

Flow of History
The Turner Family: Building a New Life

Overview

After slavery ended, freed people worked to maintain their cultural traditions and create new futures for their families. Too often students only learn about African Americans as victims or heroes, but it is critically important to expose students to stories of Black Americans that encompass the full range of human experience, including the ordinary.

This lesson uses primary sources and oral histories to show the Turner family building new lives for themselves in Grafton, VT—going to school, working in jobs, creating a business—as well as expressing their cultural heritage through story, music, song, and preserving their own family history. Daisy used the art of storytelling and music to share the history of her family. This is part of a long tradition going all the way back to Africa and the role of the griot historians and storytellers.

Grade Level

Middle-High School

Enduring Understanding

After slavery, freed people worked to maintain their cultural traditions and create new futures for their families. Stories of enslaved people live on through their descendants.

Topic(s)

African American life in Vermont

Compelling Question(s)

What did it mean for African American families to build a life in freedom?

Historical Thinking Skills

Primary Source Analysis; Synthesizing Sources

Summative Task

What aspects of the past and new opportunities for the future did the Turners combine to build a new life in Vermont?

Outline**Activating Prior Knowledge/Building Historical Context:**

Review the Turner family's journey from slavery to freedom; from Virginia to Vermont.

Formative Assessment

Class discussion

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And I'll never see my darling any more;
I'm sitting by the river and I'm weeping all the day.
For you've gone from the old Kentucky shore.
When the moon had climbed the mountain and the stars were shining too.
Then I'd take my darling Nelly Gray,
And we'd float down the river in my little red canoe,
While my banjo sweetly I would play.
One night I went to see her, but "She's gone!" the neighbors say.
The white man bound her with his chain;
They have taken her to Georgia for to wear her life away,
As she toils in the cotton and the cane.
My canoe is under water, and my banjo is unstrung;
I'm tired of living any more;
My eyes shall look downward, and my song shall be unsung
While I stay on the old Kentucky shore.
My eyes are getting blinded, and I cannot see my way.
Hark! there's somebody knocking at the door.
Oh! I hear the angels calling, and I see my Nelly Gray.
Farewell to the old Kentucky shore.

Chorus

Oh, my darling Nelly Gray, up in heaven there they say,
That they'll never take you from me any more.
I'm a-coming-coming-coming, as the angels clear the way,
Farewell to the old Kentucky shore!

Building a New Life

After slavery, freed people worked to maintain their cultural traditions and create new futures for their families. Stories of enslaved people live on through their descendants. What did it mean for African American families to build a life in freedom?

After listening to Daisy Turner's stories and examining the Turner family photographs, **describe** what aspects of the past and new opportunities for the future did the Turners combine to build a new life in Vermont.



#1. Turner Family Home and Gathering, Turner Hill, Grafton, VT, ca. 1925-25

Photographs, courtesy Vermont Folklife Center

Daisy Turner is in the top right of the photograph.



SOURCE	LOOK CLOSELY	THINKING STEMS
Read the caption to find out WHO, WHERE, WHEN	Look at the both photographs Look at the details ZOOM in with a magnifier OR DIVIDE in quadrants	I see.... I am surprised by... I wonder....
SUMMARIZE: What does this photograph tell you about how the Turners built a new life in Vermont?		

#2. Sally Turner, William Early, and Alexander Turner playing handmade instruments at their home in Grafton, VT.
Photograph, courtesy Grafton Historical Society



SOURCE	LOOK CLOSELY	THINKING STEMS
Read the caption to find out WHO, WHERE, WHEN	Look at the entire photograph Look at the details ZOOM in with a magnifier OR DIVIDE in quadrants	I see.... I am surprised by... I wonder....
SUMMARIZE: What does this photograph tell you about how the Turners built a new life in Vermont?		

#3. Rachel Turner (Daisy Turner’s sister), a nurse at the Whidden hospital, ca 1910
Photograph, courtesy Vermont Folklife Center



SOURCE	LOOK CLOSELY	THINKING STEMS
Read the caption to find out WHO, WHERE, WHEN	Look at the entire photograph Look at the details ZOOM in with a magnifier OR DIVIDE in quadrants	I see.... I am surprised by... I wonder....
SUMMARIZE: What does this photograph tell you about how the Turners built a new life in Vermont?		

#4. Class Photograph (with Rachel, Daisy, and William Turner) Valley School District #11, Grafton, Vermont.
Photograph, courtesy Grafton Historical Society



SOURCE	LOOK CLOSELY	THINKING STEMS
Read the caption to find out WHO, WHERE, WHEN	Look at the entire photograph Look at the details ZOOM in with a magnifier OR DIVIDE in quadrants	I see.... I am surprised by... I wonder....
SUMMARIZE: What does this photograph tell you about how the Turners built a new life in Vermont?		

#5. Haying on the Turner farm, Grafton, Vermont. 1925

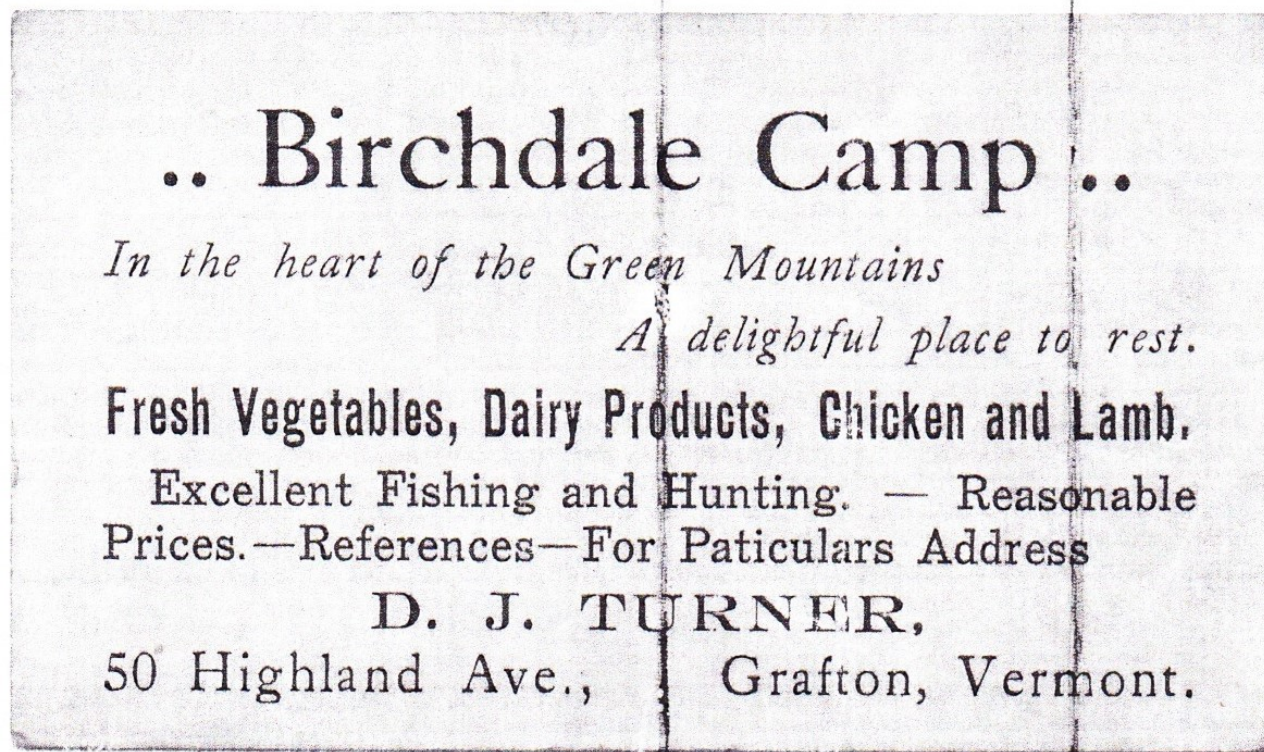
Photograph, courtesy Grafton Historical Society



SOURCE	LOOK CLOSELY	THINKING STEMS
Read the caption to find out WHO, WHERE, WHEN	Look at the entire photograph Look at the details ZOOM in with a magnifier OR DIVIDE in quadrants	I see.... I am surprised by... I wonder....
SUMMARIZE: What does this photograph tell you about how the Turners built a new life in Vermont?		

#6. Advertisement, Grafton, Vermont. 1925

Courtesy Grafton Historical Society



SOURCE	READ CLOSELY	THINKING STEMS
Read the caption to find out WHO, WHERE, WHEN	What is the business? What will people get to do? Who owns the business?	I see.... I am surprised by... I wonder....
SUMMARIZE: What does this advertisement tell you about how the Turners built a new life in Vermont?		



[The First of History]

#7. Newspaper Notice 1925
The Vermont Advance, May 9, 1914

...who is identified with the New State Equal Suffrage Association with two local associations New York City, was the first speaker and handled the propaganda for rights politically from the women's last call being to escort the tree and its bearer to the waiting audience. The tree was planted in honor of Mrs. Caroline Barrett, mother of the Hon. John Barrett, Director of the Pan-American Republic.

...brary and convincing address. The rally program of an hour and a half was closed by more suffrage songs by her good to go out and take the air and share with her husband the most variety and excitement that the

A speech on Votes for Women made by Miss Florida Turner was the hit of the afternoon, and further suffrage speeches were made by Mrs. Barlow, and Miss Daniels the chairman of the day.

...stated that the best help for the cause for equality is the labor of anti-suffragists. He showed how propaganda of equality of political rights was not a thing much desired by the women in comfortable surroundings, but that it was to the woman who is the wife of man who has to labor all day and every day in order to live, and, therefore, the propaganda is in the interest of the great mass of people of America. Mr. Hodge's speech was very good at times and extremely forceful as were given a very humorous program was concluded by the singing of several delightful songs Mrs. Henry Fairchild James, an anti-suffragist of this city.

At Gratton

...the Dedication of May second

...Since Shannon Wright was prevented from coming, Miss Wright walked out two miles from the farm and back, to decorate for us, and she was persuaded to tell her father's prepared speech.

It was, that after tea-party women were empowered to vote in Vermont at school meeting, Mrs. Barrett and some six other superior and interested women attended at the first opportunity, for the purpose of exercising their new privilege, but Bill Wynne, turned the event so to ridicule, taking them with questions, that they never went again. Yet men say, if women will not use their school vote that is reason enough for no further extension of the franchise.

Mrs. Emma Walker, a Gratton sewerer and associate of Mrs. Barrett, and who is living temporarily in this house, then gave a splendid eulogy who is expected simply to obey the laws.

Let women have this same privilege and fewer will be accused of frivolity and so-called feminine frailty.

A man may be a milliner, a dressmaker or a cook, and it occasions no remark, but when a woman takes up a profession long monopolized by man she is said to be out of her sphere.

A woman's sphere is to do all the odd jobs men do not care for at half the price.

No great movement in human progress ever came unaccompanied by criticism and prophecies of terrible disaster.

Women should stay at home. Well, do they? Thousands and thousands of women work in our factories, served out of their homes by the need all fashions in our lives producing this condition, and become superior, like the ruling men.

Let us demand the privileges and duties which will raise our standards, and so become the women "nobly planned, to warn, to comfort, and command."

Although there is no suffrage organization here we feel we had a most successful and enjoyable demonstration made up entirely of home talent and if it did not draw the "aristocracy" as an imported speaker might do, it was good for the soul of each who took part and an encouragement to others who participate another time.

Manchester.

The meeting was held at the home of the Secretary of the Bennington County Improvement Association, Mr. Herman N. Morse, and was presided

SOURCE	READ CLOSELY	THINKING STEMS
Read the title to find out WHO, WHERE, WHEN	Read the quote. Who made the speech? What was it about?	I see.... I am surprised by... I wonder....
SUMMARIZE: What does this document tell you about how the Turners built a new life in Vermont?		

