

# PRINCE AMONG SLAVES

## LESSON



# UPF

UNITY PRODUCTIONS FOUNDATION

## HOLDING ON TIGHT: ENDURANCE, IDENTITY & FAITH.

### Overview:

What does it take to preserve one's sense of identity? Abdul Rahman was an African Muslim prince who was captured in 1788 and sold into slavery in the American South. He faced grueling hardships in his life's journey, yet was able to retain his connection to Islam and to his family. In this lesson, students will follow the journey of a remarkable man who never gave up hope. They will view the film *Prince Among Slaves*, which chronicles Rahman's experiences as an African prince sold into slavery in the United States. Students will learn about Muslim life and history, challenge stereotypes, and examine different facets of identity.

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Subject Areas:** History, Geography, Language Arts, Arts

**Time:** Two fifty-minute class periods

### Materials:

- Computer with Internet access
- *Prince Among Slaves* DVD
- "Prince Among Slaves Viewing Guide" handout
- "Prince Among Slaves Advertising Campaign Planner" handout
- An assortment of small cardboard boxes or shoe boxes, magazines and newspapers
- Tape, scissors, glue, markers

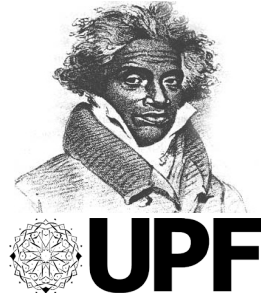
### Film Synopsis:

*Prince Among Slaves* tells the compelling true story of Abdul-Rahman, an African Muslim Prince who was captured in 1788 and sold into slavery in the American South. He endured the horrific Middle Passage, and ended up the "property" of a poor and nearly illiterate planter named Thomas Foster from Natchez Mississippi. He remained enslaved for 40 years before finally regaining his freedom under dramatic circumstances, becoming one of the most famous men of his day, and returning to Africa with his royal status acknowledged. The film ends with a family reunion between Abdul-Rahman's African and American descendants in Natchez, Mississippi.

## BUILDING BACKGROUND

### Activity One: Signs of Mistrust, Fear & Confusion

The purpose of this activity is to help students reflect on diverse notions of stereotyping.



1. "A More Perfect Union" was a 2006 campaign that was aimed at dispelling some of the public's fears toward the Muslim community in the Virginia area. It featured signs using Arabic script and English translations with comments that indirectly cautioned against jumping to conclusions. Many people reacted with fear, confusion and mistrust when they saw the signs. As a class, read aloud the International Herald Tribune article that describes this campaign at [http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2006/12/18/america/NA\\_GEN\\_US\\_Arabic\\_Signs.php](http://www.ihf.com/articles/ap/2006/12/18/america/NA_GEN_US_Arabic_Signs.php).

2. Show your students the following signs that were used in the campaign:



"Paper or Plastic? What do you think it said?"



"Rock, paper, scissors. Misunderstanding can make anything scary."

Source:

[http://www.weta.org/crossroads/wp-content/uploads/2007/03/paper\\_or\\_plastic.pdf](http://www.weta.org/crossroads/wp-content/uploads/2007/03/paper_or_plastic.pdf)

[http://www.weta.org/crossroads/wp-content/uploads/2007/03/rock\\_paper\\_scissors.pdf](http://www.weta.org/crossroads/wp-content/uploads/2007/03/rock_paper_scissors.pdf)

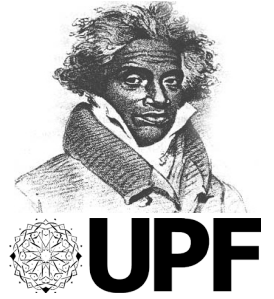
3. Lead a class discussion using the following questions as guidelines:

- Why do you think this campaign was created?
- Why do you think some people reacted to the signs with mistrust?
- Why do you think sometimes people fear what they do not understand

## STEPS FOR LEARNING

### Activity One: Spread the Word: An Introduction to Islam

*The purpose of this activity is to provide students with an opportunity to research information about the Muslim faith and beliefs and to confront common misconceptions about Muslims.*



1. Divide the class into groups of four to five students. Provide students with a copy of the “Advertising Campaign Planner” handout. Review the handout with your class prior to beginning. The handout contains the following scenario:

Your task is to create an advertising campaign to break down stereotypes about Muslims. Chose one of the following areas to focus on:

- What do Muslims believe?
- What is life like for Muslim women in today’s society?

Students may create posters, banners, websites, articles, public service announcements, television commercials, songs or any other ideas that they think will convey their message. Their campaigns may target a variety of audiences such as elementary school students, middle school students, high school students, college students, adults, or senior citizens.

2. When the students are finished, provide time for each group to share its campaign with the entire class. Invite others in the school or community to view students’ presentations. After the presentations are complete, lead a discussion critiquing their effectiveness in addressing misconceptions about Muslims in the world today.

### Activity Two: Media Viewing: Prince Among Slaves

*The purpose of this activity is to provide students with an opportunity to reflect on identity, faith, family, and hope as they are depicted in the film Prince Among Slaves. They will examine how culture and experience influence people’s perceptions of places and regions*

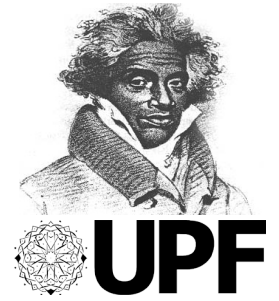
1. As a class, watch the film Prince Among Slaves. Give each student a copy of the Viewing Guide, and tell the class to complete the guide as they watch the film. Explain to the class that the guide features two parts: the left side contains factual questions and the right side contains personal response questions.

**Teacher Note:** You may also wish to have students complete the guide as a homework assignment after viewing the film.

2. When you are finished viewing the film, tell the students that they are going to participate in a Think-Pair-Share activity. This activity provides students with an opportunity for private reflection, small-group discussion, and whole-class discussion.

First, ask the students to respond in a writing journal to the following prompts:

- What were the most important places in Abdul Rahman's life?
- Why was Futa Jallon important to him?
- How did his view of Africa change as he spent time on the plantation in America?
- How was his identity impacted by being forced into slavery?
- How did his experiences as a prince in Futa Jallon remain part of his identity as he worked on the plantation in Nachez?



When the students are finished, divide the class into pairs and ask each student to share their journal responses.

The final step is to invite students to share their responses in a whole-class discussion.

### **Activity Three: Representations of Identity**

*The purpose of this activity is to provide students with an opportunity to create a representation of their own identity.*

1. Explain to the class that memory boxes are places where people collect treasured items that capture important events in a person's life and are meaningful to them. Tell the students that they are going to create a memory box that contains representations of their identities. Provide the students with boxes. As a class, brainstorm suggestions for what one might include in a memory box. The list below contains suggestions. Encourage students' creativity as they think of ideas for their memory boxes.

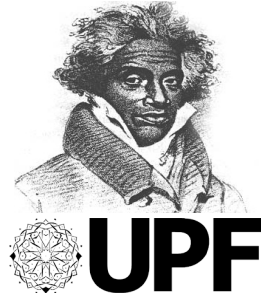
- Create an artifact
- Create a logo
- Write a poem
- Create a piece of music and/or song lyrics
- Create a sculpture or a painting
- Write a letter
- Collect photographs

**Teacher Note:** You can also choose to have students complete their memory boxes as a homework assignment.

2. When the students are finished, divide the class into small groups and ask the students to share their work. After the groups have finished, have the class brainstorm responses to the following question:

- What surprised you most about your classmates' memory boxes?
- What kinds of experiences can break down a person's identity?
- What kind of experiences can support a person's identity?

- Can you think of an example of a historical event that challenged an individual or a group's identity?
- Can you think of an example of a current event that challenges an individual or a group's identity?
- Are there any similarities and/or differences between the challenges Rahman faced and the challenges people face today in preserving one's sense of identity?

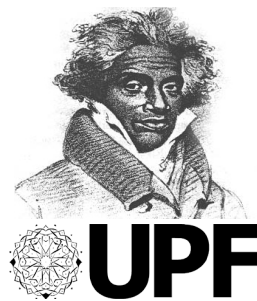


3. Ask your students what they think Abdul Rahman would have put in a memory box. Record their responses on a board. Lead a class discussion focusing on similarities and/or differences between what students put in their own memory boxes and what they imagine would be in Rahman's.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

### Activity One: "I Didn't Know That": Comparing Religions Around the Globe

1. There are many similarities between the Muslim religion and other world religions. Ask your students to create a list comparing Islam and another world religion. Provide them with the website below which is an excellent source of information about Islam: <http://www.cie.org/>. Give the students the option to work individually, in pairs, or in small groups as they complete this activity.



2. Invite students to share what they have learned with their classmates.

### Activity Two: How Does Prince Among Slaves Connect to Today's World?

1. Divide the class into small groups. Ask your students to think about how the film Prince Among Slaves is relevant to the challenges people face in modern society. Have each group create a script for a five-minute podcast highlighting the connections between the film and their own lives.

**Teacher Note:** You can create podcasts using computer software such as Garage Band. An excellent source of information on creating classroom podcasts can be found at <http://www.apple.com/education/digitalauthoring/podcasting.html>.

You may also have the students create an audiotape using a tape recorder.

2. Provide time to share each podcast with the entire class.

### Activity Three: Researching Abdul Rahman's Legacy

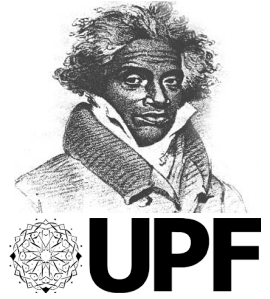
1. Encourage your students to learn more about Abdul Rahman's genealogy. Visit the film's website at <http://upf.tv/upf06/Films/PrinceAmongSlaves/Geanealogy/tabid/305/Default.aspx>. The website contains video clips, photographs and information about David Dreyer's quest to map Abdul Rahman's family tree.

2. Have your students research their own family trees.

3. Invite the students to share what they learned with their classmates.

# NATIONAL EDUCATION STANDARDS

McRel [www.mcrel.org](http://www.mcrel.org)



## GEOGRAPHY

**Standard 6.** Understands that culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=8&standardID=6>

### Level IV (Grades 9-12)

1. Understands why places and regions are important to individual human identity and as symbols for unifying or fragmenting society (e.g., sense of belonging, attachment, or rootedness; symbolic meaning of places such as Jerusalem as a holy city for Muslims, Christians, and Jews)
2. Understands how individuals view places and regions on the basis of their stage of life, sex, social class, ethnicity, values, and belief systems (e.g., perceptions of distance, impressions about what makes a place secure, views of public housing or wealthy urban neighborhoods)
3. Knows ways in which people's changing views of places and regions reflect cultural change (e.g., rural settings becoming attractive as recreation areas to people living in densely populated cities, old mining ghost towns becoming tourist and gambling centers)

## HISTORY

**Standard 2.** Understands the historical perspective

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=3&standardID=2>

### Level IV (Grades 9-12)

10. Understands how the past affects our private lives and society in general

**Standard 10.** Understands how the industrial revolution, increasing immigration, the rapid expansion of slavery, and the westward movement changed American lives and led to regional tensions

### Level IV (Grades 9-12)

3. Understands how slavery influenced economic and social elements of Southern society (e.g., how slavery hindered the emergence of capitalist institutions and values, the influence of slavery on the development of the middle class, the influence of slave revolts on the lives of slaves and freed slaves)

## LANGUAGE ARTS

### READING

**Standard 7.** Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=7&standardID=7>

### Level IV (Grades 9-12)

1. Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts (e.g., textbooks, biographical sketches, letters, diaries, directions, procedures, magazines, essays, primary source historical documents, editorials, news stories, periodicals, catalogs, job-related materials, schedules, speeches, memoranda, public documents, maps)

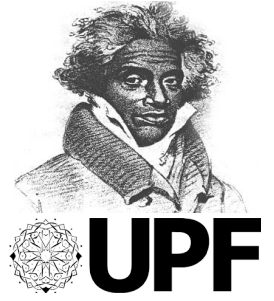
## WRITING

**Standard 4.** Gathers and uses information for research purposes

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=7&standardID=4>

### Level IV (Grades 9-12)

2. Uses a variety of print and electronic sources to gather information for research topics (e.g., news sources such as magazines, radio, television, newspapers; government publications; microfiche; telephone information services; databases; field studies; speeches; technical documents; periodicals; Internet)



## LISTENING & SPEAKING

**Standard 8.** Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/standardDetails.asp?subjectID=7&standardID=8>

### Level IV (Grades 9-12)

2. Asks questions as a way to broaden and enrich classroom discussions
4. Adjusts message wording and delivery to particular audiences and for particular purposes (e.g., to defend a position, to entertain, to inform, to persuade)
5. Makes formal presentations to the class (e.g., includes definitions for clarity; supports main ideas using anecdotes, examples, statistics, analogies, and other evidence; uses visual aids or technology, such as transparencies, slides, electronic media; cites information sources)

## ARTS

**Standard 3.** Knows a range of subject matter, symbols, and potential ideas in the visual arts

### Level IV (Grades 9-12)

2. Applies various subjects, symbols, and ideas in one's artworks

## WORKING WITH OTHERS

**Standard 1.** Contributes to the overall effort of a group

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=22&StandardID=1>

### Level IV (Grade K-12)

2. Works cooperatively within a group to complete tasks, achieve goals, and solve problems.