

# Views of Slavery

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**Date:** Day 1 of 2

**Class:** AP US History

**Objective:** The students will analyze the arguments used by slave owners to justify their “peculiar institution” based on readings of primary sources.

**Initiation:** On board write and ask: What is the “truth” about slavery? How do we know the truth? (Discuss why the word is in quotation marks?) Mention the changes in historians’ views regarding slavery. Consider today why would American support this system?

**Model/Develop:** Read together the beginning of “William Harper’s Apology” and identify his support for slavery. List on the board. Guide questions during discussion.

**Practice:**

1. Read “William Harper’s Apology” together. Read a section and list his arguments on the board.
2. Discussion of his arguments: Is this statement by Harper accurate? (Ex: “slavery was forced upon us...in a struggle for existence.”) In what ways were his arguments an indictment of slavery? What does it tell you about the “southern” view/values/beliefs? What are the weaknesses in the argument?
3. If time or need requires, have students read individually the two articles. Check individually with students for understanding.

**Closure:** Check students for understanding. What arguments were most effective? Which ones were the most ludicrous? Why would Southerners use these arguments to justify slavery? Why would non-slaveholding American people support these arguments?

**Homework:** Finish reading “William Harper’s Apology” and “the Blessings of the Slave” and list their arguments for slavery, as well as, comments of questions you have.

**Assessment:** Check for student understanding during closing discussion, and in individual reading during class.

**Materials:** “William Harper’s Apology” (1837) and “the Blessings of the Slave” (1849) by Connecticut-born Solon Robinson located in “The American Spirit: Primary Sources, Volume 1” by Thomas Bailey and David Kennedy.

**Connection to unit’s essential questions:**

1. Does free discussion elicit truth?
2. Whose story is it? Is History the story told by winners?
3. How do you persuade people to reform society?

**Bibliography:** Additional sources

Harriet Beecher Stowe Teacher Institute; Source Material for “This Question of Slavery: perspectives from primary sources.” Article entitles “South side View of Slavery: Three Months at the South” by Nehemia Adams.

**Curriculum created by Wendy Nelson Kauffman**