



Thirteenth Amendment: Lesson Plan

Topic	
<p>The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude in the United States and enabled Congress to enact legislation to enforce it. Ratification of the Amendment by the Southern states was integral to reunifying and reconstructing the country after the Civil War.</p>	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History • Government • Politics 	45-60 minutes
Video link:	
https://academy4sc.org/video/thirteenth-amendment-slavery-and-involuntary-servitude/	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain why the Thirteenth Amendment was drafted and the problems it was attempting to fix. • Briefly summarize the Thirteenth Amendment. • Trace the evolution of Thirteenth Amendment interpretations through landmark Supreme Court cases and modern society. 	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Abolition, Emancipation Proclamation	
Materials Needed	
Worksheet, poster making materials	
Before you watch	
<p>Think-pair-share: Define “involuntary servitude.” What falls under the umbrella of “involuntary servitude” and what doesn’t? For what reasons?</p>	



While you watch

Complete Questions 1-4 on the Worksheet.

After you watch/discussion questions

1. What societal issues surrounding slavery and the Thirteenth Amendment do you continue to see unresolved in modern times? How might they eventually be resolved?
2. In what ways did the abolition of slavery succeed and in what ways did it fall short?
3. Could the United States have been reunified after the Civil War without the abolition of slavery? Why or why not?

Activity Ideas

- Have students write letters to their local Congressmen expressing their opinions on the prison labor exception in the Thirteenth Amendment. The letters should include students' insights on the effects of the prison labor exception and mass incarceration on modern society, as well as offer suggestions on changes to the Amendment or other legislation to mitigate the negative effects of mass incarceration. Here's a great [template](#) for crafting a letter to an elected official.
- Design educational posters detailing the history and significance of the Thirteenth Amendment in the Civil War-era and today. Emphasize how slavery and the Amendment still affect people today and how people can combat the "badges and incidents of slavery" they still see in modern society. The teacher can pick one specific target audience or assign students to different target audiences.

Sources/places to learn more

1. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2019, August 14). Thirteenth Amendment. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Thirteenth-Amendment>.
2. Editors, H. com. (n.d.). *13th Amendment*. HISTORY. Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/thirteenth-amendment>.
3. *Interpretation: The Thirteenth Amendment* | *The National Constitution Center*. (n.d.). Retrieved from



<https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/interpretation/amendment-xiii/interps/137>.

4. "The Southern 'Black Codes' of 1865-66." (n.d.). *Constitutional Rights Foundation*. Retrieved from

<https://www.crf-usa.org/brown-v-board-50th-anniversary/southern-black-codes.html>.