

ROOTS

EDUCATION GUIDE





Introduction to this Guide

In this guide you will find:

- Episode descriptions for each night of *ROOTS*
- Discussion Questions
- Activities and Links to learn more
- Please note that at the end of this guide there is a Viewing Chart for viewers and students to fill out during or after watching each episode.

Please note: *ROOTS* is recommended for advanced high school students, college students and general audiences. Sections of this guide include specific curriculum links and ratings information.

CONNECT WITH ROOTS

ROOTS is an epic story reimagined for a new generation of viewers. There are many ways to engage with the series and the topics and themes it explores.

TWEET AND POST along with us while watching *ROOTS*. Tune in to HISTORY May 30-June 2nd. Join us each night and share your thoughts. Visit roots.history.com for social media links.

PREPARE by viewing video clips, interactives, discussion guides and more at roots.history.com

SHARE your family history. Search for a photo of one of your ancestors or an elder in your community and share it using hashtag #roots

EXPLORE the history of *ROOTS* by reading a background article about the topic:

<http://www.history.com/news/remembering-roots>

REMEMBER that everyone can define their roots in their own way. If you do not know aspects of your family history or do not have access, you can research the history of your town or city or interview a leader or elder you admire.

SOCIAL MEDIA:

<https://www.facebook.com/HISTORY/>

<https://twitter.com/History>

<https://www.instagram.com/history/>

<https://www.facebook.com/RootsSeries>

<https://twitter.com/rootsseries>

Introduction (Continued)

From the 1520s through the 1860s, approximately 12.5 million Africans were taken captive from their homes and villages, sold into slavery and shipped across the Atlantic Ocean; about 10.7 million survived the horrific route known as The Middle Passage.

ROOTS explores the lives of enslaved individuals through the story of Kunta Kinte and his family, and it contains some very intense scenes depicting the violence endured by enslaved individuals. Visit us at roots.history.com to find resources designed to help facilitate conversations about slavery and the experiences of slaves, before and after watching *ROOTS*.

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

Common Core State Standards, English Language Arts Standards—History/Social Studies, Grades 11–12

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- Evaluate various explanations for actions or events...where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.





ROOTS

*“You must always honor your ancestors, the ones who love you
and watch over you. Your name is your spirit.
Your name is your shield.”*

Introduction to the Series:

ROOTS on HISTORY® is a historical portrait of American slavery recounting the journey of one family's will to survive, endure and ultimately carry on their legacy despite enormous hardship and inhumanity. Spanning multiple generations, the lineage begins with young Kunta Kinte, who is captured in his homeland of The Gambia and transported in brutal conditions to colonial America, where he's sold into slavery.

Throughout the series, the family continues to face adversity while bearing witness and contributing to notable events in U.S. history, including the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, slave uprisings and eventual emancipation. The story of Kunta Kinte and the women and men who came after him echoes through the history of millions of Americans of African descent, and reveals powerful truths about the universal resilience of the human spirit.

Curriculum Links:

ROOTS would be useful for high school and college courses on History, Politics, Social Studies, Film and Media, Current Events and more. *ROOTS* is rated TV-14, L, V, S. Please note that *ROOTS* contains intense language of the time period, violence and sexual violence and therefore we do not recommend it for children under the age of 14. Viewer discretion is strongly advised.

Visit us at [ROOTS.history.com](https://roots.history.com) for additional resources for discussing and exploring *ROOTS* and the history of slavery.

We encourage faculty and educators to develop their own course units and lesson plans based on *ROOTS*. You can share ideas or insights using hashtag #ROOTS or email us at classroom@aenetworks.com.

Background

When *ROOTS* aired in 1977, it took the world by storm, telling the story of Kunta Kinte, an African who is abducted from The Gambia, sold into slavery, and taken to America. Based on the 1976 novel *Roots: The Saga of An American Family* by Alex Haley, the miniseries powerfully depicted the story of Kunta Kinte and his family's struggle for freedom over several generations.

Over 130 million viewers watched *ROOTS* over the course of 8 consecutive nights, nearly half of the U.S. population at the time. It was a seminal moment in American history. It was the first time that a television series started a conversation about slavery, race, identity, family, and freedom.

In 2016, an amazing cast and creative team have come together to produce a reimagined *ROOTS* for a new generation of viewers. The new *ROOTS* from A+E Studios has benefited from rich new scholarship about life in The Gambia, the transatlantic slave trade and the lives of enslaved people on American plantations during the 18th and 19th centuries. The 2016 *ROOTS* miniseries breathes vibrant life into Kunta Kinte, Kizzy, Chicken George and the rest of their family's breathtaking journeys.



Key Themes explored in *ROOTS*:

- Identity and naming: Kunta Kinte hears words as a baby that guide his family through generations: “your name is your spirit, your name is your shield.” Family identity and the powerful naming ceremony guide Kunta’s descendants and help them survive enslavement.
 - Resilience and Strength: Despite the horrors of slavery, the family survives through their connection to each other and their history. *ROOTS* characters such as Kunta Kinte, Fiddler, Belle, Kizzy, Chicken George, his son Tom and others do everything in their power to resist the inhumanity of slavery.
 - Family: Dedication to family and carrying on traditions are primary values of Kunta and the generations after him. Family heritage and connection to the African past help them persevere.
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General Discussion Questions

1. What emotions did you feel while watching *ROOTS*? Why do you think it is important to tell this story?
2. *ROOTS* depicts the violence at the heart of the slave system. In what ways do you think the legacy of slavery exists in our world today? Why is it important to explore this history?
3. What are some of the key themes and messages of *ROOTS*? What inspired you most about the story?
4. *ROOTS* opens up some very intense subject matter including the violence whites enacted on enslaved people. What spaces, if any, exist in our society for healing wounds of race-based violence? What other kinds of spaces do you wish existed? (Think about how art, music, and conversation can play a role in processing the past.)
5. How do you think the *ROOTS* story can be relatable to anyone regardless of their background?



NIGHT ONE



ROOTS

NIGHT ONE

“Keep your true name inside. Kunta Kinte. I promise I’m gonna keep it, too. This isn’t your home. But this is where you got to be.”

Introduction:

In 1750 in the port of Juffure, in the river region of The Gambia in West Africa, Omoro Kinte and his wife, Binta, have their first child, a son named Kunta. As a member of the highly esteemed Kinte family, Kunta is trained in Mandinka customs and traditions. He is a dedicated student who dreams of traveling to the university in Timbuktu to become a scholar. Kunta passes his warrior training, an important Mandinka rite of passage, but soon after he is betrayed by the Koros, a rival family. After being kidnapped and captured, Kunta is sold to British slave traders in 1767 and is shipped through the brutal Middle Passage to America on the Lord Ligonier along with 140 other slaves.

Conditions are horrific on the slave ship and Kunta fears he will never see his family again. He unites his fellow slaves and unsuccessfully leads an uprising on board. In Annapolis, Maryland, he is sold to a Virginia planter named John Waller and is given the slave name Toby. Kunta strongly resists his new name and enslavement. He relies on the wise counsel of Fiddler, an assimilated slave and sophisticated musician who has been assigned

to train him. With Fiddler’s help, Kunta fights to survive and maintain his dignity despite the unrelenting violence of the slave system.

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Please note:

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Vocabulary/Identification Terms:

Before or after watching this episode of *ROOTS*, students can define the terms below to build context for understanding the film and they can also keep their own list of terms to define as they are watching.

1. mansa
2. insolence
3. cavalry
4. toubab
5. gentry
6. transatlantic slave trade
7. chattel slavery
8. commodification
9. prodigy

Pre-Viewing Activities:

1. Before watching, students can review a map of West Africa and locate the river region of The Gambia.
2. Note that *ROOTS* opens in 1750. Research, discuss or think about what else was going on in the world at that time.
3. Define the transatlantic slave trade and consider the ways we can think about Kunta's story in the larger context of that trade.
4. Read an article to learn about the Mandinka people: <http://www.history.com/news/ask-history/who-are-the-mandinka>

Discussion/Essay Questions:

Discuss the questions below as a class or group or individually through essays or informal writing assignments.

1. *ROOTS* opens in The Gambia river region in 1750. What is surprising or interesting about what you see in the film? How does this vision of Africa during this time period compare what you have seen before?
2. Omoro names Kunta in a ceremony shortly after he is born. He tells his son, "you must always honor your ancestors." Why do you think names are so important in Mandinka culture, and what is the significance of this naming tradition?
3. Why do you think warrior training was so important in Mandinka culture? What are some of the lessons Kunta learns from his training? Why might these lessons be important to him later?
4. During his training, Kunta learns that "anger is the path to poor decisions." What do you think this means? Do you agree with this idea?
5. Why do you think Kunta wants to study in Timbuktu? What does this reveal about him?
6. Are Kunta and his family religious? What do you learn about their belief system?
7. How and why was Kunta captured by the Koros? Who was he sold to and why?
8. What emotions did you feel when you watched the scenes set on the slave ship? Why do you think it is important to depict The Middle Passage even though it can be very painful to watch these scenes?
9. Why does Kunta's mother's song for him, known as "Binta's tune," become so important to him on the slave ship? Silla tells Kunta to dream of his family. Why were these dreams and memories so important to his survival?
10. How does Kunta help organize the slaves on board the ship? How do they communicate without the slave traders knowing what they are saying?
11. When Kunta arrives in Maryland, he is put up for sale at a slave market. How are enslaved people "marketed" and turned into products? How does Kunta resist this?
12. Describe the role of Fiddler. How is he unique? What is his relationship to Kunta, and what does he risk by befriending him?
13. Why do you think it was so important to Kunta not to accept the name Toby?
14. How does Fiddler help Kunta survive at the end of this episode?

Further Explorations:

1. **Mapping the Transatlantic Slave Trade.** Visit [ROOTS.history.com/slave-trade-ships](https://roots.history.com/slave-trade-ships) to view an in-depth interactive mapping the transatlantic slave trade. Students can view slave voyages and can create data or research presentations based on what they learn. For example, how many captives were taken from the Senegambia region to North America? Students can also explore the history of uprisings and resistance on slave ships through their own research.
2. **Dreaming of Timbuktu.** Timbuktu, founded in the 5th century, became a center of learning in the Mali empire. In *ROOTS*, Kunta dreams of studying there. Today, Timbuktu is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Visit <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/119> and <http://international.loc.gov/intldl/malihtml/islam.html> to learn more about Timbuktu's history.
3. **Historicizing Slavery.** In this episode of *ROOTS*, we see slavery in two different contexts, West Africa and North America. Based on what you see and your own research, create a chart or write an essay about the differences between slavery in West Africa during the 18th century and in North America. (To start, you can define the term "chattel slavery" and then compare that definition to what you have learned about slavery in Africa during this time period.)
4. **Roots: The Saga of An American Family.** *ROOTS* is based on Alex Haley's classic 1976 novel. Visit <http://www.rootsthebook.com/excerpt.html> to read an excerpt from Haley's book. Students can compare and contrast this excerpt to the film.
5. **Your Name is Your Shield.** The power of one's name is a key theme in *ROOTS*. In an essay, reflect on the importance of Kunta's name. Why did he resist being renamed Toby? Why did the overseer punish Kunta until he said his new name? You can also research the history of slave naming to inform your essay.
6. **Resisting Enslavement.** The resistance of enslaved people to their enslavement and to the violence of the slave system is an important topic in the history of slavery. After watching this episode, think about the ways Kunta and the other enslaved people resist or attempt to resist their enslavement. In a discussion or essay, describe these forms of resistance. As you watch additional episodes of *ROOTS*, you can think about how the possibilities of resistance changed over time.
7. **Children and the Slave Trade.** Few people are aware that as many as one fourth of enslaved people taken from Africa were children. Visit <http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/case-studies/141> to read the experiences of children in the transatlantic slave trade.

Post-Viewing Questions:

1. If you watched the 1977 version of *ROOTS*, what is new or different about this version? How does it compare with other depictions of slavery?
2. How did slavery differ in West Africa and in the American colonies?
3. After watching this episode you may need time and space to reflect on what you watched. What did you learn or how did you feel?
4. How do you think Kunta will survive enslavement? What characteristics or coping mechanisms can guide him?

Passage for Discussion:

At the end of this episode of ROOTS, Fiddler says the words below to Kunta after he has been beaten by the overseer. Read this passage and discuss the questions below for further examination.

"Don't worry what Massa call you. Keep your true name inside. Kunta Kinte. I promise I'm gonna keep it, too. This isn't your home. But this is where you got to be. -- Don't know what else to say to you... but I know rain that fall in Virginny get burned off by the sun. I know it rise up into the clouds. I know clouds drift away. Maybe them clouds drift all the way cross the ocean to that river you call Kamby Bolongo. Maybe same rain fall here fall there. On your own people. And I know they want you to live. I'm sure 'bout that. So now you got to live. Hear me, Kunta Kinte? ... You live."

1. Why do you think Fiddler encourages Kunta to "keep his true name inside"?
2. What is Fiddler's main message to Kunta? What does he want Kunta to do?



Learn More

Visit History.com to learn more about *ROOTS*:

ROOTS.history.com

Learn more about the Transatlantic slave trade:

<http://old.antislavery.org/breakingthesilence/>

Visit the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database:

<http://www.slavevoyages.org/> and <http://www.slavevoyages.org/education/>

Learn more about the history of the Mandinka:

<http://www.history.com/news/ask-history/who-are-the-mandinka>

Find primary sources from the Smithsonian National Museum of American History:

http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/oral_histories/life_at_sea/equiano.htm

Find additional resources from the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture:

<http://nmaahc.si.edu/>

Learn more about Kunta Kinteh Island and a related film:

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/761> and <http://www.kuntakintehislandmovie.com/>

Further reading:

Boubacar Barry. *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African*. Simon and Brown, 2015.

Rediker, Marcus. *The Slave Ship: A Human History*. Penguin Books, 2008.

Smallwood, Stephanie. *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to America*. Harvard University Press, 2008.

Thornton, John. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Williams, Heather Andrea. *American Slavery: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2014.



NIGHT TWO

ROOTS

NIGHT TWO

"Do not allow yourself to be defeated. They can put the chains on your body, never let them put the chains on your mind."
Kunta Kinte to Kizzy

Introduction:

In 1775, Kunta is working on the Waller farm when he meets English Redcoats encouraging slaves to run away and join the English governor's "Ethiopian Regiment." The slaves are promised freedom if they fight for King George. However, during the battle Kunta realizes the English are little better than the Americans and takes off. He is apprehended by slave catchers and they amputate half his foot to make sure he never runs off again. John Waller's younger brother William, a doctor, is outraged at the mutilation and buys Kunta. Kunta is healed with the help of William Waller's slave cook, Belle. After a lengthy, awkward courtship, Kunta marries Belle. Soon after, a daughter is born to the couple. Kunta gives her the Mandinka name of "Kizzy," meaning "you stay put."

A clever child, Kizzy is entranced by William Waller's daughter, Missy, mistaking her attention for true friendship. Missy secretly teaches Kizzy how to read and write. Her hidden skills allow her to feel free and actively resist. As a teenager, Kizzy forges papers that help a young slave, Noah, to escape during a terrible hurricane. Her conspiracy is discovered; Kizzy is sold to a poor, white farmer,

Tom Lea. Soon after, Kizzy fathers a son, George. Kizzy vows to instill in her son both her pride in their African heritage and Kunta Kinte's dream of freedom.

Curriculum Links:

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Vocabulary/Identification Terms:

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1. manumission
2. armaments
3. imprudent
4. mutiny
5. consternation
6. iniquitous
7. beguile
8. corpus
9. abolitionist

Pre-Viewing Activities:

1. This episode covers the era of the American Revolution. Students can review a timeline of the Revolutionary era to gain context into this time period. Visit <http://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/american-revolution-history> for background information.
2. Visit an interactive from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History to learn about the first two centuries of slavery in America <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/multimedia#!3447>
3. In 1790, The United States conducted the first census. Visit <https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/wright-hunt.pdf> and <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/00165897ch14.pdf> to learn about the population in 1790. Students can create data charts or other presentations about subsets of this information if time permits.

Discussion/Essay Questions:

Discuss the questions below as a class or group or individually through essays or informal writing assignments.

1. Why do you think Kunta decided to join Lord Dunmore's regiment? What do you think he hoped the outcome would be?
2. In the soldier's camp before the battle, we hear the perspective of a Native American who has joined the Redcoats. Why does he say he would fight on the side of King George?
3. In this episode we see enslaved people singing spirituals while they are working. Why do you think these songs were so important to them? What role does music play in Kunta's life?
4. What role does Belle play in Kunta's recovery? Do you think he could have survived without her help?
5. What are some of the ways Spalding tries to maintain power over Kunta? What are some of the ways Kunta tries to gain some power, even amidst so much violence and powerlessness?
6. Belle tells Kunta that dwelling on memories of his life in Africa just brings him agony, but Kunta says that by not thinking about life outside the farm she "makes her life small." What does this conversation reveal about the differences between Kunta and Belle and their approach to life and survival?
7. How would you describe Missy and Kizzy's friendship? Could their friendship be genuine?
8. What did you learn about the abolitionist movement in this episode? What kinds of arguments against slavery do abolitionists make?
9. Why do you think Kunta trains Kizzy in the tradition of a Mandinka warrior? Why does he give her beads when she finishes her training?
10. Why do you think Kizzy risks so much to help Noah? Why was reading so important to Kizzy and how did it help her give Noah advice?
11. After she gives birth to George, Kizzy contemplates ending their lives. What helps her decide to stay alive?
12. What emotions did you feel at the end of this episode?

Further Explorations:

1. **Dunmore's Proclamation.** Learn more about this proclamation calling enslaved people to fight with forces loyal to the British crown against angry colonists in Virginia. Visit <http://www.history.org/almanack/people/african/aadunpro.cfm> to learn more and <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-revolution/4238> to read the full text. Then, write an essay about this proclamation. What was at stake for slaves who fought? What did they risk?
2. **Fugitive Slave Act of 1793.** In 1793, Congress passed what became known as the first Fugitive Slave Act. In groups or individually, students can research this act and write a synopsis of the act. Visit <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/fugitive-slave-acts> for one background article to get started.
3. **Runaway Slaves.** In this episode, Noah makes the very risky decision to run away. Many slaves decided to run away, despite the risks of extreme violence if they were caught. Slave owners often placed ads in newspapers searching for runaway slaves. Students can view and analyze one or more of these ads at <http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/gos/index.html>
View the Library of Congress Primary Source analysis tool at <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/primary-source-analysis-tool/> for a useful resource for analyzing primary sources.
4. **Slave Literacy.** In this episode, Kizzy says to her parents, "Reading is my way of being a warrior. Of being free inside. And it's worth jail or whatever comes." Why do you think reading was so important to enslaved people? What were some of the ways literacy helped Kizzy gain power and information? Students can read an excerpt (Chapter VII) by Frederick Douglass from his autobiography to gain insight into how he learned to read and write: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/2718>.

Post-Viewing Questions:

1. Kunta does everything in his power to escape slavery. Despite their resistance, most enslaved people were unable to escape slavery. What are some of the ways people held in captivity resisted the terms of enslavement?
2. Belle helps Kunta heal. How would you describe her character in the series and why was she so important to Kunta? How did enslaved people help each other survive brutality?
3. In this episode we see the onset of the abolition movement. What were some of the arguments against slavery? What arguments or beliefs justified slavery, and how did enslaved people contradict these arguments through their own assertions of humanity?
4. Some of the scenes in this episode can be very difficult to watch. Why do you think it is important to learn about the history of slavery?

Passage for Discussion:

At the end of this episode of ROOTS, Kizzy keeps an important Mandinka tradition alive by telling her newborn son about his ancestors. Her words to him are below.

"I don't know if this is the right kind of place. And I don't even know all of the story -- there wasn't enough time. But I've got to tell you about our people. My father's name is Kunta Kinte, he's a Mandinka warrior-- you've got to know who he is... so you can know who you are...Look up little one. See the stars, the moon, whole the sky? Behold, the only thing that is greater than you."

1. What do you think Kizzy means when she says "there wasn't enough time"?
2. Why do you think it was important to Kizzy that her son know who his grandfather was and why do you think she wanted to pass this down to him?



Learn More

Visit History.com to learn more about *ROOTS*:

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Learn more about the lives of enslaved people and slavery during the era of the American Revolution:

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/revolution/revolution_slavery.cfm

Learn More about Early Abolitionists:

<http://www.history.com/news/history-lists/6-early-abolitionists>

Learn more about abolitionism and the Second Great Awakening:

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/first-age-reform/timeline-terms/second-great-awakening>

Learn more about George Washington and slavery:

<http://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/slavery/>

Find additional resources from the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture:

<http://nmaahc.si.edu/>

Further reading:

Berlin, Ira. *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*. Belknap Press, 2000.

Camp, Stephanie. *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South*. University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Genovese, Eugene. Roll, Jordan, *Roll: The World the Slaves Made*. Vintage Books, 1976.

Gomez, Michael. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Sinha, Manisha. *The Slaves Cause: A History of Abolition*. Yale University Press, 2016.

White, Deborah Gray. *Ar'n't I A Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*. Norton, 1998.

A woman with dark skin and curly hair is shown from the waist up. She is wearing a purple, long-sleeved dress with a subtle floral pattern and ruffled cuffs. A blue cloth is draped over her left arm. She holds a small, crumpled white cloth in her hands. She is looking off to the side with a serious expression. The background consists of a brick wall and several wooden poles leaning against it. The lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

NIGHT THREE



ROOTS

NIGHT THREE

*“We fight when we need but – first
we’ve got to survive.”*

Kizzy

Introduction:

As George grows to manhood, he exhibits traits of both his parents. Like Tom Lea, he falls in love with cockfighting and carousing. The old slave bird-handler, Mingo, resents George who eventually usurps his position as pit master. The rakish George becomes such an accomplished trainer of gamecocks that he earns the sobriquet of “Chicken George.” George marries a preacher’s daughter, Matilda, and fathers many children.

George struggles to keep Tom Lea, his father, from his self-destructive ways. From Kizzy, George has inherited the strong traditions of family and a desire to be free. He rationalizes his bond with Tom Lea by convincing himself that one day he can buy freedom for himself and his family. When Tom Lea loses a reckless wager with an Englishman, he offers to send his son to work off his debts. Chicken George is dragged off to England.

Curriculum Links:

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Vocabulary/Identification Terms:

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1. distemper
2. sustenance
3. righteous
4. pious
5. boorish
6. scheme
7. wager
8. antebellum
9. paternalism

Pre-Viewing Activities:

1. Before watching this episode, it will be useful to consider the timeline of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade globally and in the United States. Students can also consider the domestic slave trade which continued to thrive. (Visit <http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/118969> for one background article about this topic.)
2. Students can also explore the abolition movement by reading this article from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/slavery-and-anti-slavery/essays/abolition-and-antebellum-reform>
3. This episode shows the role of cockfighting in U.S. history. Students can read about cockfighting to gain insights into this aspect of the story at <https://www.history.org/Foundation/journal/Autumn08/rooster.cfm> Today, cockfighting is illegal in the United States, which is important to note.

Discussion/Essay Questions:

Discuss the questions below as a class or group or individually through essays or informal writing assignments.

1. Kizzy endures incredible violence and is forced to build a new life separated from her parents. What are some of the ways she survives? How does she maintain a connection to her family?
2. Tom Lea tells Chicken George that William Byrd, a rich landowner, looks down on him. How do you think Tom thinks about his identity? How do you think he justifies owning slaves?
3. Mingo tells Chicken George that he trusts his birds but not people. Why do you think Mingo has this view?
4. Why does Tom Lea end up in a duel with Bryd? Why do you think people once settled conflict through dueling?
5. After the duel, George tells Tom, "I'm a better man than you." Why do you think it was so important to George to say this to Tom Lea?
6. How did Marcellus become a free man? Why do you think Kizzy ultimately chose not to leave with Marcellus? What were some of the dangers free blacks faced?
7. What were some of the outcomes of Nat Turner's rebellion? How did it change life for enslaved people and free blacks?
8. Why do you think Kizzy gave George her beads when he left for the cockfight in Charleston? What was the significance of these beads?
9. Do you think Tom Lea ever intended to free George? Why or why not?
10. What emotions did you feel at the end of this episode?

Further Explorations:

1. **The Duel.** In this episode, Lea and Byrd challenge each other to a duel. How common was this form of conflict in the antebellum South? Students can research duels and write a short paper or create a presentation about this form of conflict resolution. (One background article to get started: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/duel-104161025/?no-ist>)
2. **Free Blacks in the Antebellum South.** In this episode, the character Marcellus gives viewers insights into the realities of life for free blacks in the American south before emancipation. Visit <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aaohtml/exhibit/aopart2.html> for background about free blacks during this time period. How many free blacks were there in the south before 1865? Students can create data charts or other presentations about this topic.
3. **Jackson Election.** The duel between Lea and Byrd in this episode is prompted in part by a discussion of the Presidential election of 1824. Students can learn more about this important election at: <http://millercenter.org/president/biography/jadams-campaigns-and-elections>. What was at stake in this election? What group of voters did Jackson appeal to and why? Students can reflect on these questions in a short essay or class discussion.
4. **Nat Turner's Rebellion.** Viewers hear about the Nat Turner rebellion and its aftermath in this episode. Students can further explore Turner's rebellion and its consequences by viewing primary sources located at <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/exhibits/DeathLiberty/alldocs.htm#turner>
5. **Google Earth Tour: Underground Railroad.** Explore the House Divided Project created by Dickinson College to take a Google Earth tour of Underground Railroad sites and learn more about the abolition movement. [View Gateway to Freedom video](#)

Post-Viewing Questions:

1. What did you learn in this episode that was new or surprising to you?
2. Tom Lea subjects Kizzy to sexual violence throughout her life. This is extremely difficult to watch. Reflect on this and think about how Kizzy managed to cope. How did she survive?
3. Chicken George wants to be close to Tom Lea throughout his life. What faults did he see in Tom Lea, and why do you think he wanted to please him despite Tom Lea's faults?
4. Why do you think it is important to explore the history of slavery?

Passage for Discussion:

In this episode, Kizzy has a difficult conversation with George about the importance of moving forward and the ways her family history has helped her survive.

"George, I almost took my life when you was born. Yours too. So much shame. So much sadness. So far from my Daddy and Mama. And that would have been a terrible sin against everything my Daddy taught me. So he came to me. Stopped me. And I decided to live. You're a fine man, George. And I ain't told you enough. Maybe I was scared you got too much of Massa's blood. But you have honored my father. You here to keep this family goin'. That's what my father say we do to survive. Fight if we need-- but first we have to survive."

1. What role does the memory of her parents play in Kizzy's life?
2. What is Kizzy's main message to George in this passage?



Learn More

Visit History.com to learn more about *ROOTS*:

ROOTS.history.com

Learn more about Nat Turner's Rebellion:

<http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/nat-turner>

Learn more about Andrew Jackson's Presidency:

<http://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/andrew-jackson>

Learn more about the abolitionist movement:

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/multimedia#!15741>

Find additional resources from the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture:

<http://nmaahc.si.edu/>

Find Resources from the Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of Transatlantic Slavery at the Schomburg Center

<http://www.lapiduscenter.org/>

Further reading:

Baptist, Edward. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and The Making of American Capitalism*. Basic Books, 2014.

Berry, Daina Ramey. *Enslaved Women in America: An Encyclopedia*. Greenwood, 2012.

Oates, Stephen. *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion*. Harper Perennial, 2014.

Horton, James and Lois Horton. *Slavery and the Making of America*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Johnson, Walter. *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*. Harvard University Press, 1999.

Stevenson, Brenda. *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South*. Oxford University Press, 1997.



NIGHT FOUR



ROOTS

NIGHT FOUR

"You're my first baby not born a slave. First baby nobody can own...I know I can't keep this family together if I don't teach you where you come from, who you are...If I don't remember who I am."

Tom

Introduction:

After more than 20 years in England, Chicken George is finally given his freedom. George returns to the Lea farm to discover that his family was sold off to another family in North Carolina in his absence. He tracks them down working for Benjamin Murray, a respected engineer at the North Carolina Federal armory. George is reunited with Matilda but finds his youngest boy, Tom, a master blacksmith, is now the leader of the family. Tom is a quiet, hard-working young man but he nurses a cold rage against his father, blaming him for abandoning the family. George is forced to leave the Murray farm and meets up with a young, hot-headed slave, Cyrus. Together they join the Memphis Colored Battery.

As the Civil War comes to a close, Chicken George and Cyrus barely escape with their lives. After the war, southern soldiers launch a terror campaign against freed slaves. Tom goes on a journey to find his father and, inspired by a vision of Kunta Kinte, rescues George. Once home, Tom leads his family off the Murray farm, embarking on a new life. True to Kunte's hope, the family finally finds freedom and has kept the family and their traditions

intact. In 1976, Alex Haley, a seventh-generation descendant of Kunta Kinte, authors and publishes the Pulitzer Prize winning *ROOTS: The Saga of an American Family*.

Curriculum Links:

ROOTS would be useful for high school and college courses on History, Politics, Social Studies, Film and Media, Current Events and more. This episode of *ROOTS* is rated TV-14, L, S, V. Please note that *ROOTS* contains intense language of the time period, violence and sexual violence and therefore we do not recommend it for children under the age of 14. Viewer discretion is strongly advised.

Please note:

ROOTS is a powerful exploration of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery in North America. As noted in the disclaimer above, *ROOTS* contains harsh language and intense scenes of violence and sexual violence. It may prompt questions or additional discussion avenues among students about slavery and the legacy of this history in American society. Visit us at ROOTS.history.com for additional resources for discussing and exploring this history.



Vocabulary/Identification Terms:

Before or after watching this episode of *ROOTS*, students can define the terms below to build context for understanding the film and they can also keep their own list of terms to define as they are watching.

1. insurrection
2. manumitted
3. secession
4. ostentatious
5. artillery
6. arsenal
7. conspirators
8. intrigued
9. traitor

Pre-Viewing Activities:

1. This episode takes place against the backdrop of the Civil War. Reviewing a general timeline of this period before watching will be useful. Visit <http://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war> for one source to get started.
2. This episode also shows the centrality of slavery to the American economy. Students can read a helpful background article about this topic before watching: <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/04/03/how-the-slave-trade-built-america>.
3. This episode explores the roles of African American soldiers during their service at: <http://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/black-civil-war-soldiers>

Discussion/Essay Questions:

Discuss the questions below as a class or group or individually through essays or informal writing assignments.

1. Why does Chicken George fear returning home after being in England for many years?
2. When George returns he sees Tom Lea and calls him a man with no honor. Why do you think it was important to George to say this to Tom?
3. George's son Tom is a skilled blacksmith. How does his role as a blacksmith give him some power in society? What are the limits of his power?
4. Frederick Murray argues that North Carolina should secede from the Union. Why does he say the south should vote for secession?
5. Nancy Holt says "there is no south without slavery." What do you think she means by this?
6. Why do you think George and Cyrus decided to fight with the Memphis Battery Light Artillery unit? What did they encounter at Ft. Pillow, and why do you think this is still remembered as a shocking Civil War battle?
7. Describe Nancy Holt and Jerusalem's plot. Why do you think they decided to do what they did?
8. How would you describe Frederick Murray? What do you think motivates him?
9. How does Tom reunite with George? What does this tell us about the importance of family history?
10. How would you describe George's relationship with his son Tom? How do both characters change over time?
11. What was life like after the Civil War for freed slaves and their families?
12. Why do you think George and his family decide to leave North Carolina and go to Tennessee? What might be the possibilities for them in their new life there?
13. How did you feel at the end of this story?
14. Why do you think it is important to learn about the history of slavery?

Further Explorations:

1. **USCT/Civil War Soldiers.** In this episode viewers learn about the role of African American soldiers during the Civil War. Educator Paul LaRue has created a lesson plan about the USCT and supporting sources with background about the free black population in 1860. [Click here to view](#) this lesson plan which can be adapted for students at various grade levels
2. **Civil War 150 Interactive.** In this episode we see the outbreak of the Civil War and ensuing battles. History.com features an interactive to learn about all angles of the Civil War. Students can view this interactive to explore this time period: <http://www.history.com/civil-war-150>
3. **Reflecting on Ft. Pillow.** George and Cyrus participated in the battle at Ft. Pillow in this episode. In the aftermath of this battle, the Committee on the Conduct of War investigated the events and issued a report. Visit <http://www.nytimes.com/1864/05/06/news/fort-pillow-massacre-report-committee-conduct-war-all-previous-reports-fully.html?pagewanted=all> to read this report. Students can analyze the findings of the committee. What happened at Ft. Pillow according to this report? Summarize the findings in a one sheet or short essay.
4. **Exploring Your Roots.** Today, there are many ways to learn about your own roots. Speak with or interview an elder in your family community, explore your genealogy, trace your family history, or locate a photograph of your oldest known ancestor. You can even take a DNA test to trace your biological roots. Remember, everyone can define their roots in more than one way. If you don't know your family history or don't have access to it, interview an elder you admire or research the history of your hometown.
5. **In Search of Family.** After the Civil War, former slaves throughout the South search for family members they had been separated from, often for years. [Read an article](#) and see primary sources about enslaved families and their efforts to reunite.

Post-Viewing Questions:

1. George and Cyrus fight with Union forces during the Civil War. Why do you think so many former slaves decided to fight, even though the outcome of the war was unclear?
2. After the Civil War ended, what challenges did freed slaves face?
3. How can a better knowledge of history shape how we see ourselves, and how can this knowledge shape our future for the better?

Passage for Discussion:

In this episode of ROOTS, the Civil War ends and slaves are finally freed. Matilda responds to this news in the passage below.

"Blessed is this earth because my people lie beneath it. Blessed is the rain because it moistens their faces. Blessed is the wind that carries their names back to us. Kunta Kinte. Belle. Kizzy. Miss Malizy. Miss Sarah. My babies, Louis, Mary, and George, Jr. My daddy Benjamin Lyon. And my husband...George....I'm thankful the war is done. But don't ask me to heft my skirt and dance. I can't measure these days by flags and armies. Only by the ones I'm missing."

1. Matilda is reflecting on the memory of family members who have been lost. Why do you think these memories are so important to her?
2. Why does Matilda say she is not ready to joyfully celebrate the end of the Civil War?



Learn More

Visit History.com to learn more about *ROOTS*:

ROOTS.history.com

Learn more about the role of African American soldiers during the Civil War:

<http://www.civilwar.org/resources/the-importance-of.html>

Read about female spies during the Civil War:

<http://www.history.com/news/history-lists/secret-agents-in-hoop-skirts-women-spies-of-the-civil-war>

Read more about the Reconstruction era:

<http://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/reconstruction>

Find additional resources from the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture:

<http://nmaahc.si.edu/>

Further reading:

Blight, David. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Harvard University Press, 2002.

DuBois, W.E.B. *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*. Free Press, 1998.

Lemann, Nicholas. *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.

McPherson, James. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Williams, Heather. *Help Me To Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery*. University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

ROOTS Viewing Chart

Viewers can fill out the chart below during or after they watch an episode of *ROOTS*.
Classes or groups can use these charts to spark discussion of *ROOTS*.

Which scenes in this episode did you find most powerful?

What surprised you the most about this episode?

Which characters in this episode did you find compelling and why?

What is one thing you learned about in this episode that you would like to know more about?

What questions do you have after watching this episode?

ROOTS

