

James City



Lesson Plan

OBJECTIVE: *To understand how newly freed slaves made the move from bondage to economic independence*

Social Studies Objectives: 4.04, 4.05

Social Studies Skill Goals: 1, 2, 3, 4

NCSS Standards: I, II, III, IV

ELA Competency Objectives: 1.02, 1.03, 3.01, 3.02

Resources / Materials

- Background page on James City
- Questions concerning selection
- Copy of the Emancipation Proclamation
- Population chart (Source: University of Wisconsin's History Dept.)
- Lawrence Jacobs' *The Great Migration* (can be accessed on the web at <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/history/odonnell/w1010/edit/migration/migration.html>)

Procedure

- Review the Battle of New Bern in your social studies textbook.
- Read the *Background* page on James City and answer the questions.
- Read the *Emancipation Proclamation* (particularly the eighth paragraph) to understand the reason the Union army was besieged with slaves seeking protection. Analyze reasons that the capture of New Bern by Union troops necessitated a solution to dealing with the high number of slaves.
- Locate James City on a map of North Carolina. Draw the area; include the Trent and Neuse rivers, New Bern, James City, Havelock, Morehead City, Beaufort, Atlantic Beach, the Atlantic Ocean and the Pamlico Sound. Note how the location contributed to a 30+ percent African American population.

Bibliography

Mobley, Joe. *James City, a Black Community in North Carolina 1863-1900*. Raleigh, NC: NC Dept. of Cultural Resources, Division of Archives and History, 1981.

James City

A Place of New Beginnings



Background

James City is a bustling crossroads, located just outside of New Bern, the colonial capital of North Carolina. However, it was not always that way. James City was originally known as the Trent River settlement or Trent River camp. In the years following the Civil War, it was a predominately African American neighborhood that grew and developed from a shantytown to a community filled with pride for having overcome many obstacles. Its downfall came first from fights over land ownership and then from the Great Migration.

When Union troops captured and occupied New Bern in March 1862, slaves from surrounding areas made their way to New Bern and freedom. Within months, hundreds of freedmen sought security in New Bern. The Emancipation Proclamation, issued by President Abraham Lincoln, caused New Bern to become a place of solace for African Americans in that part of eastern North Carolina.

Thankfully, Lincoln already had set in place a policy that freed slaves who encountered Union forces. Lincoln's policy prohibited the return of any slave to his or her master. However, as more slaves entered the occupied city of New Bern, the Union army had to figure out a way to handle this growing population.

Accommodations had to be made for the freedmen, so Army Chaplain Horace James set up a camp across the Trent River. The 30 acres, which had belonged to former North Carolina Governor Richard Dobbs Spaight, gave rise to an exclusive African American community. Here, the freedmen began new lives. James, who later became superintendent of Negro affairs in federally occupied North Carolina, laid out the camp in 50-by-60 foot lots. Some 800 cabins, made of shakes or short boards 4 to 5 feet in length, initially housed the freedmen.

When the war ended in April 1865, the Trent River camp had been renamed James City in honor of Horace James, who worked tirelessly to help the freedmen make a new start. The camp had taken on the appearance of a town. Many of the residents were no longer dependent upon government assistance, for they were gainfully employed by the government or in occupations of their own. The community had grown to include a number of buildings such as a school, blacksmith shop, hospital, several churches, and headquarters for the Freedmen's Bureau.

James City began to fall on hard times as land ownership came into question and as African Americans made their way to the Midwest and North as part of the Great Migration. The Great Black Migration was fueled by several events. African Americans, who were tired of Southern white mob violence and economic discrimination, decided that the North offered a better future. Crop failures in the South were also a cause, along with a labor vacuum in the North created by decreased numbers of European immigrants (who could not travel because of World War I). The promise of a job and the recruitment of African American labor for work at wartime wages called even more African Americans northward.

The issue of land ownership, which first surfaced following Reconstruction, again called into doubt who owned the land that the freedmen had settled on a generation earlier. Lengthy court battles had not settled the conflict. Residents reluctantly looked for other places to live in case their land was returned to the pre-Civil War owners.

Today, while no longer an all African-American community, James City thrives on a history of self-sufficiency. Through the decades, the descendants of the former slaves have faced uncertainty as they sought land ownership, economic freedom and equal treatment.

James City



Activities

Activities

■ Students should write a short problem-solution paper outlining the problem caused by having to protect and provide for newly freed slaves while still battling Confederate forces. Students should recommend workable and logical solutions for handling the slave dilemma.

■ Through journal writing, students should imagine how a slave who had reached Union lines felt. The writing should also reflect on what kind of future the slave envisioned for himself or herself.

■ James City, like other areas of the South, lost many members of its community to the Great Migration. Have students research the Great Migration and present the findings to the class. Use the Jacobs' painting to aid with the discussion of this phenomenon.

■ As a math-related activity, have students show the percent increase of population from the 1890s to the 1960s (the time period affected by the Great Migration.) for the following areas of the country.

Black Population Trends

	1890s	1960s
Southern	90.3%	10%
Rural	90.0%	5%
Northern	9.7%	90%
Urban	10.0%	95%

(Data: University of Wisconsin)

After finding the percent change in population, lead the class in discussing reasons for this.

■ **NCFMP** look up the word *icon* in the dictionary. What icon would you use to represent the Great Migration on the NC Freedom Monument? Illustrate your idea.

Multiple Choice:

Identify the letter of the choice that best completes the statement or answers the question.

___ 1. Which word describes the James City Community after the Civil War?

- A. proud
- B. frightened
- C. ashamed
- D. peaceful

___ 2. What caused New Bern to become a place of solace for the African Americans in eastern North Carolina?

- A. the bustling crossroads of James City located just outside New Bern
- B. the predominately African American neighborhood
- C. the Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln
- D. the downfall from fights over land ownership

___ 3. What problem did the Union forces encounter?

- A. ways to prohibit the return of any slave to his master
- B. ways of setting Lincoln's policy in place
- C. ways to capture slaves from surrounding areas
- D. ways to figure out how to handle the growing population of African Americans

___ 4. Why was the Trent River camp renamed James City?

- A. because the camp took on the appearance of a town
- B. because the community grew to include a school and several churches
- C. because of Horace James' tireless work to help the freedmen and to honor them
- D. because accommodations had to be made for the freedmen

___ 5. According to this selection, which of the following is the best example of self-sufficiency?

- A. being dependent on the government
- B. being a resident of James City
- C. being gainfully employed
- D. being able to begin new lives

James City



Activities ■ Answer Key for Teachers

Activities

See *Activities* page; responses to first four activities will vary.

Black Population Trends

	1890s	1960s	% CHANGE
Southern	90.3%	10%	-80.3
Rural	90.0%	5%	-85.0
Northern	9.7%	90%	+89.3
Urban	10.0%	95%	+85.0

(Data: University of Wisconsin)

With the Great Migration many African Americans moved out of the South to the North, most notably Chicago, Detroit and New York where factory jobs offered a better future than scratching out a living from farming. Also, racial injustice was not as overt in the North.

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