

Media Project: Haitian Revolution  
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SED 405

## **Introduction**

The year is 1804, and the New World is functioning as it had for the past thirty years since the American Revolution. After the war, a new constitution, and three presidential administrations, America had begun to find its footing as a new nation. With this, many Americans began to get used to their existence as a small democratic nation. However, whether the American people knew it or not, their world was about to drastically change. 1,888 miles south of the US, another revolution had been fought and won on the island of Saint-Domingue. The rebels, much like the US patriots, were able to cast off the yoke of a powerful European empire and establish the second democracy in the Western Hemisphere. However, this rebellion was much different than the one that occurred back in 1776. Unlike the US driving out the British and establishing a new government, the rebels of 1804 were living under much harsher oppression. These rebels were slaves who were living on Saint-Domingue under French colonial rule. In 1791, the slaves revolted against the French starting a twelve year bloodbath that would end in the abolition of slavery on the island and the establishment of the Empire of Haiti.

The United States, though in theory should be very pleased with another democracy emerging nearby, were none too happy about this development. This mostly stemmed from the fact that the Haitian government were all freed slaves. This idea of a successful African rebellion was so foreign to the American government. The success of a slave revolt also flew in the face of the then legal practice of slavery in the United States. This caused the US to avoid recognizing Haiti as a nation until the start of the Civil War. However, despite all of this, the US was greatly affected by the Haitian Revolution as well as their early interactions with the new nation. First, the Louisiana Purchase, which was caused due to the French needing money after the war's economic devastation on the nation. This exchange doubled the US' size and allowed it to begin

expanding as a nation, taking its first steps to becoming a world power. But even beyond the Louisiana Purchase, the Haitian Revolution and its aftermath still affected the US greatly in terms of trade, foreign policy, and thoughts on how to deal with the issue of slavery.

Sadly the Haitian Revolution as well as its profound impact on the United States is often not talked about when discussing how America became what it is today. It is very important that these effects be discussed and understood by a broader audience. There is a lack of awareness in terms of the connections between the Haitian Revolution and the growth of America. This proposal aims to answer the question of just how the Haitian Revolution impacted the United States in its immediate aftermath. Ultimately, through qualitative research this paper attempts to explain that the Haitian Revolution affected the United States in a way that caused it to grow into a far more powerful nation.

Teaching this event is an undertaking, as there are many ins and outs in regards to this revolution. Educating students based on the historiographic data found in this paper can actually prove to be a superior style as opposed to an ordinary lesson. With the information gleaned from the historians that are cited in this essay, students can achieve a much deeper understanding of the Haitian Revolution as well as its impact that it had on the United States.

## Primary Documents

- 1) “Antislavery Agitation: Abbé Raynal, Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies (1770),” *LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY: EXPLORING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION*, accessed December 13, 2022, <https://revolution.chnm.org/d/278>.
- 2) Garran De Coulon, Jean-Philippe, Marguerite-Élie Guadet, and France. Assemblée Nationale Législative. *An Inquiry into the Causes of the Insurrection of the Negroes in the Island of St. Domingo : To Which Are Added, Observations of M. Garran-Coulon on the Same Subject, Read in His Absence by M. Guadet, before the National Assembly, 29th Feb. 1792*. Philadelphia: J. Crukshank, 1792. <https://archive.org/details/aninquiryintoca00frangoog/page/n1/mode/2up>
- 3) Napoleon’s letter to Toussaint Louverture. c. 1801. *The Louverture Project*. Retrieved from <https://thelouvertureproject.org> 14 May 2011. [https://thelouvertureproject.org/index.php?title=Napol%C3%A9on\\_letter\\_to\\_Toussaint\\_Louverture\\_\(1801\)](https://thelouvertureproject.org/index.php?title=Napol%C3%A9on_letter_to_Toussaint_Louverture_(1801))
- 4) Thomas Jefferson to Marquis de Lafayette, June 16, 1792. (GLC08063p1) <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/jefferson-french-and-haitian-revolutions-1792>
- 5) Document – Speeches and Letters of Toussaint L’Ouverture on the Haitian Revolution (1793–1800). <https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/von-sivers-3e-dashboard-resources/document-speeches-and-letters-of-toussaint-louverture-on-the-haitian-revolution-1793-1800>

## Guided Questions

- 1) What other nations did the Haitian Revolution effect and how did it affect those nations?
- 2) How did Haiti's successful rebellion inspire other enslaved communities?
- 3) Why would the United States ignore a place like Haiti even though they have a similar backstory as independent nations? Even though they are similar in some ways, how are they different?

## Lesson Plan

Big Idea	The Haitian Revolution profoundly affected the world at the time of its occurrence. It was the first major successful slave revolt in the Americas and the second republic founded in the Americas as well. It was also very impactful for the United States as it made the nation face its own slave issue. Lastly it actually indirectly helped build the US up into a stronger nation through the Louisiana Purchase.
Standards	6.1.12.HistoryUP.3.b: Examine a variety of sources from multiple perspectives on slavery and evaluate the claims used to justify the arguments.
Why does this matter?	The Haitian Revolution helped build the US into a world power that it potentially never would have become if it were not for its indirect role in the Louisiana Purchase. Its successful rebellion also helped the US look at its own slave problem.
Hook	What other nations did the Haitian Revolution effect and how did it affect those nations?
Materials	Laptop. Poster paper. Pen/pencil.
Activity	Create a poster that details the actual causes of the Haitian Revolution. Then on the other side of the poster detail a list of effects that came from the revolution. Make sure to write in clear detail but there is no need to write more than a few words for each point. Lastly, include a catchy headline that has to do with the revolution or its effects; try to design the poster like it's a newspaper's front page.
Assessment	The students will answer an eight question exit ticket based on the lesson. This will gage their general understanding of the events and effects of the Haitian Revolution.

## DBQ

Using the provided letter written by Napoleon Bonaparte, please answer the following questions based on the document.

### [Napoleon Letter](#)

- 1) Who was Napoleon writing to and what was the letter about?
- 2) When was this document written? What is the context of the situation at hand?
- 3) What does Napoleon say about the Haitian constitution?
- 4) What does Napoleon threaten to do to Toussaint's children?
- 5) What is Haiti referred to as in this document?
- 6) How do you think Toussaint would have responded to Napoleon's letter?
- 7) Based on when this letter was written, do you feel like Napoleon was desperate or was he just being civil with his Haitian adversary?
- 8) What does this letter say about how Napoleon viewed the people of Haiti?

## Bibliography

1. Barcia, Manuel. "Comment: From Revolution to Recognition: Haiti's Place in the Post-1804 Atlantic World." *American Historical Review* 125, no. 3 (June 2020): 899–905. doi:10.1093/ahr/rhaa240.
  - This piece shows the history of Haiti and its relationship with the rest of the World following the revolution. This source not only discusses Haiti's early years as a nation, but it also shows the levels of recognition it received from other nations. One nation in particular was the United States, the main focus of this essay. This source is able to reveal the US's reaction and fears about the new nation and the implications of its legitimacy.
2. Baur, John E. "International Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution." *The Americas* 26, no. 4 (1970): 394–418. <https://doi.org/10.2307/980183>.
  - This piece is very useful for a few reasons, mainly due to its coverage of the effect the revolution had on the global community. The changes other nations made in reaction to the success of Haiti's liberation are discussed and explained. The piece shows a major component of the essay's main goal, that is to examine the effect the revolution had on other nations, specifically the United States.
3. Blackburn, Robin. "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 4 (2006): 643–74. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4491574>.
  - This piece discusses the political implications of the revolution. In this work, the authors go through the history of the politics that were at play before, during and after the Haitian Revolution. This helps explain why the United States had a bizarre relationship with Haiti, as though the new nation's victory over France actually helped the US, it also promoted the idea that slavery could be defeated. This created a lot of confusion and anger that was directed towards Haiti, which ultimately resulted in the US refusing to acknowledge the island nation's legitimacy as a country.
4. Girard, Philippe. "Making Freedom Work: The Long Transition from Slavery to Freedom during the Haitian Revolution." *Slavery & Abolition* 40, no. 1 (March 2019): 87–108. doi:10.1080/0144039X.2018.1452683.
  - This piece helps showcase how slavery was not completely defeated after the Haitian Revolution. Though the victory over the French resulted in a free black nation, the authors of this piece highlight how freedom was not obtained overnight. Even after the revolution, the Haitian people were still treated poorly and the nation as a whole was villainized by larger powers such as the US. Using terms like "barbarism" and "savagery" the US helped create an image of Haiti (and by extension black people) that completely overshadowed their success in obtaining freedom. The piece helps showcase how the US was not willing to allow the idea of black people being capable members of society to



become legitimized, and how this affected freedom to be truly obtained long after the Haitian Revolution.

5. Kachun, Mitch. "Antebellum African Americans, Public Commemoration, and the Haitian Revolution: A Problem of Historical Mythmaking." *Journal of the Early Republic* 26, no. 2 (2006): 249–73. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30043409>.
  - This piece discusses the myths surrounding the rebellion and how the event became skewed in the western culture. The antebellum appreciation for the rebellion, only a few decades after its end is also covered. This helps show how southerners, specifically slaves, saw the Haitian Revolution and how the event began to help shine light onto the many fallacies in the notion that Blacks were inferior to their white counterparts.
6. Matthewson, Tim. "Abraham Bishop, 'The Rights of Black Men,' and the American Reaction to the Haitian Revolution." *The Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 2 (1982): 148–54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2717572>.
  - This piece is a showing of the reaction Americans had to the Haitian Revolution. It shows how controversial the event was in the early US culture but also discusses how the people began to consider how much value African Americans have. The legitimacy of Black people and their abilities began to be examined by some who saw the success of the rebellion and establishment of the new Haitian government.
7. Matthewson, Timothy M. "George Washington's Policy Toward the Haitian Revolution." *Diplomatic History* 3, no. 3 (1979): 321–36. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24910116>.
  - This piece is a fascinating insight into the first US president and his handling of the early Haitian Revolution. This provides a look into how the revolution was seen by the early leaders of the US before the conflict even ended. The policies of Washington are explained and through these acts one can detect the mindsets of the American leaders towards the revolution. The issue of slavery in early American society is touched on as well and helps lend to the issue of a free Haiti sparking more division among Americans in regards to slavery.
8. Peck-Bartle, Shannon Marie. "Toussaint L'Ouver-Who? An Anthropological Approach to Infusing the African Diaspora into Caribbean History." *Social Studies* 111, no. 3 (January 1, 2020): 155–62. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.rider.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ1246807&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
  - This piece helps examine the issues that most historians have had while writing about the Haitian Revolution. The main issue being a Eurocentric viewpoint of the conflict. This piece helps challenge this mentality and also attempts to provide readers with a new view of the Haitian Revolution. This view comes from the Haitian's perspective and shows the difference in viewpoints between the enslaved and those doing the enslaving.
9. Reinhardt, Thomas. "200 Years of Forgetting: Hushing up the Haitian Revolution." *Journal of Black Studies* 35, no. 4 (2005): 246–61. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40027220>.
  - This piece is extremely useful in understanding the many reasons for the lack of attention the Haitian Revolution receives. This piece uses the history of post-Haitian independence and explains the effects this event had on the Western world. But furthermore, Reinhardt explains how these effects were largely ignored by western historians for years and

years. The idea of the revolution shattering the Eurocentric idea that only white people could accomplish something of significance is explored.

10. Thomson, Jim. "The Haitian Revolution and the Forging of America." *History Teacher* 34, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 76–94. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.rider.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=EJ649663&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

- This source serves mostly as a historical account of the events of the Haitian Revolution. The piece is useful in simply explaining the conflict and why it was so important and significant. This covers the effect this war had on France as well as the United States, who because of the revolution gained the Louisiana Purchase. This source mainly covers the positive effects the revolution had on the US and how ultimately it was instrumental in the growth of the US from a small country to a powerful nation in the early 1800s.