

Emilie Davies Lesson

Common Core Standards

RH.9-10.9 Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussion with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Ask Yourself (What makes the lesson interesting and engaging for students?)

- This lesson introduces the setting of Philadelphia during the Civil War from the perspective of a free middle-class Black woman. For this lesson, students will make predictions and consider where a vibrant Black community lived in Philadelphia. Through Emilie Davies we can learn about what lesser-known Black (everyday) people did to support abolition, how they experienced Black activists, and the significance of Philadelphia historic sites.

Engagement Hook (How will students be introduced to the lesson? Prediction? Debate question? Image analysis?)

- Option 1: Think Write Share: Do you keep a journal? If so, which of these do you write about the most? Why?
 - a. weather
 - b. your job
 - c. your beliefs
 - d. your social life
 - e. your family
 - f. local/national news
 - g. something else
- If you do not keep a journal, which one do you think people write about the most? Why?

Approx. Time

- 60 minutes

Learning Target

- Describe Emilie Davis's role and opinions concerning abolition.
- Describe the everyday experience of Emilie Davis during the Civil War.

Big Questions

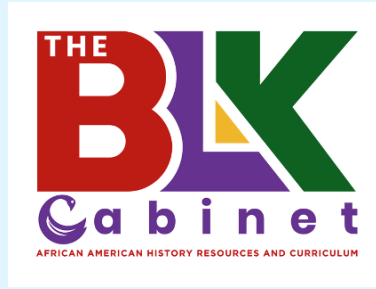
- How did Emilie Davis's Black agency help support the abolitionist movement?

Materials

- Google Slide Deck
- Documents for Station 1: Abolition (below)
- Documents for Station 2: Black Military Service (below)
- Documents for Station 3: Social Life (below)



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- Option 2: Think Write Share: What do you think life was like in Philadelphia in 1862 for Black women during the Civil War?
- Additional Suggestions:
 - If necessary, remind students that Philadelphia was a free Black community.
 - Notice trends of either option above so they can be returned to for comparison at the end of class.

Topic Introduction

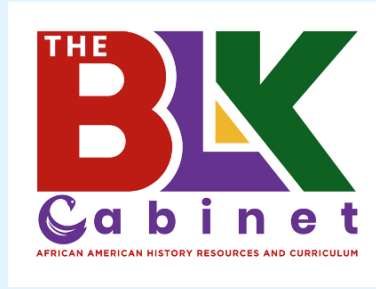
- What general historical context can be provided so that students have the necessary knowledge to effectively engage in content?

Map Analysis: Have students digitally access or print out a map of Philly's 7th Ward (Option 1, or best determined by teacher). Ask the following map comprehension questions:

- a. What are some specific locations that Emilie Davis likely engaged with or attended?
- b. What do you think she did at these locations?
- c. Who did she likely talk to?

Mini-lecture:

1. Go over the definition of “Black agency” (any effort to promote Black liberation and individual power).
2. Provide the background information for Emilie Davis.
 - Free Black woman in Philadelphia, 22 years old in 1861
 - Daughter with siblings (at least two brothers)
 - Lived in Philly's 7th Ward
 - She attended the Institute of Colored Youth or the Lombard School
 - Went to 7th St. Presbyterian Church
3. Explain to students that they will understand her Black agency during the Civil War through three lenses:
 - a. Abolition: how she supported the abolitionist movement
 - b. Black military service: her thoughts regarding Black people serving in the Civil War based on her own family members
 - c. Her social life: where she went, for example, churches, concerts, and more



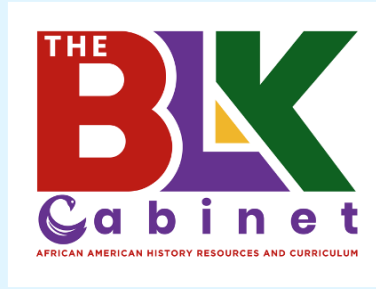
Sankofa Deep Dive (What path are the students taking to meet the objective?)

Explain to students that they will be participating in a station activity. At each station they are to:

1. **First read the diary entries** related to the station topic and answer the following questions (these will remain the same for each station):
 - a. What do we learn about Emilie Davis's life in the diary entries?
 - b. What do we learn about life in Philadelphia more generally?
 - c. What questions do you have?
2. **Read and engage in the primary sources** related to each station topic and answer the provided questions:
 - Station 1: Emilie Davis and Abolition
 - Source 2 - What does the Frederick Douglass poster reveal about the use of social media during this time?
 - Source 2 - Who else was involved in organizing the speech?
 - Source 3 - What does Douglass argue the Civil War is about besides the ending of slavery?
 - Source 3 - What does Douglass mean by "abolition war"?
 - Source 3 - What does Douglass say about the Constitution?
 - Because Emilie Davis attended lectures like this one by Douglass, how do you think hearing similar words impacted her beliefs and actions?
 - What else do you think Emilie encountered regularly in her life based on these documents?
 - Station 2: Emilie Davis and Black Military Experience
 - Source 4 - What evidence is there that Emilie is concerned about Black people's service in the Civil War?
 - Source 4 - What evidence is there that Emilie celebrates the Civil War's progress?
 - Source 5 - What does Harper say about the relationship between colorblindness and privilege?
 - Source 5 - What racist experiences in Philadelphia does Harper point out?
 - Source 5 - How does Harper use Black men's service in the Civil War to challenge the Dred Scott decision?
 - Source 5 - Harper uses Harriet Tubman to point out what historical and cultural significance?
 - Source 5 - Who do you think was Harper's intended audience for this speech?
 - Because Emilie Davis was familiar with Harper's beliefs and activism, how do you think speeches like this impacted her own emotions and beliefs?
 - What other issues do you think came up for Black people considering service in the Civil War?



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- Station 3: Emilie Davis and Social/Religious Life
 - Source 6 - What are some things Emilie did for fun?
 - Source 7 - What else do we learn about the Black Swan's biography from a statement made in 1852 Philadelphia?
 - Source 8 - What question does Gibbs ask regarding White people and the Proclamation?
 - Source 8 - What does Gibbs say about the covenant?
 - Source 8 - What does Gibbs say about Black people's military service in the Civil War?
 - Based on these documents, what was Emilie Davis likely talking about when she was out socializing?
- Teachers can choose for a few students to present their gained station knowledge to other students or for students to rotate stations.

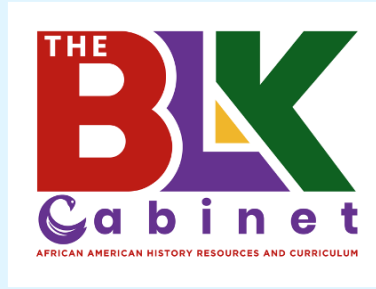
Hook Return

Finish the station activity with a whole-class discussion including any of the following questions:

- For those of you who keep a journal, what surprises you about Emilie's diary entries? Any significant similarities or differences?
- How do these documents combined and when put in comparison help us better understand Black life in Philadelphia during the Civil War?
- Say, "I want you to think about Emilie as an audience member. She was in the audience for Douglass, Harper, the Black Swan, and Gibbs. How did these experiences shape her Black agency?"
- What other documents would you like to read or have access to about Emilie's life? Why?
- How did Emilie support Black people's abolition as a whole?
- How did Black people's beliefs in abolition likely differ from those of White people?
- What are some overall contradictions revealed in these primary sources about Black people's idea of the country and democracy versus those of White people?
- Why is it important that we also learn from regular Black folk and not just Black icons?



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Exit Ticket/Assessment (How will you assess student understanding of the objective?)

- Option 1: How did Emilie Davis support the abolitionist movement? In your response, cite evidence from a primary source.
- Option 2: What was Emilie Davis's life like in Philadelphia during the Civil War? In your response, cite evidence from a primary source.

**Optional for increased rigor:* Students must also include an excerpt from Emilie Davis's diary.

Homework/Lesson Extension Ideas

- Have students return to each primary-source speech as an audience member. Come up with a social media post as if you were in the audience hearing Douglass, Harper, or Gibbs speak. What would your post be about?
- Students read and research other parts of Emilie Davis's diary.
- Students create their own Philly 7th Ward map documenting Emilie's experiences.
- Student research other Black abolitionist primary sources in Philadelphia.
- Students research their own local Black histories.
- Who is an everyday Black person you know trying to improve Black people's lives? What are they doing for activism? Provide a written summary or presentation.

Additional Resources

- Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield: Pioneering Singer and "Black Swan"
- [Black Folk: The Roots of a Black Working Class by Blair LM Kelley](#)
- [1838 Metropolis](#)
- [PBS "Africans in America: Philadelphia"](#)
- [Philadelphia's "Black Shining Prince"](#)

Documents for Station 1: Abolition

Source Collection 1: Excerpt from Emilie Davis's diaries

- last evening Vincent looked perfectly [...] we went in [Fred Douglass lectures](#) to night meeting at Stills” - Tues., Mar. 17, 1863
- “[[Fred](#)] [Douglass](#) lectured last night at national hall” - Apr. 25, 1863
- “i finished [my bonnet](#)” - Nov. 8, 1863
- “in the evening we went to hear [Fred Douglass](#)” - Dec. 4, 1863
- “I have bin trying to collect money for the [organ](#)” - Dec. 10, 1863
- “we went to hear Fredrick [Douglass](#) very interesting” - Feb. 16, 1865

Source 2: [Poster announcing a lecture](#) by Frederick Douglass in National Hall, Philadelphia, 1863

Source 3: [“Our Work Is Not Done,”](#) speech delivered at the annual meeting of the American Proceedings of the American Anti-Slavery Society at Its Third Decade, Held in the City of Philadelphia, December 3, 4, 1863

Ladies and Gentlemen: I well remember the first time I ever listened to the voice of the honored President of this association, and I have some recollection of the feelings of hope inspired by his utterances at that time. Under the inspiration of those hopes, I looked forward to the abolition of slavery as a certain event in the course of a very few years. ... But I was mistaken. I had not been five years pelted by the mob, insulted by the crowds, shunned by the Church, denounced by the ministry, ridiculed by the press, before I became convinced that I might perhaps live, struggle, and die, and go down to my grave, and the slaves of the South yet remain in their chains.

We live to see a better hope to-night. I participate in the profound thanksgiving expressed by all, that we do live to see this better day. I am one of those who believe that it is the mission of this war to free every slave in the United States. I am one of those who believe that we should consent to no peace which shall not be an Abolition peace. I am, moreover, one of those who believe that the work of the American Anti-Slavery Society will not have been completed until the black men of the South, and the black men of the North, shall have been admitted, fully into the body politic of America... This Society was organized, for two distinct objects; one was the emancipation of the slave, and the other the elevation of the colored people.

I hold that it is an Abolition war, because slavery has proved itself stronger than the Constitution; it has proved itself stronger than the Union; and has forced upon us the necessity of putting down slavery in order to save the Union, and in order to save the Constitution. ... I look at this as an Abolition war instead of being a Union war, because I see that the lesser is included in the greater, and that you cannot have the lesser until you have the greater...

I have said that our Work will not be done until the colored man is admitted a full member in good and regular standing in the American body politic. . . . I know it will be said that I ask you to make the black man a voter in the South. . . . It is said that the colored man is ignorant, and therefore he shall not vote. In saying this, you lay down a rule for the black man that you apply to no other class of your citizens. I will hear nothing of degradation against the black man. . . . I am about as big a Negro as you will find anywhere about town; All I ask, however, in regard to the blacks, is that whatever rule you adopt, whether of intelligence or wealth, as the condition of voting, you shall apply it equally to the black man.

We are not to be saved by Abraham Lincoln, but by that power behind the throne, greater than the throne itself. . . . Men talk about saving the Union, and restoring the Union as it was. They delude themselves with the miserable idea that that old Union can be brought to life again. . . . It is dead, and you cannot put life in it. . . . What business, then, have we to fight for the old Union? We are not fighting for it. We are fighting for something incomparably better than the old Union. We are fighting for unity; in which there shall be no North, no South, no East, no West, no black, no white, but a solidarity of the nation, making every slave free, and every free man a voter.

Documents for Station 2: Black Military Service

Source Collection 4: Excerpt from Emilie Davis's diaries

- “the boyes had bin sent back i feel glad and sorry” - June 18, 1863
- “[feel so worried about Father“ - June 23, 1863
- “The boyes have all volenteerd” - July 1, 1863
- “i had the pleasure of seeing some rebels” - July 25, 1865
- “to day is the eventful day they begin to Draft in the seventh ward Alfred and EJ are both drafted Mary is quite worried i hope he will not have to go” - July 31, 1863
- “this is a busy day the fair comences today i have bin working hard all the afternoon at the fair in the evening” - Feb. 10, 1864
- “i went to the lecture very interesting” - Feb. 27, 1865
- “i went down to Ellens to rejoyce over the good newes Richmond has fallen.” - April 3, 1865
- “today is the day we Celebrate the soldiers Parrade a flag was presented to the reggiment...it every body seemed to have a holiday” - April 14, 1865
- “very sad newes was received this morning of the murder of the President the city is in deep mourning” - April 15, 1865
- “Jenie and i went up Chesnut St to see the colored soldiers they went away” - May 15, 1865

Source 5: Excerpt from “We Are All Bound Up Together” by France Ellen Watkins Harper, speech on May 1, 1866, New York City, New York, at the Eleventh National Women’s Rights Convention

We are all bound up together in one great bundle of humanity, and society cannot trample on the weakest and feeblest of its members without receiving the curse in its own soul. You tried that in the case of the negro. . . . This grand and glorious revolution which has commenced, will fail to reach its climax of success, until throughout the length and brea[d]th of the American Republic, the nation shall be so color-blind, as to know no man by the color of his skin or the curl of his hair. It will then have no privileged class, trampling upon outraging the unprivileged classes, but will be then one great privileged nation, whose privilege will be to produce the loftiest manhood and womanhood that humanity can attain.

I do not believe that giving the woman the ballot is immediately going to cure all the ills of life. I do not believe that white women are dew-drops just exhaled from the skies. I think that like men they may be divided into three classes, the good, the bad, and the indifferent. The good would vote according to their convictions and principles; the bad, as dictated by preju[d]ice or malice; and the indifferent will vote on the strongest side of the question, with the winning party.

You white women speak here of rights. I speak of wrongs. I, as a colored woman, have had in this country an education which has made me feel as if I were in the situation of Ishmael, my hand against every man, and every man’s hand against me. Let me go to-morrow morning and take my seat in one of your street cars — I do not know that they will do it in New York, but they will in Philadelphia — and the conductor will put up his hand and stop the car rather than let me ride. . . .

In advocating the cause of the colored man, since the Dred Scott decision, I have sometimes said I thought the nation had touched bottom. But let me tell you there is a depth of infamy lower than that. It is when the nation, standing upon the threshold of a great peril, reached out its hands to a feebler race, and asked that race to help it, and when the peril was over, said, You are good enough for soldiers, but not good enough for citizens. When Judge Taney said that he men of my race had no rights which the white man was bound to respect, he had not seen the bones of the black man bleaching outside of Richmond. He had not seen the thinned ranks and the thickened graves of the Louisiana Second, a regiment which went into battle nine hundred strong, and came out with three hundred. . . .

We have a woman in our country who has received the name of “Moses,” not by lying about it, but by acting out (applause)—a woman who has gone down into the Egypt of slavery and brought out hundreds of our people into liberty. The last time I saw that woman, her hands were swollen. That woman who had led one of Montgomery’s most successful expeditions, who was brave enough and secretive enough to act as a scout for the American army, had her hands all swollen from a conflict with a brutal conductor, who undertook to eject her from her place. That woman, whose courage and bravery won a recognition from our army and from every black man in the land, is excluded from every thoroughfare of travel. Talk of giving women the ballot-box? Go on. It is a normal school, and the white women of this country need it. While there exists this brutal

element in society which tramples upon the feeble and treads down the weak, I tell you that if there is any class of people who need to be lifted out of their airy nothings and selfishness, it is the white women of America.

Documents for Station 3: Social Life

Source Collection 6: Excerpt from Emilie Davis's diaries

- "To day has bin a memorable day and i thank god i have bin sperd to see it the day was religiously observed all the churches were open we had quite a jubilee in the evenin i went to Jones to a Party had a very pleasant time" - Jan. 1, 1863
- "have bin busy all day mr harris is in town harriet Theodore and I went down to the Falls for ice cream" - Aug. 27, 1863
- "very dull all day great many out in the afternoon mr gibbs Preached a sermon concerning the several death wich has occured in our church during the past month" - Feb. 8, 1864
- "we went our bonnets in the evening we all went to the School exersise at concert hall it was grand" - May 6, 1864
- "this evening a Miss Greenfeilds concert comes off to night" - May 11, 1864
- "I went to town with mrs wister to see the great Fair" - June 25, 1864
- "i went to hear blind Tom i was much Pleased with the preformance excepting we had to sit up stairs wich made me furious." - Sept. 14, 1865
- "Part of the evening with me we went to watch meeting" - Dec. 31, 1865

Source 7: Excerpt from Biological Sketch of Miss Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield

We had the pleasure of listening to this celebrated cantatrice last evening, at Neil's New Hall. We have only three things to say of her performance. The first is, that she was honoured with a crowded house, composed of the most intelligent and enlightened of our citizens: second, that all who heard her were exceedingly well pleased with all her efforts; and third, that notwithstanding it is not claimed, either by herself or friends, that she is an artistic singer, yet the compass of her voice has rarely been equalled, and the sweetness of her notes seemed to enchant every auditor. - Philadelphia, March 16th, 1852

Source 8: "Freedom's Joyful Day" by Jonathon C. Gibbs, Jan. 1, 1863

THE MORNING DAWNS! The long night of sorrow and gloom is past, early born of day, shows the first faint flush of her coming glory, low down on the distant horizon of Freedom's joyful day. ... O sacred rights of every human soul! O source of knowledge, of justice, of civilization, of Christianity, of strength, of power, bless us with the inspiration of thy presence. ... The Proclamation has gone forth, and God is saying to this nation by its legitimate constitute head, Man must be free. ...

The people must support this Proclamation, heartily, earnestly, strengthening the hands of our government by all the energies and resources they possess, or in a short time the question will not be whether black men are to be slaves, but whether white men are to be free! You had better a thousand times let us into the full light of liberty with yourselves, than that yourselves come into a condition equal to that of the slave at the South. We pray you this day, be just to yourselves, and then to us you must be true.

The black people of this country are thoroughly loyal. We are above disloyalty to the government. You may suspect a Garrisonian Abolitionist, but you cannot possibly suspect us. All our hopes and interests lie in the success of our government. ... Let this strife be so decided that justice, truth, honor may not be put to shame. You, my country, entered into a solemn covenant with God in 1776 and declared before highest Heaven that your first and only purpose was to foster and cherish the equality and fraternity of man. How have you kept this covenant? Let Dred Scott decisions, fugitive-slave laws, the judicial murders of Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, John Brown, Gabriel and numerous others testify.

Many persons are asking, Will black men fight? That is not what they mean. The question they are asking is simply this: Have white men of the North the same moral courage, the pluck, the grit, to lay down their foolish prejudice against the colored man and place him in a position where he can bear his full share of the dangers of this war? That is the question that all such persons are asking, and no other. We, the colored men of the North, put the laboring oar in your hands; it is for white men to show that they are equal to the demands of these times, by putting away their stupid prejudices. We are not children, but men, and are in earnest about the matter. There is not a battlefield throughout the country, from the days of '76 until now, but what our bones lie bleaching with yours. I know whereof I affirm, and I challenge contradiction. In the very first resistance that was made to British aggression in the Revolution of '76 was a black man, Crispus Attucks, who led the attack and was some of the first slain. ... Your destiny as white men and ours as black men are one and the same; we are all marching on to the same goal. If you rise, we will rise in the scale of being. If you fall, we will fall; but you will have the worst of it.

Finally, let us offer the homage of grateful hearts to the friends of liberty and human progress the world over, for the hopes and prospects now before us, confidently predicting that the future will show that no efforts made in behalf of this country were in vain. The sum of human happiness in this country will be increased, and God honored by the utter destruction of the hideous system of American slavery.