

SLAVE NARRATIVES

Performance Standard 16A.F

Construct a timeline of the significant life events of a slave during the 1700's accordingly:

- *Knowledge*: Identify and describe significant events in the life of a slave.
- *Reasoning*: Distinguish between significant and insignificant details in an historical source; arrange significant events in chronological order.
- *Communication*: Create a timeline that is well-organized and well-detailed; express all ideas in a way that provides evidence of knowledge and reasoning processes.

Procedures

1. ***In order to understand historical analysis and interpretation (16A)***, students should experience sufficient learning opportunities to develop the following skills:
 - Distinguish between the important and insignificant details contained in an historical source.
 - Create and use information from timelines of historical events.Note: Have students complete a unit on slavery in the United States. Students should have experience/practice using timelines.
2. Have students review and discuss the assessment task and how the rubric will be used to evaluate their work.
3. Provide each student with a copy of *The Narrative of Venture Smith*, a slave narrative published in 1798. Have students read the selection in class and create a list of at least fifteen major events (and dates) associated with this former slave's life. Students should be made aware that some of these events will be linked with exact dates and some will not. They should assume that these events happened in the order in which they are presented in the narrative, unless otherwise stated in the narrative.
4. Ask each student to create a "Timeline of Significant Life Events" using his/her list of major events as follows:
 - Include at least fifteen events.
 - Display timeline on 11x17 poster paper, using a straight edge and pencil.
 - Make the print on the poster large enough for others to read.
 - Illustrate as many events as possible. Illustrations may be hand-drawn, computer-generated, photo-copied, cut from magazines, or otherwise produced.
 - Write on the notecard the title of the project and complete the following statements: "Three important things I learned concerning this man's life are ___" and "It is important to study the stories of individual lives in history because ___." Attach the notecard to the corner of the timeline (or include on poster).
5. (Optional) Have each student give a 3 - 5 minute presentation using the timeline as a visual aid.
6. Evaluate each student's work using the Social Science Rubric as follows and add the scores to determine the performance level:
 - *Knowledge*: Fifteen or more events in the life of Venture Smith were identified.
 - *Reasoning*: The events identified were significant and placed in the correct chronological order; the explanations of what was learned and why it is important to study stories of individuals in history were thorough and appropriate.
 - *Communication*: The timeline and notecard were well-organized, and well-detailed; the knowledge and reasoning were completely and effectively communicated.

Examples of Student Work follow

Time Requirements

- Three to five class periods

Resources

- "Slave Narratives" handout - *The Narrative of Venture Smith*
- Poster paper
- 5x7 notecards
- Markers, rulers, pencils, colored pencils
- Copies of the narrative
- Social Science Rubric

The Narrative of Venture Smith

Captured by an enemy tribe in Africa, then sold into slavery in America, one man managed to beat the odds.

In 1798, former slave Venture Smith published the story of his life, *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, A Native of Africa*, from which the following is excerpted.

I was born in Dukandarra, in Guinea, about the year 1729. My father's name was Saungum Furro, Prince of the tribe of Dukandarra. My father had three wives. Polygamy was not uncommon in that country, especially among the rich, as every man was allowed to keep as many wives as he could maintain.

I descended from a very tall and stout race of beings, much larger than the generality of people in other parts of the globe.

The first thing I remember was a contention between my father and mother, on account of my father marrying his third wife without the consent of his first wife, which was contrary to custom. In consequence, my mother left her husband and country, and traveled away with her three children. I was then five years old.

After five days' travel we came to the end of the desert, and immediately entered a beautiful and extensive country. Here my mother left me at the house of a very rich farmer.

I must inform my reader what I remember concerning this place. A large river runs through this country. The land on each side is flat and level. It scarce ever rains there, yet the land is fertile; great dews fall in the night which refresh the soil. The vegetation is exceeding rapid. The principal occupations of the inhabitants there were the cultivation of the soil and the care of their flocks. They appeared to be very kind and friendly.

[After a year,] my father sent a man and horse after me.

A FIGHT TO THE FINISH

Venture returned to his father's tribe. Six months later, they were attacked by an enemy tribe "instigated by some white nation."

My father discovered the [invaders] and immediately began to discharge arrows at them. This alarmed both me and the women, who, being unable to make any resistance, betook ourselves to the tall, thick reeds not far off, and left the old king to fight alone. For some time I beheld him defending himself with great courage and firmness, till at last he was obliged to surrender.

My father was closely interrogated respecting his money. But as he gave them no account of it, he was instantly cut and pounded on his body. All this availed not in the least to make him give up his money, but the continued torment obliged him to sink and expire. He thus died without informing his enemies where his money lay. The shocking scene is to this day fresh in my memory.

After destroying the old prince, [the enemy] decamped and marched towards the sea lying to the west, taking with them myself and the women prisoners.

All the march I had very hard tasks imposed on me. I was obliged to carry on my head a large flat stone used for grinding our corn, weighing as much as 25 pounds; besides victuals, mat, and cooking utensils. Though I was pretty large and stout [for] my age, yet these burdens were very grievous to me, being only six and a half old.

We were then come to a place called in Africa, Anamaboo. The enemies' provisions were then almost spent, as well as their strength. [Knowing this] the inhabitants attacked them, and took [their] prisoners, flocks, and all their effects.

I was then taken a second time. I and other prisoners were put on board a canoe and rowed away to a vessel belonging to Rhode Island. I was bought on board by one Robert Mumford, a steward of said vessel, for four gallons of rum and a piece of calico, and called Venture on account of his having purchased me with his own private venture.

After an ordinary passage, except great mortality by the small pox, which broke out on board, we arrived at the island of Barbados, but when we reached it, there were found out of the 260 that sailed from Africa, not more than 200 alive.

Smith was then sold to a Mr. Mumford, who lived in New York.

The first of the time of living at my master's place, I was pretty much employed in the house, carding wool and other household business. In this situation I continued for some years, after which my master put me to work out of doors. My behavior had as yet been submissive and obedient. I then began to have hard tasks imposed on me. Some of these were to pound four bushels of ears of corn every night for the poultry, or be rigorously punished. At other seasons of the year, I had to card wool until a very late hour. These tasks I had to perform when only about nine years old.

After I lived with my master 13 years, being then about 22 years old, I married Meg, a slave of his who was about my age.

STRIKING BACK

Smith then tried to run away, and his master sold him.

I was sold to a Thomas Stanton, and had to be separated from my wife and one daughter, who was about one month old. About a year and half after that time, my master purchased my wife and her child.

Towards the close of the time I resided with this master, I had a falling out with my mistress. This happened one time when my master was gone [hunting]. At first the quarrel began between my wife and her mistress. Hearing a racket in the house, I [ran inside and] found my mistress in a violent passion with my wife. I requested my wife to beg pardon of her mistress. But whilst I was thus saying, my mistress took down her horse whip, and while she was glutting her fury with it, I reached out my great black hand, and committed the whip to the fire.

When my master returned, his wife told him of the affair, but he seemed to take no notice of it. [A few days later], as I was putting on a log in the fireplace, I received a most violent stroke on the crown of my head with a club two feet long and as large as a chair post.

I snatched the club out of his hands and took it to a justice of the peace. He advised me to return to my master. I consented. The justice [also took] this opportunity to caution my master. [Then my master, his brother, and I] set out for home. When [we came] to a by-place, they fell to beating me with great violence. I became enraged and immediately turned them both under me, laid one of them across the other, and stamped them both with my feet.

A short time after this, I was taken by a constable and two men. They carried me to a blacksmith's shop and had me handcuffed.

UP FROM SLAVERY

Venture was then sold to a Mr. Milner, then to a Colonel Smith. The colonel agreed that Venture could buy himself out of slavery. Venture spent the next four years hiring himself out to fish, farm, and split wood, all the while paying his master about ¼ of his wages for the privilege of working.

Being 36 years old, I left Colonel Smith. My wife and children were yet in bondage. I spent [my next four years on Long Island,] working for various people. In [these] years, what wood I cut amounted to several thousand cords, and the money which I earned I laid up carefully. I bought nothing which I did not absolutely want. Expensive gatherings of my mates I shunned, and all kinds of luxuries I was a stranger to.

Being after this labor 40 years of age, I purchased Soloman and Cuff, two sons of mine, for 200 dollars each. After this I purchased a Negro man, for no other reason than to oblige him, and gave for him 60 pounds. But in a short time he ran away from me, and I thereby lost all that I gave for him. The rest of my money I laid out in land and a house thereon.

In my forty-fourth year, I purchased my wife Meg. Various methods I pursued in order to enable me to redeem [the rest of] my family. In the night time I fished with nets and pots for eels and lobsters, and shortly after went on a whaling voyage.

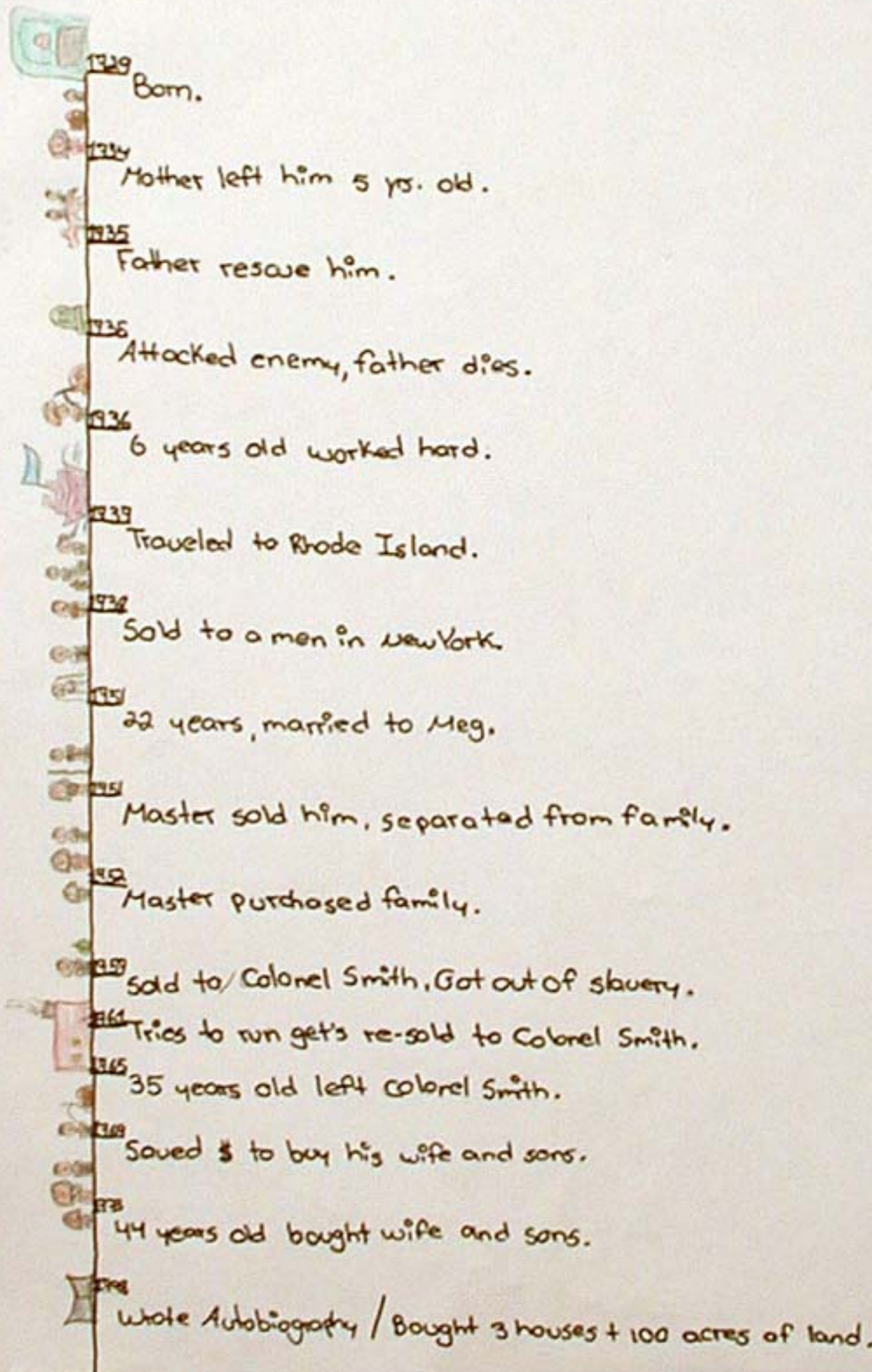
MY FREEDOM IS A PRIVILEGE

I became possessed of another dwelling house, and my temporal affairs were in a pretty prosperous condition. This and my industry was what alone saved me from being expelled [from] that part of the island [when] an act was passed that all Negroes residing there should be expelled.

I am now 69 years old. Though once straight and tall, measuring without shoes six feet, and every way well proportioned, I am now bowed down with age and hardship. But amidst all my griefs and pains, I have many consolations; Meg, the wife of my youth, whom I married for love and bought with money, is still alive. My freedom is a privilege which nothing else can equal. I am now possessed of more than 100 acres of land, and three houses. It gives me joy to think that I *have* and I *deserve* so good a character.

SOURCE: Scholastic Search

Venture's
Smith's
Life



Venture Smith

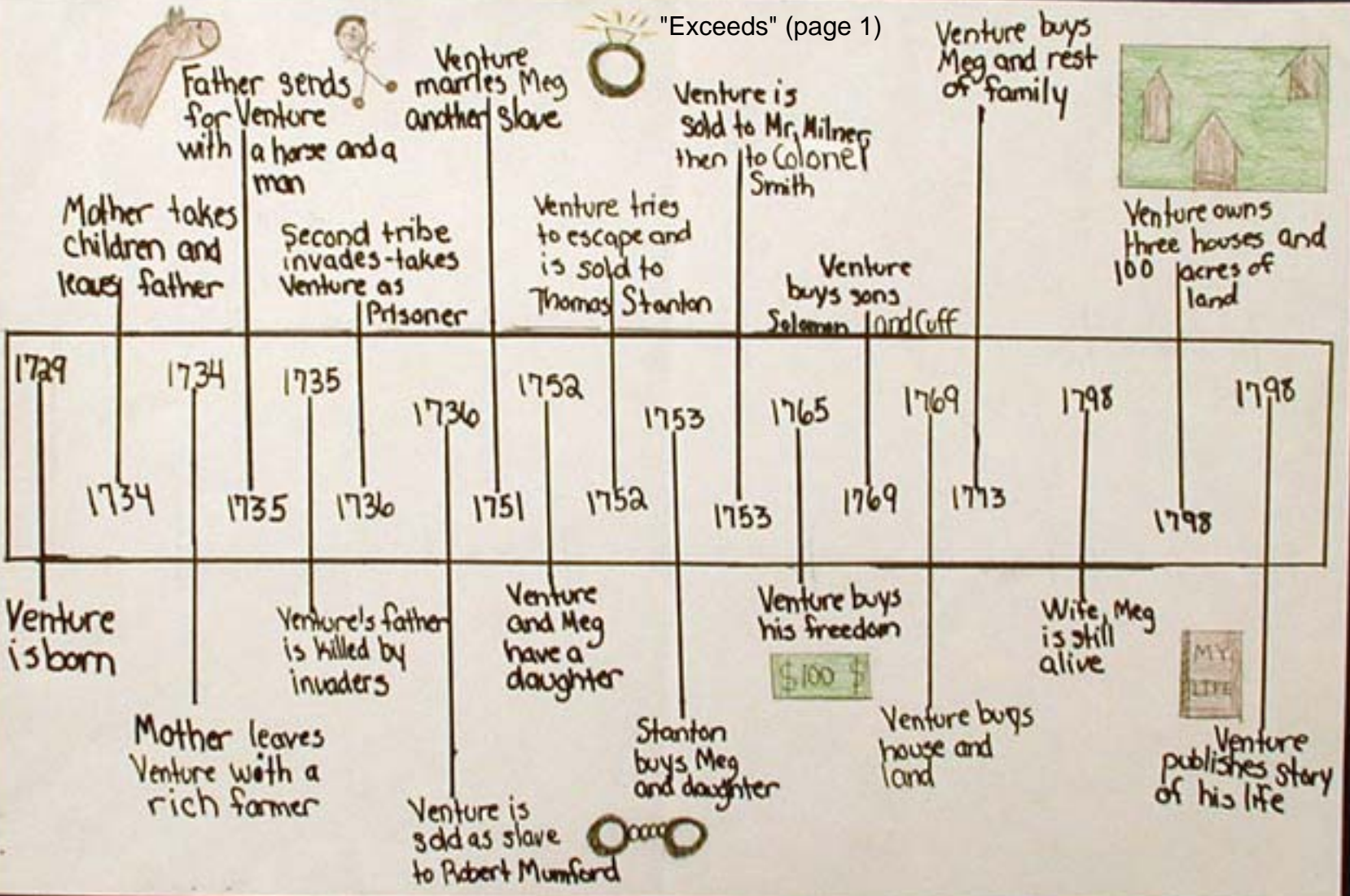
Three things I learned concerning this man's life are

1) He was a slave.

2) He worked hard and got out of slavery and became rich.

3) He bought houses and land.

It is important to study individual lives in history because it teaches us not to give up. Also it shows us that through hard work one can get what they want. It is also important to study people in history so we can learn from their mistakes.



Time Line of Significant Life Events of Venture Smith

Three important things I learned concerning this man's life are slaves were treated like animals, if you were a slave you would be sold a number of times, and if you were captured it would be hard to get away.

It is important to study the stories of individual lives in history because everyone has a different point of view and if we couldn't see a little of each person's view history would be in a way fake and not real.