



## MITCHELVILLE: THE HISTORY AND CREATION OF THE FIRST FREEDMEN'S TOWN

### TARGET LEVEL:

This lesson is designed for middle school social studies.

### STANDARD INDICATORS:

#### Standard 8.3:

Demonstrate an understanding of conflict and compromise in South Carolina, the Southern region, and the United States as a result of sectionalism between the period 1816–1865.

#### 8.3.P:

Analyze the Civil War Amendments (i.e., 13th, 14th, and 15th) as a turning point in the economic, political, and social structures of South Carolina.

#### 8.3.E:

Utilize a variety of primary and secondary sources to analyze multiple perspectives on the effects of the Civil War within South Carolina and the United States.

#### Standard 8.4:

Demonstrate an understanding of South Carolina's role in and response to the dynamic economic, political, and social developments in the United States and around the world during the period 1862–1929.

#### 8.4.CC:

Analyze continuities and change in the African American experience in the period of Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras within South Carolina.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

1. How and Why was Mitchelville created?
2. What did Mitchelville's success ultimately prove to the United States and the world?

### RESOURCE LINKS:

- [Mitchelville History](#)
- [Shot Gun House 12x12](#)
- [Mitchelville: The Hidden Town at Dawn of Freedom](#)
- [The People of Mitchelville, 1862-1868 — Heritage Library Foundation](#)

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- **Activity 1: Mitchelville Vocabulary Worksheet**
- **Activity 2: Mitchelville History - Slideshow**
- **Activity 3: Mitchelville SC Shotgun Houses -Slideshow**
- **Activity 4: Building a Shotgun Home**
  - Supplies Per Group
    - 100 Popsicle Sticks
    - 20 Large Paper Clips
    - 1 Sheet of Graph Paper
    - 1 Cardstock Paper
    - 1-8oz Wood Glue Applicator



M I T C H E L V I L L E  
HISTORIC  
MITCHELVILLE  
FREEDOM PARK | EST. 1862

SITE BOUNDARY

*in the Classroom*

## MITCHELVILLE: THE HISTORY AND CREATION OF THE FIRST FREEDMEN'S TOWN

### HISTORICAL CONTENT:

On November 7, 1861, Union forces attacked two Confederate forts and the Sea Islands of South Carolina near Port Royal. "The Battle of Port Royal" later drove the Confederate forces to retreat to the mainland. One island, Hilton Head Island, immediately became the headquarters for the Union Army. It also would become the setting for the first self-governed town of freed Africans in the country.

After the Battle of Port Royal, men, women, and children fled the plantations and sought freedom with the Union army. However, the Emancipation Proclamation was yet to be signed so these former slaves—though seeking new lives as freedmen--would be labeled "contrabands of war" and housed in ill-constructed shacks on the grounds of the Union outpost. In need of labor, the Union Army hired these "contrabands", as carpenters, blacksmiths, launderers, coopers, clerks and cooks.

Due to overcrowding in the barracks in the Union camp, General Ormsby Mitchel dedicated a large parcel of the land, near the old Drayton Plantation, to the newly freed Blacks that they would be able to cultivate and govern. Individuals and families were given a quarter acre lot and material to build a home. The freedmen elected their own officials, created their own system of law, built three churches, four stores and established the first compulsory school system in the state of South Carolina.

Education was required for every child from age 6 to 15 and when the school district was created in 1866, there were 238 students in the town. Commercial organizations and churches were established and weddings were conducted. Men were recruited for the on-going Civil War and Black soldiers built nearby Fort Howell to protect Mitchelville. On weekends, the marsh tacky work horses were raced along the beaches for enjoyment. They designed sweet grass baskets and fishing nets and sang songs interpreting their burdens.



General Ormsby Mitchel





HISTORIC  
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## DAY 1 LESSON PROCEDURES:

This lesson may be extended 1-2 days depending on class time.

1. Use the following prompt to get the students thinking about self-governance.
  - **"The mayor of your town has put this class in charge of its own plot of land [insert your hometown.] The requirement states, it is now your own town, and you must establish the rules; laws and policies, government, education, etc. "**
2. "Let's brainstorm - Take a few minutes to think about what policies, laws, etc. you would want to implement in your new town." (This could be done in **Padlet** or any other collaborative virtual space.)
3. Have students share with a partner and discuss which policies they will have in their town. (This can be done virtually by placing students in break-out rooms)
4. Have students compile a list of the policies and laws in their town. (This is could be done virtually or face-to-face by using **Nearpod**, **Peardeck**, and any other engaging media to create an interactive environment.)
5. Display the list of 10-15 ideas your students have created and shared. Discuss and debate which ones make the most sense and will aid in governing your new town. Have students vote on which ideas have the most utility and narrow your list of laws, policies, and ordinances.

**Activity 1 - Background Vocabulary:** Research each term and write a brief definition for each. (Terms: Freedmen, Contrabands, Compulsory Education, Emancipation Proclamation)

**Activity 2 - Reading:** Assign Activity 2 PowerPoint, use NearPod, Peardeck or Flipgrid or provide the activity as a hardcopy. Place students in groups and or break-out rooms if you are in a virtual environment. Students will discuss and answer questions in their groups as they read Activity 2 presentations.

- Why do you think the freedmen of Mitchelville created certain laws?
- Why did the people of Mitchelville require every child to go to school?
- What impact did Mitchelville have on South Carolina and the rest of the country during Reconstruction?

### Exit Ticket/Closing Activities

What did Mitchelville's success ultimately prove to the United States and the world?



## MITCHELVILLE: THE HISTORY AND CREATION OF THE FIRST FREEDMEN'S TOWN

# DAY 2 LESSON PROCEDURES

### Activity 3

- Write a definition for a Shotgun House. Why do you think they were called Shotgun Homes?
- Assign the **Mitchelville - Shotgun Houses Slideshow** to your students or provide a hardcopy. Read the brief article about the history of Shotgun Houses. While you and the students read the article, have them answer the questions located on the article's slides and discuss the answers.

### Activity 4 - Building

Now it is your turn to build a replica Mitchelville Shotgun Home.

- First, using your graph paper, you and your team need to design and sketch your Mitchelville shotgun house. Remember, these homes were 1-3 rooms only and 12'x12'.
- Sketch both the outside and the inside floorplan.
- Once you have your design, build your shotgun home with your materials.

### Questions to consider after building your replica.

- Why were the homes 12' x 12'?
- Compare present-day homes to homes in 1862-1868?

### Closure - Writing Prompt

You have researched, discussed, and even built a replica home of historic Mitchelville on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. In 2-3 paragraphs, identify how Mitchelville was a "rehearsal for Reconstruction." What are the lasting effects and influences that Mitchelville had on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, and the United States? Why was Mitchelville significant? Explain how Mitchelville exemplified the African American experience in the period of Reconstruction within South Carolina.