MITCHELVILLE

HISTORIC
MITCHELVILLE
FREEDOM PARK | EST 1862
SITE BOUNDARY

in the Classroom

HISTORIC MITCHELVILLE FREEDOM PARK

The Birthplace of Freedom for the Formerly Enslaved African-Americans
Prepared by: Kelly Messer, Rock Hill School District Virtual Academy York County School District 3

PROPERTY:

Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park
Hilton Head Island, SC

STANDARD INDICATORS:

K.H.2, K.H.3, K.G.1, K.G.2, 1.H.1, 1.H.3, 2.CG.2, 2.H.1, 2.H.3, 2.H.4

SOURCES NEEDED:

1. Google Slide Presentation HMFP LP K-2
2. Printed photos of Mitchelville
3. Chart paper and markers
4. Printed pictures of artifacts (cut apart)
5. Video: Finding Freedom's Home
6. Website: Explore Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park
7. Video: Freedom Day 2021: Exploring the First Families of Historic Mitchelville
8. (Supplemental) Children's book: Now Let Me Fly, by Delores Johnson or Watch this video.
9. Video: "Where Freedom Began"
10. Copies of assessments

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

1. What caused the Civil War and what happened to many formerly enslaved people in SC after the war ended?

2. What is the historical significance of Mitchelville and how do we know that it existed, even though the village is no longer there today?

3. How did the daily life of African Americans of Mitchelville differ from the daily life of people today?

General Ormsby Mitchel

page 1
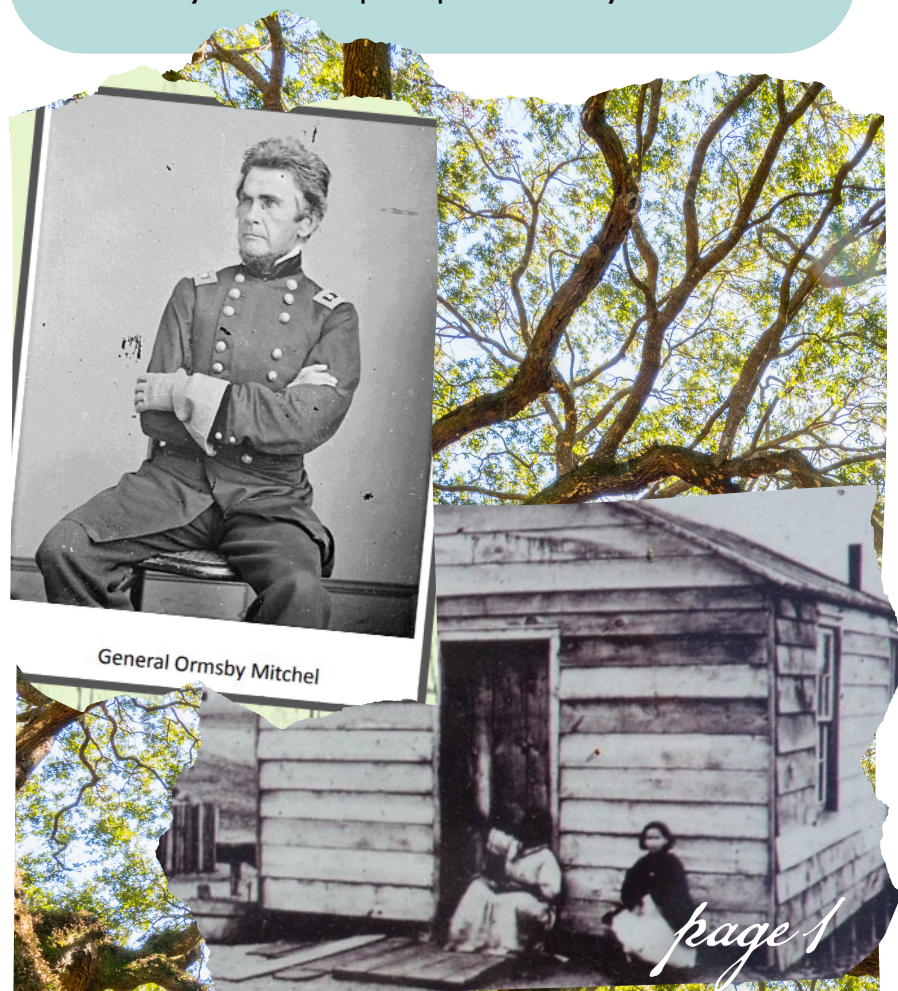
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HISTORICAL CONTENT:

During the early nineteenth century, South Carolina developed a greater economic and social stake in slavery than any other state in the US. By the 1860 Census, blacks accounted for 82.8% of the population in Beaufort County. Many of the Confederacy's political leaders were from the Beaufort area and it is little wonder that the Union attacked there. 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.

After the slaves were freed by the Emancipation Proclamation, Mitchelville (named after General Mitchel following his death from yellow fever in 1862) became a template for the creation of future freedmen towns and served as the "rehearsal for Reconstruction". This experiment of independence was a radical idea. It addressed the former slaves' longings for their own land, the right to choose who would represent them, the responsibility of keeping families intact, the right to negotiate wages for their labor, and to initiate their own religious and commercial enterprises.

At its height, Mitchelville boasted over 3,000 residents, but after the Union army left the area in 1868, the population began to decrease. Many residents began farming and engaging in local commerce to sustain themselves and the town would maintain until the end of the century. Eventually, the residents took apart their homes and moved inland towards the area of Squire Pope, Bayard and Chaplain to avoid the threat of hurricanes and storms. Even though the citizens of this important community moved on from the physical property, their connection to the town endures through their descendants and the impact of the first taste of African American independence. Mitchelville truly is: "Where Freedom Began"

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LESSON **PROCEDURES**

Day 1 Lesson:

1. Use the **google slide presentation** to tell the history of Mitchelville. (Slides 1-19) *A possible read aloud depicting lives of enslaved people is Now Let Me Fly, by Delores Johnson Now Let Me Fly and Hope's Gift Kelly Starling Lyons (optional). In addition, a TedTalk conducted by Rona Daise, a South Carolina Sea Island Native depicting the Gullah Geechee Culture Gullah Geechee -- **The Me I tried to flee: Ron Daise at TEDxCharleston** a teacher content reference on the language and culture of the sea islands. (optional)

2. Print the **photos** provided, enough for several small groups. Ask students to notice and discuss what life in Mitchelville was like for African Americans about 160 years ago. Prompt student thinking by asking questions printed under pictures. (Questions/answers are in slide notes.)

3. Prepare a T-chart on chart paper titled **"Life Long ago in Mitchelville and Life Today"**. Record notices students made about the photos as you compare life long ago to life today. (A t-chart is also on slide 20, you can write on it using annotations in zoom.)

4. Show the video linked to slide 21; stop it at 12:11. **FREEDOM DAY 2021: Exploring the Families of Historic Mitchelville**

5. Choose an Assessment shown on slide 22. (Venn diagram Comparison or Timeline)

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LESSON **PROCEDURES**

Day 2 Lesson:

1. Pose the question displayed in the google slide presentation: **How can we learn more about the life of people in Mitchelville, even though the town is no longer there?** (Perhaps mention the dinosaurs to lead students to a discussion about digging up the ground to see what can be found, or just tell them about archaeology.) Next, show the slides of the archaeologists excavating Mitchelville.

2. Show the video linked on the slide **"Finding Freedom's Home"**

3. Invite students to see what the archaeologist found by looking at the **picture cards** you've printed and cut apart. Print multiple sets for small group work. Instruct students to discuss what each item might be and how it was used. Then, reassemble the class and display the slide showing the labeled pictures of the artifacts. Discuss how these artifacts were used and how they help us know more about life long ago in Mitchelville. Answers are on the google slides.

4. Explain to students that there are many other things that have been found that teach us more about Mitchelville. Use google slides to show the map, drawings, journal entries, and newspaper articles from long ago. (Primary sources)Explain that historians have told us the history of Mitchelville in books, videos, and on websites (secondary sources) to tell people about what they found.

5. Use the link provided in the slide to visit the website for the **Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park.** View the replicas by clicking Explore/Exhibits. View the map of the park by clicking Discover/Master Plan.

6. Show the video using the link provided on the last slide: **"Where Freedom Began"**. Discuss why it is important for people to know about Mitchelville. (It was the first Freedman's town in the US for formerly enslaved people. There is no other place like it in the USA!)

7. Ask students to draw a picture or write a sentence in their journals to remember what they learned about Mitchelville.

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ASSESSMENT **IDEAS**

1. Fill in a venn diagram with words and pictures to compare life long ago in Mitchellville to life today. **(K.H.2, 1.H.1)**
2. Order a set of pictures to create a timeline of events leading up to the creation of the Historic Mitchelville Freedom Park. **(2.H.3)**
3. Identify cause and effect relationships in the history of Mitchelville by completing the sentences in the cloze activity with words and/or drawings. **(2.H.2)**
4. Identify sources of evidence used to support the history of Mitchelville. Choose from a list of items pictured by circling pictures that are sources of historical evidence, and putting an X on pictures that are not. **(K.H.3, 1.H.3, 2.H.4)**
5. Label the pictures on the map of Mitchelville with the words: house, trees, water, land, road, etc. **(K.G.1, K.G.2)**

HISTORIC MITCHELVILLE FREEDOM PARK
INVITES YOU TO

GRIOT'S CORNER

IN THE PARK *OR* AT YOUR SCHOOL

IDEAL FOR GRADES K-4 THROUGH 4TH GRADE STUDENTS IN BEAUFORT, HAMPTON AND JASPER COUNTIES

TO SCHEDULE, CONTACT JOYCE WRIGHT AT JWRIGHT@EXPLOREMITCHELVILLE.ORG OR 843-255-7301

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