Research Lesson Plan: Was Nat Turner a hero or a madman? *(Reading Like a Historian Lesson)*  
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Targeted Grade Level: 5

### Essential Question: Why do historical accounts of the same event sometimes differ?

### Formative Assessment Prompts:

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<tr>
<th>Instructional Chunk #1:</th>
<th>Is violence or civil disobedience ever justified as a means to change things that a group or individual views as an injustice or a greater evil?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Chunk #2:</td>
<td>How do the accounts of Thomas Gray, The Richmond Enquirer, and Henry Highland Garnet differ in describing Nat Turner’s rebellion?</td>
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<td>Instructional Chunk #3:</td>
<td>Was Nat Turner a hero, a madman, neither, or both?</td>
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### Standard Addressed: History Standard 3 (Interpretation), Grades 4-5: Students will explain why historical accounts of the same event sometimes differ and relate this explanation to the evidence presented to the point-of-view of the author.

### Problematic Prior Knowledge (PPL) Addressed

1. Documents with more details are better sources.  
2. We cannot know about the past because we weren’t there.  
3. There is one best story.

### Activating Strategies:

| Strategy 1: Pose & discuss the following question: Can you think of a situation where you might think it was OK to hurt someone or break a really important rule? |

### Key Vocabulary to preview

- Slave  
- Rebellion  
- Document  
- Account  
- Sourcing

### Teaching Strategies:

**Instructional Chunk #1:** Students view PBS video, The Abolitionists, take notes, and answer reflection question.  
**Instructional Chunk #2:** Students will work cooperatively with a group to examine documents to determine differences in three accounts of the Nat Turner rebellion. Teacher will model strategies for sourcing and analyzing documents.

### Graphic Organizer(s) Used:

- Note Taker and Reflection Questions for PBS video, *The Abolitionists* (attachment 1)  
- Nat Turner Timeline  
- Student document response sheets
• Exit Ticket

**Materials Needed:**
• The lesson plan, documents, timeline, and student response sheet can be found at http://sheg.stanford.edu/nat-turner

**Instructional Plan:**

*Instructional Chunk #1*: Is violence or civil disobedience ever justified as a means to change things that a group or individual views as an injustice or a greater evil?

**Procedures:**
1. Students view the first 30 minutes of *The Abolitionists*, complete teacher provided note taker, and answer reflection questions.

*Instructional Chunk #2*: How do the accounts of Thomas Gray, The Richmond Enquirer, and Henry Highland Garnet differ in describing Nat Turner’s rebellion?

**Procedures:**
1. The students will review the Nat Turner timeline. The teacher will tell the students that today they will be reading 3 documents that evaluate the kind of person Nat Turner was and that they need to decide which of these characterizations to believe. Before reading, refer to the essential question- *Why do historical accounts of the same event differ?*
2. The teacher will model the reading and analysis of Document A. He will model responding to the guiding questions about Document A.
3. The students will work in small groups to read, analyze, and record their findings about Documents B and C.
4. Debrief:
   The class will review each group’s analysis of the documents. After all documents have been discussed, the teacher will refer back to the essential question- *Why do historical accounts of the same event differ?* The students will be expected to refer to the timeline and documents to support their responses.

*Instructional Chunk #3*: Was Nat Turner a hero, a madman, neither, or both?

**Procedures:**
1. Check for Understanding/Summarizing Activity:
   During the activating strategy, the students were asked if they believe that violence is ever justified. Now, they will be asked to apply this question to Nat Turner and his actions. The students will complete an exit ticket in response to the following question- Were Nat Turner’s actions justified- was he a hero, a madman, neither, or both? They will be expected to support their answers with evidence from the documents.
Summarizing Strategy:

The students will complete an exit ticket as their summarizing activity. This activity will allow the students to state and defend their position through the use of documents.

Ideas for revisions:

- This lesson was taught in one lesson, which was about 1 ½ hours in duration. The lesson could be broken into 2 or 3 sessions.
- Before the students work with the 3 documents, it may be helpful for the teacher to discuss the sources. For example, one of the sources was an article from a newspaper, but the students had a difficult time identifying the source.
- An additional way to help students analyze the sources would be to provide biographical information for some of the sources.
Consider your answers to yesterday’s question, “Is there anything you think is so important that it might be worth dying or going to jail for?”, today’s discussion of situations where it might be OK to hurt someone or break a rule, and the documents we looked at today. Then, answer the following question. Remember to support your answer with information from the documents and our discussions.

WAS NAT TURNER A HERO, A MADMAN, NEITHER, OR BOTH?
Consider your answers to yesterday’s question, “Is there anything you think is so important that it might be worth dying or going to jail for?”, today’s discussion of situations where it might be OK to hurt someone or break a rule, and the documents we looked at today. Then, answer the following question. Remember to support your answer with information from the documents and our discussions.

WAS NAT TURNER A HERO, A MADMAN, NEITHER, OR BOTH?

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1. Who was Angelina Grimke? What was her point of view about slavery? In what way did she display unusual bravery/courage as a young woman?

2. Who was William Lloyd Garrison? What was his point of view about slavery? What was the name of the newspaper he started in Boston?

3. Who was Frederick Douglas? What did he witness as a young child that he would never forget? How did he display bravery/courage? What did he say about becoming a man? Why do you think he said this?

4. Post – Viewing Question: In her letter to William Lloyd Garrison Angelina Grimke says that fighting for abolition is worth fighting for. She also risks going to jail if she were ever to return to South Carolina. Is there anything you think is so important that it might be worth dying or going to jail for? Explain your answer.