

TEACHING PEBBLE HILL



Family History: An Interview with Dr. Terrance Vickerstaff

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Family History – An Interview with Dr. Terrance Vickerstaff

AL Course of Study: 4th Grade - 6. Describe cultural, economic, and political aspects of the lifestyles of early nineteenth-century farmers, plantation owners, slaves, and townspeople.

Objective: Students will begin to understand the life and role of enslaved people through family stories told by Dr. Terrance Vickerstaff.



Materials:

- [Video of Dr. Terrance Vickerstaff's interview at Pebble Hill.](#)
- "What did you learn?" question sheet

Hook: "You are moving and can only pack 5 things to take with you – what would you take? Think quick, you only have 2 minutes to write down your items."

Give students time to share some of their items

"Now, think about packing your items as we get ready to move. Oh yeah, I forgot to tell you that you won't get to put your things in a moving truck or a car, you have to carry them – on foot."

Discuss how that might change what is brought and what new issues that creates.

"One more thing, we have to cross a pretty large river to get where we are going. I hope you can swim and your stuff doesn't get wet!" (Share a picture or map showing the Chattahoochee River.)



Discussion Prompts and Lesson Intro:

"Moving from one place to another can be really hard and exhausting in our modern world. Can you imagine how difficult it would have been centuries ago? In today's lesson we are going to begin hearing a story (a history story) about some of the people who moved from Georgia to the city we call Auburn, Alabama.

Whole Group Activity Background Information:

Can you imagine what the place we call Auburn, Alabama, looked like 200 years ago? Well, it wasn't called Auburn just yet, and the state of Alabama had just been given its name in December of 1819.

In fact, this land was part of the Creek territory until 1832 when tribal leaders were forced to cede (give up) the land to the United States. As part of the treaty individual Creek families were given land that they could continue to live on or sell.

But, only a few years later in 1836 the United States suspended the treaty and ordered the forced removal of the Creek people.

In the 1830s a group of settlers moved from Georgia to east Alabama. They began building a town with churches, houses, a school, and a post office.

Judge John Harper is named as the founder of Auburn and his daughter helped choose the name "Auburn" from a poem that begins with the line, "Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain."

But white settlers weren't the only ones making the move to Auburn, Alabama. They also brought the people they enslaved. Colonel Nathaniel Jackson Scott settled on the land we call Pebble Hill along with some of the people that will be discussed in the video interview we are about to watch.

Dr. Terrance Vickerstaff shares many of the stories he has gathered while researching his ancestor's journey to Auburn, Alabama. His family is uniquely connected to Pebble Hill as they were part of the enslaved community on the property. His family has an important story to tell.

Whole Group Activity:

[Watch Dr. Vickerstaff's video interview](#). Consider breaking the 32 minute video into smaller segments to be viewed over several days. Allow students to discuss with a

partner or small group anything new they learned. Discuss what seemed most interesting, most important, most troubling, etc.

The “What did you learn?” question sheet may help students hold on to important information. Be mindful that students may not be able to listen and answer at the same time. Consider allowing students to choose 1 or 2 questions to answer after a segment of the video has been viewed.

Additional Learning:

[Short Video on Alabama becoming a territory;](#)

[Article on “Alabama Fever”;](#)

[Article about Dr. Vickerstaff’s return to Pebble Hill and interview.](#)

Assessment: The “What did you learn?” question sheet may serve as assessment. Possibly have students choose 6 questions to answer or allow students to partner.

ELA Extension:

Genealogy (the study of family lineage) is important to Dr. Vickerstaff. He has learned from and researched the stories his family has told from one generation to another. As a class, generate several interview questions that could be asked of an older family or community member to tell about life when they were young. Ex: How did you get to school? What was a normal family dinner like? Encourage students to ask these questions and compile the answers.

Project Extension: Allow students to choose from several different project topics related to collecting stories (personal histories) from others and/or recording their own personal history. Ex: Find out about the history of a family heirloom or item that has been passed down; Create interview questions about the way Auburn has changed for a longtime resident; Begin keeping a journal about your life; etc.

Name _____

Family History –
Dr. Terrance Vickerstaff Interview
What Did You Learn?



1. How did Dr. Vickerstaff become interested in his family's history?
2. How is Dr. Vickerstaff connected to Pebble Hill?
3. What did Dr. Vickerstaff's grandmother tell him about how the Pebble House was put together?
4. What is it called when the government collects information about people every ten years?
5. According to the 1860 census, how many enslaved people were living at Pebble Hill? How many slave cabins or dwellings were there?
6. Name two reasons a fireplace was needed in the slave cabins?
7. Even though they considered themselves married, why couldn't Dr. Vickerstaff's great, great, great grandparents (Major and Betsy) live together?
8. What might happen to enslaved people if their owner died?
9. What was the good thing that happened that kept Nathaniel Scott's slaves from being sold after he died?
10. What were some of the ways Dr. Vickerstaff's relatives showed creativity, innovation, and genius when they were enslaved at Pebble Hill?
11. Why should we learn more about our family and community?
12. Which family member would Dr. Vickerstaff write about and why?

Answer Key

Family History – Dr. Terrance Vickerstaff Interview What Did You Learn?

1. Dr. Vickerstaff listened to his grandmother's stories and asked a lot of questions.
2. His great, great, great grandmother was enslaved by Col. Nathaniel Scott and came over from Georgia to settle the town of Auburn.
3. It was put together with pegs –kind of like legos.
4. It is called a census.
5. There were 63 enslaved people and 9 cabins.
6. The fireplaces were used for keeping warm and cooking.
7. Because slaves were not free yet, Betsy had to live on the plantation of Col. Scott and Major lived on the plantation of his enslaver, Judge Harper.
8. They could be sold to pay bills.
9. The Civil War (The War Between the States) ended and the enslaved people were no longer considered property that could be sold.
10. Dr. Vickerstaff's relatives knew how to weave; some dyed clothes and kept the dye from getting on their hands; others were carpenters and blacksmiths who put their own designs on their creations.
11. Our family (whether from birth or the one we are grafted into) helps you know where you are from, can inspire us and make us proud, and teach us – even the hard stories.
12. Dr. Vickerstaff would write about his Grandma Betsy because she has a cool story. She survived slavery; could take care of the big house, cook in the kitchen, and work in the field; had 10 children