

MAN IN THE MIDDLE: THOMAS DAY AND THE FREE BLACK EXPERIENCE

STUDENT HANDOUT 1: THOMAS DAY TIMELINE

1800-1809

Events in Thomas Day's Life	Events in Thomas Day's World
	<p>1800 Thomas Jefferson is elected president.</p> <p>1800 Gabriel Prosser, a literate enslaved blacksmith, organizes a massive slave revolt in Richmond. The plan is revealed to authorities on August 30; all conspirators are killed.</p>
<p>1801 He is born in Dinwiddie County, Virginia.</p>	
	<p>1803 Louisiana Purchase. Defeated by Toussaint L'Ouverture and his slave forces in a rebellion in Haiti, France loses interest in its vast Louisiana territory. The United States purchases it for \$15,000,000, an incredible bargain.</p>
<p>1807 He moves with his family to a farm in Sussex Co., Virginia, where he is educated by Quaker tutors and apprenticed with his father, a cabinetmaker.</p>	<p>1807 First successful steamboat trip in the United States. The use of steam power starts to spread.</p>
	<p>1808 Foreign slave trade is banned by Congress.</p>

1810-1819

Events in Thomas Day's Life	Events in Thomas Day's World
	<p>1812 War of 1812 begins.</p>
<p>1814 His father loses the farm in Sussex County.</p>	
<p>1817 His father moves to North Carolina. His brother stays in Virginia to work off their father's debt, and Thomas likely remains behind with him.</p>	

1820-1829

Events in Thomas Day's Life	Events in Thomas Day's World
<p>1820 He resides in Warren County, North Carolina, with his parents and brother.</p>	<p>1820 The first settlers immigrate to Liberia in Africa to form a colony for emancipated slaves and other free African Americans.</p> <p>1820 Missouri Compromise: slavery spreads into new western states and becomes a national issue dividing North and South.</p>
	<p>1822 Denmark Vesey Conspiracy: Denmark Vesey, a free black in South Carolina, plans a large slave revolt. The conspiracy is revealed and lead conspirators are hanged.</p>
<p>1824 He works as a cabinetmaker in Hillsborough, North Carolina.</p>	
<p>1827 He pays \$550 for a lot on Main Street in Milton, North Carolina, and establishes a cabinetmaking shop.</p>	<p>1827 North Carolina passes a law prohibiting free black migration into the state.</p>
	<p>1828 Andrew Jackson is elected president.</p>
	<p>1829 David Walker, a free black from Wilmington, North Carolina, publishes "Walker's Appeal" in Boston. The era of militant abolitionism begins.</p>

1830-1839

Events in Thomas Day's Life	Events in Thomas Day's World
<p>1830 He marries Aquilla Wilson and successfully organizes a petition submitted by the citizens of Milton to the North Carolina legislature to allow her to migrate from Virginia into the state.</p> <p>1830 Brother, John Day, Jr., immigrates to Liberia where he starts out as a cabinetmaker and later becomes a missionary, statesman, and signer of the Liberian Declaration of Independence.</p>	<p>1830 North Carolina passes a law making it illegal to circulate publications that incite slave rebellion.</p> <p>1830 North Carolina passes a law preventing slaves from reading and writing.</p>

1830-1839 (continued)

Events in Thomas Day's Life	Events in Thomas Day's World
<p>1831 He begins the new decade in Milton with Aquilla, now a legal resident of North Carolina.</p>	<p>1831 Nat Turner Rebellion: Nat Turner, an enslaved preacher, leads 60-70 slaves in a revolt in Virginia, leaving nearly 60 dead—the most whites ever killed in a slave revolt on American soil. Untold scores of blacks are killed and many more are violently attacked in the aftermath and conspirators are hanged.</p> <p>1831 Abolitionist newspaper, <i>The Liberator</i>, is first published</p> <p>1831 The North Carolina General Assembly passes a law prohibiting dissemination of abolitionist literature (such as <i>The Liberator</i>) a crime punishable by imprisonment, whipping, and even death.</p>
<p>1832 His father dies in Warren County, North Carolina. His estate shows he had a significant cabinetmaking operation there.</p>	<p>1832 Andrew Jackson is re-elected president.</p>
<p>1833 A son, Devereux J. Day, is born.</p>	
<p>1835 A son, Thomas Day, Jr., is born. Most records indicate that Mary Ann Day was born this year also; however, since there's no evidence she and Thomas Jr. were twins, her birth date is unclear from the evidence.</p> <p>1835 Day attends a "colored convention" held in Philadelphia in June of 1835 that advocates racial uplift and the abolition of slavery. There he stays in a boarding house with African American leaders, many of whom will become major black abolitionists.</p>	<p>1835 Free black men in North Carolina lose the right to vote.</p>
<p>1837 The current brick structure of the Milton Presbyterian Church is built. Day provides the Walnut pews, still in use today. Nehemiah Henry (N.H.) Harding is the pastor and a close friend of Thomas Day.</p>	<p>1837 A nationwide financial panic caused by British decline in demand for cotton leaves one-third of the American work force without jobs.</p>

1830-1839 (continued)

Events in Thomas Day's Life	Events in Thomas Day's World
<p>1839 N. H. Harding's passionate words indict slavery as "the concocted essence of fraud, selfishness, and cold hearted tyranny, and the fruitful parent of unnumbered evils to the oppressor and the oppressed..." He later recants these sentiments. They appear in <i>The Liberator</i> and appear this year in <i>American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses</i> by Theodore Weld. This work was second only to Harriet Beecher Stowe's <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> in increasing anti-slavery sentiment.</p>	<p>1839 A mutiny of slaves occurs aboard a Spanish schooner, the <i>Amistad</i>. Militancy among northern abolitionists increases.</p>

1840-1849

Events in Thomas Day's Life	Events in Thomas Day's World
<p>1841 He joins the First Presbyterian Church in Milton, a predominantly white congregation, led by Pastor N. H. Harding.</p>	
<p>1847 He wins a bid to do a major job for the University of North Carolina; his bid is the highest.</p>	<p>1847 Frederick Douglass's newspaper, the <i>North Star</i>, is published, followed by its successor, the <i>Frederick Douglass Paper</i>. These two are the most successful antislavery newspapers of the 1840s and 1850s.</p>
<p>1848 He buys the Union Tavern, the largest building in Milton, North Carolina, and converts it to a shop and home.</p>	
<p>1849 He sends daughter, Mary Ann and son, Thomas Jr. to Wesleyan Academy, a Methodist preparatory school in Wilbraham, Massachusetts led by white abolitionists with whom Day is on friendly terms.</p>	

1850-1859

Events in Thomas Day's Life	Events in Thomas Day's World
<p>1850 His furniture shop is the largest in North Carolina and produces one sixth of all furniture made in the state.</p> <p>Devereux Day begins school at Wesleyan Academy in Wilbraham, Massachusetts.</p>	<p>1850 Compromise of 1850: this bill enables California to enter the Union as a free state to appease the North and allows for enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law to appease the South.</p> <p>1850 Fugitive Slave Law: this makes it easier for slave masters to capture their fugitive slaves in free states.</p>
	<p>1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe publishes <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>.</p>
	<p>1857 Dred Scott Decision: the United States Supreme Court finds that blacks have "no rights which the white man was bound to respect."</p> <p>1857 A national financial panic destroys one in three businesses.</p>
<p>1858 He declares insolvency; a credit agent for R.G. Dun & Co. of Boston notes that Day is "broke all to pieces—property under a deed of trust. When he gets through his present debts, he won't have much of anything left."</p>	
	<p>1859 John Brown's Raid: Brown and his band of 22 black and white men raid the federal arsenal in Harper's Ferry, Virginia, with the intent to steal weapons and free slaves. The raid fails but intensifies emotions about slavery.</p>

1860-1865

Events in Thomas Day's Life	Events in Thomas Day's World
<p>1860 Thomas Day, Jr. sells off most of his father's property and equipment. He signs a note that enables him to continue to operate the business until all debts are paid. The debts are retired by 1864.</p>	<p>1860 Abraham Lincoln is elected president.</p>

1860-1865 (continued)

Events in Thomas Day's Life	Events in Thomas Day's World
1861 Thomas Day disappears from the records. No obituary or other evidence of his death has yet been found.	1861 The Civil War between the North and South begins.
1864 Annie Day Shepard, granddaughter is born to Thomas Day, Jr. Will become wife of founder of North Carolina Central University, Dr. James Shepard.	1863 The Emancipation Proclamation is signed.
1865 Aquilla Day, and two of her children (Thomas Jr. and Mary Ann) are living in Wilmington, NC in the activist free black community there. Mary Ann helps found a school for recently freed black children with other free black teachers.	1865 The Civil War ends.

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