

Nat Turner's Rebellion

History's Mysteries—Solve the Crime of the Time



About the author

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WELCOME TO NAT TURNER'S REBELLION!

In this hands-on investigative activity, students are given an authentic task: to think like criminalists and review mock forensic files of a historical event. Students gather, analyze, and interpret evidence, engaging in tasks such as examining physical objects (e.g., a model of a guillotine, bullets, a blood-spattered uniform), poring over photographs, analyzing documents, and reading maps and charts. A PowerPoint® presentation includes an introduction to the task, a coroner's report, and several types of sources from the "crime scene." Students then fill out a "forensic report" graphic organizer, hypothesize how the event took place, and conclude by reading a "Mystery Solved" handout that provides historical background on the "crime." Optional extension activities include having students create a "breaking news" TV report, write a front-page newspaper article, or compose a "news alert" text message. Grades 6–12.



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Purpose and Overview

Activity Introduction

Welcome to *History's Mysteries: Solve the Crime of the Time*. Included are investigative case files that cover some of the main areas of a U.S. history standards-based curriculum. The central purpose of these files is to spark interest and excitement in students for further study of a given unit.

A History Mystery is rooted in having students act like criminalists whose job is to gather, analyze, and interpret forensic evidence. Real-life criminalists are skilled in studying everyday items, examining bullets, and analyzing documents. Likewise, in a history class, a teacher's job is to help students develop critical thinking skills also based in gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data.

In this hands-on investigative activity, students are given an authentic task—to think like criminalists and review mock forensic files of a historical event. Each file contains primary and secondary source replica/realia that students analyze in order to hypothesize how a given event took place.

This activity works best as an introduction to a U.S. history unit, but it may also be used as a way to review before a DBQ-based assessment at the end of a unit. Students are motivated to solve each Mystery both with accuracy and speed as the first student/team to do so correctly wins a "Criminalist of the Year" name plate for classroom display.

How does a History Mystery work?

Students are given the task of reviewing a historical event case file and filling out a Forensic Report. Once this initial step is completed, students then read a **Mystery Solved: Press Release** that reveals all the accurate details of the real life History Mystery.

Each *History's Mysteries Case File* review and **Forensic Report** are completed in a single (60-minute) class session. The follow up **Mystery Solved: Press Release** reading and follow up activities (**Front Page News**, **Breaking News Report**, or **Text Message News Alert**) can take another half to full one hour class period.

Each unit comes with reproducible student analysis sheets, teacher directions, student directions, CD-ROM that allows students to view the files on a computer (or the entire class with an LCD projector).



Teaching tip

For more scaffolding and greater challenge to the activity, you can also add a step where students work on a **Front Page News Article**, **Breaking News Report**, or a **Text Message News Alert** in which students further synthesize what they believed took place in either an essay, short skit, or short summary form (for better language mastery, beginner or advanced writing skills, ELL and/or AP* students).

Did Nat Turner lead a rebellion
or a massacre?



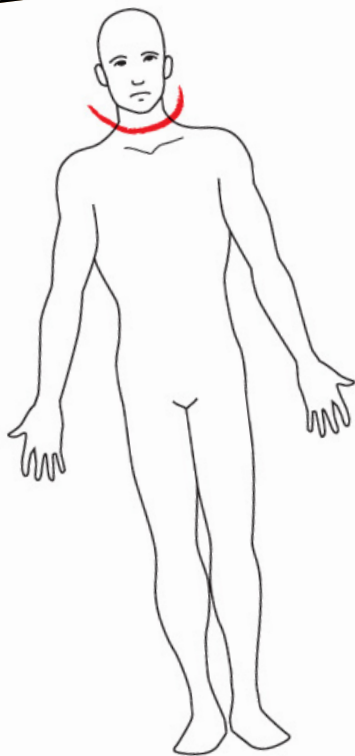
AREA 1:
CRIME SCENE



August 21, 1831



AREA 2:
CORONER'S REPORT



VICTIM'S NAME (LAST, FIRST, MIDDLE)

Travis, Joseph

SEX

☒ M ☐ F

AGE

RACE

Caucasian

WEIGHT

HT

DESCRIPTION OF CORPSE

*Adult male in what
appears to be good health.*

EXTERNAL INJURIES

*Severe cut along neck
from ear to ear.*

INTERNAL INJURIES

*Cut major artery. Victim
bled to death.*

AREA 3: DETECTIVE'S RESEARCH



The slave trade became an important and profitable commercial venture during the European settlement of the Americas.

A total of approximately 12 million Africans were kidnapped from their homes and taken to the New World as slaves.



The first slaves in America were brought to Virginia in 1619.