A nation was blind until one man made them see.

AMAZING GRACE

Study Guide
A Message from the Producers

It is with great pride that we at Bristol Bay Productions highlight William Wilberforce’s legacy through our forthcoming film, Amazing Grace.

The early 2007 release date of the film is purposeful, coinciding with the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in Great Britain. It was in 1807 that the long, arduous anti-slave trade campaign spearheaded by William Wilberforce resulted in the passing of the abolition bill in the British Parliament.

For the contemporary world, we commemorate Wilberforce’s story as an inspiration and an exhortation. It examines the supremely human virtue of conscience put into practice on others’ behalf. To this end, we announce, in conjunction with the release of Amazing Grace, our Amazing Change campaign, a campaign encouraging us all to take action on behalf of social justice throughout the world. Through this campaign, and through our film, we rekindle the luminous story of a “great soul” and the good he sought to do. For more on the Amazing Change campaign, visit www.TheAmazingChange.com.

Amazing Grace is based on the true story of William Wilberforce, a British statesman and reformer from the early part of the 19th century. This feature film chronicles his extraordinary contributions to the world, primarily his 20-year fight to abolish the British slave trade, which he won in 1807. Wilberforce was also instrumental in passing legislation to abolish slavery in the British colonies, a victory he won just three days before his death in 1833.

Amazing Grace stars Ioan Gruffudd as William Wilberforce, Albert Finney as John Newton, and Youssou N'Dour as Olaudah Equiano. It was directed by Michael Apted (Coal Miner’s Daughter, The World is Not Enough) and produced by Terrence Malick (The Thin Red Line, The New World), Ed Pressman, and Patricia Heaton (“Everybody Loves Raymond”). The screenwriter is Steven Knight (Academy Award® nominee for Dirty Pretty Things). Ken Wales (whose screen credits include Christy and whose book credits include Sea of Glory) was executive producer.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY ONE</th>
<th>page 2</th>
<th>The Amazing Story of <em>Amazing Grace</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVITY TWO</td>
<td>page 4</td>
<td>Who’s Who and What’s What?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVITY THREE</td>
<td>page 6</td>
<td>Timeline of Important Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVITY FOUR</td>
<td>page 8</td>
<td>Witness to Injustice: Olaudah Equiano and the Slave Trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVITY FIVE</td>
<td>page 10</td>
<td>Taking Action: Then and Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVITY SIX</td>
<td>page 11</td>
<td>From Sources to Screen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESPECIALLY for EDUCATORS</td>
<td>page 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADDITIONAL RESOURCES</td>
<td>page 17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## How To Use This Guide

Activities in this Study Guide target grades 9-12, are interdisciplinary, and comply with national content and education standards for Social Studies, Language Arts, Visual Arts, Theater, Music, and Character Education. Activities feature adaptations for students who require additional support, and/or for whom English is a second language. This study guide may be reproduced, in whole or in part, for educational purposes only.

## Read the Book

*Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery*  
by Eric Metaxas  
Hardcover (ISBN: 0-06-117300-2)  
Publisher: HarperSanFrancisco  
Publication date: March 1, 2007

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## Acknowledgements

We are indebted to Kevin Belmonte, who worked closely with Steven Knight, the film’s screenwriter, to provide necessary background information, supporting research, and commentary at each stage of the script’s development.

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The Amazing Story of Amazing Grace

It’s been sung by Mary J. Blige, Ray Charles, and Bono. It’s been played on bagpipes and the saxophone, and it’s been sung all over the world. Read about the hymn Amazing Grace, its role in the lives of abolitionist William Wilberforce and its lyricist John Newton, why it’s so beloved—then, now, and always—and why it’s featured in the film Amazing Grace.

E.D. Hirsch’s 1987 book Cultural Literacy includes a list of five thousand names, phrases, dates, and concepts Hirsch believes that every American should know. There are thirty-three songs on the list, five of which are religious. Of these five songs, two are Christmas carols, two are spirituals—and one is the hymn Amazing Grace.

Judy Collins’ 1970 recorded version of Amazing Grace hit the charts and brought about the hymn’s recent popularity.

Amazing Grace was regularly played on bagpipes at the funerals of police officers and firemen who perished in the attacks on the World Trade Center.

In a speech to Harvard students in 2001, singer/songwriter Bono echoed John Newton’s lyrics when he said, “I am a singer and a songwriter and I am also a father, four times over. I am a friend to dogs. I am a sworn enemy of the saccharine, and a believer in grace over karma.”

AMAZING GRACE! (How sweet the sound)
That sav’d a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieve’d;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believe’d!

Tho’ many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
’Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me.
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease;
I shall profess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbeart to shine;
But God, who call’d me here below,
Will be for ever mine.

During the civil rights movement, Judy Collins recalls hearing the hymn sung by marchers as well as gospel singers, and she sang it with activist Fannie Lou Hamer (shown below) when they attended voter registration marches together in Mississippi. At the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, NJ, Fannie Lou Hamer delivered a nationally televised speech to the convention’s Credentials Committee. Citing discriminatory practices against African-Americans, Hamer asked, “Is this America?”

YOUR TURN

What do you think Newton meant by the lyrics, “Tho’ many dangers, toils and snares? I have already come”?

Why would Wilberforce have found these words comforting? Challenging?

Why is Amazing Grace sung today as a social justice anthem, just as the song We Shall Overcome is also sung?

Discuss how lyrics to a beloved hymn could come from experiences in buying and selling human beings, and from an Old Testament story about King David.

AMAZING GRACE | Sources |

Who Was Amazing Grace Lyricist John Newton?

Born into a captain’s family who traded at the East India Company, John Newton (July 24, 1725 – December 21, 1807) embarked on sea voyages at the young age of 11. He soon entered the prosperous slave trade until he nearly died on a voyage that would change his life forever. He proclaimed, “Only God’s amazing grace could and would take a rude, profane, slave-trading sailor and transform him into a child of God.” This would influence his famed hymn Amazing Grace, in which he declared he was once blind but now could see. Newton wrote the hymn after converting to Christianity in 1748 and abandoning his participation in the slave trade. Newton also wrote of his experiences in his autobiography An Authentic Narrative published in 1764, the same year he was ordained as a priest in the Church of England. John Newton went on to write many other hymns as well.

In Writing the Lyrics, What Did John Newton Draw Upon?

In addition to actual events from John Newton’s life at sea, the lyrics are also based on a passage from the Old Testament of the Bible. Newton wrote the lyrics for Amazing Grace as part of the New Year’s morning sermon he delivered in 1773 titled “Faith’s Review and Expectations” at Olney Parish Church, where he was a pastor. The hymn was originally chanted, not sung. In this famous sermon, Newton compared God’s mercy and grace toward Newton’s own “wretchedness” to God’s blessings upon King David. To do this, Newton used King David’s prayer of thanks as David humbly thinks about all that God has done for him.

How Are the Lives of Abolitionist William Wilberforce and John Newton Intertwined?

William Wilberforce first met John Newton when he was a child. Newton was the pastor at the church Wilberforce attended. Wilberforce became reacquainted with Newton in his twenties when Wilberforce was on the brink of a career as a British MP (Member of Parliament). Wilberforce’s outspokenness on the abolition issue may well have also led Newton to make his first public confession of guilt over his past involvement in the slave trade. In the film, Wilberforce visits John Newton twice. The first time he asks Newton for advice about whether to leave politics and join the clergy. And, in hopes of using Newton’s testimony as a former slave trader, Wilberforce visits Newton for a second time, now at St. Mary Woolnoth Church in London. Here Wilberforce discovers that his former pastor is indeed blind.

Wilberforce incorporated Newton’s confession into his plea for abolition. The vote to abolish the slave trade throughout the British Empire finally passed in 1807—the same year John Newton died.

Why Was the Hymn Important to William Wilberforce?

In the film Amazing Grace, Wilberforce and his friend William Pitt discuss whether they can change England for the better. To prove that they can and soon will, Wilberforce and Pitt go into a pub visited by many important politicians. Wilberforce climbs onto a table and belts out the first verse of Amazing Grace. He dedicates his performance to the Duke of Clarence, son of the King of England, who is in the room. It’s Wilberforce’s way of letting the Duke of Clarence—and Clarence’s father the King—know that ways of doing things in England concerning slavery and the “manners” of society were about to change.

What Do You Hear? YOUR TURN What Do You See?

Listen to several different recorded versions of Amazing Grace while reading the hymn’s lyrics at: www.amazinggracemovie.com

In what ways does each version change the feeling of the hymn?

Describe your response to each version. Which version do you like best? Why?

Bring in other recorded versions of the hymn and discuss them, for their appeal and for their effect.

If the hymn were a picture or a film, what would it look like?

AMAZING GRACE Facts, Anecdotes, & Footnotes

1 This passage can be found at 1 Chronicles 17: 16-17 in the Old Testament of the Bible [NIV].

www.amazinggracemovie.com
Who’s Who and What’s What?

Read about some of the people featured in Amazing Grace and about the United Kingdom Parliament, where much of the film’s action takes place.

William Wilberforce

(1759 - 1833)

William Wilberforce was first elected to the House of Commons at the age of 21 and dedicated the rest of his life to leading the fight to abolish slavery. Though he was chronically ill and his anti-slavery bills were repeatedly rejected by Parliament, his courage and passion to abolish injustice led him to be referred to as the “conscience of Parliament.” He also worked to collect evidence of the crimes of the slave trade, collected 390,000 signatures to support his cause, and relentlessly crafted anti-slavery bills. After almost 20 years of leading the British abolitionist movement, Wilberforce wept tears of victory when the slave trade throughout the British Empire was finally abolished in 1807. Because Wilberforce also believed in reforming the larger society, his good works included prison reform, fair care for prisoners of war, improving hospitals and the lot of the poor, the prevention of cruelty to animals, and societal reforms in India and around the world. But his passion to abolish slavery always came first.

Thomas Clarkson

(1760 - 1846)

Thomas Clarkson was a man of deep conviction who devoted his life to battling the Atlantic slave trade. In Amazing Grace, Clarkson and several others active in abolition come to visit Wilberforce for the first time at Wilberforce’s house in Wimbridge, in 1782. In the film, Wilberforce hosts a dinner for his guests, but the meal is interrupted suddenly when Clarkson hoists a heavy carpet bag onto the dining room table and takes out several of the brutal devices used on slaves. To Wilberforce’s horror, Clarkson demonstrates their use, then concludes his demonstration by offering a direct challenge to Wilberforce to take action against the evils of the slave trade. In 1787, Thomas Clarkson, along with Josiah Wedgwood (see page 10) and members of the Quaker Church, helped establish the Committee for Abolition of the African Slave Trade. Clarkson then joined William Wilberforce in fighting to abolish slavery. Clarkson collected testimony from men who had worked on slave ships, also to be used as evidence before Parliament.

Hannah More

(1745 - 1833)

Hannah More is considered one of the most important female abolitionists of her time. She encouraged Wilberforce to write about his religious conversion, and also encouraged his involvement in the abolitionist movement. In the film, Wilberforce’s involvement begins with a surprise visit from More, the former slave Olaudah Equiano (see pages 8-9), Thomas Clarkson, and a few Quakers. More and her fellow guests urge Wilberforce to lead their efforts to abolish slavery. Hannah More was also very involved in the education of poor children in Great Britain and in other causes.

James Stephen

(1758 - 1832)

James Stephen was trained as a lawyer and practiced law in the West Indies. After personally witnessing slaves being burned alive before an unfair trial, Stephen was so outraged that he decided to write to Wilberforce, documenting the crimes. A partnership and friendship grew as Wilberforce asked Stephen to write of his “firsthand account of the burnings, beatings and scalplings on the sugar plantations.” In the film, Stephen supplies Wilberforce with evidence of illegal activities in the West Indies. Stephen then later becomes a Member of Parliament himself.

Think About It

✓ Among the first people to be heavily involved in the abolition movement—in Great Britain and in the United States—were members of religious groups like the Quakers. Why do you think this was so?
✓ Why would this have been troubling at first to a young politician like Wilberforce—and to the world of politics itself?

Could you do it?

✓ What skills would be important for a statesman like Wilberforce to possess in order to get a bill to become a law? How would someone learn these skills?
✓ What character traits or virtues would be important? Why?
✓ Do you think these traits are still important to people doing social justice work today?

Amazing Grace Facts, Anecdotes, & Footnotes

Wilberforce once exclaimed, “God has set before me two great objects: the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners [society].”
### The Duke of Clarence

The Duke of Clarence was born William Henry, the third son of King George III. He started his naval career at the age of 13. He eventually became a captain in his early twenties in the West Indies and was later named the Duke of Clarence in 1789. He supported slavery because it was extremely profitable, and because he genuinely believed that British slaves were treated well. In the film, while playing cards with Wilberforce, the Duke of Clarence requests that his African coach driver be a substitute as a form of payment. William Henry ascended to the British throne, becoming King in 1830.

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<tr>
<th>William Pitt</th>
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<td>William Pitt was elected Prime Minister at the age of 24. His friendship with William Wilberforce began when they were teenagers. Pitt can be credited for encouraging Wilberforce to lead the abolitionist movement through political means. In the film, Pitt pleads with Wilberforce saying “Wilber, I want you beside me all the way. You’re the best fighter in the House, and the best speaker.” In 1793, however, when France declared war on England, William Pitt fell under political pressures to withdraw from the abolitionist movement to instead focus on the war, and the two men’s friendship suffered. But when Thomas Clarkson and Wilberforce crafted an anti-slavery motion disguised as an anti-French bill, they reunited with Pitt and fought slavery together once more. Pitt died in 1806, just a year before the slave trade was abolished.</td>
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<th>Henry Thornton</th>
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<td>Henry Thornton was Wilberforce’s cousin and friend, banker, and campaigner for the abolition of the slave trade. Thornton was the financial brains behind many social reform campaigns of the time. His father financed the first publication of the hymn <em>Amazing Grace</em>. Thornton and his wife Marianne introduced Wilberforce to Barbara Spooner. Wilberforce and Spooner were married in 1797.</td>
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### The United Kingdom Parliament

The United Kingdom Parliament consists of two chambers: 1) the House of Commons and 2) the House of Lords. Today, there are 650 MPs (Members of Parliament) in the House of Commons. They are elected to represent residents of a particular constituency, or seat in England, similar to the way in which the United States House of Representatives elects members from each Congressional District. There are nearly 700 members of the House of Lords, each appointed by the Prime Minister. These members are chosen based on their expertise or experience in a specific subject matter. Parliament’s main duty is to approve or reject bills. Parliament also looks to see that the governing party (ministers) are running the country in an orderly and fair manner. The governing party is selected from the most represented political party from the House of Commons. The governing party manages and carries out the laws that all of Parliament enacts. A proposed law is called a bill. For a bill to become a law, both the House of Commons and the House of Lords must agree on the proposal, much like the Senate and the House of Representatives in the United States. When it passes through both chambers, it receives approval, called a Royal Assent. Bills suggested by individuals are rare and uncommonly become laws versus bills suggested by groups of members in the government. To learn more about the United Kingdom Parliament, see its official Web site: [http://www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk/)

### Make the Case

| Write a scene in which William Wilberforce calls on a witness or witnesses to testify that slavery should be eliminated. Those who testify should be convincing to the House of Lords that slavery is unlawful and inhumane. |
| How will each witness make the case for abolition? What evidence will be presented? What lines of argument will be used? How will each witness appeal to the humanity of those in the House of Lords? |
Timeline of Important Events

Here is a timeline of important events in the story of the abolition of slavery in Great Britain.

1772
The existence of slaves inside of Great Britain officially becomes illegal. But Britain still dominates the slave trade overseas.

1780
William Wilberforce is elected to the House of Commons.

1781
William Pitt is elected to the House of Commons. Two years later, he becomes England’s youngest Prime Minister.

1787
Thomas Clarkson and other dedicated abolitionists establish The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

1788
The “Dolben Act” passes. The Act restricts the number of slaves on board ships. But horrible conditions aboard the ships persist.

1790
After gathering evidence for a year, Wilberforce presents the first Abolition Bill to the House of Commons. The petition to abolish the slave trade has more than 390,000 signatures, and Lord Charles Fox unexpectedly adds his signature to the list. But the bill still does not pass the House.

1779
Amazing Grace, written by John Newton, is first published.

1782
William Wilberforce seeks his former pastor, John Newton, for advice. Newton encourages Wilberforce to take the cause against the slavers. Later, Newton gives his own personal account of the criminal acts of slavery to Wilberforce, to be used for the cause of abolition.

William Wilberforce stirs a debate within the House of Commons against Lord Tarleton, the Duke of Clarence, and Lord Fox when he suggests that Great Britain stop pursuing “the American War.”

1789
Olaudah Equiano publishes his memoir, The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or, Gustavus Vassa, the African. The book sells 50,000 copies in 2 months.

The French Revolution begins.

Think About It

Why did William Wilberforce seek John Newton’s personal account? How was Newton’s account helpful to William Wilberforce?

AMAZING GRACE | Facts, Anecdotes, & Footnotes

For a more detailed timeline of events relating to William Wilberforce and to the abolition of slavery, please visit www.amazinggracemovie.com.
1792
With 230 to 85 votes, the House of Commons votes in favor of the gradual abolition of the slave trade, but the bill is rejected by the House of Lords.

1796
William Wilberforce's opponents give free tickets to four of his "loyal supporters" for a comic opera the evening of the vote on the Abolition Bill. The four men go to the opera, skip out of the vote, and Wilberforce's bill is again defeated.

1797
Henry Thornton, William Wilberforce's cousin and friend, with Thornton's wife, Mariamne, take care of Wilberforce while he is ill. They introduce him to Barbara Spooner, whom Wilberforce later marries.

1803 – 1815
Napoleonic Wars between Britain and France last for 12 years.

1805
An anti-French bill that states "all ships flying the American flag be liable to search and seizure" is passed. This bill is actually a disguised anti-slavery bill to cut slavers' profits and weaken the slave-trading business.

1807
At 4 o'clock in the morning, the final count is 16 nos to the left, and 283 ayes to the right. The House of Commons finally votes to abolish the slave trade throughout the British Empire. William Wilberforce continues to fight the slave trade around the world throughout his whole life, since existing slaves still remained in custody of their owners.

1833
Abolition of the slave trade of all kinds passes in July throughout the British Empire. William Wilberforce hears the news and cries: "Thank God that I have lived to witness the day in which England is willing to give £20 million [pounds] for the abolishment of slavery." Three days later, Wilberforce dies.

Think About It
Why do you think slavery within Great Britain's borders was illegal, but was still permitted out of the country in areas under British control?

Think About It
What was happening historically between Great Britain and the American colonies? Why would this matter to Wilberforce? To members of the House of Commons?
OLAUDAH EQUiano wrote an eyewitness account of his life as a slave and of his work in the anti-slavery movement in his memoir, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or, Gustavus Vassa, The African*. Published in 1789, this book was extremely successful and important because it was one of few firsthand accounts of slavery. Different accounts exist of Equiano's early years. Equiano states that he was born in 1745 in Africa, while some historians claim that Equiano was actually from South Carolina, and was born into slavery. With little evidence to prove either argument, this part of Equiano's life is still debatable. Either way, Equiano was enslaved and owned by several different men, moving from work on a Virginia plantation, to an English ship, to the West Indies. Because of this, he witnessed many atrocities associated with the slave trade, but along the way, Equiano also learned to read and write, became a successful sailor and businessman, and adopted the religion of his masters, all while still being enslaved. Equiano eventually was able to save enough money to buy his freedom from one of his masters. He then embarked on many adventures. He also traveled to Italy, Portugal, the Greek Islands, Turkey, the West Indies, the Arctic, and Honduras on various jobs and expeditions. Equiano eventually returned to England and became very active in the anti-slavery movement. He spent the later years of his life traveling England and bearing witness on issues of slavery and the slave trade. Equiano worked tirelessly toward this cause until his death on April 31, 1797. Ten years after Equiano's death, slavery was abolished in Great Britain.

This print shows how some 600 enslaved Africans were packed into the ship *Brookes* in the 1780s.

**James Stephens Writes to Wilberforce from a Caribbean Plantation**

"The infernal fires are fuelled by the mash of sugar cane. The juice of the cane is boiled down in cauldrons over open fires, tended by women and children. The cauldrons have a tendency to explode. Many children, no more than seven or eight years old, are scalded to death by the molten lava. Others die of exhaustion or roll into the fires in their sleep. The fires burn all night long. The result in the morning is a few pounds of pure refined sugar...white in color."

James Stephens' grim account of life on a sugar plantation is starkly contrasted by this sentimental cover for the sheet music to a 1908 song titled *Down Among the Sugar-Cane*.

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**YOUR TURN**

Look up the word *witness* in the dictionary. In what ways does the definition of the word *witness* apply to Equiano?
The Horrors of the Middle Passage

You have been kidnapped from your home in Africa, yanked from family and friends. You are forced to travel on foot with your captors. You do not understand what they are saying, and you have no idea where you are being taken. Their skin looks strange and pale. You are taken to a ship. Your captors trade you for guns and other manufactured goods offered by slave traders. Then the slave traders take you aboard the ship and place you below deck. They make you lie in tiny spaces and put you in chains and manacles. It is suffocating, hot, and crowded. The stink of perspiration, human waste, and death overpowers your senses, as do the shrieks, cries, and groans of your fellow enslaved Africans. On this seemingly endless trip to the Americas, you watch in horror as slave traders throw people overboard, some of whom are dead, some of whom are still alive.

This was the journey known as the Middle Passage, the route of slave-trading ships from the west coast of Africa, where Africans were kidnapped away from their families, across the Atlantic to the Americas and the Caribbean. In this new land they were sold as slaves or, in some cases, traded for goods such as molasses, which was used in the making of rum. The Middle Passage was the longest, hardest, most dangerous, and most horrible part of the journey of the slave ships, a miserable voyage lasting two to four months. Incredibly profitable for both slave traders and their investing partners, the Middle Passage was a journey into injustice, cruelty, and unimaginable human suffering.

A Measure of Oppression YOUR TURN

Mark out the following measurements typically allotted to Africans on slave ships as William Wilberforce did: males—6 ft. x 1 ft. 4 in. & females—5 ft. 10 in., x 1 ft. 4 in.

Lie in the area you marked. Describe what it would feel like if you had to remain in that space for two months, while travelling across the ocean.
Taking Action

Read about how abolitionist Josiah Wedgwood first used an emblem to bring injustice to the world’s attention. Then, join the Amazing Change Campaign to learn about efforts you can take on behalf of social justice. Go to www.TheAmazingChange.com. See back cover for more information.

Josiah Wedgwood was born in 1730. He was very concerned with reforming British society, and in 1787 Wedgwood helped Thomas Clarkson form the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade. Josiah Wedgwood died on January 3, 1795—twelve years before slavery was abolished in Great Britain. But while alive, Josiah Wedgwood put his craft and his conscience to work, showing the world that something you wore could show where you stood. He created the medallion shown below.

This portrait medallion shows the founder of the Wedgwood Company, Josiah Wedgwood I (1730-1795). His bust is shown in white bas-relief on a pale blue background, surrounded by a moulded Rosso (red) Jasper frame with black ornaments.

"Am I Not A Man And A Brother?"

Designed as a seal to be used by the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1787, the “Am I Not A Man And A Brother?” medallion produced by pottery maker Josiah Wedgwood became a symbol for abolitionists and the anti-slavery movement. Wedgwood reproduced the design in a cameo with the black figure against a white background. He donated hundreds of these to the Society for distribution. Thomas Clarkson wrote that “ladies wore them in bracelets, and others had them fitted up in an ornamental manner as pins for their hair. At length the taste for wearing them became general, and thus fashion, which usually confines itself to worthless things, was seen for once in the honourable office of promoting the cause of justice, humanity and freedom.”

Benjamin Franklin brought the Wedgwood medallion to the United States from England. Leaders of the Abolitionist Movement in the United States issued a copper token showing a kneeling female figure bound in chains with the legend, “Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?” The reverse side of the token reads, “United States of America—Liberty, 1838.”

Your TURN

In the 18th century, abolitionists used emblems to bring attention to the inhumanity of slavery and the humanity of those bound in chains. How effective do you think these two emblems were, and why?

Research an important issue or problem in today’s world. Then design an emblem for it. How effectively does your emblem convey its message? How successfully does it visually summarize an important social justice issue?
Two Kinds of Historical Source Material

» PRIMARY SOURCES — firsthand information from persons who witnessed or participated in an event. Examples of primary sources include: diaries, memoirs, letters, official documents and records, original manuscripts, period newspapers, legal cases, transcripts, interviews, oral histories, speeches, and first-person narratives.

» SECONDARY SOURCES — descriptions by persons usually not present at the event and relying on primary source documents for information. Secondary sources usually analyze and interpret.

From Sources to Screen

For Amazing Grace, both the historical source materials selected and how they were used to tell the story were important considerations. Screenwriter Steven Knight and Wilberforce historian Kevin Belmonte (author of William Wilberforce: Hero for Humanity) worked together to ensure a faithful and dramatic story. Here are some of the key sources used for the film, with brief descriptions of their contents. Decide whether they are primary sources, secondary sources, or both:


- Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates is the daily printed record of the actual debates of Parliament. Political reformer William Cobbett introduced Britain’s first record of parliamentary debates in 1810 but later sold his interest in the debates to the Hansard family, printers to the British House of Commons. Although the Hansard family only produced the record of debates from 1812 to 1888, the report retains the Hansard name, by which it is known today. Some of Wilberforce’s most important speeches on abolition were transcribed from Hansard’s, excerpts of which were then used in the film. For more information about Hansard’s, go to: http://www.parliament.uk/hansard/hansard.cfm


- Samuel Wilberforce, The Life of William Wilberforce, one-volume abridgement (London: John Murray, 1868). Contains many quotations from William Wilberforce’s letters and diaries. Samuel was Wilberforce’s third son.

Storyboards, concept art, and re-created historical documents, all used for the film Amazing Grace.

YOUR TURN

Create and give a presentation about a modern-day social justice hero or heroine. What primary and secondary sources will you need? Why these? How will they help you? (dialogue, character, etc.)
**ACTIVITY 1  The Amazing Story of *Amazing Grace***

**Subjects**: Language Arts, Social Studies, Music, Character Education

**National Standards**:
- **Language Arts**: NCTE/IRA: Standard 1: Reading for Perspective; Standard 3: Evaluation Strategies
- **Social Studies**: NCSS Standard 1: Culture; Standard 4: Individual Development and Identity; Standard 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- **Music**: CNAEA Music Standard 6: Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- **Character Education**: Standard 6: Honesty and Truthfulness

**Duration**: Two 45-minute class periods

**Materials**: Classroom set of reproductions of Activity 1

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**OBJECTIVES**

To read a summary biography about John Newton;
To read about Newton’s motivation for writing the lyrics to the hymn *Amazing Grace*;
To examine ways in which Wilberforce and Newton’s lives were intertwined;
To analyze some of the hymn’s lyrics for their meaning and relevance to John Newton’s life;
To reflect on why *Amazing Grace* is so beloved and so commonly used as a social justice anthem.

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**PROCEDURES**

1. Play a recording of the hymn *Amazing Grace* for students, one which features the lyrics. Several different versions can be found at www.amazinggracemovie.com. The lyrics are found on page 2.
2. Encourage students to discuss events at which they have either sung this hymn or heard it played.
3. Reflect with students on why the hymn was played or sung at the events they mention from their own experiences.
4. Encourage students to bring in other recorded versions of the song.
5. Distribute copies of Activity 1 (two pages) to students.
6. Invite students to read the selection silently.
7. Discuss with students the reasons why Newton wrote the hymn.
8. Discuss the items in the section labeled Your Turn and the Amazing Facts About Amazing Grace.
9. Reflect with students on why Wilberforce felt that Newton would give him good advice and why Newton’s testimony was important in abolishing the slave trade.
10. Reflect with students on Newton’s honesty in examining his own past via *Amazing Grace*, and on why the hymn endures today.

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**ADAPTATIONS**

Students for whom English is a second language may wish to provide the lyrics to *Amazing Grace* in their first languages for the rest of the class. Other students may benefit from hearing the hymn sung or played in several versions.

**ASSESSMENT**

Assess students on their ability to explain the meaning of John Newton’s lyrics and on their origins.

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**EXTENSIONS**

ACTIVITY 2 Who's Who and What's What?

Subjects: Language Arts, Social Studies, Character Education, Theater

National Standards:
- NCTE/IRA: Standard 1: Reading for Perspective; Standard 2: Understanding the Human Experience
- NCSS Standard 4: Individual Development and Identity; Standard 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions; Standard 6: Power, Authority, and Governance
- Character Education: Chicago Public Schools Character Education Standard 2: Trait of Courage; Standard 6: Honesty and Truthfulness; Standard 9: Trait of Responsibility
- Theater: CNAEA (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations) Theater Standard 1: Script writing; Standard 2: Acting/character development

Duration: Two 45-minute class periods

Materials: Classroom set of reproductions of Activity 2; writing materials

OBJECTIVES
- To read summary biographies of major characters found in the film Amazing Grace;
- To read a summary of how the United Kingdom Parliament functions;
- To write dramatic scenes based on factual historical information;
- To present written scripts as dramatic scenes;
- To explore through acting the character traits required to convincingly argue a cause in a public forum;
- To reflect on the motivation and character of several historical figures.

PROCEDURES
1. Distribute copies of Activity 2 (two pages) to students.
2. Invite students to read these pages.
3. Summarize with students the workings of the United Kingdom's Parliament.
4. Ask students why they think Thomas Clarkson felt it necessary to demonstrate for Wilberforce how the devices used on slaves worked. What was his intention or goal in doing this?
5. Challenge students to reflect on what Wilberforce might have been thinking after his guests left.
6. Reflect with students on skills and traits Wilberforce would need in the abolition movement. Why?
7. Challenge students to reflect on whether these same traits are required of someone involved in social justice issues today.
8. Challenge students to work in small groups to write and dramatize scenes showing abolitionists making their case before Parliament.

ADAPTATIONS
- Some students may find it beneficial to follow along silently as you read aloud from transparencies of Activity 2.
- Other students may find it useful to familiarize themselves with the historical figures in the film by cutting out the pictures of actors, separating the summary paragraphs from the pictures. They can then play a matching game with two scrambled piles of pictures and biography paragraphs.

EXTENSIONS
- Challenge interested students to research and compare the United Kingdom Parliament with the United States Senate and House of Representatives.
- Students may compare British abolitionists described here with American abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Lucy Stone, Sojourner Truth, and others.
- Encourage students to research social justice issues in the world today.

ASSESSMENT
Assess students on the basis of whether (and to what extent) their written scenes and dramatizations offer solid evidence for the abolition of slavery and on whether they present solid arguments backed by facts, figures, and/or eyewitness testimony.
Especially for Educators

**ACTIVITY 3 Timeline of Important Events**

**Subjects** - Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual Arts, Character Education

**National Standards**

- **Language Arts** - NCTE/IRA: Standard 8: Developing Research Skills; Standard 11: Participating in Society
- **Social Studies** - NCSS Standard 2: Time, Continuity, and Change; Standard 7: Production, Distribution, and Consumption; Standard 9: Global Connections
- **Visual Arts** - CNAEA Visual Arts Standard 1: Understanding and Applying Media
- **Character Education** - Standard 9: Trait of Responsibility

**Duration** - Two 45-minute class periods

**Materials** - Classroom set of reproductions of Activity 3; writing and drawing materials

**OBJECTIVES**

- To read and discuss the benefits of a timeline of historical events as a summary tool;
- To examine the reasons for the length of time it took for abolition to take hold in Great Britain;
- To analyze ways in which historical events are related to one another (cause/effect);
- To reflect upon the virtue of patience as a desirable trait in social justice work;
- To illustrate several important events from the Wilberforce timeline;
- To research and create a timeline of social justice milestones in one’s own lifetime.

**PROCEDURES**

1. Distribute copies of Activity 3 (two pages) to students.
2. Review with students the features and utility of a timeline as a summary tool in examining historical events.
3. Read with students the Wilberforce timeline pages, stopping to discuss the questions marked Think About It.
4. Challenge students to look at cause/effect in the chronology of historical events by posing the question, “How does one event lead to another on this timeline?”
5. Reflect with students on the role of patience as a feature of responsibility, and as an antidote to overcoming discouragement.
6. Invite students to work individually or in small groups to illustrate key events from the Wilberforce timeline. Encourage students to discuss and reflect upon the reasons for the events they chose and their visual representation.

**ADAPTATIONS**

- Students for whom English is a second language may find it useful to begin highlighting the names of historical figures they read about in Activity 2, reviewing their accomplishments as presented in the timeline.
- Other students may benefit from a review of the workings of Parliament, or from reading the pages about John Newton and the hymn Amazing Grace, and/or Olaudah Equiano before reading the timeline pages.
- Some students may wish to illustrate the Wilberforce timeline through collages rather than drawing.

**ASSESSMENT**

Assess students on their ability to highlight important events and dates from the timeline, their reasons for why they chose certain dates and events, and their ability to graphically and/or artistically represent timeline events.

**EXTENSIONS**

Challenge interested students to research and make a timeline of milestone social justice events in their own lifetimes. Other students may wish to go online to see the comprehensive timeline of abolition events at: www.amazinggracemovie.com.
ACTIVITY 4 Witness to Injustice: Olaudah Equiano and the Slave Trade

Subjects • English/Language Arts; Social Studies; Character Education
National Standards • NCTE/IRA: Standard 2: Understanding the Human Experience
Social Studies • Standard 8: Developing Research Skills; Standard 9: Multicultural Understanding
NCSS Standard 1: Culture; Standard 4: Individual Development and Identity; Standard 9:
Global Connections
Character Education • Standard 2: Courage; Standard 4: Fairness
Duration • Two 45-minute class periods
Materials • Classroom set of reproductions of Activity 4; butcher-block paper, yardsticks and rulers, pencils

OBJECTIVES
To read a brief biography of Olaudah Equiano and an account of the slave trade;
To examine the character traits and virtues Equiano possessed in order to survive, and later, flourish;
To make inferences about Equiano’s effect on Wilberforce’s person and work;
To measure out the dimensions of the space allocated to one slave;
To examine the literal and figurative applications of the word witness to Equiano;
To reflect on why one group of human beings would inflict such suffering on another group
of human beings;
To research similar instances of injustice in the world today.

PROCEDURES
1. Ask students to close their eyes as you read the section of Activity Four called “The Horrors of the
   Middle Passage.” Invite students to reflect on what images came to mind afterward.
2. Distribute copies of Activity 4 (two pages) to students.
3. Discuss and provide time for students to work with the questions and activities marked
   Your Turn.
4. Invite someone to read aloud the excerpt from James Stephen’s letter to Wilberforce. Discuss the
   effect of such words on Wilberforce.
5. Reflect with students on why Equiano had such a profound effect on Wilberforce.

ADAPTATIONS
Some students may benefit from first listening to an excerpt from Olaudah Equiano’s narrative read aloud as they follow
along with the text on a transparency, or at their desks with handouts of the excerpt. See: The Interesting Narrative of the Life
of Olaudah Equiano or, Gustavus Vassa, The African, Edited and
with Notes by Shelly Eversley, and an Introduction by Robert
Reid-Pharr, New York: The Modern Library Paperback edition,
2004. Excerpts of this book can be found online at www.
brycchancarey.com/equiano/.

ASSESSMENT
Assess students on their ability to articulate the characteristics
or qualities that helped Equiano stay alive and even thrive
from his experiences as a slave, and on their ability to describe
Equiano’s impact on Wilberforce.

EXTENSIONS
To hear and read accounts by African Americans who were
former slaves, see Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk
About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation
edited by Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, and Steven F. Miller. New
York: The New Press, published in conjunction with the Library
of Congress and as a companion to Smithsonian Productions’s
Especially for Educators

ACTIVITY 5 Taking Action

Subjects • Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual Arts, Character Education

National Standards •
Language Arts • NCTE/IRA: Standard 5: Communication Strategies; Standard 11: Participating in Society
Social Studies • NCSS Standard 10: Civic Ideals and Practices
Visual Arts • CNAEA Visual Arts Standard 2: Using knowledge of structures and functions
Character Education • Standard 2: Courage; Standard 9: Responsibility

Duration • Two 45-minute class periods
Materials • Classroom set of reproductions of Activity 5; drawing and writing materials

OBJECTIVES
To read a nonfiction account of Josiah Wedgwood and the medallion he designed that was used in the campaign to abolish the slave trade;
To define what an emblem is and discuss the role of an emblem in a social justice movement like abolition;
To research an issue of social justice in today's world;
To design and evaluate an effective emblem for that issue.

PROCEDURES
1. Give copies of Activity 5 (one page) to students.
2. Brainstorm with students emblems they see in the world around them.
3. Read with students the nonfiction piece about Josiah Wedgwood and the pottery symbol developed for the abolition movement, and the copper token issued in the United States.
4. Discuss with students the effectiveness of these two emblems.
5. Challenge students to research a social justice issue and to design an emblem for it.
6. Reflect with students on the effectiveness of the emblem they designed and on the role of emblems in raising people's awareness.
7. Discuss with students The Amazing Change Campaign and their participation in it.

ADAPTATIONS
Students for whom English is a second language may benefit from examining the emblems of partner organizations shown first (by going on each individual organization's Web site), and then doing a visual inventory of everything they see in the two anti-slavery emblems on page 10.

EXTENSIONS
Encourage interested students to make a gallery of emblems used in the social justice movement around the world today.

ASSESSMENT
Challenge students to make a list of criteria whereby their emblems will be judged to be effective.
Especially for Educators

Activity 6 From Sources to Screen

Subjects • Language Arts; Social Studies
National Standards • Language Arts • NCTE/IRA: Standard 5: Communication Strategies; Standard 6: Applying Knowledge; Standard 8: Developing Research Skills
Social Studies • NCSS Standard 4: Individual Development and Identity
Duration • Two 45-minute class periods
Materials • Classroom set of reproductions of Activity 6; writing materials; Internet access, access to primary and/or secondary research materials

Objectives
To define primary and secondary historical source materials;
To examine some source materials used for the film Amazing Grace and decide whether they are primary sources, secondary sources, or both;
To research a modern day champion of social justice, using primary and secondary source materials.

Procedures
1. Give copies of Activity 6 (one page) to students.
2. Read with students the brief nonfiction discussion of source materials.
3. Invite students to define the source materials listed as primary, secondary, or both.
4. Challenge students to research a justice hero or heroine and to create a presentation based on their research.
5. Ask students to analyze what kinds of source materials they will need for their research, and why.

Adaptations
Students for whom English is a second language may benefit from first examining actual primary and secondary source materials, and then discussing what defines these materials as such.

Assessment
Challenge students to discuss the source materials they used, and how they aided student presentations.

Extensions
Encourage interested students to make a gallery of their social justice heroes or heroines.

Additional Resources:

Activity 1 • The Amazing Story of Amazing Grace Amazing Grace with Bill Moyers: This unique program presents adaptations of the enduring hymn, from country music to gospel to folk, in one of PBS’ highest-rated programs ever. It is available on DVD. For information, see: www.pbs.org.

Activity 3 • Timeline of Important Events National History Day, Inc. helps teachers meet educational standards; disseminates high quality curriculum material; and sponsors challenging contests that teach students critical skills for the 21st century. For more information, see: www.nhd.org.


Activity 5 • Taking Action For more information about the Wedgwood Slave Medallion, see the Wedgwood Museum’s Web site at: http://www.wedgwoodmuseum.org.uk/welcome.htm.

www.amazinggracemovie.com | 17
William Wilberforce's work is far from finished. There are still an estimated 27 million slaves in the world today suffering under the weight of oppression. Modern day slavery takes on many forms including the horrific trade in women and children kept as sex slaves, and entire families working in rock quarries or brick kilns; or children working on rug looms. These are all innocent people robbed of their freedom. These slaves are not free to come and go; they are beaten or threatened with violence. They deserve the chance to be free. The Amazing Change campaign gives students and communities a chance to make a mark on history by speaking up—as Wilberforce and his friends did.

At www.TheAmazingChange.com, you’ll learn about the “two great objects” that were important to William Wilberforce:

- The abolition of slavery
- The reformation of manners (society)

On the site you will read stories of modern day slaves and of the heroes who are setting them free. You’ll also find tools for your own social justice activism and educational efforts.

See www.amazinggracemovie.com to:

- Deepen the study of history with your students, using educational resources designed to increase their appreciation of what it means and what it takes to change the world;
- Connect the abolition movements in Great Britain and the United States;
- Explore other stories of abolition, freedom, and social justice—then and now;
- Examine primary and secondary sources materials important in the telling of abolition stories.