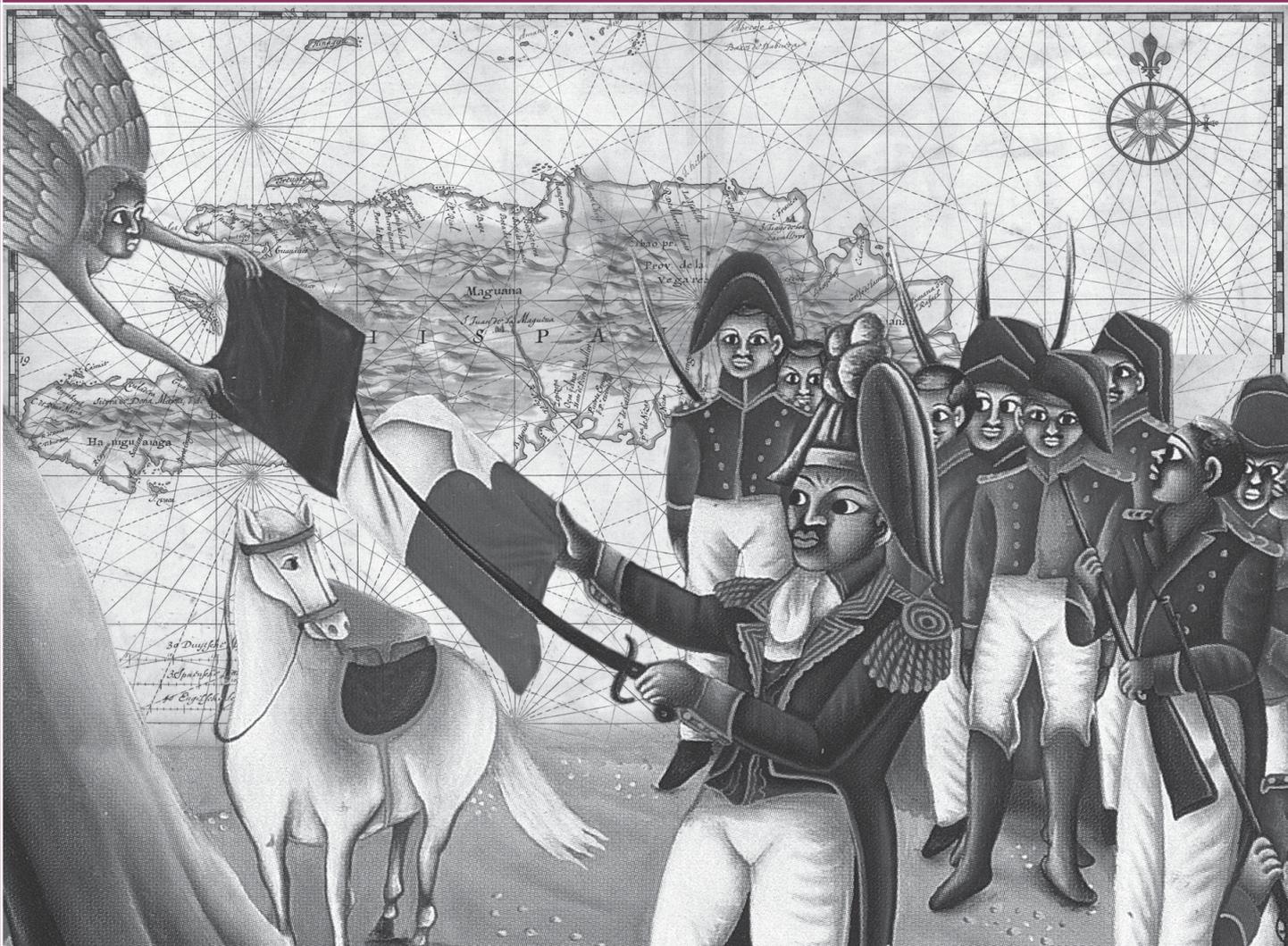


# The Haitian Revolution Today

A supplement to

# The Haitian Revolution



## THE CHOICES PROGRAM

*Explore the Past... Shape the Future*

*History and Current Issues for the Classroom*

WATSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
BROWN UNIVERSITY [WWW.CHOICES.EDU](http://WWW.CHOICES.EDU)

# The Haitian Revolution Today

## Objectives:

**Students will:** Explore the relationship between history and popular culture.

Analyze the attitudes expressed in a variety of artistic and cultural sources.

Consider the role of the Haitian Revolution in Haiti today.

## Required Reading:

This lesson is designed to be used after students have read “Part III” in the student text of *The Haitian Revolution* (pages 34-43).

## Scholars Online:

Short, free videos that you may find useful in this lesson are available at <[http://www.choices.edu/resources/scholars\\_haitianrevolution\\_lesson.php](http://www.choices.edu/resources/scholars_haitianrevolution_lesson.php)>.

## Handouts:

“Expressing the Revolution Today”

## Note:

You should preview the painting used in this lesson to be sure it is appropriate for your classroom. You may find the following resource from the Art Institute of Chicago useful: <<http://www.artic.edu/aic/education/trc/nudesinart.pdf>>.

## In the Classroom:

**1. Considering History Today**—Have students consider the important events in their country’s history that are commemorated today. Write a list three or four on the board. How do people today think about those events? What kinds of values or lessons are taken from those experiences? Do students think that people at the time thought about those events differently? How might the significance or understanding of an historical event depend on the circumstances of the present? You may want to focus discussion on one or two key events in order to press students to deepen their thinking.

## 2. Analyzing Contemporary Haitian Art and Literature

—Distribute “Expressing the Revolution Today” to each student and divide the class into groups of 3-4. Have students recall what they know about Haiti today. What are some challenges that exist? In what ways do legacies of French colonialism and the Haitian Revolution affect Haiti today? You may want to show your class the following videos from Scholars Online:

“How did French colonialism affect Haiti?” answered by Patrick Sylvain, instructor of Haitian language and culture at Brown University and “How did the Haitian Revolution affect land ownership in Haiti?” and “What were the major legacies of the Haitian Revolution for Haiti?” both answered by Alex Dupuy, professor of sociology at Wesleyan University.

Tell students that in this lesson they will examine a variety of sources and consider how Haitians today think about the Haitian Revolution. Have students carefully follow the instructions on the handout and work with their groups to answer the questions.

**3. Making Connections**—After small groups have completed the questions, have everyone come together in a large group. Call on groups to share their responses to the questions. What attitudes were expressed in different selections? What were the key phrases or elements of each source that indicated the tone? What conclusions can students draw about how Haitians today think about the Revolution? In what ways is the Revolution still important to Haiti today?

Have students consider how history can shape a nation and affect how people think about their place in the world. You may want to show your class the following video from Scholars Online:

“How do people in Haiti today think about the Revolution?” answered by Alex Dupuy, professor of sociology at Wesleyan University. Despite the current challenges that exist in Haiti, how has the Revolution given pride to the people of Haiti?

## Expressing the Revolution Today

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### Poetry

#### Haiti Tomorrow

*By Koralen (Jean-Claude Martineau)*

When it's free, oh Haiti's going to be beautiful  
You'll hear, you'll be hearing about it  
When it's free, oh Haiti will be beautiful!  
You'll hear about that little land on the move,  
oh  
You'll hear.

We may lose people, we may lose battles  
But losing Haiti is something else  
Should the blood of one patriot flow  
There'll be a dozen others rising up.

The struggle's really tough and can last a long  
time  
But from day to day it keeps on moving.  
Hard times await us up ahead  
But we'll never get discouraged.  
We know Haiti will be a beautiful land  
Where the people's future is assured  
Where whoever plants will reap the harvest  
And whoever sweats will earn his rest.

When that time comes, women will wear hi-  
biscus in their hair

Guys red bandannas around their necks  
In the street, all the kids will be singing  
And even the old folks will say: Well, it's  
finally arrived.

Yet as a pumpkin seed doesn't produce a cala-  
bash

Laziness just doesn't bring about victory  
A single raindrop can't make a flood  
Human fingernails won't cut wood  
We can't just sit on our hands  
If we really want that day to arrive  
No one ever gets freedom as a gift.  
Freedom is for people who are brave.

**Questions (Poetry)**

1. a. What is the tone of this poem? In other words, what attitude is expressed? For example, is it hopeful, frustrated, sad, angry, proud, etc.?  
  
b. How can you tell? List the words or phrases that support your conclusion.
  
2. According to this poem, what are people in Haiti striving for?
  
3. According to this poem, what does freedom mean? (Consider the following lines: “Where whoever plants will reap the harvest/And whoever sweats will earn his rest.”)
  
4. a. How do the ideas expressed in this poem relate to the Haitian Revolution?  
  
b. What did you learn about how Haitians today think about the Revolution from this source?

## Literature

### From “A Wall of Fire Rising” in *Krik? Krak!*

by Edwidge Danticat (*Soho, New York: 1991*), p. 53-57. Danticat is a Haitian American who immigrated to the United States from Haiti when she was twelve.

...“Listen to what happened to *me* today!” Guy’s seven-year-old son—Little Guy—dashed from a corner and grabbed his father’s hand. The boy dropped his composition notebook as he leaped to his father, nearly stepping into the corn mush and herring that his mother had set out in a trio of half gourds on the clay floor.

“Our boy is in a play.” Lili [Little Guy’s mother] quickly robbed Little Guy of the honor of telling his father the news....

“He already knows his speech,” Lili told her husband.

“Does he now?” asked Guy.

“We’ve been at it all afternoon,” Lili said. “Why don’t you go on and recite that speech for your father?”

The boy tipped his head towards the rusting tin on the roof as he prepared to recite his lines.

Lili wiped her hands on an old apron tied around her waist and stopped to listen.

“Remember what you are,” Lili said, “a great rebel leader. Remember, it is the revolution.”

“Do we want him to be all of that?” Guy asked.

“He is Boukman,” Lili said. “What is the only thing on your mind now, Boukman?”

“Supper,” Guy whispered, enviously eyeing the food cooling off in the middle of the room. He and the boy looked at each other and began to snicker.

“Tell us the other thing that is on your mind,” Lili said, joining in their laughter.

“Freedom!” shouted the boy, as he quickly slipped into his role.

“Louder!” urged Lili.

“Freedom is on my mind!” yelled the boy.

“Why don’t you start, son?” said Guy. “If you don’t, we’ll never get to that other thing that we have on our minds.”

The boy closed his eyes and took a deep breath. At first, his lips parted but nothing came out. Lili pushed her head forward as though she were holding her breath. Then like the last burst of lightening out of clearing sky, the boy began.

*“A wall of fire is rising and in the ashes, I see the bones of my people. Not only those people whose dark hollow faces I see daily in the fields, but all those souls who have gone ahead to haunt my dreams. At night I relive once more the last caresses from the hand of a loving father, a valiant love, a beloved friend.”*

It was obvious that this was a speech written by a European man, who gave to the slave revolutionary Boukman the kind of European phrasing that might have sent the real Boukman turning in his grave. However, the speech made Lili and Guy stand on the tips of their toes from great pride. As their applause thundered in the small space of their shack that night, they felt as though for a moment they had been given the rare pleasure of hearing the voice of one of the forefathers of Haitian independence in the forced baritone of their only child. The experience left them both with a strange feeling that they could not explain. It left the hair on the back of their necks standing on end. It left them feeling much more love than they ever knew that they could add to their feeling for their son.

“Bravo,” Lili cheered, pressing her son into the folds of her apron. “Long live Boukman and long live my boy.”

“Long live our supper,” Guy said, quickly batting his eyelashes to keep tears from rolling down his face....

**Questions (Literature)**

1. a. What is the tone of this excerpt? In other words, what attitude is expressed? For example, is it hopeful, frustrated, sad, angry, proud, etc.?  
  
b. How can you tell? List the words or phrases that support your conclusion.
  
2. Why do you think Guy had tears in his eyes at the end of the excerpt?
  
3. Explain the significance of the following sentence. “It was obvious that this was a speech written by a European man, who gave to the slave revolutionary Boukman the kind of European phrasing that might have sent the real Boukman turning in his grave.”
  
4. What did you learn about how Haitians (in this case, Haitian Americans) today think about the Revolution from this source?

**Painting**  
**Dessalines Ripping the White from the Flag**  
*by Madsen Monpremier*



Photograph by Denis Nervig, Fowler Museum at UCLA.

**Questions (Painting)**

1.
  - a. What is the tone of this painting? In other words, what attitude is expressed? For example, is it hopeful, frustrated, sad, angry, proud, etc.?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. How can you tell? For example, how do things like color, the expressions on the figures' faces, the action in the painting, and the choice of images help you interpret the painting's tone?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Describe what is happening in the painting.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3.
  - a. A symbol is an image or object that is used to represent a larger idea or concept. Artists may use symbols not only to express deeper ideas but also to convey emotions. Give an example of a symbol in this painting.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Why did the artist use this symbol?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. What emotion(s) does the symbol convey?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What did you learn about how Haitians today think about the Revolution from this source?