

UNIT 2 – RACIAL VIOLENCE IN PRINCETON, NJ

Enduring Understanding: Throughout history, power, property, class, and race have been used to subjugate the defenseless, particularly Blacks in the United States of America.

Lenses: Race, Social Class/Hierarchy, Religion, Prejudice and Racial Stereotyping

Essential Questions:

- How do social hierarchies evolve?
- What instruments were and are still used to keep people subservient?
- What are the political and economic driving forces behind social hierarchies?
- How are social classes maintained?

Primary Materials

- 1835 article from the *Princeton Whig* (Document #1)
- 1835 letter from John Witherspoon Woods to Marianne Woods (Document #2)
- 1835 letter from Thomas March Clark to John Milton Clapp (Document #3)
- 1846 excerpt from John Robert Buhler's diary, "My Microscope" (Document #4)

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FOR ANALYZING THE DOCUMENTS

- Provide students with a Document Analysis Sheet where they record, among other things, main idea, key words and phrases, images or data, vocabulary exercises, etc. etc.
- Have students annotate documents, or make marginal notes, writing down comments, and most importantly asking questions about what they do, or do not understand in the documents
- Small group processing of each document.
- Jig-Saw: Small groups of four work on each document above and report back to the whole class

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

1. How do you imagine Princeton in 1835? What was life like according to this document? **(Document #1)**
2. Who was Silas Tripp? Was he a black man, or a white man? How do you know? **(Document #1)**
3. Research the reference to Arthur Tappan in **(Document #1)**.
4. "They conducted him to the west end of the town..." **(Document #1)** Who are the "They" being referred to in this document? Explain.
5. Why do you surmise that there was an "altercation?" **Document #2)**
6. Research the origins of Lynch Laws. **(Document #2)**
7. Suggest words, and or phrases that are missing in [hole in paper] in **Document**

#2

8. What does it mean to “tar and feather” someone? (**Document #2 and 3**) Do you think this happened to Mr. Tripp? (For an interdisciplinary connection, read Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short story, “My Kinsman Major Molineux”).
9. In **Document #3** Thomas March Clapp seems to be suggesting that he was fed up with the seminary (Princeton Theological Seminary) and all that was going on at the time – the lynching, violence and prejudice against black people, stale academics etc. How do you stand up to your family if you think they are bigots? (Read the entire source document from the webpage at the bottom of Document #3)
10. Acting as a historian, explain whether you think that the last two paragraphs of the document are consistent with the events described in all **FOUR** documents.
11. List the common threads that run through these documents?
12. How would you characterize the demeanor of the students from the South in these letters? Compose a reply to one of the letters in documents 2-4. Write how you feel about the behaviors and sentiments described in these documents. Ask/include rhetorical questions in your letter.

PRINCETON, Sep. 4, 1835.

Our town last evening was somewhat excited by the report that a person had been engaged through the day in distributing papers favorable to the abolition cause, and was attending a meeting of Blacks in the suburbs of this place at that time.

About 7 o'clock a collection of persons proceeded to the House where the meeting was held, and requested the person (who calls himself Silas Tripp.) to come out, which after some altercation he did, and gave up his papers, &c. ; they offered him no violence,—escorted him through a part of the town, with various expressions in reference to Lynch Law, tar and feathers, &c. &c. They conducted him to the west end of the town, and upon his earnest solicitation not to injure him, and promises not to be engaged here in the like business again, they let him go without inflicting any injury on him.

He stated that he was an agent for the Philanthropist, Liberator, &c., copies of which he had in his possession, together with copies of the "Anti Slavery Record," with Arthur Tappan's name written on the cover.

We rejoice for the credit of our borough that nothing more serious was attempted, this being the first ebullition of public feeling on this subject.

There was so little noise made, that though our office is very near where they passed, we heard nothing of the transaction until it was over.—

Whig.

Document 2

John Witherspoon Woods to Mrs. Marianne Woods

□ Nassau Hall Sept 14th — 35

Dear Mother

I received yours of the 8th on the 11th & I was very glad on account of two things — the pleasure of hearing from home & the money that was it — My foot is entirely well now, & I intend to try to keep it so — It should always be my desire and endeavor to act in such a manner as shall meet to your approbation & so long as I am in College I will try to do nothing which will hurt your feelings — I do not think that Aunt Susan will accompany me home this fall, although I am not certain, if she makes up her mind to come, I will let you know three or four days beforehand so that you can get some person to work for you while she is there — I was indeed astonished as well as sorry to hear of the death of Mr. Mitchell — I am somewhat astonished that Mr. Konkling did not write as he said he would; according to your request I made further enquiry & Mr McClean recommended a young man in the Seminary by the name of Topping; I called at his room on Saturday evening & spoke to him about it; I told him all I knew, that the trustees gave \$50 & that the number of scholars always have been from 12 to 14, & I also told him that it was probable, if he would teach the higher branches of the English studies, he would have a larger number, he said he would write to Father about it. Mr McClean recommended him.

About a week ago it got buzzed through College that there was an Abolitionist in town, & one night the students about 60 number went down to a negro man's house, where they heard this Abolitionist was holding a meeting, two fellows went into the house, while the rest staid outside to watch, & taking the fellow by the arms asked him to come along with them; at first the man refused & told them to stand off, for he had the law on his side & that he would make use of it; they told him they had Lynchs law which was sufficient for them & so to come along or they would find a way to make him, he did not seem disposed to come so they laid hold on him & dragged him out of the house; they at first intended to tar & feather him, but he begged so pitifully that they determined not to injure him, they took his subscription paper from him & burned it & then took him up in front of the Seminary & called to the Seminarians that here was one Abolitionist & they might look out to be served in the same manner if they caught any of them; they took him a little ways past the Seminary & told him to run for his life & he did if ever fellow did, they ran after him a short distance & then stopt, the Apprentices had followed after the students expecting to have some sport; they wanted the students to let them go after him & catch him, but the students would not do it, they told them not to do it &

they were afraid

Our examination commences next Monday & and the Monday following, we are to be examined on all the studies of the sophomore year. Euclid, Horace, Algebra, Homer, Demosthenes, Cicero de officiis, & perhaps Horace de art poetry; Trigonometry, Navigation, & Nautical Astronomy, together with Arithmetic, English Grammar, & Geography, all of which I wish was over,

The Commencement this *[hole in paper]* be held in the Campus if it is a dry *[hole in paper]* a splendid one if not a poor one — *[hole in paper]* curious country, we have been obliged to *[hole in paper]* a week in the fore part of August & *[hole in paper]* days in the latter part & are now *[hole in paper]* fire in our rooms, it is very comfortable *[hole in paper]* by a good fire & write to any friends *[hole in paper]* The students & Faculty are getting on rather better terms than they have been the greater part of this session, they, the students do not commit quite so much mischief as they did & the Faculty are getting to treat them with more respect & it is more probable that if the Faculty keeps on in this course that the college will prosper, but I would be much surprised if the Faculty act the beginning of the next session as they did the beginning of this, if there would be a sort of disturbance, Give my love to all Father & all he rest & when you write to Walker give him my love, give my respects to all who make enquiry for me, I am ever your affectionate & Dutiful son

J. W. Woods

Document 3

Thomas March Clark to John Milton Clapp, Esq., Beaufort, South Carolina

Princeton [New Jersey]
September 8, 1835

My dear John,

Do you realize that it is now two years since we sat down on a certain evening by our old school house to wait for the gig that was to carry us on a little ride to Dracut? That was the last day of our being mentally engaged in the same employment? And what has become of these two years? So far as external circumstances go, they have not been very eventful. The monotonous routine of a Theological Seminary has marked their progress, letters from & letters to you have served to keep alive the memory of other scenes. From time to time I have alone visited the region of those past scenes & here the story ends. I have formed a few — a very few — new acquaintances, & forgotten many more old ones. Of these few new friends, I care but a trifle for hardly one & the acquaintance will cease with the occasion that caused it. You have been more in life — you have acted in ever stirring scenes, & found more congenial spirits among them with whom you come in contact.

I do not think the air of college or seminary would ever become wholesome to me. I don't like its staleness, its forms of society — if it may be said to have any — & I am glad to say that three weeks will terminate all connection which I have with a literary institution. I have concluded not to return here again & also not to enter any other Seminary. I am now & have been for some time attending both the lectures of the present & the succeeding year & have concluded that in two years, all the marrow that there is in such an institution as this can be extracted & digested. I mean to return home & compose myself there for a time with my books & my pen, preaching occasionally as circumstances shall be. I am now truly waiting for the term to close in order to leave at a canonical time. It will be something of a change of life to have closed this long course of preparation & to enter upon real life — to step the vestibule into the temple. It is a change that I have long anticipated & still now that it has come, I think I care very little about it. It is this with everything, that we have long anticipated. I am glad that I have already passed thro' the ordeal of examination for license. I have not that ceremony left ahead.

When will you go through the form of admission to the bar & where will you be examined? Your letters have left me in some doubt as to the nature of your plans for the future.

I am now living like a hermit — in a large boarding house. I am the only boarder who

occupies a room & thus have the whole range of the domicile to myself. There are two other students whom I meet at table. If I was in good health & in comfortable trim, this solitude would not be unpleasant as it would afford me a much uninterrupted time, but for the past month or six weeks I have been almost constantly unwell & have had an attack of fever which _____ably reduced me. They have a way here of copious bleeding & purging whenever any trifling malady seizes one — as though it were profitable occasionally to be carried one or two or three steps down into one's grave that we may be sufficiently grateful to the physician for sparing us a deeper descent.

I preached last Sunday at a primitive looking place about 16 miles from here called Ringoes! ¹ Just as a specimen of the liberality of the Jersey people, let me tell you an adventure that happened to one of our students last winter. It was bitter cold weather & he was sent for to go & preach a Sunday at a certain place. He accordingly went. The place was 25 miles off & he of course was at the expense of a horse & gig for a day or two. He preached on Sunday & when he came to take his departure, the Treasurer of the Society, as a compensation for his time & labor & expense, handed him fifty cents!

But it is time for me to turn to some of the topics in your epistle. Your hunting story is a choice one. I should like to see the man who acted in such an adventure as that. The Abolition excitement seems to have burst out of late with great vigor. We hear but little said on the subject in Princeton. There are not a great many slaves in this state but I should think that in this region the blacks constitute about one half of the population. A man was found in a house in Princeton last week endeavoring to obtain subscribers to the Abolition periodicals. A mob of college students & town's people collected & paraded him through the streets of the edge of the village & then gave him his choice — either to run for it or receive a coat of tar & feathers. He wisely chose the former alternative & was heard of no more. ²

It seems that you will not leave Beaufort till February. I have been confidently anticipating your visit to New England this Autumn. When do you mean to come with your present plans? And where have you concluded to settle after leaving South Carolina? I hope we shall not miss of your visit, even if it is somewhat delayed.

You ask for further particulars of my last visit to Lowell &c. but the truth is that the particular incidents have now so completely faded from my mind that I can recall nothing of any interest. "The polar animal E—n" I did not see. He was not exhibited during my stay. His amiable consort I had a transient view of as she stared at her window & as I stood on the minister's doorsteps. "The bull calf B—ly" was also hidden from my view but his eldest daughter I saw & conversed with. She seemed to think that we did all things well & found great fault with her father & Po. By the way, she is married to one of the Saunders — the talkative one.

I called upon young Dr. Graves & his wife, formerly Anne Adams, & while I was there the placid old gentleman — the elder Dr. Graves — of pleasant obesity, entered. It did

my soul good to look upon him. I thought the young Dr. looked rather sheepish (as ell he might), but the father was all bland___ & smiles. What a pleasure to be physicked by such a man! Rev. Mr. [William] Barry has left & is about to leave his people. The good flock in Lowell have for some incomprehensible reason or other become dissatisfied with him. ³

Do you ever hear by letter from any of our old college friends? You are the only one with whom I have any correspondence at all. In fact, you are my only correspondent left apart from my own relations at home. How vigorously for so old a man does Father Time use his scythe! It is one eternal harvest with him & he reaps a most multifarious crop! Well! Well!

I occasionally see in the newspapers the account of the Ordination & settlement of some of our old classmates. I saw the other day an account of [William Ingraham] Kip's settlement over a parish in this state. I wrote [Rev. Francis V.] Pike a few months since but he has deigned me no reply. He is, I suppose, in Andover pursuing his studies yet.

This is the last letter you will receive from me dated Princeton. Please direct your reply to Newburyport again, not forgetting, if you please, to make such a distinction in the direction that your letter may come into my hands & not my fathers. There are one or two friends whom I shall leave behind me here whose loss I shall regret & one in particular.

With the people resident here I have had no concern & in leaving them, I of course have no regrets. I have written this poor scrawl with no material for a letter, not an incident on hand; before my next, I shall have passed over classic ground again & shall something to communicate. This is an unworthy reply to your last letter, but such as it is, please accept it from your friend in sincerity, — Thomas M. Clark, Jr.

Source:

<https://sparedshared4.wordpress.com/letters/1834-thomas-march-clark-to-john-milton-clapp/>

Document 4

John Robert Buhler
Excerpt from "My Microscope," 1846

Saturday June 20

A Great Émeute.

disturbed the tranquility of College this evening. Peirce & Jerry Taylor -- availing themselves of the coolness of the evening were taking a walk together out towards the Seminary — A monstrous Buck Nigger was within immediate Van. Behind them, bringing up the rear of the collection Promenade were two Individual Incog. with that Ethiopian Minor -- Black Mary -- between them on whose charms they were perpetrating sundry manual familiarities -- one of which caused the coy Modesty to cry out suddenly "Oh, leave me be -- won't you?"— Whereupon the antecedent Darkey -- turned round instantly upon his immediate Consequent Peirce & Taylor moved doubtless by a chivalric impulse to avenge the Dark Distress behind him & imagining that they were the offenders thus profanely catechized them—"You d-d Loafers -- what are you about?"—Southern blood not being disposed to answer a Catechist of so woolly a crown as his hugely [?] at the insolence of the query & its Propounder—T. stepped up & with a hearty curse asked Ethiopia who he was talking to & what he meant? The Reply was a Succession of Blows over the head, from the sturdy Cudgel of the stalwart Darkey—so that T's temple was gashed & himself knocked down & momentarily stunned. Then ensued a general Melée—fresh reinforcements of Ebony crowding around the Scene of Action & mingling with the culprit. Taylor as soon as he moved from the shock of his stun—grappled with the Negro & vainly endeavored to run him through with his Sword Cane, which from its length—in an encounter so close only bent around his body at every thrust only damaged Pierce's contiguous Elbow by grazing up against it & tearing off the skin.

In the Darkness & Confusion of the Occasion the Negro made his escape—his Wife who had come up lustily to his succor & [?] on Peirce with both arms, was knocked head over heels by that haughty Hero—& in the sequel Taylor was led off bruised & bleeding to his Room—Dr. Dunn was sent for to examine his wounds—& remarked in relation to the one over his temple—that had it varied a half inch in direction it would have cost him his life.

Mon June 22

The Fellows begin to pour in again this morning & by evening a huge Fragment of the scattered Wreck of our Class was found & gathered together—

The Atmosphere begins to smell of Commencement & all Nature seems to be on the

Qui Vive for the Occasion. Ball Managers with Importance "sticking out a foot"—all over 'em—like the invisible sticks of an imaginary Hedgehog—men hurrying to & fro the Ball Room at Olden's Old Store. Incipient Graduates like Sickly Moustaches on a Chin of Sixteen—were struggling to bristle up into a hasty & precocious maturity,—And pining Undergraduates—rife with the anxious responsibility of their pro. tem pore Precedence in the Classal Rank—were nodding with affected graciousness to the inferior Classes—The Millstone which had ground them down into the dust of inferiority being now removed, up they shot into the sapling [?] of Dignity—The Fever ran high & the [?] & the Colfe was a [P?!] To highlight the disease—towards evening a Party—14 in number—of Southern Bloods started out in the country to search for & capture the Negro who had struck & wounded Taylor in the Fray of last Saturday night.

A Foray into Ethiopia!

They proceeded at once to the Farm on which Cuff was hired out at work & made a Requisition for him upon the Proprietor. It was peremptorily refused & the Refusal back & "substantiated" by a dozen brawny Irish Laborers in his service, who opposed themselves in armed phalanx to the further Progress of the Invaders. One of them—the verist Hercules of them all—lifted up his hoe over Buck's head—upon which out came a Revolver from Buck's broom in deadly Juxtaposition with Hercules' Thorax. This emphatic demonstration stopped the Resistance & brought about a Parley between the Antagonist Parties. It was finally agreed that the Negro should be given up on condition that he should be carried before a Magistrate & the condition being foolishly accepted he was delivered & brought into town by the combined forces. JOHNNY met them on the way & busied himself to secure the summary discharge of the Rascal with ineffectual fervor. In spite of his entreaties—his arguments & his menaces the Exasperated Captors persisted in holding possession of their Prize & arriving in town took him into court before Justice Hudnut. "His Honor" refused to write out a warrant or institute any proceedings of Redress. JOHNNY assumed the Office of Judge Advocate for the Culprit & stoutly sustained the decision of the Magistrate. The Negro was then demanded by the Students who by this time had collected in throng around the Office—to be taken before another Justice. This was denied also—Seeing that all hope of legal redress was futile—they determined then to try the Victim before the worshipful Court of Judge Lynch & so they declared themselves. At this juncture the friends & Foes of the measure divided & arranged themselves in battle array—& a general Scuffle & Bruise ensued. Old JOHNNY—(for shame)—took active part in the Defence & dealt blows about his lustily one of which lighting on Howard's crown prostrated him instant—This wouldn't do even from one of his Privilege & Professorship—so he was, by main force, seized up & hurled outside the Fray. Hullfish's Official Wrath next woke from its slumber & "with his red right hand he did valiantly"—inflicting a most percussive Lick upon Sergeant's hapless cranium. — Alas! no sooner had he manifested this taste & skill for Fisticuffs—than he was taken up in a corner & pounded into an Anatomy of Bruises. — In short — after a brief & composed Conflict—Cuffy was recaptured—taken out & whipped within an inch of his Life—to the silent Satisfaction of all the arrayed

Collegians from the South! So endeth the Chapter of the Greatest Excitement that has seized on the College, since I have been one of its unworthy Members! —.