



Education Department

**Title: Exter and Tempe's Love Story  
Creating Rituals**

**Level: 8<sup>th</sup> grade**

**HISTORY (UNIT - 3 periods)**

**OVERVIEW**

**Students will learn about the rituals of enslaved Africans through Tempe Durham's narrative. They will also compare and contrast rituals in their own lives, and discuss the role of ritual in culture.**

**Common Core Reading Standards for Literature (Grade 8)**

**Craft and Structure 8.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

**Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 8.7** Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.

**Common Core Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies (Grades 6-8)**

**8.5** Describe how a text presents information (e.g. sequentially, comparatively, casually).

**California State Standards**

**History Standard 8.7.2** Trace the origins and development of slavery; its effects on Black Americans and on the region's political, social, religious, economic, and cultural development; and identify the strategies that were tried to both overturn and preserve it (e.g., through the writings and historical documents on Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey).

**English Standard 1.1** Analyze oral interpretations of literature, including language choice and delivery, and the effect of the interpretations on the listener.

**English Standard 3.4** Analyze the relevance of the setting (e.g., place, time, customs) to the mood, tone, and meaning of the text.

**OBJECTIVES (SWBAT)**

1. Discuss the significance of rituals in the lives of enslaved Africans living in the United States during the mid-1800s.
2. Discuss how rituals are changed and adapted based on a group (or person's) age, religion, gender, location, race or ethnicity, social class, and/or physical ability.
3. Create a classroom ritual that communicates the importance of a person, place, or event. (optional extension)

## MATERIALS

- Pen
- Paper
- Copies of Tempe Durham’s narrative
- Downloaded HBO special recording of Loretta Devine reading Tempe Durham’s narrative (8:05)
- “Jumping the broom” handout (included)
- Note on the language of the narratives (included)
- Guided practice chart of ritual (included)
- Ritual handout (included)

## PROCEDURE

1. Introduce the topic by facilitating a discussion about the rituals and/or ceremonies in daily life:
  - a. What is a ritual? Discuss and define as a class. Use a dictionary definition for reference.
  - b. What are the purposes of ritual? Where do they come from? Discuss how rituals vary depending on a number of factors such as age, religion, gender, location, race or ethnicity, social class, ability.
  - c. What are some particular ways that your family participates in rituals or ceremonies? Explain how and why.
2. First listen to Loretta Devine’s dramatic reading of Tempe Durham’s narrative from the HBO special, *Unchained Memories* which can be downloaded through MoAD’s website:[http://www.moadsf.org/salon/exhibits/slave\\_narratives/media/mp3/02\\_Tempe\\_Herndon.mp3](http://www.moadsf.org/salon/exhibits/slave_narratives/media/mp3/02_Tempe_Herndon.mp3). Listen carefully to cadence and the style and sound of language in her artistic interpretation.
3. Distribute copies of text of Tempe’s narrative. Students will read the text to use both readings (Loretta Devine’s and their own) to get an understanding of what Tempe Herndon Durham’s life before and after ‘surrender’ (emancipation). Read for content and chronology. Compare to Loretta Devine’s reading.
4. Distribute “Jumping the Broom” handout. Read and discuss aloud.  
Press, 1972), 176-78.
5. Discuss the following details from the story, using linked resources on African-American vernacular English, if needed for clarification (see end of lesson). To check for comprehension, ask follow up questions:
  - a. How old was Tempe when surrender (emancipation) came?
  - b. How old did she figure she was when interviewed?
  - c. Where did she live?
  - d. How did Exter create/present Tempe’s wedding ring? What happened to her ring?
  - e. Where did they get married? Who married them?
  - f. What kind of relationship did they have with their masters as a couple?
  - g. How did they see each other?
  - h. What were some of the circumstances that kept them together?
  - i. What was their quality of life? Refer to implicit and explicit descriptions.
  - j. What happened when they jumped the broom?
  - k. What did it foretell for their marriage according to the tradition?

6. After reviewing the details of the story, focus discussion on identifying and describing rituals evident in the text and their relationship to the creation and maintenance of culture.
7. In pairs, select a common ritual. Following the form of the chart, describe three different ways that it is carried out and explain how it is shaped by context. Consider rituals around birth, graduation, coming-of-age, romantic commitments, death etc. A basic example of a coming-of-age chart is included at the end of the lesson.

**EVALUATION for Guided Practice handout**

- ✓ Features 3 distinct rituals
- ✓ Includes at least 3 distinct elements of each ritual
- ✓ Makes at least one statement about the cultural significance of the ritual

**Extension of the lesson:**

8. Students will create a ritual that becomes a part of the classroom culture, it could be a ritual that everyone does daily, weekly, monthly at the beginning or end of class etc.
9. Students will explain the inspiration for their ritual and demonstrate how it is carried out. Include items, actions and pledges.

*Tempe Herndon Durham*  
*1312 Pine St.*  
*Durham, North Carolina*  
**Interviewed by Travis Jordan**  
**North Carolina District #3**

Taken from Born in Slavery: Narratives from the Federal Work Program 1936 – 1938  
Source: American Slave: North Carolina Narratives14 (1): 284-290.

"I was thirty-one years ole when de surrender come. Dat makes me sho nuff ole. Near bout a hundred an' three years done passed over dis here white head of mine. I'se been here, I mean I'se been here. 'Spects I'se de oldest nigger in Durham. I'se been here so long dat I done forgot near 'bout as much as dese here new generation knows or ever gwine know.

My white fo'ks lived in Chatham County. Dey was Marse George an' Mis' Betsy Herndon. Mis Betsy was a Snipes befo' she married Marse George. Dey had a big plantation an' raised cawn, wheat, cotton an' 'bacca. I don't know how many field niggers Marse George had, but he had a mess of dem, an' he had hosses too, an' cows, hogs an' sheeps. He raised sheeps an' sold de wool, an' dey used de wool at de big house too. Dey was a big weavin' room whare de blankets was wove, an' dey wove de cloth for de winter clothes too. Linda Hernton an' Milla Edwards was de head weavers, dey looked after de weavin' of da fancy blankets. Mis' Betsy was a good weaver too. She weave de same as de niggers. She say she love de clackin' soun' of de loom an' de way de shuttles run in an' out carryin' a long tail of bright colored thread. Some days she set at de loom all de mawnin' peddlin' wid her feets an' her white han's flittin' over de bobbins.

*[end p. 285]*

---

De cardin' an' spinnin' room was full of niggers. I can hear dem spinnin' wheels now turnin' roun' an' sayin' hum-m-m-m, hum-m-m-m, an' hear de slaves singin' while dey spin. Mammy Rachel stayed in de dyein' room. Dey wuzn' nothin' she didn' know 'bout dyein'. She knew every kind of root, bark, leaf an' berry dat made red, blue, green, or whatever color she wanted. Dey had a big shelter whare de dye pots set over de coals. Mammy Rachel would fill de pots wid water, den she put in de roots, bank an' stuff an' boil de juice out, den she strain it an' put in de salt an' vinegar to set de color. After de wool an' cotton done been carded an' spun to thread, Mammy take de hanks an' drap dem in de pot of boilin' dye. She stir dem 'roun' an' lif' dem up an' down wid a stick, an' when she hang dem up on de line in de sun, dey was every color of de rainbow. When dey dripped dry dey was sent to de weavin' room whare dey was wove in blankets an' things.

When I growed up I married Exter Durham. He belonged to Marse Snipes Durham who had de plantation 'cross de county line in Orange County. We had a big weddin'. We was married on de front po'ch of de big house. Marse George killed a shoat an' Mis' Betsy had Georgianna, de cook, to bake a big weddin' cake all iced up white as snow wid a bride an' groom standin' in de middle holdin' han's. De table was set out in de yard under de trees, an' you ain't never seed de like of eats. All de niggers come to de feas' an' Marse George had a for everybody. Dat

*[end p. 286]*

---

was some weddin'. I had on a white dress, white shoes an' long white gloves dat come to my elbow, an' Mis' Betsy done made me a weddin' veil out of a white net window curtain. When she played de weddin' ma'ch on de piano, me an' Exter ma'ched down de walk an' up on de po'ch to de altar Mis' Betsy done fixed. Dat de pretties' altar I ever seed. Back 'gainst de rose vine dat was full or red roses, Mis' Betsy done put tables filled wid flowers an' white candles. She spread down a bed sheet, a sho nuff linen sheet, for us to stan' on, an' dey was a white pillow to kneel down on. Exter done made me a weddin' ring. He made it out of a big red button wid his pocket knife. He done cut it so roun' an' polished it so smooth dat it looked like a red satin ribbon tide 'roun' my finger. Dat sho was a pretty ring. I wore it 'bout fifty years, den it got so thin dat I lost it one day in de wash tub when I was washin' clothes.

Uncle Edmond Kirby married us. He was de nigger preacher dat preached at de plantation church. After Uncle Edmond said de las' words over me an' Exter, Marse George got to have his little fun: He say, 'Come on, Exter, you an' Tempie got to jump over de broom stick backwards; you got to do dat to see which one gwine be boss of your househol'.' Everybody come stan' 'roun to watch. Marse George hold de broom 'bout a foot high off de floor. De one dat jump over it backwards an' never touch de handle, gwine boss de house, an' if bof of dem jump over widout touchin' it, dey won't gwine be no bossin', dey jus'

*[end p. 287]*

---

gwine be 'genial. I jumped fus', an' you ought to seed me. I sailed right over dat broom stick same as a cricket, but when Exter jump he done had a big dram an' his feets was so big an' clumsy dat dey got all tangled up in dat broom an' he fell head long. Marse George he laugh an' laugh, an' tole Exter he gwine be bossed 'twell he skeered to speak less'n I tole him to speak. After de weddin' we went down to de cabin Mis' Betsy done all dressed up, but Exter couldn' stay no longer den dat night kaze he belonged to Marse Snipes Durham an' he had to go back home. He lef' de nex day for his plantation, but he come back every Saturday night an' stay 'twell Sunday night. We had eleven chillun. Nine was bawn befo' surrender an' two after we was set free. So I had two chillun dat wuzn' bawn in bondage. I was worth a heap to Marse George kaze I had so many chillun. De more chillun a slave had de more dey was worth. Lucy Carter was de only nigger on de plantation dat had more chillun den I had. She had twelve, but her chillun was sickly an' mine was muley strong an' healthy. Dey never was sick.

When de war come Marse George was too ole to go, but young Marse Bill went. He went an' took my brother Sim wid him. Marse Bill took Sim along to look after his hoss an' everything. Dey didn' neither one get shot, but Mis' Betsy was skeered near 'bout to death all de time, skeered dey was gwine be brung home shot all to pieces like some of de sojers was.

(De Yankees wuzn' so bad. De mos' dey wanted was sumpin' to

*[end p. 288]*

eat. Dey was all de time hungry, de fus' thing dey ax for when dey come was sumpin' to put in dey stomach. An' chicken! I ain' never seed even a preacher eat chicken like dem Yankees. I believes to my soul dey ain' never seed no chicken 'twell dey come down here. An' hot biscuit too. I seed a passel of dem eat up a whole sack of flour one night for supper. Georgianna sif' flour 'twell she look white an' dusty as a miller. Dem sojers didn' turn down no ham neither. Dat de onlies' thing dey took from Marse George. Dey went in de smoke house an' toted off de hams an' shoulders. Marse George say he come off mighty light if dat all dey want, 'sides he got plenty of shoats anyhow.

We had all de eats we wanted while de war was shootin' dem guns, kaze Marse George was home an' he kep' de niggers workin'. We had chicken, geoses, meat, peas, flour, meal, potatoes an' things like dat all de time, an' milk an' butter too, but we didn' have no sugar an' coffee. We used groun' pa'ched cawn for coffee an' cane 'lasses for sweetnin'. Dat wuzn' so bad wid a heap of thick cream. Anyhow, we had enough to eat to 'vide wid de neighbors dat didn' have none when surrender come.

I was glad when de was stopped kaze den me an' Exter could be together all de time 'stead of Saturday an' Sunday. After we was free we lived right on at Marse George's plantation a long time. We rented de lan' for a fo'th of what we made, den after while we bought a farm. We paid three hundred dollars we done saved. We had a hoss, a steer, a cow an' two pigs, 'sides some

*[end p. 289]*

---

chickens an' fo' geese. Mis' Betsy went up in de attic an' give us enough goose feathers to make two pillows, den she give us a table an' some chairs. She give us some dishes too. Marse George give Exter a bushel of seed cawn and some seed wheat, den he tole him to go down to de barn an' get a bag of cotton seed. We got all dis den we hitched up de wagon an' th'owed in de passel of chillun an' moved to our new farm, an' de chillun was put to work in de fiel'; dey growed up in de fiel' kaze dey was put to work time dey could walk good.

Freedom is all right, but de niggers was better off befo' surrender, kaze den dey was looked after an' dey didn' get in no trouble fightin' an' killin' like dey do dese days. If a nigger cut up an' got sassy in slavery times, his Ole Marse give him a good whippin' an' he went way back an' set down an' 'haved hese'f. If he was sick, Marse an' Mistis looked after him, an' if he needed store medicine, it was bought an' give to him; he didn' have to pay nothin'. Dey didn' even have to think 'bout clothes nor nothin' like dat, dey was wove an' made an' give to dem. Maybe everybody's Marse and Mistis wuzn' good as Marse George and Mis' Betsy, but dey was de same as a mammy an' pappy to us niggers."

## Jumping the Broom

**Origin** The significance of the broom to early African-Americans originates in the present-day West African country of Ghana. During the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, most of Ghana in the 18th century was ruled by the Asante of Ashanti Confederacy. Asante urban areas and roads were kept conspicuously clean according to visiting British and Dutch traders with the use of domestically made brooms. These same brooms were used by wives or servants to clean the courtyards of palaces or homes. The broom in Asante and other Akan cultures also held spiritual value and symbolized sweeping away past wrongs or warding off evil spirits. This is where the broom comes into play regarding marriage. Brooms were waved over the heads of marrying couples to ward off spirits. The couple would often but not always jump over the broom at the end of the ceremony. Jumping over a broom as part of a wedding ceremony was also common in pre-Christian European cultures. The custom survived the introduction of Christianity and was practiced by both blacks and whites in the American South prior to the Civil War.



**Symbolism** Jumping over the broom symbolized two things. The first was the wife's commitment or willingness to clean the courtyard of the new home she had joined. Furthermore, it expressed her overall commitment to the house. The second thing was the determination of who ran the household. Whoever jumped highest over the broom was the decision maker of the household (usually the man).

**In America** The practice of jumping the broom was largely discarded in Ghana after the decline and eventual fall of the Ashanti Confederacy in 1897 and the imposition of British customs. The practice did however survive in the Americas, especially in the United States, among slaves brought from the Asante area. This particularly Akan practice of jumping the broom was picked up by other African ethnic groups in the Americas and used to solidify marriages during slavery among their communities. Jumping the broom therefore did not arise out of slavery as some have suggested, but is a part of African culture that survived the American slavery like the Voodoo religion of the Fon and Ewe ethnic groups or the ring shout ceremony of the BaKongo and Mbundu ethnic groups.

**Decline** After the end of American slavery, jumping the broom was seldom practiced. It was not necessary once African-Americans could have European-style marriages with rings and other identifiers. Jumping the broom was always done before witnesses in order for members of the slave community to know a couple was married. It had nothing to do with Whites since no form of marriage was recognized for Blacks during slavery.

**Stigma** Jumping the broom also fell out of practice due to the stigma it carried, and in some cases still carries. Once slavery had ended, many Blacks wanted nothing to do with anything associated with that era and discarded the broom jumping practice altogether. The practice did survive in some communities though, and made resurgence after the launch of Alex Haley's "Roots".

## Guided Practice: "Coming of Age"

California African-American Museum: Education Department

August 2013

Name of ritual: Why is it significant?

Elements of the ritual

<p><b>Mexican quinceañera: transition from child to young adult</b>                      -celebrated at age 15                      -formal event                      -usually for girls</p>	<p>1. dance  2.  3.  4.</p>
<p><b>Bar/bat mitzvah: transition from being a child to an adult who is subject to Jewish law</b>                      -age 13 for boys                      -age 12 for girls</p>	<p>1.reading the Torah/research  2.  3.  4.</p>
<p><b>Sweet 16 : transition from child to young adult</b>                      -usually for girls                      -elaborate party                      -mostly celebrated in the United States in Canada</p>	<p>1.expensive gift-giving  2.  3.  4.</p>


**Name of Ritual: Why is it significant?**

**Elements of the Ritual**

**Additional resources and suggestions for extended learning:**

**[\\*A Note for Teachers on the Language of the Narratives](#)**

The Slave Narrative Collection in the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress consists of narrative texts derived from oral interviews. The narratives usually involve some attempt by the interviewers to reproduce in writing the spoken language of the people they interviewed, in accordance with instructions from the project's headquarters, the national office of the Federal Writers' Project in Washington, D.C.

The interviewers were writers, not professionals trained in the phonetic transcription of speech. And the instructions they received were not altogether clear. "I recommend that truth to idiom be paramount, and exact truth to pronunciation secondary," wrote the project's editor, John Lomax, in one letter to interviewers in sixteen states. Yet he also urged that "words that definitely have a notably different pronunciation from the usual should be recorded as heard," evidently assuming that "the usual" was self-evident.\*

In fact, the situation was far more problematic than the instructions from project leaders recognized. All the informants were of course black, most interviewers were white, and by the 1930s, when the interviews took place, white representations of black speech already had an ugly history of entrenched stereotype dating back at least to the early nineteenth century. What most interviewers assumed to be "the usual" patterns of their informants' speech was unavoidably influenced by preconceptions and stereotypes.

The result, as the historian Lawrence W. Levine has written, "is a mélange of accuracy and fantasy, of sensitivity and stereotype, of empathy and racism" that may sometimes be offensive to today's readers. Yet whatever else they may be, the representations of speech in the narratives are a pervasive and forceful reminder that these documents are not only a record of a time that was already history when they were created: they are themselves irreducibly historical, the products of a particular time and particular places in the long and troubled mediation of African-American culture by other Americans.

---

\* This letter is reproduced in George P. Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood

1. The Library of Congress guides to reading the WPA narratives  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/>
2. Information on African-American Vernacular English  
<http://www.hawaii.edu/satocenter/langnet/definitions/aave.html#sounds-hce>
3. Look into the origins of other rituals in African-American communities, as well as others. For example: kwanzaa, Día de los Muertos, New Year's dates and celebrations, seasonal markers.
4. Considering that Exter and Tempe lived on different plantations, see Anthony Kaye's *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South*, for more discussion on how enslaved people mapped out their world beyond the plantation.
5. View and/or share PBS series *Many Rivers to Cross*, especially segments on Nat Turner and Denmark Vesey.