



Title: Who was Bidy Mason?

Level: 4th grade

HISTORY-VISUAL ARTS-ENGLISH (1 lesson)

OVERVIEW

Students will read about Bidy Mason's life and create a storyboard illustrating her role in California history. Bidy Mason won freedom from slavery, worked as a nurse/midwife and then became a successful entrepreneur and a generous contributor to social causes.

Common Core Reading Standards for Informational Text (Grade 4)

Key Ideas and Details 4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Key Ideas and Details 4.2 Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Key Ideas and Details 4.3 Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

California State Standards

History Standard 4.3.4 Study the lives of women who helped build early California (e.g., Bidy Mason)

VAPA Standard 5.3 Construct diagrams, maps, graphs, timelines, and illustrations to communicate ideas or tell a story about a historical event.

English Writing Applications Standard 2.4 Write summaries that contain the main ideas of the reading selection and the most significant details.

English Writing Strategies Standard 1.3 Use traditional structures for conveying information (e.g., chronological order, cause and effect, similarity and difference, posing and answering a question).

OBJECTIVES (SWBAT)

1. Analyze the importance of events in Bidy Mason's life
2. Create a storyboard depicting a sequential order of life events
3. Retell, in writing, events from Bidy Mason's life

MATERIALS

- Bidy Mason's biography (included at the end of the lesson)
- Images of Bidy Mason
- Blank grid for storyboard (included at the end of the lesson)

- Pencils
- Crayons/markers/colored pencils

PROCEDURE

1. Read and discuss the life of Bidley Mason, a woman whose real estate investments amounted to hundreds of thousands of dollars during her lifetime.
2. Lead a discussion about major events in her life. Elicit at least 10 events from the students. Write the events on a chart and display them in the classroom.
3. Each student will then decide on **6** events from her life to depict on a storyboard in chronological order. They can use the provided template or fold a blank sheet of paper in half and into thirds to create six squares. Under each picture, they should include a complete sentence describing an event from Mason's life.
4. Share the storyboards with the class.

EVALUATION

- ✓ Contains six accurate events from Bidley Mason's life
- ✓ Each event is in chronological order in relation to the others
- ✓ Each picture contains detail
- ✓ Each picture has a descriptive sentence
- ✓ Storyboard is complete
- ✓ Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar



Bridget "Biddy" Mason

(1818-1891)

Biddy Mason won freedom from slavery, worked as a nurse/midwife and then became a successful entrepreneur and a generous contributor to social causes. She was born August 15, 1818 in Mississippi, U.S.A. as a slave on a plantation owned by Robert Marion Smith and Rebecca (Crosby) Smith. She had three daughters, Ellen, Ann and Harriet, whose father was reputedly Smith himself. In 1847, Smith became a Mormon convert and decided to move to the Utah Territory with his household and slaves, initiating a strenuous two-thousand-mile cross-country trek. Mason, along with the other enslaved Africans, walked all the way there, sleeping under the wagons at night. She was responsible for herding the cattle. She also prepared meals,

acted as a midwife—a skill likely learned from her mother or grandmother, and took care of her own children.

In 1851, Smith moved his household again, this time to San Bernardino, California, where Brigham Young was starting a Mormon community. Smith probably did not know that California had been admitted to the Union in 1850 as a free state and that slavery was forbidden there. Mason, among others, petitioned the court and in 1856 won freedom for herself and for her daughters. She moved to Los Angeles and found employment as a nurse and midwife. Hard work and her nursing skills allowed her to become economically independent.

Mason was also very frugal and only ten years after gaining her freedom, she bought a site on Spring Street for \$250.00, a property that today is worth hundreds of thousands dollars. She instructed her children never to abandon that site. Mason was one of the first Black women to own land in Los Angeles. This site is now in the center of the commercial district in the heart of Los Angeles. In 1884, she sold a parcel of the land for \$1500 and built a commercial building with spaces for rental on the remaining land. She continued making wise decisions in her business and real estate transactions and her financial fortunes continued to increase until she accumulated a fortune of almost \$300,000. Her grandson, Robert Curry Owens, a real estate developer and politician, was the richest African-American in Los Angeles at one time.

Biddy Mason also gave generously to various charities and provided food and shelter for the poor of all races. Lines of needy people were often forming at 331 South Spring Street. She also remembered the jail inmates whom she visited often. In 1872 she and her son-in-law, Charles Owens, founded and financed the Los Angeles branch of the First African Methodist Episcopal church, L.A.'s first black church.

Biddy Mason died January 15, 1891 and was buried in an unmarked grave at Evergreen cemetery in the Boyle Heights area of Los Angeles. Nearly a century later, on March 27, 1988 a tombstone was dedicated, marking her grave for the first time. The ceremony was attended by Mayor Tom Bradley, other dignitaries, and members of the First African Methodist Episcopal church.

Thursday, November 16, 1989 was declared Biddy Mason Day and a memorial of her achievements was unveiled at the Broadway Spring Center located between Spring Street and Broadway at Third Street.

Biddy Mason Storyboard

Name: _____

