

A SLAVE BOY WHO RAN AWAY: WILLIAM HENRY SINGLETON’S RESISTANCE TO SLAVERY
 TEACHER TOOL 2: VARIOUS FORMS OF RESISTANCE TO SLAVERY

This Teacher Tool provides an overview of various forms of resistance to slavery. Students will likely be aware of the more obvious forms of slave resistance, such as open rebellion or insurrection. It is best to start with what they already know and then build upon that, revealing the more nuanced ways that slaves engaged in covert resistance. Be sure to tell students that covert resistance was ubiquitous and far more common than overt resistance, which almost always resulted in severe consequences for the enslaved individual or group.

Overt Resistance	Covert Resistance
In cases of overt resistance, the individual or group responsible for the action was obvious. The following are some examples of overt forms of slave resistance:	In cases of covert resistance, the individual or group responsible for the action was unclear or concealed or the true motive for the action was veiled. The following are some examples of covert forms of slave resistance:
Coordinated violent rebellion	Pretending to be ill or impaired to get time off from labor
Individual physical rebellion/fighting against an owner	Work slow-downs
Running away	Putting poison into or spitting into food being cooked for an owner
Suicide	Sabotage, like arson, breaking tools, and letting livestock stray
Killing a newborn baby born into slavery	House servants often pretended they were not paying attention or could not comprehend what their owners were saying, but in fact often acted as undercover spies who used information gained from their privileged position at the big house to benefit themselves or their fellow slaves
Self-mutilation or pretending to be ill or impaired to prevent being sold away from one’s family	Pretending to be ignorant
Serving in the Union Army	Using songs and coded language to communicate with other slaves
Temporary escape or hiding out to force concessions from an overseer or master	Forming secret alliances with supportive groups like the Seminoles, a Native American tribe.
Hiding	

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Berry, Mary Frances. *Black Resistance/White Law*. New York: The Penguin Group, 1994.
- Camp, Stephanie M. H. *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Franklin, John Hope, and Loren Schweninger. *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Genovese, Eugene D. *From Rebellion to Revolution*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979.
- Grant, Joanne. *Black Protest. History, Documents, and Analyses. 1619 to the Present*. Second Edition. New York: Random House, 1991.
- McKissack, Patricia C., and Frederick L. McKissack. *Rebels Against Slavery*. New York: Scholastic Press, 1996.
- Mullin, Gerald W. *Flight and Rebellion. Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. Hew Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990.

Teachers may use and reproduce material on the Crafting Freedom website for instructional purposes.