As a health teacher at the West Philadelphia High School, a culturally mixed institution with a large African-American population, I discovered that research projects covering physical diseases involving my 9th through 12th graders brought shock and oftentimes disgust when they saw the signs and symptoms that accompanied these diseases. Some of these diseases occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the signs and symptoms were alarming to the students who were unaware of the diseases and their devastating effects on the human body. I also began to realize that most students had superficial knowledge and appear to be less sensitive to slavery and the history of black people or they felt that slavery occurred in other eras and did not affect them.

This curriculum unit is appropriate for 9th through 12th grade students. This unit will provoke intellectual curiosity and provide a time for research into untapped areas that will give students an opportunity to learn about real life situations from the past. It will also generate a more tolerant classroom discussion on ethnicity and race relations.