World History / WHA

Faust / Room 311 Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Unit 206: Abina Mansah’s Struggle

Monday 03/23/2015

In Class: : PowerPoints and Transcript

Readings Due : none

Assignment Due : none

Tuesday 03/24/2015

In Class : Catch-up

Read in Class

Readings Due : Read Abina, chapters 1 and 2

Assignment Due : In your notebook, write out thorough responses to the chapter questions (attached)

Wednesday 03/25/2015

In Class : Review Questions

Read in Class

Readings Due : Read Abina, chapters 3 and 4

Assignment Due : In your notebook, write out thorough responses to the chapter questions (attached)

Thursday 03/26/2015

In Class : Review Questions

Read in Class

Readings Due : Read Abina, chapters 5 and 6

Assignment Due : In your notebook, write out thorough responses to the chapter questions (attached)

Friday 03/27/2015

In Class : Catch-up

Discuss Big Questions

Readings Due : Catch-up

Assignment Due : Catch-up

Monday 04/06/2015

In Class : Quiet Reading (new unit)

Readings Due : none

Assignment Due : Respond to two of the “Broad Questions for Written Reflections on Abina”

Submit these responses as a single document to Turnitin. Be sure to begin with a heading

(name, date, class period) and then label your chosen questions and provide thorough responses. Thorough responses may be a single paragraph but must be thoroughly developed with arguments and evidence from the text.

Abina and the Important Men

Character Profiles

Abina Mansah:

The woman who filed charges against the man she claimed enslaved her after the British had abolished slavery in the British-colonized Gold Coast of West Africa. She had been captured or kidnapped in Asante territory, and enslaved at two residences in Asante, first in the capital city of Kumai at the home of Eddoo Buffoe and then again in the Asante province of Adanse. She was then purchased by a trader named Yowawhah and traveled with him to the town of Salt Pond.

Quamina Eddoo:

The defendant who allegedly purchased Abina in Salt Pond. He grew palm oil and was considered a man of status in the Gold Coast. Eddoo was a wealthy country “gentleman” who had many dependents, may have owned many slaves, interacted with merchants and traders, and could afford the leading lawyer in the region. He probably was illiterate.

Yowawhah:

The man Abina called her “husband.” After traveling with Abina to the town of Salt Pond, not far from Cape Coast and legally within the borders of the Colony, he appears to have secretly sold Abina to Quamina Eddoo.

James Davis:

A composite of evidence about other young men like him. Court interpreter for the Colony, he was British-educated at a mission school. He could write, knew English, and was likely a Christian. He probably was of mixed heritage, with at least one European ancestor. Although at the bottom of the middle classes, Davis seems to have been related to an important local merchant family and understood how to speak the language of the court. Davis helped Abina file her charges and presented Abina’s case against Eddoo.

William Melton:

The acting judicial assessor for the colony. He served as the magistrate (judge) for the trial though he was not trained as a judge. Considered fair on cases involving enslavement, he ruled in favor of plaintiffs almost as often as in favor of their alleged masters. He frequently turned to advisors and jurors who tended to be powerful men in the Colony.

James Hutton Brew:

Eddoo’s lawyer and the only trained lawyer among the “important men” with whom Abina interacted. He was of mixed heritage and descended from a Scottish merchant who married into a powerful local family of chiefs and traders. Brew had received a European education and sometimes worked for the colonial government. Brew had been involved in a scheme during the late 1870s to create an independent local state around the Cape Coast. Although the British saw the plan as a threat and briefly imprisoned Brew, he modeled the proposed state on Britain and truly believed that British “civilization” had much to offer Africans.

Tandoe:

The man Eddoo planned for Abinah to marry.

Eccoah:

Eddoo’s sister, Abina worked for her.

Transcript Reading Questions

1. What questions does Magistrate Melton ask to try to determine whether Abina was really a slave? Why do you think he asks these questions?
2. Why do you think Abina did not know that Yowahwah had sold her to Quamina Eddoo at first? Why do you think the transaction was hidden from her?
3. Why do you think Abina decided to take her former master to court? What was her objective? What evidence from the court transcript supports your interpretation?
4. Based on the transcript, do you think that Abina made her case?

Ch. 1/Abina Awakes Reading Questions

1. How does Britain’s decision to abolish slavery on the Gold Coast conflict with its economic interests?
2. Why are girls particularly vulnerable to enslavement?
3. Why does William Melton, the magistrate, say James Davis has put him in a “bad position?”

Ch. 2/Breaking of the Beads Reading Questions

1. What do we learn about the background, beliefs, and values of James Hutton Brew, Eddoo’s attorney? Are Brew and Davis “important men”? Which is more ‘important’? Explain.
2. According to Brew, what are the four questions that will determine Eddoo’s guilt or innocence? Do you think all of these questions are relevant to guilt or innocence? Do you see other considerations that should determine guilt or innocence? Explain.
3. When Abina is told to stay with Quamina Eddoo, she is ordered to take off her beads and put on new cloths. What is the significance or symbolic meaning of the breaking of beads and receiving cloth?

Ch. 3/The Truth Reading Questions

1. Why is Abina perplexed by questions about her “master” and “free will?” What is the meaning of freedom for Abina? (Also see Ch. 5, question 1) How does her confusion reflect cultural differences between the British and Abina?
2. According to Brew, how do British assumptions about the appropriate labor and punishment of children influence Melton’s judgment of whether Abina has been enslaved?
3. How does Brew attempt to intimidate Abina? Does he discredit Abina’s testimony when she says of the other girls in Eddoo’s home, “I know they were all free, but they were not free.” What does she mean?

Ch. 4/Life at Quamina Eddoo’s House Reading Questions

1. According to Brew, why doesn’t child labor imply slavery? Evaluate his argument. Is it sound?
2. Was Abina ever beaten or treated with physical cruelty in Adansi? Was she beaten in Salt Pond? Was she threatened in Salt Pond? Does any of this matter?
3. What is Melton’s dilemma? What is his idea of a “delicate balance”?

Ch. 5/He Did Nothing Good for Me Reading Questions

1. How does Abina’s definition of slavery differ from the court’s definition?
2. Why does Melton decide to call a jury? Who is eligible to serve on the jury? Does a jury make a just verdict more or less likely? Explain.
3. What additional witnesses does Melton decide to call? Why do you think they never show up?
4. Why does Abina say she is confused when she is asked whether she was paid for her work? Is this another case of cultural misunderstanding?

Ch. 6/Abina Silenced, Abina Redeemed Reading Questions

1. What arguments are made by the jurors in their deliberation? How do they reach a decision on Eddoo’s guilt or innocence?
2. How does the narrator also judge Melton? Why does the narrator say history shouldn’t judge him too harshly? According to the narrator, what were Melton’s two weaknesses?
3. Given all that you have learned about the participants in the trial, trial procedure, the power structure in the Colony, and the arguments introduced in court, do you think the verdict was “fair”? Explain.
4. After the jury reaches its verdict, why does Abina say that she took her case to court? Why does she now say that she “…might as well have kept silent”?
5. According to the narrator, how are voices from the past silenced in four stages? Why should we conclude that Abina’s voice was not silenced?

Broad Questions for Written Reflections on Abina

1. What does it mean to be an “important man” in the protectorate? Who qualifies as “important” and who is relegated to “unimportance”? How does this distinction reflect the exercise of economic and political power under British colonial control of the protectorate? How does the social hierarchy and distribution of power in the Colony help determine which voices are heard and which are silenced? How do historians themselves participate in the process of voicing or silencing historical actors?
2. How do we see evidence of Britain’s “civilizing mission” at work in the story of Abina and the Important Men? How can it be argued that Africans, including Euro-Africans such as Davis and Brew, benefit from the education, culture, and laws introduced by the British to the protectorate? Do you believe that Melton and Brew are sincere in promoting the civilizing mission? Do they genuinely believe that it is good for Africans? How can it also be argued that Abina shows the arrogance, paternalism, hypocrisy and harmful effects of Britain’s “civilizing mission” in the protectorate? Assess the author’s point of view on this question. Does Getz see the civilizing mission in a sympathetic or critical light?
3. Review the arguments on both sides of Abina’s case. Did Abina receive a “fair” trial? Was the verdict “just”? Answer the question from the point of view of Melton, Brew, and Abina. Now examine the question from the point of view of Getz, the historian who wrote the graphic history. Finally, answer the question from your own point of view.
4. Abina and the Important Men is sometimes called a “comic book” or “graphic novel,” but Getz’s intention was to present history, not fiction, to the reader. After reading the transcript of the trial and the illustrated text, examine the question whether Abina and the Important Men is a credible, accurate history or a fictionalizing of the historical record. As you address the question, critically assess Getz’s own description of Abina as history rather than fiction: “It is not a work of historical fiction, but instead a history because it aims for accuracy and authenticity even while recognizing that all historical works are at some level speculative and subjective.”