

# RESILIENCE AND RESISTANCE

In the last two episodes of *Roots*, the descendants of Kunta Kinte try to resist the terms of enslavement through simple acts like singing and through riskier actions like organized revolt. Assess which of these were most effective and why, in addition to evaluating their long-term effects.

## DISCOVERY

Resistance takes many forms in *Roots*, ranging from Nat Turner's rebellion to Kunta and his descendants keeping Mandinka culture alive through "Binta's tune." Spirituals were also a form of resistance. Use these resources to explore spirituals through the lens of identity and their role in helping slaves survive and unite amidst incredible violence.

- Learn about the history of spirituals at [www.loc.gov/collections/songs-of-america/articles-and-essays/musical-styles/ritual-and-worship/spirituals/](http://www.loc.gov/collections/songs-of-america/articles-and-essays/musical-styles/ritual-and-worship/spirituals/)
- Find out how spirituals evolved and influenced the development of music in America at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zeshN\\_ummU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8zeshN_ummU)
- Visit the Library of Congress National Jukebox and listen to several spirituals that chronicle the slave experience:
  - o *Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen*  
[www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/10169](http://www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/10169)
  - o *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*  
[www.loc.gov/item/lomaxbib000555/](http://www.loc.gov/item/lomaxbib000555/)
  - o *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*  
[www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/1797/](http://www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/1797/)

## DISCUSSION

- Establish a continuum of acts of resistance from spiritual or emotional resistance, such as prayer or song, to running away, to larger scale uprisings like Nat Turner's rebellion. Cite specific examples from *Roots*.
- Compare and contrast the modes of resistance depicted in *Roots* with other forms of resistance throughout history (e.g., the Holocaust, the Anti-Apartheid movement, and the Civil Rights Movement) and with modern acts of organizing and resistance (like the use of social media). Consider how technology has helped or hindered resistance movements over the course of American history.
- Consider how resistance contributed to the slaves' sense of self and identity. Explain how resistance also helped the slaves maintain a connection with their African roots using specific examples from *Roots*.
- Discuss the role of enslaved women in *Roots* and how they were vital to resistance movements.



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