

## TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

### *Prudence Crandall Takes on Canterbury, CT*

Grade – 11

Length of class period – 45 minutes; two periods required

Inquiry – What types of resistance did early abolitionists face in Connecticut?

Objectives - students will be able to analyze the challenges of creating an equitable society in antebellum New England.

Materials - collection of primary source documents relating to Prudence Crandall's attempt to create a school for African American girls in Coventry CT. Adapted from documents available at Prudence Crandall Museum website

<http://www.ct.gov/cct/cwp/view.asp?a=2127&q=302260> and the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at the MacMillan Center <http://www.yale.edu/glc/crandall/index.htm>

#### Activities

1. students will read primary source documents and complete analysis questions 1 & 2
2. working in small groups, students will brainstorm answers to question 3
3. students will participate in whole-class discussion of documents and analysis questions

How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?

1. ability to accurately discern opposing perspectives in documents
2. depth of analysis of documents, use of specific references to documents to support analysis
3. participation in small group and whole-class discussion

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –

- 1.1.12 Evaluate the role and impact significant individuals have had on historical events.
- 1.2.13 Analyze how events and people in Connecticut reflect and have contributed to developments in United States history.
- 1.9.43 Give examples of how individuals or groups have worked to expand or limit citizens' rights in the United States and other nations.

***Prudence Crandall Opens a School for “Young Ladies and Little Misses of Color”***  
*April 1, 1833*

When the aristocratic families of Canterbury, Connecticut, concluded their search for a new teacher for the school where their daughters were boarded, they were pleased to have found a young woman of good character and good credentials. Miss Prudence Crandall, their choice for principal and teacher at the Female Boarding School, was a graduate of the Friends Boarding School of Providence, Rhode Island. She had subsequently distinguished herself as a teacher of young women at the neighboring town of Plainfield, Connecticut. And as for her sense of duty, her moral values, and her integrity: these virtues Prudence Crandall possessed in abundance. Indeed, her moral strength was something the townsfolk of Canterbury thought they wanted in their classroom. It ultimately led them to place her in their jail.



For the first 18 months of her tenure at the Female Boarding School of Canterbury, Prudence Crandall won nothing but the praise and admiration of the community for her efforts in instructing their daughters. She was well versed in the arts and sciences and provided her pupils not only a wealth of knowledge out also a model worthy of their emulation. She was popular with her students and respected by the good citizens of Canterbury.

Things began to change for Prudence Crandall in January of 1833, however. A young lady 17 years of age approached Prudence Crandall about becoming one of her pupils. This prospective student, Sarah Harris, came from a good family and seemed genuinely interested in learning.

Without hesitation, Prudence Crandall admitted Sarah Harris to the school, where she eagerly commenced her studies and quickly won the acceptance and friendship of her fellow students.

Miss Crandall, however, soon found a delegation of Canterbury’s most distinguished citizens calling upon her. The delegation voiced its objection to her decision to admit Sarah Harris. They did not object because of any reservation concerning her intelligence or her character. They objected to Sarah Harris because of her color. Sarah Harris was black. Miss Crandall was warned that she must exclude black children from her school. Prudence Crandall replied with an announcement that henceforth she would accept only black children.

Prudence Crandall temporarily closed her school. Needing both financial support and recruits for her classroom, she traveled about New England seeking the assistance of abolitionist organizations. She secured financial backing and found 20 “young ladies and little misses of color” who were eager to learn what Miss Crandall offered to teach. The Female Boarding School of Canterbury reopened on April 1, 1833, amid a storm of controversy.

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**First Impressions: *Controversy at Canterbury***

The Canterbury controversy was covered widely by the newspapers of the day, and caused a national debate of the questions raised by Prudence Crandall’s attempt to offer educational opportunities to African Americans. The most heated debate occurred within the antislavery

movement itself, between the members of the American Colonization Society, who favored removal from the United States of all blacks, and the antislavery societies, which favored abolition and racial equality.

**Source 1: Advertisement in *The Liberator*, March 2, 1833**

PRUDENCE CRANDALL,  
Principal of the Canterbury, (Conn.) Female  
Boarding School,

Returns her most sincere thanks to those who have patronized her School, and would give information that on the first Monday of April next, her school will be opened for the reception of young Ladies and little Misses of color. The branches taught are as follows—Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, English Grammar, Geography, History, Natural and Moral Philosophy, Chemistry, Astronomy, Drawing and Painting, Music on the Piano, together with the French language.

The terms, including *board*, *washing*, and tuition, are \$25 per quarter, one half paid in advance.

For information, respecting the School, reference may be made to the following gentlemen—Arthur Tappan, Esq., Rev. Peter Williams, Rev. Theodore Raymond, Rev. Theodore Wright, Rev. George Bourne, New-York city;--Mr. James Forten, Mr. Joseph Casey, Philadelphia, Pa.;--Rev. S.J. May, Brooklyn, Ct;--Rev. Mr. Beman, Middletown, Ct;--Rev. S.S. Jocelyn, New-Haven, Ct;--Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Arnold Buffam, Boston, Mass;--George Benson, Providence, R.I.

Canterbury, (Ct.) Feb. 25, 1833

**Source 2: Resolution of Canterbury Town Meeting, March 9, 1833**

Whereas it has been publicly announced that a school is to be opened in the town, on the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of April next, using the language of the advertisement, “for young ladies and little misses of color,” or in other words, for the people of color, the obvious tendency of which would be, to collect within the town of Canterbury, large numbers of persons from other States, whose characters of habit might be various and unknown to us, thereby rendering insecure, the persons, property, and reputations of our own citizens. Under such circumstances, our silence might be construed as an approval of the project.

*Thereupon Resolved*, That the localities of a school for the people of color, at any place within the limits of this town, for the admission of persons from foreign jurisdictions, meets with our unqualified disapprobation and it is to be understood that the inhabitants of Canterbury protest against it, in the most earnest manner.

*Resolved*, That a Committee be now appointed, to be composed of the City authority and Selectmen, who shall make known to the person contemplating the establishment of said school, the sentiments and objections entertained by the meeting in reference to said school, pointing out to her the injurious effects, and the incalculable evils, resulting from such an establishment within this town, and persuade her if possible to abandon the project.

**Source 3: Henry E. Benson to William Lloyd Garrison, March 12, 1833**

Providence, R.I. March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1833

Mr. Wm. Lloyd Garrison,

DEAR FRIEND—You have heard of the excitement that prevailed at Canterbury, when the intention of Miss Crandall to open a school for the education of colored females was made known to the inhabitants; and you doubtless wish to hear the results of the Town Meeting....

I arrived at C. from Providence, just at the hour the freemen were assembling; and when I entered the meeting-house, found that a moderator had been chosen, and the call for the meeting read....My attention was soon called to a protest against the establishment of the school, signed by many of the citizens, which showed precisely the sentiments with which they regarded it. A preamble, with two resolutions annexed, was then handed to the Town Clerk and read to the people.

Many remarks were offered upon these resolutions by [several townspeople], wholly unworthy of a civilized, much less of an enlightened, Christian community. The injury that would accrue to the town from the introduction of colored children was represented in an awful light by a Mr. Judson. He said that the state of things would be, should such a school go into operation, precisely as they are now in New-Orleans, where there is scarcely, said he, a happy person—that their sons and daughters would be forever ruined, and property be no longer safe. For his part, he was not willing, for the honor and welfare of the town, that even one corner of it should be appropriated to such a purpose....

Mr. Judson further stated that they had a law which would prevent that school from going into operation, the law that related to the introduction of foreigners....

Much more was said. Yes, much more was said. Shame, shame, shame to those gentlemen who had no more honor. The character, the motives of Miss Crandall, were basely misrepresented. And you will ask, was there no one to defend her? Yes, there was *one*, one who though he did not seem altogether to approve of the school, had moral courage enough to defend her character against the base insinuations of those who had so much to say about *foreign influence* and oppression. That man was Mr. G. S. White, a tanner. He said the gentlemen were excited, and did not rightly consider what they were about to do—that the resolutions in themselves might be well enough, but he thought it was going too far to bring up an old law to support them—that that law never was intended, and never could be brought to bear upon the school in question. He did not believe that such a state of things would exist as Mr. Judson had represented, if colored children were admitted into the town; for, said he, Miss Crandall is a Christian, and the evening and the morning prayer will daily ascend to the Father of mercies in their behalf.

Mr. White was continually interrupted...Indeed, sir, during the whole time that Mr. White was speaking, the house was in the utmost confusion:--and notwithstanding every liberty was allowed Mr. Judson, not at all was allowed him....

The votes upon the resolutions were unanimous.

In short, such disgraceful proceedings I never witnessed, before, and little expected to witness in the middle of the nineteenth century. The present generation may hail them as just,

but the next will detest them. The names of those who have been most active in attempting the suppression of this school, may be honored now, but future ages will consign them to shame.

I had hoped that, among the enlightened inhabitants of Connecticut, such a school would be hailed with joy. But I was deceived. Let not the voice of protest against Southern tyranny be raised by the people of that State.

You will doubtless ask—How does Miss Crandall bear up under such a mighty opposition? I reply—UNMOVED. Not a purpose of her heart is shaken—not a fear awakened within her bosom. Confident that she is pursuing the path of duty, she is determined to press on to the end. No persecution that can assail her will alter the steadfast purpose of her soul.

**Source 4: Letter to the editor, *Norwich Republican*, March 1883**

Mr. Editor,—Most of your readers are probably aware that considerable excitement is at present existing in a portion of our community, respecting the location of a school in Canterbury for colored females. And as much pains have been taken to prejudice the public mind, in relation to the opposition made by the citizens of that town to the establishment of such an institution, it has been deemed a duty to all concerned to lay before the community the real facts of the case as well as the reasons why such opposition has been made.

You are aware, sir, that there are in Boston and Providence a few, at the head of whom stands the editor of the *Liberator*, who have been engaged for some time past, in bitter and ceaseless hostility to the American Colonization Society. Predicating the notions on the undenied truth that all men are born free and equal, they come out with the false, the unfounded, the inflammable doctrine, that slavery ought to be immediately abolished—the negroes made free, and received into the bosom of our community on a footing of perfect and entire equality. The Colonization Society they denounce for its purpose of shipping off the free blacks at the South who are seditious incendiaries and disturbers of peaceful slavery. They have heaped the most insulting epithets upon the leaders of the grand, noble scheme of colonizing the liberated blacks upon the coast of Africa—have attributed the most unworthy motives to them—and at one fell sweep, have denounced the Society, comprising some of the most talented, enlightened and liberal men in the union, and wish to bind our country in perpetuity to the curse of slavery.

These are the men, sir, who laid the foundation of this Negro school. These are the men who are industriously fanning the flame of Southern hatred toward Northern men and interests: whether or not it be their acknowledged design, they in fact do much to cherish this sectional hostility and recrimination. These men have founded this School.

And what do they propose to accomplish by means of this institution? Why, to break down the barriers which God has placed between blacks and whites—to manufacture “*Young Ladies of color*,” and to foist upon the community a new species of gentility, in the shape of sable belles. They propose, by softening down the rough features of the African mind, in these wenches, to cook up a palatable morsel for our white bachelors. After this precocious concoction is completed, they are then to be taken by the hand, introduced into the best society, and made to aspire to the first matrimonial connections in the country. In a word, they hope to force the two races to blend!

Now, what will be the actual result? Why, sir, the negress, diligently taught her own dignity and consequence (for this is the express object of the school) comes out flaunting in all the borrowed charms of dress and fashionable demeanor. But she will be greeted by a spontaneous, unconquerable aversion of the white toward the black. Educated and accomplished as she may be, she cannot over-leap this deep gulf which nature has dug between the two races. She will then return disappointed and angry to her primitive station and being unfitted to it, by an ill-advised and harmful education, will sink into degradation and infamy.

The facts in relation to the case are simply these. Miss Crandall was the teacher of a female school in Canterbury. Somebody persuaded her to dismiss her very interesting company of young ladies, and substitute for them, "*young ladies and little misses of color.*" Preparations were accordingly made—her house and school room were furnished in a new style—and the purpose declared, of attempting to instruct a generation of negresses in all the accomplishments and sciences enjoyed by their more favored white sisters. When the astounding news of this change in the condition of Miss C's school was made known to the public, great excitement was produced. In the immediate neighborhood of this proposed institution, such a change was deemed very reprehensible, and the collecting together of such a number of blacks in their midst, was thought utterly intolerable.

A Friend of the Colonization Cause

**Source 5: Editorial, *The Abolitionist*, April 1833**

We scarcely know how to comment upon the disgraceful proceeding in Canterbury. We never realized in its full measure and extent the blind and frantic prejudice against the people of color, which guides too many of those who style themselves as Christians.

The idea entertained by the people of Canterbury that the establishment of a school for the education of twenty or thirty little girls would bring ruin upon their town, would be merely ludicrous if it had not produced such melancholy results. It is perfectly obvious that a flourishing boarding school must tend to enrich the place in which it is situated. Money must be spent there, for the support of the scholars. When their relations and friends visit, they must also bring money to it. Such a school could not be successful without benefiting the town.

We presume that the only serious objection to the proposed institution in Canterbury, was that its pupils were to be of the African race. Is it then to be established as a principle, that every person who has African blood in his veins, is to be denied the common means of education, by the people of New England? If not, how is the course of these misguided villagers to be justified? For no reason can be given why people of color should not be educated, which would not apply to every other place in New England as well as Canterbury. Do we believe that colored men are to be made better by ignorance? Or that the situation of the whites is to be improved by shutting the light of knowledge from their colored brethren? If we admit that colored people have the same right to be educated as the whites, we must admit that they have a right to be educated in the same place.

Are the people of Canterbury afraid that their village will be ruined, by twenty or thirty young girls coming into it, because they are colored? If these children were to be paupers, we

should not think the sensitiveness of the Canterburians so strange. But they will be the daughters of the richest and most intelligent among the colored people. It is absurd to suppose they will impose a burden on the village.

We have endeavored, but in vain, to imagine what specific evil the townsmen of Canterbury could anticipate. We can only attribute their conduct to the workings of a deep and unrelenting prejudice against the colored people, which views with jealousy every attempt made to improve the African race among us, and wishes to drive the objects of its hatred as far as possible from its sight.

#### **Source 6: Letter of Canterbury Selectmen, March 22, 1833**

To the American Colonization Society:

To improve the unfortunate condition of a portion of the human family, in the spirit of generosity, your Society has been created, embracing many of our worthy, humane and patriotic fellow-citizens. The whole Christian community is united in sentiment and action, to remove as fast as practicable, to their native land, those who are bound in slavery. A Territory has been acquired for their occupancy upon the shores of Africa, and funds are now accumulating to meet all the expenses of their removal, where they may forever enjoy the blessings of education and freedom. It would seem that an organization such as yours, so concerned with the condition of its beneficiaries, and our safety, would find none to oppose it. But in this we were mistaken.

A new association has been formed under the name of the "Anti-Slavery Society." That Society *opposes* the Colonization Society, on the grounds that blacks ought not to be sent out of the country, but should immediately be made free, and remain within the United States, participating in all the affairs of the Government, and on terms of *entire equality*. And last of all, in their wild career of reform, these gentlemen would justify intermarriages with the white people!!! Sentiments like these are somewhat alarming, and we have been led to an examination of their consequences, by events which have recently transpired in Canterbury, Ct. Miss P. Crandall, in 1831, having received the aid of all our fellow-citizens, engaged to establish a school for *young ladies* in this place, when, without consulting a single individual with whom she had made that engagement, took a journey to Providence and Boston, and soon after, unceremoniously dismissed and sent home all the young ladies, and announced her intention to convert her *female seminary* into a *school for blacks*. The citizens of Canterbury assembled, and by a committee requested Miss C. to give up the project, which she declined. After a larger meeting was also unsuccessful in convincing her, a town meeting was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March, when the unanimous voice of the town was expressed.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of March these resolutions were communicated to Miss C. by the Selectmen, who repeated the various objections of the town, and stressed the impropriety of placing such an establishment in the town *against everyone's wishes*. She was informed that the citizens of Canterbury were opposed to this school, which would assist in the work of *immediate abolition*, as well as in opposing colonizing efforts. The *Liberator* was to be the mouth piece of this school, and Miss Crandall herself had declared, that "*colonizing the people of color* was a system of fraud, from beginning to end."

We might here rest our cause in the hands of the public. We might ask the citizens of *any town* in New England, wherever situated, would it be well for *that town* to admit the blacks from slave States, or other States, to an unlimited extent? Once open this door, and New-England will become the \***Liberia** of America!!

*\*Founded as a colony by the American Colonization Society in 1821-22, Liberia was created as a place for slaves freed in the United States to emigrate to in Africa, on the premise they would have greater freedom and equality there.*

**Source 7: Record of Canterbury town meeting, April 1, 1833**

At a town meeting legally called and held at Canterbury, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, 1833, Asahel Bacon, Esq.,

Moderator—

Voted, That a petition on behalf of the town of Canterbury, to the next [State of Connecticut] general assembly, be drawn up in suitable language, deprecating the evil consequences of bringing from other towns, and other states, people of color for any purpose, and more especially for the purpose of disseminating the principles and doctrines opposed to the benevolent colonization system, praying said legislature to pass and enact such laws, as in their wisdom will prevent the evil.

The forgoing is a true copy of Record: Examined by Andrew T. Judson, Town Clerk

**Source 8: Account of Prudence Crandall, May 7, 1833**

I saw that the prejudice of the whites against color was deep and entrenched. In my humble opinion, it was the strongest, if not the only chain, that bound these heavy burdens on the wretched slaves, which we ourselves are not willing to touch with one of our fingers. I said in mine heart here are my convictions. What shall I do? Shall I be inactive and permit prejudice to remain undisturbed? Or shall I venture to enlist into the ranks of those who with the Sword of Truth dare hold combat with prevailing injustice?

**The Birth and Death of a Unique Institution**

Twenty young African American women began their studies under the direction of Prudence Crandall on April 1, 1833. In the months after, Crandall and her pupils endured much abuse, becoming targets of a community that sought to deny them the opportunity of learning. The young women were subjected to taunts and insults by the citizens of Canterbury. They were followed by angry whites whenever they left the school grounds. Young men jeered and tooted horns at them. On occasion, they were pelted with rocks and rotten eggs. The town physician refused to answer their call for medical care. The town pharmacist refused to sell them medicines. The shopkeepers would not sell food or other supplies for use at the school. The stage company would not transport them to or from their homes. These rebukes might have been overwhelming had not Quakers from neighboring communities, Crandall's father (Pardon



Crandall), and an African American farmer with a wagon stepped forward to assure the school a continuing supply of goods and services.

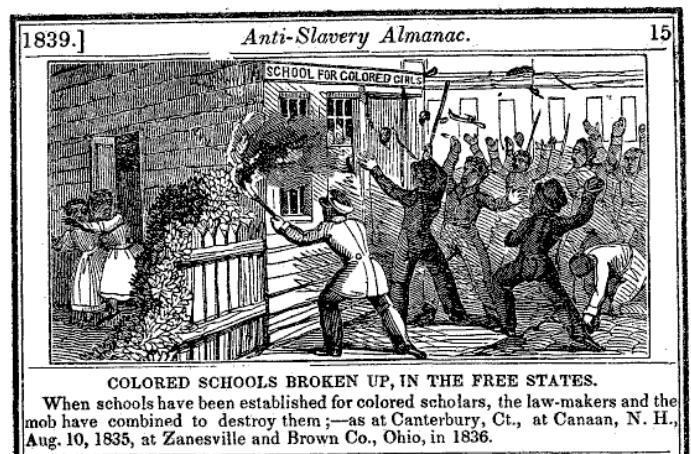
In April and May of 1833, the town of Canterbury attempted to prosecute two of the students, Eliza Ann Hammond and Anne Peterson, under Connecticut's Pauper and Vagrancy Law. An obscure law, this act made it illegal for nonresidents who had no visible means of support to stay in a town for longer than ten days without the written consent of the town selectmen. The fine for violating the Pauper and Vagrancy Law was \$1.67 per week [\$36.78 in 2008]; and, after ten days, those who lacked the permission of the selectmen were subject to ten lashes with a whip on the naked body. Before any penalties might be enforced upon the students, the Rev. Samuel May of Brooklyn, Connecticut, posted a \$10,000 bond [\$220,237 in 2008] to cover the costs of any and all vagrancy fines. So little intimidated was Eliza Ann Hammond that she volunteered to submit to the whip. It was the townsfolk who then backed down.

The school facilities were the target of frequent vandalism. A load of manure was dumped into the school's drinking well. Refuse from a local slaughter house was piled upon the school's front porch. Rocks were hurled through school windows at all hours of the day and night. Two attempts were made to burn the school building down.

On May 24, 1833, the Connecticut legislature enacted what came to be called the Connecticut "Black Law." This act made it a crime punishable by fine for any person "to set up or establish in this State any school, academy, or literary institution for the instruction or education of colored persons, who are not inhabitants of the State...without the consent in writing first obtained of a majority of the civil authority, and also of the Selectmen of the town in which such school is situated." It was also made a crime to teach, harbor, or board "any colored person who is not an inhabitant of any town" of Connecticut. On June 27, 1833, Prudence Crandall was arrested for violation of the Connecticut Black Law and spent that night in the country jail at Brooklyn, Connecticut. The next morning, Samuel May and other abolitionists posted her bail.

On August 23, 1833, Crandall was tried in county court. The prosecuting attorney, Andrew T. Judson, argued that the Black Law must be enforced or Connecticut would become a haven for freed slaves from the South. The judge instructed the jury that the Black Law must be considered constitutional and that the jurors had only to decide whether or not Prudence Crandall had violated it. Still, the jury was unable to reach a unanimous decision. Seven jurors voted for conviction, five favored acquittal. The judge dismissed the jury and set Crandall free.

In October, Prudence Crandall found herself again in court facing the same charges. This time she was tried before Judge David Daggett, Chief Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court. Daggett was not only opposed to civil liberties for free blacks, he was a supporter of slavery. His charge to the jury left little room for a



verdict other than guilty. Accordingly, Crandall was convicted of violating the Black Law.

Crandall meanwhile continued to operate her school while awaiting appeal of her conviction. The Appeals Court set aside her conviction in July of 1834, on grounds of insufficient information, but declined the opportunity to reverse it. On September 9, 1834, a mob attacked the Female Boarding School under the cover of darkness. Wielding iron bars and clubs, the mob members smashed windows, destroyed furniture, and left two school rooms uninhabitable. The local authorities declined either to investigate the offense or to provide protection against similar events in the future. The next morning, Crandall, with the aid of her friend Samuel May, told the children that the costs and the risks of maintaining the school were too high and they must return to their families. The school was then permanently closed.

### **Second Impressions: *The Significance of Crandall and Her School***

Across America in the 1830s, there was a popular fear of racial equality, and especially, racial “merging.” In the sources that follow, commentators probe the inflamed feelings that the Prudence Crandall case ignited.

#### **Source 9: Judge William Jay, *Inquiry Into the Character and Tendency of the American Colonization and American Anti-Slavery Societies, 1834***

That *black* girls should presume to learn reading, and writing, and music, and geography, was past all bearing. Committee after committee waited on Miss Crandall, to protest against the intended school but to no avail. More efficient means were found necessary to avert the impending calamity, and a legal town meeting was summoned to consider the awful crisis. At this meeting resolutions were passed, expressing the strongest rejections of the proposed school, and the preamble declared that “the obvious tendency of the school would be to collect within the town of Canterbury, large numbers of persons from other States, whose characters and habits might be various and unknown to us, thereby rendering insecure the *persons, property, and reputations* of our citizens.” Had this extreme nervous apprehension of danger been excited in the good people of Canterbury by the introduction of some hundreds of Irish laborers into their village to construct a rail road or canal, we should still have thought their temperament very peculiar; but when we find them this affecting to tremble not merely for their property, but for their persons and reputations, at the approach of fifteen or twenty “young ladies and misses of color,” we confess we are astonished that the collected wisdom of these people was not able to frame an argument against the school, less disgraceful to themselves.

#### **Source 10: Interview of Prudence Crandall, age 82, by journalist George B. Thayer, 1886**

My whole life has been one of opposition. I never could find anyone near me to agree with me. Even my husband opposed me, more than anyone. He would not let me read the books that he himself read, but I did read them. I read all sides, and searched for the truth whether it was in science, religion, or humanity. I sometimes think I would like to live somewhere else. Here, in

Elk Falls [Kansas], there is nothing for my soul to feed upon. Nothing, unless it comes from abroad in the shape of books, newspapers, and so on. There is no public library, and there are but one or two persons in the place that I can converse with profitably for any length of time. No one visits me, and I begin to think they are afraid of me. I think the ministers are afraid I shall upset their religious beliefs, and they advise the members of their congregation not to call on me, but I don't care. I speak on spiritualism sometimes, but more on temperance. I don't want to die yet. I want to live long enough to see some reforms consummated.

**Source 11: James Schouler, *History of the United States*, 1894**

In our free States all the while, the negro, though usually unmolested and permitted to earn his own livelihood, was the victim of caste from the color of his skin and seldom encouraged to better his condition. He might brush boots, sweep a store, drive a wagon, and perform menial work of all sorts for a living, but any idea of having him educated up to the standard of a merchant or professional man was not to be thought of. One Prudence Crandall undertook to open a school for colored girls in the town of Canterbury, Connecticut; but so furious an opposition did she stir up that the legislature reached out a hand to suppress, and after suffering brutal annoyances from her neighbors she was forced to close her establishment. And again in this proud State of the common schools, when private benefactors proposed to set up a manual-labor college for blacks in the same city as Yale, New Haven was so alarmed that at a public indignation meeting the mayor and respectable citizens joined in voting down the project and threatening resistance by all means lawful. No such sedition eggs could be laid in alert New England that the good society of the place did not sit down with its whole weight upon the nest and crush them before the brood could be hatched. The utmost that private kindness could do at the North was to teach young children of the despised race the bare rudiments of learning. Negroes and mulattoes were kept humble, even in States where they were on a nominal equality with the whites; to aspire was forbidden; and while one of superior intelligence among them might direct a band of barbers or waiters of his own complexion, a white man would rather starve than work under negro supervision in any capacity.

**Source 12: Edwin and Miriam Small, "Prudence Crandall: Champion of Negro Education," 1944**

Some of the irritation against the school arose from the fact that members of the community regarded themselves as the true friends of the Negro in their capacity as members of the Friends of the Colonization in Africa. The insistence upon maintain separation from people of color even in worship reflects the arguments against the merging of the races voiced in letters continually printed in the newspapers of the day, written usually by friends of the Cause of Colonization. This seemed the most hopeful solution to many persons, since it pointed toward a future when this country would be entirely free of the race problem. The Friends of Colonization, including many religious leaders, actively opposed any education for Negroes beyond training them to be leaders of their own race in Africa, since any other efforts pointed to eventual equality, and the much-feared "merging."

**Source 13: Dwight Lowell Dumond, *Antislavery: The Crusade for Freedom in America*, 1961**

People always have found it easy to crucify those who differ with them. They never succeed in suppressing ideas in this way, but they never fail to try, and they seem to get a sadistic pleasure from the effort. Such was the public attitude toward the free Negroes and their antislavery friends. Great souls must always bear a certain amount of rudeness and disrespect. The liberals, the humanitarians, the intellectuals, the philanthropists, and practitioners of Christian benevolence of the 1830s were no exception. The American people in 1830, certainly, were an ill-mannered lot, and when slaveholders, men in high public office, and political newspapers chanted a hymn of hate, ill manners turned to brutality. The shame of what happened then will always be with us. It could not have happened if public officials had performed the most elementary duty of protecting persons and property. They did not do so. The whim of public opinion in a given community at a given time took from the law control of the affairs of men. The result was either mob violence or legal persecution, or both.

The first outburst of public hostility toward Negroes and their antislavery friends to attract national attention was the Prudence Crandall case. Sentiment in the town against Miss Crandall was whipped into a frenzy by Andrew T. Judson, ambitious local politician and guiding genius of the local colonization society.

Andrew T. Judson realized his ambition of going to Congress, but was defeated for reelection. The tide of public opinion was already running heartily against such men.

**Source 14: Historian Russel B. Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slave Controversy, 1830-1860*, 1963.**

Since both abolitionists and antiabolitionists considered the Canterbury affair as a test case, it furnished the clearest examination of the issues involved in the question of Negro education in the North. Samuel J. May, who was projected into national prominence by his part in the proceedings, believed that the importance of Prudence Crandall's right to maintain her school transcended Connecticut; that it was a question of "whether the people in any part of our land will recognize and generously protect the inalienable rights of man without distinction of color." The abolitionist lawyers based their defense on the principle that the Negro possessed an inalienable right, as well as a constitutional one, to education. [Andrew T.] Judson's prosecution rested on the thesis that the Negroes were not citizens and as such had no rights at all, that the Declaration and the Constitution had never meant them to be citizens or to have rights, and that Crandall's actions were in defiance of public policy. Quite clearly defined in the case was the popular fear of racial equality and racial merging; though the school was originally intended to be biracial and was then changed to a Negro school, neither policy was acceptable to Canterbury citizens. Judson informed the jury during the course of the first trial that "the professed object is to educate the blacks, but the real object is, to make the people yield their assent by degrees, to this merging of the two races, and have the African race placed on the footing of perfect equality with Americans." Out of court, he spread the story that Miss Crandall's aim really was to train Negro girls as brides for New England bachelors. In addition, the antagonism of the American Colonization Society to the school served to define the divergent educational aims of the abolitionists and the colonizationists, the latter desiring to

educate the Negro for life in a far-removed colony of his own race, the former wishing to prepare him for a place in American society.

**Source 15: Alma Lutz, *Crusade for Freedom: Women of the Antislavery Movement, 1968***

Neither persecution, nor disappointment, not a conservative husband, nor the traditional role of a clergyman's wife, were able to close Prudence Crandall's active mind nor curb her liberal ideals. This courageous woman, who faced mob violence before Garrison or any of the antislavery lecturers, blazed the train for women in the antislavery movement.

**Source 16: Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle, 1975***

Prudence Crandall's struggle is all the more memorable when viewed in the context of her day. In 1833, Mount Holyoke was still a dream in Mary Lyon's mind. The voices of the first women to speak against slavery in public had not yet been raised. Yet Prudence Crandall traveled widely, disregarded not only threats but flying stones, and carried on her school in a virtual state of siege for eighteen months. Here was a struggle to give many a woman not only food for thought but heart as well. Prudence Crandall belongs not only to the anti-slavery movement, but also to that for women's rights.

Questioning the Past: *be sure to reference specific examples from the text to support your analysis!*

1. Why did the city leaders of Canterbury oppose a school in their community that would educate African American children? What was the underlying reason, as articulated by Andrew T. Judson? What arguments could be made to counter their concerns?
2. Analyze and compare the premises of colonization and abolition. Why would these two movements come to such bitter opposition on the school question?
3. Education is the greatest of equalizers. The Virginia Assembly in the years before the Civil War stated its philosophy regarding education for African Americans, whether free or slave: *We have, as far as possible, closed every avenue by which light can enter their minds. If we could extinguish their capacity to see the light, our work would be completed; they would then be on a level with the beasts of the field, and we should be safe.*

American states, north and south, attempted to ensure that blacks would not receive the same educational opportunities as whites, not only before the Civil War, but after it. It was not until 1954 that the U.S. Supreme Court decreed that all people must be given equal opportunities for learning. Nevertheless, the gap in education that is the legacy of generations of inferior schooling for blacks has yet to be closed. [For more information on this, look up the 1996 Connecticut court case of *Sheff v. O'Neill*.]

What would have been the short- and long-term consequences in 1833 if Connecticut had been committed to providing for African Americans the same quality of education as was offered to whites?