

A Journey to Freedom via America's Birthplace (*An Intricate Connection Among Conductors, Passengers, and Stations*)

Subjects: English, Language Arts, American History

Suggested Grade Levels: 7–9

Time Frame: Variable

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Overview

This lesson is designed to put emphasis on Philadelphia's role as a central component in the Underground Railroad network that enabled hundreds of enslaved Africans to realize freedom in America. Additionally, since Philadelphia birthed two seminal documents—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—while serving as the nation's capital. An in-depth study of these documents should activate this lesson. The final phase of this multidisciplinary lesson is intended for students to gain insights about World Heritage Sites & Cities, locally and internationally.

Connection to Philadelphia World Heritage Tool Kit's Goal

Philadelphia is home to one of the twenty-three World Heritage sites in the United States: Independence Hall (1979). The deliberation and ratification of two globally influential legal documents: the Declaration of Independence (1776), and the Constitution of the United States (1787) occurred in Independence Hall. Therefore, these cultural icons will enable students to learn more about sites of outstanding universal value inscribed on the World Heritage List. As students learn about these cultural treasures, they will be equipped to forge new attitudes about the roles of: the city of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Underground Railroad, and freedom and democracy. Ultimately, they will become stakeholders in touting Philadelphia's rich cultural, architectural, and democratic heritage. What a tribute this will be as Philadelphia takes center stage as the first World Heritage City in the US!

Core Curriculum Standards

- Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
- Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).
- Compare and contrast a text to an audio, video, or multimedia version of the text, analyzing each medium's portrayal of the subject (e.g., how the delivery of a speech affects the impact of the words).
- Use technology to produce, publish, and update writing products.

Objectives

Students will be able to articulate and demonstrate the rich cultural history of Philadelphia as a World Heritage Site and City by introducing new forms of tourism to the Philadelphia Tourism Bureau and international visitors. Students will be able to read and comprehend the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States by analyzing the structure and language which supported enslaved Africans right to be free. Students will learn to synthesize the information from Independence Hall, the Declaration of Independence, and the Underground Railroad Sites to establish Philadelphia as an international city.

Essential Question

How did Philadelphia become an integral part of the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad?

Materials Needed

Philadelphia tourism brochures, text of the Declaration of Independence, text of the Constitution of the United States, text of the Frederick Douglass speech “What is Your Fourth of July to Me?”, books about Underground Railroad passengers’ experiences (*I Want My Freedom* and *Price of a Child* listed in additional resources), videos of major Underground Railroad sites in Philadelphia (links included in procedure), highlighters, chart paper, graphic organizers, Prezi software, and access to social media sites like Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter

Procedure

Quick Write: What is the Underground Railroad? Does it still exist today? What is Philadelphia’s connection to the Underground Railroad? Can you think of any connections between the Underground Railroad and the Declaration of Independence?

Guided Practice: Students will read *I Want My Freedom* which is a true account of an enslaved woman and her children travelling with their master through Philadelphia. While staying overnight in Philadelphia Jane seeks the assistance of abolitionists, William Still and Passmore Williamson. Teacher will model guided reading to determine the author’s purpose and illuminate what Philadelphia was like in 1855, the year of her escape.

Independent Group Practice: Students will read and analyze an excerpt of the Constitution of the United States and an excerpt of the Declaration of Independence to determine themes such as freedom, equality, strength, and democracy; concepts such as fairness, justice, respect, and honor—engaging ideas presented in an original way—themes and concepts that encourage the audience to take action.

Independent Individual Practice: Students will use the information from the collaborative discussion and notes to cite the lines that state the actions our forefathers believe should be taken in either the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution of the United States.

Check for Understanding: Have students highlight in yellow words that show the concepts of respect and honor. Students should also underline the words that describe the ideas of freedom and equality in an original way. Have students highlight in blue statements of action for the audience to take.

Exit Ticket: In 140 characters or less...tweet 2 connections you made between the Underground Railroad and the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution of the United States

Homework: Watch videos of the four major Underground Railroad Sites in Philadelphia and take notes on what you would change to make the information appeal to teenagers and tourists. Bring in notes to use for summative assessment.

- Belmont Mansion: <http://video.whyy.org/video/1127503982/>
- The Johnson House: <https://vimeo.com/43869368>
- Mother Bethel AME Church: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDcUbr5Zc14>
- Glen Foerd on the Delaware: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5QUd12p3qw>

Outcome/Assessment:

Students will work together in groups to create a Multimedia Presentation. They will reimagine and update the travel brochures visitors receive when arriving in Philadelphia. Use information from texts, notes, and videos! Remind students that an effective multimedia presentation uses technology to share information through text, infographics, images, and sound. Additionally, it integrates information from a variety of sources and media and it ALWAYS presents information and supporting evidence from the texts clearly, concisely, and logically.

Guidelines:

- Groups should be no larger than 5 students
- Assign parts of the presentation
- Storyboard parts of the presentation after its written and produced
- Practice delivering the presentation, revise the presentation,
- Share your presentation with classmates and community members either in person or through Google Hangouts or Skype (travel and tourism staff, city officials, students in another country)
- Get permission to create a Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram page using your multimedia presentation
- One of the group presentations can be a response to Frederick Douglass's speech, showing Philadelphia, then and now

Special Education and English Language Learners Accommodations

Locate a YouTube video of someone reading the Declaration of Independence...then have students choral read the first two paragraphs of each document. Next, reread the text one sentence at a time and ask students to identify words that indicate why the subject of the documents is important. Have students read aloud parts of the text that support their answers.

Additional Resources

Print:

I Want My Freedom: Jane Johnson's escape with the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, 1855, Lorene Cary: <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/OneBook/obop03/curriculum/iwantmyfreedom.cfm>

Price of a Child, Lorene Cary ISBN-13: 978-0679744672

Web:

A detailed first person narrative of the Jane Johnson escape to freedom and includes original documents detailing personal information about the Johnson family and subsequent court case:
www.Librarycompany.org