

Welcome to the Teachers' Instructions area for this student activity. Here you'll find directions and suggestions for using this activity along with the materials you need to evaluate your students' work.

**Title:** Escape This Way!

**Audience:** Middle

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Subject Area(s):**

Language Arts - Reading

**Grade Level(s):** 6,7,8

### **Teacher Directions:**

The *Following the Footsteps* interactive on the Pathways to Freedom: Maryland & the Underground Railroad Website allows the user to travel back to the 1800's, take on the role of a young slave, and make decisions about an escape. In this activity, students will use the interactive to experience the situations faced by slaves as they planned and executed their escape, and write clues that will improve a slave's chances of reaching freedom successfully. They will then use these clues to create a sign to help slaves who are contemplating or attempting escape.

This activity can be completed using a variety of technology configurations. If a computer lab is available, students can access the activity, worksheets and web pages through Thinkport. Another option would be to display the activity and Web page on a classroom computer with a projection device.

Note to teacher: Due to the richness of the *Following the Footsteps* interactive, this activity is divided into two parts and may take more than a 45-minute period to complete. In Part 1, the students explore the interactive and use an organizer to write their clues. In Part 2, the students use the clues they've collected to make a sign for slaves that provides hints for a successful escape. You may complete these activities together or separately.

#### Part 1

##### Pre-Viewing Activity

Before viewing the *Following the Footsteps* interactive, lead the students in a discussion of the word *dilemma* as it relates to the situation faced by slaves who wished to escape. You may want to include the following:

Can the students define this term? Tell them that when a person needs to make a decision but feel there is no good option to choose, they are facing a *dilemma*.

Give the students an example. For instance, you might describe a person who has a toothache and needs to go to the dentist. Should they endure the pain of the toothache, an unpleasant choice, or go through a trip to the dentist, also (probably) an unpleasant choice? How many students would choose the toothache? The dentist? How did they make their decision? How did it feel to make a decision between two unpleasant choices?

The dilemma for a slave who wished to escape was a much more serious and dangerous one. What was the dilemma faced by the slaves? Lead the students to the conclusion that escaping was dangerous, risky and not guaranteed to be successful, but staying was defeating, demeaning, and depressing. How was a slave to choose?

One factor that may have made a slave's dilemma a bit easier was knowing that there would be help along the way. Discuss how the slaves were helped in their escape to freedom. For example, those who were against slavery often provided food and shelter to escaping slaves, or arranged for transport; signs or song lyrics were used to let escaping slaves know where to go or who to speak to; slaves who had escaped passed on hints to help others escape, like traveling at night or in the rain.

Tell the students that in this activity, they will have the opportunity to play the role of a young Maryland slave in the 1800's and make decisions about how to escape from slavery. Their task as they experience the decision-making situations faced by slaves is to write some clues that might help other slaves to be successful in their escape to freedom.

Give each student a copy of the **Escape Clues Part 1** worksheet. Read the directions on this worksheet together, and review the first clue with them.

#### Focus for Media Interaction

The focus for viewing the *Following the Footsteps* interactive on the Pathways to Freedom: Maryland & the Underground Railroad Website is for students to list clues that would improve a slave's chances to reach freedom successfully.

#### Viewing Activity

Tell students to open the Pathways to Freedom: Maryland & the Underground Railroad Website at [http://pathways.thinkport.org/flash\\_home.cfm](http://pathways.thinkport.org/flash_home.cfm), and click on *Following the Footsteps* from the list on the left side of the screen. They will see the title "You are a Maryland Slave..." at the top of the screen.

Ask the students to read the information on this introductory screen. It will help them as they complete the interactive. The text on this screen is as follows:

"Travel back to the 1800s and become an eyewitness to history. You become a young slave who must make some important and life-changing decisions.

Be sure to explore the various scenes you see by rolling your mouse over the pictures. The clues you discover might be just the ones you need to escape to freedom."

Make sure that the students know that they can listen to the words of the story by clicking on the speaker icon found on the lower righthand corner of each screen of the interactive.

When all the students have read the directions, ask them to click on *Go to the Interactive*. This will open a new window called *Following the Footsteps*. Point out the speaker icon found on the lower right hand corner of the screen. Remind the students that they may use this icon to pause or turn off the narration at any time. Begin the interactive by clicking on *Continue*.

As the students work in the interactive, remind them that their task is to write down clues on the **Escape Clues Part 1** worksheet that will improve a slave's chances to reach freedom successfully. Some examples of clues they might include are:

§ Learn to read and write. You will be able to read the signs you see. You will be able to write your name on the pass you need to travel.

§ Travel at night when you will not be seen so easily.

§ Travel in the rain or follow the river. The water will help erase your tracks.

§ If you see a light in a window, it means that someone in that house will help you. This will give you a chance to rest and get some supplies.

§ Keep traveling north. Use the North Star to guide you.

§ Moss grows on the north side of trees. Use this to make sure you are traveling in the right direction.

§ Learn a skill that will help you when you are free. If you have something to do when you reach freedom, you will be able to take care of yourself. There are many free Black Americans who are working in the North, and so can you.

Because of the decision-making options presented in the interactive, not all students will follow the same pathway through it. For a flowchart delineating the possible pathways, go to [http://pathways.thinkport.org/resources/FollowTheFootsteps\\_Flowchart.doc](http://pathways.thinkport.org/resources/FollowTheFootsteps_Flowchart.doc).

### Postviewing Activity

If you are not completing *Escape Clues: Part 2* at this time, you may want to have the students complete one of the extension activities that follow.

#### Part 2

Give each student a copy of the **Escape Clues Part 2** worksheet. This worksheet will allow the students to use the information they have gathered from the *Following the Footsteps* interactive to create a sign that will help slaves reach freedom successfully.

Read the directions on this worksheet together. Remind the students that not all slaves could read or write. Their sign, then, may contain words, but will need to use pictures to get their point across. Give them an example; one is provided for you on the **Sample Escape Clues Part 2** worksheet. Correlate the completed section of the sign to the first clue on the **Escape Clues Part 1** worksheet.

Provide the students with a variety of art materials with which to create the sign, or have them use the Draw Tools available in Microsoft Word to complete this worksheet electronically. When the signs are complete, you may want students to present the information on their signs to the class, or you may choose to display the signs in your classroom.

### Extension Activities

1. Ask the students to read a clue aloud and tell why this clue would be important to an escaping slave. If other students have the same clue, ask them to check it off on their paper. See how many original clues the students gathered.

2. Ask the students to draw a diagram showing the choices they made during the interactive. Compare the results of their choices with those of other students. How many students reached the north successfully? How did their choices affect their success?

3. Ask the students to write a short paragraph describing the choices they made during the interactive and how they felt about making these kinds of decisions. Did they see how the decisions they made and the clues they followed were a critical factor in the success or failure of their escape?

### **Student Directions:**

You hate your life. You work long hours each day for someone else who doesn't care what is good for you or for your family. You are unpaid, and often treated harshly. You want to run away, but it is just so risky. There are dangers all along the way. You could be caught and punished. You or your family could even be killed.

But you feel that staying is killing you, too.

It is difficult to imagine being faced with this dilemma. But for many slaves in the United States in the 1800's, it was all too real. In this activity, you will have the opportunity to put yourself in the place of a young Maryland slave in the 1800's and make some of the decisions slaves might have had to make as they escaped from slavery. Having experienced these situations, you will be writing down clues you've discovered that might be helpful to the next slave that tries to find his or her way to freedom, and making a sign based on those clues. Pay close attention - it may mean the difference between success and failure!

## **Standard 1.0 General Reading Processes**

Grade 6-8

Topic

E. General Reading Comprehension

Indicator

4. Use strategies to demonstrate understanding of the text (after reading)

Objectives

Summarize or paraphrase

Assessment limit: The text or a portion of the text

## **5.0 CONTENT STANDARD: HISTORY**

Students will examine significant ideas, beliefs, and themes; organize patterns and events; and analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time in Maryland, the United States and around the world.

Grade 4

### C. Conflict between Ideas and Institutions

4. Explain how the institution of slavery impacted individuals and groups in Maryland
  - a. Compare the living conditions of slave families and free blacks
  - b. Describe the abolitionist movement in Maryland
  - c. Describe the conditions that promoted the growth of the Underground Railroad in Maryland

#### **The Students will:**

Summarize and explain factors that slaves might have considered when escaping, including:

- a light in the window of a house at night meant someone lived there who would help them
- it was usually safer to travel at night

#### **The Students will:**

Summarize and explain factors that slaves might have considered when escaping, including:

- it was often safer to walk in a river or in the rain, because it made it more difficult for dogs to smell their trail
- slaves sometimes used the stars to guide them

#### **The Students will:**

Summarize and explain factors that slaves might have considered when escaping, including:

- looking at the moss on tree trunks could help guide slaves in the right direction since moss grows mostly on the north side of trees

**The Students will:**

Describe the characteristics of slavery in Maryland, including the following:

- Most slaves were not allowed to learn to read or write.
- Slaves usually had to carry special passes from their masters when they traveled.

**The Students will:**

Describe the characteristics of slavery in Maryland, including the following:

- There were many slaves in Maryland, but also many free blacks in places like Baltimore.

**The Students will:**

Summarize and explain factors that slaves might have considered when escaping.

**The Students will:**

Describe the characteristics of slavery in Maryland.

**Directions:** In the Following the Footsteps interactive, you will learn about some of the factors

that slaves considered while planning and executing their escape. As you work in the interactive, your task is to write down clues on the Escape Clues Part 1 worksheet that will improve a slave's chances to reach freedom successfully.

Escape Clues Part 1 ([View](#))

**Directions:** Open the Following the Footsteps interactive below. Read the information on this introductory screen. Click on Go to the Interactive. This will open a new window called Following the Footsteps. Begin the interactive by clicking on Continue beneath this title. Use the speaker icon to listen to the words of the story. You may pause or turn off this narration at any time. Since the objective of this activity is to learn clues about how best to escape from slavery, choose to escape when given the choice.

### **Pathways to Freedom: Maryland & the Underground Railroad**

**Following the Footsteps** The *Following the Footsteps* interactive on the Pathways to Freedom: Maryland & the Underground Railroad Website allows you to face the decisions a young Maryland slave in the 1800's might have faced as he planned and executed his escape from slavery. You may complete this section of the interactive more than once, making different decisions each time, and compare the results of your decisions.

<http://pathways.thinkport.org/following/>

What kinds of things did slaves need to consider as they executed their escape from slavery?

**Directions:** Once you have collected several clues from the Following the Footsteps interactive, create a sign on the Escape Clues Part 2 worksheet below that will help other slaves who want to escape to freedom. Remember, many slaves were unable to read or write. While it is acceptable to include words in your sign, you will need to include pictures to get your point across.

Escape Clues Part 2 ([View](#))

**Directions:** Use the Sample Escape Clues Part 2 worksheet as an example for students. The drawing it contains correlates to the first clue on the Escape Clues Part 1 worksheet.

Sample Escape Clues Part 2 ([View](#))

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Activity Signature

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