Ripley, Ohio: Freedom’s Landing

Learning Objectives
Students will be able to explain Ohio’s role in the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad.

Lesson Overview
Students will
- Watch video on John Rankin, John Parker and Ripley, Ohio
- Analyze a primary source: Abolitionist meeting minutes
- Write a biopoem about an abolitionist
- Create a “talk radio” show about the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850

Teacher Background
The Ohio town of Ripley is nestled along the banks of the Ohio River in Brown County. Founded in 1812, this small town, which in 2008 has a population of just over 1,700 citizens, is steeped in history. With its location along the banks of the Ohio River and proximity to the slaveholding state of Kentucky, Ripley became an early stop on the Underground Railroad – a network of people and places organized to help escaping slaves find freedom in the north.

Ripley, Ohio was not just a stop on the Underground Railroad; it was a hotbed of abolition activity. With help from his wife and children, the Reverend John Rankin, a Presbyterian Minister, abolitionist, and conductor on the Underground Railroad, secreted away over 2000 slaves escaping to freedom. The Rankins chose the location of their home for its hilltop vantage point overlooking the Ohio River. A lantern in the window of their hilltop home signaled to men, women, and children that it was safe to cross, and that help could be found at the Rankin home.

John Rankin was not only instrumental in helping thousands escape to freedom, he also preached against slavery through his sermons, and helped found the Ripley Anti-Slavery Society. Rankin also published several important anti-slavery writings. His influential Letters on Slavery (1823, 1833, 1839) was written as a series of letters to his brother in opposition to his brother’s slaveholding. These letters were published in the Ripley newspaper The Castigator as well as in the famous abolitionist paper The Liberator. The letters were later published in pamphlet form and became influential reading for those in the struggle against slavery.

The Rankins did not act alone; many citizens in Ripley and surrounding towns like Red Oak were actively involved in the abolitionist cause. One Ripley man, John Parker, also a conductor on the Underground Railroad, stands out for his daring night-time rescues of escaping slaves. Parker, a former slave himself, had become a successful businessman and inventor. He owned and operated the Phoenix Foundry in Ripley. The foundry, as well as his home, were located on the banks of the Ohio River. Parker would often take his boat on the river at night to help slaves who might be crossing. Then Parker along with other Ripley inhabitants would help escapees along to the home of the Rankins until they could further their journey north to freedom.
Ohio Academic Content Standards

**GRADE 5**

**People in Societies**
3. Describe the experiences of African-Americans under the institution of slavery.

**GRADE 8**

**History**
8. Explain the causes of the Civil War with emphasis on:
   - a. Slavery;
   - e. The abolitionist movement and the roles of Frederick Douglass and John Brown;
   - f. The addition of new states to the Union and their impact on the balance of power in the Senate, including the Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850.

**People in Societies**
4. Analyze the economic, geographic, religious and political factors that contributed to:
   - b. Resistance to slavery.

**Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities**

1. Show the relationship between participating in civic and political life and the attainment of individual and public goals including:
   - b. The Underground Railroad and the abolitionist movement/Abolition of slavery.

3. Evaluate the role of historical figures and political bodies in furthering and restricting the rights of individuals including:
   - d. Frederick Douglass and the abolitionist movement;
MATERIALS

John P. Parker and John Rankin biographical information and quotations.
Drawing paper
Rulers, markers, colored pencils or crayons

Computer lab with Internet access
Cassette recorder/player
Cassette tapes

SUGGESTED WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

Ohio History Central
http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org
This site provides information on Ohio history and is an excellent source for researching Ohio Abolitionists. Students can search key terms like "abolition," "underground railroad" or for specific names.

Google Books
http://books.google.com
Search for John Rankin –Letters on American Slavery for free access to a .pdf of his letters.

History Matters
http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6232/
This url links directly to a passage from John Parker’s Autobiography.

Additional Research: Students may also conduct basic searches on search engines such as Google. Please review with students what makes a good online source. For guidelines on evaluating online resources please visit:

Evaluating Web Pages: Techniques to Apply and Questions to Ask
http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Evaluate.html

TEACHER VOCABULARY

Abolitionist Movement
Underground Railroad
Ripley, Ohio
John Rankin
John Parker
Levi Coffin
Frederick Douglass
Harriet Beecher Stowe

Compromise of 1850
Fugitive Slave Law of 1850
Biopoem
Talk Radio
The Castigator
The Liberator
Instructional Procedure

What I Learned

1. Begin by asking students to define what the term Underground Railroad refers to. Explain that the term refers to a network of people, safe houses, and routes upon which slaves escaped to freedom.

2. Now ask students to think about the role Ohio and Ohioans played in the Underground Railroad. Explain that the slaveholding state of Kentucky was just across the Ohio River, and that towns like Ripley, Ohio located along the river were often stops on the Underground Railroad.

3. Let students know that they will be watching a short video that describes the important abolition work and Underground Railroad activity going on in Ripley, Ohio in the early to mid 1800s. Distribute the What I Learned worksheet and have students complete as they watch the video Ripley, Ohio: Freedom’s Landing.

The Ripley Anti-Slavery Society

1. Review primary sources with students and write examples of different types of primary sources on the board.

2. Explain that one type of primary source document—meeting minutes—are a record of what members of a group discussed, or decided to do after a meeting.

3. Let students know that they will be conducting a primary source analysis by examining excerpts taken from the meeting minutes of the Ripley Anti-Slavery Society in order to understand what the members of the group felt about certain issues and the actions they chose to take in response.

4. Distribute the Ripley Anti-Slavery Society worksheet and have students complete the questions. For Grade 5 complete this exercise as a class.

Abolitionist Biopoem

1. Explain how Ohio had a significant role in the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad. Students should have watched the Our Ohio video segment about Ripley, Ohio.

2. Divide students into groups of four. Distribute to each group a John P. Parker and a John Rankin folder. Each folder should contain the Quotations handouts and biographic information about each abolitionist’s life. Biographical information can be found for each at www.ohiohistorycentral.org. Students will select to read about Parker or Rankin. Students may partner read or read individually.
3. Handout instructions and introduce students to the Abolitionist Biopoem activity. Allow students to work on the Biopoem individually, using the biographic information provided.

**Grade 5 Modifications**

1. After viewing the video, have students vote and select either John P. Parker or John Rankin for the students to complete their Biopoem on. Distribute the appropriate reading. Read the biographical information as a class.

2. Review the quotes prior to the day’s activity and select one quote to place on the board. Discuss the quote and its meaning.

3. Instruct students to use the quote in their Biopoem. Handout instructions and introduce students to the Biopoem activity.

4. Allow students to work on the Biopoem individually, using the research provided.

**Talk Radio: The Fugitive Slave Law**

1. Begin by asking students to think back to the video they watched on Ripley, Ohio and review the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.

2. Distribute the Talk Radio: The Fugitive Slave Law activity. Review activity requirements with students. If students are unfamiliar with talk radio, find an example online or on the radio for students to listen to.

3. Allow students to begin research. Research should take no more than two class periods.

4. After research has been completed, allow students to return to their groups and share the information they discovered. When students have finished sharing, review the script requirements again. Allow students to begin writing their script. Script writing should take no more than three class periods.

5. After the script has been completed, make arrangements for students to record their talk radio show in a quiet setting. Once each group has completed recording its show, listen to the shows in class.
Answer Key

What I Learned

1. Ripley was a stop on the Underground Railroad, and a hotbed of abolitionist activity.
2. John Rankin
3. By hiding them; signaling with their lantern, and helping them escape.
4. By allowing for bounty hunters or former owners to recapture them from the northern free states.
5. It was deeper and wider.
7. John Rankin and other Ripley residents.

The Ripley Anti-Slavery Society

2. John Rankin
3. It means they thought slavery was immoral/bad.
4. A mob attacked a printing press/print shop.
5. They discussed the recapture/kidnapping of a free woman and how to get her freedom restored.

Abolitionist Biopoem

Use the rubric and instructions to identify lesson requirements and to guide grading.

Talk Radio: The Fugitive Slave Law

Use the rubric and instructions to identify lesson requirements and to guide grading.
What I Learned

NAME: ___________________________ DATE: ________________

Instructions: Read all of the boxes in the Find Out column below. Fill in the correct answers in the What I Learned column while watching the video Ripley, Ohio: Freedom’s Landing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIND OUT</th>
<th>WHAT I LEARNED</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why was Ripley, Ohio important in the struggle to end slavery?</td>
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<td>Who was the Underground Railroad Conductor who lived high on the hill top?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How did the Rankin family help escaping slaves?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How did the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 make it even more difficult for slaves to escape?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How has the Ohio River changed since the mid-1800’s?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who was John Parker?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who worked with John Parker sometimes to help slaves escape to freedom?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Ripley Anti-Slavery Society

NAME: ______________________    DATE: ______________________

Instructions: Carefully read the excerpts taken from the meeting minutes of the Ripley Anti-Slavery Society and answer the questions that follow using complete sentences.

November 25th 1835

The Anti-Slavery Society of Ripley met at the Church of Red Oak at the call of the board of managers. John Rankin was appointed secretary. The following resolutions after discussion was adopted…

Resolved, That holding property in man under any pretext whatever is a heinous sin. Adjourned to meet in Ripley on the 25 December next…

Ripley April 13th 1836

Resolved That we view the assault at Cincinnati on the printing press of the Philanthropist as a direct attack upon the palladium of our liberties the freedom of speech and of the press.

At a meeting of the Ripley A.S.S. held at Red Oak meeting house on Thursday the 11th day of August 1836 to take into consideration the alarming state of things occasioned by the spirit of mobocracy that is a broad in the land and especially the late proceedings of the mob at Cincinnati… That we do not view the getting up of the late mob in Cincinnati to be the act and doing of the honest industrious, and labouring class of our fellow citizens; but the deliberate working of a few wealthy aristocrats combined with a few Orlean traders and principle mechanicks [crossed out word “traders”] who are interested in trade with slave holders.

Ripley April 27th 1837

Society met pursuant to adjournment opened with prayer… on Motion ordered that a committee be appointed to collect and publish the facts in the case of Eliza Jane Johnston a free woman of Ohio, who was kidnapped in Ohio carried to Kentucky and is now in bondage, and that’s committee endeavour through the Governor of this State or some other legal way to restore her again to liberty.

Committee Chambers Board C J Campbell e A F Knight

Find the original document at Ohio Memory at: http://www.ohiomemory.org and search on Ripley Anti-Slavery Society Minutes.
The Ripley Anti-Slavery Society

NAME: ____________________________    DATE: ______________________

Instructions: Carefully read the excerpts taken from the meeting minutes of the Ripley Anti-Slavery Society and answer the questions that follow using complete sentences.

Word Bank
heinous: shockingly evil
palladium: safeguard

mobacracy: mob rule
Orlean traders: refers to slave traders from New Orleans

1. When and where was the first Ripley Anti-Slavery Society meeting held according to the meeting minutes? What is the location of the second meeting?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. Who was appointed Secretary of the Society at the first meeting?

____________________________________________________________________

3. In the second paragraph, the society members have resolved: “That holdin property in man under any pretext whatever is a henous sin,” what does this mean?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

4. What happened in Cincinnati on the 11th of August, 1836? Who is the “mob” and what did they do?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

5. What did the society meet to discuss on April 27th 1837 and what did they resolve to do?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
Abolitionist Biopoem

NAME: __________________________    DATE: ______________________

Create a biopoem for either John Rankin or John P. Parker. Use the information you learned from Our Ohio video segment, Ripley, Ohio: Freedom’s Landing and Quotes handouts provided by your teacher to create your biopoem. A dictionary and thesaurus might also be helpful when creating your biopoem. You will place your final copy of your biopoem on drawing paper provided for you in class.

Use the following format to create your historical biopoem:

Line 1: First name

Line 2: Relative of (husband, father, brother…)

Line 3: Profession

Line 4: Four adjectives that describe the character of the person

Line 5: Who believed (one guiding principle)

Line 6: Who feared (three items)

Line 7: Who would like to have seen (three items)

Line: 8: Who gave (three items)

Line: 9: Who said (one quote)

Line 10: Resident of

Line 11: Last name
Abolitionist Biopoem

John P. Parker Quotes

His Promised Land

"How I hated slavery as it fettered me, and beat me, and baffled me in my desires. But in the end that unknown ancestor of mine gave me the will and the courage to conquer or die." (pg. 25)

"It [slavery] was an incident to the curse, but the real injury was the making of a human being an animal without hope. Now that it is all over, as I have previously stated, I know slavery's curse was not pain of the body, but the pain of the soul." (pg. 26)

"As a child, I was bitterly touched with a hatred which I had to conceal, but it rankled and festered and bore its sour fruit,..." (pg. 26)

"My education was carried on secretly; even the good doctor, who was truly my friend, did not know what was going on. Though there was a law, which was strictly enforced, against slaves being taught to read or write or have books, from that time forward, I always had several books at hand." (pg. 30)

"Gaining my freedom by hook or crook was never out of my mind." (pg. 45)

"So far as my masters were concerned, most of my life as a slave was a pleasant one, so far as my bodily wants were concerned. But I hated the injustices and restraints against my own initiative more than it is possible for words to express. To me that was the great curse of slavery." (pg. 70)

"When the Fugitive Slave Law agitation was at its highest, and active prosecutions began it's enforcement, everyone engaged in the work destroyed all existing evidence of his connection with it. My little memorandum book I dropped quietly in the cupola of my own iron foundry, so no one knew its existence, especially its damaging contents. But the work went on just the same, in fact, more aggressively than ever, which speaks well for the conscience and courage of the Ripley group." (pg. 127)
Abolitionist Biopoem

John Rankin Quotes
Letters on American Slavery

“\textit{I consider involuntary slavery, a never failing fountain of the grossest immorality, and one of the deepest sources of human misery; it hangs like the mantle of night over our republic, and shrouds its rising glories.}” (Letter 1 pg. 7)

“\textit{Slavery is often clothed with such scenes of cruelty and blood, and often sports with every thing that is dear to man! – it breaks the most tender relations of life.}”
(Letter 2 pg. 20)

“\textit{Slavery interferes with all the social and relative duties, and what is still a more serious evil, it interferes with the divine prerogative over man, and robs the Almighty of the service which is due to him from the creatures of his power.}” (Letter 2 pg. 20)

“\textit{The questions with us is not whether the Africans are not in a better or worse condition than they would have been in their own country; but this is the question; is it just for us to enslave them?...}” (Letter IV pg. 34)

“\textit{The longer I reflect upon involuntary slavery, the more I abhor it, as being a combination of the most flagrant injustice and cruelty. It makes an innocent man the property of another, who may, if he please, deprive him of all of comforts of life, and subject him to a thousand sufferings.}” (Letter V pg. 35)

“\textit{It seems to me astonishing that any government, much more that of the United States, should sanction such a source of monstrous crime as slavery evidently is!}” (Letter V pr. 39)

“\textit{Yes, in America, the far famed America! you may hear the clankings of the chains that bind innocent husbands, and wives, and parents, and children, in order that they be forever separated from the objects of their affections, and all that is dear to them in life!!}”
(Letter VI pg. 44)
# Abolitionist Biopoem Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Contains all of the lines in the correct order.</td>
<td>Contains most of the lines in the correct order.</td>
<td>Contains half of the lines in the correct order.</td>
<td>Fewer than half of the lines are in the correct order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>All of the details are historically significant and demonstrate a deep understanding of the biography.</td>
<td>All of the details are historically significant and demonstrate an understanding of the biography.</td>
<td>Some of the details are historically significant.</td>
<td>Details are not historically significant and demonstrate a lack of understanding of the biography.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Zero spelling errors.</td>
<td>One – two spelling errors.</td>
<td>Three – four spelling errors.</td>
<td>Four or more spelling errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>The final product is organized, visually appealing and easy to read.</td>
<td>The final product is organized and easy to read.</td>
<td>The final product is easy to read.</td>
<td>The final product lacks organization and is difficult to read.</td>
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</table>
Talk Radio: The Fugitive Slave Law

NAME: ___________________________ DATE: _____________________

Instructions: Working in groups of three, you will conduct research, write a “talk radio” script, and record a talk radio show on a cassette tape examining arguments against the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.

1. Research
Divide research topics evenly, two per group member

- Conditions of enslaved persons
- Compromise of 1850
- Fugitive Slave Law of 1850
- Abolition movement*
- John Rankin **
- John P. Parker
- Levi Coffin
- Frederick Douglass
- Harriet Beecher Stowe

* For the above topics, students should research the who, what, when, where and why of each topic.
**Choose two abolitionists to research. For each abolitionist, students should research the background of each abolitionist and how he or she participated in the movement or the Underground Railroad.

2. Script
After conducting your research, share what you uncovered with group members. Write the script based on the following format. The show must be between three and seven minutes in length.

Host – Introduce self, the conditions of enslaved persons, Compromise of 1850, Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, why abolitionists are upset about the recent laws. Begin call-in section with Caller One, e.g., one of the abolitionists researched. Take a commercial break. Introduce Caller Two, e.g., one of the abolitionists researched. Wrap-up show.

Caller One – Introduce self, accomplishments, what you are currently involved in. Discuss argument against the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 from your perspective as an abolitionist.

Commercial – Create a commercial appropriate for the time period. Commercial can highlight an upcoming program or product from the time period.

Caller Two – Introduce self, accomplishments, what you are currently involved in. Discuss argument against the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 from your perspective as an abolitionist.

Radio show elements – Introduction music, title of program, two sound effects, closing music.

3. Practice script

4. Record script on cassette player

5. Turn in research, script and cassette to teacher
## Talk Radio: The Fugitive Slave Law Rubric

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
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<td>Some background information was historically accurate.</td>
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<td>Background information was clear and historically accurate.</td>
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<td>Background information and arguments were historically accurate.</td>
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<td>Some background information was historically accurate.</td>
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<td><strong>Research</strong></td>
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<td>Less than half of the topics were researched and lacked key details.</td>
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<td>Each topic was</td>
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<td>Half of the topics were thoroughly researched.</td>
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<td>Each topic was researched.</td>
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<td><strong>Show elements</strong></td>
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<td>Appropriate</td>
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<td>Appropriate title of the program and one other sound effect were used effectively in the radio talk show.</td>
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<td><strong>Script Quality</strong></td>
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<td>Script lacks creativity and does not meet the 3-7 minute time requirement.</td>
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<td>Script lacks creativity and does not meet the 3-7 minute time requirement.</td>
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<td>Script lacks creativity and does not meet the 3-7 minute time requirement.</td>
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<td><strong>Audio Quality</strong></td>
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<td>Host and call-in guests cannot be heard clearly and lines are delivered with frequent interruptions (laughing, stumbling).</td>
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<td>Host and call-in</td>
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<td>Host and call-in guests can be heard clearly and a few lines are interrupted during delivery (laughing, stumbling).</td>
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<td>Host and call-in guests can be heard clearly and a few lines are interrupted during delivery (laughing, stumbling).</td>
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<td>without</td>
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<td>interruption and</td>
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