

Lesson Plan 4

TO FOLLOW OR NOT TO FOLLOW?

Intermediate (grades 6-8)

1-2 class periods

Program Segments

The Fugitive Slave Act

Freedom's Land

NYS Core Curriculum - Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects, 6-12

Reading

- Craft and Structure (Determine the meaning of words)

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes (Write arguments focused on task, support claims)
- Production and Distribution of Writing (produce clear stance on point of view)
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge (Draw on Evidence to support argument)

NCSS Themes

- II. Time, Continuity and Change
- III. People, Places, and Environments
- IV. Individual Development and Identity
- VI. Power, Authority and Governance
- VIII. Science, Technology, and Society
- IX. Global Connections
- X. Civic Ideals and Practices

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- define the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850
- explore the claims of law on personal conscience (right vs. wrong)
- consider the relationship between individual rights and the rule of law in contemporary society

Focus Questions

- Is non-compliance of slave laws acceptable if slavery is considered immoral?
- If you lived at the time of the Fugitive Slave Act, would you abide by or ignore the law?

Key Concepts

Fugitive, Law, Morality, Civil Disobedience

Instructional Resources

- *Underground Railroad: The William Still Story* DVD
- Poster or sign paper

Procedures

1. Before the start of this lesson, place a poster or sign on one side of the room that reads "AGREE" and a poster or sign on the other side of the room that reads "DISAGREE."
2. Watch the *Underground Railroad: The William Still Story* segments on the Fugitive Slave Act.
3. Select a few of the following statements, or some of your own, that would be appropriate for your students:
 1. Students should have to say the Pledge of Allegiance.
 2. Teachers can go into a student's locker at any time.
 3. Metal detectors should be allowed at school entrances.
 4. Students should not express their opinions in school.
 5. Students should wear a school uniform.
4. Read the statements aloud, then allow students to move to the side of the room that represents their belief. Students can share their opinions on their decisions.
5. Students should go back to their seats. Have a class discussion about individual rights and freedoms. Discuss school rules, or "laws," and rules/laws of society.
6. Have students recall the segments from the program on the Fugitive Slave Act and answer any questions they might have. Guiding questions might be:



From: UNDERGROUND RAILROAD: THE WILLIAM STILL STORY: Dion Johnstone as William Still

- How do you feel about slave owners or bounty hunters traveling around the country hunting slaves?
 - How do you feel about free blacks being captured and taken to the South to be enslaved?
 - Do you think you would have been a bounty hunter, sympathizer (abolitionist), or just stayed to yourself and abided the law?
7. Ask students to once again choose “AGREE” or “DISAGREE” based on the Fugitive Slave Act. If students are not fairly evenly distributed, you may choose to move some students to the smaller group.
 8. The “AGREE” and “DISAGREE” groups should assign a note taker for each group. Allow 10-15 minutes to come up with reasons why the group is for or against the Fugitive Slave Act.
 9. Have a class discussion or debate based upon what the groups came up with.
 10. Each student should choose what they think are the four most compelling facts for their arguments and write an essay.

Assessment Tasks

The students will participate in a class debate. The students will complete an essay describing compelling facts for their argument.

Extension Activity

Explain why each one of the following people must have been brave.

Choose the one that you would MOST want to be and explain why. Choose the one you'd LEAST like to be and explain why.

- An enslaved mother who must choose which children she can escape with
- A white man who has offered to help enslaved people on the Underground Railroad
- A free black man who helps enslaved people on the Underground Railroad