



INTERNATIONAL  
STORYTELLING CENTER

**Curriculum Guide for Freedom Stories Discussion  
“Freedom Stories at the National Storytelling Festival”**

*Notes about this guide:*

*First, it is just that—a guide. It is meant to offer suggestions for how you might approach these important yet sensitive topics in your classroom, as well as ideas for how you might augment existing curriculum in your classroom. Please adapt it as necessary to fit your classroom’s needs.*

*Second, while it is aimed for 10<sup>th</sup> grade, many of the activities can easily be adapted both for lower and higher grades, and we encourage you to do so.*

*Third, since the International Storytelling Center is based in Tennessee, we have used the Tennessee state academic standards for Social Studies as our guide, but have also included Common Core standards where appropriate in an attempt to provide some reciprocity between and among state curriculums. Please feel free to use your own state standards in place of Tennessee’s or Common Core’s.*

*Fourth, our collective understanding of the subject matter covered in this and the other Freedom Stories Curriculum Guides is ever-evolving as we unearth forgotten narratives and seek out more complete truths. As such, there may be instances where certain instructional approaches are no longer useful, or where certain resources are no longer applicable. We encourage you to keep this in mind as you use this guide and adapt activities with new information as it becomes available.*

*Last, we welcome your feedback about this guide and its role in your classroom. Please reach out to us at [FreedomStories@StorytellingCenter.net](mailto:FreedomStories@StorytellingCenter.net) with comments, questions, and suggestions.*

Lesson Title	“Freedom, really?”
Grade Band	10th Grade
Standard(s)	<p><u>Tennessee Social Studies Standards SSP.05:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop historical awareness by identifying patterns of continuity and change over time, making connections to the present.</li> </ul> <p><u>Tennessee Social Studies Standards AAH.09:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the development of the abolitionist movement and its impact on slavery and the nation.</li> </ul> <p><u>Tennessee Social Studies Standards AAH.10:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the Underground Railroad and assess its impact on slavery in the U.S.</li> </ul> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</li> </ul>

	<p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.</li> </ul> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.</li> </ul> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.</li> </ul> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.</li> </ul>
Lesson Objective(s)	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interrogate their notions of freedom, abolition, and slavery by comparing and contrasting stories of various abolitionists.</li> <li>• Summarize the stories of various abolitionists by identifying and retelling the most important facts presented.</li> <li>• Analyze how the format of a story/history affects their understanding of the content by analyzing the storytelling conventions used by Sheila Arnold.</li> </ul>
Essential Understanding/ Essential Question	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. “Really, freedom? What does that mean? What does that look like? And how can we help all people to have that?” - Sheila Arnold</li> <li>2. “Freedom, really? And if not, how do I make it so?” - Sheila Arnold</li> </ol>
Lesson Activities	<p><b>Lesson 1: Introduction to Freedom Stories</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Warm-up: What is freedom? Write five or more sentences exploring the idea of freedom. Consider the role of freedom in your own lives, in other people’s lives, and in the history of the United States.</li> <li>2. Ask aloud: What is freedom? Lead a brief conversation based on student’s warm-ups. Collect student responses by creating a mind-map with “Freedom” in the middle. Create the mind-map on the board or on a piece of poster paper, and save it for use throughout these lessons.</li> <li>3. Watch the beginning of the “<a href="#">Freedom Stories at the National Storytelling Festival</a>” video, pausing at minute marker 8:45 after Sheila Arnold says, “... how do I make it so?”</li> <li>4. Introduce the guiding questions: “Really, freedom? What does that mean? What does that look like? And how can we help all people to have that?” and “Freedom, really? And if not, how do I make it so?” Ask: What do you think Sheila Arnold means when she asks these questions? What kind of stories do you predict she will tell based on these questions?</li> </ol>

5. Lead a class discussion on the following questions:
  - a. Alex Haley said, "Without storytelling, we'd have no roots." What does this mean? Based on this statement, what kinds of stories do you predict we will hear in this recording?
  - b. What is the "Freedom Stories" project?
  - c. What does it mean to "center" the stories of African Americans?
  - d. Kiran Singh Sirah says that Appalachia is the site of the best and the worst of humanity but all sides of these stories are essential. Do you agree? Why or why not?
  - e. What does it mean to "interrogate your perspective?"
6. Tell students that before they listen to the stories Sheila Arnold is going to tell, they are going to write down their current perspectives on freedom, abolition and slavery. Prompt students to write by asking: What do you know about freedom, abolition, and slavery? Allow students to write in any format they like: sentences, bullet points/list, mind-map, or anything else.
  - a. Provide time for students to share their current perspectives with an elbow partner.
  - b. Tell students they will revisit this writing after listening to the stories so they can "interrogate" it.
7. Explain to students that Sheila Arnold is a storyteller. Ask: What do you think a storyteller does? How is storytelling different from history? What predictions do you have before we watch the first story?
8. Watch Sheila Arnold tell the story of Elihu Embree (8:45 - 21:15). Prompt students to take notes on facts about Elihu Embree and/or model the process of taking notes on a whiteboard or similar.
9. Allow students time to discuss their initial impressions of the story of Elihu Embree. (Whole class discussion, pair-and-share, etc.)
10. Explain to the class that for each story, we will be looking at how the story was told and the content of the story to learn more about freedom and storytelling. Then lead a class discussion:
  - a. Who was Elihu Embree? What facts did we learn about him?
  - b. How would a history book tell the story of Elihu Embree? Write a summary together.
  - c. Based on Arnold's performance of the story of Elihu Embree, describe "storytelling." How is it similar to history? How is it different?
  - d. How do you think Embree himself might have told his story? How would that version differ from a history book version and Arnold's version?
  - e. What literary devices did Arnold use in this story? If necessary, guide students to name the following: dialogue, imagery and rich descriptions, flashbacks, singing.
  - f. How did Arnold's storytelling techniques affect your understanding of Embree's story/history?
  - g. Answer the guiding questions:
    - i. How would you answer Arnold's question based on this story: Really, freedom? What did that mean to Embree and Frames? What did it look like to Embree and Frames? How did Embree help all people to have freedom? How did Frames?

- ii. Based on this story, how would you answer Arnold's query: "Freedom, really?" Was this story really about freedom? In what ways was it? In what ways did it fail as freedom?
- iii. Revisit the mind-map from the warm-up as it is relevant.

11. Conclusion: Direct students to look at what they wrote about freedom, slavery, and abolition at the beginning of class. How did the story of Elihu Embree challenge your perspective? How can you interrogate what you thought you knew and add to it? Write a few sentences beneath your initial perspective. Allow time for students to share their reflections with the whole class.
12. Ask students to watch the remainder of "Freedom Stories at the National Storytelling Festival" for homework or during class time. Tell them they will have an opportunity to re-watch portions and discuss them in more depth in later lessons.

### **Lesson 2: "We use whatever we have."**

1. Warm-up: Arnold says, "I think it's important to have a story that doesn't fit well in a box." What does it mean if a story doesn't fit into a box? Write or prepare a story that doesn't fit into a box. Your story can be based on something you learned watching "Freedom Stories at the National Storytelling Festival," a historical event, or your own life.
  - a. Ask volunteers to tell their stories to the class. Encourage students to not just read, but to tell the story like a storyteller.
  - b. Ask: How do these stories relate to the idea of "freedom"? Refer students to the mind-map from the previous lesson as necessary.
2. Explain to students that they will be jigsawing the stories of Frances Ellen Watkins Hopkins, Robert Jackson (alias Wesley Harris), and Seth Concklin. Today, they will work in small groups to answer a series of questions about their assigned historical figure. Then tomorrow, they will "jigsaw" into new groups with students who studied the other two historical figures. In these second groups, they will share notes, and compare and contrast these abolitionist figures.
3. Divide students into small groups and assign each group one figure to focus on. Direct students to the following timestamps:
  - a. Frances Ellen Watkins Hopkins (21:25 - 28:15)
  - b. Robert Jackson, alias Wesley Harris (28:15 - 37:45)
  - c. Seth Concklin (39:26 - 56:50)
4. Small group task: Create a series of notes to share with classmates tomorrow. Everyone must take their own notes. Use the following prompts:
  - a. Independently or as a small group, re-watch Sheila Arnold tell the story of your assigned figure. Take notes on the facts of the story.
  - b. Working together, write a summary, textbook-style, of the historical figure's story.

- i. If necessary, use the internet to research your historical figure and learn more. (Tip: If your story is shorter, you should do more research.)
  - c. What literary devices did Arnold use in this story? (*Dialogue, imagery and rich descriptions, flashbacks, singing*)
  - d. How did Arnold's storytelling techniques affect your understanding of your historical figure's story/history?
  - e. Answer the guiding questions:
    - i. How would you answer Arnold's question based on this story: Really, freedom? What did that mean to the people in this story? What did it look like to these people? How did people in your assigned story help all people to have freedom?
    - ii. Based on this story, how would you answer Arnold's query: "Freedom, really?" Was this story really about freedom? In what ways was it? In what ways did it fail as freedom?
    - iii. Revisit the mind-map from the warm-up as it is relevant.
5. Lead a whole class discussion:
- a. Have the stories you have heard so far in this program "fit inside a box?" Why or why not?
  - b. Consider your own story from the warm-up. How is it similar to these stories? How is it different?
  - c. Arnold points out that the project of freedom can feel impossibly big and hard to tackle. But she argues that the answer to this bigness is to just "use whatever you have." What did your historical figure use?
  - d. What tools do you have at your hand to use in the fight for freedom?
6. Conclusion: Look at what you wrote about freedom, slavery, and abolition yesterday. How did the story of the historical figure you learned about today challenge your perspective? How can you interrogate what you thought you knew and add to it? Write a few sentences beneath your notes from yesterday.

### **Lesson 3: If not freedom, how do I make it so?**

1. Warm-up: Sheila Arnold uses music as part of her performance. Search the internet for more information about "Oh Freedom" and "If I Can Help Somebody." Why do you think Arnold chose these two spirituals to punctuate her stories?
2. Lead a brief class discussion on the songs and their role in the performance. Direct students' attention to the lyrics if they do not bring them up on their own.
3. Assign students to new small groups so that each group has an "expert" on Frances Ellen Watkins Hopkins, Robert Jackson, and Seth Concklin.
4. Small group task:
  - a. Trade notes with one another so everyone in your group has information about all three abolitionist historical figures.
  - b. As a group, generate an answer to the guiding question based on the stories of these three historical figures and Elihu

	<p>Embree: “Really, freedom? What does that mean? What does that look like? And how can we help all people to have that?”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Regroup as a whole class. Lead a discussion on the guiding question: “Freedom, really? And if not, how do I make it so?” Add notes to the freedom mind map from Lesson 1 and/or refer to the mind map as appropriate.</li> <li>6. Ask students: How can we apply what we have learned about freedom, slavery, and abolition to contemporary issues around freedom?       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What problems do we still have today?</li> <li>b. What can we do about them? What can we bring to these problems? Remember: no offering is too small, according to Sheila Arnold.</li> </ol> </li> <li>7. Conclusion: Ask students to—one final time—reflect on freedom. How has their idea of freedom changed over the course of these lessons?</li> </ol>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whiteboard, electronic whiteboard, and/or poster paper</li> <li>• Technology to show a video to the whole class</li> <li>• Computers and internet access</li> <li>• Headphones for students to watch the video independently.</li> </ul>
Accommodations	<p>If students need more support regarding the historical figures, direct them to the following resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Elihu Embree—a Forerunner</a>: Article on Elihu Embree from <i>The Beacon</i></li> <li>• <a href="#">Profile of Frances Ellen Watkins Hopkins with links to many of her poems at the Poetry Foundation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Full copy of William Still’s <i>The Underground Railroad</i></a>: the book Sheila Arnold reference and draws her from       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Robert Johnson, Alias Wesley Harris’s story (pages 48-51) including a great engraving showing the fight in the barn</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">Seth Concklin’s story (pages 22-38), including many letters</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Peter Still’s Story</a>: an article from PBS about Seth Concklin</li> <li>• <a href="#">Underground Railroad Terminology</a>: PBS overview of the Underground Railroad, including clips from a documentary about the origin of the name “Underground Railroad” and the metaphorical meanings of words in spirituals</li> </ul> <p>The jigsaw format provides an opportunity for homogeneous and heterogeneous ability groupings. Consider grouping students homogeneously for the first round, and assigning students with stronger comprehension skills to Seth Concklin and students who need more support with comprehension skills to Frances Ellen Watkins Hopkins. When re-grouping students, the new small groups will de facto be heterogeneous groupings.</p>