

## Freedom Parade

### Overview

As a culminating group project to a unit on the Civil War and Reconstruction, students will research a topic relating to slavery and freedom and create an informational and artistic float representing that topic. Students will then present their float by participating in a class "Freedom Parade."

### Grades

4-8

### Essential Questions

- What were the various obstacles to freedom during the period before, during, and after the Civil War?
- What led (politically and socially) to the end of slavery in America?
- In what ways were former slaves impacted by freedom?

### Materials

- "Sweet Freedom's Song," reading excerpt attached
- "Freedom Parade," sample assignment sheet attached
- Access to research materials (i.e., Internet, library, etc.)
- Art supplies

### Duration

The amount of time required for this activity varies by teacher. The recommended time is:

- 1 class period for assignment introduction/description, brainstorming and beginning research
- Time for research and construction of float

### Preparation

The purpose of this activity is to exhibit historical understanding while also celebrating the perseverance, survival, resistance, and contributions of enslaved people and their fight for freedom. In researching the period of slavery and freedom, however, students should always be prepared for and reminded that they will come across words and images of racism, white supremacy, and violence. Teachers should continually monitor all float research and production to ensure students are treating the material with sensitivity and respect, and that final products do not involve stereotypical portrayals, or symbols/words of hate. (Even though such symbols/words would be historically accurate, they can be traumatizing if presented directly in the classroom or student projects. Thus, students can refer to such measures, but should not explicitly use such language or symbols in their work.)

### Procedure

1. Project (or write on the board) the following lines of poetry and ask a student volunteer to read it out loud:

No more is heard the driver's whip and horn  
 Resounding thru the cotton and the corn;  
 The slave-hounds in the swamp no longer bark,  
 The slave no longer travels in the dark,  
 But in great freedom's light, of recent birth,  
 He walks erect, a sovereign of the earth!

J. Willis Menard, July 4, 1867

Briefly discuss:

- What are your impressions of this excerpt? What is it about? Why is the time that it was written significant?
  - What is the tone/mood of this excerpt?
  - What does this poem teach us about the conditions of slavery? What can we infer regarding the life of a slave?
  - If you were to give this poem excerpt a title, what would you call it and why?
2. Instruct students to consider these 6 lines and to write 6 more lines of poetry that would fit either before or after this excerpt. Give students 5-10 minutes to write then allow volunteers to share their writing.
  3. Explain to students that the author of these lines is John Willis Menard, an African American journalist, civil rights leader, editor, and poet from the 1800s, and that these lines represent the experiences and feelings of thousands of African Americans in the mid-1860s as freedom from slavery became a reality.
  4. Tell students they will read a bit more about how African Americans responded to the end of slavery and hand out the attached reading excerpt, "Sweet Freedom's Song," an excerpt from The Trouble They Seen: The Story of Reconstruction in the Words of African Americans, edited by Dorothy Sterling. The passage contains various excerpts from 1860s papers written by African Americans. Instruct students to read it individually or in partners. Afterwards, discuss:
    - Why do you think parades were organized by various black men and women?
    - What types of floats and participants were represented in the parades?
    - Of all the parade participants and presentations described, which do you think would have been most striking and why?
    - What do you notice about the image, "Oh Freedom"?
    - What message did Capt. J. H. Ingraham send to attendees of the parade? What was symbolic about the spot where he spoke?
    - Who do you imagine attended such parades and why? Who might have resented such parades and why?
  5. Explain to students that they are going to celebrate freedom and recreate one of the parades that occurred in 1865 by participating in a group project in which they create a float based on a topic relating to slavery and freedom. Pass out the attached assignment sheet, "Freedom Parade," and go over it in detail with students.

Teachers should decide whether students can choose or will be assigned their topic, as well as their partner/group members. Also, teachers should determine and make students aware of how much class time and homework time will be provided for completing the project. (The attached "Freedom Parade" assignment sheet has a sample Timeline for Completion, but teachers should tailor and reduce the time provided as needed.)

- **TEACHER NOTE:** The purpose of this activity is to exhibit historical understanding while also celebrating the perseverance, survival, resistance, and contributions of enslaved people and their fight for freedom. Teachers should continually monitor all float research and production to ensure students are treating the material with sensitivity and respect, and that final products do not involve stereotypical portrayals, or symbols/words of hate. (Even though such symbols/words would be historically accurate, they can be traumatizing if presented directly. Thus, students can refer to such measures, but should not explicitly use such language or symbols in their work.)

6. Allow students to ask questions and begin brainstorming their parade float in class. On the float due date, teachers should determine how students will share their work. Example options include:
- Line all the floats up in a large space, such as the media center. Allow students to spend some time freely touring the floats. Finally, have each of the float's creators take a few minutes and present their float topic to the class.
  - Present the floats in parade format, perhaps inviting other classes and/or parents and community members to attend.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Freedom Parade**

**Assignment:** As the Union began to occupy the southern states and the Civil War drew to a close, parades were organized throughout the summer of 1865 to celebrate the new freedom of those formerly enslaved. You will be recreating a “Freedom Parade” by choosing a topic relating to slavery and freedom, researching that topic, and creating a parade float representing your chosen topic and its relationship to the theme of freedom.

**Your float must be completed and ready for parading/display on:**

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### Requirements for Completion

#### 1. Choose a topic for your float that relates to slavery and freedom. Example topics:

- Abolitionists
  - Float can be on the movement in general, on a particular abolitionist society, or on a particular abolitionist
- Abraham Lincoln
- African Americans and the NC State Constitution
- African American Representatives in the US Congress (Reconstruction)
- Black Soldiers in the Civil War/ “Colored Troops”
- *Dred Scott v. Sandford*
- Emancipation Proclamation
- Free Black Settlements
  - Choose a particular settlement, such as Princeville, NC; James City, NC; Trent River, NC; etc.
- Freedman’s Bureau
- Fugitive Slave Law
- Freed Slaves & Sharecropping
- Reconstruction
- Skills/Trades of African Americans
- Slave catchers
- Slave Codes/Black Codes
- Slave Rebellions
- Slave Resistance
- Slavery and the US Constitution
  - Focus on various Articles/Amendments that dealt with slavery, the ending of slavery, and the civil rights of African Americans
- Underground Railroad
- \_\_\_\_\_ (you may choose your own topic but you MUST clear it with the teacher)

➤ **My topic is:** \_\_\_\_\_

➤ **My partner/group members are:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. Research your topic using the Internet, encyclopedias, library books, etc.

Research your topic, finding as many related facts as you can. Take notes on your research, with consideration to your float requirements. Look for information that will help you understand and illustrate your knowledge of your topic.

- In what ways does your topic relate to slavery and freedom?
- Share important facts on your float regarding your topic. You might have to narrow your topic, which is fine. (For example, if your topic is slave rebellions, you may decide to focus on one particular rebellion.) Be as clear and detailed as possible.
- What dates, prominent people, important events, etc. are connected with your topic?
- What can your topic teach us regarding the resilience, courage, skills, perseverance, etc. of those who were enslaved?
- Why is your topic important historically?
- What situations relate to your topic, past and present?
- What impact has your topic had on people throughout history?
- What relevance does your topic have to life today? Why should we care about this topic today?

### 3. Understand and brainstorm the **Float Requirements**:

- a) Your float must be **visually appealing** (decorated and creative) and contain **appropriate and accurate information** teaching about your chosen topic and how it relates to freedom.

It is recommended that you think of a symbol or artistic structure for your float that will make it memorable (think of what you see on floats in parades you have witnessed...this might be a person in costume, a literal artistic recreation representing your topic, a colorful artistic/abstract display representing your topic, etc.) For example, your float might contain someone dressed and speaking as Abraham Lincoln, or it might contain a sculpture you've created that represents freedom in some way, such as broken chains falling from hands.

- b) Your float must be **moveable**, so that you can present it along the parade route on its due date. (Be creative! Use wagons, tricycles, cardboard attached to skate boards, your own bodies, etc.)
- c) Your float must contain **written material/visual aids** that teach about your topic (banners, flags, posters/signs, art work, a flyer that gets handed out, etc.)
- d) You must create a **typed summary** of your topic and what you have learned. Your narrative must summarize your chosen topic(s), explain your topic's impact on the themes of slavery and freedom, note the importance and impact of your topic throughout history, and describe your topic's relevance to life today.

#### ➤ **Questions I have about the above steps:**

### 4. Follow the **Timeline for Completion**:

Date	Action
	Receive assignment and begin investigating which topic(s) you may be most interested in; decide upon your three top choices;

	Finalize your chosen topic with your teacher, as well as your partner/group choice (if applicable); Begin researching and learning about your topic
	Bring your research to class for an in-class workday; you will be able to utilize class time for further research and brainstorming float ideas based on information learned thus far
	2 <sup>nd</sup> in-class research and brainstorming workday
	Continue researching and brainstorming outside of class; develop a first draft of written material your float will include, as well as rough design sketches for your float and its visual aids
	Bring in first draft of written material for your float and rough sketches of your float and its visual aids for in-class workday; begin brainstorming ideas for your jingle/rap
	Continue developing written and visual material
	Bring in a second draft of your written material and visual aids; Work in class to finalize all items.
	Finish float items; double check float requirements to ensure all pieces are complete
	Begin bringing float materials to class
	Final items due; Begin to create and decorate float in class
	Float due! Be ready to present your float in the Freedom Parade.

## 5. Parent /Guardian Signature

I have reviewed this assignment with my child and understand the expectations and Requirements for the Freedom Parade. If I have any questions, I will e-mail the teacher at \_\_\_\_\_. I will check in with my child periodically to ensure he/she is abiding to all due dates.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail or phone number

**We hope that you can attend our Freedom Parade on:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**to be held at**  
\_\_\_\_\_

# I. YEAR ONE

## THE TROUBLE THEY SEEN

2

A month later the city's black men and women organized a parade:

No more is heard the driver's whip and horn  
Resounding thru the cotton and the corn;  
The slave-hounds in the swamp no longer bark,  
The slave no longer travels in the dark,  
But in great freedom's light, of recent birth,  
He walks erect, a sovereign of the earth!

J. Willis Menard, July 4, 1867

## 1. Sweet Freedom's Song

When Charleston, South Carolina, was captured by Union forces in February 1865, the Twenty-first Regiment U. S. Colored Troops was the first to enter the city. A black soldier on muleback with a banner that proclaimed LIBERTY led the regiment through the narrow streets. An old woman who tried to embrace the soldier hugged his mule instead as she cried, "Thank God!" Another woman danced for joy

"I am sixty-nine years old," she said, "but I feel as if I want but sixteen!" She broke into a chant:

Yes long been a-comm  
Yes long been a-comm  
Yes long been a-comm  
For to take the land.

*The National Freedman, April 1, 1865*

It was a jubilee of freedom, a hosannah to their deliverers. First came the marshals and their aids, followed by a band of music; then the Twenty-first Regiment, then the clergymen of the different churches, carrying open Bibles, then an open car drawn by four white horses. In this car there were 15 colored ladies dressed in white—to represent the 15 recent Slave States. A long procession of women followed the car. Then the children—1,800 in line, at least. They sang:

John Brown's body lies a moulding in the grave,

We go marching on!

This verse, however, was not nearly so popular as one which rapidly supplanted all the others, until along the mile or more of children, marching two abreast, no other sound could be heard than

We'll hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree!

As we go marching on!

After the children came the various trades. The fishermen, with a banner bearing an emblematical device and the words, "The Fishermen welcome you, General Saxton." Carpenters, masons, teamsters, drovers, coopers, bakers, paper-carriers, barbers, blacksmiths, wood-sawyers, painters, wheelwrights and the fire companies. The carpenters carried their planes, the masons their trowels, the teamsters their whips; the coopers their adzes. The bakers crackers hung around their necks; the paper-carriers [had] a banner, and each a copy of the *Charleston Courier*. The wheelwrights a large wheel; and the fire companies, ten in number, their foremen with their trumpets.

A large cart, drawn by two dilapidated horses, followed the trades. On this cart was an auctioneer's block and a

As the cart moved along, the mock-auctioneer rang his bell and cried out: "How much am I offered for this good cook? She is an excellent cook, gentlemen. She can make four kinds of mock turtle soup—from beef, fish or fowl. Who bids?"

"Two hundred's bid! Two-fifty Three hundred."

"Who bids? Who bids?"

Women burst into tears as they saw this tableau and for getting that it was a mimic scene, shouted wildly.

*"Give me back my children! Give me back my children!"*

New York Daily Tribune, April 4, 1865

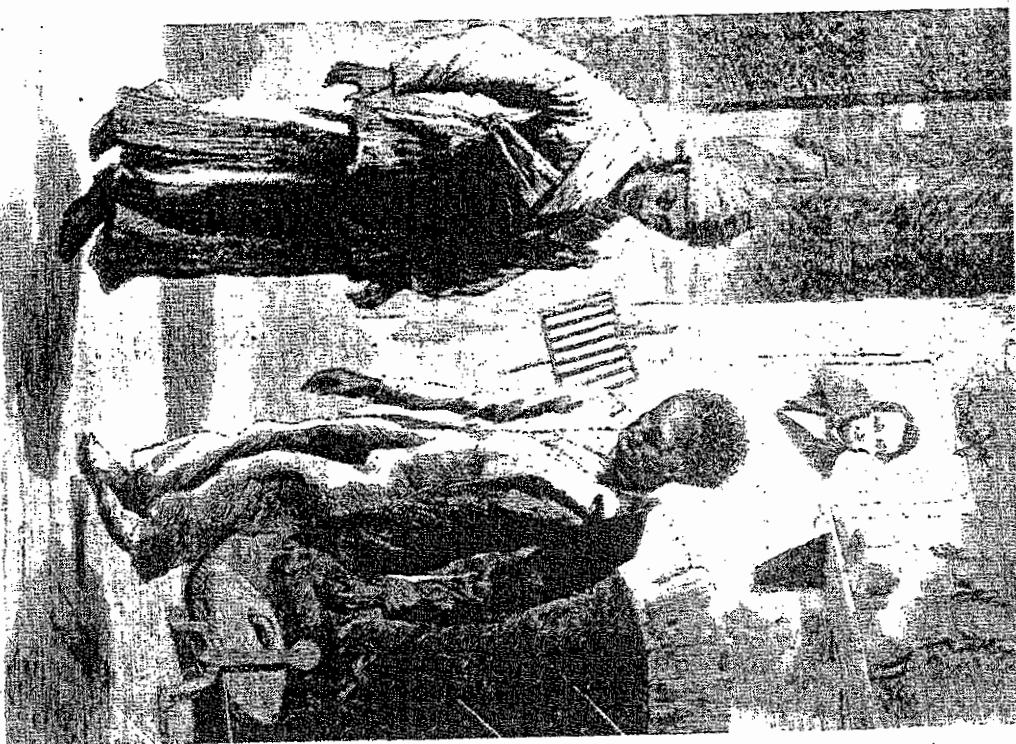
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There were parades everywhere that summer. A reporter for The New Orleans Tribune, the first black daily newspaper described events in Mobile on the Fourth of July. James H. Ingraham was an officer in the Louisiana Native Guards.

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The Fourth was celebrated here by the colored population in fine style. The procession formed as follows: Two regiments of colored troops—Mechanics and Draymen's Association—Steamboatmen's Association—Firemen's Association, consisting of eight companies—Benevolent Society—Daughters of Zion—Sons of Zion—Missionary Society—Young Men's Association—Sisters of Charity and many others whose names I did not learn. A large number of enfranchised citizens turned out to witness the demonstration. Capt. J. H. Ingraham addressed the vast assembly in the public square. Upon the very spot where, a few years ago, the apostle of slavery (W. L. Yancey) declared that slavery was a divine institution, Ingraham and others declared that slavery was dead and will be buried so deep that the judgment will not find it! Everything passed off quietly and with satisfaction.

The Liberator, July 21, 1865



Oh, Freedom! (Boston Public Library)

black man with a bell represented a Negro trader. This man had himself been sold several times and two women and a child who sat on the block had also been knocked down at auction in Charleston.