



North Carolina Freedom Park Field Notebook

The North Carolina

African American

Heritage

Commission

“Locating [Freedom Park] in our Capital City where tens of thousands of children go every year - why do this? It’s terribly important...so many times young people find going to a thing like this where they can touch something or feel something catalyzes all they’ve been taught in school.” Dr. William Friday

Overview

Field trips provide real-world experiences that can be more memorable than classroom lessons, especially when hands-on activities prompt them to actively engage, analyze, process, and connect the information they encounter to their existing knowledge. [North Carolina Freedom Park](#) offers a rich opportunity for such active teaching and learning, including the promotion of curiosity, contemplation, empathy, and reflection for all ages. To ensure students have a meaningful on-site experience, in which they take the time to critically consider various aspects of the Park (such as the “Beacon of Freedom” and “The Arbor,” as well as the people commemorated in its “Voices of Freedom,” teachers can provide them with [Freedom Park Field Notes](#), a printable journal of engaging, hands-on activities to be completed during their visit.

Duration

Time will vary depending on how many journal pages students complete; the journal activities can also be stretched across several days post-visit.

Grades

The journal’s readings are geared towards middle and high school. Elementary grades can edit the journal to still make use of the hands-on activities.

Materials

- [“Defining Freedom”](#) video excerpt (5 min.), from Facing History & Ourselves
- [Freedom Park Field Notes](#)
 - Teachers should print & assemble the journal prior to the visit.
 - Many of the activities in the journal can also be expanded as more in-depth classroom activities.
- Pencils
- (Optional) Clipboards or another portable, hard surface (to stabilize the field notebook when writing)
- (Optional) Smart Phones or other devices connected to the internet (if utilizing the QR codes/websites) throughout the journal
- (Optional) Headphones
- *Additional activities for use before, during and after your visit to NC Freedom Park, as well as lesson plans for teaching about the people, history and themes of NC Freedom Park more in depth in the classroom, are available [here](#). All educational resources are aligned to the NC Standard Course of Study/NC Essential Standards in Social Studies.*

Preparation

Students should have a basic familiarity with North Carolina Freedom Park and should be prepared with expectations for engaging with the themes represented in the Park. See the lesson plan [“An Introduction to North Carolina Freedom Park.”](#)

Prior to visiting Freedom Park, photocopy and assemble the [Freedom Park Field Notes](#) journal for each student. The journal is designed so that it can be printed/photocopied on standard 8 ½ x 11 paper, front and back. (Teachers who do not want to utilize the entire journal can also omit, edit or even add pages based on the grade level of students and your individual teaching and learning goals.) After printing the journals, they can be stapled down the spine so that they open like a book. Teachers may want to have clipboards or another portable surface to help students when writing in their journals.

Procedure

What is Freedom? (15+ minutes)

1. As a warm up, have students silently consider and brainstorm in writing (via words, phrases, sketches, etc.): "What does the word 'freedom' mean to you?"
2. Engage students in a brief class discussion, encouraging them to share their initial thoughts, collecting their responses in a list up front. As they discuss, ask follow up questions that prompt them to consider the various categories of freedom, such as physical v. mental/spiritual, and personal freedom v. Constitutional/political freedom, etc.
3. Using student feedback, create a comprehensive definition of the term freedom, such as: "Freedom is a state of being without restraints, limitations, or oppression, encompassing the ability to make choices, express oneself, and pursue one's interests without undue interference."
4. Next, ask students to consider the concept of freedom throughout history to present. Ask them to share various people or movements in our state and nation that have involved restricting and/or fighting for freedom, and again, note these in a list. Historical examples might include enslaved people running away, women's suffrage, the labor movement, Civil Rights protests against Jim Crow, etc. Modern examples might include workers' rights, Internet freedom of speech, environmental activism, etc. Deepen the discussion by having students talk about the challenges these individuals or groups face(d) and how their actions contribute(d) to securing various forms of freedom throughout history to present. Highlight how modern struggles for freedom relate to the historical examples discussed.
5. Connect this conversation to students' upcoming visit to [North Carolina Freedom Park](#), reminding them that the Park commemorates the spirit of the African American struggle for freedom, and serves as a timeless tribute to the universal ideals of liberty, resilience, and equality.. To deepen student thinking on the concept of freedom in preparation for their visit, show the first 4 min., 50 sec. of "[Defining Freedom](#)" (from Facing History & Ourselves, April 6, 2022.) In this excerpt, scholars discuss the evolution of the definition of freedom for enslaved people in America. As students watch, ask them to continue thinking about the concept of freedom and its various forms. After viewing, discuss:
 - How does one's identity inform ideas about freedom? How might the time in which you live inform your ideas about freedom?
 - What message is Timothy McCarthy conveying when he says that "The birth of this freedom-loving nation was forged in the crucible of slavery...?"
 - What kinds of freedom did enslaved people (and even free Black people who may have legally been "free") seek?
 - Deepen student understanding of the concepts of **concrete freedoms** (i.e., enslaved people wanted to be able to move about and travel freely, work for themselves, earn and manage their own money, own property, marry, etc.) as well as **existential freedoms** (e.g., the lifting of the burden of enslavement, coupled with the hope and possibility that comes with freedom.)
 - Teachers who choose to do so can also show the entire 15-minute excerpt, which goes into Reconstruction and the actualities of freedom post-emancipation.)

Introducing Students to the Journal (5 minutes)

6. Prior to your on-site visit to North Carolina Freedom Park, provide students with their own copy of [Freedom Park Field Notes](#). The purpose of this journal is to continue exploring the concept of freedom, while ensuring students engage with the Park and its various features in a way that is interactive, meaningful and impactful. The journal provides prompts that encourage critical thinking, connections,

reflection, and more, through prompts requiring reading, writing, sketching, art, and other interactive activities.

7. It is recommended that students be provided the journals the day before, or (if you worry about students losing/forgetting them) right before, leaving to visit the park. Teachers should:
 - Instruct students to write their name on the front of their journal
 - Share the purpose and an overview of the journal, explaining the variety of activities provided (from critical thinking to art) that relate to various components of the Park.
 - Provide some time for students to flip through the pages and skim the various types of questions and activities they will complete onsite and ask any questions.
 - If students will be allowed to utilize internet-connected devices to access the QR codes in the booklet during their visit, make sure they understand how to scan them. (Web addresses are also provided as an alternative.)
 - Teachers should also let students know what the expectations are in terms of how much of the journal they should complete; whether it will be collected, shared with others, and/or graded; as well as if and how their work in the journal will be assessed.
 - To help protect the various surfaces at NC Freedom Park, students should only use pencils while onsite. (Teachers may also want to provide clipboards or other hard surfaces that can serve as a solid backing when students are filling out their journal pages.)

Completing the Journal (Time Varies)

8. The first page of the journal asks students to share what they are excited about regarding their pending visit, as well as what they already know about the park. These questions should be completed before students visit (i.e., in the classroom before leaving or on the trip there.)

As an optional/supplementary activity, either before or after their visit, students can also fill out the back cover of the journal (“About the Author”) with a bio of themselves or some other creative expression of their identity. While this is optional, it is also a way for students to develop a deeper sense of ownership of their work and reflections in the journal.

All other activities can be completed on site; many can alternatively be completed after their visit.

Debriefing the Journal (Time Varies)

9. Post visit, teachers will ideally provide class time for students to share and further process their visit and journal entries together. (Class time might also be provided to complete additional journal activities.) Strategies that can be used for processing include:
 - **Whole class discussion**
 - **Partner or small group sharing** (students can be instructed to focus on particular pages to share)
 - **“Speed” Sharing:** Two rows (Row A & Row B) of students face one another. Partner A shares their thoughts (based on an assigned journal page/s) with partner B across from them. Then, the entire Row A moves a single spot to the left so that students now face a new partner. Repeat the process for as many times/prompts as they are to discuss.
 - **Gallery Walk:** This activity can be used for students to share their thoughts and/or display their art work completed for various prompts in the journal (i.e., the pages for Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Ella Baker, etc.)
 - **Create a Class Book:** Students might work to edit and compile pieces from each student journal to make one culminating class book of their Freedom park visit. This could also include photographs from the trip and other creative additions.

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