



Preparing for a Field Trip to North Carolina Freedom Park



“When the park is completed, [students] will reflect on the quotes that are on the wall, and they will look at the Beacon, which is a guide and inspiration for the future – and they will leave here with a new outlook on freedom and equality for all.” Reginald Hodges, North Carolina Freedom Park Board member & Chair of the Construction Liaison Committee

Overview

“Freedom Park is a historic green space nestled in the heart of downtown Raleigh. With deep reverence for the unyielding spirit of the African American struggle for freedom, this park stands as a timeless tribute to the universal ideals of liberty, resilience, and equality. The park's thoughtful design pays homage to the countless individuals (the “Voices of Freedom”) who contributed to the advancement of civil rights and the pursuit of equality in North Carolina. The pathways wind through landscaped gardens, each corner adorned with quotes that tell the story of a community's unwavering determination to overcome adversity. In the center of the park stands a majestic monument, the Beacon of Freedom, a symbol of unity and strength that reaches for the sky. Freedom Park is not merely a physical space; it is a living testament to the strength of the human spirit. It reminds us that the pursuit of freedom is a shared endeavor that transcends time, race, and background. As the first park in North Carolina dedicated to honoring the African American struggle for freedom, it stands as a beacon of hope and a reminder that the ideals of perseverance, equality, and freedom are universal aspirations that can unite us all.” [\(Source\)](#)

The addition of Freedom Park to downtown Raleigh offers a welcoming public space for teaching, learning, and reflection, where students can develop empathy, foster understanding, and engaging in meaningful conversation. Here, students will learn about the barriers faced throughout North Carolina's history, while also finding inspiration in the agency, resistance, resilience, and hope inherent in the “Voices of Freedom” represented throughout the Park. They can explore the pathways and consider the meaning of freedom as they stare up at the 45-foot tall Beacon of Freedom, reaching into Raleigh's skyline. Teachers might gather the class in the area known as The Arbor, a circular space with benches harkening to the African American tradition of bush arbors, sheltered by giant oaks, where students can engage in activities, discuss and reflect regarding what they have learned at the Park. NC Freedom Park can also offer a limitless entry point for learning about numerous other topics, themes, people, and rich histories related to the ongoing struggle for freedom in North Carolina.

To ensure students get the most out of a field trip, **planning, preparation and framing are key to success**. Whether a class spends 15 minutes or an hour at Freedom Park, educators will ideally provide a pre-visit introduction to NC Freedom Park themes for their class; utilize purposeful engagement strategies on-site; and implement a post-trip reflective discussion followed by hands-on processing activities. The recommendations below are designed to help ensure your time at NC Freedom Park significantly enriches students' understanding, engagement, and overall learning outcomes.

1. Pre-Trip Teacher & Student Preparation

- **Educational Goals:** Clearly define your educational objectives and goals of the field trip. What specific knowledge or skills do you want students to gain from the experience? Share these

goals with students and their parents, to ensure everyone is on the same page. (Standards alignment for NC Freedom Park is available [here](#).)

- **Introductory Materials:** Provide students with relevant background information about NC Freedom Park. [“An Introduction to North Carolina Freedom Park”](#) can be used to introduce students to public art in general, as well as provide a foundation for understanding the vision and purpose of NC Freedom Park in particular. In addition to making use of these educational materials, teachers can provide supplemental readings such as recent articles about the Park’s creation and opening, or have students view videos about the Park and its creation (such as those on the website or news features that have aired), with the goal of providing context for the trip.
- **Expectations:** Communicate behavioral expectations, safety guidelines, and any assignments or tasks that students need to complete during or after the trip. Based on the educational goals you have defined for your particular class, make sure you have an appropriate number of trained chaperones to help achieve your goals.
- **Engage Curiosity:** Encourage students to ask questions about what they hope to learn or discover during the trip, and discuss their upcoming trip with family members. This fosters a sense of curiosity and anticipation.
- **Content Preparation:** North Carolina and the nation’s history is complex, and while the study of freedom across time will include many stories of joy and success in the face of adversity, a comprehensive study of our history will also include encounters with injustice, oppression, racism, violence, and pain. Characterized as “hard history,” a phrase coined in the Southern Poverty Law Center’s [report of the same name](#), such history often reverberates into the present, making it potentially challenging to teach or to learn about when students (and their parents/guardians) are not appropriately prepared. It is thus imperative that students understand expectations for respectfully discussing periods of “hard history” such as enslavement, Jim Crow, segregation, and other times when freedom has been denied - all of which are a part of our shared state and national narrative. That said, as Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries noted, “Hard history isn't hopeless history.” NC Freedom Park's educational resources thus encourage students to critically examine and reconsider aspects of the African American experience and struggle for freedom, but with a focus on resistance, resilience, Black agency, collaboration with allies of all races, hope, and empowerment. The stories of the leaders and persevering North Carolinians elevated throughout NC Freedom Park are stories we can all celebrate and be inspired by, using the lessons of their past struggles, hard work and sacrifices as lights that guide us toward a better future.

For techniques on building and preparing a classroom community to effectively engage with topics and periods of “hard history,” see Carolina K-12’s [Tips for Tackling Sensitive History & Controversial Current Events](#).

2. On-Site/During the Trip:

- **Guided Exploration:** A structured itinerary of how the class will spend their time at NC Freedom Park, as well as how that fits into an itinerary for a larger day of exploration if seeing other sites in the Capital Area, helps ensure your time at NC Freedom Park is focused, purposeful, and maximized. Even if your time is limited to a brief walk-through, planning can help make every minute count on-site, and the available classroom resources can assist you in extending the important themes represented in NC Freedom Park back at school.

- **Interactive Activities:** Incorporate interactive and hands-on activities on-site to keep students engaged and actively participating. On-site activity options are available, such as the [hands-on, printable Field Notes journal](#), and educators are encouraged to create your own.
- **Reflection Time:** Build in moments for students to pause and reflect on what they're seeing and learning on-site/in the moment. This can be through question prompts from teachers and chaperones, or by utilizing the [Freedom Park Field Notebook activity](#), which provides a printable "[Field Notebook](#)" of diverse prompts.
- **Capturing Experiences:** Encourage students to take photos, record videos, or make sketches during the trip. (The [Freedom Park Field Notebook](#) also provides prompts and space for student artwork.) This creates tangible memories and materials for post-trip activities.

3. Post-Trip Activities:

- **Debriefing Session:** Hold a debriefing session where students share their experiences, discoveries, and insights. This helps consolidate their learning and encourages peer-to-peer knowledge sharing. See [Post-Visit Prompts & Strategies for Discussion & Reflection](#) for sample prompts and discussion strategies.
- **Creative Project-Based Assignments:** Assign activities and projects that require students to synthesize what they learned during their trip to NC Freedom Park. Ideas are available in [Post-Visit Processing Activities & Projects for NC Freedom Park](#).
- **Connecting to Curriculum:** Relate the trip experiences back to the classroom curriculum. Discuss how the trip's content aligns with information and concepts they've learned in class and highlight the real-world connections, reinforcing the relevance of the experience.
- **Guest Speakers:** Invite guest speakers who are related to the history and themes represented in North Carolina Freedom Park to further enhance students' understanding and create real-world connections.
- **Showcase and Celebration:** Provide opportunities for students to showcase their projects and share their insights with the wider school community, fostering a sense of accomplishment and further sharing the relevance of what students learned and experienced at NC Freedom Park.
- **Extended Learning:** Offer resources for further exploration, such as recommended books, appropriate films, or additional field trips that students can engage in with their families.

4. Continuous Feedback & Reflection:

- **Student Feedback:** Gather feedback from students about their experience. What did they find valuable? What could be improved? This helps refine future field trips. (Creative activities such as "Write a Review of NC Freedom Park" are also available in the "[Field Notebook](#)".)
- **Teacher Reflection:** Reflect on the effectiveness of the trip and the strategies used. What worked well? What could be adjusted for better outcomes next time you visit NC Freedom Park with a group of students? Is there a specific resource you wish NC Freedom Park made available for your use? (Contact Christie Norris at cnorris@unc.edu with suggestions, ideas, or requests. We would also love to hear about any activities you created to engage your students; please send us a summary of what you did, photos of your visits, etc.)

Remember, the goal is to make your class visit to NC Freedom Park an immersive and impactful learning experience that goes beyond just a day away from the classroom. By incorporating thoughtful planning, engaging activities, and meaningful follow-up, you can help students extract the maximum educational value from their visit and ensure they develop a deep appreciation for the ongoing struggle for freedom, past and present, in North Carolina.

Available Educational Resources from North Carolina Freedom Park

North Carolina Freedom Park, and the educational resources designed to accompany it, are intricately aligned with [North Carolina's Standard Course of Study](#). Available resources include:

- **Pre-Visit:** [Preparing for a Fieldtrip to North Carolina Freedom Park](#) (current document)
- **Pre-Visit:** [An Introduction to North Carolina Freedom Park](#)
- **On-Site:** [North Carolina Freedom Park Field Notebook](#)
- **Pre-Visit** or **On-Site:** [The Leaders Behind the Words: NC Freedom Park's "Voices of Freedom"](#)
- **On-Site** or **Post-Visit:** [Primary Source Analyzation at North Carolina Freedom Park](#)
- **Post-Visit:** [Prompts & Strategies for Discussion & Reflection](#)
- **Post-Visit:** [Processing Activities & Projects for NC Freedom Park](#)

Websites

- **[NC African American Heritage Commission](#):** This site provides information about the park, its history, the "Voices of Freedom Featured," and more.
- **[Carolina K-12 Database of K-12 Resources](#):** In addition to the curriculum materials for Freedom Park, other lesson plans related to Freedom Park people, events, themes, and beyond, are available; all materials are aligned to the NC Standard Course of Study/NC Essential Standards. Sample related lesson plans include:
 - [A Parallel Struggle for Freedom: Black People During the American Revolution](#)
 - [Abolitionism, Quakers & the Underground Railroad in North Carolina](#)
 - [African Folk Tales: Resistance, Hope & Freedom](#)
 - [Against All Odds: The African American Founding of Princeville, NC](#)
 - [Coastal Freedom Seekers: Hotel D'Afrique, Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony & James City](#)
 - [A Counter Revolution – The Fight Against Segregated Dining in NC](#)
 - [Elizabeth Keckly: From Slavery to Celebrity](#)
 - [Exploring African American Leadership & Service in North Carolina](#)

- [Exploring Life in 1898 Wilmington & the Wilmington Coup with CROW, a novel for young adults](#)
- [Fighting for Freedom: Black Contributions to the Civil War](#)
- [Freedom Music](#)
- [The Freedom Rides of 1961](#)
- [Freedom Seeking Across North Carolina](#)
- [From Wyatt Outlaw to the Kirk Holden War](#)
- [George Henry White: The American Phoenix](#)
- [George Moses Horton](#)
- [Halifax County, the Roanoke River and Freedom Seeking](#)
- [History of Black Education in North Carolina](#)
- [How Should Robert F. Williams Be Remembered?](#)
- [Jim Crow in North Carolina](#)
- [Journey of Reconciliation, 1947](#)
- [NO FEAR: The Extraordinary Artistry of Nina Simone](#)
- [North Carolina's 35th USCT](#)
- [North Carolina's Settlements of Freed People During the Civil War: The Roanoke Island Freedmen's Colony and the Trent River Settlement](#)
- [Our Story is Told Through Our Plates – Southern Foodways](#)
- [Pauli Murray: Civil Rights Trailblazer](#)
- [Resistance, Resilience & Strength: The Life of Harriet Ann Jacobs](#)
- [Shining a Light on Untold History: North Carolina's Black Revolutionary War Soldiers](#)
- [Stealing a Little Freedom – Enslaved Runaways in NC](#)
- [Surviving and Thriving Despite Jim Crow: Durham's "Black Wall Street"](#)
- [The 1979 Greensboro Massacre](#)
- [The Wilmington 10: Criminal Justice & Exoneration](#)
- [The 1898 Wilmington Coup](#)

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