

Halfway to Freedom

Lesson 5: Theater Performance

Focus Questions

How did the Illinois Black Laws affect the lives of African Americans in Chicago? What did the abolitionists of Chicago risk by their civil disobedience? How are works of historical fiction produced?

Core Understandings

Students will understand that the Illinois Black Laws restricted the lives and opportunities of African Americans in Chicago. They will understand that acts of civil disobedience can have serious consequences. They will understand how works of fiction based on historical events are created.

Knowledge

Students will know the new vocabulary words introduced in *Halfway to Freedom*. They will know key historical figures in the abolitionist movement. They will know the difference between fact and fiction.

Skills

Students will use their analytical, interpretive, and communication skills to master key historical facts and create a fictional work of art inspired by those facts.

Common Core ELA Standards

CCSSR1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

ISBE Social Science Standards

Goal 15: Understand economic systems, with an emphasis on the US.

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the US, and other nations.

Goal 17: Understand world geography and the effects of geography on society, with an emphasis on the US.

Goal 18: Understand social systems, with an emphasis on the US.

ISBE Fine Arts Standard

Goal 26: Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced.

In This Lesson

Students will perform an original skit using characters, themes, and key vocabulary words from *Halfway to Freedom*. The story elements of setting, character, and conclusion are addressed. Note: This lesson was designed as a two-day activity but may be altered at will (see Lesson 4). Researched and written by Kris Ballard.



Activity

In this lesson, students will perform the skits inspired by *Halfway to Freedom* written during Lesson 4.

Skits should be assessed by both teacher and peers based on overall performance, correct use of vocabulary words, historical accuracy, and creativity. Consider giving extra points to those that use music and/or costumes in an appropriate manner.

Distribute and review peer-assessment worksheets (at the end of this lesson) for each performance.

Materials & Resources

- **Printouts of the *Halfway to Freedom* narrative:**

http://www.GreatChicagoStories.org/pdf/story/Halfway_to_Freedom_by_Melody_Herr.pdf

Instructional Notes

Try to allow time for a brief discussion after each performance. You may not get through all the skits in one day.

Extension Activities

Have students perform their skits for the whole school.

Handout: Peer Assessment

Name: _____

Writer/Actor names: _____

- Circle each of the following vocabulary words **if they are used correctly**:
abolitionist **advocacy** **fugitive** *McGuffey Reader* **mischievous**
overseer **petition** **shackles** **smuggler** **testify**

- Do all group members have equal parts?
- Is the skit historically accurate, and does it reflect knowledge learned from the story?
- Do students act out their roles and not simply read aloud from the script?
- Is the skit about five minutes in length?
- Does the skit have a theme and moral? What are they?

Rate the following on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest.

- overall performance
- correct use of vocabulary words and terms
- historical accuracy
- general entertainment