

The Eighth Step to Freedom:

What story will you tell?

Introduction

New Jersey played a major role in the Underground Railroad, which was a network of people and places that helped runaway slaves reach freedom. Both whites and blacks assisted in the exodus, and free blacks risked their own freedom in order to help free the fleeing enslaved. In addition to being a link to the North, and therefore a major passage on the Underground Railroad, New Jersey was also key because of the presence of two major Underground Railroad conductors, Harriet Tubman and William Still. Harriet Tubman worked for three years in Cape May, NJ, and William Still was a native of the state. William Still helped to organize the network of freedom and kept detailed accounts of nearly every slave he assisted, so that no voice would be forgotten. He also helped reunite families as they made their way north.

This lesson will allow students to recognize the importance of the Underground Railroad, and to learn of the accomplishments of William Still: as a self-educated black man, as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, and as the recorder of the history of the flight to freedom. William Still personally helped over 800 runaway slaves to freedom, and he “vowed their stories would never be forgotten” (“Underground”). In addition, students will play the role of historian and work to honor and remember William Still, as well as other agents of the Underground Railroad. Students will be able to employ their creativity by designing historical markers and making movies.

Standards

ELA Common Core Reading Anchor Standard 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

ELA Common Core Writing Anchor Standard 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

ELA Common Core Writing Anchor Standard 6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

ELA Common Core Speaking and Listening Anchor Standard 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Guiding Questions

Why is it important to remember historical figures and to create historical markers?

What are the best ways to remember historical figures? Monuments? Museums? History books?

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

Closely examine the text of a narrative.

Use historical documents to create a digital public history project.

Synthesize the details of the narrative to write the text for a historical marker.

Lesson Activities

Activity 1. Imagining the 8th Step to Freedom

Activity 2: Creating new historical markers

Activity 1. Imagining the 8th Step to Freedom

Ask your students how they best relate to history (history books, lectures, documentaries, reenactments, museums, etc.). Ask them to provide reasons and examples to support their answers.

Explain to your students that they will create an 8th step on the freedom trail based upon the life of William Still and modeled on the Seven Steps to Freedom project.

Have your students go to the Seven Steps to Freedom project's website.

<https://7stepstofreedom.wordpress.com/>

The site provides links to seven stories based in Salem County where the Underground Railroad played a major role. These stories are:

Abigail Goodwin, Quaker abolitionist
How one woman set herself free
The great orator, Dr. John Stewart Rock

A Slave Catcher on Trial in Salem
Poet Hetty Saunders describes her escape
Thomas Clement Oliver, Underground Railroad conductor
Black Civil War veterans remembered

Ask your students to explore the stories, read the text, play the audio recordings, and interact with their cellphones. Ask them how this way to interact with history differs from ways they usually learn about the past.

Now have your students read the excerpts we have provided from William Still's book about the Underground Railroad. Using this information, ask your students to create an 8th Step to Freedom corresponding with William Still's historical marker in Philadelphia.

Have your students create a video walking tour using the excerpts.

Encourage your students to be creative and model their projects after those from the Seven Steps to Freedom project. A good way to ensure participation from everyone is to play to the individual student's strengths. Assign one student the duty of research, another to write, another to film, and others to act. There are enough jobs in the process of making a video for everyone to participate and succeed.

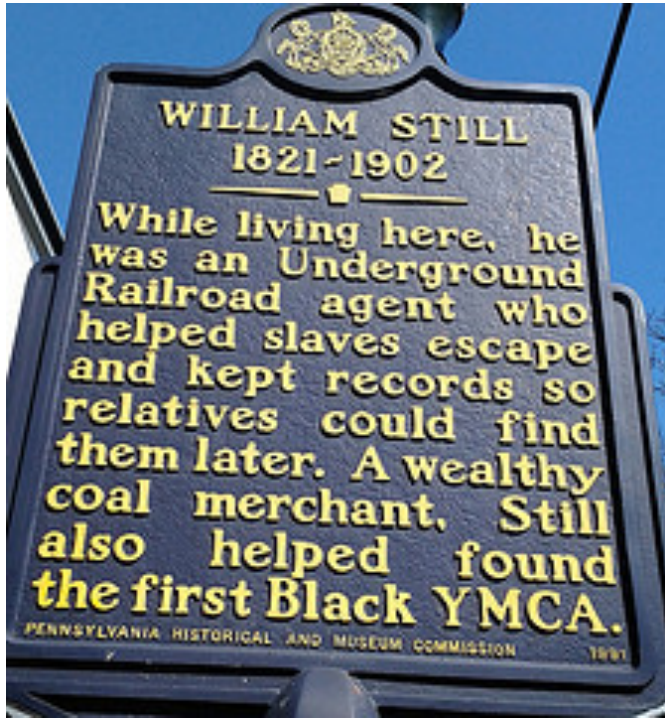
Activity 2: Creating new historical markers

Have your students do research to find additional people who should be honored with historical markers. We have provided some links to historical markers and to information about Underground Railroad agents. Your students may use these, or do their own research.

Using the blank template, have your students create a new historical marker to honor an agent of the Underground Railroad.

Students may honor people who already have markers, but ask them to create new text for the sign.

Resource 1: Picture of the William Still historical marker in Philadelphia



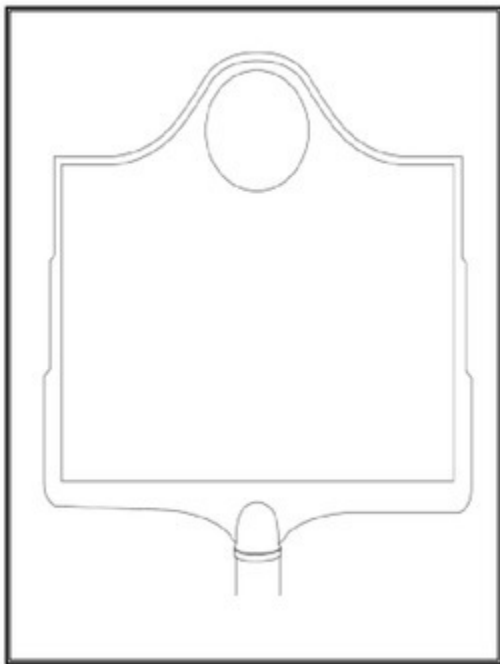
Resource 2: Historical markers for Underground Railroad sites

Aboard the Underground Railroad, the National Park Service list of sites for the Underground Railroad: <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/states.htm>

William Still Historical Marker, Explore PA History, <http://explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=1-A-3EB>

The Struggle Against Slavery: The Abolition Movement and Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania

- *Overview: William Still and the Underground Railroad*, <http://explorepahistory.com/story.php?storyId=1-9-8>
- *Historical Markers In the Story* <http://explorepahistory.com/storydetails.php?storyId=1-9-8&chapter=0#markers>



[https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Historical-Highway-Marker-Writing-Activity-](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Historical-Highway-Marker-Writing-Activity-1118280)

[1118280](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Historical-Highway-Marker-Writing-Activity-1118280)

Works Cited

“Underground Railroad: The William Still Story.” *PBS.org*. n.d. Web. 15 June 2015.