

Telling Their Stories: Using Runaway Ads to Write Narratives with Heather Ingram



Telling Their Stories: Using Runaway Ads to Write Narratives

presented by Heather Ingram

Suitable for History, Language Arts & Psychology Classes

Adaptable for Grades 5-12

Background

Thorough English teachers are sometimes mistaken for history teachers. Indeed, our love of literature is often couched in historical fascination. To paraphrase many of our most beloved thinkers, the written word (whether imaginative or factual) is the documentation of eras. The “Telling Their Stories” lesson plan guides students through the era of enslavement through the lens of those who chose to flee as a form of resistance. Using the FOTM database of runaway ads, this lesson centers on the lives of the enslaved, and students are tasked with giving voice to the voiceless.

Tangible Objectives

Students will write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

Students will draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research.

Terms to Know

Enslaved

Enslaver

Subscriber

First-Person Perspective

Inference

Elements of Personal Narrative

Required Reading

[RunawayProject.info](#) (database)

[Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl \(excerpts\)](#), by Harriet Jacobs

Supplemental Sources

[The Underground Railroad Records, by William Still](#) (Narrative Collection)

[The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850](#) (Primary Source)

[Harriet Jacobs' Runaway Poster](#)

[Harriet Jacobs | Slavery and the Making of America](#) (Documentary)

[The Compromise of 1850 Explained](#)

["Diseases and Peculiarities of the Negro Race"](#) (Article)

["Eric Foner on the Fugitive Slave Act"](#) (Article)

[Effects of the Fugitive Slave Law](#) (Lithograph With Description)

[How the Fugitive Slave Act Ignited a "Struggle for America's Soul"](#) (Audio)

Instructional Handouts

[Personal Narrative Elements](#)

In The Classroom

Review Terms to Know

Image Study

Students will examine Harriet Jacobs' runaway poster. They are to jot down all descriptors (e.g., name, gender, age, complexion, personality traits, companions, skill(s), location). Students will also note what they find most striking or interesting.

Class Conversation/Group Analysis

Students will discuss their findings and are asked to make inferences based on the descriptors they have culled.

Media

- Harriet Jacobs | Slavery and the Making of America
- The Compromise of 1850 Explained

Formative Tasks

- Students are guided through the Freedom on the Move database using, amongst other materials, a runaway advertisement placed by President Thomas Jefferson for an enslaved man named Sandy
- Again, students will jot down all descriptors, note what they find most striking or interesting, and make inferences based on their findings
- Class Conversation/Group Analysis (Students will discuss their findings.)
- Individual Activity
 1. Students will find three runaway advertisements
 2. Students will jot down all descriptors
 3. Students will write down any inferences they've made
 4. Students will note what they find most striking or interesting
- Paired Activity
 1. Students will gather in pairs to share their findings about the three people they found
 2. In a whole class setting, each student will share information with their peer about one runaway they encountered
- Activity Extension
- Students create digital presentations for each of their three people
- Can also be done in pairs or small groups

Direct Instruction

Personal Narrative Elements

- Via an instructional handout, instructor will help students familiarize themselves with the elements of personal narrative.

Reading

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, by Harriet Jacobs

- Depending on any number of factors (time, technology, student comprehension levels), the reading can be flexible (e.g., teacher-led, independent, popcorn, small group, abridged text).

- For the purpose of this lesson, I've attached a link to a fairly substantive excerpt. (See Required Reading.)
- Due to time constraints, the excerpt may be broken into smaller pieces and assigned as independent reading.

Classroom Conversation / Group Analysis

While reading and afterwards, students will discuss Incidents through the lens of Personal Narrative Elements.

Writing Workshop

Personal Narrative Prompt

After selecting one person from the database, students will compose a Personal Narrative in the voice of their chosen person.

- Students are encouraged to capture a moment in time, not a lifetime.

Summative Assessment

Personal Narrative (Imagined)

Writing Extension

Informative Essay Prompt:

- What was the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and what were its effects?
- Students are directed to use the Supplemental Sources.
- Students MUST use three pieces of textual evidence from three different sources.

Supported Standards, Concepts & Objectives

Focus Standards (Georgia Standards of Excellence)

ELAGSE11-12RI9: Analyze foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance

ELAGSE11-12W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences

ELAGSE11-12W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization and analysis of content

ELAGSE11-12W9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research.

ELAGSE11-12SL1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 11-12 topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

ELAGSE11-12SL5: Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning and evidence and to add interest.

Key Concepts From Teaching Hard History Framework (Teaching Tolerance)

(2) Slavery and the slave trade were central to the development and growth of the colonial economies and what is now the United States.

(3) Protections for slavery were embedded in the founding documents; enslavers dominated the federal government, Supreme Court and Senate from 1787 through 1860.

(5) Enslaved people resisted the efforts of their enslavers to reduce them to commodities in both revolutionary and everyday ways.

(6) The experience of slavery varied depending on time, location, crop, labor performed, size of slaveholding and gender.

(10) By knowing how to read and interpret the sources that tell the story of American slavery, we gain insight into some of what enslaving and enslaved Americans aspired to, created, thought and desired.

Summary Objectives (Teaching Tolerance)

(11) Students will recognize that enslaved people resisted slavery in ways that ranged from violence to smaller, everyday means of asserting their humanity and opposing their enslavers.

(13) Students will examine the expansion of slavery as a key factor in the domestic and foreign policy decisions of the United States in the 19th century.

This lesson aligns to key concepts [4](#), [5](#), [6](#) and [10](#) of Teaching Tolerance's [Teaching Hard History Framework](#).