

Theme: Cultural & Historical

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Subject Areas

Social Studies, Language Arts

Duration

One class period

Setting

Classroom

Skills

Interpreting, describing, drawing conclusions, imagining

Charting the Course

The occurrence of slavery and indentured servants is part of the history of the region and should be included to provide complete historical perspective about the region.

Vocabulary

Indentured servant, slavery, others as defined from passages

Correlation to NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards

Social Studies	Language Arts
6.2 (1, 4)	3.2 (2)
6.3 (1, 2, 3, 4)	3.3 (1)
6.4 (1, 3, 4)	3.4 (3, 6, 8)
6.6 (6)	

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Bondsmen escaping to freedom on the Delaware.

"Crossing the Bay in a Skiff" from *The Underground Railroad*, written by William Still.

Liberty for Some

■ Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Describe, through reading and interpreting newspaper articles from 1778, how difficult it was for Afro-Americans to escape slavery.
2. Through interpreting descriptive clues, describe the conditions and clothing of two escaped slaves.
3. Understand that black men, slave and free, participated in America's struggle for "Liberty" during the revolutionary war.

■ Materials

Student handout (included), paper and writing utensil

■ Making Connections

Relating the history of the region and the significance of Salem County to the Revolutionary War, students can begin to realize the important role that the region played in the development and formation of our country and our state. Realizing the dilemma of two escaped slaves will assist students in looking back in time within the historical context of the region called Down Jersey.

■ Background

Not everyone who lived in Salem County in 1778 enjoyed freedom. Some African-Americans worked as slaves and did not have the freedom to live as they chose. Also, a number of white men, women and children were "indentured servants." This meant that they worked without pay in exchange for

being taught a skill or trade until they reached a certain age or until they paid off their ship passage to come to America. "Indentureships" (as they were called) sometimes lasted as long as 15 years. Unlike slavery, however, an indentureship did come to an end.

People who are not free usually are not happy, and during the American Revolution many enslaved people and indentured servants tried to escape and seek freedom. The British, in fact, encouraged enslaved African Americans and indentured servants to join the British army in exchange for freedom — a promise that they did not always keep.

Additionally, approximately 5,000 black men, slave and free, fought on the side of the American colonists in the Revolutionary War. Some of these African-Americans who fought for American "Liberty" were from New Jersey.

■ Procedure

Warm Up

Edward Bird and Harry were two of these people who tried to escape to freedom. The two advertisements offering rewards for returning them to their masters are from Philadelphia newspapers. While you read the advertisements, see how much you can learn about these two men.

The Activity

1. Distribute the handout to each student. Have them read the newspaper advertisements.
2. Each student should then answer the questions.

3. In small groups, or individually, students should choose one of the men and then write the conclusion to their story. What happened after this advertisement appeared? Where they captured and returned to their masters? Did they successfully escape? Where did they go? What did they do? Did they have families?, etc.

Wrap Up

Discuss the answers to the questions as a class.

Have students share their completed stories with the class. They could also illustrate them.

■ Assessment

Participation in discussions and completion of questions.

■ Extensions

Research other stories about runaway slaves. Investigate the level of success that was realized. Did most "make it" to freedom, or were most recaptured?

■ Resources

*Salem County
Historical Society
79-83 Market Street
Salem, New Jersey 08079
(609) 935-5004*

*or visit their website at
[http://www.salemcounty.com/
historical_society](http://www.salemcounty.com/historical_society)*

*See related activity
"Finding Your Way on the
Underground Railroad"*



Liberty for Some

Thirty Dollars Reward

Ran Away on the 26th of February last with the British light infantry at Salem, a Negro man named HARRY, but it is probable that he may change his name; he is about twenty-eight years of age, five feet eight or nine inches high, a stout well made fellow, country born, a large nose, thought he would leave the soldiers and go into the country and may perhaps endeavor to pass as a freeman; had on when he went away, a fustian coat with a red collar, light broadcloth breeches, two coarse shirts, a fine ditto, a good hat cut Maccaroni fashion, good stockings and shoes. Whoever takes up said Negro and secures him in any gaol, so that his master may get him again, shall have the above reward and reasonable charges, paid by ROBERT JOHNSON.

N.B. All persons are forbid to harbour said Negro at their peril.

NOTES:

“Fustian” is a type of coarse cotton cloth.

“A good hat cut Maccaroni fashion” was a small crushed hat worn toward the front of the head.

Questions to Consider

- What did they look like?
- How were they dressed?
- Where do you think they went?
- If you were either Edward Bird or Harry, what would you need to help you escape? Try to imagine things that would have been available at the time of the American Revolution — no cars, planes, buses, no telephones or computers, and no electricity!

Ten Dollars Reward

Run Away from the subscriber, living in Pittsgrove Township, Salem County, and West-New-Jersey, on the evening of the 30th of March; two indentured servant men, the eldest named EDWARD BIRD, about 35 years of age, was born in Boston government, went to England about a year and a half past, and came in a servant last fall; he is about 5 feet 5 or 6 inches high, thin visaged, short brown hair, is disabled in his back and loins, walks with difficulty, and rocks very much in his walk; had on when he went away, a brown homespun short coat, a whitish coloured cloth waistcoat, with horn buttons on, a pair of old leather breeches, some mended, homespun shirt and stockings, an old beaver hat, about three parts worn: He can read and write, and will likely forge a pass; it is expected that he will push towards New-England, as he pretends he has a wife living there...

Whoever takes up said servants and secures them, so that his master can have them agin, shall have the above reward and all reasonable charges paid by me ISAAC HARRIS.

N.B. All recruiting officers in the navy and army are requested not to enlist them. All masters of vessels are forbid to carry them off. May 15, 1776.

NOTES:

“Thin visaged” means having a thin face.

A “waistcoat” is a vest.