
NCSS Notable Trade Book Lesson Plan

Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad

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Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad recounts the remarkable story of a Richmond slave who shipped himself in a wooden crate to Philadelphia to escape slavery in the south. After participating in a pre-reading activity designed to enhance critical thinking skills, students will read not only the notable trade book, but also other versions of Henry's narrative. Students will use and will evaluate alternative sources. Students also will analyze illustrations, comparing and contrasting the interpretation of this historical event. A data retrieval chart and culminating discussion will allow students to detect source variation, to evaluate how critical the differences are between sources, and to determine which sources are credible.

NCSS Notable Trade Book Title:	<i>Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad</i> by Ellen Levine (Notable, 2008) Illustrated by Kadir Nelson (2007). New York, Scholastic Press. ISBN: 978-0-439-77733-9 Recommended Age Group: 10-14 Recommended for Grades: 5-8 Time: Four (60-90 minute) class periods
Book Summary:	This picture book biography details the life of Henry Brown, a Virginia slave who engineered his daring escape to freedom following the heartbreaking forced separation from his wife and children. With the aid of abolitionist sympathizers, Henry left his job at a tobacco factory, climbed into a wooden crate, and emerged in Philadelphia 27 hours later. During his perilous journey northward, the crate was tossed into a baggage car, turned upside down aboard a steamboat, used as a resting place by two men, and loaded onto another train before being pried open by anxious onlookers.
NCSS Standards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual Development and Identity• Individuals, Groups, and Institutions• Power, Authority, and Governance
Materials:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children's Literature: <i>Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad</i> and <i>Freedom Song</i> (multiple copies of each, if possible)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple copies of a United States atlas or map• Internet access (multiple laptops, class set of iPads, or access to computer lab)• Additional Sources: <i>The Unboxing of Henry Brown</i> and <i>Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown Written by Himself</i> (one copy of each to make photocopies for group work)
Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Students will create a plausible scheme for transporting themselves out of a socially unjust scenario/situation and into a place of safety and independence.2. Students will engage in source work— the interrogation of different texts—in order to analyze and evaluate different accounts of the same story.3. Students will critically analyze varying illustrations depicting the same event in order to evaluate different illustrative interpretations of the event.

<p>Procedures Exploration</p>	<p>Day 1: Contextualizing the themes of creative and critical thinking, resourcefulness, and self-preservation.</p> <p><i>Time:</i> 90 minutes</p> <p><i>Prompt:</i> The teacher will engage the students in the following sequence of thinking and planning prompts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask the students to briefly describe a scenario where they feel powerless. Prompt students to imagine that someone in their life controls all of their decision-making and personal choices. (Ask students not to consider their parents in this scenario.) Ask: “Who might make you feel powerless (a boss, a neighbor, a bully, etc.)?” and “What things are they controlling in your life (food, clothing, job, money, free time)?” 2. Then, inform students the only way they can regain their independence would be to move several states away. 3. Next, tell students that the person controlling your life will not allow them the option of moving to another selected state, leaving escape as the only choice. 4. Direct the students to plan and record a journey to freedom. Ask them to consider the following when planning (the teacher should post these questions for student reference): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When will you leave? • How you will leave undetected? • Who will assist you? • Who can you trust? • How do you feel about leaving your home and friendly surroundings? • How will you travel? • How will you pay for your travel? • Will anyone assist you when you get to your new home? • What challenges will you face as you start your new life? 5. Have students spend 20 minutes individually working on their plan. Provide atlases, maps, access to Internet travel sites, and other resources to aid them in their planning. 6. Have students spend 20 minutes in small groups explaining the steps of their plan to peers. 7. Lead a discussion synthesizing the ideas and choices faced by the students in constructing their escape scenarios, possibly including other literature-based examples before listing a few of the universal themes addressed (desperation, risk, danger, ingenuity, deception, etc.) on the whiteboard. 8. Closure. Prompt students to consider the aforementioned universal themes as they listen to a read aloud of <i>Henry’s</i>
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	<p><i>Freedom Box.</i></p> <p><i>Assessment:</i> Provide a space to display student escape plans. Assess plans by checking for accurate responses to the questions listed in step four.</p> <p>Day 2: Historical Thinking: Source Variation – Text</p> <p><i>Materials:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children’s literature—<i>Henry’s Freedom Box</i> (HFB) and <i>Freedom Song</i> (FS)• Additional sources—<i>The Unboxing of Henry Brown</i> (UNB) (pp. 35-36); <i>Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown Written by Himself</i> (NAR) (pp. 87-88)• Class set of Appendix A <p><i>Time:</i> 60 minutes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prior to this lesson, read aloud each of the children’s literature accounts (HFB and FS) of Henry Brown’s story. These should be presented independently, possibly over a few days. As listening cues, ask students to consider both accounts carefully, critically evaluating <i>what</i> information is presented, <i>how</i> the narrative is constructed, <i>who</i> created each account, <i>when</i> was the account published, and how these variables, when compiled, represent a unique interpretation of the event. Have students take notes following the reading of each account, answering each prompt and creating a list of points to ponder, interesting details, and unanswered questions.2. To begin the lesson, assign students to small groups (4-5 each); Distribute copies of both text accounts describing Henry’s emergence from the crate (only the last double-page spreads).3. Direct the groups to carefully read each text section in succession, listening for similar and contrasting elements.4. Instruct groups to re-read the passages. This time, students should collect and record data on the chart (in Appendix A, organizing their results of the text comparison. <i>For Appendices A and B, portions of the data retrieval charts have been completed as a guide for teachers or students in need of specific scaffolding or modeling of the process.</i> Guiding questions may include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who was present as Henry emerged from the box?• Where was the crate opened? What time of day was it?• How did the men aid Henry in emerging from the box? What tools did they use?• What was Henry's reaction as he emerged?• What was he thinking about? How was he feeling?• What were the reactions of the men? How do you know?
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<p>Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think happened next? What information informed your inference? <p>5. After students have had time to process and discuss their results, have each group prepare responses to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think there are differences in the texts? • Would you characterize some differences as <i>significant</i> and others as <i>trivial</i> (minor or negligible; not affecting the development of the story)? If so, explain your rationale. • Which account do you think best represents what really happened? Why do you think so? <p>6. Distribute additional accounts (copies for each group) of the event (NAR, pp. 87-88; UNB, pp. 35-36) and monitor discussion, critical literacy skills, and thought processes as groups reconceptualize their thoughts about the previously analyzed sources.</p>
<p>Expansion</p>	<p>7. Reconvene as a whole class and facilitate a discussion to synthesize the lesson, clarify any questions, and recognize insightful comments overheard while monitoring. Students can refer to their data retrieval chart and make additions or changes during the discussion.</p>
<p>Assessment</p>	<p><i>Assessment:</i> Review Appendix A from each student to ensure they have completed the data retrieval chart correctly and completely, and assess the quality of their justification to the cumulative discussion questions. (<i>Which account do you think best represents what really happened? and Why do you think so?</i>)</p>
<p>Exploration</p>	<p>Day 3: Historical Thinking: Source Variation – Illustrations</p> <p><i>Materials:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s literature—<i>Henry’s Freedom Box</i> (HFB) and <i>Freedom Song</i> (FS) • Additional sources—<i>The Unboxing of Henry Brown</i> (UNB) (pp.35 & 188, note 42); <i>Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown Written by Himself</i> (NAR) (pp. 87-88, 108-109, & 118-121) • Class set of data retrieval chart (Appendix B) <p><i>Time:</i> 60 minutes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Display the iconic <i>Washington Crossing the Delaware</i> image using a projection system. After a brief discussion of the event, inform students about the artist, when it was created, under what circumstances, and the criticism it has received based on the artist’s historical “interpretation” of the event (Fischer, 2004, pp. 1-6; Murphy, 2010, pp. 84-85). 2. Remind students of the historical thinking processes used in the previous day’s lesson and inform them they will repeat the

<p>Development</p>	<p>process today using <i>illustrations</i> of Henry Brown’s emergence from the crate (as just modeled using the <i>Washington Crossing the Delaware</i> image).</p> <p>3. Assign students to small groups (of 4-5) and provide copies of the illustrations of Henry Brown rising from his box (same pages as previous day for HFB and FS). After discussing similarities and differences in the artistic depictions, direct students to complete the comparison chart (Appendix A). Guiding questions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who was present as Henry emerged from the box? • Is it possible to identify specific individuals? How do you know? • Where was the crate opened? What name and address is on the crate? • How did the men aid Henry in emerging from the box? What tools did they use? • What was Henry's reaction as he emerged? • Do you think the crate is depicted accurately? Why or why not? • What were the reactions of the men? How do you know? • What do you think happened next? What information informed your guess?
<p>Expansion</p>	<p>4. Distribute the additional sources (UNB pp. 35 & 188, note 42; & NAR pp. 87-88, 108-109, & 118-121) and prompt students to carefully consider the images and commentary in the Brown (NAR) text (pp.118-121) and how they might differ from the depictions of Henry’s emergence in the two picture books (HFB & FS). Allow students time to process, discuss, and analyze the variety of illustrations presented during the lesson.</p> <p>5. Reconvene as a whole class and facilitate a discussion to synthesize both historical thinking lessons, clarify any questions, and recognize insightful comments overheard while monitoring. The focus of the culminating discussion should be on detecting source variation, evaluating how critical (historically) the differences are between sources, and determining which sources are credible, thereby allowing the analysis to become a piece of the constructed narrative of each student.</p>
<p>Assessment</p>	<p><i>Assessment:</i> Evaluate each student’s data retrieval chart for accuracy, focusing on their ability to evaluate the credibility of sources and their ability to identify critical differences between each source.</p>

Additional References:	<p>Fischer, D. H. (2004). <i>Washington's Crossing</i>. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Murphy, J. (2010). <i>The crossing: How George Washington saved the American Revolution</i>. New York, NY: Scholastic.</p> <p>Teacher Content Knowledge</p> <p>Brown, H. B., & Ernest, J. (2008). <i>Narrative of the life of Henry Box Brown, written by himself</i>. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.</p> <p>Ruggles, J. (2003). <i>The unboxing of Henry Brown</i>. Richmond, VA: The Library of Virginia.</p> <p>Still, W. (1968). <i>The Underground Railroad</i>. New York, NY: Arno Press.</p> <p>Children's Literature (containing accounts of Henry Box Brown)</p> <p>Levine, E. (2007). <i>Henry's freedom box: A true story from the Underground Railroad</i>. New York, NY: Scholastic.</p> <p>Walker, S. M. (2012). <i>Freedom song: The story of Henry "Box" Brown</i>. New York, NY: HarperCollins.</p>
Digital Resources	<p>A virtual field trip of Henry Brown's journey; Virtual Field Trips Station, Dickinson College. (2007-2008). Retrieved from http://housedivided.dickinson.edu/fieldtrips/brown.html</p> <p>Large image of the Kramer illustration; Landmarks of the Underground Railroad, Dickinson College. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www2.dickinson.edu/departments/hist/NEHworkshops/NEH/resource/images/brownBox_use.jpg</p> <p>Washington Crossing the Delaware image; The Collection Online, Metropolitan Museum of Art. (2000-2014). Retrieved from http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/11417</p>

Author Bios

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Appendix A
Data Retrieval Chart - Print Text

Name: Date:	Henry's Freedom Box (HFB)	Freedom Song (FS)	The Unboxing of Henry Brown (UNB)	Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown (NAR)
Author/Date of Publication	Ellen Levine 2007	Sally Walker 2012	Jeffrey Ruggles 2012	Henry Brown 1851
Similarities	cover was pried open;	Someone pried the lid off Henry's box; Henry sang after emerging; tried to stand but shaky legs said no	men...prided off the lid; Henry sang 40th Psalm after emerging	managed to break open the box; burst forth into a hymn; I was too weak to stand ...and swooned
Differences: significant	no specific names - Four men smiled...	no specific names - Henry looked up at the men...	McKim worried Brown might be dead; mentioned the specific names of the men (McKim, Still, Thompson, & Cleveland)	no specific names - presence of a number of friends
trivial	mentioned the date (March 30,1849); stated the event was the beginning of Henry's new middle name, Box		He was about as wet as if he'd come up out of the Delaware	
Possible evidence of Credibility/ Authenticity Primary Source/ Eyewitness;			evidence of research, many footnotes	Brown's autobiographical account

Level of Research				
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Appendix B
Data Retrieval Chart – Illustrations

Name: Date:	Henry's Freedom Box (HFB)	Freedom Song (FS)	Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown (NAR) (p. 118 print)	Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown (NAR) (p. 120 print)
Illustrator/Date of Work	Kadir Nelson 2007	Sean Qualls 2012	Samuel Rowse 1850	Peter Kramer ca. 1851
Similarities	wooden crate;	wooden crate;	wooden crate;	wooden crate;
Differences: significant	3 white men, 1 black man + Henry; name and address on crate & This Side Up With Care	<u>2 white men</u> , 1 black man + Henry; <u>no name or address visible</u> ;	3 white men, 1 black man + Henry; <u>partial address visible</u> & This Side Up With Care;	3 white men, 1 black man + Henry; name and address on crate & This Side Up With Care
trivial	hand tools visible; everyone facing the reader; Henry's bandage (on his hand) is visible	<u>no</u> hand tools visible; everyone facing the reader; one man not wearing a jacket; Henry standing	hand tools visible; all but one man facing the reader; one man has a basket	hand tools visible; all but one man facing the reader; one man wearing a top hat
Possible evidence of Credibility/ Authenticity Primary Source/ Eyewitness; Level of Research			created close to the time of the event	artist lived in Philadelphia during this time & based his artwork on the actual people

Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad; Levine, Ellen. Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt; Hopkinson, Deborah. Follow the Drinking Gourd: A Story of the Underground Railroad; Connelly, Bernardine. The Patchwork Path: A Quilt Map to Freedom; Stroud, Betty. Friend on Freedom River; Whelan, Gloria. Create a newspaper article telling readers of a notable event during The Underground Railroad period. Write a biography on someone from the People to Study section. As with any of the above resources mentioned, I ask that parents do their research before hand to determine what is acceptable for their family. Some resources are only for older children while other resources will be good for the younger members.