

Supplement for the Docent-Facilitated Immersion Experience

Goals: students will:

- Understand the Underground Railroad, Rochester's role, and some of the major people involved.
- Discover what it means to make choices and to take risks to improve their lives (as the freedom-seekers did) or the lives of others around them (as abolitionists, stationmasters, and conductors did).
- Experience empathy for those who participated in the Underground Railroad as a process – both the freedom seekers and the helpers.

Dear Educator:

We are excited that you have chosen our docent-led immersion experience and are looking forward to your visit.

In addition to the information in the Educator Guide, there are some special things you should know about the docent-facilitated tour.

A docent will be calling you about one week before your visit.

We encourage you to view the exhibit prior to your visit. Museum admission is always FREE to teachers – just bring your school I.D.

About the Tour:

Immersion Experience: During the tour, students take on the roles of people that participated in the Underground Railroad. The map indicates the four thematic areas through which they will journey:

- Slavery
- Footsteps to Freedom
- Doors to Rochester
- Freedom

We will ask you to divide your class into a certain number of groups depending on the number of students. Each group will cycle through all of the thematic areas but may begin in a different stage of the journey. Depending on start time and the number of docents involved, slight differences between tours may occur. Spiritual music may or may not be used in your tour to set the mood. Please be aware that this is being used in a social and not religious context.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS that docents may be posing to your students at each stage of their journey are:

SLAVERY

- What was slavery like, especially for Frederick Douglass, Austin Steward, Thomas James, and Harriet Jacobs?
- What did an enslaved person need to consider when deciding whether to take their own freedom?
- Why strive for an education?

FOOTSTEPS TO FREEDOM

- Once an enslaved person has decided to take his or her freedom, what decision would the person have to make about how to do it? What were the risks?
- Why did most enslaved people not attempt to escape, and if they did why did so few make it?
- What was the Underground Railroad and why was Rochester active in it?

DOORS TO ROCHESTER

- What kind of choices did both the freedom seekers and the helpers have to make, and what were the risks?
- What were some of the roles of the helpers on the Underground Railroad, and who were some of these people in Rochester?
- For Middle School Level only: How did the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 change the lives of those in Rochester?

FREEDOM

- What was freedom like?
- What kind of choices did a free black have to make and what were the risks?
- For Middle School level only: How did the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 nudge the country closer to war?

In addition to the "Before-Visit" and "After Visit Extension Activities" suggested in your Educator Guide, you may wish to discuss with your students several topics specific to the docent-facilitated experience.

Suggested Topics for Pre-visit Discussion:

- Introduce the topic of role-playing to your students. Tell them that they will be going on a "journey" along the Underground Railroad – a journey in which they will be taking on identities of either fictional enslaved people or real free people from Rochester.
- Prepare them by telling them that at one part of the tour (in the Doors to Rochester area) they will be acting-out a (historical fiction) play in which they will have short scripts to read.

- Tell them that although we of course want them to have fun on their visit, this experience is a serious one. Real people not so very long ago struggled very hard and risked their lives. We will be paying respect to these people, both non-fictional and fictional.

Suggested Topics for Post-Visit Reflection:

- How does one decide when it is OK to take risks and when it is not a good idea?
- What was most meaningful to you about the experience? Most surprising?

