

Running Against the Odds

Lesson Questions

Why didn't more slaves escape North? How did some manage to escape despite the odds?

Lesson Task

After reading three primary source documents, students write a four-paragraph essay that explains why relatively few enslaved people escaped to the North. Students cite specific details from the documents to explain that fear of punishment and restrictions on their movements (including slave laws and patrols) contributed to keep slaves trapped in the South. In their conclusion they explain how some slaves managed to escape despite the odds.

NAEP Era: 4. Expansion and Reform (1801 to 1861)

Focal Skill: Writing explanatory essays

Number of Documents: 3

Number of Days: 4–5

Common Core Standards

- CC reading standard (primary): RHSS.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary sources
- CC reading standard (secondary): RHSS.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a text
- CC writing standard: WHSS.6-8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts

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[Suggested time: 2–3 sessions]

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[Suggested time: 1/2 session]

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- Purpose

- Cross-Document Discussion
 - Re-engage students in historical inquiry
 - Compare big ideas and details across documents
 - Help students articulate own thinking

[Suggested time: 1–2 sessions]

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OVERVIEW

[Suggested time: 5 minutes]

Content Objectives

Students will challenge the common assumption that many slaves escaped.

Due to **severe punishments** and **restrictions on their movements**, running away was extraordinarily difficult for slaves; attempts were few and success was rare.

Historical Thinking Objectives

- Contextualization
- Through Their Eyes

Skill Objectives

- Writing an explanatory essay
- Citing specific textual evidence to support analysis of documents
- Summarizing the main ideas and details of primary sources

Instructional Sequence

Before you begin the lesson, you should share a brief agenda with students:

HOOK

Together, we will look at some information about the numbers of slaves who actually escaped.

CONTEXT

We'll then review some background context about why the South wanted to make running away so difficult and what some of the obstacles were.

DOCUMENTS

On your own, you will read and analyze three primary source documents on the obstacles to successful escape.

CONNECT

We'll have a discussion about how the documents connect to the Context and the lesson questions.

WRITE

You'll write a four-paragraph explanatory essay in response to the lesson questions.

Lesson Background

Slaves had lots of reasons for running away—to escape terrible conditions or a severe punishment, to avoid being sold away from their family at the auction block, or, because, having learned about freedom in the North, they were determined to try to liberate themselves.

Runaways were costly to owners, in terms of the lost labor and expense of hiring slave catchers, posting runaway advertisements, and offering rewards. More fundamentally, runaways challenged the authority of slaveholders, some of whom pretended that slaves were actually happy with their enslavement.

As a result, white Southerners went to great lengths to prevent slaves from escaping, and harshly punished those that tried. People enslaved in border states had the most realistic chance of escaping;

nonetheless, most runaways were quickly recaptured and returned to their masters who then whipped, maimed, and often sold them to the Deep South and away from their families. Despite the difficult odds and threat of punishment, hundreds of thousands of slaves still tried, and a small number even succeeded.

Student Background Knowledge

- By the early 1800s, slavery was abolished in Northern states, but continued in Southern states.
- Throughout the 1800s, slavery grew more important to the Southern economy and spread to territories in the West.

THE HOOK

[Suggested time: 10 minutes]

Slaves Escapes in 1850

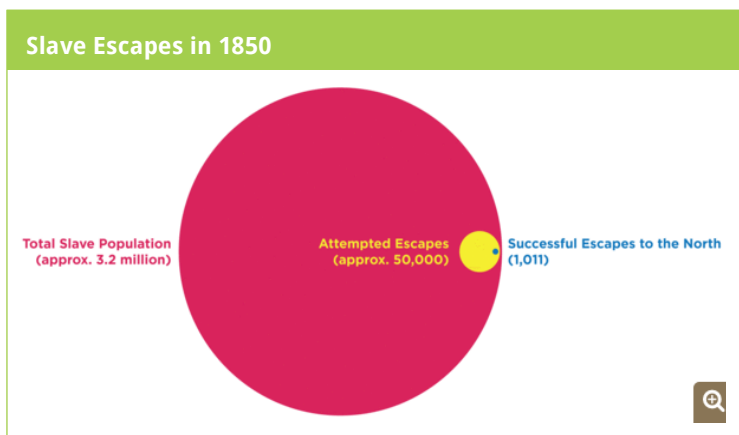
Purpose

To help students complicate what they think they know about slavery.

- Running away was not easy.
- Fear of punishment (specifically, whipping) wasn't the only obstacle preventing escape.

Process

- **Focus** students' attention on the chart.
- **Ask:** What is this chart telling us?
 - The title is "Slave Escapes in 1850," and I see three circles.
- Who can tell me what one of the circles is? OK, what does that mean?
- Who can tell me what another circle is? What does that mean?
- **Ask** the **Think About It** question: Is the number of slaves who escaped in 1850 a big number or a small number?
- Give students time to think, and as you gather student responses **ask** each student: Why did you say it was a [big/small] number?
- **Clarify:** 1,011 people is a lot of people. But compared to the number of people who tried to escape, and to the total number of slaves, it is very, very small.
- **Ask:** Why do you think so few slaves managed to escape?
 - Students might say: patrols; dogs; fear of getting punished



- **Ask:** Why do you think some *were* successful?
 - Students might say the Underground Railroad, or mention ideas like bravery
- **Connect** to the Lesson Questions: We’re going to try and explain why so many slaves did *not* run away. We’ll gather evidence from narratives written by people who were slaves as well as other historical documents.
- At the end of the lesson you will answer the questions:
 - **Why didn’t more slaves run away?**
 - **How did some manage to escape despite the odds?**
 - And why is it important to know about this history?

TRANSITION TO CONTEXT-SETTING

Transition students to the Context slides by letting them know that they are now going to learn more about what was happening at the time. Tell them they will look at a map that shows where runaways were coming from and where they were trying to get to. They will also look at some data about the Northern and Southern economies.

Context slides are intended to serve as a support for a relatively quick “interactive lecture” with students. The goal is to provide essential background information and engage students’ prior knowledge and thinking.

While you can certainly slow the process down according to your students’ needs, Context is not intended to be a “deep dive” into slide images. Documents in the Context slides serve the role of illustrating content, sparking quick observations and reactions, and making abstract ideas more concrete.

CONTEXT

[Suggested time: 25 minutes—to be completed in the first session]

Context Overview

There are three main purposes for these Context slides.

- **Geography:** To remind students of runaways’ starting points and destinations, as well as to establish the importance of the border between slave and free states.
- **Economic Incentive:** To help students understand that the Southern economy depended on the labor of enslaved blacks; thus, white Southerners were motivated to make running away extremely difficult.
- **Obstacles to Escape:** To set up the two main topics that students will use to organize their reading and note-taking: Punishments and Restrictions.

When students are reading the lesson documents, this information will help students connect slaves’ decisions to run away—and their chances for success—to the conditions in the American South.

The three Context slides focus on these ideas:

A House Divided—The Ohio River separated free and slave states

Wealth in the South, 1860—Slaves accounted for 50% of the South’s wealth

Punishment and Restriction: Two Obstacles to Escape—Slave patrols and a law requiring slaves to possess written passes when away from masters were two deterrents to escape

Slide 1: A HOUSE DIVIDED

Purpose

To identify slave states, free states, and Canada.

To help students understand that:

- Runaways needed to escape an entire region (not just one master).
- The border between slave and free states was an important zone for escaping slaves, and slave catchers.

Suggested Process

- To help students read the map, **ask**: What do the red and purple colors on the map represent?
 - Red: Slave states (where slavery was legal); Purple: free states (where slavery was illegal)
- You may need to help students **locate** the Ohio River. It runs between the red and purple states, and is highlighted in red.
- **Ask** the first **Think About It** question: Why would runaway slaves be glad to get across the Ohio River?
 - Because they would have made it to free states in the North.
- **Ask** the second **Think About It** question: Why would slave owners want to patrol the Ohio River?
 - To prevent slaves from getting to the free states.
 - You may need to define “patrol” for students.
- **Ask**: Where were runaway slaves trying to go?
 - North to Canada—it was the only place where they would truly be free. Even if they made it to free states in the northern U.S., they could be caught and returned to the South.

Ohio River Separated Slave & Free States



Slide 2: WEALTH IN THE SOUTH, 1860

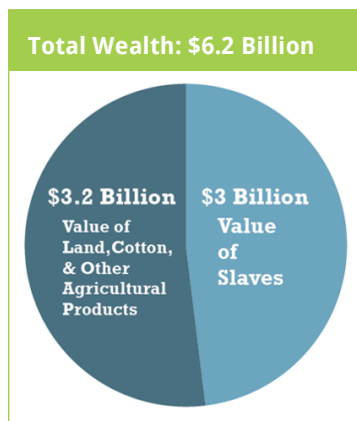
Purpose

To help students understand that white Southerners had strong *economic reasons* for preventing their slaves from escaping.

To support students in reading and using data from graphs to inform historical understanding.

Suggested Process

- **Read** the slide title and text with students.
- **Ask** students: What does this pie chart tell us?
 - Slaves made up almost half of the total wealth of the South in 1860
 - Slaves were worth as much to the Southern economy as land and crops combined
- Students may need explicit support in using a graph such as this for historical knowledge. Reminders about how to read graphs may be useful for many students.
- **Ask** students the **Think About It** question: Looking at this chart, why do you think the South wanted to keep slaves from escaping?
 - If large numbers of slaves escaped, the South would suffer economically.



Slide 3: PUNISHMENT AND RESTRICTION: TWO OBSTACLES TO ESCAPE

Purpose

To establish an organizational structure for student note-taking on obstacles to escape:

- Punishments
- Restrictions

Suggested Process

- **Read** the slide title and introduction.
- **Read** the caption for the image.
- **Ask** students to observe the image, with questions that guide their observations, such as:
 - What do you see in this image?
 - Who is in this image? What are they doing? How do you know?
 - How are figures positioned?
 - Where are they? What do you see that makes you say that?
 - What objects do you see?

Plantation Police Examine a Slave's Pass



- What time of day is it? How do you know?
- What story do you think this image is telling? What makes you say that?
- Have students **discuss** the two **Think About It** questions on the slides:
 - What is the man with the lantern doing?
 - What do you think happened to these slaves if they were caught trying to run away?
- **Ask** students to think about how this image illustrates evidence of *slave laws*.
 - E.g., laws about passes, slave movement and patrollers
- **Ask** students to think about how this image illustrates evidence of *fear of punishment*.
 - E.g., guns, dogs, and the threat of violence
- **Key Point:** During the lesson, students will classify evidence for obstacles to slave escape as "Punishments" or "Restrictions." These categories can overlap. Many of the slave laws made to prevent escape placed restrictions on slaves' movements and legalized, or even mandated, corporal punishment. The central idea here is to help students begin to think about the fact that there were legal structures that restricted slaves in addition to the violence they experienced. The categories are not always "either/or" but are often entwined.
- Some students may have knowledge that slaves occasionally carried forged passes to move about more freely. If you have time and inclination, you could use this image to speak about forms of slave resistance.

Slide 4: CONTEXT REVIEW: RUNAWAY SLAVES

Purpose

To review and take notes on key Context ideas and information students will need to draw on in reading, discussion and writing.

Process

- **Look** at the image on this slide.
- **Tell** students that they will use some of the information they've just learned or reviewed to answer the lesson questions. They will now spend a few moments to *review and take some notes*.
- Guide students in remembering the most important information to answer the **Take Notes on Context** question:
 - Why did the South make it so difficult for slaves to escape?
- If necessary, click back to past slides to jog students' memories.
- Allow students to **discuss** their answers at table groups or with a partner, but each student should **record** his/her own notes.

Context Review



TRANSITION TO DOCUMENTS

After reviewing the Context slides, say to students:

The Context information we just discussed showed us how far runaways had to travel to get to freedom and why the South worked so hard to prevent slaves from escaping. We also began to discuss the types of obstacles whites used to prevent slaves from running away. The three primary source documents you are about to read will help you to better understand how slave laws and the fear of punishment impacted slaves' lives. [Remind students that they will be looking for two types of obstacles: Punishments and Restrictions. Because these categories can overlap, it is OK if students identify the same evidence in different ways.] The Context and the Documents will help you to answer the lesson questions: **Why didn't more slaves escape North? How did some manage to escape despite the odds?** in a four-paragraph explanatory essay.

DOCUMENTS

[Suggested time: 2–3 sessions]

Documents: Overview

Students gather evidence and details about obstacles to escape from three primary source documents, and classify that evidence as relating to punishments or restrictions.

- Some details in the documents can be classified as both punishment and restrictions, but students will only be able to choose one category. The way they describe their thinking about *how* the detail connects to the category they select is more important than the category itself. (For example, a student could identify a fear of whipping as a restriction on a slave's movement instead of as a punishment.)

Kentucky Slave Laws

Laws aimed to control slaves' movement and prevent them from escaping. Physical punishment was encoded in the law.

Dennis Simms' Oral History

Slave laws made slaves' lives difficult. Despite a desire for freedom, fear of whippings made slaves too afraid to attempt escape.

John Parker's Autobiography

Many obstacles, including nightly patrols, prevented slaves from crossing into the North, but many made bids for freedom regardless.

The central reading skill is to cite textual evidence to support analysis of primary source documents.

A secondary reading skill is to summarize the central ideas and information in the texts.

Note: Students can work on these documents independently while you circulate and support their work. (See PD Doc on supporting students during document work.)

Document 1: KENTUCKY SLAVE LAWS

Purpose

To help students understand that slave laws worked to restrict the movement of enslaved people.

Key Reading Challenges

Students will need help distinguishing two types of laws—those directed toward slaves who ran away, and those directed toward whites and free blacks who helped enslaved people run away.

Students will also need help understanding that the purpose underlying all these different slave laws—those directed at slaves, free blacks and whites—was the same: to control and restrict the movement of slaves.

Suggested Strategy—Teacher Guided Reading

- We recommend that you read this text aloud with your students two to three times. It is complex, and because it comes first the modeling will help students read the other documents independently.
- It will help students to know that the term “citizen” in the 1798 law refers only to all white people.
- Use the document questions to guide you in this discussion. Start by asking questions aloud to students and supporting their responses.
- When students get stuck, *talk aloud the strategies you use* for deeper comprehension.
- Give students time throughout and after discussion to write in *Zoom In* in response to the questions.
- FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT. Use your Teacher Dashboard to scan and assess student responses to specific Document questions (such as the Big Idea question) once a majority of students have finished reading the document. This will prepare you for the class discussion.

Document 1: Class Discussion

It is critical for students to briefly discuss each document after they have read it.

Purpose

Check for and deepen students’

- comprehension of the document
- grasp of the “Big Idea,”—i.e., The purpose of slave laws was to restrict the movement of slaves (and prevent their escape).

Process

Engage students in discussing one or two key questions they have answered in the tool.

- *Zoom In* provides Source It, Read Closely, Gather Evidence, Big Idea and Think About It questions and prompts alongside this document. Depending on your class’s needs, you may choose to focus on certain question types over others.

KY Slave Laws, 1794-1846



- We strongly recommend using structures such as turn-and-talk and table group discussions as you engage students in these questions.
- Most important, be sure to follow up on student comments by *pressing for reasons and evidence*, and *for accountable talk*. Use the prompts below.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Select student responses to the “Big Idea” question, and use them to guide discussion.

- Ahead of time, use the Teacher Dashboard to quickly scan your students’ responses to the “Big Idea” question:
 - Why did Kentucky pass these slave laws?
 - What evidence in this document supports your answer?
- Identify student responses that reflect understanding of the Big Idea, and good use of supporting evidence, and those that reflect confusion or misunderstanding.
- Select and project a range of student responses to the summary questions. You can choose model responses as well as responses that need development as a way to spark student discussion. (See the PD document and video on “Discussion Phase 1: Formative Assessment of Student Comprehension of Individual Documents” for more support on using students’ responses to analyze their reading strengths and needs.)

Discuss the Source It Questions

Discuss how laws are different from other types of primary sources, such as the first-person narratives that students will read later in the lesson.

- What does it mean that the state of Kentucky created these laws? Who creates laws in a state?
 - You may want to return to the map from Context slide 1 to show students that Kentucky was a slave state that shared a border with two free states (Indiana and Ohio).
 - State government (legislature creates laws; governor signs them into law and enforce them)
- What were these laws intended to do (inform, record, persuade, etc.)?
 - Students may disagree over whether the laws were to “inform” people about the laws of the state, or “persuade” slaves not to run away and free people not to help slaves escape.

Discuss the Read Closely Questions

- In what ways was it illegal for whites and free blacks to help slaves?
- What was their punishment if they did help a runaway slave escape?
- How did the punishment change over time?
 - 1830: up to \$500 fine
 - 1846: increased from a fine to imprisonment

To deepen students’ thinking, **ask** questions, such as:

- What does this law mean? What do you think the purpose of this law was?
- Why would some slave laws set punishments for or reward white people and free blacks?
 - Help students understand that runaway slaves needed help to escape.

Discuss the Gather Evidence Questions

Ask students to share the quotes they highlighted for the **Gathering Evidence** question: How did the Kentucky Slave Laws prevent slaves from escaping?

Focus on key quotes, including:

- Enslaved persons found outside their plantation without a written pass would receive ten lashes as punishment.
- Any citizen was allowed to apprehend a suspected runaway and be eligible for a reward.
- No slave was allowed to work on a steamboat.
- There was a 10pm curfew for slaves.
- County patrols were required to ride through the county on horseback at night to enforce the slave laws.

As students are finding quotes, **ask** them:

- Why do you think slaves needed a written pass to be outside on their own?
- Why would Kentucky set a 10pm curfew and send country patrols out at night?
 - Most slaves escaped at night when it was dark.
 - The curfew was meant to stop slaves from trying to runaway at night, and the patrols enforced the law.
- Why weren't slaves allowed to work on steamboats?
 - Boats traveled on the Ohio River, which made escaping to a free state easier.
- What about these laws made escaping hard?
- Let's think about how these might have impacted slaves' ability to travel? Their sense of safety?
- How might these factors have acted to prevent slaves from attempting to run away?
- What text would we want to quote? How would you explain this quote? How is this evidence for the fact that laws were intended to prevent slaves from escaping?

Prompt students to articulate these quotes *in their own words*.

Discuss the Big Idea Questions

Students move at this stage to connecting the specific details in the text to the Big Idea about why Kentucky passed these slave laws. One way to articulate the Big Idea is:

- Kentucky passed slave laws to limit slaves' movements so that they could not escape to the North.

Anticipate these difficulties that students will have getting to the Big Idea:

- In their responses students may focus on smaller details and have a harder time articulating the Big Ideas (for example, *Kentucky passed slave laws so that slaves couldn't be out at night*).
- Or, conversely, they may articulate their ideas quite generally, without staying connected enough to the document details (for example: *Kentucky wanted to control slaves*).

Ask these questions to help students more clearly *identify and articulate the Big Idea*:

- What is the overall purpose that all of these laws seem to have in common?
 - Preventing slaves from escaping; restricting slaves' movement
- Did anyone else write a different Big Idea? Why? What evidence do you see in the text for that idea?
- OK, we have several thoughts here about the Big Idea in this document about the purpose of Kentucky's slave laws. Which ideas seem to have the strongest evidence from the document? What makes this evidence stronger?

The idea here is not to push students towards the “right” answer as there are many possible ways to articulate the Big Idea, but to push them **to engage in a rich text-based discussion** with one another in which they have to articulate their ideas and ground their thinking in the document.

Discuss the Think About It Question

Ask the **Think About It** question: Why did slave owners think of slaves who ran away as having “stolen” themselves?

- Owners viewed slave as their “property” and a runaway slave was a loss of property and money for the owner. This is why the South worked so hard to prevent slaves from running away.

Have students **revise** their notes during/after the discussion. Students may need time to revise how they articulated the Big Idea.

Document 2: ORAL HISTORY OF A FORMER SLAVE

Purpose

To help students understand that both fear of punishment and restrictions prevented slaves from running away.

Key Reading Challenge

Students may need to be reminded that while laws restricting movement and allowing punishment may have prevented many slaves from running away, they did not limit enslaved people's desire for freedom.

Dennis Simms' Interview



Suggested Process

- As students read independently, move around the room to diagnose difficulties and offer coaching. When you note several students struggling with particular passages or questions bring them to the attention of the class as appropriate.
- Tell students that some details in this document can be classified as either “slave laws” or “fear of punishment.” Therefore, in their written responses, they need to be able to explain how their selection fits one category or the other.
 - For example, for the quote, “If a slave went to another plantation on lawful business but without a written permit from his master, the owner of the plantation would usually give the offender 10 lashes” a student checking “slave laws” might say that the law told citizens they could whip slaves caught off their plantations.

- **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT.** Use your Teacher Dashboard to scan and assess student responses to specific Document questions (such as the Big Idea question) once a majority of students have finished reading the document. This will prepare you for the class discussion.



Document 2: Class Discussion

It is critical for students to briefly discuss each document after they have read it.

Purpose

Check for and deepen students'

- comprehension of the document
- grasp of the “Big Idea,”—i.e., Although slaves dreamt of freedom, many were too afraid of the (legal) punishments they would receive if caught trying to run away.

Process

Engage students in discussing one or two key questions they have answered in the tool.

- *Zoom In* provides Source It, Read Closely, Gather Evidence, Big Idea and Think About It questions and prompts alongside this document. Depending on your class's needs, you may choose to focus on certain question types over others.
- We strongly recommend using structures such as turn-and-talk and table group discussions as you engage students in these questions.
- Most important, be sure to follow up on student comments by *pressing for reasons and evidence*, and *for accountable talk*. Use the prompts below.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Select student responses to the “Big Idea” question, and use them to guide discussion.

- Ahead of time, use the Teacher Dashboard to quickly scan your students' responses to the “Big Idea” question:
 - What was a main idea Simms describes, and how did it affect his thinking and actions?
 - What evidence in the document supports your answer?

Discuss the Source It Questions

- Who was Dennis Simms?
 - A former slave
- When was this created? What does that tell you about the interview?
 - This interview was done in 1937, long after slavery had been abolished. Simms is remembering what life was like for African Americans in the South under slavery.
- What is the purpose of this interview (to inform, persuade, etc.)?
 - In the 1930s, some white Americans believed slavery had not been so bad. WPA interviews, done during the Great Depression, were meant to record a more accurate picture of what life was really like for slaves by interviewing former slaves.
 - It is useful if students disagree about whether the purpose is to *inform*, *record* or *persuade*. They can discuss why it could have had multiple purposes.

Discuss the Read Closely Questions

- Who is the “we” that felt “very unhappy”? What made them unhappy?
 - The enslaved people on Simms’ plantation
 - “We were never allowed to congregate after work, never went to church, and could not read or write for we were kept in ignorance.”
 - > Enslavement denied people control over their own lives.
- Did Simms and the other enslaved people he knew want to run away? Why did they think of “running off to Canada or Washington”?
- Did most slaves Simms knew run away? Why or why not?
 - No. They feared the patrollers and the whippings they would receive.

Discuss the Gather Evidence Questions

Ask students to share the quotes they highlighted for the **Gathering Evidence** question: According to Simms, what are some of the obstacles to slaves escaping?

Focus on key quotes, including:

- We stuck pretty close to the cabins after dark, because if we were caught roaming about we would be unmercifully whipped.
- If a slave was caught beyond the limits of the plantation where he was employed, and wasn’t in the company of a white person, or didn’t have a written permit from his master, any person who apprehended him was allowed to give him 20 lashes across the bare back.
- We were never allowed to congregate after work...
- Sometimes Negro slave runaways who were apprehended by the patrollers, who kept a constant watch for escaped slaves, besides being flogged, would be branded with a hot iron on the cheek with the letter ‘R’.
- We all thought of running off to Canada or Washington, but feared the patrollers.

As students are finding quotes, **ask** them:

- How does this detail connect to an obstacle? Can you say more? Did anyone write about different obstacles?
- Does this obstacle represent a punishment or a restriction? How come? Who agrees or disagrees? Why?

Prompt students to articulate these quotes *in their own words*.

Discuss the Big Idea Questions

Students move at this stage from connecting the specific details in the text to the Big Idea about the main obstacles Simms identifies that kept slaves from escaping. One way to articulate the Big Idea is:

- A main obstacle to escape Simms described were the violent punishments slaves who left their plantations might face at the hands of owners and patrollers. These made Simms too afraid to run away.

Students may need **support** in getting to the Big Idea.

Ask these questions to help students more clearly *identify and articulate the Big Idea*:

- How would you summarize the obstacles to escape Simms identifies in the interview?
- What seem to be the main obstacles? Do you think those relate more to punishments or restrictions? How come?
- Did anyone else write about a different Big Idea? Why? What evidence do you see in the document for that idea? What makes this evidence stronger?

The idea here is not to push students towards the “right” answer, but to help them to **engage in a rich discussion** with one another in which they articulate their ideas and ground their thinking in the text.

Discuss the Think About It Question

Finally, **discuss** the **Think About It** question: What do you think would help an enslaved person escape from Simms’ master?

Questions to support student thinking include:

- What could slaves bring with them to aid in an escape? (A written pass, etc.)
- Who might be willing to help them?

Have students revise their notes. Allow students to revise their notes after and/or during the discussion. In particular, students may need to revise how they articulated the Big Idea.

Document 3: JOHN PARKER’S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

John Parker



Purpose

To help students uncover another first-person perspective on the obstacles to running away; in particular, what the laws looked like in action.

To help students uncover the perseverance many slaves showed in running away despite the significant dangers.

Key Reading Challenges

This document requires students to gather details about specific obstacles and aids to escape, and infer how those obstacles connect to restrictions and punishments.

Suggested Process

- As students read independently, move around the room to diagnose difficulties and offer coaching. When you note several students struggling with particular passages or questions bring them to the attention of the class as appropriate.
- Tell students to look for connections between the slave laws and Parker’s first-person account.
 - **Ask:** Where does Parker’s account agree with (or “corroborate”) the Kentucky Slave Laws?
 - Parker never mentions laws explicitly, so this will help them to draw inferences by connecting details in his account to the laws that influenced them.

- **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT.** Use your Teacher Dashboard to scan and assess student responses to specific Document questions (such as the Big Idea question) once a majority of students have finished reading the document. This will prepare you for the class discussion.



Document 3: Class Discussion

It is critical for students to briefly discuss each document after they have read it.

Purpose

Check for and deepen students'

- comprehension of the document
- grasp of the “Big Idea,”—i.e., White southerners worked hard to prevent slaves from crossing the Ohio River and escaping to the North; however, despite significant obstacles, many slaves took the risk of running away and some successfully escaped.

Process

Engage students in discussing one or two key questions they have answered in the tool.

- *Zoom In* provides Source It, Read Closely, Gather Evidence, Big Idea and Think About It questions and prompts alongside this document. Depending on your class's needs, you may choose to focus on certain question types over others.
- We strongly recommend using structures such as turn-and-talk and table group discussions as you engage students in these questions.
- Most important, be sure to follow up on student comments by *pressing for reasons and evidence*, and *for accountable talk*. Use the prompts below.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Select student responses to the “Big Idea” question, and use them to guide discussion.

- Ahead of time, use the Teacher Dashboard to quickly scan your students' responses to the “Big Idea” question:
 - What was a main obstacle Parker describes, and how did it affect enslaved people's thinking and actions?
 - What evidence in this document supports your answer?

Discuss the Source It Questions

Make sure students understand that Parker's words were written in 1885, not 1996 (when his autobiography was reprinted).

Follow-up sourcing questions and prompts include:

- Who was John Parker?
 - A former slave who escaped and worked on the Underground Railroad to help other slaves escape.
- What does Parker's role as a conductor for the Underground Railroad tell us about slave escape?
 - It was possible.
 - Despite laws forbidding people to help, there were still people helping slaves to escape.

- What is the purpose of this interview (to inform, persuade, etc.)?
 - Parker wanted people to know that, despite the obstacles, many slaves did attempt to run away. It is okay if students disagree over whether his aim is to inform, record or persuade.

Discuss the Read Closely Questions

It may help students to talk more in depth about the Mason-Dixon line. Like the Ohio River, the Mason-Dixon line divided North and South; however, it was a political border, and not an actual geographic feature.

If students are familiar with the Underground Railroad, you may want to review with them how it worked and how northerners could aid runaways. **Connect** to the text with questions such as:

- Who were the “conscientious men north” of the Mason-Dixon line?
- How might these men have helped runaway slaves?
 - Provide them with temporary housing; helped them to plan the rest of their route, etc.

Ask a follow-up question to deepen students’ thinking:

- Why does Parker say that at night any man “black or white” near the Ohio River “had to give a good reason for being out, especially if he were a stranger”?
 - Men from the North (“strangers” to Kentucky) might be out to help runaway slaves cross the Ohio River.

Discuss the Gather Evidence Questions

Ask students to share the quotes they highlighted for the **Gathering Evidence** question: According to Parker, what are some of the obstacles that prevent slaves from escaping?

Focus on key quotes, including:

- Every precaution was taken to prevent the fugitive from successfully passing through [the border between the North and South].
- The woods were patrolled nightly by constables.
- Any man they found, black or white, had to have a good reason for being out.
- Every ford was watched, while along the creeks and the river, the skiffs were not only pulled up on the shore, but were padlocked to trees, and the oars removed.
- There were dogs in every dooryard, ready to run down the fugitives.
- Once word came from the south that runaways were on their way, the whole countryside turned out, not only to stop the fugitives, but to claim the reward for their capture.

As students are finding quotes, **ask** them:

- Why did you choose this quote? How does it connect to the question you are answering? Is there more (or less) of the text we should include here?
- Does this connect to a punishment or a restriction? How come?
- Does anyone else agree? Disagree?

- Why did “fugitives ha[ve] to take care of themselves south of the [Mason-Dixon] line”?
 - Laws punished whites who helped them.
- What was the role of patrollers?
 - Details about patrollers relate to laws requiring counties to hire patrollers to be on the lookout for runaways.
- What can you infer about the role of ordinary citizens in preventing runaway slaves?
 - Laws allowed citizens to apprehend runaways and receive a reward for capturing them, so a lot of people looked for runaway slaves.
- Why were skiffs (small boats) locked up to trees?
- What role did dogs play in preventing slaves from escaping?
 - Dogs could be used to track a runaway.
 - Dogs could also arguably be understood as implying the danger of violence.

Prompt students to articulate these quotes *in their own words*.

Discuss the Big Idea and Think About It Questions

Students move at this stage from connecting the specific details in the text to the Big Idea about which obstacles Parker identifies as most important in preventing slaves from escaping. One way to articulate the Big Idea is:

- The main obstacles to escape Parker described were the many restrictions that prevented slaves from being able to cross the Ohio River into the North without being caught. However, slaves were determined to be free and many tried to escape, some successfully.

Students may need **support** in getting to the Big Idea.

Ask these questions to help students more clearly *identify and articulate the Big Ideas*:

- Why do you think this was a main obstacle? Were there others? Who agrees or disagrees?
- How does this detail connect to this obstacle? Can you say more? Did anyone write about different details?
- Does this obstacle represent a punishment or a restriction? How come? Did anyone agree or disagree?
- Ask the **Think About It** question: Why do you think slaves continued to try and run away despite the many obstacles?
- What seems like the strongest evidence from Parker’s account to support your thinking?

The idea here is not to push students towards the “right” answer, but to help them to **engage in a rich discussion** with one another in which they have to articulate their ideas and ground their thinking in the document.

Have students revise their notes. Allow students time to revise their notes after and/or during the discussion. In particular, students may need to be prompted to revise how they have articulated the Big Idea.

CONNECT

[Suggested time: ½ session]

Purpose

Before students write in response to a historical question, they need opportunities to talk. They need to clarify their understanding of the documents and how they connect with the larger context and the question they are answering. Your job as a *Zoom In* teacher is to create these discourse opportunities.

Cross-Document Discussion

In this discussion the main goal is to help students to synthesize their learning across documents and connect back to the context and the larger historical questions under investigation. This supports the historical thinking skills of corroboration and contextualization.

Three major moves should happen here:

- Re-engage students in the historical inquiry
- Support students in comparing big ideas and details across documents
- Support students in articulating their own thinking

A) Re-engage students in the historical inquiry

Begin by reminding students of the lesson questions and the larger historical context. Do an initial informal assessment of what “big picture” students have walked away with. **Say** to students:

- You’ve had a chance to examine three primary source documents that each dealt with some of the obstacles slaves encountered to running away. Remember that we are thinking about the questions: **Why didn’t more slaves escape North? How did some manage to escape despite the odds?**
- Before we discuss these documents together, let’s remind ourselves about why the South wanted to make it so difficult for slaves to escape.
 - Spend just a few minutes having students refresh their memories about the content from the Context slides (especially slide 2 “Wealth in the South, 1860”).

Questions for students to **discuss** in turn-and-talks or table groups:

- What was your big takeaway from these documents?
- What were the big obstacles?
- What impact did these have on the lives of slaves?
- What do you think?

The purpose of this initial phase is to prime students’ thinking and to give you an initial assessment of their general level of understanding. You do not need to spend a long time on these questions because you will dig in deeper in the next phases.

B) Support students in comparing big ideas and details across documents

Display the Connect Tab.

Tell students:

- Given this backdrop, let's look across these three documents at the Big Ideas you identified.

The Connect tab will display the key discussion questions:

- How did fear of punishments and the restrictions on slaves create obstacles to escape?
- In what ways did the obstacles affect enslaved people's thinking, and actions? In what ways did they not?

Connect will also display a t-chart labeled "Punishments" and "Restrictions" that displays student notes on the Big Idea questions, and their supporting evidence. You can choose one student's work to project to guide the discussion, or you can project notes you've "starred" while using the Teacher Dashboard to review students' Big Idea notes.

- A t-chart with an example of student work is shown below.

CONNECT	
Punishments	Restrictions
Oral History of a Former Slave Big Idea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A main obstacle Simms describes is whipping, which made him too scared to run away. Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slaves stayed close to their cabins at night because if anyone caught them walking around they would be whipped really badly. 	John Parker's Autobiography Big Idea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One obstacle to escape was crossing the Ohio River into the North, but many slaves tried anyway. Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police patrolled the water, and locked boats to trees without their oars.
	Kentucky Slave Laws Big Idea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The laws were meant to keep slaves from escaping by controlling where they went. Evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slaves had a 10pm curfew each night so that they couldn't run away in the dark.

Prompt students to look at the "Connect" graphic and key discussion questions. Again, we recommend using turn-and-talk or table group structures to have students engage in these discussions with their peers.

Follow-up questions you could **ask** to deepen and extend thinking include:

- What do you notice about the kinds of punishment Simms and Parker were writing about? Were they writing about the same things or different things? Why do you think?
- How do the Kentucky Slave Laws connect with the obstacles Simms and Parker described?

- How do restrictions and punishments connect? Do you see themes on both sides of this chart? Why do you think these connections exist?
- What do we think of the main ideas and details here? Would we want to reword any of this? If so, how? Can anyone remember other details from the documents we would want to have on this chart that we don't see now?
- How does this connect to what we learned about the Southern economy?
- Why do you think the border was especially dangerous at this time?
- Re-ask the first part of the lesson question: **Why didn't more slaves escape North?**

Be sure to follow up on student responses by *Pressing for Evidence*:

- How do you know? What evidence do you have for that?

Next, return to the second part of the lesson question: **How did some slaves manage to escape despite the odds?** Students' responses to this are not recorded on the chart, but students will address this question in their essays. **Ask:**

- Given all these dangers and hardships, how did some people manage to escape despite the odds?
 - You can prompt students to return to their document notes. The Think About It and some of the Close Reading questions for the documents will help students in answering this question.

Give students time to **edit** their responses in *Zoom In* based on class discussion.

C) Support students in articulating their own thinking

Finally, be sure to allow students time to speak with each other about their own thinking and larger concepts. This can happen at any stage of the discussion, through turn-and-talks or small-group discussion. Questions to **ask** to support this kind of thinking include:

- So, what do you think about this?
- What ideas were new for you and why?
- Was anything surprising in what we read/discussed?
- What do you think is most important here and why?

WRITING

[Suggested time: 1–2 sessions]

In this four-paragraph essay, students must describe two obstacles—fear of punishments and restrictions— that prevented slaves from escaping to the North, and how some enslaved people managed to escape despite the odds. The focal writing skill is for students to develop a thesis statement that answers the lesson question and is supported using evidence from the documents.

Teacher's Roles During Writing

As students are writing, support them in these key ways according to their needs:

- Circulate and observe students' progress through the template or outline. Take some notes to help you think about mini-lessons in writing you may want to teach to the whole class.
- Conference individually with students on their writing. Support their development through asking probing questions:
 - You seem stuck; where might you find that information?
 - If you don't remember what that quote means, where can you go?
 - Tell me why you introduced that evidence that way? What more do you think the reader might want to know?
 - Can you tell out-loud what the Big Idea is here? OK, how could you put that into writing?
- If you see patterns, pull together small groups of students for mini-lessons, or to review instructions.
- Support students in being peer editors.
- Help students move on to polished writing.

Preparing Students to Write

Tell students that the next stage of the lesson will be their writing. Remind them they will be writing a four-paragraph explanatory essay. The key elements of historical essay writing you'll help them with are:

- Developing a thesis that responds to the lesson questions.
- Integrating context into their introductions.
- Understanding the organizational structure of the essay, particularly the topics of the two body paragraphs.
- Thinking about what else is important in this topic and how to construct a conclusion.

Project the Essay Outline View. Use this to review the writing prompt and preview the essay structure with students. Review explicitly each part of the essay and the role it serves in developing an answer to the historical question. Making these elements of the essay explicit for students will help them to develop the skills to construct essays more independently down the road.

Essay Outline View

Prompt: Write a four-paragraph explanatory essay that answers the lesson questions: Why didn't more slaves escape North? How did some manage to escape despite the odds?

Paragraph-by-paragraph guidance: In your essay you must have the following sections:

- **An introduction in which you**
 - State the topic of your essay.
 - Provide historical context on why the South wanted to make running away so difficult.
 - Introduce your thesis about why running away was so hard and yet how some slaves were still able to escape.
- **A first body paragraph in which you**
 - Introduce one of the main obstacles to slaves successfully escaping.
 - Provide two supporting details from the documents related to this obstacle.
 - State how each quote connects to the obstacle you described in your topic sentence.
- **A second body paragraph in which you**
 - Introduce a second obstacle to slaves successfully escaping.
 - Provide two supporting details from the documents related to this obstacle.
 - State how each quote connects to the obstacle you described in your topic sentence.
- **A conclusion in which you**
 - Summarize your thesis and the main ideas that support your thesis.
 - Provide information that answers the second part of the lesson question: How did some slaves manage to escape despite the odds?
 - Provide a concluding statement about what we can learn from these obstacles and/or the ways in which some slaves still managed to escape.

Setting the Level of Writing Support

Using the Teacher Dashboard, you can set the level of students' writing support. (Note: do this before they begin drafting their essays, or essay writing will be lost.) *Zoom In* offers two levels of writing support. High Support (the default) gives all students sentence-level tips, optional sentence-starters, and guidance in selecting and using evidence. As students show progress as historical writers—especially in using evidence from documents to support their ideas—teachers can set writing support for individual students to Low Support. The system will provide these students with paragraph-level tips only, meaning students will shape and support their essays substantially on their own.

Preparing Students to Write with Low Supports

If most of your students are writing with Low Supports (meaning with outline only, rather than the detailed Writing Template), you may wish to give them more up-front preparation to write their historical essays. The following outline may help.

Overview

- Let students know that the next stage of the lesson will be their writing.
- Remind them that they will be explaining why more slaves did not escape to the North and, in their conclusion, how some did despite the odds.
- Their final product will be a four-paragraph explanatory essay.

Thesis

- Depending on your students' needs, you may want to guide them in a general discussion of what a thesis is and what role it plays in an explanatory essay.
- Project the lesson questions and ask your students:
 - What kind of thesis might you write based on these questions that would provide a focus for your essay?
- Encourage some open discussion about how to write the thesis. Elicit a range of possibilities. If your students struggle with this, you might want to model the language and explain your thinking aloud.
- Depending on your students' needs you might want to:
 - Keep this as discussion and have students develop their own writing independently.
 - Write down some models for students to use in their writing.
 - Skip this discussion altogether if your students are skilled at writing a thesis.

Context

- Remind students that they will need to provide some information about the historical context in their introductory paragraphs.
- Ask students what background information might be most helpful for readers.
- The goal is to support students in understanding the importance of discussing why the South imposed these obstacles: Why did the South want to make running away so difficult?
- Ask students to look at their Context notes and think about what information from these notes might belong in the introduction.

Body Paragraphs

- After you've discussed the thesis with students, have them think about how the rest of the essay might be structured. Let them know that the two body paragraphs will be focused on obstacles.
- Ask students:
 - Based on your reading and your notes, how do you think you'll organize the two body paragraphs? What might the topic of each paragraph be?
- In this essay the two topics are Punishments and Restrictions. While this seems clear, middle school students may not automatically see that the organizational structure of the reading questions can drive the organizational structure of their writing.
- Again, you can spend as much or as little time on this as you feel your students need. For example, some students may benefit from a review of how to write topic sentences.

Conclusion

- Finally, draw students' attention to the second lesson question: How did some manage to escape despite the odds?
- Let them know that the conclusion is the place in their essay where they will summarize the main ideas, but where they can also write about additional important information that connects to and helps their readers understand the essay topic.
- In this case, it is important that readers understand that even though there were many obstacles that made running away extremely difficult, some slaves still tried and succeeded. Students will be able to discuss this in their conclusion.
 - If you want, you can discuss with students what the documents had to say about what helped some slaves escape.
- Finally, in the last sentence of the essay, students will be able to express their own perspective on the significance of what they've learned.

Sample Student Essay

Some people say that slaves should have just run away and that running away would have been easy. In fact only a small number of slaves did try to run away and an even smaller number made it to freedom. During the time of slavery the South depended on slaves for their economy. Slaves made up most of the wealth of the South. Because of this runaway slaves were very expensive and the South wanted to do whatever it could to keep slaves from running away. More slaves did not escape to the North because the South made many obstacles that prevented them from escaping easily. Even though so few slaves escaped a few still did despite the odds.

One important obstacle to slaves escaping was restrictions put on slaves that controlled their movements. According to the Kentucky Slave Laws, "There was a 10pm curfew for slaves." This means that the law kept slaves from going out at night, when it would be dark and easier to escape. According to former slave Dennis Simms, "We were never allowed to congregate after work, never went to church, and could not read or write for we were kept in ignorance." This means that restrictions kept slaves from meeting in groups, which would make planning to run away very difficult.

Another important obstacle to slaves escaping was fear of punishment. According to former slave John Parker, "There were dogs in every dooryard, ready to run down the fugitives." Runaways were probably afraid of dogs that might attack them. According to the former slave Dennis Simms, "We stuck pretty close to the cabins after dark, because if we were caught roaming about we would be unmercifully whipped." This means that slaves would be afraid to run away because they knew they could be whipped very badly.

In summary, running away was a dangerous and difficult thing for slaves to do. Some of the main obstacles were the restrictions and fear of punishment. Even though there were many dangers, some slaves did try to escape and some were even successful. Slaves who ran away were helped by free blacks and even some whites, who helped runaways get to freedom. The fact that a few slaves did try and run away shows us that even though running away was hard and dangerous, getting to freedom was still worth the risk to some.

Assessing Student Writing with the Essay Rubric

For information on assessing student writing, see these documents:

- “*Zoom In* Essay Rubric” (PDF)
- “Tracking Students' Progress and Assessing Student Work” (PDF)