



Freedom's Journal

The First Black Newspaper

Lesson Summary:

Students will learn that in *Freedom's Journal*, the first black newspaper, African Americans had an independent voice and could speak for themselves. The paper's founder and editors recognized the media as a powerful means of expression.

Lesson Objective:

Students will analyze the objective and components of a modern-day newspaper and will examine *Freedom's Journal* to see that it had similar objectives. Students will use focus questions to infer why *Freedom's Journal* was an important landmark in African-American history.

Students will develop an awareness of free African Americans who were living, working, building, contributing to their community, and agitating for an end to slavery at this time.

Activity:

Teacher should provide several newspapers for the students to examine.

Students will examine the newspapers and create a list of the sections or topics covered in the newspapers.

Students will then develop a statement describing the purpose of a newspaper.

Students will share their statement with the class. Teacher should keep track of the statements and create one class statement based upon the most popular comments.

Teacher may want to discuss with the students the following terms: slavery, lynching, rebel, advocate, right to vote, colonization, and pro-emigration.

Teacher will then give the students background information about the newspaper *Freedom's Journal*. Teacher may want to pre-read the web site:

http://www.pbs.org/blackpress/news_bios/newbios/nwsprr/freedom/freedom.html

Depending on the ability level of the students, teacher may want the students to read the above information on their own or in groups.

Teacher may also provide copies of *Freedom's Journal* from the following web site:

<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/libraryarchives/aanp/freedom/volume1.asp>



Students should create a list comparing and contrasting the components and purpose of *Freedom's Journal* versus modern-day newspapers.

Teacher may want the students to use the following focus questions for their work:

Why might the editors have chosen the name of the newspaper?

What topics did *Freedom's Journal* address that were not addressed in white mainstream papers?

Who was the paper's audience? How did that affect the choice of topics?

What were the important issues of the time?

Students should create a fact sheet for *Freedom's Journal* including such information as title, purpose, location of publication, date of first publication, editors, distribution locations, cost, etc.

Extensions:

Teacher may want the students to research famous African Americans involved in *Freedom's Journal* such as Samuel E. Cornish, John B. Russwurm, Paul Cuffee, Touissant L'Ouverture and Phyllis Wheatley.