Freedom Flight tells the tale of the most important incident in the history of the Underground Railroad in Ohio. The show follows the story of Addison White, a slave who escaped from Kentucky and traveled the Railroad north to the small town of Mechanicsburg, OH. There, he was befriended by a farmer named Udney Hyde. Addison lived in Hyde’s barn, working for his meals by day and learning how to read and write by night.

Hyde was a suspected abolitionist, and it was not long before Addison was discovered by his former master. Federal marshals surrounded the cabin and were prepared to arrest Addison and return him to slavery.

In a powerful moment of solidarity, over 100 citizens from Mechanicsburg confronted the marshals and demanded that they set Addison free. Freedom Flight uses drama, music, riddles and rhyme to create characters that emerge from the past and bring the Underground Railroad to life right before your eyes. Produced by Mad River Theater Works.

About NJPAC On the Mic
NJPAC On the Mic is an audio resource that takes SchoolTime performances to the next level. This podcast features three exclusive, curriculum-aligned episodes for all of NJPAC’s 2022-2023 SchoolTime performances. On the Mic offers students the opportunity to engage their listening skills, deepen their understanding of the performance and learn about the process of bringing a live or recorded production to life. This immersive audio experience features a theme song by students in the NJPAC arts education program.
Prepare for the performance

Have a class discussion using the questions in the student section to get them thinking about the show. Discuss the types of literary conflict: internal (character vs. self) and external (character vs. character, environment, society, technology, supernatural). Invite students to identify examples of conflict from familiar stories or their curriculum. Make a list of conflict types and examples for students to reference later in the lesson.

Experience the performance

Before the show: Briefly recap the types of literary conflict. Prompt students to look for moments in the play that elicit an emotional response.

After the show: Listen to the second episode of The On the Mic podcast and discuss student responses to the play. Have students compare and contrast Freedom Flight to what they’ve already learned about slavery in the United States.

Reflect, respond and read

As a class, read about the Fugitive Slave Act on page six of the Mad River Theatre Works study guide. Ask students to make connections to the play, history and current events.

Next, watch the video on the history of policing in the United States. See the student section for an introduction to the video. Ask students to make connections between the video, Freedom Flight and current events.

Focus

Break the class into small groups to complete Activity Sheet 1. Working together, students will identify when they think a law was passed during the 19th, 20th or 21st centuries. The intention is not to get it right, but to connect shared knowledge and perhaps be surprised by the results. Give students the opportunities to share their thoughts on these historic laws.

Introduce the concept of satire as a tool used by artists and writers to make a point, often through humor. Highlight the first law on the activity sheet and invite students to share what they see as ridiculous about that law. Prompt the class to exaggerate the law to make it even more ridiculous. Write out the satirical version of the law and save it for later in the lesson. The law can be phrased as if it were being announced on the news.

Originate

As a class, brainstorm some prompts for imaginary satirical laws. The prompts can be mundane, complex, realistic or absurd. Have students return to their small groups and complete Activity Sheet 2 to create satirical laws and a news-inspired script. See some tips for writing satirical laws.

Rehearse

Give students time to study and practice their scenes. Have students determine their own casting, ensuring that everyone who wants a role has one. Encourage groups to practice or even memorize their lines. See the student section for ways in which groups may stage their performance.

Make magic

It’s showtime! Designate a performance area in your classroom and set up chairs for the audience. If you’d like, invite administration and/or another class. After each performance, the audience may share constructive feedback to the performers. Feedback can start with, “I liked,” “I noticed” or “I wonder.”

Freedom Flight is based on actual events. Why do you think this story needs to be told? What lessons from this story might we be able to apply to our own lives? What other laws or events that you’ve seen are based on actual events?

Every story has a conflict: internal and/or external. What are some types of conflict from your favorite books, shows or films? What about in your own life? For example, if your birthday party was canceled due to a bad storm, what would be the opposing forces working against your desire to have a party?

Before the show: What are some types of literary conflict that you might see in Freedom Flight? While watching the show, take mental notes of moments of conflict, as well as moments that connect with your emotions.

After the show: What were some of your favorite moments? How did those moments make you feel? What types of literary conflict did you notice? How was the story similar or different than what you’ve already learned about slavery in the United States?

Read about the Fugitive Slave Act on page six of the Mad River Theatre Works study guide. In Freedom Flight, what did the Fugitive Slave Act mean for Addison White and Sidney Hyde? What types of literary conflict are present? How are things different or similar today?

Next, watch the video on the history of policing in the United States. Some of this information may surprise or even anger you. We learn the origins of the United States police force not to support an argument that all cops are bad, as that’s far from the truth. Rather, we are learning the history to help us better understand the problems of today.

After the video: What surprised you? What angered you? In Freedom Flight, the townpeople came together to protect Addison. In what ways is the United States like that now?

What are some prompts that a new, satirical law could be based on? Consider your day-to-day life, your community, as well as current and past events. In your small groups, complete Activity Sheet 2 and create a new satirical law and news announcement. Does your new law make life easier or harder? How can you exaggerate the law for comedic effect? Is there a point you want to make about politics or society?

What are some types of conflict from your favorite books, shows or films? What about in your own life? For example, if your birthday party was canceled due to a bad storm, what would be the opposing forces working against your desire to have a party?

Now it’s time to share your scenes! Do your best and be proud of your work. When other groups perform, remember to give your full attention and abundant applause. When giving feedback, start with phrases such as “I liked,” “I noticed” or “I wonder.”
Language Arts

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

3. Interpret and analyze visual and performance works, complex texts, and visual art using key lines, symbols, and visual elements to build understanding.

4. Use Goran, participatory strategies to enhance understanding of subject matter and to synthesize and apply learning.

5. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to create products.

6. Participate in a brainstorming session with individuals who represent different perspectives and ideas.

7. Collaborate in diverse groups to analyze ideas, generate ideas, build on others’ ideas, challenge thinking, and deepen understanding.

8. Present and develop ideas to a diverse audience through active discussions to achieve a group goal.

9. Demonstrate openness to diverse ideas and perspectives.

10. Participate in group discussions to analyze others’ perspectives, to compare and contrast them, and to develop a unifying position.

11. Participate in active discussion about a topic of curiosity.

12. Demonstrate the ability to reflect, analyze, and use creative skills and ideas.

13. Participate in group discussions to analyze others’ perspectives, to compare and contrast them, and to develop a unifying position.

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Vocabulary

14th Amendment
20th Amendment
2nd Amendment
3rd Amendment
4th Amendment
5th Amendment
6th Amendment
7th Amendment
8th Amendment
9th Amendment
10th Amendment
11th Amendment
12th Amendment
13th Amendment
14th Amendment
15th Amendment
16th Amendment
17th Amendment
18th Amendment
19th Amendment
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In-School Residencies: NJPAC teaching artists come right to your school to teach the performing arts to your students. Our super-flexible in-person residencies are designed to meet your needs, and you’ll have a dedicated program manager to help you every step of the way. It’s the perfect program to keep your students creating, connecting and expressing themselves through the magic of the arts.

Professional Development: Calling all educators! Expand your teaching skills, deepen your curriculum and give yourself a creative boost in NJPAC’s forward-thinking professional development workshops. Our virtual PD programs are for teachers all the way from pre-K to high school, and include hip hop, dance, storytelling, theater, music and more. Not only will you learn something... you’ll also have fun and be inspired.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please email our education sales team at artseducation@njpac.org. Or visit njpac.org/education

Saturday Programs: NJPAC’s Saturday programs are geared towards students at every level — from those who dream of starring on Broadway to those who are still learning their scales. Students work with professional artists to build technique and develop their own creative style in hip hop, jazz, theater, musical theater and symphonic band.

Summer Programs: Want to begin to explore the arts? Or immerse yourself in the study of one genre? Then join us at NJPAC next summer in one of seven programs that spark the creativity in every child through the study of music, dance and theater.

On the Mic is an NJPAC Arts Education production. It is produced in partnership with CM Studios. NJPAC Arts Education performances team: Randal Croudy, Natalie Dreyer, Rosa Hyde, Danielle Vauters. CM Studios producers: Michael Aquino and Dania Ramos. NJPAC and CM Studios are located in Essex County, New Jersey, situated on the traditional territory of the Leni Lenape people.