

Young Audiences of Massachusetts *Educational Materials*

Please forward to teachers

7/29/09

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Characters Educational Theatre: *Ellen Craft*

Grade levels: 7-12

In 1848, Ellen Craft and her husband William made a most remarkable escape from slavery in Georgia to freedom in the North. Rather than travel via the Underground Railroad, they took the "above-ground" railroad. Often mistaken as a Caucasian woman due to her light complexion, Ellen disguised herself as a white man while her husband posed as her slave. Mrs. Craft retells the story of their escape from slavery, their year in Boston, and their subsequent escape to England. She describes their eventual return to the United States several years after the Civil War ended to start the Woodville Community Farm and School in Georgia.

LEARNING GOALS:

1. To explore the meaning and responsibilities of freedom.
2. To understand what a true *hero* is and what drives a person to risk everything.

PRE-ACTIVITY #1 SUMMARY: *Discrimination*

Discuss the students' familiarity with slavery in the United States. Divide the students into two arbitrary groups and, without explaining why, give one group a difficult writing assignment and the other group a much easier assignment. Then the idea of discrimination and how some students felt discriminated against during the exercise.

PRE-ACTIVITY #2 SUMMARY: *Ellen's Journey*

Follow Ellen's escape route. Calculate the distance that she traveled. Have students imagine what it would be like for an illiterate adult to travel this distance. Discuss the difficulties Ellen faced, her courage, and her resourcefulness. Try to anticipate some challenges she might have had on a train car filled with educated, white, mostly Southern men she did not know.

PRE-ACTIVITY SUMMARY: *Heroes*

Ellen Craft is considered a hero/heroine for her escape from slavery. What makes someone a hero/heroine? Discuss and compare heroes/heroines from fiction and real life. Ask students to tell or re-enact heroic adventures of people they know. Have students find newspaper articles about "real life" heroes to share with the class.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

English Language Arts, History and Social Sciences, American History, African-American History, Theater, Women's Studies

PRE-ACTIVITY #1 - DISCRIMINATION

LEARNING GOALS:

- * To understand how African-Americans were treated during the years of slavery in the United States
- * To understand what it feels like to be discriminated against

MATERIALS/PREPARATION:

Any book with a vivid description of slavery

TIME:

1 hour

TIPS FOR THE TEACHER:

- * The assignments can be anything (better to make one extremely grueling and the other very simplistic).
- * **DO NOT SAY THE ASSIGNMENT OUT LOUD.** Write the information on the board tell the students they have the rest of the period to finish the assignment.

STEP 1:

Read an excerpt from the book about slavery to the class.

STEP 2:

Ask students what they know about slavery. Ask what books they have read and movies they have seen about this. Discuss prejudice and discrimination. Were African Americans the only enslaved people in history?

STEP 3:

Pretend this lesson is over and you are moving on to something else. Before you move on to the next lesson, write two in-class assignments on the board. Look around the class and choose a color that approximately half the class is wearing. Assign the difficult assignment to that group of students and the simpler one to the other half.

STEP 4:

Interrupt the work when you feel half the class is annoyed. Ask a student from the group that had the difficult assignment how they felt when they saw the two assignments. Ask them why they were mad? Why was it not fair? Explain to the students that this is how people feel if they are discriminated against.

STEP 5:

Have the students write a short essay about how they felt during that exercise. Have volunteer students share their essays with the remainder of the class.

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) **Consult** a map. Look how far Ellen and William traveled. Count the miles from the start, (Macon, Georgia) to their end (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania).
- 2) **Discuss** differences between the way African-Americans were treated in the South and the North in 1800's. Why do you think slavery was more predominant in the South?
- 3) **Review** the chronology of slavery in the 1800's from the beginning, through the Civil War, to the Missouri Compromise, to the Emancipation Proclamation, etc.



PRE-ACTIVITY #2: ELLEN'S JOURNEY

LEARNING GOALS:

- * To explore the magnitude of Ellen's journey
- * To attempt to understand the difficulties slaves faced and the sacrifices they made

MATERIALS/PREPARATION:

Map of the United States, copies of maps, rulers

TIME:

45 minutes

TIPS FOR THE TEACHER:

- * Make sure students realize that this trip took four days and that Ellen and her husband had to change means of conveyance numerous times.

STEP 1:

Show students a map of the United States. Ask which states they've visited. Ask students how they have traveled.

STEP 2:

Ask students to estimate the distance in miles from Boston to New York City, Washington, D.C, and Atlanta. Then, using the map scale, measure and calculate the actual distances.

STEP 3:

Have students find the following cities on the map (and note that Ellen passed through each of these cities while escaping slavery):

Macon, Georgia
Savannah, Georgia
Charleston, South Carolina
Wilmington, North Carolina
Richmond, Virginia
Washington, D.C.
Baltimore, Maryland
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Use the map scale to have students measure and calculate the distance from each city to the next. Total the distance from Macon to Philadelphia.

STEP 4:

Ask students how long it takes to fly or drive from Macon to Philadelphia. Discuss the difficulties she faced and her courage and resourcefulness.

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) **Discuss** how African-Americans were treated in the South and the North in 1800s. Why was slavery predominant in the South? Did any Northerners own slaves? Did any Northern industries rely on or support slavery?
- 2) **Review** the chronology of slavery. Begin with the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and move through the Civil War to the Missouri Compromise and the Emancipation Proclamation.



POST-ACTIVITY: HEROES

LEARNING GOAL:

* To examine Ellen Craft's life and understand why she is considered to be a heroine

Materials/Preparation:

Television cartoon, newspaper, or cartoon clip

TIME:

45 minutes

TIPS FOR THE TEACHER:

* Discuss the fears, frustrations and doubts that "real life" heroines such as Ellen Craft experience.

STEP 1:

Show a clip from a television cartoon or newspaper cartoon strip that depicts a character in an heroic context. Ask students what makes these fictional characters heroes (e.g. Superman, Batman, The Terminator)

STEP 2:

Ask students what qualities make a person a hero. What conditions in life force people to act heroically. Ask students to think of any heroes/heroines from history and their own lives.

STEP 3:

Discuss why Ellen Craft is considered a heroine. Ask students what they learned from the performance that led them to believe she was a heroine. Ask students if they would take the same chances that she did.

STEP 4:

Have students choose and research a hero/heroine from their own lives.

STEP 5:

Ask students to present this person's story to the class using any medium (video, performance, report, cartoon, strip, display, etc.).

EXTENSIONS:

- 1) **Create** a Civil Rights timeline from the 1800s (during the years of slavery) to the 1960s.
- 2) **Find** a copy of the *Emancipation Proclamation*. Have students read it and discuss the rights it gave to slaves.
3. **Discuss** the difference between the Underground Railroad and the Above Ground Railroad. What were the differences? Which route do you think was safer? Which option would you have taken if you were trying to escape slavery?



RESOURCES:

Armstrong, Jennifer. Steal Away to Freedom. New York: Scholastic, 1993.

Craft, William. Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom. New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969.

Lester, Julius. This Strange New Feeling. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1992.

VOCABULARY:

Underground Railroad
emancipate
jump the broom

abolitionist
Quaker
bright (as skin color)

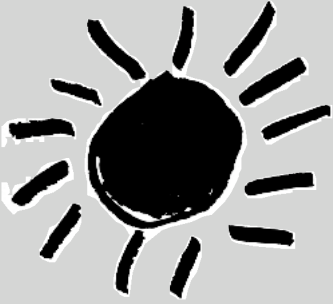
fugitive
down river

ABOUT THE PERFORMER:

A graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design and a former teacher, Marcia Estabrook began performing her characters in 1982. In addition to her Characters Educational Theatre performances, Marcia has been a featured storyteller at the Three Apples and the Big Apple Storytelling Festivals, the John F. Kennedy Library, the Old South Meeting House, the Martin Van Buren Historical Site in Kinderhook, NY, the Deerfield Museum, Old Sturbridge Village, Channel 5's "Tank Away" and Fox 25's "Americana". Marcia has been the keynote speaker at the New England Kindergarten Conference and has also performed and conducted workshops at the CT Storytelling Festival. Marcia appeared in "The Raven and the Dove" and "Town Called a River". She has consulted for the Rhode Island Children's Museum and the National Park Service. Marcia is a member of Solo Together and Historical Entertainments, and is proud to have been twice a nominee for the National Performer of the Year Award from Young Audiences.

ABOUT YOUNG AUDIENCES:

Young Audiences of Massachusetts (YAMA) is the oldest, largest and most utilized arts-in-education organization in the state and one of the largest in a national network of 33 chapters. For over 45 years, YA has been serving as a link between teaching artists and the region's school children, providing dance, storytelling, music and theater programs to children in schools, libraries and hospitals in the form of assembly performances, workshops and residencies. The organization's mission is to encourage lifelong engagement with the arts by making them an integral part of every child's education.



Young Audiences of Massachusetts

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MASSACHUSETTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS CONNECTIONS

Characters Educational Theatre: *Ellen Craft*

<i>Language Arts 2</i>	...pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions.
<i>Language Arts 3</i>	...make oral presentations that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience, purpose, and the information to be conveyed.
<i>Language Arts 9</i>	...identify the basic facts and essential ideas in what they have read, heard, or viewed.
<i>Language Arts 13</i>	...identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure, elements, and meaning of nonfiction material.
<i>History 1</i>	Chronology and Cause...understand the chronological order of historical events and recognize the complexity of historical cause and effect.
<i>History 2</i>	Historical Understanding...understand the meaning, implications, and importance of historical events, while recognizing the contingency and unpredictability of history.
<i>History 4</i>	Society, Diversity, Commonality, and the Individual...learn the complex interplay that has existed from the beginning of our country between American ideals and American practice.
<i>Arts-Theatre 1</i>	Acting...develop acting skills to portray characters who interact in improvised and scripted scenes.
<i>Arts-Theatre 5</i>	Critical Response...describe and analyze their own theatrical work and the work of others using appropriate theater vocabulary.
<i>Arts-Theatre 10</i>	Interdisciplinary Connections...apply knowledge of the arts to the study of English language arts, foreign languages, health, history, and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering.