

**LESSON**

# Exploring the Freedom Dreams of Past Generations: Culminating Lesson

## Overview

### About This Lesson

In this lesson, students choose three or four primary source documents encountered throughout their year-long study of US history in order to analyze how the individual or groups in the documents pursued their freedom dreams. Students will use these examples to envision the kinds of positive change they would like to see in their own communities, the nation, and the world, and reflect on the tools they need to enact such change.

### Essential Question

- How can I make real the ideals of freedom and democracy?

### Guiding Question

- What freedom dreams have people pursued throughout US history?

### Learning Objective

- Students will analyze primary sources in order to explore the freedom dreams of past generations and the lessons they hold for us today.

### What's Included

This lesson uses the following material. Access materials in this [Google Folder](#).

- **Handout:** Freedom Dreams Graphic Organizer

## Preparing to Teach

### A Note to Teachers

#### 1. Creating Folders for Table Groups

In Activity 2 of this lesson, students choose three or four primary source documents that they have encountered throughout their year-long study of US history in order to analyze how the individual or group in the documents pursued their freedom dreams. To prepare for this activity, create folders for table groups (one folder per table group) with six primary source documents for students to choose from.

We recommend the following documents from our US History resources, but you can also select your own documents from your course or allow students to select them. The important thing is that each document expresses a vision for a new future with freedom

and democratic rights at the center, and that students have already explored the document in class and had sufficient time to comprehend and analyze it. We also recommend that you select a range of voices from the course so that students can access multiple perspectives and moments in history.

Recommended documents:

[In Pursuit of Democracy and Freedom: A US History Inquiry:](#)

- [Excerpts from “Board of Education: Chinese Mother Letter,” Daily Alta California, 1885](#)
- [Excerpts from “Andrew G. Imutan 1965-1974,” Essays by UFW Volunteers Collection](#)

[We the People: Expanding the Teaching of the US Founding:](#)

- [Petition for Freedom to the Massachusetts Legislature](#)
- ["On the Equality of the Sexes" by Judith Sargent Murray](#)

[The Reconstruction Era 3-Week Unit:](#)

- [Petition from the Colored Washerwomen](#)
- [What the Black Man Wants](#) (excerpt of a speech by Frederick Douglass)
- [Savannah Freedpeople Express Their Aspirations for Freedom](#) (the testimony of Garrison Frazier)
- [South Carolina Freedpeople Demand Education](#) (excerpt of a resolution from an 1865 convention of freedmen)

## 2. Review “Levers of Power” Framework

The graphic organizer students complete on Day 2 of this lesson uses the Levers of Power framework. Note that you may need to review this framework, which students have explored before in the resource [In Pursuit of Democracy and Freedom: A US History Inquiry](#). You might spend a moment exploring the metaphor of the lever in the title. In a literal sense, a lever is a tool that allows one to pick up or move something much heavier than could be lifted without it. In other words, a lever allows someone to use a small amount of force to have a big impact. When working within a democracy, sometimes we need to work with organizations, government, and other community members to amplify our voice and our desire for change. By influencing or making use of these “levers,” individuals might have a larger impact on their community or society. Using the levers of power is one example of a democratic tool that people use to bring about change in their communities.

## Lesson Plan

### Activities

#### 1. Review Learning from the Previous Day

Provide students with the opportunity to review their learning from the previous day. Ask students to revisit the working definition of “freedom dreaming” they created in the

opening activity of Lesson 1, and give them the opportunity to add any new ideas to their definitions based on their notes and learning from the previous day.

## 2. Complete a Freedom Dreams Graphic Organizer

In the next activity, students will select three or four primary source documents that they have encountered throughout their yearlong study of US history in order to analyze the freedom dreams individuals expressed at the time, the power that they had to express or achieve their freedom dream, and the obstacles that stood in their way.

Divide the class into table groups of between three or four students, and give each group a folder with six primary source documents (see “Teaching Note 1” for more information.) Then pass out the **Freedom Dreams Graphic Organizer** and read the directions aloud to students.

Model the activity by sharing the example provided in the first line of the graphic organizer, which uses the document “What the Black Man Wants” from an 1865 speech by Frederick Douglass that appears in the 3-week unit on Reconstruction.

Regroup and ask volunteers to share summaries of their small-group discussion, especially their responses to the following prompts from the graphic organizer:

- Identify levers of power for this individual or group. (*Who or what helps/helped them enact their freedom dream?*)
- Identify limits on the power of this individual or group. (*Who or what stands/stood in the way of their freedom dream?*)

## 3. Discuss the Lessons of the Past

Return to whole group and discuss the following questions as a class:

- What can we learn from the past efforts of Americans to secure their rights and freedoms in the United States? What can we learn from the opposition they faced?
- What tools have these individuals and groups left for us to pick up as we try to achieve democracy and freedom today?