



Classroom Activity: Will You Run?

Listed below is an activity that you can use with your class. The Tudor Place Education Department recommends this activity after the Civil War field trip at Tudor Place, and is also happy to schedule a time to facilitate it in your classroom. For more information, please contact us at education@tudorplace.org.

Total program time: 45 minutes

Introduction: 10 minutes

Activity: 30 minutes

Conclusion: 5 minutes

Background Information

Adapted from the study guide for *Stealing Freedom* by Lisa Carbone (Yearling, 2001).

“Today, people often think, ‘there’s no way I’d stay a slave. I’d escape!’ Yet when we really understand the lives of slaves, we see that this decision was never simple or easy to make. This activity is designed to shed light on the complexities of the decision to run.” –Lisa Carbone

By participating in this activity, students will:

- Use critical thinking skills to consider the pros, cons, and unintended consequences of decisions
- Practice empathy with people who lived in the past
- Discuss decisions in groups

Materials

- Frederick Douglass Quotes Regarding Slavery handout (pass around printouts to students or project at the front of the room)
- Self-Emancipation Statistics handout (pass around printouts to students or project at the front of the room)
- Case studies, 1 per group (6 total)
- Outcome Guide
- Pro/Con worksheet, 1 per group or 1 per student



The Program

Introduction

Introduce the activity with the quotes by Frederick Douglass. This will help set the stakes and the seriousness of the topic for the students.

Before you divide into groups, discuss the statistics on self-emancipation.

Ask: What is emancipation? Students will likely know what emancipation is, but if they do not, explain that emancipation means being set free, so emancipated slaves were freed slaves.

Ask: What is self-emancipation? Students may not know what self-emancipation is, but encourage them to think through the components of the term to determine its meaning. Self-emancipation is the act of freeing oneself. Slaves who purchased their own freedom or ran away, were self-emancipated, since they freed themselves.

Using the information students learned at Tudor Place and in class, discuss the data as a class. Have students consider why 81% of runaways were male, why most were “well spoken,” why most runaways were between 13 and 25?

Activity

Divide students into six groups. Tell the class that you will give each group a historical case study where an enslaved person faced the decision of whether or not to run. Instruct students to use the information they learned in class and at Tudor Place to consider as a group the pros, cons, and unintended consequences of both deciding to run and deciding not to run.

Remind students to think about their decisions based on what the person in their case study would have known, rather than what they know as 21st-century students. Remind students that these were real-life people and real-life circumstances and decisions that enslaved people faced.

Give each group a half-sheet case from the attached list and a pro/con worksheet. Students should read and discuss their case as a group.

Questions for students to consider include:

- What are the pros of running? What are good things that could happen if this person decides to run?
- What are the cons? What bad things does this person risk if they decide to run?
- How would the decision affect any family members who depend on this person?
- Does the escape plan sound like it could work?
- Does the person in charge of the escape seem trustworthy?



- What happens if they reach freedom? Is there an organization, like the Underground Railroad, who would help them adjust to their new life? Would it be better to take this opportunity to escape or wait for another one?
- How does gender impact the decision to run or not? How does gender impact enslaved people's daily lives?
 - Enslaved men often had more freedom to leave a plantation, either through their work or to visit family members living elsewhere. Therefore they often knew the terrain better. Enslaved women were responsible for enslaved children more so than enslaved men.

Students should discuss their opinions about whether to run. The facilitator should informally talk with each group to help students think critically about their case. Everyone in a group can agree, or each person can make a different decision.

Students should incorporate information they learned in class and at Tudor Place about enslaved people's lives to inform their decision. Remind students that not all slaves had the option to run – this analysis assumes the enslaved person is in a physical and mental state of mind to escape, which was often not the case.

After each group discussed their case (Tudor Place recommends 10-15 minutes), each group should present to the class their scenario, some pros and cons, and their decision(s). After each group presents, read the outcome corresponding to their case.

Conclusion

After all groups have presented, discuss as a group the students' decisions and the process making those decisions. Discussion questions can include:

- Was this an easy or a difficult decision to make? Why?
- Why do you think some people chose not to run away?

Conclude by reading again the quotes from Frederick Douglass.



Glossary

Emancipation – The freeing of an enslaved person, usually by a master or the law.

Execution – When a person given a death sentence is killed. During the Civil War, William Orton “Orton” Williams and Walter Gibson “Gip” Peter were executed as spies.

Manumission – A form of emancipation by which an owner frees their enslaved worker(s).

Secession—A formal withdrawal from a government

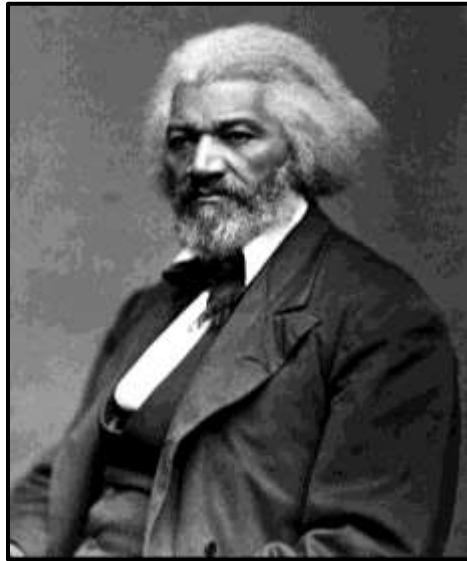
Self-emancipation – The freeing of an enslaved person by their own action, often by running away and reaching a free zone.

Slavery – A system by which some people are considered property and can be owned, bought, and sold. Before the Civil War in America, slavery was enshrined in law. Slavery can also be referred to as human trafficking.

Note:

There is extensive conversation in the historical field about the use of the word “slave” versus “enslaved person.” Those in favor of “enslaved person” point out that person-first terminology emphasizes the humanity rather than the situation of the individual concerned. Those who advocate for “slave” assert that the adjective form diminishes the impact of the word and the seriousness of the situation. During your field trip to Tudor Place, Museum Teachers may use either or both of these terms.

Frederick Douglass Quotes Regarding Slavery



Frederick Douglass, National Archives and Records Administration

“No man can tell the intense agony which is felt by the slave, when wavering on the point of making his escape. All that he has is at stake; and even that which he has not is at stake also. The life which he has may be lost, and the liberty which he seeks, may not be gained.”

- Frederick Douglass, 1855

“I felt assured that, if I failed in this attempt, my case would be a hopeless one – it would seal my fate as a slave forever. I could not hope to get off with anything less than the severest punishment, and being placed beyond the means of escape. It required no very vivid imagination to depict the most frightful scenes through which I should have to pass, in case I failed. The wretchedness of slavery, and the blessedness of freedom, were perpetually before me. It was life and death with me.”

- Frederick Douglass

Self-Emancipation Statistics

85% of runaways were captured

81% of runaways were male

78% of runaways were between 13-29 years old

50% of runaways were over 5'7" (the average height of a man)

12% of runaways were over 6'

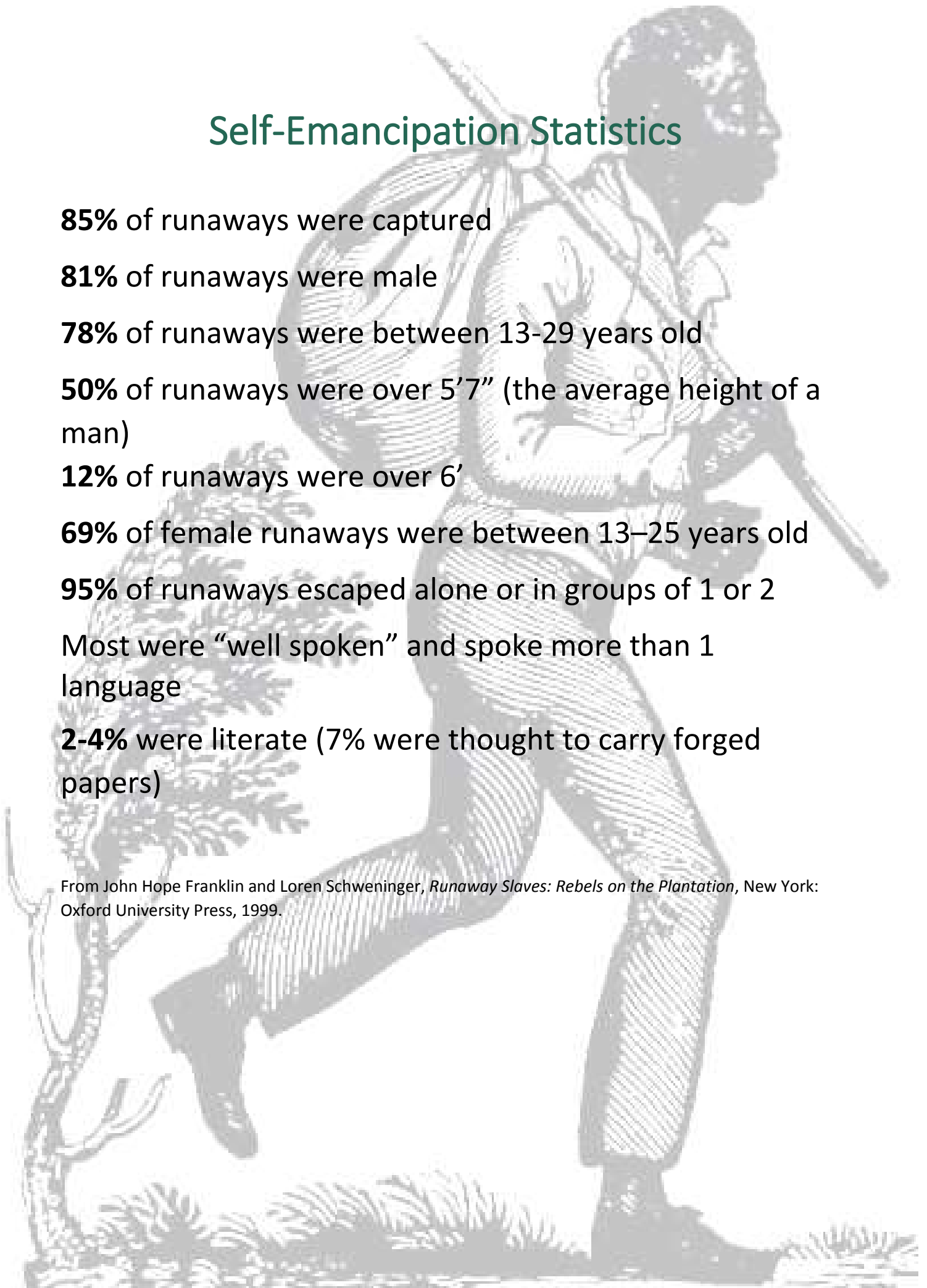
69% of female runaways were between 13–25 years old

95% of runaways escaped alone or in groups of 1 or 2

Most were “well spoken” and spoke more than 1 language

2-4% were literate (7% were thought to carry forged papers)

From John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.





Case #1

Until recently, a 13-year old girl named Ann lived with her mother, older sister, and three brothers. All of them were enslaved. Her father was a free man and also lived with them. Ann's father worked hard to raise money to free some of her family. He was able to purchase the freedom of her mother and sister.

Ann's mother, father, and sister no longer live with Ann and her brothers. They live in Washington, D.C. Ann only gets to see them every once and awhile. Ann's enslaver, a slave trader in Rockville, Maryland, just sold her brothers to someone in Alabama. The man is refusing to let Ann's father purchase her freedom.

Ann's mother works for the Underground Railroad in Washington, D.C. The Underground Railroad is willing to help Ann escape. Their plan is to hire someone to "steal" Ann from the slave trader's house and then take Ann to Canada. Ann's aunt and uncle are in Canada and Ann can live with them. If this dangerous plan fails, Ann could be sold and never see her family again.

Should Ann run?



Case #2

Rebecca is enslaved by Margaret Dick, the sister of Thomas Peter of Tudor Place. Rebecca is married to a free man and they have a 12-year-old daughter. Rebecca and her daughter live with the Dick family in Georgetown. Her husband lives separately. Rebecca wants to live with her husband, but Mrs. Dick will not let her. Mrs. Dick is demanding and mean, but she is generous with food.

The Dick family also has a farm in the country. When Mrs. Dick is upset with Rebecca, she threatens to send Rebecca and her daughter to the farm. Mrs. Dick has started threatening this more often. If Rebecca and her daughter are sent to the farm to work, then Rebecca would not get to see her husband.

When Rebecca's daughter turns 13 next year, Mrs. Dick will send her to the farm to work. If Rebecca is not sent to the farm, then she will not get to see her daughter much.

Rebecca's husband contacted a lawyer in Washington, DC who works with the Underground Railroad. He said he can put Rebecca, her husband, and their daughter in a coach going North. It will be led by experienced operators. Rebecca knows that if they are caught, she and her daughter will be sold to slave traders. She would likely never see her daughter or husband again.

Should Rebecca run?



Case #3

Emily is 13 years old and enslaved by a family in Montgomery County, Maryland. Her father is a free former slave. Her mother is enslaved. For the last year, Emily's owner hired Emily out to a family in Washington, DC. Emily's owner gets paid for her work; Emily does not. The family that Emily has been working for likes Emily.

Emily has four older siblings who purchased their freedom from Emily's owner. This is not an option for Emily. Her owner has decided against letting any more of Emily's family buy their freedom.

Emily heard through African American community networks that the Underground Railroad is planning a large escape for enslaved African Americans by boat. An experienced conductor is in charge. If Emily can make it to the boat, she can join the escape.

One of Emily's sisters and four of her brothers have decided to go. If Emily decides to join them, she will probably never see her parents or other siblings again.

Should Emily run?



Case #4

Jane is 30 years old and has two children. She and her children are enslaved by John Wheeler who was recently appointed the U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua in Central America. He has decided to take Jane and her sons with him to Nicaragua.

On the way to Nicaragua, Wheeler plans to stop in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania is a free state, which means slavery is not allowed. But the state made exceptions for Southern slave owners who brought slaves into the state. Enslavers, like John Wheeler, could keep their slaves in Pennsylvania for up to six months. After that, their slaves could choose freedom. Jane knows Wheeler only plans to keep Jane and her sons in Philadelphia for one day.

Jane does not want to go to Nicaragua, and she wants to be free. She knows there is a strong African American abolitionist community in Philadelphia. If she can get in touch with them, they could probably help her escape.

Should Jane run?



Case #5

Samuel is a 27-year-old man. He works as a butler for a wealthy family in New Orleans. His work situation was not a terrible one until his enslaver died and the son took over ownership. The son has already beaten Samuel twice and, with the father dead, Samuel now have no protection. The son won't kill Samuel because Samuel is valuable, but he could sell Samuel or keep beating Samuel.

Samuel is fair-skinned and can pass for white. Samuel approaches an English captain in a ship heading from New Orleans to Jamaica. Samuel tell the captain that he is a businessman heading to see to his interests in Jamaica (where slavery is abolished). Samuel asks if he can have passage on the ship. The captain says yes and that the ship is leaving in the morning.

If Samuel goes, he will have to leave your wife. If he is successful, he can make arrangements for her escape or go back for her. If he is unsuccessful, he will never see her again.

Should Samuel run?



Case #6

John is a 22-year-old, single man. He is enslaved at a plantation in Lewinsville, Virginia. He was picked up by the Union Army and labeled “contraband,” or stolen property. Both Union and Confederacy leaders do not believe that African American men should serve as soldiers. Instead, they put African American men to work at manual labor.

The Union Army orders John to drive a pair of mules that are hitched to an army wagon. He can hear the booming of the guns at Bull Run. There are about 20 other African Americans with John who want to escape from the Union Army to freedom.

John does not have support from anyone to help him get to a free state, so even if his escape from the Union Army succeeds, he will still be in a slave state. John would need to convince people that he was not an escaped slave and start a new life by himself.

Should John run?

Outcome Guide for Teachers

Outcome #1



Portrait of Ann Maria Weems

This is the real story of Ann Maria Weems. She ran. Her mother and father were determined to get her away from her owner, the slave trader Charles Price who lived next door to St. Mary's Catholic Church in Rockville. Jacob Bigelow, who also helped in the campaign to raise money for Mary and Emily Edmonson, paid a man to enter the Price house and steal Ann Maria. She was brought to Washington, D.C. and hidden while arrangements were made to smuggle her out of the city. One day, a physician from Philadelphia arrived in Washington and parked his carriage directly in front of the White House. A young "man" was brought out and climbed up to the driver's seat and drove the carriage north. He was Ann Maria who had been dressed as boy and taught to drive a horse and carriage. She made it safely to relatives in Canada.¹

Outcome #2



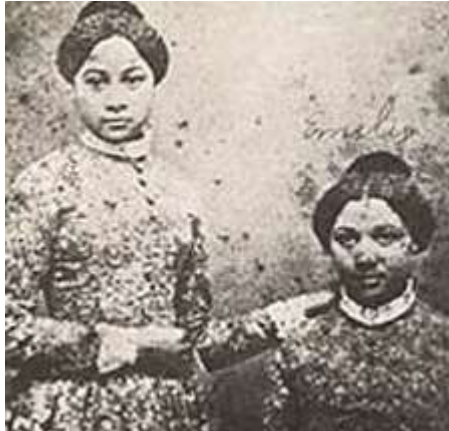
Photograph of William Still

The very real Rebecca Cox Jackson took the chance and made it safely to Philadelphia with her husband and child. Her story was recorded by the black abolitionist William Still who interviewed every fugitive who made it through their operation successfully. He published those records after the Civil War in a book called *The Underground Railroad*. It is available at Montgomery County libraries.²

¹ <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5400/sc5496/009900/009938/html/009938bio.html>

² https://www.google.com/books/edition/Still_s_Underground_Rail_Road_Records/KD9LAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover, p 477.

Outcome #3



Mary and Emily Edmonson, after they became free

This is the true story of Emily Edmonson. She, her sister Mary, and four of her brothers, including her brother Samuel, boarded the *Pearl* schooner in April 1848. The escape attempt failed. Emily was jailed in a slave pen in Alexandria, and despite her father’s desperate efforts, was shipped south with her sister Mary to be sold in New Orleans. Fortunately for the Edmonsons, yellow fever broke out in New Orleans so the sisters were returned to D.C. Their father, Paul, convinced the slave trader to sell them to him if he could quickly raise \$2,250 – tens of thousands of dollars today. Paul Edmonson enlisted help from Henry Ward Beecher, whose sister Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Beecher’s church raised enough money to buy and free Emily and Mary. Emily went to Central College in Cortland, NY, and became an important figure in the abolitionist movement. She moved

to Anacostia in 1860, where she raised her family, maintained a close friendship with Frederick Douglass, and continued to fight for the abolition of slavery.³

Outcome #4



Portrait of Jane Johnson

This is a real story. While in Philadelphia, Jane Johnson got word to the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society that she wanted to escape through the black community. A white Quaker named Passmore Williamson, the black abolitionist William Still, and five African American dockworkers led the charge to free her and her children. They boarded the ship she was on that was about to depart Philadelphia for New York and declared that she and her children were free according to the laws of Pennsylvania. They led Johnson and her sons away. Wheeler went to federal court to demand the return of his property as a runaway slave and Judge Kane ordered that she and her sons be immediately returned. Williamson was named as one of the men who helped her but he refused to turn her over and was jailed. Meanwhile, Johnson and her sons were quickly taken to Canada.⁴

³ <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/educ/exhibits/womenshall/html/edmonson.html>

⁴ <https://web.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/speccoll/quakersandslavery/commentary/themes/johnson.php>

Outcome #5



A schooner, c. 1850. Cape Ann Scenery: No. 321 "Marine Study", Cape Ann Museum Library & Archive

This is the story of Samuel Edmonson and it was reported in a book written by his grandnephew John Paynter in 1930 based on family stories. Samuel boarded the ship and escaped New Orleans. Paynter wrote that Edmonson was able to get his wife Delia out of New Orleans and that he took her to England and then Australia before he returned to Washington, D.C. after the Civil War. Paynter's story is supported by the U.S. Census for 1870 which states that Samuel Edmonson's wife was from New Orleans and that one of their children was born in England and another in Australia. Edmonson's successful escape was his second escape attempt. His first escape attempt was

unsuccessful. He tried to escape on the *Pearl* in Washington, D.C. with his siblings and was captured and sold to merchant in New Orleans.⁵

Outcome #6



John Lockett at Tudor Place

This is the story of John Lockett. He ran.

In his words, "Twenty-one of us—slaves that the Yankeys (sic) had stolen—concluded we had had enough of the war, and that 'we was going to leave.' (We) deserted.... I just kept on—crossed the Chain Bridge and made for Georgetown. In coming down Congress Street, [Britannia] happened to be standing at the gate of Tudor. I stopped and asked whether she wished to hire a man. She asked where I came from. [I said,] Over yonder." Britannia hired him at 50 cents a day to be the Tudor Place gardener. John Lockett remained the gardener at Tudor Place for 44 years and preserved some of the oldest plants in the garden. He also taught the Peter

children to garden. John Lockett married Harriet Wilkins in 1867. They had 6 children who lived to adulthood. Although the Peters offered to buy the Lockett family a house in Georgetown, Lockett refused, saying his wife enjoyed living on Capitol Hill. He walked the three miles to and from Tudor Place each day. Even though he was close to the Peter family, he chose to maintain distance and independence in his personal life.⁶

⁵ <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5400/sc5496/047800/047819/html/047819bio.html>

⁶ Tudor Place Collection & Archive

Pros

What are possible good results from this decision?

Cons

What are possible bad consequences of this decision?