

New Philadelphia A Freedom Village

Teaching Guide For Grades 3 - 5

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Key Themes

- Entrepreneurship
- Freedom
- Community
- Memory

Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science:

SS.3-5.IS.5. Develop claims using evidence from multiple sources to answer essential questions.

SS.6-8.IS.3.MdC. Identify evidence from multiple sources to support claims, noting any limitations of the evidence.

SS.6-8.IS.3.MC. Develop claims and counter claims using evidence from credible sources while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both.

SS.3-5.IS.6. Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources.

SS.3-5 IS.7. Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequences, examples, and details with relevant information and data.

SS.3.H.1. Create and use a chronological sequence of related events to compare developments that happened at the same time.

SS.4.H.1. Study important individuals or major events in order to recognize and explain that there are multiple cultural perspectives.

SS.4.H.3. Explain probable causes and effects of events and developments in Illinois history.

SS.5.H.1. Create and use a chronological sequence of related events to identify cause and effects of relationships in history and the impacts of underrepresented groups.

SS.5.H.3. Summarize the central claim in a work of history.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in Historical/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

CC.3.R.I.3 Key Ideas and Details: Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

CC.3.R.L.1 Key Ideas and Details: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers

CC.3.W.3 Text Types and Purposes: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CC.4.SL.1.c Comprehension and Collaboration: Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.

CC.5.W.9 Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CC.5.W.2 Text Types and Purposes: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CC.5.SL.1.c Comprehension and Collaboration: Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.

CC.5.SL.1.d Comprehension and Collaboration: Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.

Introduction

New Philadelphia was a "Freedom Village."

This small town, covering about 42 acres, was located in Pike County, Illinois. It was full of life as its residents went about their daily activities. Students went to school, blacksmiths worked with iron, storekeepers sold their products to the townspeople, and Black and White families lived together in harmony. However, if you were to drive to New Philadelphia today using your GPS, you would pass through fields of corn, tall prairie grass, and farms with animals. But when the GPS says, "You've arrived at your destination," you might be surprised by what you see. There are no schoolchildren playing at recess, no stores filled with groceries, and no town at all.

What happened to New Philadelphia?

Objectives

Upon completion of this unit, students will be able to:

- Discuss the story of New Philadelphia and its founder Free Frank McWorter
- Explain the importance of New Philadelphia as an integrated “Freedom Village”
- Identify ways that New Philadelphia and its residents fought for freedom
- Support and argument about why New Philadelphia was abandoned
- Compose an original retelling of the story of New Philadelphia

Suggested Vocabulary

Entrepreneur: A person who organizes and operates a business or businesses, taking on greater than normal financial risks in order to do so.

Slave Catcher: A person, often a mercenary or private citizen, hired by slave owners to hunt down and return escaped enslaved people.

Slave State: A state in the U.S. where slavery was legal before the American Civil War.

Freedom Seeker: An enslaved person who takes action to escape bondage and achieve liberty.

Plot: A specific parcel or measured area of ground.

Integration: A social process that seeks to create unified and equitable communities where people from different backgrounds are included in all aspects of life.

Black Codes: Southern laws passed after the Civil War that restricted the rights and freedoms of newly freed Black Americans. They limited work, movement, and daily life, and were designed to maintain control even after slavery ended. Eventually, these laws were challenged and replaced by stronger civil rights protections.

Introduction Activity

1836 - Following the Flower to New Philadelphia



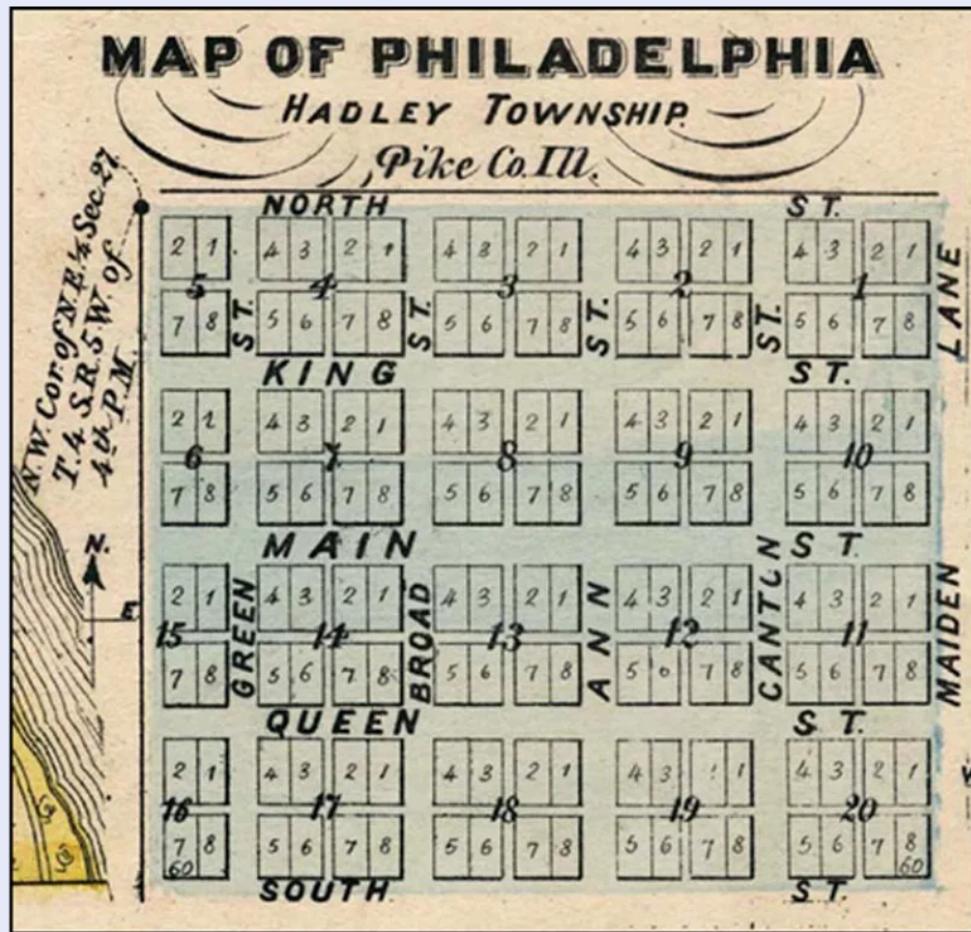
Using Visual Thinking Strategies, ask the students to describe what they see. After no more than 5 minutes, explain:

In 2024, artist Jeff Williams painted 1836 - Following the Flower to New Philadelphia. Through this colorful painting, and its two additional pieces, Williams tries to capture Free Frank McWorter's vision for the "Freedom Village."

Ask students: What do you think a Freedom Village is?

What is New Philadelphia?

New Philadelphia was the first town ever founded and mapped out by an African American in 1836. Why is the year 1836 so special? It was 24 years before the Civil War and 29 years before slavery was abolished in the United States. Despite this, a Black man from Kentucky in the 19th century bought a piece of land, packed up his family, made the risky journey during a cold winter, and created a town based on friendship, freedom, and equality.



Frank

The man who started the town was named Frank. He was born in 1777 in South Carolina and eventually moved to Kentucky with his enslaver George McWhorter.

Frank was an entrepreneur, which means he wanted to earn and save money. When Frank was not forced to work for McWhorter, he was "hired out." This meant that his enslaver allowed him to work for other people which helped Frank earn and save his own money.

Frank worked very hard. During the day, he worked for McWhorter, and at night, whenever he could, Frank worked for himself to save as much money as possible.

In 1799, Frank met an enslaved woman named Lucy. They fell in love and promised to be together. At that time, enslaved people were not allowed to get married legally, but Frank and Lucy held a ceremony to marry each other, promising to stay together forever.

- What is an entrepreneur?
- How was Frank able to earn extra money while enslaved?
- Frank mined for saltpeter. Saltpeter is an important ingredient for making gun powder. Why would saltpeter be such an important resource during this period of time?

Free Frank

Frank continued to work for McWhorter, the people who hired him out, and also for himself by mining for saltpeter in nearby mines. Saltpeter was an important material used to make gunpowder.

To gain freedom, enslaved people had limited options. They could buy their freedom, which was hard to do and expensive, or they could become slave catchers. Slave catchers tracked down freedom seekers, captured them, and returned them to enslavement.

By 1817, Frank had saved enough money to buy freedom for Lucy. At that time, Lucy was pregnant with their son, Squier. This meant that once Lucy was free, Squier would be born free too.

Two years later, Frank's hard work paid off again as he was able to buy his freedom and the freedom of three of his children. When he purchased his freedom, he became known as Free Frank.

- What made it difficult for enslaved people to purchase their freedom?
- Why did Frank purchase Lucy's freedom first?
- What does it mean to be born free?

Buying Land

Living in Kentucky was dangerous and hard for a Black family because it was a slave state. This meant that enslavement was accepted there and a big part of life. Slave catchers were present in this area, making it dangerous for freedom seekers and freed peoples as they could be captured and returned to enslavement.

In 1830, Free Frank saw a new opportunity in Illinois. He traded his saltpeter mine, sold his land in Kentucky, and used the money to purchase a 50-acre plot from the Illinois Military Tract—land originally set aside for veterans of the War of 1812 and their families. A doctor named Galen Elliot, who knew Frank hoped to buy property, sold him the land. By purchasing land within the Military Tract, Free Frank was able to avoid many of the restrictions created by Illinois' Black Codes.

In the 1830s, Illinois supported enslavement and treated African Americans unfairly. Black people were often discouraged from moving to Illinois; some White people were allowed to enslave others, and if a Black person wanted to purchase land and move to Illinois, they had to pay \$1,000, which today would be more than \$30,000. By purchasing the land from Dr. Elliot, Frank officially became a landowner, meaning he did not have to pay the bond.

- What made Kentucky dangerous?
- Why would Frank want to move to Illinois?
- What do you think Black Codes were?

New Philadelphia

Free Frank bought the land in Illinois “sight unseen,” meaning he did not know what he would find after traveling from Kentucky.

Free Frank and his family packed their belongings and started their journey North. The trip was dangerous for many reasons. They traveled in winter, dealing with extreme cold, heavy snow, and icy conditions. It was also risky because slave catchers were still looking for freed African Americans to return to enslavement.

Frank and his family arrived in the spring of 1831. They were welcomed by beautiful rolling hills, flowing water, and thick forests. Frank looked at his land and imagined a thriving town where his children could grow up, start their own families, and live freely.

Free Frank’s family took care of the land, built a house, planted crops, and raised animals. It was a rural paradise where they could settle down and be happy.

He named the town New Philadelphia, after Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, known as the City of Brotherly Love. In that spirit, Free Frank hoped that New Philadelphia would be a place of peace, love, and prosperity.

- Why do you think Frank bought land in Illinois without seeing it first?
- What made the journey from Kentucky to Illinois so dangerous?
- What would the family need to do to set up a home on the new land?

Freedom Village

Free Frank wanted to become a full citizen which would mean New Philadelphia would be recognized as a real town. Free Frank decided to take the last name McWorter. His former enslaver was George McWhorter so he changed the spelling by removing the H, making the name his own. This name was his “freedom name.”

New Philadelphia grew as Black and White people moved there for the good soil and low cost of living. What made New Philadelphia special was that Black and White families lived together without fighting. They raised families, ran businesses, went to school, and built a community together. This is what we call “integrated.”

McWorter died in 1854 when he was 77 years old. By then, he had traveled to Kentucky many times to buy freedom for 16 of his family members.

- Why do you think Frank kept the name McWorter but changed the spelling?
- Why would we call his new name a “Freedom Name?”
- What made the town of New Philadelphia so special during this time?
- What does it mean for a town to be integrated?

What happened to New Philadelphia?

By 1865, 160 people lived in New Philadelphia. Before he died, McWorter hoped that the town would become an important location to do business and make money. By the 1850s, railroads were the best way to move goods and people across the country. Towns with railroads were more successful than towns without.

The railroad that was to be built was from Missouri, a slave state. This created a challenge in convincing the railroad company to build in New Philadelphia. Eventually, instead of going through the town, the railroad was built around it.

Over time, people in New Philadelphia started moving away hoping to be closer to business opportunities. By the end of the 19th century, much of the town was covered in fields and farmland. The last residents of New Philadelphia moved away in 1950.

In 2002, a team of archeologists started digging in New Philadelphia to try and learn more about it. They wanted to uncover clues about this forgotten town and learn more about the people who lived there. Over time, we have been able to understand what New Philadelphia looked like and what life was like for its residents. In 2022, New Philadelphia was named a National Historic Site. Today, the land reminds us of the determination, creativity, and hope of the community that built New Philadelphia.

- Why are towns with railroads more successful?
- Why do you think a railroad was not build through New Philadelphia?
- Why do you think New Philadelphia did not survive as a town?

ISM Video Resource



[Click here to watch Lucy McWorter's Dress: Exploring How Objects Tell a Story](#)

Activity

Instructors: After learning the story of Free Frank and New Philadelphia, watch the video Lucy McWorter's Dress: Exploring How Objects Tell a Story. After watching the video, discuss with your class?

- “Who is Lucy McWorter?”
- “What happened to Lucy after the death of Frank?”
- “What does this dress tell us about Lucy?”
- “What makes you say that?”

Activity 1: **The Fight for Freedom**

In his book *New Philadelphia*, Gerald McWorter, the great-great grandson of Free Frank McWorter, says that New Philadelphia “fought for freedom in seven ways.” Divide the class into groups to discuss and identify the different ways that New Philadelphia fought for freedom. Challenge them to come up with seven!

Ask each group to defend how each of these items were a form of fighting for freedom. Allow groups 10 minutes to discuss their reasoning. Then go over the list of ways of fighting for freedom and ask each group to explain why they think these reasons made New Philadelphia a “Freedom Village.”

Activity 2

New Philadelphia: the Graphic Novel

Graphic novels combine colorful imagery with text, creating an exciting visual journey for the reader. Many graphic novels tell the story of a superhero swooping into to fight injustice and save the day.

Many important stories in history have been captured in graphic novel format such as the *March* series by John Lewis which tells the story of the brave Freedom Fighters who fought for equality in the 1960s, *Maus*, by Art Speigelman which tells the story of the Holocaust through the lens of a family of mice, and *They Called Us Enemy*, the story of George Takei's time in an Japanese internment camp.

After learning the story of Free Frank McWorter and New Philadelphia, challenge students to recreate the story in a graphic novel format. They can break the story into the three generations of Frank, they may chronicle the epic journey the family took from Kentucky to Illinois, they can retell the story of Frank working hard to earn money prior to purchasing his freedom. They can even create a character who lives in New Philadelphia and tell the story of their time living in the village. Who are their neighbors? What is their job? What is their home like?

Upon completion, have the students share their graphic novels with the class.

More Resources:

- New Philadelphia: A Multicultural Town on the Illinois Frontier (Teaching Historic Places)
- New Philadelphia Association
- Archeology of New Philadelphia
- Listen: New Philadelphia Holds Legacy of Entrepreneurship and Resilience
- Center for Heritage Resource Studies: Oral Histories of New Philadelphia

