

# How do people fight for change?

What was the role of abolitionists in the lead up to the Civil War?

**Subject:** History and Social Sciences, Language Arts  
**Grade Level:** Fourth Grade  
**Topic:** The Underground Railroad; Abolitionists  
**Guiding Questions:** How do people fight for change?  
What was the role of abolitionists in the lead up to the Civil War?

**VA SOL:** STANDARD VS.7a  
The student will demonstrate an understanding of the issues that divided our nation and led to the Civil War by  
a) explaining the major events and the differences between northern and southern states that divided Virginians and led to secession, war, and the creation of West Virginia.

**Materials:** Cardboard box large enough to contain a fourth-grade student; Primary source photo (Appendix A), primary source photo (Appendix B), Seek to See Thinking Routine (Appendix C), [Henry's Freedom Box by Ellen Levine](#), whiteboards, dry erase markers, sticky notes, computers with internet access, mailing labels, pencil, coloring utensils

## Before you begin:

Display the large cardboard box labeled as primary source photo (Appendix A) one to two days prior to the book reading. Post the guiding question, "How do people fight for change?" Ask students to begin brainstorming possible contents of the box and writing predictions on sticky notes to adhere to it. Students are encouraged to submit multiple sticky note predictions for a wide variety of responses.

The day following the reading, provide mailing labels for the cumulative activity.

## Introduction

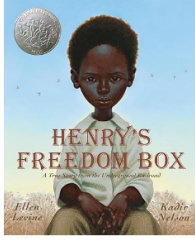
Ask students the guiding question for the lesson, "How do people fight for change?" Allow time for students to read through the brainstorm sticky notes on the cardboard box.

## Pre-Reading Activity

Think/Pair/Share Time: With the primary source photo (Appendix B) displayed, orally present the questions of the Seek to See Thinking Routine (Appendix C). Students may document responses on white boards and edit throughout the activity based on peer responses.

*Note: It is critical that students begin to nurture a disposition toward proactive empathic perspective taking, de-stigmatization, and recognition of dignity. To achieve this, students should be encouraged to think deeper to respond with precise vocabulary rather than generalized, vague terms. This will facilitate and enhance the cumulative activity.*

After completing this activity, let students know they will be reading a book. Show them the book, then ask students to share predictions about what they think the book will be about with the whole class.



### Read the Book

Now that students have been introduced to the topic, ask students the second guiding question, “What was the role of abolitionists in the lead up to the Civil War?” Ask students to look for the answer to this question as you read the book *Henry’s Freedom Box* in its entirety.

### Understanding through Empathy

Following the reading, refocus the discussion toward the Human Dignity question of the Seek to See Thinking Routine (Appendix C). **What words would I choose to honor your humanity and make you shine?** In groups of four, students will list Henry Brown’s character traits throughout his childhood, young adult, and adult experiences. (Access to digital and print dictionaries and thesauri should be provided.) In groups of eight, students will combine lists of words to honor Henry Brown’s humanity at each life stage. As a conclusion, the whole group will generate a list of precise vocabulary terms to honor his humanity during the three life stages.

### Defining Humanity

On the day following the reading, students will define Henry Brown’s humanity by designing a mailing label to adhere to the cardboard box. From the group list of vocabulary terms, students will choose a life stage and word to define and illustrate. Mailing labels should include: term, part of speech, definition, synonym, and illustration. The cardboard box is thereby transformed into a compilation of basic humanitarian ideas and beliefs central to the abolitionist movement. The box could be displayed throughout the instructional period for the Civil War and Reconstruction as a visual cue to remain mindful of the human dignity component of historical events.

### Closing Discussion

End the lesson by engaging in conversation about the guiding questions, How do people fight for change? What was the role of abolitionists in the lead up to the Civil War?

### Optional Extension

- Allow individual students to sit inside the box for a brief period, pretending to be Henry Brown. At the end of the simulation, have students write a reflection paragraph to describe the thoughts, emotions, and take-aways of the experience.
- Using the Library of Congress Catalog, students can research the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad to create a timeline leading up to the Civil War.
- Using the Library of Congress Catalog, students can research the reasons for the creation of West Virginia to generate a graphic organizer. To allow for differentiation, organizers may include a cause and effect, compare and contrast, or chronological order organizer, depending on the preference of the student.

*Lesson Created by Amy Jennings, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade PLATO Teacher with Roanoke City Public Schools*

Appendix A



Image retrieved from <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.06501600>

## Appendix B



Image retrieved from <https://lccn.loc.gov/2002698281>

## Appendix C

A THINKING ROUTINE FROM PROJECT ZERO, HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

### Seek to See

A routine to nurture a disposition toward proactive empathic perspective taking, de-stigmatization, and recognition of dignity.

Take some time to look closely at this story (with an image, video, or text) drawing on the information you have, explore the following ways of seeking to see.

I seek to see . . .

**Multiple Feelings** What might be this person's various feelings in this situation?

**Strength** What might be this person's strengths, cultural richness and power?

**Connections** What might be some ways in which we connect as human beings?

**Human Dignity** What words would I choose to honor your humanity and make you shine?

Take a moment to reflect about your experience seeking to see. Did you notice any shifts in your thinking, perspectives, or feelings? Did anything surprise you? What questions do you have?

**Purpose: What kind of socio-emotional learning and thinking does this routine encourage?**

We often see inequality through the lens of distribution of resources. This routine addresses a different kind of inequality. Recognition gaps defined as "the disparity in worth and cultural membership between groups in a society." Recognition gaps situate inequality in the realm of culture, and amenable to influence through education.

Recognition of worth and belonging have intrinsic value because human dignity and social justice do as well. Additionally, recognition – the opposite of stigmatization and discrimination – is associated with mental health and well-being.

Seek to See is designed to direct our gaze onto another human being with a deliberate intention to see complexity, connections and human dignity.

**Application: When and where can I use it?**

Provocations for this routine can provide an opportunity to understand a subject that remains typically invisible or a target for stigmatization. Provocations ideally will provide background and wider contextual information regarding the person being explored. Provocations should provide a richness of multiple colors, with possible positives as well as negatives responses in terms of the feelings, emotions and connections present surrounding the provocation being explored.

If the provocation features issues of violence, discrimination, or other difficult issues, it is important to think about opportunities for students to consider their agency and reasons for hope associated with the circumstance being explored, so students don't solely end in a place of fear or anger.

Share your experience with this thinking routine on social media using the hashtags #PZThinkingRoutines and #SeekToSee.



This thinking routine was developed as part of the ID Global, Reimagining Migration project at Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education. Explore more Thinking Routines at [pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines](https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines)

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A THINKING ROUTINE FROM PROJECT ZERO, HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

### Seek to See, cont'd

**Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?**

One might want to pay close attention to the range of **emotions** offered by a provocation, as well as nuance with which students describe emotions, opportunities to uncover complexity and the way that students bring their own emotions in terms of the emotional states of the lives they're learning about.

In exploring at **strengths**, we should seek to see a variety of sources of strengths ranging from the personal character driven values, to the cultural roots and contributions of a person, to their capacity to bridge cultures.

For the **connections** stage, we may seek to observe the kinds of connections students find to bridge differences (socioeconomic, cultural, etc.) while also highlighting the importance of understanding the self and the other as holding complex identities.

In seeking to see **human dignity**, we should seek provocations that present opportunities to see the whole person, their story and their potential. In the process we should seek to move towards a proactive view bringing a critical eye towards stigmatization and considering actions towards de-stigmatization that they may propose organically in the process.

In certain moments, pairing this routine with the question "What makes you say that?", can help deepen the conversation and help students uncover their reasoning and evidence related to a given provocation.

Retrieved from <https://pz.harvard.edu/resources/seek-to-see>