

# The Price of Freedom

Freedom is not free. What was the price of freedom for Contrabands and the children of the formerly enslaved?

- Subject:** History and Social Sciences, Language Arts
- Grade Level:** Fourth Grade
- Topic:** Contrabands, Abolitionists, Missionaries, Emancipation Proclamation, Thirteenth Amendment
- Guiding Questions:** What would you do for freedom?  
What would you do once you were free?  
What was the price of freedom for Contrabands and the children of the formerly enslaved?
- VA SOL:** VS.7 The students will apply history and social science skills to understand the key people, events, and issues of the Civil War and Virginia’s role by
- A. evaluating the experiences and contributions of Indigenous Peoples and enslaved and free Blacks and their allies during the war, including, but not limited to Elizabeth Van Lew and Mary Bowser.
- VS.8 The student will apply history and social science skills to explain the reconstruction of Virginia following the Civil War by
- A. describing what the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution accomplished;
  - B. examining the effects of Reconstruction on life in Virginia;
- Materials:** Primary Source Photos: (See Appendix below lesson)
- Mary Peake
  - Fort Monroe
  - Slabtown
  - Confederate Soldier
  - Union Soldier
  - Contraband
- [Under the Freedom Tree by Susan VanHecke](#)  
PDFs of pages from the book  
Project Zero Thinking Routine “[Circle of Viewpoints](#)”

## Before you begin:

Scan copies of a few pages from a copy of Under the Freedom Tree. Use these to project as “Jump In” backgrounds.

Copy and cut apart the Author’s note at the end of the book. place multiple copies of each section in an envelope with a primary source item.

Divide students into groups of 3 or 4 to look at the item and read their section of the article.

## Introduction

Ask students the guiding question for the lesson, “What would you do for freedom?” Project an image of the page from the picture book that portrays Union soldiers and Contrabands. Have students “jump in” to the photo and guess what the characters are discussing? (Choose a few volunteers)

Project an image of the page from the picture book that portrays the formerly enslaved people walking in a group. Have students “jump in” to the photo and guess what the characters are thinking? (Choose a few volunteers)

Modification: You can also have some students “Jump In” and pose as one of the characters in the picture. This will allow students who are not certain what is happening in the picture an opportunity to participate.

### Pre-Reading Activity

Review the Fugitive Slave Act and the events that occurred at Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia. Define Contraband, secede, emancipation, proclamation, 13th Amendment

Note: *This activity assumes your students are familiar with the civil war and some of the events that occurred prior to the Emancipation Proclamation.*

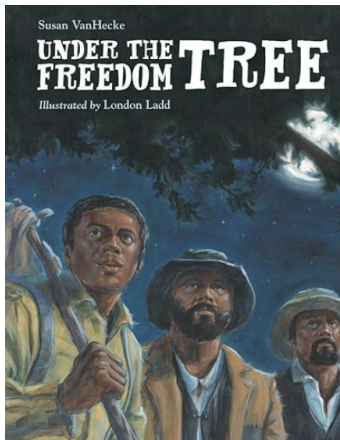
### Circle of Viewpoints

1. Brainstorm a list of difference perspectives.
2. Choose one perspective to explore, using these sentence-starters:
  - I am thinking of ... *the topic* ... from the viewpoint of ... *the viewpoint you've chosen*
  - I think ... *describe the topic from your viewpoint. Be an actor—take on the character of your viewpoint*
  - A question I have from this viewpoint is ... *ask a question from this viewpoint*

1. Pass out copies of the “Circle of Viewpoints” card above.
2. Explain to students that they will take on the viewpoint of the person in their primary source envelope. Based on the passage they read, they will complete one of the prompts on the “Circle of Viewpoints” card. For example:

**“I am thinking of *the fugitive slave laws* from the viewpoint of a *Union soldier*. I think *the fugitive slave laws were fair to Contrabands since the laws only applied to US citizens (which Virginians were no longer)*.”**

3. Have each group share their viewpoint and encourage other groups to ask questions as well. Time permitting, have the students “Jump In” to the pictures from the book used during the introduction, sharing their viewpoint.
4. End the discussion by asking the guiding question again. Add: What was the price of freedom for the Contrabands and the children of the formerly enslaved?



### Read the Book

Now that students have experienced the topic. Read the book aloud and ask students to give a “thumbs up” during the reading when they recognize their primary source person’s viewpoint. Have the students add any other comments or questions about the fugitive slave laws or the Emancipation Proclamation that they would like to research further.

### Optional Extension

- Show photographs of Fort Monroe and Slabtown. Have students “Jump In” to these photos to give different perspectives.
- Visit Fort Monroe or watch this video to learn about the complete history of the fort. • Visit the campus of Hampton University to learn about the legacy of the Emancipation Oak and Mary Smith Peake or share information from the Hampton University website.
- Find out about Contraband villages in your own town (they were in many places in Northern and Central Virginia where Union Forts could be found)

*Lesson Created by Jeryl Payne in conjunction with the Virginia Tech College of Education and the Library of Congress.*

## Appendix Links to Primary Sources References

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Highsmith, C. M., photographer. (2019) Artist John Hair's seated statue of Mary Peake at Hampton University, a historically black university in Hampton, Virginia, one of the state's Tidewater-region cities at the place where the James River, Chesapeake Bay, and Atlantic Ocean converge. Virginia United States Hampton, 2019. -11-24. [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2020724591/>

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