

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Writing Prompts

Part 4: Gathering Forces

MISSION 2: "Flight to Freedom"

A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR:

You will need to decide how best to share these writing prompts with your students. You might share them all and ask students to choose one for response. You might assign one or more to the entire group. You might make one or more of the topics the basis for in-class discussions. Make your decisions according to the needs of your group.

You may notice that many of the topics contain some version of the phrase, "Write about a time in your life..." The intention of these prompts is twofold: first, since students remember the content of their own lives, they can more easily respond to the questions and they are more likely to want to express themselves if they feel competent to do so; second, these questions can form a meaningful bridge between what happens in the lives of ordinary people today and the lives of people in history or in historical events themselves. For these reasons, you might decide to use some of those prompts before students encounter the history, because thinking about them sets the students up to understand it and to relate to it.

Since students vary in their degree of comfort and skill in writing, you should decide when students write and how much students should write. We do suggest, though, that since students need to share their writing with each other to make personal and historical connections, you encourage them to focus on content rather than on mechanical skills. Pieces can be revised and edited later if you decide they should be shared more formally (such as on a bulletin board or newsletter).

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Read through all the topics. Then choose one of them to write about. Write the title of the piece at the top of your page. Write in complete sentences. After you are finished, proofread your work for correctness.

COLONIZATION: In Part 4, Lucy hears the politician Benjamin Harrison address a gathering of abolitionists. What does his political party—the "Free Soil Party" stand for? Does Harrison consider himself an abolitionist? Does he believe in racial equality between black and whites? Describe the "colonization" policy he proposes. Was there any precedent in American history to sending formerly enslaved people back to Africa? Do you think people like Harrison may have played a role in ultimately abolishing slavery despite their beliefs about racial equality?

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD: What did the Underground Railroad consist of? Who served as its "conductors?" Why did they have to be careful to avoid detection even in the "free" states of the north? Were their activities legal? Can you think of any other examples of people finding it necessary to break the law in the interests of a higher moral authority? Would you ever consider doing so yourself? Explain.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING PRUDENT: Life for runaway slaves and those who helped them was filled with risk. Even in the "free" northern states, armed slave catchers were common sights, and the law was on their side when it came to returning fugitives to their masters. Because of this, an important survival skill for both runaways and Underground Railroad conductors was "prudence"—a careful and patient attitude that looked to avoid trouble. Can you think of times when Lucy and other characters have been prudent (or imprudent) in the decisions they have made? What have the results been? Many 19th century Americans felt their government should be prudent in dealing with the political conflict over slavery. Fearing a bloody civil war, they wanted to let slavery be abandoned slowly over time instead of abolished all at once. Do you think prudence was a virtue in that context? Why or why not?

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM: In Part 4, Millicent Hatcher rejects the idea of buying Lucy's mother and brother's freedom, insisting that it would be supporting the system of slavery. Do you agree? If not, why not? If so, would you still agree if she were talking about your own mother and brother? Certainly John Parker would argue that the purchase of his own freedom was money well spent, enabling him to help others find freedom. There is often a gap between what we believe is right in principle and what we find necessary to do in life itself; bridging that

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gap is a process called compromise—a concept which often carries negative connotations, but which often enables progress or resolution. Assuming Lucy could have saved enough money to purchase her mother and brother legally, what advantages would there have been to doing so rather than attempting to help them to escape as she had?

LUCY'S JOURNAL. Through Lucy's eyes, think about your circumstances from the beginning to the end of this part of "Flight to Freedom." Think about the people with whom you interacted, what you learned from them. Think about the choices you made and the consequences of those choices. Now write a journal entry from Lucy's point-of-view summarizing what happened to you in Part 4. You may choose to illustrate one aspect of your entry.