

VFTE Chautauqua

Life In Liberty Teacher Resources

Ilene Evans



Teachers Packet for VFTE Chautauqua

Dear Educators,

Thank you for inviting us to your school to perform “Life in Liberty: Rebuilding a Nation and Fulfilling the Promise of Freedom.” This Chautauqua-style program features first-person performances of four people who had a significant impact on our history.

We realize that your classroom time is valuable, so we will keep this short. In this packet we have provided two lesson plans. This first will prepare your students for what they are about to see. The second lesson plan will help them process the performance. We have also included a list of words that may be unfamiliar and some resources that may be helpful to you. At the end of the packet, you will find guidelines for “Civil Discourse.”

Again, thank you for your time and effort. We look forward to our visit.

Sincerely,
Ilene Evans, Artistic Direction
Voices From the Earth

Vocabulary

Freedmen	Vigilantes	Secession
Emancipation	Chautauqua	Watch-Night
Refugee Camp	Portrayal	Gullah-Geechee
Port Royal Experiment	Reenactment	Krio
Scholar’s panel	Historically Plausible	Low-country
Symposium	Anti-Bellum	Sea Island

Primary Sources

1. Taylor, Susie King. (1988). *A Black Woman’s Civil War Memoir: Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the U.S. 33rd U.S. Colored Troops, Late 1st South Carolina Volunteers*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Weiner Publishers
2. Redkey, Edwin, S. ed. (1993). *A Grand Army of Black Men: Letters from African American Soldiers in the Union Army 1861-1865*. New York: University of Cambridge Press.

Web Resources for the Classroom

<http://www.roanokefreedmenscolony.com/nfra.pdf>
http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson347.shtml
<http://constitutioncenter.org/constitution/>
<http://www.apples4theteacher.com/holidays/constitution-day/printables/>
<https://constitutionday.aclu.org/>
<http://www.americanantiquarian.org/Freedmen/Intros/questions.html#questions>
<http://www.americanantiquarian.org/Freedmen/Intros/questions.html>



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Pre-Performance Lesson Plan for VFTE Chautauqua

Frame of Reference Activity: Play “Trashcan”

The purpose of this game is to give students a frame of reference for what they are going to see in tomorrow’s performance.

Directions

Give students 5 sheets of paper. Give each row (front to back) a different color. Ask the students to put their names on the paper. Then put a trashcan in front of the first row. Tell the students to crumple their papers into a 5 balls and while staying in their seats, throw the paper balls into the trashcan one row at a time.

When they finish, ask them to look at the paper balls and consider where the paper balls landed. Tell them that the students who got the paper balls in the trashcan will get bonus points. (Hopefully you will get a big reaction.) Ask the students the following questions.

- Who liked that game? Why? Why not?
- The students in the front of the room were more likely to get their papers in the trashcan? Who thinks that was unfair? Why? Why not?
- You may have heard an adult say, “Life isn’t fair.” What about the structure of the game gave certain students an advantage over the others?
- What sorts of things in our daily lives gives some people advantage over others? (Think status, money, education, family)
- As a culture, how can we say, “Life isn’t fair” and still believe, “All Men Are Created Equal?”
- How could we change the rules to make this game fairer?

Writing Activity: Read this Writing Prompt to the students

Imagine you and a group of your friends have recently moved to another country to work for an international corporation. A close friend of yours is the owner of this company. She had assured you this move is “an opportunity of a lifetime.” You have given up ever thing you know (your home, your friends) to take this new job. Your employer and the cooperating government have been promised you a home, land, and chance to have a say in the governance of your community. Now imagine that some people who live near your new community have been told that you are an invader and that you are a threat to their way of life. Imagine that in the middle of the night, an angry mob invades your community with the intent to destroy, kill, and take control of your land. What would you do?

1. Hand the students a notecard.
2. Ask them to write a secret message to their employer (their friend, the boss of the company that brought them to this place). In this message, the students should tell



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the company what is happening and what they plan to do about it. (Note, the company cannot protect then.)

3. Collect and save the note cards for the follow up lesson plan.

Tell the students: *Tomorrow you are going to be seeing a Chautauqua style performance. In 1862 there was a bold experiment in freedom that affects us today. Ten years after the end of the Civil War, freedmen and women were under attack in Port Royal by people who did not want them to have what was promised to them in our countries founding documents.*

The Setting: Robert Smalls home in Beaufort, SC

The Event: Watch Night

The People: Harriet Tubman, Robert Smalls, Frances Harper, Frederick Douglass

What was the Port Royal Experiment?

The Port Royal Experiment, the first major attempt by Northerners to reconstruct the Southern political and economic system, began only seven months after the firing on Fort Sumter. On November 7, 1861 the Union Army occupied South Carolina's Sea Islands, freeing approximately 10,000 slaves. As the Confederate Army and white plantation owners fled, Northerners began to capitalize on their possession of an area world famous for its cotton. During the first year of occupation African American field hands harvested approximately 90,000 lbs. of the crop. The workers were paid \$1 for every 400 pounds harvested and thus were the first former slaves freed by Union forces to earn wages for their labor.

In January of 1862 Union General Thomas W. Sherman requested teachers from the North to train the ex-slaves. Three months later U.S. Secretary of Treasury Salmon Chase appointed Boston attorney Edward L. Pierce to begin the Port Royal Experiment, which would create schools and hospitals for ex-slaves and to allow them to buy and run plantations. That same month the steamship Atlantic left New York City bound for Port Royal. On board were 53 missionaries including skilled teachers, ministers and doctors who had volunteered to help promote this experiment. In April The Port Royal Relief Committee of Philadelphia dispatched Laura Matilda Towne with funds to found the Penn School, one of the largest of the missionary schools created during the Port Royal Experiment.

In 1863 President Abraham Lincoln issued new land redistribution policies that allowed nearly 40,000 acres of abandoned Confederate plantations to be divided among 16,000 families of the "African race." The freed people were to purchase the land at \$1.25 per acre. Almost immediately local blacks bought about 2,000 acres of land. White Northerners also purchased land. Edward Philbrick, for example, bought 11 plantations that collectively covered 7,000 acres. His holdings supported 950 African Americans as tenant farmers. Union General Ormsby Mitchel granted African American islanders permission to found the town of Mitchelville on Hilton Head Island, the first of many all-black communities. By 1865 Mitchelville had 1,500 inhabitants.

As the Union moved closer to victory however, enthusiasm for the Port Royal Experiment began to wane. Many Northern whites, initially concerned about compensating African Americans for the injustices they had endured during slavery, now saw voting rights rather than land ownership as the key component to black progress. More conservative Northerners were increasingly uneasy about the precedent set by large scale land confiscation.

It was the death of President Abraham Lincoln in April 1865, however, that ended momentum for the experiment. The new president, Andrew Johnson, was determined to restore all lands back to their previous white owners. In the summer of 1865 he ordered Brigadier General Rufus Saxton to begin that process. Nonetheless not all white owners returned to the Sea Islands, and thousands of black landowners and their descendants continued to farm their lands until well into the 20th century.

Taken from: <http://www.blackpast.org/ah/port-royal-experiment-1862-1865>



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Post-Performance Lesson Plan for VFTE Chautauqua

Discussion Questions: After seeing the performance, ask the students the following questions.

1. What did the characters do to make a world that was fairer?
2. What can we do in our schools our community and our country to make things fairer?

Writing Activity: Remind the students of the Writing Prompt for the Pre-Performance Lesson Plan.

1. Pass out the students note cards from the day before. Have them re-read what they wrote.
2. Ask students how they would change what they wrote from the day before in light of the performance they just saw.
3. Ask the students to write to the company - but as one of the characters in the play

Writing Prompt: *Now with your informed understanding, having seen the VFTE Chautauqua program, choose a character from the program you saw and write a letter in the voice of one of the characters; either U.S. Marshall Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, poet, Frances Harper or U.S. Senator Robert Smalls. Respond to the prompt from their point-of-view. For example, how would Harriet Tubman answer?*

4. How did writing in the voice of the character change your response to the event?

Extension: Give the students the “Guidelines for Civil Discourse” found on the next page of this packet. Ask them to become “Guardians of Civil Discourse.” Then, discuss the following question.

- Is the definition of freedom the same today as it was during the Civil War?
- Who or what defines your freedom today?
- Are there degrees of freedom?
 - Are your freedoms curtailed for the greater good?
 - Are you free everywhere all the time?
 - Is personal freedom more valuable than national security?
- What is the cost of Freedom? Responsibility? Respect?
- Can there be freedom without a sense of justice?

Additional Resources



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Additional Resources

Guidelines for Civil Discourse

Civil Discourse is purposeful conversation to add to the commonwealth of knowledge and understanding. Conversation requires trust and a willingness to listen with the intent to gain knowledge. These guidelines help participants to ensure a safe space for that kind of exchange.

Definition:

Conversation –To turn; exchange of thoughts, ideas, and feelings; the free turning of dialogue this way and that to strive to understand complex realities;

- Conversation must carry the actuality or potential of growth;
- Conversation increases personal and organizational intelligence;
- Conversation builds awareness, comprehension, understanding, and capability;
- Conversation is characterized by mutual trust, lack of fear, desire for contribution;
- Conversation is used to excite and inform;
- Conversation has the intention to generate reflection and inspiration;
- Conversation interweaves logic and intuition; where facts and imagination dance.

What rules should protect conversations in civil discourse?

Guardians of Civil Discourse

Participants must agree to:

- Not use words as weapons – no violence in word or deed
- Engage in Affirmations –express appreciation for the contributions of participants
- Insist on a tone of that expresses respect and tolerance

Each small group shall determine 5 guardians

1. To ensure that each person in the group has an opportunity to speak
2. To ensure the question is the center of the conversation
3. To record the thoughtful ideas of the group
4. To bring those thoughts back to the large group
5. To ensure that the tone remains one of respect and tolerance

Discussion Questions in the context of the Port Royal Experiment:

- What is Freedom?
- What is Equality?
- What is Fairness?
- What is Justice?

Discussion Questions in the context of Current Events

- Is the definition of freedom the same today as it was during the Civil War?
- Who or what defines your freedom today?
- What is the cost of Freedom?



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