



PHILIP REID AND FREEDOM

Introduction

The U.S. Capitol was constructed by many laborers – free and enslaved. This activity introduces students to Philip Reid, an enslaved laborer who helped to complete the making and installation of the statue of Freedom on top of the Capitol Dome. Construction of the dome continued through the Civil War and the dome was topped with the statue of Freedom in December 1863.

Students learn about an enslaved laborer and his contribution to the building of the Capitol while contemplating how freedom is depicted in art and architecture. While intended for 8th grade students, the lesson can be adapted for other grade levels.



National Standards

National Standards for Arts Education

Visual Art Standards, grades 5-8

- Content Standard 2: Using knowledge of structures and functions
- Content Standard 3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas
- Content Standard 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
- Content Standard 6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, grade 8

- Reading Informational Text 1, 2
- Speaking and Listening 1, 4

Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, grade 8

- Reading 2, 4
- Writing 4

Learning Skills

Research, building vocabulary, storytelling, creative writing, observation and analyzing documents.

Essential Question

How are concepts, such as freedom, represented in works of art? What do specific works of art or architectural features tell us about what was important to the people who designed or made them; particularly if it is telling a story about the importance of freedom?

Documents and Material Needed

Download the following items:

- Vocabulary Worksheet
- Background: Philip Reid and Freedom
- Document Analysis Worksheet
- Clark Mills' Petition to the Board of Commissioners for the Emancipation of the Slaves in the District of Columbia
- Photograph of the building of the Capitol Dome
- District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act of 1862 with transcript
- Image of the Statue of Freedom



Suggested Activities

Optional Warm-up Activity: Vocabulary Worksheet

Distribute a vocabulary worksheet to each student. Use the worksheet as a tool to familiarize them with the words or phrases they will encounter in this activity.

Reading

1. Begin by reading to students the story about Philip Reid and the Statue of Freedom. Ask students: What impresses you most about the story of Philip Reid? What words best describe him? How might he have felt when he looked at the Statue of Freedom atop the U.S. Capitol?

Analyzing Documents

2. In small groups students study the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act of 1862. Using the document analysis worksheet, students record their findings. Then, as a class, students compare their observations. Why would the D.C. Compensated Emancipation Act be important to Philip Reid?
3. Show students Clark Mills' Petition to the Board of Commissioners for the Emancipation of the Slaves in the District of Columbia. How is Philip Reid described in the document? Find the compensation requested for Philip Reid. How does it compare with the compensation for the other ten persons? Why is the compensation requested for Philip Reid so much greater? What are other observations?

Observation and Research

4. Together the class studies the photo of the Statue of Freedom. Using background information on the Statue of Freedom, assist students in identifying the features of the Statue of Freedom (laurel wreath, shield of the United States, helmet with eagle's head).
5. Involve the entire class in creating a list of anything that reminds them of (symbolizes) freedom. The list may include works of art, buildings, objects, etc. Students conduct research on the ways in which freedom has been depicted in art and architecture.

Creative Writing

6. Using the information they gathered, students select from the list something they would like to write a story about. Include in the story a possible reason someone would choose this symbol of freedom rather than another. Students share their story with the class.

Class Exhibit

7. Create a classroom exhibit of students' stories about the representation of freedom in works of art, architecture and other objects.



Recommended Reading

Holland, Jesse. *Black Men Built the Capitol: Discovering African-American History in and Around Washington, D.C.* Globe Pequot Publication, New York, NY, 2007. This book gives an historical view of the accomplishments of African-Americans in the building of Washington, D.C.

Website

Architect of the Capitol

<http://www.aoc.gov/capitol-hill/other-statues/statue-freedom>

<http://www.aoc.gov/philip-reid-and-statue-freedom>



Background

Philip Reid and Freedom

The Story

Putting the Statue of Freedom on top of the Capitol dome took many years and the hard work of many people. One of them was an enslaved man named Philip Reid.

The statue's journey began in Rome where Freedom's artist, an American named Thomas Crawford, began designing the statue in 1855. He'd originally intended her to wear a liberty cap, the sign of a freed slave. But the U.S. Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis, insisted that such a cap wouldn't suit the American people, who, he said, had never been enslaved. So Crawford, inspired by Native Americans, created an eagle head cap complete with hanging talons and a crest of feathers.

Crawford cast his design in plaster. The 19½ foot cast left Italy in five major sections. Each big piece was packed in own crate, and a sixth crate contained the smaller pieces. The little ship¹ containing these crates sailed in spring 1858. It almost sank twice, and all six crates didn't arrive in Washington until March 1859.

An Italian artisan assembled the large plaster pieces, smoothly covering the joints so that the model could be displayed in Statuary Hall while the Capitol dome was going up. But when the time came to cast the huge statue in bronze, he refused to take the model apart, demanding more money for the job. He claimed no one else could do it.

Enter Philip Reid. The government had hired Reid's owner Clark Mills to cast the statue. The government would rent Mills' foundry; grant him \$400 a month for his own services; buy his materials, including 15,000 pounds of copper; and pay his 12 foundry workers.

This was a big job, but how would Clark Mills disassemble the plaster statue? Philip Reid knew just what to do. He inserted a metal hook into the head, and then used a block and tackle to pull up gently on the heavy head until a tiny crack appeared. This crack clearly showed where Freedom's head had been joined to her body and where the bolts were that held the pieces together. Reid loosened the bolts and the statue's head was removed. Reid repeated this operation until all the sections had been disassembled safely.

Then when it came time to cast the statue, Reid supervised a group of enslaved men who kept the fires burning during the casting process. Imagine the heat caused by those fires. Yet Reid worked seven days a week, earning \$1.25 for himself for each Sunday he toiled.



But Reid’s role in the creation of the Statue of Freedom wasn’t finished. When it came time to assemble the bronzed pieces, Clark Mills ran into a familiar problem. This time it was his foreman who refused to do the job unless he was paid more. And, once again, Reid stepped in. He supervised the lifting of the heavy pieces and bolted them together, “joint by joint, piece by piece.”¹

Philip Reid won his freedom when slavery was abolished in the District of Columbia on April 16, 1862, and went into business for himself. On December 2, 1863 the Statue of Freedom was finally installed on the newly finished Capitol dome to celebratory gunfire. We can only imagine how Philip Reid must have felt to gaze up and know that he had helped to raise the Statue of Freedom before gaining his own.

Written by Syd Lieberman and Adrienne B. Lieberman for Capitol Visitor Center

¹ Historical Newspapers Chicago Tribune, p.1. “The Statue of Freedom,” Chicago Tribune, December 14, 1863



Statue of Freedom

The full-size plaster model for the Statue of Freedom was used to cast the bronze statue on top of the Capitol dome. Freedom wears a helmet encircled with stars and topped with an eagle's head and feathers, the talons hanging at either side of her face. Her long, curly hair flows down her back. Her dress is secured with a brooch with the letters "US," and she is draped with a fur-trimmed robe. Her right hand holds a sheathed sword, the left a laurel wreath of victory and the striped shield of the United States.

The model, which had been stored in pieces for many years, was restored in 1992 by the Architect of the Capitol with funds donated to the U.S. Capitol Preservation Commission. It was on display in the Russell Senate Office Building before being moved to Emancipation Hall in the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center.

The bronze Statue of Freedom, facing east over the central entrance, crowns the dome of the United States Capitol, 288 feet above the east front plaza.

Architect of the Capitol





Written Document Analysis Worksheet

1. TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Map | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegram | <input type="checkbox"/> Congressional record |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patent | <input type="checkbox"/> Press release | <input type="checkbox"/> Census report |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum | <input type="checkbox"/> Report | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

2. UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting letterhead | <input type="checkbox"/> Notations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten | <input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Typed | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seals | |

3. DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:

4. AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:

POSITION (Title):

5. FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?

6. DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)

A. List three things the author said that you think are important:

B. Why do you think this document was written?

C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.

D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:

E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:

Designed and developed by the Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408



Vocabulary Building Worksheet: Philip Reid and Freedom

Name _____

Word or Phrases	I know the word.	If you know the word, use it in a sentence.	I don't know the word and need to research it. Record the meaning below.
Foundry			
Slavery			
Freedom			
Casting a Statue			
Symbol			
Bronze			