

Free & Safe Exhibit Visit

OVERVIEW

Free & Safe focuses on Simon and Jesse, two fugitives who were sheltered at Rokeby in the 1830s. It traces their stories from slavery to freedom, introduces the abolitionist Robinsons who called Rokeby home for nearly 200 years, and explores the turbulent decades leading up to the Civil War. The exhibit begins by providing context on slavery, the domestic slave trade, and the state of Maryland, from which Simon escaped. It ends with a large gallery exploring the history of the abolitionist movement nationally and in Vermont. In between, your students will encounter and get to know Simon, Jesse, and the Robinsons. *Free & Safe* is rich with lessons and learning for students, and we recommend that teachers preview it before bringing their classes if possible.

AUDIOVISUAL COMPONENTS

The exhibit includes two audiovisual components that help visitors understand slaves' experiences. Both are engaging for students and young people, so be sure that your students don't miss them.

- **Gallery 2—Escape!**—uses recorded sound and lighting and scenic effects to convey the anxiety, danger, and risk of running away. We “borrowed” voices from other fugitive slaves to suggest what Simon may have thought and felt.
- **Gallery 4—Trapped**—the theater, presents a 15-minute “actor-less play” about Jesse’s effort to purchase his freedom legally. The “Jesse’s Story” panel in Gallery 3 displays documents recording his life in slavery. You may want to review these documents with students before moving into the theater.

QUESTIONS

A list of questions to guide students as they view *Free & Safe* follows. Feel free to tailor them to suit your needs. Ask students to work in pairs and answer some or all of the questions provided. The Museum can provide clipboards and pencils.

HISTORIC IMAGES

Free & Safe is packed with historic images that have much to teach. You may want to focus your students' learning by investigating images. Students may work singly or in pairs. You may ask them to analyze one image from slavery and one from antislavery. An image analysis worksheet is provided below.

TEACHER-LED LESSONS

Three galleries have enough space to gather a small group of students and material appropriate for a short teacher-led lesson. You may request panel text in advance.

- **Gallery 1**—Gather your students at the slavery mural or the domestic slave trade panel and mural—or both! Read the text with students and discuss. The slavery mural image shows slaves hauling cotton, ask students to describe what they see. The “Second Middle Passage” displays quotations from slaves about their experiences being sold and having loved ones sold away. Read and discuss with students. Some of these slaves were young—possibly the same age as your students.
- **Gallery 3**—The Vermont map of Underground Railroad sites and the “Jesse’s Story” panel both offer opportunities for class discussion.
- **Gallery 5**—The “Meeting Hall” gallery reviews the history of abolition in America. Any one of its components—the antislavery libraries, the abolition timeline, banners and broadsides, or “Speaking Truth to Power” offer material for group discussion.

FREE & SAFE EXHIBIT VISIT QUESTIONS

GALLERY 1

1. Explain in your own words why this exhibit is called *Free & Safe*.

2. Find one of the following images—“The Lash,” “Slave House of J.W. Neal & Co.,” or “The Parting, Buy us, too”—and answer these questions.

What is happening in this picture?

What message does this picture send about slavery?

How would a picture like this convince people that slavery was wrong?

3. Find John Smith’s quote. He was 13 when he said this—a little older/younger than you are. How would you feel if this were happening to you at your age?

4. Meet Simon—What did he proclaim he could do better than any man?

GALLERY 2 — SIMON'S ESCAPE

5. Travel through Simon's three-part story—keep your eye on the set and listen carefully! What section of the story did you enjoy most and why?

6. What did vigilance committees do?

GALLERY 3 — VERMONT

7. Find the Vermont map with the Underground Railroad sites. Read about one site besides Ferrisburgh. Which site did you choose? List one fact you learned.

Site: _____

Fact: _____

8. Draw the pattern here that would be left on a sheep with the Robinson's stamp:

9. Spin the spinning tube. What do the white and black balls show you?

10. Meet Jesse... When Jesse was just 14 years old, he was earning wages in North Carolina. Was he earning money for himself? Use the text to explain what the wages meant for Jesse.

GALLERY 4 — THEATER

11. Enter the theater and listen to Jesse's entire story: Why did Rowland Robinson refuse to loan Jesse the \$150 he needed?

What do you think happened to Jesse next?

GALLERY 5 — THE MEETING HALL

12. Find the “Speaking Truth to Power” display. Listen to at least one of the speeches. Whose speech did you choose?

What did you learn?

13. Find the quote: “No Union with Slaveholders!” What did the abolitionists mean by that?

14. Who were some of the women abolitionists and what did they do? Find Abby Kelley Foster, Lucretia Mott, Angelina Grimke, and Rachel Robinson. Choose one of these brave women and tell us one fact about her role in abolishing slavery.

GALLERY 6 — LEAVING ROKEBY

15. List one fact about each of the following people:

Lunsford Lane: _____

James W.C. Pennington: _____

John Brown: _____

IMAGE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

1. What is the title of the image? If it doesn't have a title, create one from clues in the picture.
Describe what the title means.

2. What is the setting? What do you know about the environment? Can you pinpoint where this took place?

3. What are the people wearing? Why?

4. What are they doing? Why?

5. What ages of people are represented? Are there both men and women? What social classes are present? What ethnic groups? How are they interacting? Are any groups missing? Why?

6. What are the people's attitudes toward each other? Why? Do you think these attitudes are constant or do they change depending on the circumstances?

7. Describe any conflicts you see and the reasons for them. Is there anything here that compares to the present? Explain.

8. What do we learn about those groups at this time and place?

9. How would you feel if you were one of the people pictured here? Which one would you choose to be? Write a story about yourself in the picture.

10. Redraw this scene to show how it might look today. For example, change the clothing to today's fashions, make the trees bigger, make the houses different, put in modern-day furnishing. When you are finished drawing, look at the old and new pictures together. What caused the changes? What were the effects of the changes on society? What stayed the same? Why? Are there any issues from the time of the picture we still grapple with today?