

Simon's Escape: Visit to *Free & Safe*

OVERVIEW

This lesson takes place during the visit to *Free & Safe* at Rokeby Museum; it includes some inquiry and discussion questions, as well as connections to the pre-visit lesson. Students may work singly or in pairs to complete the question worksheet as they view the exhibit.

You may want to copy the map below (showing Simon's path from Maryland to Pennsylvania and then turning to head for Vermont) for students to have on the visit.

You may want to gather your students for a discussion here at Rokeby after they see exhibit—the picnic tables in the yard are available or you may gather in the Center if the weather is bad. Engaging students while the experience is still fresh may draw more from them.

ATTACHMENTS

- **Question worksheet for students**
- **A Google map shows Simon's path**—from Maryland to Jenner, Pennsylvania, to Philadelphia, and to Rokeby in Vermont, which will help students grasp the distance covered. Note the distance from western Pennsylvania to Canada, which was Simon's original destination.
- **Simon's Escape Text.** These are not Simon's words. They were taken from the autobiographies of other fugitive slaves who told their stories of running away. We use them to help us understand what Simon experienced.

SIMON'S ESCAPE: QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR VISIT

INTRODUCTION TO SIMON

1. What made Simon such a valuable slave?

2. Why was Simon worth more at auction than in the field? Does this surprise you?

3. Why did Simon decide to run away?

4. Find the word “likely” on the panel introducing Simon—it appears three times. What do you think it means in this context?

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

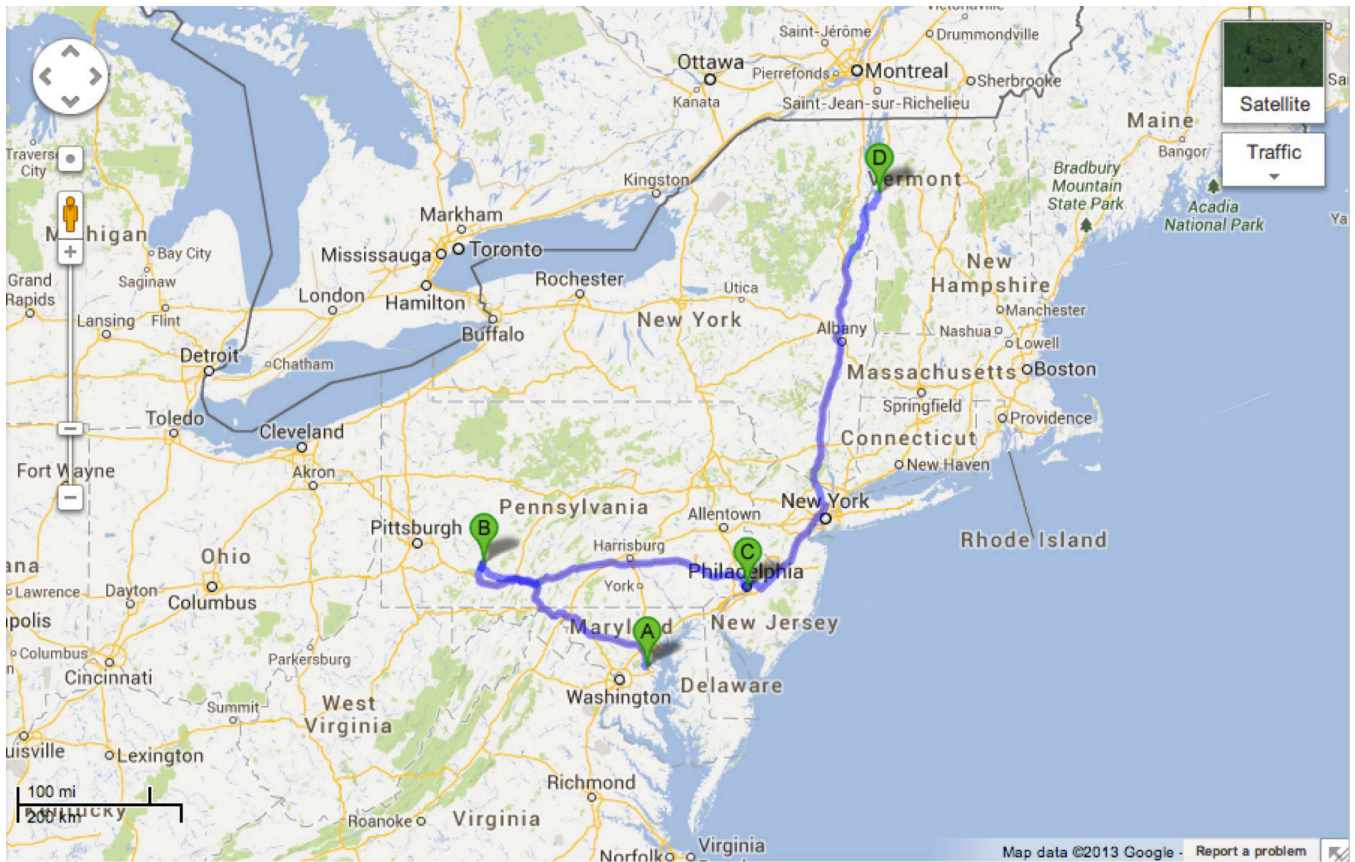
5. Listen and watch as scenes from Simon's escape appear before you. What descriptions/details strike you most? Why?

6. What are some of the troubles Simon faced on his escape?

7. Who may have been the friend?

8. Why was Simon in Jenner, Pennsylvania and not in Philadelphia? (Map included; you may want to provide to students to use during their visit)

9. How did vigilance committees work against slavery?



Simon's path—from Maryland to Jenner, Pennsylvania, to Philadelphia, and to Rokeby in Vermont.

SIMON'S ESCAPE: TEXT FOR AUDIO/VISUAL COMPONENT

***DECIDING TO RUN*—JAMES W. C. PENNINGTON**

But a still more trying question was, how can I expect to succeed, I have no knowledge of distance or direction. I know that Pennsylvania is a free state, but I know not where its soil begins or where that of Maryland ends. ... but the hour was now come, and the man must act and be free, or remain a slave forever. ...if I did not meet the crisis that day, I should be self-doomed ... The emotions of that moment I cannot fully depict. Hope, fear, dread, terror, love, sorrow, and deep melancholy were mingled in my mind together; my mental state was one of most painful distraction.

***WORTH THE RISK?*—JAMES W. C. PENNINGTON**

At this moment, gloom and melancholy again spread through my whole soul. The prospect of utter destitution which threatened me was more than I could bear, and my heart began to melt. ... my condition was as wretched as that of any human being can possibly be ... I had but four pieces of clothing about my person. I was a starving fugitive, without home or friends – a reward offered for my person in the public papers – pursued by cruel manhunters, and no claim upon him to whose door I went.

***GRIFFITH FARM*—JOHN BROWN**

I was then conducted into a safe retreat, where there was a comfortable bed provided for me, into which I got, and soon fell asleep. ... In the middle of the night I awoke, and finding myself in a strange place, became alarmed. It was a clear, starlight night, and I could see the walls of my room, and the curtains all of a dazzling whiteness around me. I felt so singularly happy, however, notwithstanding the fear I was in, at not being able to make out where I was, ... At last I became alive to the truth; that I was in a friend's house, and that I really was free and safe. I had never learnt to pray; but if what passed in my heart that night was not prayer, I am sure I shall never pray as long as I live.