

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## Writing Prompts

### Part 5: New Times, New Troubles

#### 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).*

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## Writing Prompts

### Part 5: New Times, New Troubles

#### MISSION 2: "Flight to Freedom"

---

---

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.

**FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT:** The Fugitive Slave Act, passed by Congress in 1850, made it a crime for any law enforcement official to not arrest a person suspected of being runaway slave. Suspected fugitives were not given trials and could not legally challenge those claiming to be their owners. This led to many free blacks being kidnapped into slavery. Northerners used to thinking of slavery as a southern problem now saw their own officials responsible for enforcing it. Imagine yourself as a northern abolitionist who happened to also be a policeman or other official whose duty is to enforce the law. Would you stand against what you believed to be an unjust policy, or would you compromise your conscience in order to uphold the law of the land?

**LET ME SEE YOUR PAPERS!** For free blacks in pre-Civil War United States, "free papers" — written legal documents declaring their holder to be free — were often all that stood between them and a slave catcher's irons. Many papers were borrowed or forged to help with escapes and changed identities, but as you have seen in Part 5, even genuine papers could be ignored or destroyed by unethical slave catchers. Free papers were abolished after the Civil War, but in certain contexts, society has continued to insist that citizens carry something officially confirming their identity. Driver's licenses are the most obvious example of this — can you think of others? At what point do you think requiring official identification comes at the expense of people's liberty? What about new laws being passed today requiring people suspected of being illegal immigrants to show proof of legal residency? Discuss where (or if) you think the line should be drawn between the practical need to establish people's identity and an unfair compromise of their rights.

**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 5. You may choose to illustrate one aspect of your entry.