Tudor Place Historic House & Garden
Classroom Activity

Will You Run?
Grades 4-12
Classroom Activity: Will You Run?

Listed below is an activity that you can use with your class. The Tudor Place Education Department recommends this activity after a field trip to Tudor Place, and is also happy to schedule a time to facilitate it in your classroom. For more information, please contact us at education@tudorplace.org.

Adapted from the study guide for Stealing Freedom by Lisa Carbone (Yearling, 2001).

“Today, people often think, ‘there’s no way I’d stay a slave. I’d escape!’ Yet when we really understand the lives of slaves, we see that this decision was never simple or easy to make. This activity is designed to shed light on the complexities of the decision to run.” —Lisa Carbone

By participating in this activity, students will be better able to:

- Consider the pros, cons, and unintended consequences of decisions
- Empathize with people who lived in the past
- Discuss decisions in groups

In introducing the activity, the teacher can read the attached statistics on self-emancipation and quotes by Frederick Douglass.

Students should be divided into 6 groups. Each group receives a half-sheet Case from the attached list and a Pro/Con worksheet. Students should read and discuss their Case as a group. Instructions should include the direction for students to think about their decisions based on what the person in their Case would have known, rather than what they know as 21st-century students.

Questions to consider include:

- What are the pros of running? What are good things that could happen if this person decides to run?
- What are the cons? What bad things does this person risk if they decide to run?
- How would the decision affect any family members who depend on this person?
- Does the escape plan sound like it could work?
- Does the person in charge of the escape seem trustworthy?
- What happens if they reach freedom? Is there an organization, like the Underground Railroad, who would help them adjust to their new life?
- Would it be better to take this opportunity to escape or wait for another one?
Students should discuss their opinions about whether to run. Everyone in a group can agree, or each person can make a different decision. Then, each group should present to the class their scenario, some pros and cons, and their decision(s.) After each group presents, the teacher reads the outcome corresponding to their case.

After all groups have presented, the teacher can hold a discussion about the students’ decisions. Discussion questions can include:

- Was this an easy or a difficult decision to make? Why?
- Why do you think some people chose not to run away?

The teacher can conclude by reading again the quotes from Frederick Douglass.
“No man can tell the intense agony which is felt by the slave, when wavering on the point of making his escape. All that he has is at stake; and even that which he has not is at stake also. The life which he has may be lost, and the liberty which he seeks, may not be gained.”
Frederick Douglass, 1855

“I felt assured that, if I failed in this attempt, my case would be a hopeless one – it would seal my fate as a slave forever. I could not hope to get off with anything less than the severest punishment, and being placed beyond the means of escape. It required no very vivid imagination to depict the most frightful scenes through which I should have to pass, in case I failed. The wretchedness of slavery, and the blessedness of freedom, were perpetually before me. It was life and death with me.”
Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass, National Archives and Records Administration
Tudor Place Historic House
and Garden

Will You Run?

85% of runaways were captured
81% of runaways were male
78% of runaways were between 13-29 years old
50% of runaways were over 5’7”
    (the average height of a man)
12% of runaways were over 6’
69% of female runaways were between 13–25 years old
95% of runaways escaped alone or in groups of 1 or 2
Most were “well spoken” and spoke more than 1 language
2-4% were literate (7% were thought to carry forged papers)

Case #1

You are a young girl, just turned thirteen. Until recently you lived with your mother, older sister, and three brothers, all of whom are slaves, and your father, who is a free man. Your father worked hard to raise money to free some of his family and was able to purchase the freedom of your mother and sister. They now live in Washington, D.C. and you get to see them every once in a while. Your owner, a slave trader in Rockville, Maryland, then sold your brothers to someone in Alabama. Now he refuses to let your father purchase your freedom. Your mother now works for the Underground Railroad in Washington, D.C. and they are willing to help you escape. They have a plan to hire someone to “steal” you from the slave trader’s house and then take you to Canada. Your aunt and uncle are in Canada and you can live with them. If this dangerous plan fails, you too could be sold and never see any of your family again.

Will you run?

Case #2

You are a woman of 28, married to a free man. You have a young daughter, aged 12. You are owned by Margaret Dick, the sister of Thomas Peter of Tudor Place. The Dicks live in a lovely home at 3033 N Street in Georgetown. Mrs. Dick is fretful, demanding and mean but she is generous with food. You would like to live with your husband in his family’s home but she won’t let you. The Dick family also has a farm out in the country. When Mrs. Dick gets upset with you, which happens more and more as she gets older, she threatens to send you and your daughter out to the farm. Then you’d hardly ever get to see your husband. Even if you stay near him in Georgetown, when your daughter turns 13, she will be put to work at the farm, and then you won’t be able to see her often. Your husband has made contact with a lawyer in Washington who works with the Underground Railroad. He says he can put all three of you in a coach that is going to leave for the North. It will be led by experienced operators. You have no doubt that if you are caught, you and your daughter will be sold to slave traders and quite likely separated forever.

Will you run?
Case #3

You are a 13-year-old girl from a large family. Your father is a free former slave, but because your mother is enslaved, so are you. Your home is in Montgomery County, MD, but for the last year or so you have been hired out by your master to an elite home in Washington, DC. Your master gets paid for your labor, but you do not. The family you have been hired out to likes you.

Four of your older siblings have managed to buy their freedom, and your master has decided not to let any more of your family be free. You hear through African American community networks that the Underground Railroad plans a large escape by boat, with an experienced conductor in charge. If you can make it to the boat, you can join the escape. One of your sisters and four of your brothers are in favor of going, but if you decide to go with them you will have to leave the rest of your family behind and may never see them again.

Will you run?

Case #4

You are a 30 year-old woman with two children owned by a man just appointed to be the U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua in Central America. He has decided to take you and your daughters with him. You loathe him. He has started to look at your attractive young daughters in a bad way. You went to the black minister of your church to ask for advice because you don’t want to go somewhere where this awful demanding man is the only person you know. Your minister takes you to meet a white man who he says you can trust. He tells you that there is a ship that is going to stop overnight in Philadelphia before making its way to New York. He says that can he write a note for you to send from the ship to his abolitionist friends in Philadelphia telling them that you want to leave the ship and to please come and get you and send you to Canada. It is against the law for anyone to bring a slave into Pennsylvania. But if you are caught, there is a chance that the authorities might decide that you were not brought into the state because you were kept on the boat. They would then give you back to your owner.

Will you run?
Case #5

You are a 27 year-old man who works as a butler for a wealthy family in New Orleans. Your work situation was not a terrible one until your owner died and his son took over. The son has already beaten you twice and, with the father dead, you now have no protection. He won’t kill you because you are valuable; but, he could sell you or keep hitting you. You are fair-skinned and can pass for white. You approach an English captain in a ship heading soon from New Orleans to Jamaica. You tell him you are a businessman heading to see to his interests in Jamaica (where slavery has been abolished) and ask if you can have passage on the ship. He says yes and that he is leaving in the morning. You will have to leave your wife and, if you are successful, you will then have to make arrangements to have her escape or go back for her.

Will you run?

Case #6

You are a 22-year-old, single man enslaved at a plantation in Lewinsville, Virginia. You are picked up by the Union Army and considered “contraband,” or stolen property. At this time, the leaders of both sides of the war do not believe that African American men are able to be soldiers. The next day, you are ordered to drive a pair of mules that are hitched to an army wagon. You can hear the booming of the guns at Bull Run. There are about 20 other people with you who want to escape. You do not have support from anyone to help you get to free states, so even if your escape succeeds, you will still be in areas where slavery is legal. You would have to convince people that you are not an escaped slave, and you would have to start a new life all by yourself.

Will you run?
Outcome Guide for Teachers

Outcome #1

This is the real story of Ann Maria Weems. She ran. Her mother and father were determined to get her away from her owner, the slave trader Charles Price who lived next door to St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Rockville. Jacob Bigelow, who also helped in the campaign to raise money for Mary and Emily Edmonson, paid a man to enter the Price house and steal Ann Maria. She was brought to Washington, D.C. and hidden while arrangements were made to smuggle her out of the city. One day, a physician from Philadelphia arrived in Washington and parked his carriage directly in front of the White House. A young “man” was brought out and climbed up to the driver’s seat and drove the carriage north. He was Ann Maria who had been dressed as boy and taught to drive a horse and carriage. She made it safely to relatives in Canada.

Outcome #2

The very real Rebecca Jackson took the chance and made it safely to Philadelphia with her husband and child. Her story was recorded by the black abolitionist William Still who interviewed every fugitive who made it through their operation successfully. He published those records after the Civil War in a book called *The Underground Railroad*. It is available at Montgomery County libraries.
Outcome #3

This is the true story of Emily Edmonson. She, her sister Mary, and four of her brothers, including her brother Samuel, boarded the *Pearl* schooner in April 1848. The escape attempt failed. Emily was jailed in a slave pen in Alexandria, and despite her father’s desperate efforts, was shipped south with her sister Mary to be sold in New Orleans. Fortunately for the Edmonsons, yellow fever broke out there so they were returned to DC. Their father, Paul, convinced the slave trader to sell them to him if he could quickly raise $2,250, tens of thousands of dollars today. Paul Edmonson enlisted help from Henry Ward Beecher, whose sister Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Beecher’s church raised enough money to buy and free Emily and Mary. Emily went to Central College in Cortland, NY, and became an important figure in the abolitionist movement. She moved to Anacostia in 1860, where she raised her family, maintained a close friendship with Frederick Douglass, and continued to fight for the abolition of slavery.

Outcome #4

This is a real story. Jane Johnson passed the note off the ship, probably through a black person who worked on the docks in Philadelphia and he gave it to a white Quaker named Passmore Williamson, the black abolitionist William Still, and several other sympathetic men. They came to the ship to help her and her children sneak away. But her owner went to federal court to demand the return of his property as a runaway slave and Judge Kane ordered that she and her daughters be immediately returned. Williamson was named as one of the men who helped her but he refused to turn her over and was jailed. Meanwhile, Johnson and daughters were quickly taken to Canada.
Outcome #5

This is the story of Samuel Edmonson and it was reported in a book written by John Paynter, his grandnephew, in 1930. He did board the ship and made his way out of New Orleans. Paynter was able to talk with Samuel Edmonson and his book, *Fugitives of the Pearl*, give us many details about the Pearl escape and its aftermath, including his own successful flight. Paynter says that Edmonson was able to get his wife Delia out of New Orleans and that he took her to England and then Australia before he returned to Washington after the Civil War. He had been a butler in Washington when he was enslaved and he most likely worked in a similar capacity on ships that sailed to those countries. Paynter’s story is supported by the U.S. Census for 1870 which states that Samuel Edmonson’s wife was from New Orleans and that one of their children was born in England and another in Australia.

Outcome #6

This is the true story of John Luckett. He ran. In his words, “Twenty-one of us—slaves that the Yankeys (sic) had stolen—concluded we had had enough of the war, and that we was going to leave.’ (We) deserted…. I just kept on—crossed the Chain Bridge and made for Georgetown. In coming down Congress Street, [Britannia] happened to be standing at the gate of Tudor. I stopped and asked whether she wished to hire a man. She asked where I came from. [I said,] Over yonder.” Britannia hired him at 50 cents a day to be the Tudor Place gardener. John Luckett remained the gardener at Tudor Place for 44 years, and preserved some of the oldest plants in the garden. He also taught the Peter children to garden.

John Luckett married Harriet Wilkins in 1867. They had 6 children who lived to adulthood. Although the Peters offered to buy them a house in Georgetown, Luckett refused, saying his wife enjoyed living on Capitol Hill. He walked the three miles to and from Tudor Place each day. Even though he was close to the Peter family, he chose to maintain some distance and independence in his personal life.
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<td>What are possible good results from this decision?</td>
<td>What are possible bad consequences of this decision?</td>
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Vocabulary

Emancipation – The freeing of an enslaved person, usually by a master or the law.  
Manumission – A form of emancipation by which an owner frees their enslaved worker(s).  
Secession—A formal withdrawal from a government  
Self-emancipation – The freeing of an enslaved person by their own action, often by running away and reaching a free zone.  
Slavery – A system by which some people are considered property and can be owned, bought, and sold. Before the Civil War in America, slavery was enshrined in law. Slavery can also be referred to as human trafficking.

Note:  
There is extensive conversation in the historical field about the use of the words “slave” versus “enslaved person.” Those in favor of “enslaved person” point out that person-first terminology emphasizes the humanity rather than the situation of the individual concerned. Those who advocate for “slave” assert that the adjective form diminishes the impact of the word and the seriousness of the situation. Museum Teachers at Tudor Place may use either or both of these terms.