

## **Freedom Seekers: Eliza and John Little**

- Grade Level: 6-12
- Estimated Time: 1-2 class periods
- Topic: Underground Railroad
- Subtopic: Freedom Seekers

This lesson addresses the following disciplinary concepts and topics in the [Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science](#):

- Geography
  - Geographic Representations
  - Human/Environment Interaction
  - Human Population
- History
  - Change, Continuity, and Context
  - Perspectives
  - Historical Sources and Evidence

### Essential Questions

- What are some experiences enslaved individuals may have gone through when seeking freedom?
- Who were John and Eliza Little?
- How can the experiences of John and Eliza Little help us understand the impact of slavery and the Underground Railroad?

### Objectives

- Examine and analyze sources featuring the stories of John and Eliza Little and their experiences on the Underground Railroad.
- Compare the path of The Littles to present-day trips and lengthy travels.
- Foster an empathetic connection with past historical figures, such as John and Eliza Little.

### Introduction

- Display the following prompt on the board as students walk in and/or read the prompt at the beginning of the class period:
  - *In a four-to-five sentence paragraph, describe the longest distance you've ever traveled in a car, bus, or other motor vehicle and the longest distance you've ever walked barefoot. How did you feel during and at the end of these trips?*
- Allow students 5-10 minutes to respond to the prompt.
- After students have completed responding, ask a few students to share their experiences with the class.

*Journey to Freedom Illinois' Underground Railroad*

[www.IllinoisUGRR.org](http://www.IllinoisUGRR.org) [www.lookingforlincoln.org](http://www.lookingforlincoln.org)

Lesson #2 – Freedom Seekers: Eliza and John Little

- (Introduction Continued)
  - *Many students may say they have traveled several hours and hundreds of miles in a car. Students may also say they have walked several miles barefoot before or like to walk around barefoot when walking around their home or neighborhood. Students may describe feeling tired, exhausted, relieved, or excited to reach their destination. Students may say they felt a little pain when walking barefoot or putting their shoes back on when they felt too much pain or exhaustion.*
- Once a few students have shared their experiences, transition into the next portion of the lesson and say that today's lesson will allow students the opportunity to learn about two enslaved people and their search for freedom along the Underground Railroad.
- Review Essential Questions and Objectives together as a class.

Source Examination and Analysis

- Distribute and review the instructions on the **John & Eliza Little Source Examination Activity** worksheet.
- View the attached video and listen to the podcast featuring the stories of John and Eliza Little.
  - LINK FOR VIDEO
  - LINK FOR PODCAST
  - If possible, be sure to display captions for students.
- Have students respond to questions on the given worksheet (attached).

Follow the Path of John and Eliza Little

- [Using the GIS map linked here, follow the route of John and Eliza Little.](#)
  - While following the route, note the great distance they travel along their path to freedom, tying back to the introductory activity when students described exhausting car trips and walks much shorter than the trip John and Eliza made. Although not the same, this comparison will allow students to connect emotionally to the past.
    - *"Think back to the trips you all brought up at the beginning of class. Can you imagine walking barefoot, hundreds of miles with no definite supply of food, shelter, or safety?"*
- After viewing all sources, review the worksheet together as a class.

Conclusion

- Wrap up the lesson by reviewing with students that the stories of John and Eliza Little are only two examples of tens of thousands of freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad. Many were unsuccessful. The path was tough for the Littles, but they ultimately succeeded in escaping to freedom, and their stories should be remembered.

### Extensions Beyond the Lesson

- Have students explore Underground Railroad maps to identify routes that may run through or near their communities. Using local museums, libraries, and archives in the area, students can research their local Underground Railroad history and present their findings.
- After listening to the story of John and Eliza Little, draw a picture depicting the two of them. The scene can either show The Littles on the journey along the UR or The Littles as they reach their destinations in Chicago, Detroit, Canada, or Haiti.
- Explore resources available through the National Park Service's Network to Freedom, including the Interactive Map showing sites and stories that are part of the network. Identify Illinois towns where the UR passed through and pathways through other states.
- Explore other stories of freedom seekers by listening to additional podcasts produced by Looking for Lincoln. Learn about the harrowing freedom stories of Susan Richardson, Henry Stevenson, Jim Gray, Lydia Titus, and others.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### **John & Eliza Little Source Examination Activity**

*The sources you will examine tell the story of John and Eliza Little, two Freedom Seekers who led a courageous journey through Illinois on their way to Canada.*

*Use the following sources to answer the questions that follow:*

[Podcast – "Tale of Two Freedom Seekers: The Story of John and Eliza Little"](#)

Video depicting Eliza Little: [https://youtu.be/OTKS0d\\_fcxc?si=OOalq9SnenXF2Hka](https://youtu.be/OTKS0d_fcxc?si=OOalq9SnenXF2Hka)

["John Little and his Wife" – A Story and Map of John and Eliza Little's Journey](#)

1. Before escaping, describe two examples of hardships John or Eliza faced while enslaved.
2. Where did John and Eliza Little meet?
3. Who escaped first, John? Eliza? Did they escape at the same time?
4. What method of transportation did Eliza and John Little use to get from Tennessee to Canada?
5. While seeking freedom along the Underground Railroad, how did John and Eliza eat?
6. According to Eliza, what was the scariest part of their journey?
7. Besides living in the United States, where else did John and Eliza Little live once free?

**John & Eliza Source Examination Activity-ANSWERS**

*The sources you will examine tell the story of John and Eliza Little, two Freedom Seekers who led a courageous journey through Illinois on their way to Canada.*

*Use the following sources to answer the questions that follow:*

[Podcast – "Tale of Two Freedom Seekers: The Story of John and Eliza Little"](#)

Video depicting Eliza Little: [https://youtu.be/OTKS0d\\_fcxc?si=OOalq9SnenXF2Hka](https://youtu.be/OTKS0d_fcxc?si=OOalq9SnenXF2Hka)

["John Little and his Wife" – A Story and Map of John and Eliza Little's Journey](#)

8. Before escaping, describe two examples of hardships John or Eliza faced while enslaved.

Many mentions of lashings, beatings, the china plate story with Eliza, working in the heat, etc.

9. Where did John and Eliza Little meet?

Tennessee. Jackson, Tennessee

10. Who escaped first, John? Eliza? Did they escape at the same time?

John

11. What method of transportation did Eliza and John Little use to get from Tennessee to Canada?

A little by horseback, but mostly walking, barefoot.

12. While seeking freedom along the Underground Railroad, how did John and Eliza eat?

Scavenging in the woods and even stealing pies, cakes, etc., from peoples' windows

13. According to Eliza, what was the scariest part of their journey?

Bodies of water to cross, particularly the Ohio River

14. Besides living in the United States, where else did John and Eliza Little live once free?

Canada and Haiti

*Follow the path of John and Eliza Little:*

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/36d746659d1e4253b92a83224b594f11>

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