**Lesson Plan #10 for *Genius of Freedom*: William Still & the Underground Railroad by Liz Taylor**

**Grade level:** Middle or High School

**Topics:** Underground Railroad, Vigilance Committee, William Still

**Pennsylvania History Standards:** 8.1.6 B, 8.1.9 B,8.2.9 A, 8.2.9 B, 8.2.9 D, 8.3.9 A, 8.3.9 B, 8.3.9 D

**Pennsylvania Core Standards:** 8.5.6-8 B, 8.5.9-10 B, 8.5.11-12 B, 8.5.6-8 C, 8.5.9-10 C, 8.5.11-12 F

***African American History,* Prentice Hall textbook:** 297-299

**Overview:** Featured within the *Genius of Freedom* exhibit is William Still’s *The Under-ground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters &c., Narrating the Hardships, Hair-breadth Escapes, and Death Struggles of the Slaves in Their Efforts for Freedom, as Related by Themselves and Others or Witnessed by the Author: Together with Sketches of Some of the Largest Stockholders and Most Liberal Aiders and Advisers of the Road*. This book, published in 1872, includes Still’s records of his interviews with fugitive slaves or freedom seekers. Still, the chairman of the General Vigilance Committee of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, aided many fugitive slaves who were able to get to Philadelphia to escape farther north, often to Canada. His book is a treasure trove of primary sources that are easily understood by students who cannot help but comprehend the strength of these freedom seekers’ drive for freedom. In this lesson, students read one of the passages in Still’s work and answer a series of questions about it. The following day, students create a nametag and engage in a “meet and greet” in order to find out about more of the people aided by William Still.

**Materials Needed**

* Attached excerpts from Still’s book. These are from the 2007 abridged version. Teachers can select their own excerpts from the original version of Still’s work which is available on the web.
* Attached document analysis sheet
* Index cards with an unlined side
* “Meet and Greet” Invitation
* “Meet and Greet” matrix ***or*** Underground Railroad Reunion matrix
* “Thank You Note to William Still” extension activity sheet

**Procedure**

1. Teacher queries class about what they know about the Underground Railroad.
2. Students write answers on sticky notes and post them on the board.
3. Teacher reads some of the answers out, noting what is true and what is myth (or simply incorrect). Teacher should reinforce the fact that freedom seekers largely struck out on their own and did not often receive much help until they got to the North and into the care of “conductors” like William Still. A good teacher resource is <http://stillfamily.library.temple.edu/historical-perspective/william-still-significance>
4. Place students in groups of three.
5. Students read Still’s record of one freedom seeker.
6. Students work together to analyze the record using the analysis worksheet. (As an alternative, students can work independently on this as a homework assignment.)
7. Each student creates a nametag for using the back of an index card. The card instructions should state the following:

Please create a nametag for your Freedom Seeker that *you* will wear. Include the following:

* Name (prominently and legibly written)
* Former home
* Sketch of the Freedom Seeker (optional)
* Create or bring in a small prop to help in the telling of the story of escape (optional)

1. Students should affix the nametag to their shirt with tape to indicate that they are ready for the next part of the activity.
2. Pass out invitation to the students and read aloud.
3. Pass out matrix (you can choose which format you prefer) to the students. Explain that they will engage in a “meet and greet” in which they will meet other freedom seekers who received help from William Still. Each of the boxes should be filled out. Do not record information about the freedom seeker that you are portraying!
4. Debrief: Students in a whole class discussion will identify some of the patterns that became evident during the meet and greet. Students should also note things that surprised them and things they learned that they did not previously know.
5. Extension activity: Distribute “Thank You Note to William Still” assignment.