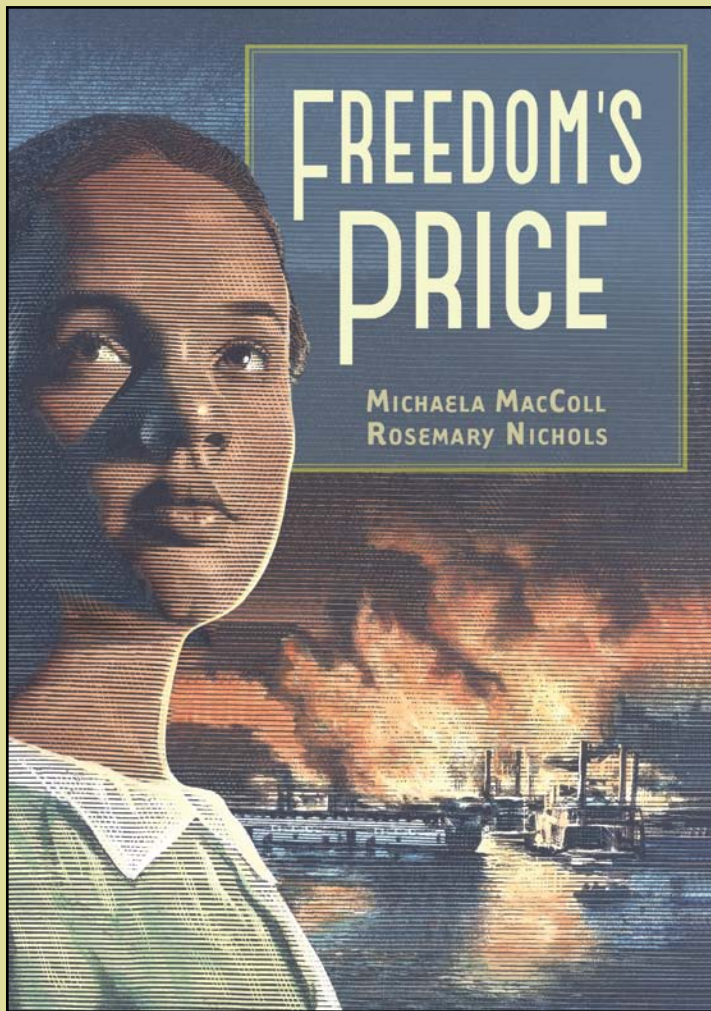


Educator's Guide



 CALKINS CREEK
 BOYD'S MILLS PRESS

Highlights

**With
Common Core
State Standards
correlations**

ABOUT THE BOOK

In *Freedom's Price*, Michaela MacColl and Rosemary Nichols tell the story of Eliza Scott, a young girl growing up in St. Louis in 1849. As one of Dred Scott's daughters, Eliza has a front row seat to history as her father fights for his family's freedom. The landmark *Dred Scott* decision had repercussions that reverberated throughout the United States in the days leading up to the Civil War.

This fictionalized account imagines what Eliza's life might have been like as the family waited for their case to be decided by the court. Eliza's family is neither slave nor free, and the family's struggle to stay strong and united during their time living in limbo is depicted in a way that will resonate with students today. Using real historical figures and events, the authors bring the *Dred Scott* decision to life.

Students will be inspired by Eliza's courage and resourcefulness, and they will also gain an understanding of what life was like in the mid-nineteenth century. This guide is designed to enhance their reading of the book and to encourage them to learn more about the time leading up to the Civil War. Connections to the Common Core State Standards are included with each activity.

Common Core abbreviations used in this guide:

RL – Reading: Literature

W – Writing

SL – Speaking & Listening

RH – Literacy in History and Social Studies

QUICK QUESTIONS

- Who was Dred Scott?
- What was the *Dred Scott* decision?
- What did the *Dred Scott* decision have to do with the start of the Civil War?
- When was the Civil War?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

At the beginning of the story, Eliza Scott is writing her name in the mud with a stick. Why does her mother, Harriet, get upset when she sees what Eliza is doing? [RL 5.1]

Harriet and Eliza are doing laundry on the banks of the Mississippi. Describe the work they are doing. How does Eliza feel about the work? [RL 5.1, 5.2]

Eliza needs to get another ingredient to make the laundry soap. What is it? Who helps her get that ingredient? [RL 5.1]

Who is Wilson Madison? What kind of work does he do? Why does Eliza hesitate to answer his questions? [RL 5.1]

Who is Celia? What was she doing when Eliza met her? Is she a slave or a free person? What is her life like? What is a shantytown? [RL 5.1, 5.4]

Why is Harriet so angry with Eliza for running after Celia? What is Harriet afraid will happen to Eliza? [RL 5.1]

Eliza's mother does the laundry at the river four days a week, and two days a week she does the laundry for Miss Charlotte at the Charlesses' home. How is the work at the Charlesses' house different? Why is Eliza jealous of the slaves who work for the Charlesses? [RL 5.1]

When Eliza is in the kitchen at the Charlesses' house, she overhears a conversation. Who is arguing? What are they arguing about? How does it concern Eliza? What happens when Eliza speaks up? [RL 5.1]

Why do you think Miss Charlotte hired Harriet to work for her? Who does Harriet's husband, Dred, work for? What does Miss Charlotte have to do with Harriet and Dred's case? [RL 5.1]

What work does Miss Charlotte want Eliza to do? Why does Eliza's mother say no to Miss Charlotte's request? [RL 5.1]

Where does Eliza's family sleep every night? Why? How does Eliza describe their living quarters? [RL 5.1]

Who is Lucy? What happened to her? How does she describe her life as a slave? [RL 5.1]

One evening, Eliza sits with her father and asks him about his past. What do Dred's answers reveal about the life of a slave? What does he mean when he says, "Most colored folk in this country don't get to keep their family" (page 76)? [RL 5.1, 5.6]

Miss Charlotte's husband is an abolitionist. What does that mean? Why does Miss Charlotte keep her involvement with the Scott family a secret from her friends? [RL 5.4, 5.1]

Eliza's father is asked for medical advice when Lucy becomes ill. Why is he considered "good with sick folks" (page 93)? How do you suppose Dred learned his medical skills? How does Lucy's sickness affect the other characters in the story? [RL 5.1, 5.3]

Wilson accepts Eliza's invitation to come to her church. After the Sunday service is over, he asks Eliza about her "schooling." Why does Eliza hesitate to tell him about the church's school? Why is the school's location a secret? Where is the school located? Why? [RL 5.1]

Eliza, her parents, and her little sister are overjoyed when it's time to go to court and hear the outcome of their case. Eliza is ready to leave their jailhouse home behind and begin living as a free family. But their hopes are dashed when they get to the court. What news does their lawyer give them? What does Eliza do after she hears the bad news? [RL 5.1]

When Eliza visits Wilson on his steamboat, she explains why she has the same name as her sister. How does sharing a name with her little sister help keep Eliza safe? Why is Wilson worried about Eliza working at the Charlesses' house? What is Eliza and Wilson's secret signal? [RL 5.1]

Eliza dreamed of moving out of the jailhouse, but her new accommodations are not what she expected. What is her job at the Charlesses' house? How does Eliza feel about her new job? What does she think of Miss Sofia? How are Miss Sofia and Eliza alike? How are they different? [RL 5.1, 5.3]

Music is important to Eliza. Where and when does she sing? What does singing have to do with her job at the Charlesses' home? How does Miss Sofia help Eliza with her music? [RL 5.1]

One evening as Eliza is sitting with Miss Sofia, Wilson uses the secret signal to call for Eliza. What news does he have about the Charlesses' next-door neighbors? How does this news affect Eliza? Why will Eliza have to break her mother's most important rules: "Stay close to the family and stay in the city" (page 164)? [RL 5.1]

As the Charlesses pack up to move to the farm, Eliza begins to understand what her mother told her: "Miss Charlotte and Miss Sofia were kind, but their needs would always be more important than Eliza's" (page 167). What did Eliza's mother mean? [RL 5.6]

Mark Charless sends Eliza back to the house to get a crochet hook for Miss Sofia. What happens after Eliza retrieves the hook? Who is responsible for what happened? How does the letter from Frank Sanford's aunt seal Eliza's fate? [RL 5.1]

The slave catchers take Eliza to a ship called the *Mameluke*. Why is this good news for Eliza? What does Eliza drop once she's on the boat? [RL 5.1]

While she is held captive, Eliza thinks about her parents and Reverend Meachum. How does thinking of them inspire the first part of her escape plan? What are some of the other things Eliza does to help herself escape? How does the crochet hook come in handy? [RL 5.1, 5.2]

As Eliza and Wilson prepare to leave the boat, disaster strikes. What happens? What are Eliza and Wilson forced to do? How does Wilson help Eliza overcome her fears? [RL 5.1, 5.2]

On the river, Wilson and Eliza must rely on each other. As the fire on the boats rages, how do the two of them work together to stay afloat? Where does Eliza suggest they go? [RL 5.1]

Eliza feels guilty about not listening to her mother. Wilson stops her and says, “The blame for what happened isn’t yours. It’s slavery that’s at fault. When we fix that, everything will be better” (page 201). What are their plans for the future? What are some of the things Eliza looks forward to doing once she is free? [RL 5.1, 5.2]

In the epilogue, Eliza’s family once again goes to court. What happens? What does Eliza do with the verdict that she would not have been able to do before the verdict was handed down? Think about what happened at the very beginning of the story. What has changed? [RL 5.1, 5.3]

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Eliza Scott was really Dred Scott’s daughter, but little is known about her life. The authors used historical sources to recreate what life would have been like for a black girl growing up in St. Louis, Missouri, in the mid-nineteenth century. Two events that actually happened play large roles in the book: the Cholera Epidemic and the Great Fire of 1849.

- What is cholera? Why were people so afraid of the disease?
- Research the Fire of 1849. What factors made it so difficult to stop the fire? [RI 5.9]

In the story, Mark Charless demands money from his mother so he can go west with Frank Sanford and strike it rich in the California Gold Rush.

- What was the California Gold Rush? What was a “forty-niner”? What impact did the Gold Rush have on California’s population? How did people get to California in the mid-nineteenth century? Was the journey easy? [RI 5.9, SL 5.4]

Westward expansion in the United States tested the young country’s thinking about slavery. Read about the *Dred Scott* decision—a good book for research is

The Dred Scott Case: Testing the Right to Live Free by Jennifer Fleischner. Additional information, including the original court documents, can be found at <http://digital.wustl.edu/dredscott/history.html>.

- What was the Missouri Compromise? How did it affect Dred Scott's case? What was the Compromise of 1850? What did it have to do with slavery? Why do historians believe the *Dred Scott* decision was instrumental in leading the United States into Civil War? [RI 5.9]

Think about how Eliza and her family were treated. What freedoms were slaves denied? How were freed blacks treated? [SL 5.1]

In the story, Eliza's friend Wilson Madison lives and works on a boat in the Mississippi River. Look at a map of the United States. Which states border the Mississippi River? In 1857, which states along the river were free and which were slave states? [RI 5.9]

How did someone's clothes indicate if they were a slave or a free person? Why do you think slaves were forced to dress a certain way? [RI 5.9, SL 5.1]

The song Eliza sings to Miss Sofia is called "The Blue Juniata." Why is the song important to Eliza? What is the song about? What is the "Juniata"? [RL 5.1, RI 5.1]

When Eliza is held on the slave ship, she sings "Amazing Grace" by John Newton. Look at the lyrics to "Amazing Grace." Who was John Newton? What did he have to do with slavery? [RI 5.1]

At the back of the book, the authors provide some historical background for the story, including the fact that the character Reuben Bartlett was based on an actual notorious slave trader of the time. What does "notorious" mean? How would you describe Reuben Bartlett? [RI 5.4]

After their escape, Eliza thinks about the day's events: "But, on the other hand, she'd saved herself today. Wilson had proved to be someone she could depend on, just like Ma and Pa could depend on each other" (page 202). What do you think happens with Eliza and Wilson after Eliza gains her freedom? Read the Author's Note at the back of the book to see if you're right. [RI 5.3]

EXTRA CREDIT

How do Eliza and her mother wash laundry? What do they use for soap? Think about how people did chores back in the mid-nineteenth century. What are some of the tools we have today to make chores easier? Imagine you lived in 1850. Think of some of the ways your life would be different. [RL 5.1, SL 5.4]

The Mississippi River has played a vital role in the commerce of the United States for nearly 200 years. For information, visit <http://www.nps.gov/miss/riverfacts.htm>. What were the major ports in 1850? What are the major ports today? Compare the goods that traveled on the river in 1850 to the goods that are shipped today. [RI 5.9, W 5.7]

Harriet Scott and Miss Charlotte use a lot of sayings, such as: “You get nothing in this world by coddling yourself” (page 36) and “If something sounds too good to be true, it usually is” (page 37). Write down some proverbial sayings or maxims you know. Do you think maxims are important? Why or why not?

[RL 5.1, SL 5.4]

FURTHER READING

HISTORICAL FICTION

Chains by Laurie Halse Anderson

I, Dred Scott: A Fictional Narrative Based on the Life and Legal Precedent of Dred Scott by Sheila Moses, illustrated by Bonnie Christensen

I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly: The Diary of Patsy, a Freed Girl
by Joyce Hansen

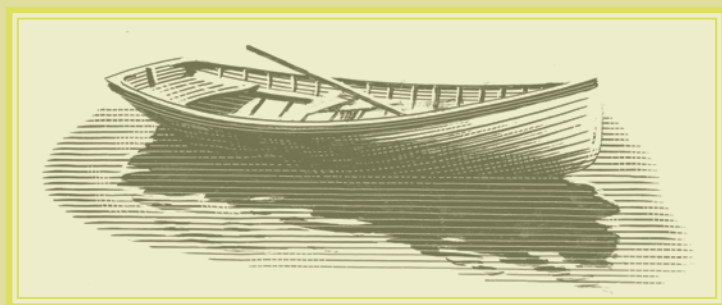
The Lions of Little Rock by Kristin Levine

A Picture of Freedom: The Diary of Clotee, a Slave Girl by Patricia McKissack

A Thousand Never Evers by Shana Burg

NONFICTION

Hand in Hand: Ten Black Men Who Changed America by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney



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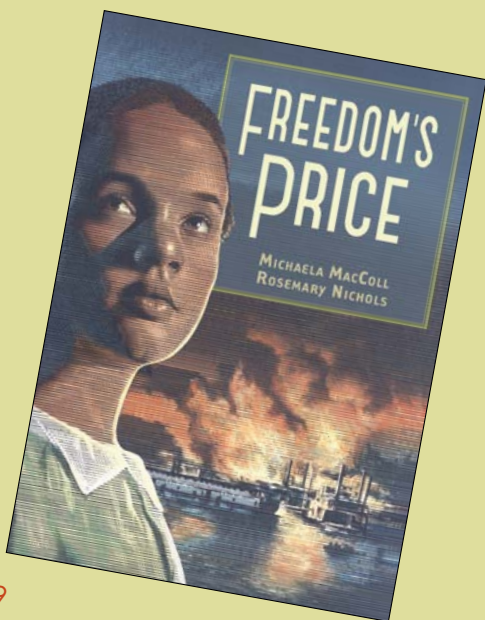
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