

Reading Thematic Overview

'Freedom' – Catherine Johnson

Freedom by Catherine Johnson tells the story of Nat, a young boy enslaved in 18th-century London. The novel examines the changing attitudes towards slavery and freedom during this period, connecting Nat's personal experiences with the abolition movement and evolving perceptions on human rights.

English

Freedom can be used to explore themes of identity, resistance, and historical context, encouraging students to analyse character development and the impact of social and political forces. Students can also engage with the novel's narrative structure, developing skills in writing persuasive essays and creating their own historical fiction pieces inspired by the book's events.

Music

The book can be used to explore the role of music in the historical context of the transatlantic slave trade, examining how enslaved people used songs for resistance, communication, and preserving cultural identity. Students can analyse the musical styles mentioned in the book, such as spirituals and folk songs, and then create their own compositions to express themes of freedom and resilience.

Geography

During this period, Asia underwent significant changes due to colonial rule and economic shifts. The theme of freedom in the novel illustrates how imperialism and the slave trade impacted both Africa and Asia.

Russia's vast and harsh landscape presents both advantages and obstacles. The struggles faced by characters in the story mirror the difficulties imposed by Russia's geography.

Science

Freedom can be used to explore the scientific concepts of force, motion, and the impact of gravity through the story's thrilling escapes and adventures. Students can investigate how the characters' physical challenges relate to principles like friction, energy transfer, and the forces at work during high-stakes moments in the plot.

ICT

Pupils can explore the role of technology in historical contexts, such as researching and presenting the abolitionist movement through digital tools.

History

Nat's story illustrates how an increasing number of people in Britain began to oppose slavery, with activists like Thomas Clarkson and Olaudah Equiano posing difficult moral questions about the institution.

As Enlightenment ideas spread, many argued against the morality of slavery. Nat's struggle for freedom highlights the growing recognition of slavery's injustices. Through Nat's experiences, the novel reveals the harsh realities of the slave trade.

