

Template for a reading comprehension review using the *American RadioWorks'* documentary "Oh Freedom Over Me".

The *American RadioWorks* documentary "Oh Freedom Over Me", presents one of the most remarkable chapters in the Southern Civil Rights movement.

This activity uses text excerpted from the documentary to give your students practice in preparing for either the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment in Reading. It is divided into three 45 – 60 minutes sections. Students will first read an excerpt together and practice identifying the main idea, supporting details, and understanding vocabulary in context. These are some of the skills tested on the MCA-II Reading test - see "Things to Know" below. Students will then apply the same skills to identify relevant content in a second article and construct test questions for a peer. In the third session, students once again practice reading comprehension skills by reading the remaining excerpt and answering the peer-created reading comprehension questions.

Materials:

- Access to a computer for each student for all sessions or copied printouts of each article (see "prep" below).
- A copy of the first section excerpted from "OhFreedomOverMe-Part1.pdf" for each student (see below).
- A copy of the "Reading Comprehension Tool" for each student (see below).
- A copy of the "Question Forming Tool" for each student (see below).
- Optional: [Real Audio Player 8.0](#) or higher and headphones for each student.

Objectives for High School Students:

- Students will practice and apply reading comprehension skills necessary to successfully complete the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment II in Reading.
- Students will practice reading comprehension skills as they learn about race relations during Freedom Summer.
- Students will identify and discuss key issues that arose during Freedom Summer.
- Students will infer and identify the documentary's viewpoint and evaluate the facts used to support that viewpoint.

Correlations with the Minnesota Graduation Standards

Grade	Subject	Strand	Sub-Strand	Standard	Benchmark
7 - 12	Language Arts	Speaking, Listening & Viewing	Media Literacy	The student will critically analyze information found in electronic and print media, and will use a variety of these sources to learn about a topic and represent ideas.	Make informed evaluations about television, radio, film productions, newspapers and magazines with regard to quality of production, accuracy of information, bias, purpose, message and audience.
9 – 12	Language Arts	Reading and Literature	Vocabulary Expansion	The student will apply a variety of strategies to expand vocabulary.	2. Determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and metaphors by using ..., context clues...
9 – 12	Language Arts	Reading and Literature	Comprehension	The student will understand the meaning of informational, expository or persuasive texts, using a variety of strategies and will demonstrate literal, interpretive, inferential and evaluative comprehension.	1. Monitor comprehension and know when and how to use strategies to clarify the understanding of a selection. 5. Summarize and paraphrase main idea and supporting details.

Things to know for the MCA-II Reading Test:

From http://children.state.mn.us/MDE/Accountability_Programs/Assessment_and_Testing/Assessments/MCA_II/MCA_II_General_Information/index.html:

"To meet the basic requirement for reading, a student shall demonstrate the ability to read and comprehend English passages representative of widely circulated material commonly encountered in adult life. Students must read a passage such as a newspaper article and be able to answer questions about concepts and skills like these:

- main idea
- setting, characterization, plot
- fact and opinion
- author's point of view
- analysis or evaluation of the text
- vocabulary in context
- information contained in charts or graphs.

For more information, see the PDF file "Reading and Math Test Specifications" available at:

http://children.state.mn.us/MDE/Accountability_Programs/Assessment_and_Testing/Assessments/MCA_II/MCA_II_Test_Specifications/index.html

In addition to preparing students for the MCA-II's, the following activity provide students with the opportunity to develop both literal and inferential comprehension skills. We've defined these skills to be:

Literal Comprehension:

- identify the main idea and purpose
- recognize supporting details
- identify the meaning of words and phrases

Inferential Comprehension:

- recognize the author's point of view
- draw logical conclusions
- distinguish between fact and opinion"

PREP - Estimated time: 35 – 45 minutes

- 1) **20 minutes:** Access and peruse the story sections on the webpage for the *American RadioWorks*' documentary "Oh Freedom Over Me": http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/oh_freedom. If you believe your students may benefit from an introduction to the history of Jim Crow and the events leading up to Freedom Summer, see the *American RadioWorks*' documentary "Remembering Jim Crow": <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/remembering/>
- 2) Determine if your students are going to read the articles online or in printed form during each session
- 3) **5 minutes:** Print off and make copies of the reading comprehension question tool (see below) for each student.
- 4) **5 minutes:** If not using the computer lab for the first session, print off and make copies of the excerpt from the documentary (see below).
- 5) **5 minutes:** If you are not using a computer lab for either the second or third session, print off and make copies of the other excerpts, one for each pair of students. These can be found on the webpage for this month's Sound Learning Monthly Feature webpage: http://www.soundlearning.org/subjects/history_civics/civil_rights_revolution/freedom_over_me.shtml
- 6) **10 minutes:** Read the first article and answer the questions yourself. Think of how to model test-taking skills – for example, reading the questions first and then the selection.
- 7) **Optional:** If you anticipate that your students will have trouble with the text, they can listen to parts of the documentary first. The time code for each part is listed above the corresponding section in the printed transcripts.

To listen to part 1, use this URL: http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/jim_crow/rafiles/arw_freedom1.ram

To listen to part 2, use this URL: http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/jim_crow/rafiles/arw_freedom2.ram

To listen to part 3, use this URL: http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/jim_crow/rafiles/arw_freedom3.ram

INSTRUCTION**Session 1: Skill Review**

Estimated time: 45 - 60 minutes.

- 1) **Building Prior Knowledge, 5 - 10 minutes:** Brainstorm with your class what they know about segregation and Jim Crow laws. What it would be like to live under such a system, for all citizens?
- 2) **Purpose, 1 – 2 minutes:** State that each student's task will be to learn about the rise in teen gambling as they practice reading comprehension skills for the Minnesota Reading MCA-II Test.
- 3) **5 minutes:** Distribute the excerpt from the excerpt (see below). NOTE: this excerpt has a Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 8.7 Flesch Reading Ease Score: 64.5
- 4) Explain that the MCA-II assesses how well students can apply reading comprehension skills to answer specific questions about a passage. One strategy for taking reading tests is to read those questions first and then read the passage. That way, one will have an idea of what information to look for as one reads.
- 5) **10 minutes:** Ask students to try out the strategy by just reading the questions first (and not answering them) and then read the passage.
- 6) After an appropriate amount of time, call the class back together and review the article, identifying the correct answers together.
- 7) **10 minutes:** Distribute the Comprehension Tool to review the reading comprehension skills assessed by the Minnesota Reading MCA-II Test. Point out where in the article students can:
 - identify the main idea and purpose – what is the big idea of the article? What does the article do – inform, persuade, entertain, or express?
 - recognize supporting details – what facts or examples did the author use to support the main idea?
 - identify the meaning of words – using context clues, can you figure out what a word means?
 - recognize the author's point of view – does the author have a clear a point of view? If so, what statements are clues to the author's point of view?
 - draw logical conclusions – based on the details presented, what conclusions can be made?
 - distinguish between fact and opinion – what evidence did the author use to support statements of fact?Point out how each question asked the student to apply one of the reading comprehension skills and whether or not they had to infer the answer.
- 8) **Skills Practice, 15 – 20 minutes:** Distribute other parts of the transcript (these are found under "Resources" on this month's Sound Learning page) and give students an appropriate amount of time to complete the excerpt. As they read, prompt them to fill out the Comprehension Tool to prepare them for the closing discussion.
- 9) **Closing Discussion, 10 minutes:** Review the impressions students expressed during the brainstorm. Compare the notes that arose from the brainstorm with the information they received from the excerpts. How would you summarize the situation and possible different points of view? Which point of view do you think is "the truth"? What evidence do you have from the reading, what details are there in the article that supports your conclusion?

Session 2: Skill Practice: Creating Test Questions

Estimated time: 40 – 60 minutes.

- 1) **Review, 5 minutes:** Briefly recall the points students contributed in the first session's closing discussion.
- 2) **Purpose, 1 – 2 minutes:** Explain that in this session, students will learn more about the struggle women workers faced in the Iron Range mines. Students will be able to choose one of the remaining two articles to read. Their task will be to develop questions on their chosen article that tests their peer's reading comprehension. State that all this activity will prepare them for the Minnesota Reading MCA-II Test. Distribute the excerpts, keeping track of which students have been assigned part 1, part 2, or part 3.

NOTE: The first section in part 1 is used in Session 1 above.

- 3) **Introduce the Question Forming Tool, 10 minutes:** Review the skills assessed by the Minnesota Reading MCA-II Test:
 - identify the main idea and purpose – what is the big idea of the article? What does the article do – inform, persuade, entertain, or express?
 - recognize supporting details – what facts or examples did the author use to support the main idea?
 - identify the meaning of words – using context clues, can you figure out what a word means?
 - recognize the author's point of view – does the author have a clear a point of view? If so, what statements are clues to the author's point of view?
 - draw logical conclusions – based on the details presented, what conclusions can be made?
 - distinguish between fact and opinion – what evidence did the author use to support statements of fact?
- 4) Briefly review the questions from the last session and point out which skill the question assesses. Distribute the Question Forming Tool and walk the class through how to use it to form questions on the article they just read.
- 5) **Assignment, 15 - 30 minutes:** Assign students to use the tool to create their own questions and their answers on the excerpt they chose to read. Mention that their peers will use these questions in the next session to assess their own reading.
- 6) **Small Group Check, 10 – 15 minutes:** After an appropriate amount of time, ask the class to form into small groups made up of students who read the same excerpt. Have the groups compare the questions each member created to check for accuracy and relevance. NOTE: if time runs short in this session, this step can be moved to the third session.
- 7) **Collect Papers, 1 – 3 minutes:** Collect the questions and answers, along with the excerpts, to be redistributed next session. Keep each set of questions together with the excerpts to facilitate distribution in session 3. BE SURE students have written their NAME on their question forming tools.

Session 3: Applying the Skills`

Estimated time: 50 – 60 minutes.

- 1) **Review, 5 – 10 minutes:** Recall the points students contributed in the first and second sessions. Query if there's anything to add to the discussion.
- 2) **Assignment, 25 - 30 minutes:** Invite students to read the one excerpt they haven't read yet and answer the other students' questions from session 2. While students are "taking the test", divide the class into two groups.
- 3) **Small Group Assessment, Round 1, 10 minutes:** Assign one group to be the assessor. Direct them to meet with students who just completed reading the same excerpt each assessor wrote questions for in the second session. The assessor's task is to review the other student's answers to her or his questions and point out where in the excerpt the correct information lies.
- 4) **Small Group Assessment, Round 2, 10 minutes:** Switch the assessor group and repeat step 3.
- 5) **Final Closing Discussion, 5 – 10 minutes:** Ask students to share what they learned about struggle for racial equity. Ask student to reflect on ramifications the struggle might have had on their future? What if Freedom Summer hadn't happened?



American RadioWorks' "Oh Freedom Over Me"

This story really ought to start in slavery. But then again, in, say, the 1950s, a few generations after the end of slavery, life for black Mississippians looked and felt much like it had during those centuries in bondage.

Like any black Mississippian who grew up in the Jim Crow years, MacArthur Cotton can tell you stories. The story of his grandfather, who, Cotton says, was fatally beaten by whites for teaching other blacks to read. Or the story of the black sharecropper in Winston County in the 1950s, who took the day off to go to a church gathering—without his white boss's permission. Cotton was there—about fifteen years old at the time, he says.

"He [the sharecropper] didn't go to plow that day, but his boss man wanted him to plow. So ... he came up to church with the rest of the people, and, [the boss came and said] 'I thought I told you to go to the field.' And [the sharecropper] got ready to walk away and [his boss] just kinda grabbed him and shot him six times. You know, right there, he fell and laid out there."

Eventually, Cotton says, somebody picked up the man's body and carried it away. "And nobody really said nothing, nobody really did anything. Things like that just happened. It happened all the time."

The system of segregation known as Jim Crow, which had been entrenched throughout the South since the end of Reconstruction in the late 1800s, demanded conformity from everybody, black and white. Bob Zellner is white; he grew up in southern Alabama in the 1940s and '50s. His upbringing was atypical, he says, in that "my father, unlike his brothers and his father, and his father, had broken with the Klan. So as I grew up I didn't get, in my family itself, the kind of racist teaching that was more or less automatic for white Southerners."

He did get it outside the family, however. As a teenager, Zellner worked at a country store in East Brewton, Alabama. He remembers being corrected by his boss.

"He explained that I had just said, 'Yes, sir' to a black man, and 'Yes, ma'am' to a black woman. And he explained to me that if it was just he and I and a black customer, it was all right, but if there were white people around that I couldn't do that. And I explained to him that I had been raised to have manners, and that meant that to older people you said 'yes, sir' and 'no, sir' and 'yes, ma'am' and 'no, ma'am.' And he said, 'Well that's all right if it's just us, but other people will get very upset if you do that.'"

American RadioWorks' "Oh Freedom Over Me"

In 1961, as a Huntington College senior in Montgomery, Alabama, Zellner and several other students were assigned to write a paper on the race problem for a sociology class. As part of their research, they arranged interviews—against their professor's directions—with civil rights leaders Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ralph Abernathy.

"And as a result of those meetings," Zellner says, "five of us were asked to leave school, the Klan burnt crosses around our dormitory. We were called into the office of the Attorney General of the state of Alabama, who said, 'You're under the communist influence.' ... And to boil it down, they gave you the choice of completely capitulating to their know-nothing racism or becoming a rebel."

After he'd finished school (he refused to leave and the school backed down), Zellner became the first white field secretary for SNCC. That group had been formed as a young people's wing of Martin Luther King's group, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. SNCC would be the first to mount a public campaign against Jim Crow in Mississippi—but not until 1961. Before then, even while blacks were launching bus boycotts and lunch-counter sit-ins in other Southern states, the Mississippi movement stayed underground.

"You know, in spite of growing up in Alabama, where it's not too much different—but Mississippi! It was just—this was the last place," says John Lewis, who now represents Georgia in the U.S. Congress. In 1961, Lewis was 21 and a hero of the Freedom Rides. The Freedom Riders rode buses into the South to challenge whites-only lunch counters and restrooms. Lewis was punched and kicked by South Carolina segregationists. Rioting whites beat him bloody in Montgomery, Alabama. But what scared him was Mississippi.

"When you crossed that state line over into Mississippi, it's just this sense of something like the climate changed, the air got warmer and your heart started beating faster. ... Too many bodies had been found, black bodies, had been found in the Pearl River or the Tallahatchee River in the state of Mississippi," says Lewis



Questions

1) According to the article, segregation was

- A) relatively new.
- B) a strict division of power.
- C) designed to give both blacks and whites equal power.
- D) not law but a social order.

2) "...a few generations after the end of slavery, life for black Mississippians looked and felt much like it had during those centuries in bondage."

In this sentence, bondage means

- E) to be tied up
- F) slavery
- G) freedom
- H) having the right to vote

3) The MAIN IDEA of the excerpt is that

- A) segregation mandated that both blacks and whites act in a certain way.
- B) segregation did not affect white lives as much as it affected black lives.
- C) segregation had some support among blacks.
- D) segregation was no different in Mississippi.

4) The author of the excerpt MOST LIKELY believes that

- E) segregation was defensible.
- F) segregation was violently enforced, especially in Mississippi.
- G) segregation should not have been challenged.
- H) whites weren't affected by segregation.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Hour: _____

Reading Comprehension Tool

Literal Comprehension: *What is actually stated.*

Identify the main idea and purpose –

What is the article's big idea? Summarize what the article is about. What does the article do – inform, persuade, entertain, or express?

Identify supporting details -

What facts and examples did the author use to support the main idea?

Identify the meaning of words –

Identify a word you had trouble understanding or one that you think someone might have trouble understanding. Copy the sentence as it appears in the article. Circle the word and write what you think the word might mean, based on how it's used in the sentence.

Inferential Comprehension: *What information isn't specifically stated?*

Recognize the author's point of view -

Does the author have a clear a point of view? If so, what statements are clues to the author's point of view?

Draw conclusions –

Based on the details the author presented, what conclusions about the subject can you make?

Distinguish between fact and opinion –

What evidence did the author use to support factual statements?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Hour: _____

Question Forming Tool

After you've read the excerpt, use this tool to help you create questions with which to test your peers. Remember to change where you place the correct answer for each question.

<p>Identify the meaning of words: Find a word that you think your peers might not be familiar with. Write the sentence it is used in and circle the word you chose.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Now, write three incorrect definitions for the word, along with the correct definition here.</p> <p>In this sentence, the word _____ means</p> <p>A. _____</p> <p>B. _____</p> <p>C. _____</p> <p>D. _____</p>	<p>Supporting details: Identify a supporting detail. Rewrite it so that this question makes sense:</p> <p>According to the article, _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Now, write three incorrect answers for the question, along with the correct answer here.</p> <p>A. _____</p> <p>B. _____</p> <p>C. _____</p> <p>D. _____</p>	<p>Identify the meaning of words: Find a word that you think your peers might not be familiar with. Write the sentence it is used in and circle the word you chose.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Now, write three incorrect definitions for the word, along with the correct definition here.</p> <p>In this sentence, the word _____ means</p> <p>A. _____</p> <p>B. _____</p> <p>C. _____</p> <p>D. _____</p>
<p>Main Idea: The MAIN idea of the article is ... Write three incorrect possible answer for the main idea, along with the correct answer here.</p> <p>A. _____</p> <p>B. _____</p> <p>C. _____</p> <p>D. _____</p>	<p>Distinguish fact and opinion: The author of the article MOST LIKELY believes that ... Write three incorrect answers for the writer's opinion might be, along with a correct statement. HINT: Write "the writer was unbiased" if you think so.</p> <p>A. _____</p> <p>B. _____</p> <p>C. _____</p> <p>D. _____</p>	<p>Draw conclusions: After reading the article, you can conclude that ... Write three incorrect possible answer for the what a reader may conclude, along with the correct answer here.</p> <p>A. _____</p> <p>B. _____</p> <p>C. _____</p> <p>D. _____</p>