



## **Flight to Freedom Learning Resource** **Writing and Discussion Activities©**

**Fort Mose Historical Society:**  
**African American Community of Freedom**  
[connect@FortMose.org](mailto:connect@FortMose.org)  
<https://fortmose.org/>

**Fort Mose Historic State Park**  
<https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/fort-mose-historic-state-park>

**Fort Mose: Selected Awards & Honors**  
U.S. National Historic Landmark  
Site of Memory, UNESCO Slave Route Project  
Site: National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom  
Site: Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor



## Fort Mose Historical Society: African American Community of Freedom

### Flight to Freedom Learning Resource: Writing and Discussion Activities©

**Note:** This educational resource is designed to accompany the popular **Flight to Freedom Encounter** that takes place annually at Fort Mose Historic State Park. Flight to Freedom re-creates the perilous journey of Freedom Seekers as they escape from enslavement on British plantations and flee southward, for a free life in Spanish Florida.

Fort Mose Historical Society offers use of these materials free-of-charge. The materials may be downloaded and reproduced for educational use. Editing is prohibited.

For more information on the **Flight to Freedom Encounter**, or to register youth groups for the unique experience, please visit [FortMose.org](http://FortMose.org). For information or feedback on these educational resources, please contact [Connect@FortMose.org](mailto:Connect@FortMose.org).

Thank you for sharing the Fort Mose history!

### FL Learning Standards

- **SS.4.A.3.5** Identify the significance of Fort Mose as the first free African community in the United States.
- **S5.4.A.3.In.e** Identify that African slaves escaped to Fort Mose to live in freedom
- **S5.4.A.3.Su.e:** Recognize that African slaves went to Fort Mose to be free.
- **S5.4.A.3.Pa.e:** Recognize an aspect of freedom.
- **SS.4.A.3.3** Identify the significance of St. Augustine as the oldest permanent European settlement in the United States.
- **SS.8.A.2.7** Describe the contributions of key groups (Africans, Native Americans, women, and children) to the society and culture of colonial America.
- **SP.PK12.VI.1.2** Apply listening and auditory skills, such as discriminating sounds and associating concepts, actions, and ideas with expressive language.
- **LAFS.4.RL.3.9** Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g., opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g., the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

- **LAFS.4.W.1.1** Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
  - a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.
  - b. Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.
  - c. Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., for instance, in order to, in addition).
  - d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

## **The Fort Mose Story**

- ◆ **First free legally sanctioned Black community in what became the United States of America**
- ◆ **Destination of the original Underground Railroad, running south**

Welcome to Fort Mose Historic State Park, a National Historic Landmark, and to the unique Flight to Freedom encounter!

As you travel the Freedom Trail with your students, you will be transported to a time nearly three hundred years ago when courageous freedom seekers risked everything to live at Fort Mose, the first legally sanctioned free Black community in what is now the United States.

Africans who were taken from their homes sought to reclaim their freedom. Those born into enslavement sought relief from the hereditary system of bondage. When word spread that free life might be possible in Spanish Florida, the Flight to Freedom began.

Enslaved men, women and children within the British colonies of the Carolinas and Georgia began the perilous journey southward. They were aided by indigenous Yamassee people along the way.

Upon safe arrival in St. Augustine, the freedom seekers were asked to pledge allegiance to the Spanish crown and accept the Catholic religion. Able-bodied men were required to complete a term of service in the militia.

The Spanish colonial government established *Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose*, or Fort Mose, in 1738. Located on St. Augustine's northern border, Fort Mose became the first legally sanctioned free Black community in what was to become the United States. It was an important military outpost where free Fort Mose militia

defended all of St. Augustine from attack. The free women of Fort Mose provided vital community support.

Today, Fort Mose is preserved as a Florida State Park, open 365 days per year for visitation by the public. It's designated a National Historic Landmark and a Site of Memory of the UNESCO Slave Route Project. Fort Mose is also honored as a site on the National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom and as southernmost site on the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor.

At its core, the Fort Mose story is one of tremendous human agency, perseverance, ingenuity, courage and accomplishment. As such, it stands in sharp contrast to the standard narrative of subjugation and oppression. Fort Mose citizens made significant contributions to colonial Spanish society. These freedom seekers had claimed their liberty, and secured the blessing of freedom for their offspring.

This is not to say Mose's founders and their offspring did not suffer. They did, enduring hardships, illness, hunger and constant danger. Many fought and died protecting Saint Augustine. These facts highlight the sacrifices people are willing to make to be free and can lead to rich and meaningful conversations with students.

Ultimately, the story of Fort Mose is one of hope, endurance, and triumph. Therefore, Fort Mose's story appeals to all who yearn for a broader, more inclusive and accurate depiction of colonial history that led to our country's founding.

We thank you for introducing your students to Fort Mose and the story of its courageous citizens, as defined in Florida Social Studies Standards.

For a more complete history of Fort Mose, please visit the Fort Mose Historical Society's website, and please forward questions to: [Connect@FortMose.org](mailto:Connect@FortMose.org).

**Fort Mose Historical Society: African American Community of Freedom**

## **Flight to Freedom Writing & Discussion Activity©**

### **Learning Goal**

To provide students with a standards-based, writing and discussion activity that will enable students to make personal connections to the word "freedom" in conjunction with a field trip to Fort Mose to experience the **Flight to Freedom Encounter**.

### **Materials**

- Writing materials, paper

## **Vocabulary**

**Enslaved** - A person forced into the control of another, in violation of their human rights

**Fort Mose (Moh-say')** – First legally sanctioned free African community in what became the United States.

**Freedom** - Not being imprisoned or enslaved

**Freedom seeker** - An enslaved person who seeks a life of freedom

**Perilous** - Dangerous

**Yamasee (ya mah' see)** - Native peoples who lived in the coastal region of present-day northern Georgia, and later in northeastern Florida.

**Underground Railroad** - A secret network and routes, co-created by people of various backgrounds, and used by enslaved people to escape to freedom. Today, Fort Mose is listed as a site on the US National Parks Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

## **Instruction: Flight to Freedom Reading & Writing Activities©**

### **Lesson Objectives**

#### **Preparation for the Flight to Freedom Encounter**

- Students define 'freedom' and explore what it means to different people, in different times, and life circumstances.

#### **Follow-up to the Flight to Freedom Encounter**

- Students refine their definitions of the word "freedom" after learning about the Flight to Freedom and the historical significance of Fort Mose.

### **Preliminary Activity**

- Share the story of Fort Mose with students (see above).

### **Pre-trip Writing Lesson:**

**Time: 30-45 minutes**

### **Introduction**

- Have students turn and tell a partner what freedom means to them today. (5 minutes)
- Ask students to write their definition of the word "freedom" in a paragraph and include specific examples of being free. (10 minutes)

- Have students share their paragraphs with a partner. (5 minutes)
- Then, ask several partners to share their peer's examples with the class as the teacher lists their examples of "freedom" on the board. (10 minutes)
- If time permits, provide students with an opportunity to revise their original paragraph after hearing their classmate's perspectives. (5 minutes)

### **Conclusion**

- Guide students to understand that freedom means different things to different people from various circumstances, cultures, and periods in history.
- Then, ask students to turn and talk to a partner and share examples of the different types of freedom people may have wanted in the past. (10 minutes)

### **Post-Trip Writing Lesson**

**Time: 30-45 minutes**

- Review what students learned about the freedom seekers' journey to Fort Mose and facts about the freedom seeker's daily lives. (5 minutes)
- Hand back students' pre-trip written definitions of the word 'freedom' and ask students to quietly read their work. (3 minutes)
- Ask students to write a new paragraph defining 'freedom' as seen through the eyes of a recently arrived Fort Mose resident in 1738. Encourage students to include specific details about a Fort Mose citizen's daily life. (10 minutes.)
- Students share their new paragraphs with a partner. (5 minutes)
- Teacher facilitates a whole-class discussion about how students' definitions changed after they learned about Fort Mose's freedom seekers. During the discussion, create a chart on the board to list the differences and similarities of their 'before' and 'after' definitions of the word, "freedom." (10 minutes)

### **Conclusion**

- Share that by learning about other's perspectives we often gain key knowledge about important concepts like 'freedom.' (2 minutes)

### **Extension**

- Ask students to share thoughts on how they can appreciate, preserve and advance freedom today, based upon their definition of freedom. (10 minutes)

## **Next Steps**

Visit Fort Mose Historic State Park in St. Augustine, FL. Explore the on-site museum, where you will learn much more about the Fort Mose community.

Soon, you will also be able to experience the Flight to Freedom Encounter 365 days per year, through the use of interpretive panels. For more information visit: <https://www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/fort-mose-historic-state-park>.

Visit the Castillo des San Marcos National Monument in downtown St. Augustine to learn more of the city's colonial history. For more information visit: <https://www.nps.gov/casa/index.htm>.