

By Kelsey



MARY JO  
WELLINGTON

# **Historical Character File: A Slave's Freedom**

Dear audience member,

This learning product was created by a PIONEER School for Expeditionary Learning 8<sup>th</sup> grade student in the spring of 2004. And while I have been trying for several years to intertwine historical inquiry, literacy, and craftsmanship in the curriculum I develop, this is my first attempt at facilitating the development of a product of this complexity. I am truly honored by the academic and creative risks these students were willing to take as we learned from this process together. Please take a moment to read their introductory advice below, as it will help you understand the context of our endeavors. And thank you for sharing in our learning!

-Matt Strand, PIONEER 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Humanities

## **PIONEER 8<sup>th</sup> Graders' Introduction**

### **What is a historical character file?**

- A historically/geographically accurate, fictional story about a character we created; it includes a portrait of the character, a narrative/biography, a character map, a bibliography, and the option of including artifacts from the character's life
- Our way of showing what we are learning
- An experiment in learning based on educator Ron Berger's character file project
- A project about slaves in United States history

### **What were we trying to accomplish?**

- To build our schema (background knowledge) about slavery
- To educate others/ourselves about the slavery era
- To bring back the history through every detail instead of bits and pieces
- To challenge the notion that slaves were merely stereotypical "victims"; they were human beings with complex emotions that often used various "forms of freedom" as a way to experience power and dignity
- To feel the personal, human level of history rather than simply memorizing dates and facts in order to gain a different perspective of and respect for the real people that endured this system

### **What else should the audience know?**

- Our intent is not to be racist or offensive; some of us have chosen to portray the physical and verbal abuse slaves experienced; sometimes this involves violence and racial slurs that, according to the primary, secondary, and expert resources we used in our research, were commonplace; these elements were included to convey historical realities
- We worked for 2 months on this project: asking questions, researching, discussing, drafting, drawing, critiquing, revising, and creating artifacts
- We went deep. And we'll remember it because we spent so much time on it. And we actually enjoyed the process; almost all of us would be willing to do a project like this again in the future.

Anna Wellington

Lettering.

Capitals ~

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T  
U V W X Y Z

Lower Case

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

Capitals ~

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P  
Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Lower Case

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r  
s t u v w x y z

Numbers

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Muzjgo Wellington

Lower case

abcdefghijklmnopqrstu vwxyz

bcdefghijklmnopqrstu vwxyz

bcdefghijklmnopqrstu vwxyz

abcdefghijklmnopqrstu vwxyz

abcdefghijklmnopqrstu vwxyz

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Marygo Wellington

Capitals -

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V  
W X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W  
X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W  
X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V  
W X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V  
W X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V  
W X Y Z

Manuscript in script

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u  
v w x y z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u  
v w x y z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u  
v w x y z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u  
v w x y z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u  
v w x y z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u  
v w x y z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u  
v w x y z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u  
v w x y z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u  
v w x y z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s  
t u v w x y z

Mary J Wellington

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q  
R S T U V W X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q  
R S T U V W X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q  
R S T U V W X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q  
R S T U V W X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q  
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A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q  
R S T U V W X Y Z

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q  
R S T U V W X Y Z

May 7, 1805

Dear Father,  
I just learned how to write and read,  
with in three years. I work in the home of  
the Zellington family in Georgia. I don't  
know where you are, and I miss you. Lately  
I've been trying to work well, but it's  
impossible with master such as John  
Zellington. Today I got what seems  
like one million lashes across my back,  
for dropping a plate. I hope your being  
treated with more respect. I have no  
idea where the rest of our family is,  
and I'm worried. Nights under the  
Georgia sky grow long as a dream of  
the family again. Father I'm scared,  
when will we be together? I don't  
like being pushed around, and not  
see you. Please father, stop the  
while someone from being well.

Sincerely, your daughter  
Fate (Marygo Zellington)



May 28, 1805

Dear Father,

I don't know if you feel the pain I do, but I feel so powerless with the way this world is turning. This log cabin is starting to feel more of a hell hole, than a home. There just nouse to find the freedom in my heart. Every day seems to be the same as the one before, but only longer.

Constantly, I'm dreaming of finding you, and putting an end to this nightmare. I wish these cuts and bruises would soon be invisible. Maybe someday I will be president, so I can change the way whites be treating us. Amma is the little girl who I also work for, she thinks judging people by their race is a good way to get blacks and Africans in line. I truly despise that remark. I hope you do to, I miss you very much.

With love,

Fate (Marissa Wellington)

February 3, 1806

Dear Father,

It's been awhile since I wrote you  
last. I am still beating beds, clearing rooms,  
dishes, and clothes. Last night I dreamed  
of a memory locked in the back of  
my mind. Remember back in Africa when  
me and Maulidi were playing around,  
and that boy chased me out behind  
the tree. When you, mother, and my  
older brother laughed because the boy  
was more scared than I was? I miss  
those boys. I can't stop the tears from  
falling every night, when I am always  
thinking of you. John, my master  
found more broken dishes ~~of~~ today and  
gave more swipes of the chain whip.  
I don't know how to stop the wrong  
things I do, but I still am dreaming.  
With the bleeding from all the beatings,  
I wish we can be free.

With love  
Tate (Mwanga Zellington)

April 19, 1806

Dear Father,

I just heard three slaves sing  
in the cotton field next door.  
Their words are so powerful, and  
heart warming. Mr. Wellington has  
become a gross and violent man.  
Today my mistress, friend John  
slamming me to the bed. He told  
Mrs. Wellington I pushed him and  
he never touched me. I hope you  
know that I would never do such  
a thing. Mrs. Wellington beat me with  
a broom. I ever hope life is trusting  
you right. I'm waiting to see you.

With love,

Isaiah (creasy) Wellington

March 12, 1806

Dear Father,

I feel like I have been here for, what  
seems like forever. Night and days are  
getting longer by the minute. The  
pain and sorrow are longer than anything.  
I don't know how to describe the  
tragedy, but I do know I feel deprived  
over my life and death. I don't know  
how survive this bad and the constant  
confusion. Today I went in to  
town with Miss Wellington to gather  
her needs. As I was there I could  
feel people's eyes on my back. Looking  
around I began to feel misplaced.  
It's so hard to remember our citizens  
songs. It's as if freedom is just a word,  
and not a feeling. I have a plane to get  
away and find you with me in the  
world of freedom.

With love,

Iatu (Marygo Wellington)

August 13, 1810

Dear Father,

Every I have not wrote to  
you in a few years. I hope you're doing  
good, and you are still alive. Being  
locked in this house I have nothing  
better to do other than think of you.  
Lately I've been expressed by my  
emotions I want to find my freedom.  
For soon I'll be apart of the  
Underground Railroad. I know  
someday I'll make it, but for now  
I can only dream. As the sun melts  
my skin I continue to work under  
the hands of Mr. Wellington. John  
won't stop the constant excise, gross  
treatment to me. I already gave him, his  
third child. His name is Clayton. John wants  
him to be his house slave once his older.  
I can't take this helpless things that  
keep happening. I still am here waiting  
for you.

With love,

Sarah (Mary) Wellington

October 31, 1817

Dear Father,

Today is the day I'm leaving to the  
Underground Railroad. I know deep down  
inside all long that I would fulfill  
this dream. I don't know if I'll write  
you from here on. It's late in the evening  
and I hear the dogs behind me. I'm  
sitting here cold and breathless from  
the run. I hope they won't catch me,  
because I ran farther than I thought.  
I passed at last mine fields so far.  
I just looked over my shoulder and  
there not very close yet. I wish I  
could write you more, but the temptation  
is coming in. I know someday I'll see  
you. I miss you and won't let you  
down yet.

With love,  
Fate (Maryjo Wellington)

Kelsey

## Character Map for Tatu (Maryjo Wellington)

### Physical Description

Tatu is 5'8" and has brown curly hair. She has a very dark complexion. Everyone must not be fooled by her mystical eyes. Wearing rag clothes she is good looking for a gal in her 30's.

### Fears

Tatu fears the dark because of what is there and not seen. Plus she is scared of water, for the reason of never standing close near it in her life. Also she fears never seeing her family.

### Dreams and hopes

Tatu hopes to soon be free and see her family once more. She wants to become president and change the rights of others. She really hopes to go home to Africa. She dreams of the cuts and bruises to become invisible. She also dreams of making it in life and making a difference in the life of others.

### What is freedom?

Freedom to Tatu is where she can be herself, and not some slave who is looked down on. Being able to be with her family, and be apart of her culture again.

### Family History

She doesn't know very much of family history. She knows her grandfather was a great man who helped African people with their illnesses and to heal their hearts. She knows of the tales her father would tell her. She also knows that her mother was one the nicest and caring women in Africa. She knows almost nothing of her grandparents or those who came before them.

### Likes

Bread, yellow flowers, stars, the moon, horses, kids, the smell of rain, snow, music, and outside.

### Dislikes

Pasta, the sun, dirt, being dirty, red flowers, broken hearts, sad people, when people don't smile.