

History Through Graphic Novels

Objective(s): Students will have an opportunity to learn about the conditions of African Americans in Mississippi during the summer of 1964 through reading excerpts from the *Benton County Freedom Train* newsletter, created by students in Freedom Schools during Freedom Summer.

Target Audience: Grades 6-8

Materials: Computer, Internet access, Pixton.com (suggested graphic creator), binder, and printer

Procedures: Introduce students to the idea of history being presented in graphic format by having them read historical graphic novels such as Spiegelman's *Maus* or Satrapi's *Persepolis* in their entirety or identify select excerpts. Then have them engage in either Activity #1 or Activity #2. Afterward, introduce them to the graphic/comic creation site known as Pixton. Have them create a free "For Fun" account and test out the creator tool prior to engaging in the following activities.

To become more familiar with how to use Pixton, please visit the following sites:

Pixton: <http://samsonfung.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/pixton-beginners-guide.pdf>.

Teach with Web 2.0.: <https://teachwithweb2.wikispaces.com/Pixton>.

Note: Please monitor students as they use Pixton.

Activity #1: Instructions

Ask students to read the following newsletter excerpts from the *Benton County Freedom Train*, which was a newsletter published by Benton County Freedom School members. Ask them to reflect upon one excerpt and think about the perspective from which it is told and why the writer chose to highlight that topic. Afterward, have students interpret their excerpt by creating a graphic strip of three or more panels using *Pixton* (this is the suggested graphic creation tool; however, please feel free to use others). After students create their graphic, have them share the link to their graphics with peers.

Note: Students may complete Activity #1 individually or in groups of 2-3 people.

A suggested follow-up activity is to have students create a *Benton County Freedom Train* graphic novel by printing off each student's/group's graphic and placing them in a binder for in-classroom use.

Activity #2: Instructions

Ask students to brainstorm and reflect upon what they learned from the pre-Summit activities and the webcast. Encourage them to think about key ideas and/or themes covered and what they have learned about Freedom Summer and its impact. Afterward, ask them to translate their interpretation of these occurrences into a graphic format using *Pixton's* comic creator. Ensure that they think carefully about the perspective from which their panels are told.



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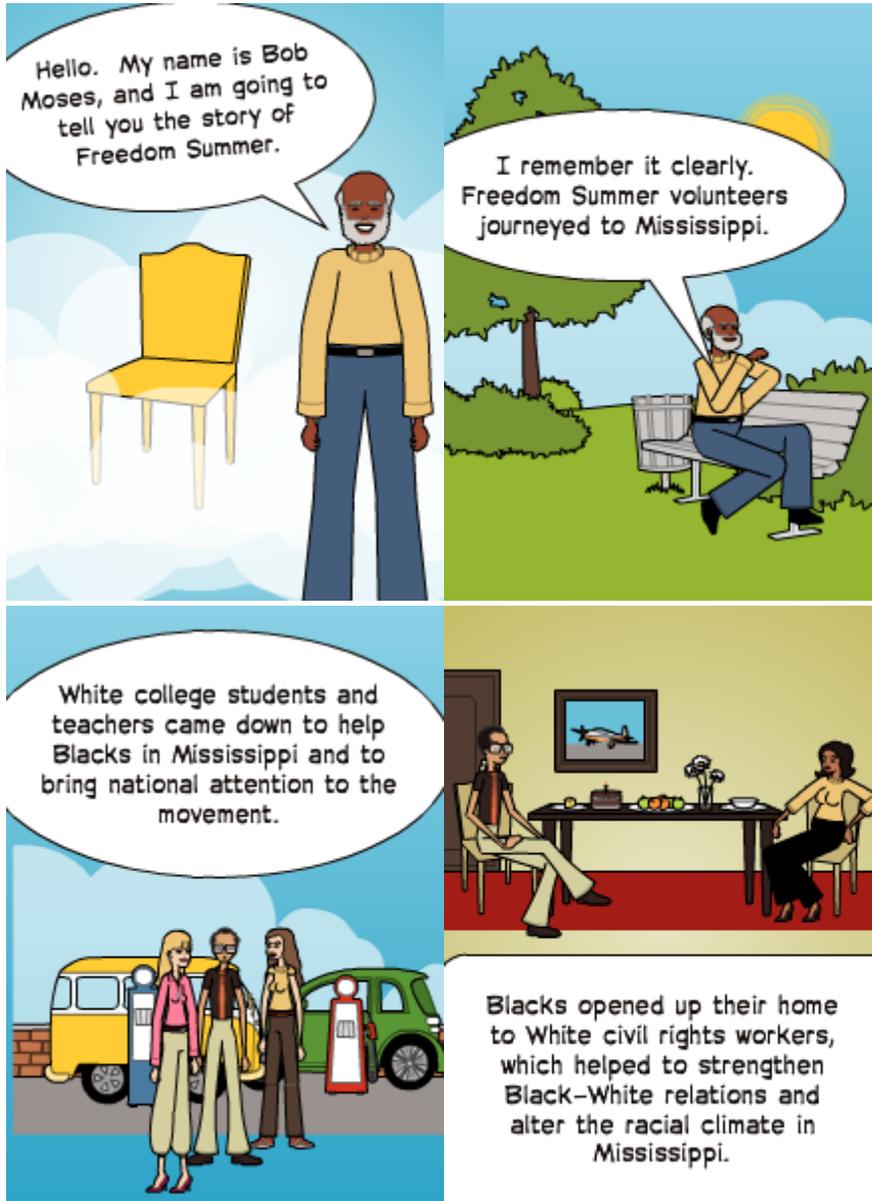
Following this reflective exercise, have students work individually or in groups with 2-3 people to create a graphic strip of three or more panels using *Pixton* (this is the suggested graphic creation tool; however, please feel free to use others). After students create their graphic, have them share the link to their graphic creation with peers.

A suggested follow-up activity is to have students create a National Youth Summit Freedom Summer graphic novel by printing off each student's/group's graphic and placing them in a binder for in-classroom use.



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Example Comic: Freedom Summer Remembrances by [Intern](#)



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THE NEGROES AND WHITES

BY Archie B. Richard

We as Negroes should be thankful for these nice people who have come over from Washington, New York, Chicago, and these different cities to help us, for we know as Negroes that we have had our share of hard times. While we are working for Whites -- ironing, housecleaning, etc., -- we can't even go into cafes, or go swimming. And no matter how hard we work for them, we sometimes are told to go to backdoors of Whites. Think of how poor the times our forefathers had in slavery days. After so many years of hard work for the Negroes, the president, Abraham Lincoln, thought that the Negroes should have freedom like Whites in the year 1863. No more slavery, but still just because our skins are dark, I wonder why they got the idea we are lower than they.

"All men are created equal." That statement means a lot. The Bible says, "Let us love one another and live together, for we are all children of God." We should think of what these statements mean.

We have been treated badly so long by the Whites, it's time someone made a change about this situation. But as we know, no job can be done without the help of the Lord. We need him at work or play -- everything we do. And I really believe in my heart it's the love and will of God that what these civil rights people are trying to do was his fixing.

So many times we have to go to windows of cafes while Whites go inside. We go to stores and are there first, but then Whites come in and are waited on first. Or we may be walking alone minding our own business and whites come along and meddle, or maybe throw something or yell at you. And nothing can be done, for as soon as Negroes would do that to Whites, the law is ready to put you in jail or something of that kind. We are getting tired. But God sees what we have to go through, and that's why he has sent people around to change this law so we, too, can have a fair chance.

Now that the civil rights bill has been signed, we children going to school have a better chance of learning the different subjects we wish to, if we put our minds to it. We can finish school, go to college, and make a new start in life; find good jobs, make maybe more than \$3.00 a day. We hope and pray that everything works out okay, that we all can work and play together--Whites and Negroes-- in the name of the Lord.

We pray to God to watch over the civil rights people in Mississippi, that nothing happens to them while they're trying to help us.

"The Negroes and Whites"

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BENTON COUNTY FREEDOM TRAIN July 15, 1964 page 3

THE NEGROES OF MISSISSIPPI by Dorothy Jean Richard

There are many Negroes in Mississippi and their jobs are mostly of farming. Some are maids and they make from \$2.50 to \$3.50 while working from 8:00 to 5:00. Usually their wages are no higher than \$3.50.

Cotton Chopping Time: this time some people were paid from \$2.50 to \$3.00. Last year the people were paid \$3.50 for 100 pounds, but this year at the place where I worked, the people were paid \$3.00. Working hours in the cotton field are from 6:00 A.M. to 12:00 noon and then they go back at 1:00 o'clock and chop to 6:00 P.M. Usually, those who get \$3.00 go to the field at 7 o'clock, stop at 11:30 for lunch and go back to the field at 1 o'clock and stop at 5 o'clock in the evening. We much prefer to stop at 5 o'clock.

When picking cotton time comes the majority of the people start from \$2.50 a hundred for chopping cotton and then finally they go up to \$3.00 and \$3.50. Later on in the fall they may make as much as \$3.75 a hundred.

I am very glad that someone has come to help us. I hope it won't be any more trouble. It's a terrible thing to have your friends missing. The only thing I can think of is death. I am sorry about that.

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"The Negroes of Mississippi"
Koenig Collection ACNMAH 0558 series 2 box 1

BENTON COUNTY FREEDOM TRAIN July 15, 1964 page 4

FEELINGS ABOUT THE FREEDOM WORKERS by Alice Ann Judge

Questions were asked about how we Negroes feel about the freedom workers coming into Mississippi. Some of the Negroes are not pleased. Most of the Whites are not pleased. They do not want the Negroes to vote for their freedom. They do not want the Negroes to have good-paying jobs. Almost all of the white people are against the freedom workers. For this I am very sorry and very hurt and I am sure others are too. I hope so.

When I heard about the three freedom workers being missing I thought to myself that I do not want to believe that they are dead - burned. I don't want to think though I wish that they would be found.

I hope we do get our freedom. Most Negroes earn their living by cotton while the white man gets all of the office jobs. The left over jobs are given to the Negroes. For example, Negroes make very little money, no more than \$3.00 or \$4.00 in the cotton fields. All men should have the same chance. If we Negroes get the chance to vote than we will have the same chances as the white man.

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"Feelings about the Freedom Workers"
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