

Riding Freedom
Discussion Guide
Grades 4-5

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Before reading, have a class discussion to activate prior knowledge about the antebellum period in US history, including slavery and western migration. What do students know about this time period? What groups had the most rights? What groups had few to no rights? Make a list of student generated responses on an anchor chart or whiteboard.
- *Riding Freedom* is a historical fiction novel, which means that it is based on a true story, but the author may have made some changes. Discuss with the class how the purpose of a historical fiction novel differs from that of a textbook.
- Frontload vocabulary: lurch, tend, pester, consider, hesitate, reputation, ruffle, coax, recognition, reluctantly, untamed, maneuver

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

- How is Charlotte different than other children at the orphanage? (Ch. 1)
- How does Charlotte feel about the loss of Freedom and Hay? (Ch. 2)
- Why does Charlotte decide to dress up as a boy? (Ch. 3)
- How does Charlotte escape from the orphanage? (Ch. 3 and Ch. 4)
- How is Charlotte able to travel to Rhode Island? (Ch. 5)
- How does Charlotte feel about her interaction with Mr. Millshark? (Ch. 6)
- Why does Charlotte want to go to California? (Ch. 7)
- How did Charlotte overcome her injury? (Ch. 8)
- Why do you think Charlotte continues to dress as a man? (Ch. 6 Ch. 7, and Ch. 8)
- How did Charlotte get her ranch? (Ch. 9)
- Why is it important to Charlotte to vote? (Ch. 10)

After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

Charlotte had overcome many different challenges! What are some challenges you have faced? How did you overcome those challenges? Write your answers on chart paper or a whiteboard.

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Direct students to the “From the Author” section (p. 135) and consider, what was included from the real Charlotte’s life, what was left out or changed, and why/how the author decided what to include, leave out, or change.
- Encourage students to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let students explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.