

What did freedom mean for Anna?



Image taken from film *Anna*. Burton & Dreher (Co-Directors, Co-Producers), Thomas (Co-Producer). (2018).

Supporting Questions

1. What were the pivotal moments in Anna's life?
2. What do the pivotal moments in Anna's life tell us about the ways in which she maintained her autonomy?
3. What were the results of Anna's petition for freedom? How did that affect her life going forward?

Anna: One Woman's Quest for Freedom

What did freedom mean for Anna?		
Nebraska Social Studies Standards	SS 8.4.2 (US) Students will analyze the impact of people, events, ideas and symbols upon US history using multiple types of sources.	
Staging the Compelling Question	Students view an image of Anna leaping from a third-floor window and draw inferences and make predictions about the image, drawing on background knowledge and previous understanding.	
Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
What were the pivotal moments in Anna's life?	What do the pivotal moments in Anna's life tell us about the ways in which she maintained her autonomy?	What were the results of Anna's petition for freedom and how did that affect her life going forward?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Complete a storyboard of six pivotal moments in Ann's life that you think most contributed to her personal growth.	Working from the six pivotal moments on the storyboards, rank how much personal autonomy or freedom Ann Williams had in each moment from least to most autonomy.	Write a narrative, expository, or persuasive piece explaining the story.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Source A: Film: Anna Source B: Anna: Historical Background	Source A: A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery in the United States by Jesse Torrey	Source A: Ann Williams case summary from O Say Can You See Source B: Excerpts from Slavery and the Domestic Slave-Trade in the United States by Ethan Allen Andrews
Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT Construct an argument with evidence in response to the question, "What did freedom mean for Anna?" EXTENSION Utilizing a graphic organizer, identify what social, political, and legal resources Ann Williams used to navigate from enslavement to freedom. As part of your organizer, include how she utilized each.	
Taking Informed Action	UNDERSTAND How should we remember Ann Williams? What parts of her life should we highlight if we want to understand the experiences of enslaved people in the United States? ASSESS Determine which parts of Ann Williams' life received either too much or not enough attention in the film <i>Anna</i> . ACT Based on your new understanding of Ann Williams' life and the experience of slavery, use your storyboard to create a presentation (animation or persuasive speech) that emphasizes the events and choices you think best represent our remembrance of Ann Williams.	

*Featured sources are suggested and links are provided. It may be that these links are broken and we apologize in advance for the inconvenience

Anna: One Woman's Quest for Freedom

Overview

Inquiry Description

In November of 1815, an enslaved woman known only as Anna jumped out of a third floor window in Washington, D.C., in what was assumed to be a suicide attempt. Presumed dead, abolitionists used her story to expose the harsh realities of slavery and advocate for better treatment of enslaved people. In 2015, the *O Say Can You See* research project uncovered an 1828 petition for freedom from an Ann Williams for herself and three children. This woman was the same “Anna” who had leapt from the window, still alive but severely injured from her fall, a contrast to the widely held belief that she had died in the fall. In 1832, a jury ruled in her favor, granting Ann and her three children freedom from slaveholder George Williams. Ann and her children went on to live free in Washington, subsisting on the weekly \$1.50 that Ann’s still enslaved husband was able to provide for his family. This inquiry and the compelling question seeks to address the autonomy that enslaved African Americans had, and the question of what freedom meant to Anna.

Structure

This inquiry is structured into three supporting questions that unpack the larger compelling question, segmenting the inquiry into manageable sections for classroom implementation. Each supporting question is reinforced with credible sources, and answerable with relevant and varied formative performance tasks. The questions are created to help guide inquiry into specific aspects of Anna’s life that students will benefit most from examining.

Staging the Compelling Question

Staging the Compelling Question

Students first engage with Ann Williams’ story by examining an image depicting its most shocking moment—her leap from the third floor of a D.C. tavern in which she was being temporarily held captive (with her daughters) after being sold in Prince George County, Maryland, to a “Georgia trader.” Students begin to think about the experiences and emotional state that may have led Anna to make such a drastic decision as a means of understanding the relationship between the unique circumstances of her life and the broader forces of institutionalized American slavery.

*Anna: One Woman's Quest for Freedom***Staging the Compelling Question Description**

To structure this opening element of the inquiry we suggest projecting the [image of Anna](#) leaping from the tavern window for students; and as they enter the classroom, invite them to either write or discuss their initial observations: “What do you see in this image? What do you think is happening? What questions do you have?” Be sure to point out the script at the bottom of the image.

* For more guidance/structure in the staging element of the inquiry see [Visual Thinking Strategies](#) for more insight.

Questions to guide further discussion and transition into the film:

- What might lead someone to take such drastic action?
- How do you think this woman might have felt when she made this extreme decision?

At the close of the discussion, teachers may need to fill in the gaps in terms of student knowledge of the image, the event captured, and moreover, Anna's story. Teachers at this point may reveal more about Ann Williams including the fact that she lived as an enslaved woman in Maryland and Washington, D.C., in the early nineteenth century. In reference to the image, Anna's extreme (perhaps desperate) choice represented a pivotal moment in her life: she survived the fall and eventually won her freedom without running away or ever leaving slave territory. Teachers can further prime student interests in Anna's story by prompting with questions such as: How would winning her freedom be possible? Who or what might have helped Anna gain her freedom?"

Supporting Question 1

After viewing the film, students are challenged with the inquiry's first supporting question, “What were the pivotal moments in Anna's life?” The question is intended to have students consider and subsequently document the most important moments in Anna's life. The sources for the supporting question include a film and an essay that describe the events of Anna's escape to freedom, the subsequent trial regarding her freedom, and life as a free woman. In addition, the sources touch briefly on her life before these events, such as Anna's connections to her mother, her philosophy on freedom, her approaches to creating and maintaining a loving relationship with her husband, Edward, and the trust and responsibility placed in Edward that allowed him to make trips across the Chesapeake Bay independently.

In order to address the supporting question, students complete a storyboard identifying six pivotal moments in Ann's life. An approach to completing the storyboard could include:

- a brief explanation of the event (What happened? Who was involved? What was the result?)
- a brief (2-3 sentence) argument for the moment's significance in her life drawing on events across the range of her life (i.e. her mother's direction for self-care, the passing down of legacies from the African homeland to the American plantation, finding love, marrying, and having children were noteworthy events for Anna, just as later losing her daughters or suing for freedom would become.)

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The storyboard task gives students an opportunity to process the key moments in Anna's life, both uplifting and traumatic including her marriage, creating a family, leaping from the tavern window, and eventually, emancipation and life as a free person. While teachers should focus on this task as a means of ensuring students' comprehension of the narrative, creating the storyboard also enables students to begin connecting specific events and choices in Anna's life to broader, more common experiences of enslavement.

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Supporting Question 1

Featured Source A

[Anna](#) film.

Featured Source:

Thomas, W. G., III, & Dreher, K. (Producers). (2018). *Anna* [Video file]. Retrieved August 19, 2024, from <https://animatinghistory.unl.edu/films/anna/>

This short film (12 minutes) is an animated documentary about the life of Ann “Anna” Williams and her quest for freedom leading up to and after the events of her jump from the third floor tavern window.

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Supporting Question 1

Featured Source B

[Anna: Historical Background](#)

Burton, M., Dreher, K., & Thomas, W. G., III. (n.d.). *Anna: Historical Background*. Retrieved August 19, 2024, from <https://animatinghistory.unl.edu/history/anna/>

This written source documents the life of Ann Williams and the account of how historians discovered her story and connected all of the pieces together. The source helps students understand Anna's story, especially after her jump. It explains the rest of her life after the historic moment, and establishes her connection to Torrey, who enters the story afterwards. The text of this source is below.

In November 1815, a woman known only as "Anna" leapt from the third floor window of a tavern in Washington, D.C., after she was sold to Georgia traders and separated from her family. Abolitionist writers seized on her story, depicting her act as an attempted suicide. For two hundred years, her identity and her ultimate fate remained unknown. In 2015, her petition for freedom filed in the Circuit Court for D.C. came to light in the *O Say Can You See* collaborative research project. Her name was Ann Williams. She suffered a broken back and fractured her arms, but she survived the fall. She and her husband had four more children. Ann won freedom in court for herself and her children in 1832.

News of Anna's alleged suicide attempt spread across the city and eventually reached Jesse Torrey, a physician from Philadelphia who was visiting Washington three weeks later. Shocked by her tale and the slave **coffles** he was seeing in the nation's new capital, Torrey heard that she had broken her back and both of her arms. Rumors circulated that she had died from the fall.

On December 19th, Torrey visited George Miller's tavern on F Street to **inquire** about her fate, and his account has been the main source for her depiction in later writings. He found her very much alive, lying on a bed on the floor in the third floor **garret**, covered with a blood stained white woolen blanket. He learned that her broken arms had not set correctly, that her back had been broken, and that she might not walk again. The slave trader left her behind but took her two girls south to be sold. Torrey also discovered that several others who had been kidnapped and were being held in Miller's Tavern, and he enlisted local lawyer Francis Scott Key to bring a series of **habeas corpus** cases in the D.C. courts.

At her bedside, seeking some sort of explanation, Torrey asked her why she would have committed "such a frantic act." And she reportedly replied:

They brought me away with two of my children, and would'nt let me see my husband—they did'nt sell my husband, and I did'nt want to go;—I was so confus'd and 'istratcted, that I did'nt know hardly what I was about—but I did'nt want to go, and I jumped out of the window; —but I am sorry now that I did it; —they have carried my children off with 'em to Carolina.

These words were the only verbal record of her story, and even though Torrey published them in his antislavery tract called *A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery*, he did not identify her by name. When published in 1817,

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Torrey's pamphlet sold poorly and went largely ignored even in antislavery circles in New England. There were efforts to discredit it and vicious rumors swirled that he made up many of the events he recounted, though the documentary evidence recently unearthed proves the **veracity** of his account.

In the years that followed, she was known only as "Anna." None of the published accounts of her actions revealed much about her life or social world, instead preferring to use her story to elicit sympathy from whites in the antislavery cause or to promote colonization of Blacks out of the United States. Anna's dramatic act prompted a Congressional inquiry in 1816 into kidnapping and the interstate slave trade in Washington, D.C. The Committee chair, Virginia Congressman John Randolph, **subpoenaed** testimony from Torrey, from the medical doctors who treated Anna, and from his friend Francis Scott Key, a prominent attorney who had helped gather evidence about the kidnappings.

In the aftermath of the congressional investigation, George Miller's tavern on F Street had become notorious as a place where the inhumanity of the slave trade was laid bare. In fact, Miller accommodated his business to the slave trade so much that the F Street tavern was known in local circles as "the Negro **Bastille**." Then in April 1819, the tavern caught fire, and some local whites refused on principle to help put out the fire at Miller's Tavern. Instead, they carried water only to neighboring buildings to prevent the fire from spreading. During the fire, some speculated that slaves were chained up in the third floor garret; others recounted the story of the woman who jumped from the window in 1815, saying that she had died of her injuries.

Anna disappeared from the public record after the F Street fire, but thirteen years after her leap from the tavern window, a woman named Ann Williams filed a petition for freedom in the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, claiming that George Miller, Sr., and George Miller, Jr., held her unjustly in slavery. Her 1828 petition included her children Ann Maria, Tobias, and John. Her attorney, not coincidentally, was Francis Scott Key, who requested that the court provide a "certificate for their protection" indicating that their freedom petition had been filed and was pending. Clearly, they were concerned that the Millers might attempt to sell Ann Williams and her children now that they sought to claim their freedom. Over the four years from the time she filed her freedom suit to when the case went to trial in the summer of 1832, Ann Williams lived independently and to a large degree as free woman.

The court repeatedly summoned both George Millers to appear, but for years neither responded. Every six months, Key filed another summons—January 1829, July 1831, February 1832—and the summonses went unanswered. Then on June 27, 1832, Ann discovered that the Millers had taken her twelve-year-old son out of the District, presumably to sell him. Key brought **affidavits** into the court about the removal, and the court scheduled an immediate jury trial.

George Miller, Sr., filed a single document in the case: a receipt for his purchase of a 24-year-old woman named Ann on November 29, 1815, for \$5. With this bill of sale, Miller could claim he owned not only Ann's once-broken body, but also her yet unborn children. The timing of the purchase and the shockingly low price of sale indicate that Ann Williams was without a doubt the woman who jumped out of Miller's tavern in late November 1815. The court minutes of her trial provide the final proof that Ann Williams was Anna. Among the witnesses who testified on her behalf was William Gardner, one of the men who refused to help put out the fire in 1819 at Miller's F Street tavern. Two doctors were called to testify as well, the same doctors who treated her and the others in tavern: Dr. Benjamin King and Dr. W. Jones.

On July 2, 1832, the jury rendered a verdict for Ann Williams and her children. They were free. While the reasons the jury found in favor of Ann Williams were not recorded, the jurors may have determined that she was brought to the District of Columbia in November 1815 to be sold in violation of Maryland law, or that her son in 1832 was about to be taken out of the District to be sold. Under Maryland law, domestic slave traders and

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slaveholders could not import slaves into Maryland for the purpose of selling them. However, slaveholders with a "**bona fide** intention of settling" in Maryland could move from other states into Maryland, as long as they registered their enslaved laborers within one year of arrival as a resident. Additionally, the jury may simply have despised Miller and his "Negro Bastille" and could have been **predisposed** to render a verdict for Ann Williams and her children.

Three years later, "Anna" returned to the public limelight when she was featured in Ethan Allen Andrews' *Slavery and the Domestic Slave-Trade in the United States*, a series of letters addressed to the executive committee of the American Union for the Relief and Improvement of the Colored Race. He tracked down Ann in Washington and found her living in freedom, a mother of four children, and able to walk, though with difficulty. Yet, Andrews' sympathy and anti-slavery reformism came with profound limits. He portrayed Anna as a suffering figure, cut off from her family, a symbol for what slavery as a whole did to the enslaved. He barely mentioned Ann's freedom suit. But he did provide details that Torrey did not.

According to Andrews, Ann was born near Bladensburgh, Maryland. When the slaveholder who claimed her fell into debt, he sold her and her two daughters to the man who held her husband on a neighboring plantation. When he too succumbed to his debts, Ann and her children were to be sold to slave trader from Georgia. When this news reached Ann, she begged the slaveholder not to tear her family apart. Seemingly moved by her pleas, he "swore a great oath that they should not be separated." He did not honor his word.

Once the Georgia man saw her condition after her leap from the window, he left her behind with the tavern keeper, George Miller, taking her daughters away with him to Georgia. But Ann was eventually reunited with her husband who remained enslaved and was able to provide \$1.50 a week to support his family. The couple had four more children, though only a son and daughter were yet living in 1835.

Ann Williams' story was more than a single "frantic act," and her actions were far more calculated and intentional than those who wrote about her were willing to admit. Brought to Washington, D.C., she lost two of her children to the slave trade. Her actions to resist the breakup of her family brought public attention to the moral problem of slavery and to the desperation and terror of the slave trade. George Miller and his tavern became the focal point for the community's resistance to enslavement, and on account of her, some members of the community were willing to let the tavern burn to the ground in 1819. Rather than running away, she fought slavery in one place, accumulating allies, resources, and standing in the community, and eventually, obtaining freedom for herself and her children.

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Vocabulary:

1. **coffles:** a train of enslaved people fastened together
2. **inquire:** to ask about
3. **garret:** a room or unfinished part of a house just under the roof
4. **habeas corpus:** states that a person cannot be kept in prison unless they have first been brought before a court of law, which decides whether it is legal for the, to be kept in prison
5. **veracity:** something true
6. **subpoenaed:** commands the person designated in it to appear in court under a penalty for failure
7. **Bastille:** prison or jail
8. **affidavit:** a sworn statement in writing especially under oath or on affirmation
9. **bona fide:** sincere
10. **predisposed:** to influence one to have or take an attitude toward something

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Supporting Question 2

After completing the storyboard tasks, students consider the ability of enslaved people to maintain and express their own autonomy through the supporting question, “What do the pivotal moments in Anna’s life tell us about the ways in which she maintained her autonomy?” Teachers and students should discuss definitions of freedom and autonomy before beginning the formative task. During discussion, be sure to have students consider how freedoms might be limited and the multiple ways people could assert autonomy (i.e. living on their own, moving freely in certain spaces or across long distances, making their own income, bringing a case to court, finding love, marrying, escaping—on the other end of the spectrum physical restraint, being watched, etc.).

In order to address the second supporting question, students return to the storyboard that they created with the first task. Students should rank how much personal autonomy or freedom Anna had in each moment from least to most autonomy. This task encourages students to further assess pivotal moments identified in the storyboard task and determine when Anna displayed the most personal freedom/autonomy, and conversely, when was she most constrained by her circumstances. By making judgments about these pivotal moments, students confront the degree to which institutionalized slavery restricted individual choices as well as the ingenuity and heroism of men and women negotiating those difficult situations. Each of these areas offer opportunities to deepen students’ understandings of the complicated ways slavery played out in practice and the large degree of autonomy many enslaved people maintained in many parts of their lives.

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Supporting Question 2

Featured Source

Source A: *A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery in the United States*
by Jesse TorreyFeatured Source: [A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery in the United States by Jesse Torrey](#)

A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery in the United States (1817), Jesse Torrey. In *O Say Can You See: Early Washington, D.C., Law & Family*, edited by William G. Thomas III, et al. University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Accessed October 25, 2018. <http://earlywashingtondc.org/doc/oscys.supp.0001.001>

This is account by a white physician about meeting Ann Williams and seeing of the conditions that enslaved people experienced in the tavern. With anti-slavery motives, Torrey recounts Anna's story and the stories of other enslaved people and the atrocity of slavery. These are the only known verbal accounts of Anna. The text of this source is below.

[I was told]... that a black woman, destined for transportation to Georgia, with a coffle which was about to start, attempted to escape, by jumping out of the window of the garret of a three story brick tavern in F. Street, about day break in the morning; and that in the fall she had her back and both arms broken! I remarked that I did not wonder that she did so, and inquired whether it had not killed her? To which he replied, that he understood that she was dead, and that the Georgia-men, had gone off with the others. The [story] of this shocking disaster, excited considerable [turmoil] in my mind... of the multiplied horrors added to slavery, when its victims are bought and sold, frequently for distant destinations, with as much indifference as four-footed beasts.

Supposing this to have been a recent [event], and [wanting to see] the mangled slave before she should be buried, I proceeded with some haste, early on the following morning, in search of the house already mentioned. Calling at a house near the one at which the catastrophe occurred, I was informed, that it had been three weeks since it took place, and that the woman was still living. Having found the house, I [asked] permission of the landlord to see the wounded woman; to which he [agreed], and directed a lad to conduct me to her room ; which was in the garret over the third story of the house. On entering the room, I observed her lying upon a bed on the floor, and covered with a white woolen blanket, on which were several spots of blood, (from her wounds,) which I perceived was red, despite the **opacity** of her skin. Her [face], though very pale from the shock she had received, and **dejected** with grief, appeared sympathetic.

Both her arms were broken between the elbows and wrists, and had undoubtedly been well set and dressed; but from her restlessness, she had displaced the bones again, so that they were **perceptibly** crooked. [I] have since been informed by the Mayor of the city, who is a physician, and resides not far distant from the place, that he was called to visit her immediately after her fall; and found besides her arms being broken, that the lower part of the spine was badly shattered, so that it was doubtful whether she would ever be capable of walking again, if she should survive. The lady of the Mayor said she was awakened from sleep by the fall of the woman, and heard her heavy struggling groans.

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I inquired of her, whether she was asleep when she sprang from the window. She replied, "No, no more than I am now." Asking her what was the cause of her doing such a **frantic** act as that, she replied, "They brought me away with two of my children, and would'nt let me see my husband—they did'nt sell my husband, and I did'nt want to go;—I was so confus'd and 'istracted, that I did'nt know hardly what I was about—but I did'nt want to go, and I jumped out of the window;—but I am sorry now that I did it;—they have carried my children off with 'em to Carolina." I was informed that the Slave Trader, who had purchased her near Bladensburgh, (she being a legal slave,) gave her to the landlord as a **compensation** for taking care of her.

Thus her family was **dispersed** from north to south, and herself nearly torn in pieces, without the shadow of a hope of ever seeing or hearing from her children again! He that can behold this "poor woman," (as a respectable citizen of Washington afterwards expressed himself, on requesting of her landlord the privilege of seeing her,) and listen to her **unvarnished** story; and then **delineate** it with the mental pencil without a **humid** eye, I will confess possesses a **stouter** heart than I do.

Vocabulary:

1. **opacity:** not translucent or transparent, the degree to which something reduces the passage of light.
2. **dejected:** sad and depressed
3. **perceptibly:** noticeably
4. **frantic:** wild and distraught with fear, anxiety, or another emotion
5. **compensation:** something, usually money, awarded to someone to as payment or for services.
6. **dispersed:** spread over a wide area
7. **unvarnished:** plain and straightforward, honest
8. **delineate:** describe precisely
9. **humid:** moisture, teary
10. **stouter:** stronger

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Supporting Question 3

The third and final supporting question of the inquiry asks students, “How did the results of Ann Williams’ petition for freedom impact the rest of her life?” In response to the question and using the sources, students construct an argument explaining the jury’s decision, which left Anna a free woman. While the trial serves as a major turning point in Ann’s life, this supporting question encourages students to look at her life after she is granted freedom by the court. Tying it back to the compelling question, students will need to evaluate the freedoms that Anna had after winning in court. What does that freedom look like compared to what students thought freedom would look like?

In the task, students examine the Gardiner-Miller exchange in the *Washington Gazette*, the *O Say Can You See* case summary, and excerpts from Andrews’ *Slavery and the Domestic Slave-Trade in the United States* in order to form their opinions about Ann’s final freedom. Students’ arguments may vary. Once students complete the task and share their arguments, students will be prepared to answer the compelling question “What did freedom mean for Anna?”

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Supporting Question 3

Featured Source A

[Ann Williams case summary from *O Say Can You See*](#)Featured Source: [Ann Williams case summary from *O Say Can You See*](#)

Thomas III, William G., Kaci Nash, Laura Weakly, Karin Dalziel, and Jessica Dussault. *O Say Can You See: Early Washington, D.C., Law & Family*. University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Accessed September 11, 2015. <http://earlywashingtondc.org>

This is a case summary from the authors of *O Say Can You See* about the trial of Ann Williams where she won her freedom. The source outlines the case, and provides explanation further into how the trial progressed as well as some conjecture for the ruling. The text of this source is below.

Over the four years that passed from the time she filed her freedom suit to when the case went to trial in the summer of 1832, Ann Williams lived independently, and to a large degree, as a free woman. The federal census in 1830 recorded her living near Miller's tavern in Ward 2 of Washington, D.C., as a free colored person with three others in the household: two young men and a young woman, likely her children, Tobias, John, and Ann Maria. Even the **defendants'** attorneys in their jury instructions conceded that George Miller had allowed her to live "at large." Armed with the certificate from the court stating she had filed her petition for freedom, and living on her own, Ann Williams could reasonably present herself as free while the suit dragged on.

The court repeatedly summoned both the tavern keeper George Miller and his son, George Miller Jr., to appear in court, but for years neither responded. Every six months, Williams' attorneys, Francis Scott Key and James Dunlop, filed another summons—January 1829, July 1831, February 1832—and the summonses went unanswered. Then on June 27, 1832, the attorneys discovered that the Millers had taken the twelve-year-old son of Ann Williams out of the District, presumably to sell him. They brought affidavits into the court about the impending sale and the court scheduled a jury trial.

Two weeks later, George Miller filed a single document in the case: a receipt for his purchase of a slave named Ann, 24 years old, on November 29, 1815, for \$5. The timing of the purchase and the unusually low price of sale indicate that Ann Williams was without a doubt the enslaved woman who jumped out of Miller's tavern in late November 1815, rather than be sold south to Georgia. Known as "Anna" in several abolitionist tracts, Ann was featured prominently, though not named, in Jesse Torrey's *A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery*, published in 1817. Two of her children had been sold already, and she would never see them again. Torrey's account of Ann's actions depicted her as "frantic," desperate, and suicidal. She broke her back and arms in the fall, and some historians assumed she died as a result. Her petition for freedom thirteen years later calls into question these interpretations.

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The court minutes of her trial provide the final proof that Ann Williams was Anna. Among the witnesses who testified on her behalf was William Gardner, who in 1819, refused to help put out a fire at Miller's tavern because he objected to Miller's role in aiding and abetting the slave trade. Two doctors were called to testify as well, the same doctors who treated her and the others in the F Street tavern: Dr. Benjamin King and Dr. W. Jones. Her fourth witness was Washington Boyd, U.S. Marshal for the District of Columbia from 1808 to 1818, who lived on F Street opposite George Miller's tavern.

On July 2, 1832, the jury rendered a verdict for the **plaintiff**, Ann Williams, and her children. While the reasons the jury found in favor of Ann were not recorded in the minutes, we can **surmise** some of the reasons for the verdict. The jury may have determined that Ann Williams was brought into the District of Columbia in November 1815 to be sold in a violation of the Maryland Act of 1796. Under its terms, domestic slave traders could not import slaves into Maryland for the purpose of selling them in the state. Slaveholders with a "bona fide intention of settling" there could move from other states into Maryland, as long as they registered their enslaved laborers within one year of arrival as a resident. Under the 1783 and 1796 acts, slaveholders moving into Maryland had to certify that all of the enslaved people, including all of the mothers of enslaved children under three, had resided in the U.S. for at least three years. This **provision** was designed to prevent enslavers from using Maryland as a way station in the transatlantic slave trade—by arriving in a state that did not bar importation, then moving to Maryland and holding the enslaved there for later sale. Slaveholders could obtain an exemption to this provision, but they had to verify that the enslaved labor was not intended for sale. In the case of Ann Williams, neither Miller nor the slave trader had obtained an exemption. Ann Williams and her children were free.

Vocabulary:

1. **plaintiff:** a person who brings a legal action
2. **surmise:** a thought or idea based on limited evidence
3. **provision:** a measure taken beforehand to deal with a need

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Supporting Question 3

Featured Source B

[Excerpts from *Slavery and the Domestic Slave-Trade in the United States* \(1836\) by Ethan Allen Andrews](#)

Featured Source: [Excerpts from *Slavery and the Domestic Slave-Trade in the United States* \(1836\) by Ethan Allen Andrews](#)

Andrews, Ethan Allen. Excerpts from *Slavery and the Domestic Slave-Trade in the United States*. Accessed August 19, 2024. <https://animatinghistory.unl.edu/history/anna/andrews/>. The text of this source is below.

Containing letters to the Executive Committee of the American Union for the Relief and Improvement of the Colored Race in Boston, MA.

Letter XVII (17)

Washington, July 21, 1835

... A poor woman is now [living] in this city, who, together with her two children, was separated from her husband, and brought to this place, in order to be shipped for Georgia. In her **distraction** at being separated from her husband, she leaped from an upper window, and falling upon the pavement, her limbs were broken in a shocking matter. She is a helpless cripple, but in her **affliction** she has applied to the great Physician, who heals the **maladies** of the soul, and is now waiting in the confident hope, that she shall meet again her dear children "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." ...

Letter XIX. (19)

Washington, July 23, 1835

... This evening I have seen old Anna, the unfortunate slave mentioned under the date of the 21st instant, as having thrown herself from an upper window, many years since, while distracted at being violently separated from her husband. She was born near Bladensburgh. Her "old master," as she calls him, in whose family she was born, and of whom she speaks with great respect, became involved in debt, and the sheriff was about to seize his property. Finding he could no longer retain his slaves, he consented to sell Anna to her husband's master, for she was now married to a slave upon a neighboring plantation, and was the mother of two little girls. In her new situation, Anna was treated unkindly, and was compelled to work very hard, both in the house and in the field. Her new master soon died, but her circumstances were not improved at his death; and when she had been in this family about a year, their affairs also became much involved in consequence of the **improvidence** of her young master, who was very extravagant in his expenses, and **dissipated** in his habits, or, as old Anna expresses it in her dialect, he was "very rapid." It now became necessary that this family, in its turn, should dispose of a part of their few slaves to pay their pressing debts, and it was determined that Anna, who had been last purchased, should be sold with her children. Anna is so ignorant, and so many years of sorrow have now passed over her, since the occurrences, that she cannot tell the ages of her little girls. She only says, "the youngest was *about so high*, and the oldest *about so*

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much higher," raising her crippled arms, as if to show us their height by putting her feeble hands once more upon their heads. From her description, their ages might have been three and six years.

When Anna heard that she was to be sold to a man from Georgia, she "went," as she says, "upon her knees to her young master, and begged him that she and her children might not be separated from her husband and their father." **Vice** seems not yet fully to have hardened his heart, for it is plain from Anna's simple narrative, that he was moved by her appeal, and "swore," as she says, "a great oath, that they should not be separated." He did not, however, find it convenient to [keep] his promise, and soon after, her husband was one day sent away to work at a remote part of the plantation, and "the man from Georgia," as she calls her purchaser, came in the meantime to her master's house. And now she was ordered to take her children, and go immediately with her new owner. She says "she was dreadfully frightened, and did not know what to do," when they took her by force and compelled her to go. She does not remember anything distinctly which followed, and has only a recollection of a dreadful state of terror and **affright**, in which she seems to have been deprived of the use of her reason, and to have become frantic with grief and apprehension. During this state she was brought to Washington, and was placed, with a great number of others, in the upper room of a three-story house in F. street. During the night, she threw herself from the window, and fell upon the pavement. Her arms were broken and dislocated, and her lower limbs and back dreadfully injured. Her master, perceiving that she could never be of any use to him, left her lying in the garret to which she had been carried, and taking her little girls and his other slaves, departed with them to Georgia. It was then winter, and poor Anna's sufferings were extreme, not only from broken limbs and bruises, but from cold. She was alone, without fire, with no one to help her, and was totally unable to help herself. Sometimes she suffered greatly from thirst occasioned by fever, and often from cold, when the blanket which covered her would slip from her, and she could not replace it, so that when the physician came to see her in the morning—for a physician sometimes visited her—he would find her, as she says, "more dead than alive."

Her bones were either not set in a proper manner, or did not remain so, and one of the bones of her left arm has protruded two or three inches below the wrist, and is only kept from pushing its way through, by means of the integuments. The wrist of the other hand also is nearly useless. When she was able to leave her bed, the man at whose house she had been left, claimed her as his slave, alleging that her Georgia master had given her to him, and she was therefore compelled to remain at Washington, where her husband also came to live, some time after her recovery.

Since Anna has lived at Washington, she has had four children, two only of whom are now living—a son and a daughter. Her husband continues a slave, but is allowed one dollar and fifty cents a week from his wages, for the support of himself and family. She says she has never learned to "read book," but, since her afflictions, she hopes that she has become a child of God. For some time, she could not bear to think of seeing the family, who by selling her had occasioned all her affliction; but when she thought so, she says she was unhappy, and at length "she had a heart to pray that she might forgive them, and that God would forgive them, and then she was happy." At length she saw her old mistress, who reproached her very much for having been unwilling to go to Georgia!

After some years, the man at whose house she had been left, claiming her children also, and took them away, but Anna applied to the Attorney for the District, who obtained "free papers" for her and her children.

She has never heard from her little girls, who were carried to Georgia, and does not expect to know anything about them in this world. She says "she has done mourning about them, but always prays for them, and expects to meet them *up there*." She now blesses God for all her afflictions, because they have been, as she hopes, the means of her conversion; and she seems especially grateful that her life was so remarkably preserved, at a time when she had not learned to be submissive to the will of God. She prizes greatly her religious privileges, and particularly her *class meetings*, which are the more valuable to her from her inability to read.

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Vocabulary:

1. **distraction:** extreme agitation of the mind or emotions, frenzy
2. **affliction:** something that causes pain or suffering
3. **maladies:** a disease or sickness
4. **improvidence:** neglecting to provide for future needs, wasteful
5. **dissipated:** indulging in excessive devotion to pleasure
6. **vice:** immoral or wicked behavior
7. **affright:** fright

*Anna: One Woman's Quest for Freedom***Summative Performance Task**

At this point in the inquiry students have examined the relationships between Ann Williams' biography and the experience of enslavement, the nature of personal autonomy for enslaved people, and the legal ambiguities of slavery and freedom in the early-nineteenth-century United States. Students now use their thinking about each of these issues to construct an argument, supported by specific evidence, to answer the culminating compelling question and Summative Performance Task: "What did freedom mean for Anna?" Within the context of these resources, students should be encouraged to evaluate the extent to which they believe Anna was able to exercise autonomy throughout her life, before and after freedom. Prior to crafting their response, teachers may use a chart or graphic organizer to help students map out their thoughts and reflections.

At the close of the inquiry, students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by considering ways of remembering Anna and how her experiences have contributed to an understanding of the experiences of enslaved people more broadly. They can assess this issue by reflecting on how Anna's life was depicted in the film and critically weigh which aspects of her life they feel received either too much or potentially not enough attention. Students can then act by creating a public presentation that unpacks their remembrance of Ann Williams.