



**maryland**  
historical society

**Historical Investigation:**

**Was Baltimore an Desirable Destination for Newly Freed African Americans after the Civil War?**

**Grades:** 8<sup>th</sup>; High School U.S. History

**Time:** 45 to 60 minutes

**Materials:**

1. Graphic organizer, one per student
2. Primary source handout, one per student

**Primary Sources:**

1. "The Freedmen in Maryland," *Baltimore American*, 10 November 1864. Maryland Historical Society Library, Baltimore, Maryland.
2. "Report of the Overseer," *The Ordinances of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore*, 1866. Maryland Historical Society Library, Baltimore, Maryland.
3. "The Negroes Become a Nuisance," *Baltimore Gazette*, 2 July 1866. Maryland Historical Society Library, Baltimore, Maryland.
4. "The Freemen To Take Care of Themselves," *Baltimore American*, 2 April, 1866. Maryland Historical Society Library, Baltimore, Maryland.
5. "Arrival of Freedmen and Their Families at Baltimore, Maryland-An Every Day Scene," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 30 September 1865. Wood Engraving, Print. Maryland Historical Society Library, Baltimore, Maryland.
6. Richard Macks, Interview. *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project*, 1937. American Memory Project, Library of Congress. <memory.loc.gov>

**I. Engage the Students**

- Show students the print, *Arrival of Freedmen and their Families at Baltimore, Maryland-An Every Day Scene*, created in September 1865.
- Ask: What do you think is going on in this print?
- Ask: Is the experience being portrayed positively or negatively?
- Provide students with basic background on Emancipation and the end of the Civil War. Explain that Maryland did not secede from the Union at any point during the

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war, but that there were significant numbers of southern sympathizers in the state. In fact, the first bloodshed of the war occurred in Baltimore's Pratt Street Riots, during which locals violently protested against Union Troops passing through the city. At the outset of the war, the free and enslaved African American populations were nearly equal in the state. The black population of Baltimore City was approximately 90% free and only 10% enslaved. Because the state remained loyal, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation did not affect the status of enslaved Marylanders. They were not freed until November 1, 1864, when the new State Constitution was ratified with a narrow majority. Many of the formerly enslaved African Americans, largely residing in the rural counties of the state, saw Baltimore as a destination that offered economic and social opportunity. They migrated to the city in large numbers, experiencing a diverse range of receptions from the native residents.

## **II. Conduct the Investigation**

### ***Guided Practice***

- Present students with graphic organizer, which asks them to record:
  - Title of source
  - Key phrases that relate to the condition of freedmen in Baltimore: + or –
  - Key phrases that relate to the reaction of white Baltimoreans to the freedmen: + or –
  - Does source suggest that Baltimore was an appealing destination for former slaves? Why?
- Model analysis of one source with the whole class:
  - Read the source aloud, with proper phrasing (pauses), all the way through.
  - Read the source again in chunks, asking students to give the explicit meaning of each chunk.
  - As a class, fill in the graphic organizer.

### ***Independent Practice***

- Have students work in pairs or small groups to analyze the remaining primary sources and fill in the graphic organizer.
- If time (or students' reading abilities) does not allow for students to analyze all sources, assign at least 2 of the remaining 4 sources to each group so that they have an opportunity to practice multiple source synthesis.

## **III. Discussions**

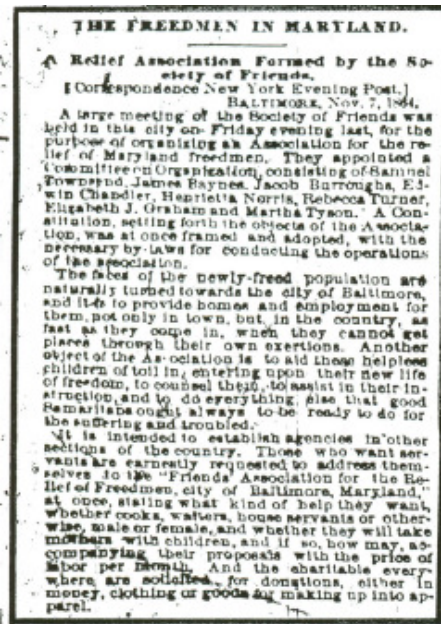
- Share students' findings to complete a class copy of the graphic organizer.

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- Conduct a class discussion, prompted by the following questions, to help students crystallize their thinking about the compelling question: Was Baltimore a desirable destination for newly freed African Americans following the Civil War?
  - What was the experience of incoming freedmen to Baltimore?
  - How did white Baltimoreans react to the increased presence of African Americans in the city?
  - What institutions (government or private) did freed people encounter in the city? What services were available?
- Discuss students' responses.

#### **IV. Report the Findings**

- Remind students about the print image they viewed in the motivation.
- Ask students to assume the identity of an African American who has moved to Baltimore in the years following the Civil War. Direct the students to write a letter to a family member in a rural county of Maryland or Virginia, describing either the positive or negative situation that they have encountered in the city.
  - Tell students to provide evidence from the primary sources to support their view.
  - Tell students to keep in mind their conclusions about white Baltimoreans' reactions to the newcomers.



“The Freedmen in Maryland,” *Baltimore American*, 10 November 1864

### **A Relief Association Formed by the Society of Friends.**

A large meeting of the Society of Friends [*Quakers*] was held in this city on Friday evening last, for the purpose of organizing an Association for the relief of Maryland freedmen. They appointed a Committee on Organization, consisting of Samuel Townsend, James Baynes, Jacob Burroughs, Edwin Chandler, Henrietta Norris, Rebecca Turner, Elizabeth J. Graham and Martha Tyson. A Constitution, setting forth the objects of the Association, was at once framed and adopted, with the necessary by laws [*rules*] for conducting the operations of the association.

The faces of the newly-freed population are naturally turned towards the city of Baltimore, and it is to provide homes and employment for them, not only in town, but in the country, as fast as they come in, when they cannot get places through their own exertions. Another object of the Association is to aid these helpless children of toil in entering upon their new life of freedom, to counsel them, to assist in their instruction, and to do everything else that good Samaritans ought always to be ready to do for the suffering and troubled.

It is intended to establish agencies in other sections of the country. Those who want servants are earnestly requested to address themselves to the “Friends’ Association for the Relief of Freedmen, city of Baltimore, Maryland,” at once, stating what kind of help they want, whether cooks, waiters, house servants or otherwise, male or female, and whether they will take mothers with children, and if so, how many, accompanying their proposals with the price per labor per month. And the charitable everywhere are solicited for donations, either in money, clothing, or goods for making up into apparel.

Source: “The Freedmen in Maryland,” *Baltimore American*, 10 November 1864. Maryland Historical Society Library, Baltimore, Maryland.

“Report of the Overseer,” *The Ordinances of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore*,  
1866

TRUSTEES OF THE POOR.

329.

REPORT OF THE OVERSEER.

To the Board of Trustees:

GENTLEMEN:—I most respectfully beg leave to present this, my fourth annual report, for the year commencing January 1, 1865, and ending December 31, 1865. Throughout the year every article of supplies necessary for the Institution has increased over the preceding year. The class of inmates received during the year, who have presented themselves for admittance, have been received in a most miserable condition, who were required to be clothed to make them comfortable, thereby increasing largely the expense for materials furnished in making said clothing. The large mass of colored persons who have been thrown from the several counties of the State upon the city of Baltimore for support and who from necessity and humanity's sake are necessarily sent to this Institution to be cared for. They all being in a most deplorable condition, this loudly for legislation, so that the interests of the city should be properly guarded and the poor...

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To the Board of Trustees:

Gentlemen: - I most respectfully beg leave to present this, my fourth annual report, for the year commencing January 1, 1865, and ending December 31, 1865. Throughout the year every article of supplies necessary for the Institution [*home for the poor*] has increased over the preceding year. The class of inmates received during the year, who have presented themselves for admittance, have been received in a most miserable condition, who were required to be clothes to make them comfortable, thereby increasing largely the expense for materials furnished in making said clothing. The large mass of colored persons who have been thrown from the several counties of the State upon the city of Baltimore for support and who from necessity and humanity's sake are necessarily sent to this institution to be cared for. They all being in a most deplorable condition.

Source: “Report of the Overseer,” *The Ordinances of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore*, 1866. Maryland Historical Society Library, Baltimore, Maryland.



## LOCAL NEWS.

**THE NEGROES BECOME A NUISANCE.**—The great influx of negroes in the city since the emancipation in Maryland, has become a nuisance, and so great has become the evil that the Marshal of Police has been constrained to cry out against it, and call on the City Council for help. They come to the city without the means of support, and many of them, too indolent to work in the country where their labor is needed, depend on what they can pick up to satisfy the demands of hunger, and seek shelter at night in the police stations. So great has been the demand for lodgings that there is but little room left for others. The following is the letter of the Marshal, sent to the Council yesterday, on the subject, but under the Civil Rights bill it will be difficult for the City Council to interpose any obstacle to their coming to the city and remaining here, even if they do occupy the police station houses to the exclusion of destitute white people:

POLICE DEPARTMENT, OFFICE OF THE MARSHAL,  
BALTIMORE, June 1, 1866.

“The Negroes Become a Nuisance,” *Baltimore Gazette*, 2 July 1866

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Police Department, Office of the Marshal,  
Baltimore, June 1, 1866

Source: “The Negroes Become a Nuisance,” *Baltimore Gazette*, 2 July 1866. Maryland Historical Society Library, Baltimore, Maryland.

THE FREEMEN TO TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES.—Gen. Charles Howard, assistant commissioner of freedmen, has issued an order forbidding the issue of government rations and supplies to freedmen after the 10th inst. The successful operation of the employment offices in Washington and Alexandria and branch offices sustained by benevolent associations in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and other northern cities, work at good wages has been found sufficient for all the able-bodied freed people who are without employment, and the government soup houses will therefore be closed, and the distribution of food, clothing, wood, &c, discontinued.

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“The Freeman To Take Care of Themselves,” *Baltimore American*, 2 April, 1866

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Source: “The Freeman To Take Care of Themselves,” *Baltimore American*, 2 April, 1866. Maryland Historical Society Library, Baltimore, Maryland.

Richard Macks, Personal Interview, *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project*, 1937.

I came to Baltimore when General Grant was elected [1868], worked in a livery stable [*stable where horses and vehicles are kept to be hired*] for three years, three years with Dr. Owens as a waiter and coachman, 3 years with Mr. Thomas Winans on Baltimore Street as a butler [*male servant in a home*], 3 years with Mr. Oscar Stillman of Boston, then 11 years with Mr. Robert Garrett on Mt. Vernon Place as head butler, after which I entered the catering [*food preparation*] business and continued until about twelve years ago. In my career I have had the opportunity to come in contact with the best white people and the most cultured class in Maryland and those visiting Baltimore. This class is about gone, now we have a new group, lacking the refinement, the culture and taste of those that have gone by.

Source: Richard Macks, Personal Interview, *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project*, 1937. American Memory Project, Library of Congress. <[memory.loc.gov](http://memory.loc.gov)>



“Arrival of Freedmen and Their Families at Baltimore, Maryland-An Every Day Scene”



Source: “Arrival of Freedmen and Their Families at Baltimore, Maryland-An Every Day Scene,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, 30 September 1865. Wood Engraving, Print. Maryland Historical Society Library, Baltimore, Maryland.

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*Was Baltimore a Desirable Destination for Newly Freed African Americans? Why or Why Not?*

Source Title	Words/phrases that characterize white Baltimoreans' reactions: +/-	Words/phrases that characterize the condition of the freedmen: +/-	Was Baltimore a desirable destination?	Why or why not?
"The Freedmen in Maryland," November 10, 1864				
"Report of the Overseer," 1866				
"The Negroes Become a Nuisance," July 2, 1866				
"The Freeman To Take Care of Themselves," 2 April 2, 1866				
Richard Macks (ex-slave), Interview, 1937				