

# Freewater



By

Amina Luqman-Dawson

A Novel Study  
by Nat and Joel Reed

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**About the author:** Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit [novelstudies.org](http://novelstudies.org).

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### Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each of the ten chapters of the novel study focuses on several chapters of *Freewater* and is comprised of the following activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A portfolio cover (page 7) as well as a Checklist (page 6) are included so that students may keep track of their completed work.

**Every activity need not be completed by all students.**

#### Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to:

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases... including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story, and many others.

Themes which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include freedom and slavery; survival; friendship; courage and heroism; endurance; sacrifice; inner growth.

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### List of Skills

#### Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

#### Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

#### Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

#### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist/antagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

#### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Conduct an interview
5. Create a poem
6. Write about personal feelings
7. Write a book review
8. Complete a KWS Chart

#### Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Design a cover for the novel
4. Create a comic strip

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### Synopsis

Award-winning author Amina Luqman-Dawson pens a lyrical, accessible historical middle-grade novel about two enslaved children's escape from a plantation and the many ways they find freedom.

After an entire young life of enslavement, twelve-year-old Homer escapes Southerland Plantation with his little sister Ada, leaving his beloved mother behind. Much as he adores her and fears for her life, Homer knows there's no turning back, not with the overseer on their trail. Through tangled vines, secret doorways, and over a sky bridge, the two find a secret community called Freewater, deep in the recesses of the swamp.

In this new, free society made up of escaped slaves and some born-free children, Homer cautiously embraces a set of spirited friends, almost forgetting where he came from. But when he learns of a threat that could destroy Freewater, he hatches a plan to return to Southerland plantation, overcome his own cautious nature, and free his mother from enslavement. Loosely based on a little-mined but important piece of history, this is an inspiring and deeply empowering story of survival, love, and courage.

[Courtesy of the Publisher]

### Author Biography

#### Amina Luqman-Dawson

Amina Luqman-Dawson loves using writing to tell stories and to build an understanding of race, culture and community. Her published writing includes op-eds in newspapers, magazine articles, travel writing and book reviews. She's authored the pictorial history book *Images of America: African Americans of Petersburg* (Arcadia Publishing). She's worked as a policy professional, researcher and consultant on issues of education and criminal justice. She has a BA in Political Science from Vassar College and a Master of Public Policy from UC Berkeley. She's a proud mother of a 13-year-old son. She, her husband and son reside in Arlington, VA. (Adapted from the publisher)



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## Student Checklist

Student Name

# Freewater



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Freewater

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### Prologue to Chapter 9



#### Before you read the chapters:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *Freewater* is Homer a courageous 12-year-old runaway slave. Think back on some of your favorite characters from novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. Who would you say is your *most favorite* character ever? What made you select this person?




#### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

contemplate	plantation	unimaginable	impassable
instinct	quiver	meticulous	raucous

1. Between the chirping and swamp \_\_\_\_\_, there was barking.
2. Suleman turned from the children and placed the arrow into his \_\_\_\_\_.
3. After hearing the question, Jonas took a moment to \_\_\_\_\_ what the teacher meant.
4. That poor family experienced \_\_\_\_\_ horror during the tornado.
5. A successful accountant must be very \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Homer and Ada grew up on a \_\_\_\_\_.
7. After the rainstorm, the roads were \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Karen’s \_\_\_\_\_ told her that she was heading in the right way direction.

## Questions



1. Describe the **setting** of the story at the beginning of Chapter One.


2. What instructions had Homer's mother given them if they were to get separated?


3. What event had triggered Mama's decision to escape and head north. Why had Mama returned to the plantation during their escape?


4. Describe your first impression of Stokes. On what did you base this impression?


5. What do you think motivated Two Shoes to betray Wilson?


6. Describe how Suleman saved Homer's life.


7. Describe how Suleman saved the children from Stokes.


8. What do you think Homer meant when he told Anna that he could make himself invisible?


9. Describe how Chapter 9 ends on a very mysterious note.


## Language Activities



### A. Your Favorite Genre Of Books

*Freewater* might be classified as a historical fiction novel for Young Readers. What genre of books do you enjoy the most? (i.e. mystery, humor, biography, romance, fantasy, historical fiction, science fiction, poetry, etc.) Why do you especially enjoy this type of book?




**B.** A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from this section is: *My head hit the rocks on the river floor and clanged like a cowbell.*

What is being compared in this example?

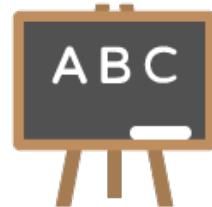
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Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your own imagination:

a) a snake


b) a raging river


**C.** Many authors enjoy using **alliteration** – a literary device where the author repeats the same sound at the beginning of several words. Here's an example: from Chapter 9: *Suleman stopped rowing.*



Using your imagination, create your own examples of **alliteration** from the following topics. Each example must contain a minimum of three words.

An owl.	
A drink of coffee.	
Your choice.	

## D. A Quatrain Poem Celebrates Buried Treasures.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following quatrain is the first four lines of the famous poem, *Swamp Critters*, written by the renowned poet, Atrocious Halitosis.

*I live real close to Kenny's Marsh,  
It's full of bugs and snakes.  
I like to hunt them when I can,  
'Cause they make delicious steaks.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - B - C - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: ABAB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBB, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The theme should have something to do with the topics established in the first nine chapters of our novel (like *swamps, snakes or snarly dogs*).

### The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

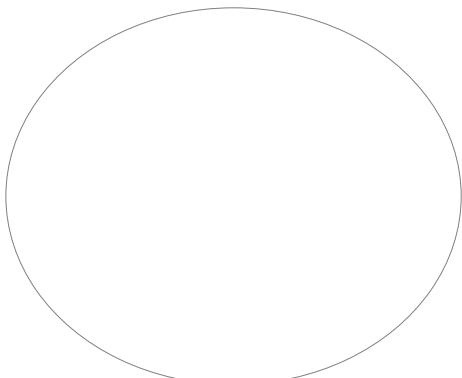
**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_


**E.** Next to each pair of words indicate whether each is an example of a Synonym (S), Antonym (A), or Homophone (H).

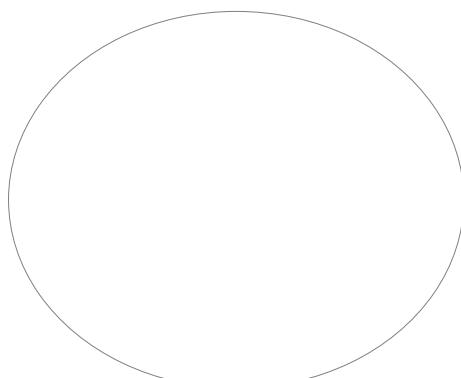
1	real - reel		6	insist - suggest	
2	shook - trembled		7	swamp - quagmire	
3	tight - loose		8	sea - see	
4	hungry - famished		9	harvest - plant	
5	invisible - visible		10	unison - dissent	

## F. 5 Ws and an H.

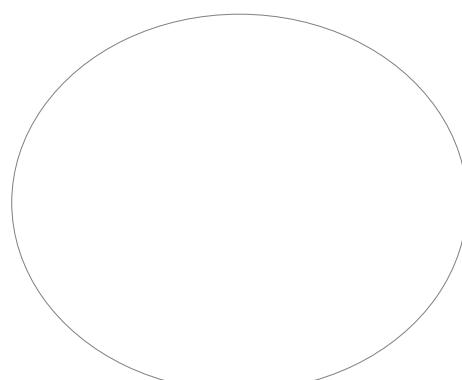
Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



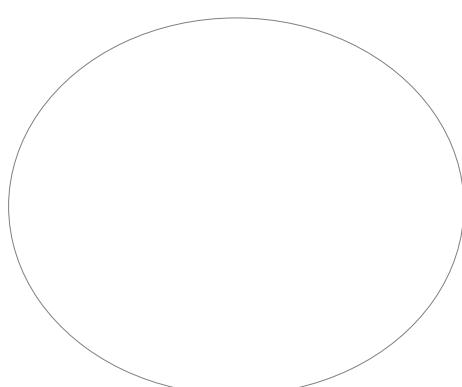
**WHO?**



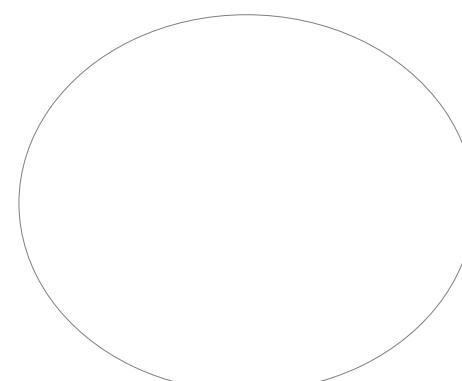
**WHAT?**



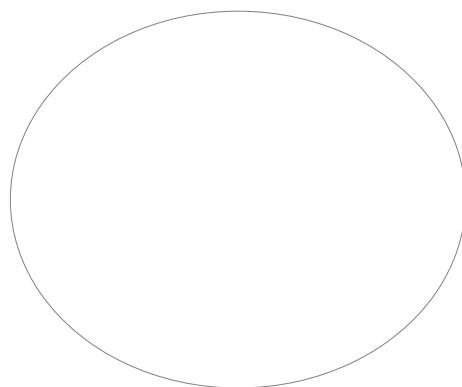
**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**



**WHY?**



**HOW?**

## Extension Activity



### Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A story-board can tell the story of only one scene – or the entire novel. Complete the story-board below illustrating the events described in this section our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6