

Changemakers: John Parker

This inquiry is adapted from material created by Jennifer Suchland, Ph.D., The Ohio State University.

Compelling Question

Why would someone risk their freedom or their life to help strangers?

State Standard(s)

Ohio/ Grade 8/ History Content Statements. 1, 20, 21
Kentucky/ 8.I.Q.1, 8.I.Q.2, 8.I.Q.3, 8.C.RR.3, 8.H.CH.2, 8.I.U.E.1, 8.I.U.E.2, 8.I.U.E.3, 8.I.U.E.4

C3 Framework Indicator(s)

D1.3.6-8, D1.4.6-8, D1.5.6-8, D4.8.6-8

Learning Goals

Students will understand

- How John Parker's life reveals information about abolitionism, the free Black community, and the Underground Railroad
- The different types/levels of questions.
- The basic science of altruism.

Students will be able to

- Generate supporting questions that advance the inquiry.
- *Source* a document.
- Assemble a visual representation of their learning.
- Collaboratively determine a quality and feasible course of action.
- Collaboratively implement a project.

Supporting Question

What questions about John Parker will help us understand abolitionism, the free Black community, and the Underground Railroad? What kind of sources will help us answer these questions?

Featured Sources

- Inquiry Questions (Appendix A)
- Classroom resource about developing questions

Supporting Question

Why and how should we source documents?

Featured Sources

- Reading Like A Historian. (2021, Aug. 26). *Evaluating Sources Lesson Plan: Teacher Materials.* (cont.)

Supporting Question

What can John Parker's life teach us about abolitionism, the free Black community, and the Underground Railroad?

Featured Sources

- Example mind map

Featured Sources (cont.)	Featured Sources (cont.)	Featured Sources (cont.)
	<p>.. Stanford History Education Group. sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/evaluating-sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reading Like A Historian. (2020, Oct. 27). <i>Evaluating Sources Lesson Plan: Student Materials</i>. Stanford History Education Group. sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/evaluating-sources ■ Student and teacher identified sources 	
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inquiry Guide (Appendix A) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reading Like A Historian. (2020, Oct. 27). <i>Evaluating Sources Lesson Plan: Student Materials</i>. Stanford History Education Group. sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/evaluating-sources ■ Discussion ■ Inquiry Guide (Appendix A) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mind Map

<p>Summative Performance Task</p>	<p>ARGUMENT: To answer the compelling question - Why would someone risk their freedom or their life to help strangers? – students will complete additional research on altruism while making connections their research about John Parker. Students should apply their sourcing and questioning skills to advance their research.</p> <p>EXTENSION: Students could apply the science of altruism to explain the selfless actions of other abolitionists. In addition, students could research why some people choose not to help strangers and apply those findings to what we know about anti-slavery advocates.</p>
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<p>Taking Informed Action</p>	<p>UNDERSTAND: Students are encouraged to take informed action by promoting altruism at their school. Students should generate a plan for encouraging altruism amongst the student and staff.</p>
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Taking Informed Action

ASSESS: Through discussion and research, students will determine specific areas of need and possible means for addressing those needs.

ACT: Adhering to C3 indicator D4.8. students should apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions and take-action. This requires students to work collaboratively to determine a quality and feasible course of action and determine how to implement their project.

Inquiry Description

The Changemakers series of inquiries provide teachers multiple opportunities to incorporate the history of the Underground Railroad into their curriculum across the academic year. Additionally, there are opportunities for cross-disciplinary study and collaboration. While the inquiries are aligned to eighth grade Ohio and Kentucky standards, we hope teachers across grade levels and disciplines utilize these materials. Throughout this series, lessons and activities will connect the Underground Railroad and the abolitionist movement to today through personal and community stories. Spanning various subjects, the overarching theme focuses on the impact changemakers have during their lifetime, the evidence they leave behind, and their ongoing impact today. Lessons and activities are unique and can build upon each other.

The theme is “Changemakers in the Past, Present & Future.” The series begins with an inquiry about historical myths and assumptions emphasizing historical and critical thinking. The second and third inquiries require students to apply these skills while developing questions and completing research regarding two historical narratives: John Parker and Francis Watkins Harper. The next two series inquiries provide the opportunity to consider, reflect upon, and engage the question of how we are connected to the past. The fourth inquiry has students consider the legacies and evidence we leave for future generations, including the powers that limit and restrict such evidence. The fifth inquiry engages students in changemaking to identify and address a problem of today to create a better tomorrow.

In inquiry 2 of 5, “Changemakers: John Parker,” students will hone their sourcing and questioning skills while researching the life of John Parker. The goal is to obtain information about abolitionism, the free Black community, and the Underground Railroad.

Students will engage in social justice work by examining why someone, like John Parker, would risk their freedom and life to help strangers. This process will introduce the concept of altruism, and students will be challenged to increase altruism in their school community.

This inquiry embodies the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center principles of courage, cooperation, and perseverance by illustrating how each was necessary for the success of the Underground Railroad. We encourage teachers and students to visit our museum and continue this exploration through our exhibits and focus on narratives. The Freedom Center uses education to inspire individuals to create positive change in society. A visit would be an excellent addition to the “Changemakers in the Past, Present & Future” series of inquiries.

Required Prior Knowledge

Before engaging in this inquiry, students should be able to identify primary and secondary sources. It would also be beneficial for students to have experience sourcing and analyzing primary and secondary sources. If needed, the lesson plan “Teaching Primary and Secondary Sources” provided by The George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum, 2011 can be found at:

georgewbushlibrary.gov/s3fs-public/2021-09/SecondaryLP_PrimarySecondarySources_Web.pdf

The Historical Thinking Chart, as well as the sourcing, contextualization, corroboration, close reading, and “What Is History?” posters from *Reading Like A Historian*, sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons, are useful classroom resources.



Staging The Compelling Question

Introduce this inquiry by engaging students in the “SnapShot Autobiography” lesson from *Reading Like A Historian* (2019, Feb. 11), at sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/snapshot-autobiography. Consider expanding the assignment by having students interview (corroborate) with at least two individuals. The lesson description reads:

What is history? And why do historical accounts differ? In this lesson, students create brief autobiographies and then reflect on the process to better understand how history is written. Why are some events included and others not? How does their version of events compare to others’ versions of the same event? Why do two historical accounts differ when both sides believe they are telling the truth? How would students prove that their version of events was true? Exploring these questions will give students insight into the nature of history and will prepare them to engage in historical thinking in future lessons.

This assignment requires students to interview someone outside of the classroom, so it should be introduced and assigned prior to this inquiry introduction. Use the prompts in the lesson description to guide classroom discussion regarding the assignment and *What is history?*

Describe how students will be largely conducting their own inquiry based upon the life of John Parker. Discuss the importance of questions in the practice of history and the relationship between supporting and compelling questions. As a resource for this and other inquiries, post question categories (such as levels 1, 2 & 3, or factual, intellectual, & universal) and starters in your classroom, or provide handouts.

There are many different questioning models. Here are a few:

- In “**A Brief Summary of the Best Practices in College Teaching**” Tom Drummond introduces “**Discoverable Questions.**” According to Drummond, these ten question formulations meet the criteria of being both perceptually based and discoverable. Since we want inquiry to be a shared experience, the teacher can lead a learner who may not at first answer adequately back to available evidence to find their own connections. The “right” answer can be found in shared experience.
tomdrummond.com/helping-other-adults/best-practices
- “**A Questioning Toolkit**” provided by From Now On: The Educational Technology Journal is an additional resource for generating compelling and supporting questions.
questioning.org/Q7/toolkit.html
- **Costa’s 3 Level House** is explained in the following pdf from AVID
dvsd.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=207145&dataid=144077&FileName=costas_levels_of_questioning.pdf
- **Facing History and Ourselves.** (n.d.). *Levels of Questions.*
facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/levels-questions

Have students work in pairs generating compelling and supporting questions about various topics. Have students dictate topics for other groups to question. Discuss how answering these questions would lead to a deeper understanding of the topic.

Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question - What questions about John Parker will help us understand abolitionism, the free Black community, and the Underground Railroad? - requires students to generate questions that will advance the inquiry. The question - What kind of sources will help us answer these questions? - requires students to examine the sources that will advance the inquiry. By narrowing the focus to abolitionism, the free Black community, and the Underground railroad, student inquiry remains focused within set parameters that adhere to lesson goals and standards.

By examining this question...

- **Students will understand** how John Parker’s life reveals information about abolitionism, the free Black community, and the Underground Railroad

- **Students will understand** the different types/levels of questions.
- **Students will be able to** generate supporting questions that advance the inquiry.

Begin by sharing the following biographical information with your students.

- John Parker (1827-1900) was an African American inventor and businessman who lived in Ripley, Ohio.
- He worked on the “front line” of the Underground Railroad and helped hundreds of freedom seekers between 1845-1865.
- Parker was born into slavery in Norfolk, Virginia. His mother was an enslaved Black woman, and his father was white.
- When he was eight years old, his owner sold him to a doctor in Mobile, Alabama.
- Parker secretly learned how to read and write.
- Parker purchased his freedom with money he earned working as an apprentice in a foundry when he was eighteen years old.
- Most of what we know about John Parker comes from a transcription of an oral history taken by white journalist Frank Moody Gregg after the Civil War. The manuscript was placed in the Duke University Archive as part of the Rankin-Parker collection until recent historians published it in 1998. It is titled, *His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker, Former Slave and Conductor on the Underground Railroad*.
- Today the John P. Parker House is a museum that offers tours, and there is a John P. Parker Historical Society.

Next, guide students through a brief reflection with the goal of generating ideas for supporting questions. Have students work with a partner to generate questions that would advance their understanding of abolitionism, the free Black community, and the Underground Railroad. Emphasize the importance of talking and engaging with a topic when generating ideas and questions. Have students share their questions and explain why each question lends itself to answering the supporting question: What questions about John Parker will help us understand abolitionism, the free Black community, and the Underground Railroad? Possible questions might include:

- Parker worked on the “front line” of the Underground Railroad. What does it mean to be on the “front line?”
- Why were enslaved Black family members separated?
- Why is it significant that John Parker learned to read and write?
- What is a foundry? What skills does someone working in a foundry have? How was that profession suitable to aid freedom seekers in the Underground Railroad?
- Why do you think it was so hard to publish Parker’s manuscript during his lifetime?
- What does the story of how and why the public knows about John Parker’s life matter? What does it teach us about the Underground Railroad, about the role of African Americans in American society, and the advancement of Black communities?
- What evidence of John Parker’s life is visible to us today?

Encourage students to edit their selected questions, and to record their questions on the inquiry guide (Appendix A). Then, address the question - What kind of sources will help us answer these questions? – by encouraging students to develop a research strategy. Identify places where students could begin their search (online, library, the John P. Parker Museum, The John P. Parker Historical Society, and his autobiography). Have students brainstorm what types of documents they hope to find and why these types of documents would be useful. Provide students with Appendix B, an excerpt from John Parker’s autobiography. As students read, they should seek answers to their questions, but also record new questions that arise and record their thinking on the inquiry guide (Appendix A). You may choose to model this process by asking - *What is the significance of the different Christian denominations Parker describes in this passage?* Then, direct students to PBS This Far by Faith series, “Abolition and the Splintering of the Church” at pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/journey_2/p_5.html, where an answer can be found. Ask

if this information fits within the parameters of this inquiry: to understand abolitionism, the free Black community, and the Underground Railroad.

Students should be given time throughout this inquiry to research.

The following sources are recommended:

- Ohio History Connection. (2020, March 30). John Parker in His Own Words. YouTube. [youtube.com/watch?v=s4PlkwtL9Ac](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4PlkwtL9Ac)
- This Far by Faith Series (n.d.). Abolition and the Splintering of the Church. PBS. [pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/journey_2/p_5.html](https://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/journey_2/p_5.html)
- Ison, J. (2018, Feb. 7.) John P. Parker (1827-1900). Black Past. blackpast.org/african-american-history/parker-john-p-1827-1900
- Griffler, K. (2004). *Front Line of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.
- John P. Parker Museum and Historical Society. (n.d.) johnparkerhouse.net/about
- Duke University Libraries (n.d.). Rankin-Parker papers, ca.1880. find.library.duke.edu/catalog/DUKE000873686
- Ohio History Connection. (n.d.). Ohio History Connection Selections: John Parker. ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/p267401coll32/search/searchterm/John%20Parker

Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question – Why and how should we *source* documents? – examines what history is and how it is recorded. It also requires students to engage in sourcing. This skill will be used as students conduct research during this inquiry.

By examining this question,

- **Students will be able to** generate supporting questions that advance the inquiry.
- **Students will be able to** source a document.

Engage students in a Think, Pair, Share regarding this question: What is history? After discussion, share these points taken from the “What is History?” poster from *Reading Like A Historian* available at sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/what-history-classroom-poster. This classroom poster reminds students of how historical accounts are built:

- History is an account of the past.
- Accounts differ depending on one’s perspective.
- We rely on evidence to construct accounts of the past.
- We must question the reliability of each piece of evidence.
- Any single piece of evidence is insufficient to build a plausible account.

Next, engage students in the activity *Evaluating Sources* from Stanford History Education Group (sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/evaluating-sources). The lesson is described as follows:

Are all historical sources equally trustworthy? How might the reliability of a historical document be affected by the circumstances under which it was created? In this activity, students sharpen their ability to source documents and learn to think critically about what sources provide the best evidence to answer historical questions.

After this activity, have students apply these same methods and source the documents they chose for their John Parker inquiry. Begin by identifying the strengths and limitations of the excerpt from John Parker’s autobiography

(Appendix B). In addition, discuss how the limited time frame and access to certain documents will affect their inquiry process. Students should record their thinking on the inquiry guide (Appendix A) and continue this process throughout their research.

Students should be given time throughout this inquiry to research.

Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question - What can John Parker's life teach us about abolitionism, the free Black community, and the Underground Railroad? – requires students to share their findings.

By examining this question,

- **Students will understand** how John Parker's life reveals information about abolitionism, the free Black community, and the Underground Railroad
- **Students will be able to** assemble a visual representation of their learning.

Emphasize the process of inquiry and have students create graphic representation, like a mind map, of their research. Include questions, sources, findings, and thinking that occurred along the way. Here are some resources about how to utilize mapping or mind mapping in the classroom:

- Stokhof, H., de Vries, B., Bastiaens, T. et al. (2020). *Using Mind Maps to Make Student Questioning Effective: Learning Outcomes of a Principle-Based Scenario for Teacher Guidance*. *Res Sci Educ* 50, 203–225
doi.org/10.1007/s11165-017-9686-3
- Teachings in Education. (2017, Nov. 21). *Mind Mapping | Teaching Strategies #3*.
[youtube.com/watch?v=xCyjFipyRE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCyjFipyRE)
- A Google search for “student examples mid maps” images will provide a number of examples.

Summative Performance Task

To answer the compelling question - Why would someone risk their freedom or their life to help strangers? – students will complete additional research on altruism while making connections their research about John Parker.

By examining this question,

- **Students will understand** the basic science of altruism.
- **Students will be able to** generate supporting questions that advance the inquiry.
- **Students will be able to** source a document.

Have students begin by researching altruism to understand the science behind self-less actions. The following are quality sources:

- Greater Good Science Center. (2022). What is Altruism? The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley.
<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/altruism/definition#:~:text=These%20good%20feelings%20are%20reflected,us%20a%20%E2%80%9Chelper's%20high.%E2%80%9D>
- Elmore, J. (2022). *Why People make Sacrifices for Others*. The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley.
https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_people_make_sacrifices_for_others
- Cherry K. (2021, April 26). *What is Altruism?* Very Well Mind.
<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-altruism-2794828>

Students should apply their sourcing and questioning skills to advance their research. Students should make connections between the science of altruism and events in John Parker's life that resulted in altruism. Using John

Parker as an example, students should be able to utilize science and history to answer the compelling question.

To extend the learning, students could apply the science of altruism to explain the selfless actions of other abolitionists. In addition, students could research why some people choose not to help strangers and apply those findings to what we know about anti-slavery advocates.

Alternative Summative Performance Tasks

Have students work in small groups to create a visualization of Parker's words and answer the question: Why would someone risk their freedom or their life to help strangers? What would it look like to run away from slavery? Who are the different people described in Parker's text? How do you think Parker would answer the compelling question? The visualization can be a map, a picture, or a storyboard.

Write a letter back to John Parker. Do you have any questions for him? Do you want to tell him something about today's society? Using evidence, speculate why he risked his freedom to help strangers. Present your claim and evidence to Parker in the letter.

Taking Informed Action

Students are encouraged to take informed action by promoting altruism at their school. Begin by determining specific examples of how an increase in altruism would benefit the school. Identify specific areas of need. Additional research, such as an interviews and surveys, may be required. Then generate feasible ideas for those areas of need. Adhering to C3 indicator D4.8. students should apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions and take-action. This requires students to work collaboratively to determine a quality and feasible course of action and determine how to implement their project. Encourage students to bring in outside support such as administrators and school counselors and psychologists. You could also reach out to experts outside of the school.

By engaging in this project,

- **Students will be able to** collaboratively determine a quality and feasible course of action.
- **Students will be able to** collaboratively implement a project.

The following are resources for generating ideas:

- Greater Good Science Center. (2022). *Eliciting Altruism*. The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley.
https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/elicitng_altruism
- Murphy, S. (n.d.). *Classroom Activities With Altruism*.
<https://classroom.synonym.com/classroom-activities-altruism-7668408.html>

References

AVID (n.d.). *Costa's 3 Level House*. https://www.dvusd.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=207145&dataid=144077&FileName=costas_levels_of_questioning.pdf

Cherry K. (2021, April 26). *What is Altruism?* Very Well Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-altruism-2794828>

Drummond, T. (n.d.). *A Brief Summary of the Best Practices in College Teaching*. <https://tomdrummond.com/helping-other-adults/best-practices>

Duke University Libraries (n.d.). *Rankin-Parker papers, ca. 1880*. <https://find.library.duke.edu/catalog/DUKE000873686>



Elmore, J. (2022). *Why People make Sacrifices for Others*. The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_people_make_sacrifices_for_others

Facing History and Ourselves. (n.d.). *Levels of Questions*. <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/levels-questions>

From Now On: The Educational Technology Journal (n.d.). *A Questioning Toolkit*. <http://www.questioning.org/Q7/toolkit.html>

Greater Good Science Center. (2022). *Eliciting Altruism*. The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley. https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/eliciting_altruism

Greater Good Science Center. (2022). *What is Altruism?* The Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley. <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/altruism/definition#:~:text=These%20good%20feelings%20are%20reflected,us%20a%20%E2%80%9Chelper's%20high.%E2%80%9D>

Griffler, K. (2004). *Front Line of Freedom: African Americans and the Forging of the Underground Railroad*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.

Ison, J. (2018, Feb. 7.) *John P. Parker (1827-1900)*. Black Past. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/parker-john-p-1827-1900>

John P. Parker Museum and Historical Society. (n.d.) <https://johnparkerhouse.net/about>

Murphy, S. (n.d.). *Classroom Activities With Altruism*. <https://classroom.synonym.com/classroom-activities-altruism-7668408.html>

Ohio History Connection. (2020, March 30). *John Parker in His Own Words*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4PIkwtL9Ac>

Ohio History Connection. (n.d.). *Ohio History Connection Selections: John Parker*. <https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/p267401coll32/search/searchterm/John%20Parker>

Reading Like A Historian (2019, Feb. 11). *Snap Shot Autobiography Lesson*. Stanford History Education Group. <https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/snapshot-autobiography>

Reading Like A Historian. (2020, Oct. 27). *Evaluating Sources Lesson Plan: Student Materials*. Stanford History Education Group. <https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/evaluating-sources>

Reading Like A Historian. (2021, Aug. 26). *Evaluating Sources Lesson Plan: Teacher Materials*. Stanford History Education Group. <https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/evaluating-sources>

Stokhof, H., de Vries, B., Bastiaens, T. et al. (2020). *Using Mind Maps to Make Student Questioning Effective: Learning Outcomes of a Principle-Based Scenario for Teacher Guidance*. Res Sci Educ 50, 203–225 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-017-9686-3>

Teachings in Education. (2017, Nov. 21). *Mind Mapping | Teaching Strategies #3*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCvjFipyRE>

This Far by Faith Series (n.d.). *Abolition and the Splintering of the Church*. PBS. https://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/journey_2/p_5.html

