

# Finding Freedom: ELA Lessons for Gifted and Advanced Learners in Grades 6-8

Emily Mofield, Tamra Stambaugh Ph.D.

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Finding Freedom invites students to follow America's journey toward finding freedom by examining multiple perspectives, conflicts, ideas, and challenges through seminal historical texts. This unit, developed by Vanderbilt University's Programs for Talented Youth and aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), features close readings of some of the most famous American political speeches from notable Americans, presidents, and minority voices. To sharpen historical thinking, students analyze arguments for freedom, examine dissenting perspectives, and reason through multiple viewpoints of historical issues through debates and interactive activities. To develop advanced literacy skills, students evaluate effective rhetorical appeals, claims, supporting evidence, and techniques that advance arguments. Students synthesize their learning by comparing speeches to each other, relating texts to contemporary issues of today, and making interdisciplinary connections. Lessons include close readings with text-dependent questions, choice-based differentiated products, rubrics, formative assessments, social studies content connections, and ELA tasks that require argument and explanatory writing. Ideal for pre-AP and honors courses, the unit features speeches from Patrick Henry, Frederick Douglass, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt, Lincoln, Kennedy, Johnson, George W. Bush, Obama, and others.



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