



VIRTUAL VILLAGE
FROM OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE

LESSON RESOURCES

Tea Party Characters

*(accompanies the **Heading West Tea Party** lesson plan)*

Name: Samuel Freeman

Born: 1774 in Sturbridge, Massachusetts

Moved to Parma, Ohio in 1825

I was raised on a farm in rural Massachusetts. It was a hard place to make a living, but our family always had what we needed. Besides farming, my brother and I had many different jobs to help support our families, which was very common in the early 1800s. In addition to being a farmer, I was also a teacher, land surveyor, and served in the state legislature. In 1825, I decided to move westward to Ohio to secure a better life for my family. My wife and I had 13 children. I had many debts, and I was ready to move out of Sturbridge and settle in a new place where my sons would have better opportunities. There was a lot more land available for farming in Ohio than in New England in those days. Much of the land in Massachusetts was worn out. Many industrious Massachusetts people like myself moved out here and made successful farms. Things were always changing in Ohio: while I lived there, I helped build three schoolhouses, a large brick courthouse, a large penitentiary, and a superb state house. My nephew, Pliny Freeman Jr., moved to Ohio to join us in 1829. Many people like him moved after hearing from relatives about the life they could have out West.

Name: Harriet Beecher Stowe

Born: 1811 in Litchfield, Connecticut

Moved to Cincinnati, Ohio in 1832

I was born into a family that valued education and religion. My father, Lyman Beecher, was a well-known and outspoken minister. All but one of my 10 siblings were prominent public figures in the 19th century. We were pioneers in education, writing, and social justice movements. In 1832, I moved to Ohio to join my father, who was the president of a school called Lane Seminary. The city of Cincinnati is on the Ohio River. It was home to many migrants, people who had escaped enslavement, and the bounty hunters who pursued them. Lane Seminary was home to a series of debates on the issue of slavery. I was moved by the passionate words of the abolitionists during these debates. An abolitionist is someone who believes in ending the institution of slavery. I also listened to the stories of formerly enslaved people, and visited plantations in Kentucky. These views on abolition influenced my future writings. In 1852, I wrote the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which helped to change white Americans' views on slavery.

Name: Hannah Moore

Born: 1808 in Union, Connecticut

Moved to Dwight Mission, Oklahoma in 1841

I grew up on a farm in a rural part of Connecticut near the Massachusetts border. In the early 1800s, there were not many job opportunities for young women like myself. For a little while, I worked in a local factory, but I always felt called to become a missionary. A missionary is someone who is sent on a religious mission to spread Christianity in other parts of the world. In 1833, I asked the American Home Missionary Society to send me to the West where I could be useful. They rejected me, saying that I would need a better education before joining as a missionary. I paid my own tuition at a local school and worked hard to become a teacher. In 1841, I finally moved to the Dwight Mission in Oklahoma. In 1828, the government forced the Western Cherokee Indians to leave their homes in Arkansas. They were moved to Oklahoma, which was then called Indian Territory. I sympathized very strongly with these people who had been removed from their homeland. During my time at the mission, I taught reading, spelling, math, history, and philosophy to Cherokee girls.

Name: George Boyer Vashon

Born: 1824 in Carlisle, Pennsylvania

Moved to Oberlin, Ohio in 1840

For my whole life, I fought for the emancipation and education of African Americans. My father was an abolitionist and a well-respected leader in the Black community. In 1840, I moved from Pennsylvania to Ohio to enroll in Oberlin Collegiate Institute, which was later called Oberlin College. Oberlin was only the second college in the country to accept African American students alongside white students. I became the school's first Black graduate in 1844. In the early 1800s, many people moved West for greater freedom than was available to them in the North or South. There were many abolitionists in Ohio, who believed that slavery was a crime against humanity. After I graduated from Oberlin, I became the first practicing Black lawyer in the state. I was denied this right in my native state of Pennsylvania on the basis of my race.

Name: Keziah Grier

Formerly enslaved in South Carolina

Brought to Indiana in the early 1800s

Before I came to Indiana, I was enslaved in South Carolina. Slave holders brought me with them out West to use my labor to help settle their land. Indiana was part of the Northwest Territory, founded in 1787. By law, slavery was illegal there, and anyone held in bondage had to be freed once they entered the territory. This was not the case with me, and I remained enslaved for some time after that. I married my husband Charles in 1818. He had also been enslaved, but was freed when he was inherited by a pastor who thought it was the right thing to do. Charles moved to Indiana in 1806. Virginia law said that any enslaved person who was freed in Virginia had to leave the state within 12 months or be reenslaved. He left behind his family, but found more opportunity out West. Together, we raised a family and worked our 40 acres of land into a very successful farm. We assisted other freedom seekers as they passed through the area by giving them food and shelter. Indiana and Ohio became havens for people of color during this time: slavery was outlawed there, they were on the route to Canada, and they shared a border with Southern slave-holding states.

Name: Salem Charles

Born: 1813 in Brimfield, Massachusetts

Moved to the West in the mid-1800s

I have always been an adventurer. My brother was a wealthy landowner and businessman in Massachusetts, but I felt a strong urge to travel. During my life, I traveled extensively across the eastern United States. I went as far west as Iowa, where I spent about 10 years. During the early 1800s, many people like me moved west in search of an adventure. The West was a wilderness at the time, and some pioneers were drawn to the area because of this. I also knew there was a better chance of making a fortune in the West. Migrants could purchase inexpensive land and sell it at a higher price, start a new industry, or make discoveries in unchartered territory. Eventually, I moved to Texas and made a fortune importing cloth. At some time during my life, I changed my name to Charles Hill. When I died, my lawyer had to figure out my true identity to make sure that my family in Brimfield received their inheritance of \$142,000.