

**Title:**

Freedom

**Author:**

Catherine Johnson

Blurb:

An enslaved Jamaican boy is separated from his family and taken to work in England. His owners, the Barratts, treat him cruelly but he is determined to escape and earn the money needed to buy his family's freedom. While in London, he attends the *Zong* slave ship's court hearing and learns about the horrors that took place on board.

Author background:

Catherine Johnson was born in London and has Jamaican and Welsh heritage. When she was a child, she loved reading historical stories but could never find many stories with black characters in them. So, she decided to write some herself. She has written over 20 novels, winning the Young Quills Award for best historical fiction for 12-year-olds and over. She has also written for TV and radio and has mentored writers for the British Council

Cultural background:

The novel takes place in 1783, and although the main character is fictional, real historical figures and events are included. One such event is the *Zong* trial, where the shipping company sued their insurers for failing to compensate them for the 132 enslaved people who were thrown overboard. The *Zong* was suffering from a water shortage and sickness was spreading. Insurance could not be claimed for people who died on board the ship, so the captain threw many of the enslaved overboard. The real historical figures in the book include Olaudah Equiano, Granville Sharp and Shadrack Furman. Olaudah Equiano was enslaved then bought his freedom and wrote a book about his life. He joined the Sons of Africa, who were a group fighting for the abolition of slavery. Granville Sharp was one of the first white English men who campaigned to abolish slavery and Shadrack Furman was one of the first black pensioners who was paid for his service in the British Army during the American War of Independence .

Literary terms:

BOOK ANALYSIS

dialect : A form of language spoken in a particular area.

first person narrator : The first person narrator tells a story from their perspective using words, such as I, me, we and us.

imagery : Imagery is the term given to descriptions that create pictures in your mind. For example, '*I thought any prince wearing that would look as if something had been sick all over them.*'

Simile : A simile compares one thing to another using like or as. For example, 'It came like a bolt of lightning.'

slang : Slang consists of informal words.

Vocabulary examples:

Transatlantic
Resistance
The Zong

Benefits for our children:

The author introduces dialect and slang terms to add authenticity to her characters' interactions. She portrays dialect by the way she spells words or puts sentences together. For example, when Old Thomas says '*Yess'm, Missis*' and Betsy says, '*I'm not going 'til that noise stop, not for nobody.*' Some of the slang terms she uses are the English word '*landlubber*', which means someone who resides on land as opposed to at sea, and the Caribbean word '*pickney*', which is a derogatory term for a child.

It addresses many difficult themes which will provide rich discussions:

Family

Resistance

Slavery

Racism

Relationships'

Freedom

Our children get to experience a life beyond Leafield; the book provides an adventure story that manages to give young readers a really important insight into slavery without being so upsetting that it's impossible to read.

