

**Letters from Mississippi:  
Using Primary Sources and Video for Reflection and Analysis**

Angela Adams-Arkansas History Day

*Overview:* Students will gain a deeper understanding of Freedom Summer.

*Audience:* Grades 9-10

*Objective:* Students will read, watch, and discuss in their group.

*Documents:*

**Primary Sources:**

- *Letters from Mississippi*, by Elizabeth Martinez

**Secondary Sources:**

- Clips from PBS Freedom Summer linked in procedure

*Procedure:*

- Activity One (8 minutes): The class should watch this 3:25 second clip to orient them- What is Freedom Summer? [What Was Freedom Summer? | American Experience | Official Site | PBS](#) Go over directions and allow time for a couple of procedural questions.
- Activity Two (30 minutes): Provide students a copy of the map on page 74 of *Letters from Mississippi*. Break them into groups of 2-5 people depending on class size. Assign each group a different primary source passage copied from the book *Letters from Mississippi*

**Group 1 Freedom Schools**

Watch the 4.42 clip of Freedom Schools [Freedom Schools | American Experience | Official Site | PBS](#) and Read pages 106-107

- Questions: What do the video and reading teach you about Freedom Schools? What was their purpose? What did they teach and what was the response to them? What do you think about this project? What would be taught in a Freedom School today?

**Group 2 Overcoming Fear**

Watch Bad Things Were Going to Happen 1:47 min [Bad Things Were Going to Happen | American Experience | Official Site | PBS](#) and read pages 169-170 of *Letters from Mississippi*.

- Questions: In her letter, Heather says "I became aware of the uselessness of fear that immobilizes and individual. Then I began to relax." Explain what you think she means. How did others face their fears?

Volunteer Dorothy Zellner said, "If you cared about this country, if you cared about Democracy, then you had to go down." Explain what she is saying. What lessons does this provide for us?

### **Group 3- What motivates volunteers?**

Watch Living in Mississippi [Living in Mississippi | American Experience | Official Site | PBS](#) and Read pages 25-27 in the book *Letters from Mississippi*.

- Questions: What do you think motivated Freedom Summer volunteers to go? Why were they able to become "part of the community." What lessons does their experience hold for us?

### **Group 4- What is Liberal?**

Watch the 3:27 clip Mrs. Mississippi Find Trouble [Miss Mississippi Finds Trouble | American Experience | Official Site | PBS](#) and Read pages 88-89 in the book *Letters from Mississippi*.

- Questions: Reflect on the line from the book on page 89 "In Mississippi it is liberal." What surprised the volunteer writing about the differences in the cities in Mississippi? What was seen as liberal? What do you think this word means today?

In the video Barbar Nave Miss MS and her family hosted Freedom Summer Volunteers. What happened to them? Why was the response from their friends and neighbors so surprising to them?

Reflect on the surprise in both sources. What do you learn about the written and unwritten rules in Mississippi at that time?