

Teacher Guide/Student Activities
Littsie of Cincinnati

By Jinny Powers Berten & Norah Holt

To the Teacher

This Teacher Guide with Student Activities is a resource of ideas for students who have read the novel, *Littsie of Cincinnati*. Some Student Activities are stand alone and designed for use by individual students; others are meant to add to students' knowledge of Ohio history and the historically important people who are major characters in *Littsie of Cincinnati*. The activities also enable students to understand life in Southern Ohio in the early nineteenth century. These Student Activities are adaptable for students in the fourth through the sixth grades. Copy these activities for use in your classroom.

Student Activities

- Activity One – Selling Supplies to Pioneers
- Activity Two – Writing Advertisements for Pioneer Stores
- Activity Three – The Navigator and Finding Our Way
- Activity Four – Autobiographical Sketch – Personal Journals or Blogs
- Activity Five – A Most Unforgettable Day
- Activity Six - The Ohio River
- Activity Seven – Abolitionists In Cincinnati
- Activity Eight – Cincinnati Then and Now

Activity One – Selling Supplies to Pioneers

Ask the students to imagine they are shopkeepers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1832. They sell supplies to pioneers who are going downriver to Cincinnati. What would these pioneers need for their journey? What would they need to set up their homes and to farm the land?

Materials:

- Paper, pens or pencils
- A map of southern Pennsylvania and Ohio

Learner Objectives:

- Demonstrate problem-solving skills.
- Identify the basic needs of pioneers for survival.
- Summarize what they imagine would be the problems and dangers facing pioneers as they journeyed from Pittsburgh to Cincinnati on the Ohio River in 1832.

Procedure:

1. Arrange students into cooperative working groups of four or five per group.
2. After a discussion of living conditions in 1832, described in the first three chapters of *Littsie of Cincinnati*, ask the students to imagine they are shopkeepers who sell supplies to pioneers about to start on a river journey. What items would these pioneers need to survive the journey?
 - A. Ask students to choose the type of boat they will sell to the pioneers and explain why.
 - B. What food and drink should they take to last the journey?
 - C. Will they take extra clothing or bedding?
 - D. How will they keep themselves clean and healthy during the trip?
 - E. Does the group want to include medical supplies? What kind of medical supplies do they think they will need?
3. What supplies will be needed to repair the boat and keep it running?

Give students one class period to complete this activity. Groups can report their findings the next class day.

- A. Have the captain from each group report their results.
- B. Have a class discussion of which pioneers would or would not survive and why

Activity Two – Writing Advertisements for Pioneer Stores

Many pioneers came through Pittsburgh on their way down America’s rivers to the lands they believed would give them a new life. All of these pioneers needed supplies for their journeys. Ask the students to imagine they are shopkeepers and they want to sell supplies to the pioneers. How would they advertise the supplies they sell so the pioneers would want to come to buy their supplies at their stores?

Materials:

- Paper, pens or pencils
- Poster Board
- Construction Paper
- Glue
- Markers

Learner Objectives:

- Identify and discuss basic elements of advertising used in print advertisements.
- Understand the needs of pioneers.

Resources:

Current magazine and newspaper ads

Procedure:

Begin this activity by asking the students to share their favorite print advertisements. Students explain why they liked certain advertisements and what part of the ad would make them want to buy the product in the advertisement. Discussion should follow regarding the words and pictures used to sell a product in each advertisement.

Divide the class into four or five cooperative groups and distribute cards that have the title of one of the following businesses written on it:

- Flatboat Builders
- General Store
- Bookstore
- Farming Tools Store
- Seed and Animal Feed Store

Ask the students to write an advertisement and use appropriate materials to either display their ad in their store window or to be printed in a newspaper.

When the class has finished this activity, ask volunteers from each group to share their ads with the class and explain how they came up with their idea.

Activity Three – The Navigator and Finding Our Way

All of the pioneers needed maps to guide them over the trails and roads and down the rivers to their destinations. Zadok Cramer was a Pittsburgh printer and bookbinder. In 1801 he published *The Navigator*, a book that became the best known of the early river guides used by most flatboat men and keelboat men, many of whom became steamboat pilots.

The Navigator has journals and reports about navigating the Monongahela, Allegheny, Ohio, and Mississippi Rivers from people who traveled on these rivers. It also has maps showing dangerous areas, such as sandbars, water levels, the location and distance between towns and other useful information. *The Navigator* was an essential tool for anyone who wanted to travel by boat. Littsie's family used *The Navigator* for their journey downriver from Pittsburgh to Columbia.

Materials:

- Paper, pens or pencils
- Computers with Internet access

Learner Objectives:

- Understand the importance of geography in moving from one location to another.
- Enable students to become more observant of their surroundings.
- Enable students to present details in a logical manner.

Procedure:

This activity could be included as part of a geography lesson. Ask the students to create a visitor's guide to their neighborhood or a favorite place, using their classroom as the starting point.

Ask the students to consider:

- A. What plans would be needed to get their destination?
- B. Should they draw a map?
- C. What are some of the key landmarks along the route?
- D. What obstacles or dangers could the student traveler meet up with along the way?
- E. If a traveler got lost going to the destination, whom could they ask for directions?
- F. What can the traveler expect to find when they arrive at the destination?

When the class has finished this activity, ask for volunteers to share their visitor's guide with the class.

Activity Four – Autobiographical Sketch – Personal Journals or Blogs

Littsie's family left their friends and family in Dingle, their small village on the West Coast of Ireland, to find a better life in America. After working on a relative's farm in Pittsburgh for several years, they decided to go to Columbia, Ohio, where they could buy land for a farm. Littsie enjoys going to new places and is excited about the adventures she and her family will have in Columbia.

Materials:

- Paper, pens or pencils
- Computers with Internet access

Learner Objectives:

- Understand how to organize a story as a chronological order of events.
- Learn how to edit their work for spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Write about personal experiences.
- Use personal knowledge to develop a topic.
- Discuss ideas and experiences with others.

Procedure:

Ask the students to answer the questions listed below as they write a journal of their personal experiences. This Student Activity can be paper and pen or online, if the classroom has Internet access and both teachers and students know how to use blogs.

For those who have not used blogs, blogs or weblogs are unique to the Web. The blog is a personal Web site where students can write their journals and add links, comments and photos, whatever they want. Blogs can be updated daily using software that allows those with little or no technical background to maintain them.

Blog templates can be found at such Web sites as: <http://www.tblog.com> and <http://www.movabletype.org/>. These templates can help teachers build a blog or start a new topic in an existing blog.

Ask the students to consider these questions as they write their journals or blogs:

- A. Did they ever move to a new country or a new city?
- B. How did they feel about leaving relatives and friends?
- C. Describe how they felt the day they left.
- D. How did they feel when they arrived in their new home or town?
- E. How is their new home or town different from the one they left?

When the students finish this activity, ask volunteers to share their journals or blogs with the class.

Activity Five – A Most Unforgettable Day

In the novel, *Littsie of Cincinnati*, Littsie has many adventures. One of her adventures is going to Cincinnati with her father and her friend, Tommy. While they are there they go to the Great Western Museum where they see many strange and frightening creatures. Another adventure she has is getting lost in the forest as she searches for her sister, Megan. Yet another adventure is saving Eulene from drowning in the river after the steamboat Eulene is on exploded during a steamboat race.

Materials:

- Paper, pens or pencils

Learner Objectives:

- Enable students to tell stories based on their personal experiences.
- Understand how to use basic writing skills to describe events, characters and conflicts.

Procedure:

Ask the students to write in one or two paragraphs a description of their most unforgettable day. The experience they describe can be anything they would like, good, bad, funny, or frustrating. When the students finish this activity:

- Ask volunteers to read to the class what they have written about their most unforgettable day.
- Ask the students to discuss how they were changed by their experiences on their most unforgettable day.

Activity Six - The Ohio River

The Iroquois called the river "Ohio." The name was later translated by the French as, "the Beautiful—La Belle Riviere." The Ohio River begins at a point in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, flows for hundreds of miles and then into the Mississippi River. After the American Revolution, thousands of settlers began to travel on these two great rivers to establish towns and buy homesteads in the western lands.

Materials:

- Paper, pens or pencils
- World Almanac
- Atlas
- Computers with Internet access

Resource Link:

<http://www.lrp.usace.army.mil/nav/ohioback.htm>

Learner Objectives:

- Understand the importance of the Ohio River as an inland highway for commerce.
- Understand the relationship of the Ohio River to history and pioneer life.
- Learn how to use maps of the Ohio River and Web sites on the Internet that describe the major features and history of the Ohio River.

Procedure:

Using the materials listed above, ask the students to find the answers to the following questions:

1. What two rivers form the Ohio River? (The Monongahela and the Allegheny)
2. Where does the Ohio River join the Mississippi? (Cairo, Illinois.)
3. What is the length of the Ohio River in miles? (981miles)
4. Do you think the river has changed since 1832? How? (The new dam system has made the river wider and deeper. It rarely freezes.)
5. Was travel possible up river before the invention of the steamboat? (Yes. Keelboat men used long poles to move the boat forward against the current.)
6. Name 3 cities on the Ohio River.
7. Name 3 rivers that flow into the Ohio River. (Little Miami, Great Miami, Scioto, Kanawha)
8. Who was Mike Fink? (A legendary riverboat man, rough and tumble, and wild)
9. What was a roustabout? (Referred to a man who worked on keelboats or steamboats)
10. What states border the Ohio River? (West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois).

Activity Seven – Abolitionists In Cincinnati

In 1833, when Littsie lived in Cincinnati, there were many people who wanted to bring an end to slavery. For example, Harriet Beecher Stowe lived in Cincinnati in 1833 where she gathered material for writing her famous antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Levi Coffin, born and raised in the slave state of North Carolina, was against slavery. In his general store in Cincinnati he refused to sell anything made with slave labor. Levi Coffin, with the help of those involved in the Underground Railroad, a network of people who assisted escaped slaves, was able to save thousands of slaves from being captured and sent back to the south. Salmon Chase, a Cincinnati lawyer, who defended runaway slaves, was called, "The Attorney-General of Fugitive Slaves."

Cincinnati's trade with the south was extensive. For this reason, there were many people in Cincinnati who wanted to keep the institution of slavery. The city attracted slave catchers because it was an easy place to catch a slave who had just escaped across the Ohio River from Kentucky, a slave state, to Ohio, a free state. Yet even in a free state, slaves were the property of an owner and by law the owner could take them back. Those for and those against slavery were in conflict and created tensions in the city, as the students learned in *Littsie of Cincinnati* when Littsie attempts to free Eulene.

Materials:

- Paper, pens or pencils
- Poster Board
- Construction Paper
- Glue
- Markers
- Computers with Internet access

Learner Objectives:

- Understand the impact of slavery on African Americans and the white citizens of Cincinnati.
- Learn about the Underground Railroad and its impact on slavery

Procedure:

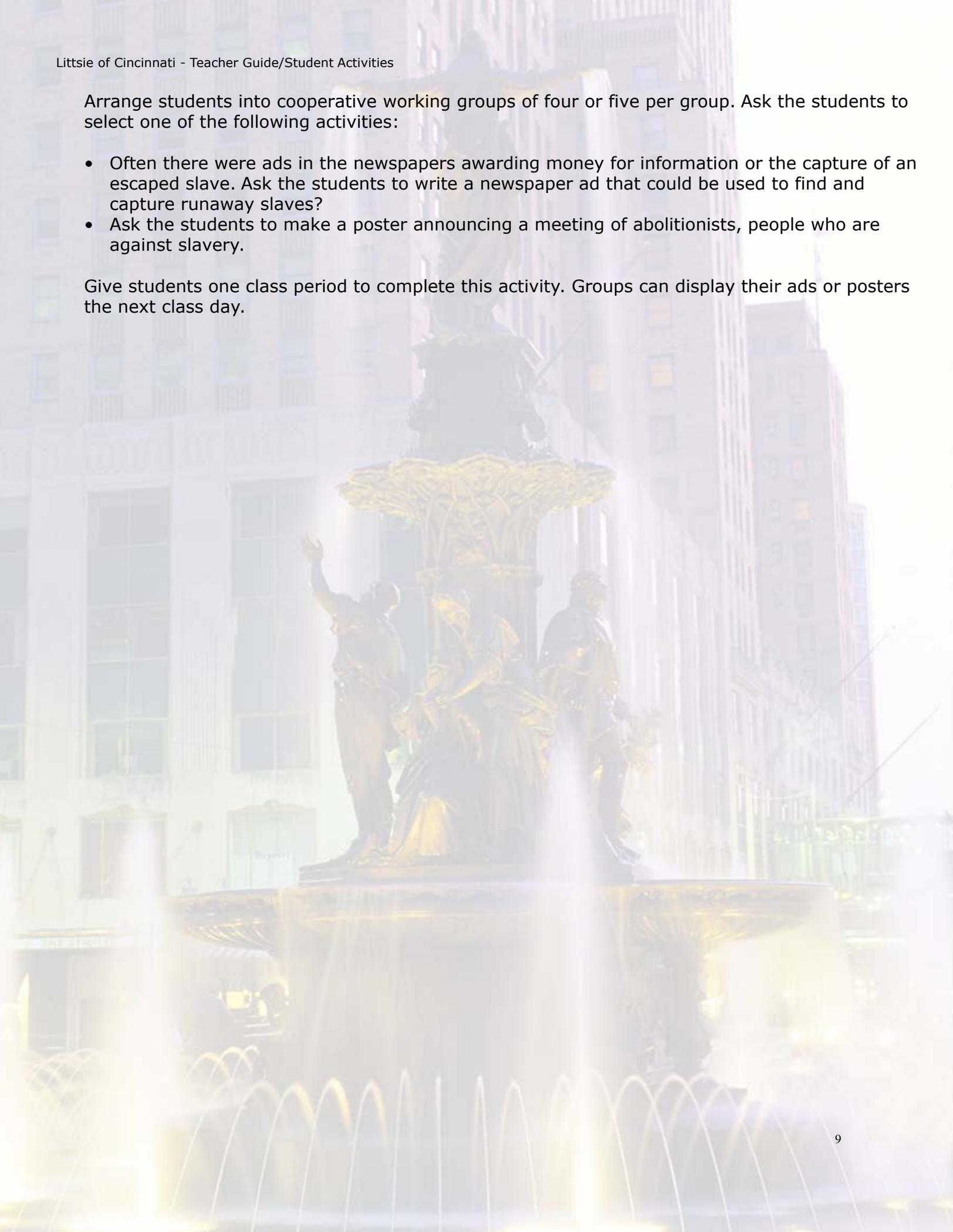
Begin this activity with a class discussion of these questions:

1. Ask the students to imagine that they are Eulene. What are her fears?
2. A slave was considered the property of an owner. Why did Littsie need to be afraid when she hid Eulene?
3. Why would steamboat captains be concerned about escaped slaves?

Arrange students into cooperative working groups of four or five per group. Ask the students to select one of the following activities:

- Often there were ads in the newspapers awarding money for information or the capture of an escaped slave. Ask the students to write a newspaper ad that could be used to find and capture runaway slaves?
- Ask the students to make a poster announcing a meeting of abolitionists, people who are against slavery.

Give students one class period to complete this activity. Groups can display their ads or posters the next class day.



- A. Ask the captain from each group to explain the group's ad or poster ideas.
- B. Discuss the ads and posters with the class and ask how effective they believe they are.

Activity Eight – Cincinnati Then and Now

When Littsie attended the Cincinnati Female Academy in 1833, Cincinnati was a very different city from what it is today. For example, most of the streets were not paved, pigs ran wild in the streets and people who lived in the city bought their food from farmers at open markets. Discuss other differences between Cincinnati then and now with the students.

Materials:

Littsie of Cincinnati
Paper, pen and pencil
Computers with Internet access

Learner Objectives:

- Develop students' Internet research skills.
- Learn about the history of Cincinnati.
- Learn about the day-to-day life of people living in Cincinnati in 1833.

Procedure:

Once the students have a clear idea of the many differences between how people lived in Cincinnati in 1833 and how things are now, ask them to answer the questions listed below. Also encourage them to use the Internet to add more facts to their answers.

1. What was the population of Cincinnati in 1833? (Approximately 24,831) What is it today? (324,000)
2. Did Cincinnati have a bridge to Kentucky in 1833? (No) Does it today? (Yes, there are several bridges)
3. What fuel did people use to heat their houses in 1833? (Wood) What do they use today?
4. What were the main industries in Cincinnati 1833? (Soap, candles, steamboats, pork, printing, machinery, beer) What are they today? (Soap, aircraft engines, insurance, banking, printing, machinery)
5. Was Fountain Square in downtown Cincinnati in 1833? (No) When was it built? (1871)

6. Why was Cincinnati called Porkopolis? (Because there were many meat packing companies in Cincinnati and large numbers of pigs were brought to the city by farmers) Are there any statues or events that remind people in Cincinnati of the time when Cincinnati was called "Porkopolis?" (The pigs on the top of the entrance to Sawyer Point and The Flying Pig Marathon)
7. When Littsie and Eulene needed help, they were taken to the home of Nicholas Longworth who lived on Pike Street. Can you still visit Nicholas Longworth's house today? (Yes, today Longworth's house is the Taft Museum of Art.)
8. Dr. Daniel Drake was an important character in the novel, *Littsie of Cincinnati*. He worked tirelessly for the people of Cincinnati during the cholera epidemic. He even tried to help Littsie when her father had cholera. He also told her where he thought she might find her sister, Megan. Is there a famous Cincinnati hospital named after him? (Yes, the Drake Center)
9. In 1833 the public landing in Cincinnati had many steamboats docked there. How did transportation change in the next 100 years? (Trains, cars, planes) Do any steamboats still dock in Cincinnati? (Yes, and every four years there's a celebration of steamboats at the Tall Stacks Festival)
10. Littsie's family had a favorite song about a boatman they always sang together. Do you know any songs about rivers or a song you and your family likes to sing together?