# The Freedmen's Bureau and Fisk University

## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Content Essay</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Student Activity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Primary Sources</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Freedman’s Bureau and Fisk University

*Essential Question: How did the Freedman’s Bureau and Fisk University assist African-Americans in Tennessee after the Civil War?*

In March 1865, President Lincoln and Congress established the Freedmen’s Bureau to assist formerly enslaved people as well as white Southerners who had been displaced by fighting during the Civil War. The Freedmen’s Bureau carried out a number of functions in the South. The agency provided food, clothing, shelter, and medical care for those in need. It also protected freed people from exploitation by their former masters. It also investigated claims of abuse from formerly enslaved people and helped establish employment contracts. One of the agency’s most important functions was to establish schools.

In Nashville, Clinton B. Fisk, leader of the Freedmen’s Bureau in Tennessee, donated a former Union army barracks to establish a school for African Americans in 1865. The school, which was known as Fisk School in his honor, opened in January 1866 to students of all ages who wanted to learn. One year later, the school was incorporated as Fisk University and was open to students of all races. The school quickly fell on hard times and was nearly bankrupt by 1871. In a last ditch effort to raise money for the school, a group of Fisk students began to tour the nation singing gospel music. The Fisk Jubilee Singers were an immediate sensation. In 1873, they performed for President Grant at the White House and for Queen Victoria. Fisk University continued to prosper in the early 20th century. Students from Fisk, including Diane Nash and John Lewis, played a key role in the civil rights movement.

Sources:
Student Activity

Directions: Read the excerpts from the Memphis Colored Orphan Asylum found on the following pages. The Orphan Asylum operated with assistance from the Freedmen’s Bureau. Complete the chart below and sentence stems below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges faced by African-Americans after the Civil War</th>
<th>Successes of African-Americans after the Civil War</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Freedmen’s Bureau assisted African Americans by ____________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

After the Civil War, African Americans in Tennessee continued to face many challenges including

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________
Primary Sources

The following excerpts come from the Diary of Memphis Colored Orphan Asylum which is available from the Tennessee State Library and Archives.

with coal, which is a great relief to me; fuel is very expensive, and the labor of providing it is not very pleasant.

New Year's Day, Sunday—Sent to Capt. Walker a women named "Charity," and her child, that I took in last evening. Her situation required attentions that could not be given here, and I recommended her to the hospital.

Jan. 2d—I notified several that we were now ready to receive children. The colored population are having a grand celebration of the emancipation proclamation. Miss Cahill commenced the school. Provided a matron temporarily.

Jan. 3d—Arranged with the officers of the Provisional Camp to draw our rations and bring them to us, which will be a very great accommodation. Uncle Morris brought us two children, Philip Marvel and Jane Dulan. Jane is about six years old, has been very cruelly treated, and is greatly delighted with the prospect of her new home. This is our first little girl. A negro, former servant of the late proprietor of the house, came to the door, and his strange questions caused us some alarm. He is an old "secess," but I will not anticipate trouble.

Jan. 4th—Ration day. Received from the Government our first allowance of coal; sixty bushels for the month. Aunt Eliza and Doreas came to sewing to take home with them. Mr. Conk, Superintendent of Colored Schools, brought us two girls, Alice Hills and Janette Gurney, both orphans. Janette has brothers in the service.

Jan. 5th—Dismissed the carpenter. Admitted five children, Mary Brown, John Granbury, Fanny Farley, Ben Dunlap, Henrietta Prince. Mr. Toone, Agent of Western Freedmen's Aid Commission, agreed to furnish boys' clothing from the Industrial Schools under his charge.

Jan. 6th—Rained and snowed all day. Just at night, Mr. Creight brought a boy, Andy Smith, about eleven years old; found him crying in the street. Says he has no home; knows his father is dead; thinks he has a mother; never saw her since he came with the army; has no "kin-folks." Thought his case deplorable enough, from his appearance, being covered with rags and vermin; received him without further inquiry or delay.

Jan. 7th—Received Charles Westmoreland, a little boy sent from Washington Hospital; is about eleven years old, and stutters badly; also, two little sisters, orphan children of Isaac Wells, a soldier who died on President's Island. Purchased shoes and stockings.
Lind, was very fair; a person not knowing the fact would hardly believe African blood was coursing through her veins. She cried bitterly when told she must go, and said "I always had a hard time because I was white, and now you are going to send me away from here." I could not bear the idea of keeping her with black children, and think I have found a home more suitable for her. Received little Ned McGhee.

Feb. 3d—Tried to make some collections; not as successful as I would have liked to have been. Ordered some supplies from the U. S. Sanitary Commission.

Feb. 4th—Have been preparing a register of the children; two have gone to new homes, and three admitted.

Feb. 6th—Received a letter from Major W. G. Sargent, Superintendent and Provost Marshal of Freedmen, Department of Arkansas, asking if I would receive twenty orphans if sent from Little Rock. I replied that I would be glad to do so, but there were more in Memphis than I could care for.

Feb. 8th—Numerous calls for children. A clergyman, delegate of the Christian Commission, wishes to take one of our largest girls with him North, and we are making preparations to have her go.

Feb. 9th—Had hospital room fitted up. Reported to Gen. Dana the deficiency in our coal receipts. He replied that he would give it immediate attention.

Feb. 10th—Met at Mrs. Dana's a Miss Hallowell, from Philadelphia, who promised to assist me, and will solicit contributions from her friends East.

Feb. 11th—I find myself almost worn out, and must have rest; tried to keep my room to-day, but found it impossible—numerous calls that I could not refuse. A respectable looking colored woman wished to adopt one of our youngest little girls. Her recommendations as to character and ability, and pecuniary circumstances were very satisfactory, and I selected "Jane," our first little girl for her. She was a very gentle, affectionate child, and will appreciate kindness and attention. I hope she may receive from her new mother the love which her nature craves, but which the poor child has never known. Received a foundling which was left when an infant, in camp near Memphis, at the time Gen. Sherman removed his troops to Vicksburg. As the child had no name I gave him that of Sherman, from the above circumstance.

Feb. 13th—Mrs. Gen. Dana and Miss Hallowell made us quite