

Robert Smalls: Fearless Defender of Black America

Critical Thinking & Discussion Questions

Virtues of Community Service

K - 2

- What is good about serving others? How did Smalls serve former slaves?
- What qualities does a good leader need to have? Name reasons why Smalls was elected to so many political offices?
- What are some ways that you would like to serve your community?
- If you were a leader, what would you do for your community?

3 - 5

- Why is serving others important? How did Smalls serve former slaves?
- What is good about being a leader? How can leadership be used for evil? How can leadership be used for good? Name reasons why Smalls was elected to so many political offices?
- What are some ways that you would like to serve your community?
- If you were a leader, what would you do for your community and say to your community?

6 - 8

- How can leadership be used for evil? How can leadership be used for good? Give reasons why Smalls was repeatedly elected for political office. What would motivate you to run for political office?
- Local government leaders are sometimes called civil servants. How do they serve the community? Why do leaders sometimes serve themselves rather than serve the people around them? If you were a leader, what would you do for your community and say to your community?

Virtues of Courage and Conviction

K - 2

- Why was escaping from slavery important to Robert Smalls and his wife?
- At 23 years old, Smalls became a Civil War hero. What is a hero? Why do people appreciate heroes?
- Why do you think he would help the family who had formerly enslaved him?
- Why is freedom so important to human beings?
- What are reasons would some slaves would not try to escape?

3 - 5

- Why is freedom so important to human beings?
- What reasons would some slaves choose to stay in bondage and not risk their lives to be free?
- What did Smalls do with his prize money for being a Civil War hero? Why did he help someone who had enslaved him?
- Smalls seized the opportunity to go to school once he was a free man. What subjects and skills helped him become a successful store owner, a school founder, and a newspaper publisher?

6 - 8

- Why is freedom so important to human beings?
- What would some slaves not attempt to escape?
- What emotions do you think Smalls felt as he steered the ship toward the Confederate check-point?
- Smalls was determined to help people and solve problems in the part of South Carolina where he lived. Why was he so determined?
- Besides the word *determination*, think of another word to describe **conviction**.
- What are you determined to do with your life? Name situations that you deal where you would like to have more courage?

Robert Smalls saw an **opportunity** to get possession of the ship, created a plan, and achieved his goal.

- What goals do you have for this year? What opportunities does your school or community have that you can take advantage of?
- What mindset did Smalls have that allowed him to take advantage of the opportunity to escape?
- In what ways can you develop a similar mindset?

Few lead, many follow. Think about Smalls' example.

- What character traits do you want to develop to follow in Smalls' footsteps of success?
- How does Smalls' extension of grace to Mrs. McKee reveal the qualities of a servant-leader?
- Which of the ten Woodson Principles do you see exemplified in Smalls' life?
 - 10 Woodson Principles: Competence, Integrity, Transparency, Resilience, Witness, Innovation, Inspiration, Agency, Access, Grace