



**Thinking About Freedom**  
**Read Aloud Lesson based on the book**  
***Henry's Freedom Box* by Ellen Levine**

All of us hear about the *freedoms* we have because we live in the United States of America. If we just think about the First Amendment to the Constitution, we realize we have the freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, the right to gather peaceably, and the right to petition the government. Since we all live in the USA, now is a good time to think about the following: **What does FREEDOM mean to you?**

Think about what freedom means to you and then listen or read *Henry's Freedom Box*. *Check out YOUTUBE for a recording of the book* Have your thoughts about what *freedom* means changed after you heard and discussed the story?

Now you are about to listen to a story that is true. Henry Box Brown was a slave who dreams of a world in which his life belonged to him. Just look at the cover of this book. What do you think is in a box that is call a *freedom box*? Now let's hear the story...

1. People are always telling us that we need to find out as much as we can about ourselves, our families, and our culture. As the story *Henry's Freedom Box* begins, we learn that Henry - and all slaves for that matter - were not even allowed to know their birthdays. Why do you think the slave owners did not want slaves to know their own birthdays? Brainstorm all the answers you think possible.

2. Think about how much freedom meant to Henry Box Brown. Today there is a sense that many people - old and young - take their freedoms that we have in this country for granted.

Let's examine those freedoms we have in the First Amendment to the Constitution:

- Freedom of Speech...Do you have the right to hold any opinion you want as long as you express that opinion in a respectful, responsible manner?
- Freedom of Religion...Do you and your family have the right to practice any religion that you choose?
- Freedom of the Press...Do you read a newspaper or listen to the news on TV or on your phone? Do you think that the Government controls what is written in the press?

- Freedom to Assemble...Do we have the freedom to gather/assemble to protest something we do not think is right? Can you give an example that you might have seen or heard about?
- Freedom to Petition the Government - Can you go to someone in city government and ask for something for your school or neighborhood?

3. Do you think Henry Box Brown was a hero or a leader or both? Be prepared to support your answer.

4. Henry Box Brown's box was 3 feet long; 2 feet, 8 inches deep; and 2 feet wide. Henry had 1 hole for air. He stayed in the box for 27 hours not knowing what was going to happen or who was going to open his box. Do you think what Henry Box Brown did was worth what he got when his box was opened? Why or why not?

5. In some ways, we are being asked to stay in our “box” right now. We cannot play with our friends. We cannot go to school. It is very important that we keep at least 6 feet away from anyone other than the people with whom we live. If we follow all of these guidelines, we too can be considered a leader **and** a hero. Do you agree? Why or why not?