Flying to Freedom
A Program Presented by the SJR State Library

This program has been adapted by the SJR State Library from a lesson plan published by the International Literacy Association and the National Council of Teachers of English through ReadWriteThink. This program aligns with the following State standards for Language Arts: LA.3.1.6.2., LA.3.2.1.5., LACC.3.RL.1.1., LACC.3.RL.1.2., LACC.3.RL.1.3., LACC.3.SL.1.2., LACC.3.L.3.5.b., and LA.4.5.2.4..

In this program, a librarian from SJR State will read aloud two stories over the course of two visits. Each visit requires 1 hour to complete. This program is suitable for children in Grades 3 – 5. The SJR State Library will supply the books and drawing supplies required as well as two librarians and, if permitted, 2 – 5 SJR State student volunteers for each visit.

The librarian will begin the program with an introduction, a brief statement about the 2019 commemoration of 400 years of African American history, and a brief explanation of how this program contributes to that commemoration. The librarian will read the book aloud, lead a group discussion, and provide an activity. The other librarian and volunteers will assist as needed.

This program features the Coretta Scott King Book Award winners Tar Beach by Faith Ringgold and The People Could Fly, a folktale retold by Virginia Hamilton. By listening to each story, viewing its illustrations, reflecting upon posed questions, and expressing thoughts and ideas through speech, text, and visual representations, children will engage in multimodal learning to process the characters, events, and context of the stories (including the themes of racism and liberation).

Visit 1: Tar Beach

Group discussion: Why does Cassie want to fly? What does Cassie's flying help her to do? What would happen if Cassie couldn't fly? Where do you think Cassie flies after the Union building and the Ice Cream Factory?

Activity: Draw or write a response to the following - Where would you fly, if you could fly like Cassie? What would be your reasons for flying? How would flying change your life?

Visit 2: The People Could Fly

Group discussion: Why does Toby want to fly? What does Toby's flying help him to do? What would happen if Toby couldn't fly? Remember Cassie from last week's story? In what ways are Cassie's reasons for flying the same as Toby's reasons? In what ways are Cassie's reasons for flying different than Toby's reasons?

Activity: If Toby and Cassie could draw pictures for each other, what would they draw? What would they want to show each other about their lives? Pretend you are Toby and draw a picture for Cassie or pretend you are Cassie and draw a picture for Toby. Or, if Toby and Cassie wrote letters to each other, what would they want to say to each other about their lives? Pretend you are Toby and write a letter to Cassie or pretend you are Cassie and write a letter to Toby.