DISCUSSION HELP/HINTS

QUESTIONS TO ASK AFTER HEARING THE SONG. Some questions might need use of the lyrics.

* How would you characterize the mood of the music? *Slow, sad, it is a dirge, like a song to be played at a New Orleans funeral.*
* What does the song seem to be about? *FREEDOM, SAN MALO, ESCAPE.*
* To what *irony* do they refer? Why is it ironic?: *Maroon can mean to leave a person in an isolated place with no resources, but these people pick a kind of marooning in order to gain their freedom, and are referred to as Maroons.*
* This song is called a *dirge*. What is a *dirge*? *A song or hymn of grief or lamentation especially one intended to accompany funeral or memorial rites. A slow, solemn, and mournful piece of music.*
* Based on the fact that this is a *dirge*, what do you think eventually happened to San Malo*? He was captured, tried, and hanged in the main square of New Orleans (now called Jackson Square).*
* Where were these people located? *Mississippi to Pontchartrain, in the bayous and swamps.*
* How did they survive? *Raiding the city.*
* What is your understanding of the word *marooned*? *(Remind them of Pirates of the Caribbean if they seem stuck.)*

QUESTONS REFERING TO SPECIFIC LYRICS:

* Where did they “find freedom”?: “*In the shallows, deep down in the bayou*.” – In the shallow but swampy areas.
* Why was that a good place?: “*Where white man never goes*”.
* What is mean by “*Brought freedom to dozen of fellows*…”: He was a community/maroon leader rather than simply being an escaped slave seeking only his own freedom.
* Geographically, where was the area?: “*Beyond the Mississippi to the lake of Pontchartrain.”*
* What was the area like? :“*gators, snakes, mud pits, and wild boar*”.
* What is one of their chief methods of survival?: “*At night they raid the city*…”

QUESTIONS TO ASK based on TRI POD podcast.

* How were MAROONS different from most runaway slaves?

Most runaways tried to blend into city life. Maroons stayed in isolated areas to be as free as possible. “*They were looking for their way to establish their communities in areas that nobody had control over*.”

* What were living conditions like for maroons?

They varied. Some lived in bare caves. Others outfitted their caves with furniture, stoves, etc.

“*some were really little houses, with stoves, with furniture, beds*”

* Why were swamps a good place for maroon settlements?

They were difficult for the authorities to police, often requiring soldiers to move in neck deep water. “*You had to wade into the water to your neck, and the mosquitoes and you know all the wild animals…”*

* How large was the typical maroon settlement and where did they tend to be located?

“*small camps of less than 20 people -- established settlements that were technically still on their old owner’s property. It was just uncultivated land the whites were unfamiliar with!”*

NOTE: San Malo’s larger settlement was deep in the swamps as noted in the song. This was necessary given the greater number of people who lived in his settlement.

* What were the advantages of being located in those areas?

“*access to the resources in the big city or the big house.”*

* Why would some family members stay behind?

*“Often, one member of the family would remain on the plantation to be able to help the others… to be able to help give us news, intelligence about what's going on, about when the militia is coming with the dogs(?)’"*

* Why did the slaves feel justified in stealing from the whites?

*“Which is what this type of resistance was about: taking back what was theirs…That's why stealing from white people was not stealing. So whatever they were taking they were entitled to it, because they had actually produced it.”*

* What were some ways to get the resources needed to survive?

“*Raiding the plantations was one way of survival. Another was doing work for hire -- actually getting paid. Already being in the woods, Maroons in Louisiana tapped into the lumber industry. A lot of times, they would work for white people to cut timber*”

* Why were the Maroons such a threat to the slave holders?

*“Slave owners were afraid that the presence of Maroons would corrupt the people, because they said that they noted insolence among the slaves, It was like ‘well if you’re doing all this to me, then you know I can go and join the Maroons.*’

* Who was San Malo?

“*one of the only identifiable Maroon leaders in the United States”*

* How was his settlement different?

“*St. Malo had a population of more than 50”*

* What eventually happened to San Malo?

“*defeated by the Spanish under Governor Esteban Miro. They captured Malo and fellow organizers and hanged them, making an example of the rebels against the slave system.”*

* According to one Maroon, why live such a life with all of its suffering?

*"It’s not the kind of pseudo freedom of living in a city in the South where you pass as a free man or a free woman, but you are not. This is the real freedom. And to a planter you know who could not understand why a Maroon did not return when, you know, if he had been sick, he had frostbite, it was a very difficult time. And the man told him ‘****I taste how it is to be free, and I didn't come back****.’"*

Have them consider the different definitions of maroon based upon context.