



Abolitionists and the Underground Railroad

Goal:

Students will brainstorm ways to organize against slavery and will learn about the abolitionist movement.

Purpose:

Students become aware of the risks taken by fugitive slaves and the people who helped them, while gaining an understanding of the goals, actions, and symbols of the abolitionist movement.

Materials:

Chart paper or projection/transparency with 3 guiding questions (What are the goals of your anti-slavery group? What will you actually do to reach these goals? Will your group have a name, and if so, what name will you choose and why?)

Abolitionist Student Worksheets

Standards Correlation:

Pennsylvania Academic Standards for History: 8.2 and 8.3 A, C, & D

Before the Lesson:

- Have charts/projections/transparencies with 3 guiding questions ready, but not yet displayed. (What are the goals of your anti-slavery group? What will you actually do to reach these goals? Will your group have a name, and if so, what name will you choose and why?)
- Have a plan for getting the students into cooperative groups (3-4 students per group). Each group will have a recorder and a presenter.
- Make enough copies of the Student Fact Sheet for every student.

Steps:

1) Engage: *The Underground Railroad was a reaction to the rise of slavery in this country. Africans were brutally captured from their homeland, they endured the Middle Passage across the Atlantic Ocean and life as enslaved people in America. Both free and enslaved Africans in America made significant contributions from the very beginning of our country's history, all through the time in our history when slavery was legal in this country, and have continued contributing to our country's history today.*

I am going to ask you a series of questions, and I want you to just silently think of the answers on your own. You will have a chance to share with others in your group in a little while. Now put yourself back into that time, and ask yourself the question: What would you do? How would you feel about slavery? Would you DO anything about it? Could you DO anything about it? Would you be more successful doing something about it as an individual or as a group?

Allow students time to think quietly about these questions. Have them share with a partner and then ask students to share with the whole class. Accept all supported responses. Then display the 3 guiding questions for the class.

*Your team will be forming an anti-slavery group during the early 1800s. Please take some time to discuss the following questions, and the **recorder** of the group will write down the group's answers after you have reached agreement.*

Questions: *What are the goals of your group? What will you actually do to reach these goals? Will your group have a name, and if so, what name will you choose and why?*

The teacher should give the groups time and monitor their progress. Each group's **presenter** will share the group's responses with the class. The teacher can have each group present all 3 answers at once, or could call on each group to share one goal, then one action in random order; and then ask each group to share their group name, if they chose to have one, and explain the reasoning behind their choice. The teacher facilitates a Socratic dialogue by prompting students to further think about and support their goals and actions, and even group names. The teacher lists the ideas generated by the groups on the board or on chart paper under the headings of: GOALS, ACTIONS, and GROUP NAMES. Hopefully, students will generate many ideas about how to enact a change in the state of things with regard to slavery.

2) Abolitionist Student Worksheet: Pass the student worksheet out to each student. Have them read the information and answer the questions on their own. Each student

should complete their own sheet, but the teacher could allow them to confer with their anti-slavery group for assistance.

- 3) Closing: Allow students to get with a partner to share their answers from the worksheet. Then have a whole class discussion on the last three questions from the student worksheet: **Would you still be willing to help? Would you be willing to take the risk? Why or why not?**

Suggestions for Formal Evaluation:

- Students write a persuasive letter, trying to convince the South that slavery is wrong and should be abolished.
- Students write a persuasive letter to a friend or someone that they know, and try to convince them to join the abolitionists.
- The teacher has students imagine that they have been approached several times by abolitionists wanting them to join their fight, but recently there have been many people in this anti-slavery struggle who have been fined, jailed, and recently a group of anti-abolitionists turned violent and burned down Pennsylvania Hall (an abolitionist building in Philadelphia). Students have to write a letter telling the abolitionists whether or not they will join them and explain their reasoning.

Extending and Enriching the Learning...

Further Study of the Liberty Bell

Teachers may find it helpful to use the enclosed Liberty in Motion activities to extend their students' knowledge about the Liberty Bell. The Liberty Bell is discussed in this lesson in the context of being given its name and used as a symbol by the abolitionists. These resources and activities would assist students in knowing more about the Bell before their site visit to Independence National Historical Park.



Quest for Freedom: The Underground Railroad

Name of your Anti-Slavery Group: _____

Your name: _____

Names of other Group Members: _____

There were people who believed that slavery was wrong right from the beginning, and were looking for different ways to ABOLISH it. Since these people wanted to abolish (or end) slavery, they became known as the **abolitionists** and they tried to do many of the things that you and your teams talked about doing. They joined together in groups called abolitionist societies and tried to change the laws by changing people's minds about slavery. But often the laws were slow to change, and slavery was growing in the South. Abolitionists relied on the POWER OF WORDS through books, essays, pamphlets, making speeches, and other activities; all with the ultimate goal of CHANGING people's minds, and they relied on using SYMBOLS, too.

Question: Did you and your team come up with any of the things that the abolitionists really did? What were they? List them here:

In the 1830s, many abolitionists were visiting Philadelphia or living there and they were starting to visit the Pennsylvania State House where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were created, and where the State House Bell was on display. This Bell had an inscription (words written on it) from the Bible: "Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof". They decided to use this Bell that had hung in the State House when the founders declared that "all men are created equal" as a symbol for FREEDOM for those who still were not equal and did not have any liberty in America: the enslaved Africans. They began printing images of the Bell on their writings, and they renamed it The Liberty Bell.

Question: Why did the abolitionists need a symbol, like the Liberty Bell, for their anti-slavery cause? What difference could a bell make in their fight to end slavery?



Quest for Freedom: The Underground Railroad

As time passed, some (not all) abolitionists decided that the only way to free the slaves would be to actually FREE the slaves: to help them to escape from Southern plantations and travel to the northern states, and later to Canada or Mexico. People had been helping **fugitive** slaves (enslaved Africans who ran away to be free), and slaves had been running away on their own since the beginning. But now the effort became more organized and more extensive. This organized effort to assist fugitive slaves to escape became known as **the Underground Railroad**. The Underground Railroad is the network of all routes and all people who helped enslaved Africans escape from slavery to freedom. Remember: slavery was LEGAL in the southern states, south of the Mason-Dixon Line that divided Pennsylvania and Maryland. By the mid-1800s, slavery was against the law in the northern states. So you would think that as long as escaped slaves made it to the North, they would be free. But it wasn't that simple. There were Fugitive Slave laws that said that people in the north were not LEGALLY allowed to help fugitive slaves. Southern slave owners considered slaves their property, and they thought that anyone who helped fugitive slaves to escape was a thief. Because of these laws, anyone who helped an enslaved African to escape could go to jail (and be separated from their family, and probably lose their job) and had to pay a fine (as much as \$500 or \$1000) for breaking the law, so helping slaves to escape was a very dangerous thing to do.

Question: Would you still be willing to help? Would you be willing to take the risk? Why or why not? _____



Quest for Freedom: The Underground Railroad



Routes of the Underground Railroad

Goal:

Students will map the routes of the Underground Railroad network, and learn about its secret code words and symbols.

Purpose:

Students become aware of how vast and complex the network of the Underground Railroad was, while gaining an understanding of the many variables involved in escape and how secrecy was maintained

Materials:

Physical and Political United States write-on, wipe-off desk maps (If these are not available to the teacher, outline maps can be used. Good basic, political outline maps of the United States can be found and printed at the following web site:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/atlas/index.html?Parent=usofam&Rootmap=&Mode=b&SubMode=w>

Or the students could use political and physical maps from their atlases or textbooks, and use tracing paper to map their routes for this activity.

Handouts with actual Underground Railroad Routes. Some sample route maps can be found at the following web sites:

<http://education.ucdavis.edu/NEW/STC/lesson/socstud/railroad/Map.htm>

<http://www2.lhric.org/pocantico/tubman/map.htm>

<http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/routes.htm>

Standards Correlation:

Pennsylvania Academic Standards for History: 8.2 A, C, & D; 8.3 A, C, & D

Before the Lesson:

- Photocopy handouts of Underground Railroad Routes.

- Prepare physical and political United States desk maps (write-on/wipe-off or outline paper). Should have enough maps for student groups working in pairs or groups of three at the most.

Steps:

- 1) Engage: *From the beginning of slavery in the American South, fugitive slaves were escaping in order to gain their freedom. These fugitives used many different routes, and were often helped by people who wanted to end slavery. By the 1830s, this network of routes to freedom had become more organized and more extensive. Since it was very dangerous for anyone involved if they were caught, one way to keep this activity secret was to use code words for what they were doing so that others didn't know what they were talking about or referring to. The abolitionists were trying to help fugitive slaves to travel along safe routes to freedom. The people and the routes involved in this struggle for freedom became known as the **Underground Railroad**. Think of a railroad. What are some terms associated with a railroad?*

(Allow student responses and list some terms on the board.)

When abolitionists talked about passengers, they were referring to the fugitive slaves. When they talked about conductors, they were referring to the people who would lead the enslaved Africans to safety and freedom (there were conductors who were free Africans, whites, Native Americans, and former slaves). Stations were the safe houses where fugitives could stop, rest, and hide along the routes. Other railroad terms used as code included: depots, shareholders, superintendents, and agents.

(Students can brainstorm what they think these terms really referred to).

Abolitionists used the railroad as a metaphor (and a code) for how they were transporting fugitive slaves to freedom.

- 2) Mapping Activity: Distribute only the political maps to students working in pairs. First have them mark the Mason-Dixon Line (Explain, if necessary, that this line divided the North from the South. It forms the boundary line between Maryland, a slave state, and Pennsylvania, a free state.) Ask them to find and mark South Carolina on their map (or another southern state or city). What route do you think a fugitive slave might take to try to get to freedom? Discuss it with your partner and then mark it. Use the map scale to measure about how far the fugitive slave would have to travel to reach freedom. How long do you think this journey might take? Meet briefly with another team and share routes and rationale, and distances.

(Remind students that because of the Fugitive Slave Laws, enslaved Africans were not truly free until they left the United States. However, many did end their journey in the “free” states, hoping to take on a new identity and avoid the slave catchers sent to retrieve them. Teams can decide where they want to end their fugitive’s journey).

Now hand out the physical maps, and again mark the Mason-Dixon Line and find and mark South Carolina. Ask students to compare and contrast this map with the other one that they just used: what new info is shown on this map that they didn’t have before? (mountains, swamps, etc.) Does that change their route choice? If so, map a new route. Share with another team.

Now hand out the Underground Railroad Route Map(s) and allow time for the teams to study the information. Ask them to compare and contrast their mapped routes to the actual routes known to have been used by fugitives on the Underground Railroad. Students should discuss: How are the routes similar? How are the routes different? When looking at the actual routes, what surprised you the most?

This journey wasn’t easy and it involved risks and consequences for all involved. Have a class discussion about difficult choices involved. (Discussion examples: The swamps and mountains are difficult terrain, but perhaps there is less chance of getting caught. Is the quickest route necessarily the safest? Is the most difficult and lengthy route necessarily a bad choice? Is it better to go by land or by a water route? Is it better to travel in mainly rural or urban settings? Should you try for Canada versus Mexico, or Florida and attempt to blend in with the Native Americans there?)

3) Closing: What do you think was the hardest choice that enslaved Africans trying to escape from slavery had to make? (Accept responses; most will probably emanate from the activity, but some may come from other activities or readings). If no one brings up the CHOICE to leave without one’s family, mention this choice. Many slaves had to escape on their own, or with only certain members of their families. Only the strongest people would be able to make this kind of journey (as they have just seen through the mapping activity), so many were left behind. Many slaves escaped, but vowed to return for their families, or to work and save enough money to buy back their family members’ freedom.

Evaluation:

- The mapping activity shows the routes to freedom that students chose. Teachers could more formally assess by asking students to explain (either verbally or in written form) why they chose the routes, or what changes they made after receiving the physical map, if any.

- Enslaved Africans often used the lyrics of songs to communicate information about the routes to freedom of the Underground Railroad (such as *Follow the Drinking Gourd*). Now that students have attempted to make this journey using the mapping activity, have them write the lyrics for a song that would help others to know details and tips about the best escape route from South Carolina. The students may enjoy this interesting web site about the meaning of the song *Follow the Drinking Gourd* from NASA:
<http://quest.arc.nasa.gov/lrc/special/mlk/gourd2.html>)

Extending and Enriching the Learning...

National Geographic has an excellent web simulation of the Underground Railroad that students can do independently.

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/index.html>

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center has developed a Monument to the Underground Railroad Freedomquest:

<http://www.freedomcenter.org/freedomquests/monuments/>



Quest for Freedom: The Underground Railroad



Stories and Leaders of the Underground Railroad

Goal:

Students complete research on a leader from the Underground Railroad and their struggle for freedom, and share their learning with the class.

Purpose:

Students become aware of the diverse individuals who were leaders and heroes during this time of conflict and struggle in our nation, and gain an understanding that they themselves can make a difference and cause positive change to occur in the world through their words and actions.

Materials:

List of Leaders Sheet

Research Guide Sheets

Primary Resource Documents are available at the Library of Congress web site at:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aohtml/aohome.html>

Standards Correlation:

Pennsylvania Academic Standards for History: 8.1 B, C, & D; 8.2 and 8.3 A, B, C, & D

Before the Lesson:

- Gather resources together that students can use in researching their Underground Railroad Leader. Reserve the computer lab and/or A/V equipment, if necessary.
- Formulate a plan for group assignments: How many students will be in a group? How large will the groups be? Will the research topics be assigned by the teacher or chosen by the students?

Steps:

- 1) Engage: *Harriet Tubman said: "I had reasoned this out in my mind; there was one of two things I had a right to, liberty or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other."*

It took courage to make the decision to escape from slavery. It took courage to help others in their escape. It took courage to write and speak out about the injustices of slavery. People took risks and lived with the consequences of their actions.

- 2) Activity: Students will work in groups to research the story of their chosen or assigned Underground Railroad leader using books, the internet, and video. Depending on your time and resources, you may want to extend this activity's duration. Students synthesize their information onto the Research Guide Sheet, and then create a final piece. Teachers can decide exactly what they would like the final product to be: a written report, an oral presentation with visual aids, a dramatic skit, etc.
- 3) Presentation of Reports: Students present their research reports. This could be done in front of the entire class, or student groups could pair off and take turns sharing if this is a better format due to student comfort level with presentations, class size, and/or time constraints.
- 4) Closing: Discuss the leaders and heroes that we do not know and may never know about because we don't have any primary source documentation about them. *In studying history, how do we "know what we know"? Do you think that there are there many things that we don't know? Why do you think that there is so little information available about the Underground Railroad? (Very little was written down or saved due to the secret nature of the operation).*

Talk to the students about the time frame of these stories. *How many years ago was this? Do you think any of these places still exist? Are any of these Underground Railroad structures still standing? Do you care? Is it important? If you heard that an old building in Philadelphia had been found to be a station from the Underground Railroad, and was about to be torn down, how would you feel about it? Would you care one way or the other? Should it be preserved and saved or demolished for the new store, apartments, etc, that people in the city need? Do you think there are any Underground Railroad sites that still exist in Philadelphia?* Engage the students in this discussion about historic preservation, the need to preserve and protect important structures so that present and future generations can visit them and learn from them.

Evaluation:

Students should use the information gained from this activity, along with what they have learned from the other lessons and from using the suggested video, web, and print resources, to begin to brainstorm their ideas for an essay on the Underground Railroad.

After your class's site visit to Independence National Historical Park to experience the Underground Railroad School Program, the students will have a wealth of knowledge, information, and experience to bring to their essay writing.

The Underground Railroad essay question is:

What do you think are the most important lessons learned from the stories and leaders of the Underground Railroad, and how can you apply them to your life?



Quest for Freedom: The Underground Railroad



Underground Railroad List of Leaders with Web Links to Help Students Begin their Research

- 1) William Still
<http://www.whispersofangels.com/biographies.html#still>
<http://www.undergroundrr.com/foundation/about.htm>
- 2) Frederick Douglass
<http://www.nps.gov/boaf/frederickdouglass.htm>
<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/fdoug.htm>
- 3) Harriet Tubman
<http://www.nps.gov/boaf/harriettubman.htm>
http://americancivilwar.com/women/harriet_tubman.html
- 4) Ellen and William Craft
<http://www.nps.gov/boaf/william&ellencraft.htm>
- 5) Henry “Box” Brown and Samuel A. Smith
<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USASbox.htm>
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/brownbox/brownbox.html>
- 6) Thomas Garrett
<http://www.whispersofangels.com/biographies.html#garrett>
- 7) Lucretia Mott
<http://www.whispersofangels.com/biographies.html#mott>
- 8) William Lloyd Garrison
<http://www.nps.gov/boaf/williamlloydgarrison.htm>
- 9) James Forten
<http://www.undergroundrr.com/foundation/abolotionist.htm#24>
<http://www.explorepahistory.com/ExplorePAHistory/MarkerDetails.do?markerId=11>
- 10) Robert Purvis
<http://www.nynews.com/blackhistory/purvis.html>
<http://www.undergroundrr.com/foundation/abolotionist.htm#29>



Quest for Freedom: The Underground Railroad

Leader of the Underground Railroad: _____

Your name: _____

Background: When and where was this leader born? When and where did this leader die? Who were their family members? What was their childhood like? What kind of education did they receive? Could they read and write? Were they enslaved or free?

Major Achievements and Accomplishments: How did this leader make a difference during the struggle for freedom called the Underground Railroad? Give details about this leader's contributions to the Underground Railroad and freedom for the enslaved. How did this person make a difference in the lives of others through their actions? Make sure that you are telling this leader's story so that the rest of your class will understand their life and its importance. What is interesting about this leader? What do you admire about them? Was this person a leader in areas other than the Underground Railroad?

Photograph or Drawing of your Leader: Find an image of your leader and attach it to your final paper.



Quest for Freedom: The Underground Railroad

Apply your Learning: What are the most important lessons learned from the story of this Underground Railroad leader? How can you specifically apply these lessons to your life right now, both at home and at school?

Resources: List the sources you used to get information about your leader. Include books, videos, DVDs, and web sites.



Quest for Freedom: The Underground Railroad



Quest for Freedom: The Underground Railroad

Underground Railroad Resources for Teachers

Print Resources

African Americans in Pennsylvania: Above Ground and Underground: An Illustrated Guide. Charles L. Blockson. (RB Books, 2001).

Bound for the North Star: True Stories of Fugitive Slaves. Dennis Brindell Fradin. (Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

Freedom Roads: Searching for the Underground Railroad. Joyce Hanson, Gary McGowan, & James Ransome. (Cricket Books, 2003).

Freedom Train: The Story of Harriet Tubman. Dorothy Sterling. (Scholastic, 1991).

North by Night: A Story of the Underground Railroad. Katherine Ayres. (Yearling Books, 2000).

Stealing South. Katherine Ayres. (Yearling Books, 2002).

The Underground Railroad. Bial, Raymond. (Houghton-Mifflin, 1999).

True North: A Novel of the Underground Railroad. Kathryn Lasky. (Scholastic, 1998).

Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania. William J. Switala. (Stackpole Books, 2001).

Video Resources

The Underground Railroad (The History Channel, 1999)
Frederick Douglass (A&E Biography, 1997)
Race to Freedom: The Underground Railroad (Xenon Studios, 1994)
Roots: The Gift (Warner Studios, 1988)

Web Resources

The National Park Service Underground Railroad Web Site
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/ugrr/learn.htm>

The History Channel's Underground Railroad Web Site
<http://www.historychannel.com/exhibits/undergroundrr/story.html>

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center Web Site
http://www.freedomcenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.viewPage&page_id=ABCFFEAC-ED17-4005-8698CAF502A5259E

Library of Congress African American Odyssey Web Site
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aohtml/aohome.html>

National Geographic Underground Railroad Simulation Web Site
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/j1.html>

Underground Railroad FreedomQuest Web Site
<http://www.freedomcenter.org/freedomquests/monuments/>

PBS Underground Railroad-Africans in America Web Site
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2944.html>

NASA Web Site that explains the meaning of the song Follow the Drinking Gourd
<http://quest.arc.nasa.gov/lrc/special/mlk/gourd2.html>



Quest for Freedom: The Underground Railroad

