

Lesson Plan #2
The Underground Railroad and The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850

Subject: Social Studies

Grade Level: 5-8

Classroom description: Approximately 25 students of various genders and abilities

Topic: The “Underground Railroad” helped to smuggle thousands of runaway slaves out of the United States south prior to the Civil War. These runaways were helped by people in the north who were part of a vast network of safe houses that fed and sheltered the runaways as they made their journey north.

Amount of Time Allowed for Lesson: Two 40 minute lessons (*Note: students should already have been introduced to the Erie Canal before completing this activity)

New York State Learning Standard(s): 1-United States History, 3-Geography, 4-Economics, 5-Civics, Citizenship and Government

National Educational Technology Standards: 1-Creativity and Innovation, 3-Research and Information Fluency, 4-Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making, 5-Digital Citizenship, 6-Technology Operations and Concepts

Objective: The purpose of this lesson is to analyze the Underground Railroad and those slaves who traveled along the northern route to freedom prior to the Civil War.

- Students will be able to analyze primary source documents
- Students will be able to list some of the major points of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850
- Students will be able to describe what life was like for runaway slaves and free men
- Students will create artifacts that relate their understanding of the Underground Railroad

Materials: Computer Lab, Internet, White Board/Markers, Underground Railroad Worksheets, “weathered paper” (dip paper into tea to create paper that has a “weathered look”), calligraphy pens

Anticipatory Set: The students will hear the song “Follow the Drinking Gourd.” The teacher will pass out the lyrics to “Follow the Drinking Gourd” and start the music once the students are settled into their seats. The song can be accessed via the following Web site:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Follow_the_drinking_gourd The students will read along with the lyrics. The teacher will tell the students the history of the song and ask the students, “Why do you think the song had a secret meaning?” A class discussion on the possibilities will follow.

Introduction: The teacher will begin the lesson by asking the following questions: “What do you think life was like for an African American slave 170 years ago?” “What about for a free African American?” The teacher will lead the students in a discussion on the events leading up to the Civil War including a discussion of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. The teacher will then

introduce the students to the day's subject matter: The Underground Railroad. The teacher may use the Monroe Fordham Regional History Center to conduct personal research on the Underground Railroad and the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Click on the following link to discover what resources concerning these subjects are available at the center.

http://www.monroefordham.org/vertical%20files/African_Americans.html

Procedure: The students will be using the Internet to view Web sites devoted to the Underground Railroad and Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. When they are finished conducting their research, they will create realistic-looking aged diary entries that describe what life was like for African Americans who were runaway slaves.

1. The students should be directed to consider the images and information provided on the Underground Railroad video and other pages. They should be persuaded to take notes on all of the Web sites so they may refer to their notes when they create their diary entries at the end of their research. This is an independent activity and should be completed by the end of the class.

-The students should review the following Web sites:

*Video: The Underground Railroad: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8nwJDR2O40>

*The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850: <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USASfugitive.htm> or http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fugitive_Slave_Law_of_1850

Full-Text of Law: <http://www.nationalcenter.org/FugitiveSlaveAct.html>

-The students should view the images on the following Web sites and consider the lifestyle of a runaway slave:

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c2/Great_Dismal_Swamp-Fugitive_Slaves.jpg

<http://www.old-picture.com/civil-war/pictures/Fugitive-Slaves.jpg>

<http://www-tc.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/images/4ride33b.jpg>

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brown80/brown104.jpg>

<http://www.libraries.wvu.edu/delany/freeman.gif>

<http://www.beyondbooks.org/slavery/images/fleeing.jpg>

The teacher will walk around the room keeping the students on task and trouble-shooting any potential problems.

2. Once the students feel comfortable with their knowledge content, they may begin creating their aged diary entries. The teacher will provide the students with a sheet of "weathered paper" and calligraphy pen. The students will create a diary entry according to the guideline rubric sheet.

3. The teacher will review the diary entries and conduct a classroom discussion on the students' answers.

Web site name(s) and address(es):

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground_railroad
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8nwJDR2O40>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Follow_the_drinking_gourd
<http://monroefordham.org>
<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USASfugitive.htm>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fugitive_Slave_Law_of_1850
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c2/Great_Dismal_Swamp-Fugitive_Slaves.jpg
<http://www.old-picture.com/civil-war/pictures/Fugitive-Slaves.jpg>
<http://www-tc.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/images/4ride33b.jpg>
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brown80/brown104.jpg>
<http://www.libraries.wvu.edu/delany/freeman.gif>
<http://www.beyondbooks.org/slavery/images/fleeing.jpg>
<http://www.nationalcenter.org/FugitiveSlaveAct.html>
<http://www.archives.gov/northeast/education/slavery/fugitive-slaves.html>

Integration of computer technology: The students will utilize the Internet sites provided to view primary source documents pertaining to the Underground Railroad and the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.

Special accommodation(s) for at-risk, special education, gifted: Extended time allotted per individual student IEP. Gifted students may wish to review additional primary sources on the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 by viewing the following site:

<http://www.archives.gov/northeast/education/slavery/fugitive-slaves.html>

Assessment: Students will be assessed based upon their participation in the classroom activity and discussion. Students will be assessed based upon the completion of their diary entries with an emphasis on creativity, structure, and adherence to the activity rubric. The teacher will check for understanding through classroom discussion and review of the student's diary entries.

Closure: The teacher will end the lesson by saying, "Today we discovered what life was like for fugitive slaves traveling along the Underground Railroad and the people who helped them travel north. We looked at primary sources of escaped fugitives, the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and the Underground Railroad to discover. I want you to think about why someone would want to help a runaway slave under the threat of arrest, fine and imprisonment. I want you to think about why a slave would risk their life to escape to the north and for homework you will write three reasons why a slave would want to escape to the north even if it meant being captured and beaten or killed.

The lesson will not be continued during the next class.

Transition to next lesson: The teacher will prepare for a smooth transition to the next lesson by creating a "teachable moment" that includes the opportunity for the students to engage in a discussion concerning the homework question.

Extensions/homework: The students will hand in a half sheet of paper with Three Reasons Why a Slave Would Want to Escape.

Lesson Plan References:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground_railroad

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8nwJDR2O40>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Follow_the_drinking_gourd

<http://monroefordham.org>

<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USASfugitive.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fugitive_Slave_Law_of_1850

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c2/Great_Dismal_Swamp-

[Fugitive_Slaves.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c2/Great_Dismal_Swamp-Fugitive_Slaves.jpg)

<http://www.old-picture.com/civil-war/pictures/Fugitive-Slaves.jpg>

<http://www-tc.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/images/4ride33b.jpg>

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brown80/brown104.jpg>

<http://www.libraries.wvu.edu/delany/freeman.gif>

<http://www.beyondbooks.org/slavery/images/fleeing.jpg>

<http://www.nationalcenter.org/FugitiveSlaveAct.html>

<http://www.archives.gov/northeast/education/slavery/fugitive-slaves.html>

<http://www.wisegorilla.com/images/slavery/RunawaySlaveSymbol.jpg>

http://wwwdelivery.superstock.com/WI/223/995/PreviewComp/SuperStock_995-1982.jpg

Follow the Drinking Gourd

By Harriet Tubman or Peg Leg Joe (Possible Authors)

When the sun comes back,
and the first Quail calls,
Follow the drinking gourd,
For the old man is waiting
for to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.

Chorus:

Follow the drinking gourd,
Follow the drinking gourd,
For the old man is waiting
for to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.

The riverbank will make a very good road,
The dead trees show you the way.
Left foot, peg foot traveling on,
Following the drinking gourd.

The river ends between two hills,
Follow the drinking gourd,
There's another river on the other side,
Follow the drinking gourd.

When the great big river meets the little river,
Follow the drinking gourd.
For the old man is waiting
for to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.

Source: <http://www.songsforteaching.com/folk/followthedrinkinggourd.htm>



DIARY ENTRY ACTIVITY

LIFE ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Pretend you are a “way station” on the Underground Railroad and consider the following questions: Why would you risk your family to help strangers? What would happen to you if you were caught? How would you hide the runaway slaves? How would help the slaves move on to the next safe house?

Directions: You will create a “diary entry” using the weathered paper and a calligraphy pen provided to you by your teacher. In your diary entry, make sure you include the following to receive full credit:

- Two facts about why you help runaway slaves
- Two facts about what would happen to you if you got caught with runaways
- Three facts about the physical condition of the runaways when they arrive
- Three ways you help the slaves once they are in your home
- A plan about how you will move them to the next safe house

**REMEMBER TO
“STAY IN CHARACTER!”**

CREATIVITY COUNTS!

