

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/aaohhtml/aohome.html>

Standards Correlation:

Common Core State Standards Correlation :Common Core Standards for ELA and Common Core Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

****Note:** Standards listed are extrapolated from Grades 9-10 CC History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects; the lessons can be adapted for grades 7-12, refer to corresponding standards for your particular grade level.

CCSL (9-10).2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

CCSL (9-10).4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSL (9-10).5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and

interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

CCRI (9-10).1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCRI (9-10).7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

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?

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

- 1) William Still
<http://www.whispersofangels.com/biographies.html#still>

- 2) Frederick Douglass
<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/fdoug.htm>

- 3) Harriet Tubman
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1535.html>

- 4) Ellen and William Craft
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/The-Great-Escape-From-Slavery-of-Ellen-and-William-Craft.html>

- 5) Henry “Box” Brown and Samuel A. Smith
<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USASbox.htm>

- 6) Thomas Garrett
<http://www.whispersofangels.com/biographies.html#garrett>

- 7) Lucretia Mott
<http://www.whispersofangels.com/biographies.html#mott>
<http://www.nps.gov/wori/historyculture/lucretia-mott.htm>

- 8) William Lloyd Garrison
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1561.html>

- 9) James Forten
http://pabook.libraries.psu.edu/palitmap/bios/Forten_James.html
<http://www.independenceparkinstitute.com/inp/forten/james.htm>

- 10) Robert Purvis
<http://www.nps.gov/resources/person.htm?id=38>



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).

Web Resources

The National Park Service Underground Railroad Web Site

<http://www.nps.gov/subjects/ugrr/education/index.htm>

The History Channel's Underground Railroad Web Site

<http://www.historychannel.com/exhibits/undergroundrr/story.html>

Library of Congress African American Odyssey Web Site

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

National Geographic Underground Railroad Simulation Web Site

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/j1.html>

National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

<http://www.freedomcenter.org>

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>