

Lesson Title: The Underground Railroad Through Primary and Secondary Sources

Grade Levels: 4-8

Class Time needed: Varies depending on the age of students

Content Standards: See Page 36

Objectives:

To introduce the Underground Railroad to students using an age and/or grade appropriate book while using the questions provided to encourage dialogue.

Rationale:

Through reading comprehension, class discussion and first-person journaling, students will be able to empathize with enslaved persons and more fully understand the risks associated with the Underground Railroad.

Description of lesson/activity:

1. First read a secondary source (book) about the Underground Railroad, taking notes as you read.
2. After reading, have an open discussion using the questions provided.
3. Research advertisements for escaping slaves using the internet and other library resources. Analyze their impact on escape, on those who were thinking about escaping and on those who helped them.
4. Write a journal of an escaping enslaved person. What struggles might they have to encounter to get to freedom? What might they have to leave behind to get to freedom?

Materials:

Book from Suggested Reading List
Internet

Assessment:

Formal: Journal of escaping person.

Informal: Observation of discussion questions; measure of proficiency in research of slave advertisements.



1. A student recently said, “I don’t care about slavery. That happened a long time ago, and I don’t want to think about it in my life today. It is no longer important.” What do you think about this statement? Tell why you agree or disagree. What would you tell that student if you had the chance to have a conversation?
2. Students in the United States enjoy lots of freedom. List some of the freedoms that you enjoy. Were these privileges always available to everyone? What might someone have had to do in order to make sure you have these freedoms? How does that make you feel about the privileges you enjoy?
3. Think back to when you were born. From your birth to today your history is important. You learned, you made mistakes, and you grew. Discuss the importance of knowing your own personal history. Why is it important to study historical information of a country or a people? Why can’t the past simply be ignored?
4. What happens if a rule, law or a practice in a country is immoral or wrong? Who decides if it is right or wrong? What is done to change that law or rule or practice? How does someone decide what to do?
5. What makes a hero or heroine? Is it necessary to save someone’s life to be heroic? Are only certain people heroic? Is it possible to plan to become a hero in the future?
6. What do you visualize when you think about the Underground Railroad? How do you think it worked? Why do you think it became a necessity?
7. Discuss what you expect to see, feel and learn when you visit the Freedom Center. After your visit, you will have a chance to compare your expectations to reality.

