

Lesson Title: Heroes of the Underground Railroad

Grade Levels: K-3

Class Time needed: 3 Days– Each approximately one hour in length
(Can be divided into three separate lessons)

Content Standards: See pages 16-19

Objectives:

Students will develop an awareness of the risks taken by those who took part in the Underground Railroad, and will increase their understanding of the concept of a “hero.”

Three Sessions focusing on:

1. Building Background Knowledge
2. John P. Parker
3. Harriet Tubman

Day One (One hour session)

Objectives:

Students will learn key vocabulary to increase their understanding of events and people in the Civil War and Underground Railroad exhibits at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

1. Students will summarize what character traits they feel make a person a hero.
2. Students will recognize that the Underground Railroad was not an actual railroad, but a group of people that took great risks in order to be free from slavery and to help others be free.



1. Any and all materials relating to the Underground Railroad. (trade books, maps, photographs, newspaper articles, notices of escaped slaves, etc.). Try to have enough for students to use in groups of two or three with all groups having materials.
2. Access to the Internet if possible
3. Paper
4. Pencils

Procedures:

1. Begin a group discussion by asking, “What makes someone a hero?” Discuss all answers.
2. Have students write a paragraph describing what makes a person a hero or who they feel is a hero and why.
3. As students finish, have volunteers take turns sharing what they wrote with the whole group.
4. Tell students that, since they are beginning to think about heroes, you are going to tell them about some of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad.
5. Assess background knowledge by asking, “What was the Underground Railroad?” and “What was it all about?”
6. Discuss answers and clarify information for students. Stress the following key points and vocabulary:
 - A. The Underground Railroad was not an actual railroad
 - B. The Underground Railroad was made up of people: those who wanted to be free, called “Freedom Seekers,” and those who wanted to help people seeking freedom.
 - C. The Ohio River played a very important part in the Underground Railroad. Once Freedom Seekers crossed the river, they were getting closer to freedom (Canada) and there were even more people to help them.
 - D. Vocabulary

Abolitionist– A person who spoke out against slavery.

Agent– A person who helped fugitives know where to go and who would help them.

Conductor– A person who took Freedom Seekers along the path to freedom.

North Star– The Little Dipper. Fugitives followed the North Star on their way north.

Jordan River– The Ohio River (geographical divide between free and slave states).

Promised Land– Canada, which symbolized the land of freedom for Freedom Seekers.

Station– Safe houses, churches, or any place of safety along the route to freedom.

Passenger– A runaway slave, also called a Freedom Seeker.

7. For the remainder of the hour, allow students to work in groups of two or three. They are to look through the Underground Railroad materials they choose. Assign some students to use the Internet websites (see Resources).

Student Assessment:

Assess and evaluate students’ ability to state or write what character traits make a person a hero. Determine comprehension during discussion of Underground Railroad background knowledge. Observe students as they locate and analyze information in the Underground Railroad materials.



Day Two (One hour session)

Objectives:

1. Students will paraphrase the meanings of UGRR vocabulary learned during the first session.
2. Students will recognize John P. Parker's role in the UGRR
3. Students will infer what risks were taken by characters in the story.
4. Students will justify their positions as to whether they would have run if they were enslaved during the 1800's.

Materials/Technology:

1. UGRR Vocabulary (words only) listed on separate index cards. (See words in Day one). Repeat words as needed until there are enough for each student to have one card.
2. Large white paper (11" x 17")
3. Markers
4. Freedom River, by Doreen Rappaport
5. Writing prompt (See next page)
6. Paper
7. Pencils

Procedures:

1. Review Underground Railroad vocabulary by distributing the index cards with vocabulary terms written on them (one word on each card). Have students form cooperative groups by finding others in the room with their same word. Groups then use markers to write their vocabulary word and everything they know about that term on a large piece of white paper. Encourage them to make it visually appealing. Provide help when needed. Ask questions such as, "What does this term mean?" "Why was it important?" "Can you think of any examples?" When all groups finish, hang the papers to create a bulletin board or "Underground Railroad word wall."
2. Prepare students by telling them that they will be learning about a very brave man named John P. Parker.
3. Read Freedom River by Doreen Rappaport (New York: Hyperion, 2000)
4. Discuss the story by asking the following questions, "Which character (s) in this story would you consider a hero?" and "What was John P. Parker risking by helping this family?" and "What was the family risking?"
5. Have students respond in writing to the following question: If you were enslaved during the 1800's in America, would you have run away or stayed? Give three reasons for your decision. (See writing prompt on next page)

Student Assessment:

Assess and evaluate students' ability to work with group members and create an appropriate definition for their vocabulary word. Assess students' ability to state a position, (running away or staying), and give three appropriate reasons why they chose that position.



The Underground Railroad

Over the last several days, you have learned about the hardships faced by enslaved people as they tried to escape on the Underground Railroad. Think about how hard it was for them on their journey. They risked their lives when they ran to freedom.

Answer the following question

If you were enslaved during the 1800's in America, would you have run away or stayed with your master?
Give three reasons for your decision.

(Write your answer in paragraphs, one paragraph for each reason. You will have to describe each reason with more than one sentence.)



Day three: (One hour session)**Objectives:**

1. Students will recognize Harriet Tubman's role in the Underground Railroad.
2. Students will create a booklet depicting Harriet Tubman's acts of heroism.

Materials/Technology:

1. A Picture Book of Harriet Tubman by David A. Adler (New York: Holiday House, 1992)
2. One booklet for each student. Using two pieces of plain white paper, fold one down from the top about one third of the way. Fold the other about two thirds of the way down. Insert one into the other to create a "flip book" with four tabs. Staple at the top.
3. Chart tablet, dry erase board or overhead projector.
4. Markers for teacher use
5. Pencils
6. Crayons

Procedures:

1. Prepare students by telling them that they will be learning about one of the most famous heroes of the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman.
2. Read A Picture Book of Harriet Tubman, by David A. Adler.
3. Have students help you create a list of the things Harriet did to help others. Use the book to help you. Write responses on a class list (overhead projector, dry erase board, etc.).
4. Explain to students that they are going to make a flip book about Harriet Tubman's life. Demonstrate how the book will be set up. The top flap is for the title and the student's name. The other three flaps are for sentences describing how Harriet Tubman helped people on the Underground Railroad. Students can use the ideas generated by the class to help them. After writing the three sentences on the flaps, students are to open the pages and illustrate the sentences.
5. If possible, display the flip books in the hall on a table, or in the school library so that others can see and read them.

Student Assessment:

Assess and evaluate students ability to cite passages from the story that depict how Harriet Tubman helped others. Assess students' ability to use that information to create a flip book with appropriate sentences and illustrations.



Underground Railroad Resources for Primary Students

Books:

Adler, D. (1992). *A Picture book of Harriet Tubman*. New York: Holiday House.

Bial, R. (1995). *The Underground Railroad*. Boston: The Houghton Mifflin Company.

Lawrence, J. (1993). *Harriet and the Promised Land*. New York: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers.

Levine, E. (2007). *Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad*. New York: Scholastic Press.

Nelson, V. (2003) *Almost to Freedom*. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, Inc.

Osborne, M. (2000). *Civil War on Sunday*. New York: Random House.

Rappaport, D. (2000). *Freedom River*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

Schroeder, A. (1996). *Minty: A Story of Young Harriet Tubman*. New York: Puffin Books.

Woodruff, E. (1998). *Dear Austin: Letters from the Underground Railroad*. New York: Scholastic, Inc.

Videos:

Animated Hero Classics. *Harriet Tubman*. Nest Entertainment, Inc.

Websites:

Harriet Tubman

PBS: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1535.html>

United States Library of Congress: <http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa/tubman>

National Geographic: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/j2.html>

Underground Railroad

National Geographic: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/kids.html>

Social Studies for Kids: <http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/articles/ushistory/undergroundrailroad1.htm>

PBS: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2944.html>



Key Words

1. Abolitionists
2. Bounty Hunter
3. Conductor
4. Cooperation
5. Courage
6. Freedom
7. Freedom Seeker
8. Fugitive Slave Act
9. Hero
10. Passenger
11. Perseverance
12. Safe House
13. Slavery
14. Slave Catcher
15. Underground Railroad



1. What is slavery?
2. What is freedom and why should we appreciate it?
3. What is a hero? Can anyone be a hero or heroine?
4. What is the Underground Railroad? Was it underground? Was it a railroad? How did the Underground Railroad get that name?
5. What do you expect to see at the Freedom Center?
6. Define the Underground Railroad. Why did enslaved people attempt to escape?
7. Why did conductors help enslaved people try to escape?
8. Name some potential hiding places for freedom seekers.
9. How were songs used as a means of aiding escape?

