

# Freedom Train

## *The Story of Harriet Tubman*



***Applause Series* CURRICULUM GUIDE**  
**CIVIC CENTER OF GREATER DES MOINES**

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**March 29, 2011**

# ***Freedom Train***

## **Dear Teachers,**

Thank you for joining us for the Applause Series presentation of FREEDOM TRAIN: THE STORY OF HARRIET TUBMAN. Born a slave on a Maryland plantation sometime around the year 1820, the abuse Harriet Tubman endured at the hands of her white masters was, unfortunately, not uncommon. What set her apart, however, was her tremendous courage and compassion for others. Not only did she successfully escape to freedom in the North as a young woman, she did the unthinkable— she returned to the dangerous South an additional 19 times to assist another 300 slaves escape. The strength and determination she displayed has led her to become one of the most enduring symbols of the Underground Railroad— a loose network of people who covertly helped nearly 100,000 enslaved individuals travel to freedom.

FREEDOM TRAIN, from Theatreworks USA, honors Harriet Tubman’s story, and we are very pleased that you have chosen to share this special experience with your students. It is our hope that this study guide helps you connect the performance to your in-classroom curriculum in ways that you find valuable.

In the following pages, you will find contextual information about the performance and related subjects, as well as a wide variety of discussion questions and activities that tie into several curriculum areas. Some pages are appropriate to reproduce for your students; others are designed more specifically with you, their teacher, in mind. As such, we hope that you are able to “pick and choose” material and ideas from the study guide to meet your class’s unique needs.

See you at the theater,

Civic Center Education Team

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# ABOUT THE CIVIC CENTER OF GREATER DES MOINES



The Civic Center of Greater Des Moines is a cultural landmark of central Iowa and is committed to engaging the Midwest in world-class entertainment, education, and cultural activities. The Civic Center has achieved a national reputation for excellence as a performing arts center and belongs to several national organizations, including The Broadway League, the Independent Presenters Network, International Performing Arts for Youth, and Theater for Young Audiences/USA.

Five performing arts series currently comprise the season— the Willis Broadway Series, Prairie Meadows Temple Theater Series, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield Family Series, the Dance Series, and the Applause Series. The Civic Center is also the performance home for the Des Moines Symphony and Stage West.

The Civic Center is a private, nonprofit organization and is an important part of central Iowa's cultural community. Through its education programs, the Civic Center strives to engage patrons in arts experiences that extend beyond the stage. Master classes bring professional and local artists together to share their art form and craft, while pre-performance lectures and post-performance Q&A sessions with company members offer ticket holders the opportunity to explore each show as a living, evolving piece of art.

Through the Applause Series— curriculum-connected performances for school audiences— students are encouraged to discover the rich, diverse world of performing arts. During the 2010-2011 season, the Civic Center will welcome more than 30,000 students and educators to 12 professional productions for young audiences.

**Want an inside look? Request a tour.**

Group tours can be arranged for performance and non-performance dates.

Call 515-246-2355 or visit [civiccenter.org/education](http://civiccenter.org/education) to check on availability or book your visit.

## DID YOU KNOW?

More than 250,000 patrons visit the Civic Center each year.

The Civic Center opened in 1979.

The Civic Center has three theater spaces:

- *Main Hall, 2745 seats*
- *Stoner Studio, 200 seats*
- *Temple Theater, 299 seats (located in the Temple for the Performing Arts)*

No seat is more than 155 feet from center stage in the Main Hall.

Nollen Plaza, situated just west of the Civic Center, is a park and amphitheater that is also part of the Civic Center complex. The space features the Brenton Waterfall and Reflection Pool and the Crusoe Umbrella sculpture.

The Applause Series started in 1996. You are joining us for the 15th anniversary season!

# GOING TO THE THEATER . . .



## YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER

Attending a live performance is a unique and exciting opportunity. Unlike the passive experience of watching a movie, audience members play an important role in every live performance. As they act, sing, dance, or play instruments, the performers on stage are very aware of the audience's mood and level of engagement. Each performance calls for a different response from audience members. Lively bands, musicians, and dancers may desire the audience to focus silently on the stage and applaud only during natural breaks in the performance. Audience members can often take cues from performers on how to respond to the performance appropriately. For example, performers will often pause or bow for applause at a specific time.

As you experience the performance, consider the following questions:

- What kind of live performance is this (a play, a dance, a concert, etc.)?
- What is the mood of the performance? Is the subject matter serious or lighthearted?
- What is the mood of the performers? Are they happy and smiling or somber and reserved?
- Are the performers encouraging the audience to clap to the music or move to the beat?
- Are there natural breaks in the performance where applause seems appropriate?

## THEATER ETIQUETTE

Here is a checklist of general guidelines to follow when you visit the Civic Center:

- Leave all food, drinks, and chewing gum at school or on the bus.
- Cameras, recording devices, and personal listening devices are not permitted in the theater.
- Turn off cell phones, pagers, and all other electronic devices before the performance begins.
- When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please stop talking at this time.
- **Talk before and after the performance only.** Remember, the theater is designed to amplify sound, so the other audience members and the performers on stage can hear your voice!
- Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage—they will let you know what is appropriate.
- Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience. Enjoy yourself!

\*GOING TO THE THEATER information is adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts study guide materials.

# CIVIC CENTER FIELD TRIP INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS



**Thank you for choosing the Applause Series at the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines. Below are tips for organizing a safe and successful field trip to the Civic Center.**

## ORGANIZING YOUR FIELD TRIP

- Please include all students, teachers, and chaperones in your ticket request.
- After you submit your ticket request, you will receive a confirmation e-mail within five business days. Your **invoice will be attached to the confirmation e-mail.**
- Payment policies and options are located at the top of the invoice. **Payment (or a purchase order) for your reservation is due four weeks** prior to the date of the performance.
- The Civic Center reserves the right to cancel unpaid reservations after the payment due date.
- Tickets are not printed for Applause Series shows. Your invoice will serve as the reservation confirmation for your group order.
- Schedule buses to arrive in downtown Des Moines at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the performance. This will allow time to park, walk to the Civic Center, and be seated in the theater.
- Performances are approximately 60 minutes unless otherwise noted on the website and printed materials.
- All school groups with reservations to the show will receive an e-mail notification when the study guide is posted. Please note that study guides are only printed and mailed upon request.

## DIRECTIONS AND PARKING

- Directions: From I-235, take Exit 8A (Downtown Exits) and the ramp toward 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. Turn onto 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and head south.
- Police officers are stationed at the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Locust Streets and will direct buses to parking areas with hooded meters near the Civic Center. Groups traveling in personal vehicles are responsible for locating their own parking in ramps or metered (non-hooded) spots downtown.
- Buses will remain parked for the duration of the show. At the conclusion, bus drivers must be available to move their bus if necessary, even if their students are staying at the Civic Center to eat lunch or take a tour.
- Buses are not generally permitted to drop off or pick up students near the Civic Center. If a bus must return to school during the performance, prior arrangements must be made with the Civic Center Education staff.

## ARRIVAL TO THE CIVIC CENTER

- When arriving at the Civic Center, please have an **adult lead your group** for identification and check-in purposes. You may enter the building through the East or West lobbies; a Civic Center staff member may be stationed outside the building to direct you.
- Civic Center staff will usher groups into the building as quickly as possible. Once inside, you will be directed to the check-in area.
- Seating in the theater is general admission. Ushers will escort groups to their seats; various seating factors including group size, grade levels, arrival time, and special needs seating requests may determine a group's specific location in the hall.
- We request that an **adult lead the group into the theater and other adults position themselves throughout the group**; we request this arrangement for supervision purposes, especially in the event that a group must be seated in multiple rows.
- Please allow ushers to seat your entire group before rearranging seat locations and taking groups to the restroom.

## IN THE THEATER

- In case of a medical emergency, please notify the nearest usher. A medical assistant is on duty for all Main Hall performances.
- We ask that adults handle any disruptive behavior in their groups. If the behavior persists, an usher may request your group to exit the theater.
- Following the performance groups may exit the theater and proceed to their bus(es).
- If an item is lost at the Civic Center, please see an usher or contact us after the performance at 515.246.2355.

### QUESTIONS?

Please contact the Education department at 515.246.2355 or [education@civiccenter.org](mailto:education@civiccenter.org). Thank you!

# ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE



FREEDOM TRAIN is a 60-minute musical play for young people from Theatreworks USA. The play tells the story of Harriet Tubman—the “Moses” of her people—and about her role on the secret route known as the Underground Railroad. Featuring 6 actors, the play incorporates traditional African American spirituals, as well as language and clothing of the period.

FREEDOM TRAIN is Theatreworks USA’s longest-running production. It has been on tour since Fall 1974.

## SYNOPSIS

FREEDOM TRAIN begins when Harriet Tubman is a child, living on a plantation as a slave with her family. The plantation owner, Master Broda, decides to rent Harriet out to a neighboring slave owner where she works in the kitchen. Treated poorly and facing punishment, Harriet decides to run away and returns to her family.

One day, the family hears rumors that Master Broda is thinking about selling Harriet’s brother David. Rather than be sold, David decides to run away. David is soon caught and punished. When Harriet tries to help David, the overseer strikes her in the head, giving her an injury that continues to leave her with spells of dizziness for the rest of her life.

Harriet grows up. When she learns that Master Broda has decided to sell Harriet to a family in Georgia, she decides to run away. After many close calls and with the help of several selfless individuals, Harriet reaches the North. Before long, however, she feels called to help others—including her family—who remain enslaved. Despite the risk and protests of her friends, Harriet returns to the dangerous South. Trip by trip, she helps bring members of her family and other enslaved individuals to freedom. Although the danger of each trip increases as greater rewards are offered for her capture, Harriet, now called “Moses,” refuses to give up. In the end, her courage and determination allow her to bring over 300 slaves to freedom.

## SONGS

Several African American spirituals are sung during the performance. Often performed during transitions between scenes, the spirituals reflect the themes of freedom, love, and faith that guide Harriet and her family.

“Follow the Drinking Gourd”

“Go Down Moses”

“Mary Had a Li’l Baby”

“Hidin’ Place”

“Hush, Hush”

“Wade in the Water”

“Another Man Done Gone”

“Good News, the Chariot’s A-Comin’”

“Lovely Ben, Won’t You Come Out Tonight”

“Get on Board”

# ABOUT THEATREWORKS USA



Theatreworks USA is one of America's largest and most prolific professional not-for-profit theatre for young and family audiences. Since 1961, Theatreworks USA has enlightened, entertained, and instructed over 68 million people in 49 states and Canada, now performing for about four million people annually. Every year, the company tours approximately 16 shows from its ever-growing repertoire of 110 plays and musicals.

## PROGRAMS

Theatreworks USA tours approximately 16 shows each year across the country. Audiences can see their shows in venues as diverse as school gymnasiums, regional theaters, and major Broadway-sized theaters.

In addition to its touring programs, Theatreworks USA has reached thousands of underserved New York school children through its free summer theater program.

## ACCOLADES

Theatreworks USA is the only children's theatre to receive both a Drama Desk and a Lucille Lortel Award. In addition, Theatreworks USA was the recipient of a 2001 Jonathan Larson Performing Arts Foundation Award, and in May 2000, The Actors Fund of America bestowed its Medal of Honor upon its founders, Jay Harnick and Charles Hull.

## ALUMNI

In addition to its history of providing young audiences with their first taste of the performing arts, Theatreworks USA also provides young actors, writers, directors, and designers an early opportunity to work in the field. A list of Theatreworks USA alumni reads like a veritable "who's who" of theatre. Theatreworks USA actors have gone on to originate lead roles in such Broadway shows as AVENUE Q, HAIRSPRAY, YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN, RENT, WICKED, JERSEY BOYS, and many others. The actors of FREEDOM TRAIN may also go on to similar success in musical theatre.

## ON THE ROAD

2010-2011 touring productions include...

AESOP'S FABLES

CHARLOTTE'S WEB

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

CLICK, CLACK, MOO

FANCY NANCY

FREEDOM TRAIN

IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE

JUNIE B. JONES

THE LION, THE WITCH & THE WARDROBE

THE MYSTERY OF KING TUT

SEUSSICAL

SKIPPYJON JONES

TALES OF A FOURTH GRADE NOTHING

WE THE PEOPLE

# ABOUT HARRIET TUBMAN, pg. 1



Harriet Tubman is perhaps the most well-known of all the Underground Railroad's "conductors." During a ten-year span she made 19 trips into the South and escorted over 300 slaves to freedom. And, as she once proudly pointed out to Frederick Douglass, in all of her journeys she "never lost a single passenger."



An early photograph of Harriet Tubman, probably taken around 1869.  
Image courtesy of harrietubmanbiography.com

## CHILDHOOD

Tubman was born a slave in Maryland's Dorchester County around 1820. At age five or six, she began to work as a house servant. Seven years later she was sent to work in the fields. While she was still in her early teens, she suffered an injury that would follow her for the rest of her life. Always ready to stand up for someone else, Tubman blocked a doorway to protect another field hand from an angry overseer. The overseer picked up and threw a two-pound weight at the field hand. It fell short, striking Tubman on the head. She never fully recovered from the blow, which subjected her to spells in which she would fall into a deep sleep.

**"I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person now I was free. There was such a glory over everything! The sun came through like gold through the trees and over the fields, and I felt like I was in heaven."**

**—Harriet Tubman,  
on reaching freedom**

Harriet Tubman leads fugitive slaves to freedom. To elude slave catchers, Tubman liked to travel at night and was known to carry a gun. Image courtesy of edublogs.org.

## ESCAPE

Around 1844, Harriet married a free black named John Tubman and took his last name. (She was born Araminta Ross; she later changed her first name to Harriet, after her mother.) In 1849, in fear that she, along with the other slaves on the plantation, was to be sold, Tubman resolved to run away. She set out one night on foot. With some assistance from a friendly white woman, Tubman was on her way. She followed the North Star by night, making her way to Pennsylvania and soon after to Philadelphia, where she found work and saved her money.

(About Harriet Tubman, cont. page 9)

'About Harriet Tubman' from PBS.org's *Africans in America*.  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1535.html>

## ABOUT HARRIET TUBMAN, pg. 2



### RETURN TO THE SOUTH

The following year, Tubman returned to Maryland and escorted her sister and her sister's two children to freedom. She made the dangerous trip back to the South soon after to rescue her brother and two other men. On her third return, she went after her husband, only to find he had taken another wife. Undeterred, she found other slaves seeking freedom and escorted them to the North.

Tubman returned to the South again and again. She devised clever techniques that helped make her "forays" successful, including using the master's horse and buggy for the first leg of the journey; leaving on a Saturday night, since runaway notices couldn't be placed in newspapers until Monday morning; turning about and heading south if she encountered possible slave hunters; and carrying a drug to use on a baby if its crying might put the fugitives in danger. Tubman even carried a gun which she used to threaten the fugitives if they became too tired or decided to turn back, telling them, "You'll be free or die."

By 1856, Tubman's capture would have brought a \$40,000 reward. On one occasion, she overheard some men reading her wanted poster, which stated that she was illiterate (unable to read). She promptly pulled out a book and feigned reading it. The ploy was enough to fool the men.

All together, Tubman made the perilous trip to slave country 19 times by 1860, including a challenging journey in which she rescued her 70-year-old parents.



A woodcut of Harriet Tubman in her Civil War Garb, 1869.  
Image courtesy of harriettubman.biography.com.

Harriet Tubman, far left, with members of her family in 1887. After her own escape, Tubman returned to the South to help guide her family to freedom in the North.  
Image courtesy of americanpicture.links.com.

### RESPECT

Of the famed heroine, who became known as "Moses," Frederick Douglass said, "Excepting John Brown – of sacred memory – I know of no one who has willingly encountered more perils and hardships to serve our enslaved people than [Harriet Tubman]." And John Brown, who conferred with "General Tubman" about his plans to raid Harpers Ferry, once said that she was "one of the bravest persons on this continent."

### THE CIVIL WAR AND AFTERWARDS

Becoming friends with the leading abolitionists of the day, Tubman took part in antislavery meetings. During the Civil War Harriet Tubman worked for the Union as a cook, a nurse, and even a spy. After the war she settled in Auburn, New York, where she would spend the rest of her long life. She died in 1913.

'About Harriet Tubman' from PBS.org's *Africans in America*.  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1535.html>

# TIMELINE: SLAVERY AND THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD



## **1619: Slaves in Virginia**

Africans brought to Jamestown are the first slaves imported into Britain's North American colonies. Like indentured servants, they were probably freed after a fixed period of service.

## **1700: Antislavery Publication**

Massachusetts jurist and printer, Samuel Seawell, publishes the first North American antislavery tract, *The Selling of Joseph*.

## **1705: Slaves as Property**

Describing slaves as real estate, Virginia lawmakers allow owners to bequeath their slaves. The same law allows masters to "kill and destroy" runaways.

## **1775: Abolitionist Society**

Anthony Benezet of Philadelphia founds the world's first abolitionist society. Benjamin Franklin becomes its president in 1787.

## **1776: Declaration of Independence**

The Continental Congress asserts "that these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States."

## **1793: Fugitive Slave Act**

The United States outlaws any efforts to impede the capture of runaway slaves.

## **1808: United States Bans Slave Trade**

Importing African slaves is outlawed, but smuggling continues.

## **1820: Missouri Compromise**

Missouri is admitted to the Union as a slave state, and Maine is admitted as a free state. Slavery is forbidden in any subsequent territories north of latitude 36°30'.

## **1834-1838: Slavery Abolished in England**

England abolishes slavery in its colonies including Jamaica, Barbados, and other West Indian territories.

## **1850: Compromise of 1850**

In exchange for California entering the Union as a free state, northern congressmen accept a harsher Fugitive Slave Act from the previous one of 1793.

## **1854: Kansas-Nebraska Act**

Setting aside the Missouri Compromise of 1820, Congress permits these two new territories to choose whether to allow slavery. Violent clashes erupt.

## **1857: Dred Scott Decision**

The United States Supreme Court decides, seven to two, that Blacks can never be citizens and that Congress has no authority to outlaw slavery in any territory.

Slaves in front of slave quarters on a plantation in Beaufort, South Carolina, 1862. Image courtesy of [americanpicturelinks.com](http://americanpicturelinks.com).

## **1860: Abraham Lincoln Elected**

Abraham Lincoln of Illinois becomes the first Republican to win the United States Presidency.

## **1861-1865: Civil War**

Four years of brutal conflict claim 623,000 lives.

## **1862: Emancipation Proclamation Drafted**

On September, 22, Lincoln drafts the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. The final is issued on January 1, 1863.

## **1863: Emancipation Proclamation**

President Abraham Lincoln decrees that all slaves in Rebel territory are free on January 1, 1863. The Proclamation only freed those slaves in states that were in rebellion against the United States. The proclamation did not free slaves in the states that never left the Union.

## **1865: Slavery Abolished**

The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution outlaws slavery.

Timeline from the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, [freedomcenter.org](http://freedomcenter.org).

# ABOUT THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, pg. 1



Image courtesy of electronicvillage.blogspot.com.

Estimates suggest that during the 1800s, more than 100,000 enslaved people sought freedom in the United States through the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was not an actual railroad; instead, it is a term used to describe the routes that enslaved Black Americans took to gain their freedom as they traveled. Free Blacks, Whites, Native Americans and other slaves acted as conductors by aiding runaway slaves on their way to freedom.

## SLAVERY IN THE U.S.

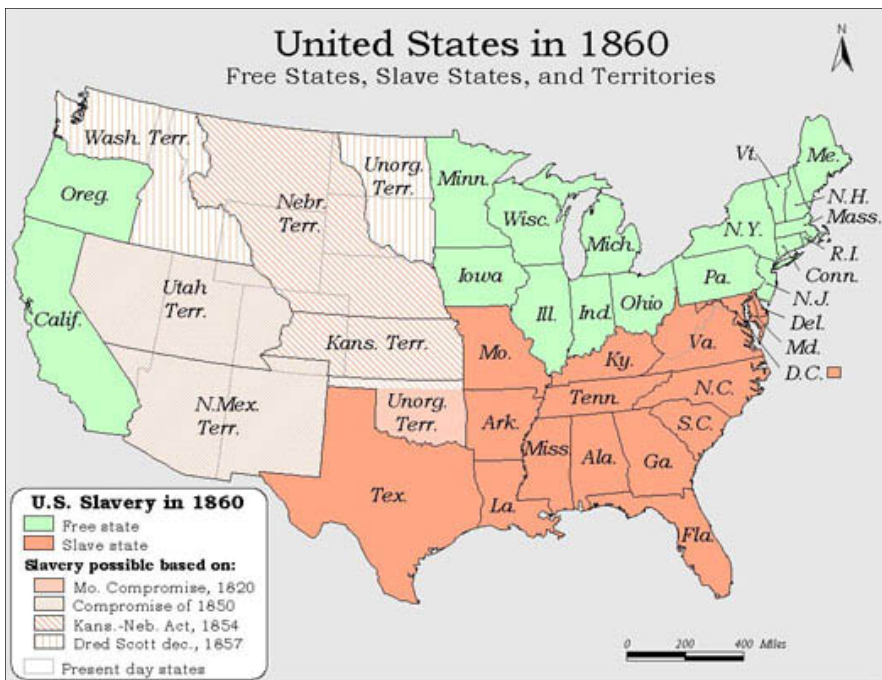
In the decades leading up to the Civil War, the United States was deeply divided over slavery. By the early 1800s, every state in the North had legally abolished slavery. The South, however, clung to the institution because tobacco and cotton— the South’s main crops— required a large and cheap labor force. Due to this division, the Underground Railroad was particularly active within the border state regions as fugitive slaves attempted to reach freedom in the North.

## REASONS TO ESCAPE

Many slaves faced intolerable living conditions. Long work days, harsh punishments such as beatings, inadequate housing, and poor diets led many slaves to the conclusion that continuing to live in slavery was worse than any hardship they would endure while escaping.

Furthermore, slaves were viewed as property. Individuals could be sold to other masters. Slave sales tore family, friends, and communities apart and forced enslaved individuals who were sold to start their lives over with new owners, new people, and no familiar connections. Enslaved individuals in these circumstances were often more willing to run away rather than be sold from their loved ones.

(About the Underground...cont. pg. 12)



LEFT: This map shows the division between free states and slave states in 1860. As new states and territories were added to the country, there was tense and often violent debate about whether the new region would be considered free or slave.

Map courtesy of faculty.unlv.edu.

## ABOUT THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, pg. 2



### REASONS TO HELP

The Quakers, who belonged to a religious group called the Society of Friends, were the first organized abolitionists.

(Abolitionists thought that slavery was wrong and should *abolished*.) The Quakers believed that slavery violated their Christian principles. They felt it was their religious duty to help runaway slaves on their journey to freedom.

Other abolitionists who assisted fugitives on the Underground Railroad believed that slavery violated the ideals on which the United States was founded upon. They felt that a country based on the ideas of independence and freedom could not justify slavery.

In addition, not everyone who helped runaways was free. In fact, most “conductors” in the South were blacks who were still enslaved themselves.

### RISKS

Escaping from slavery or helping someone to escape from slavery was a very difficult and dangerous undertaking.

#### *For Escaping Individuals*

Those attempting to escape faced a long journey filled with uncertainty and fear. Many enslaved individuals attempted their escape in the winter when the rivers were frozen and easier to cross, but traveling into the colder climates of the North could be difficult. It was also difficult to find safe places and people to trust. Fugitive slaves might go several weeks between stations and, even when they did arrive at one, they risked being found by slave catchers. By the time of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, more and more slave catchers were traveling north with guns, horses, and bloodhounds and were willing to take back escaped slaves by any means. Enslaved individuals caught by slave catchers were often harshly punished upon their return by beatings, imprisonment, or worse punishments.

ABOVE: An illustration from a period newspaper showing an escaping individual being hidden at a “station” or safe house on the Underground Railroad.  
Image courtesy of prospectplace-dresden.com.

#### *For those who Helped*

In 1850, the Fugitive Slave Act made assisting or helping hide fugitive slaves a federal offense. Any association with Underground Railroad activity could land a free person six months in prison and a \$1,000 fine (about the equivalent of \$21,000 today).

## \$100 REWARD.

**Ran away from my farm, near Buena Vista P. O., Prince George's County, Maryland, on the first day of April, 1855, my servant MATHEW TURNER.**

He is about five feet six or eight inches high; weighs from one hundred and sixty to one hundred and eighty pounds; he is very black, and has a remarkably thick upper lip and neck; looks as if his eyes are half closed; walks slow, and talks and laughs loud.

I will give One Hundred Dollars reward to whoever will secure him in jail, so that I get him again, no matter where taken.

MARCUS DU VAL.

BUENA VISTA P. O., MD.  
MAY 10, 1855.

Rewards were often offered for the return of a runaway slave. Posters, like this one, or newspaper advertisements gave descriptions of the fugitive.  
Image courtesy of wisconsinhistory.org.

# ABOUT THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, pg. 3



## SECRET CODE WORDS

People involved with the Underground Railroad developed their own secret code to describe the people and safe places along the routes. People who guided slaves from place to place were called “conductors.” Locations where slaves could safely find protection, food, or a place to sleep were called “safe houses” or “stations.” Those who hid runaway slaves in their homes, barns or churches were called “station masters.” Slaves who were in the safekeeping of a conductor or station master were “cargo.”

Code words were also used to help runaway slaves find their way North. The Big Dipper, whose handle pointed towards the North Star, was referred to as the “drinking gourd.” The Ohio River was frequently referred to by a biblical reference, the “River Jordan.” Canada, one of the final safe havens for many runaway slaves was called the “Promised Land.” These terms allowed people to communicate about the Underground Railroad without being obvious about their true meaning.

## ORAL TRADITION

A strong oral tradition gave enslaved individuals the necessary knowledge to begin their journey north and connect with the Underground Railroad network. For example, it was known to look for moss on the north side of trees. Some slaves knew about using the North Star, the brightest star in the night sky, to guide them in a northerly direction. From this oral tradition, enslaved individuals knew also to travel during the nighttime and to follow rivers and streams to hide their scent from dogs and slave catchers.

## MODES OF TRAVEL

The most common form of transportation for escaping enslaved individuals was walking. Those attempting to escape walked the hundreds of miles from the South to the North and even all the way to Canada. Slaves also frequently traveled by wagon, boat, horseback and train with the help of those working on the Underground Railroad. Secret compartments, traveling only at night, using disguises and carrying false papers provided cover for these risky methods of escaping.

ABOVE: The Big Dipper, or the “drinking gourd,” points to the North Star. Image courtesy of photobucket.com.

## ROUTES AND DESTINATIONS

There were many towns and cities in the North with connections to Underground Railroad activity. Not surprisingly, many of these cities and towns were located along the borders between free and slave states. The most well known border was the Ohio River. Further east in the Chesapeake Bay area, cities such as Philadelphia and Baltimore were hot spots.

While some runaway slaves settled in the cities and towns they reached after entering the North, many continued their journey all the way to Canada. Slavery was illegal in Canada and there were no laws protecting slave owners or slave catchers. Canada was by far the safest place a runaway slave could be.

### ***Did you know?***

While Underground Railroad activity was concentrated mostly in the regions of the Ohio River and Chesapeake Bay to the north, some enslaved individuals chose to travel south to escape to Mexico as well.

# ABOUT SPIRITUALS



Throughout FREEDOM TRAIN, the actors sing traditional African American spirituals as they present Harriet Tubman's story. Spirituals allowed enslaved individuals to express their faith in God, made their work more bearable, and communicated important messages about freedom.

## HISTORY & INFLUENCE

Spirituals arose in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century among African American slaves who were denied the opportunity to practice their traditional African religions and, as a result, adopted the Christian faith. For the most part, enslaved individuals were not allowed to form their own congregations; whites feared that if they were allowed to meet on their own, they would plan a rebellion. Despite these constraints, slaves throughout the South would meet secretly, often at night, to worship together. It was at these meetings that the spiritual – a mix of African performance traditions and hymns from the white churches – emerged.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Spirituals played an important role in the slave community. Spirituals allowed individuals to share their experiences with the larger community using a pattern of call-and-response. A person would begin to create a song by singing about his or her own joys or sorrows. Those gathered around would respond as a group. The soloist might sing another line, and the group would again respond. This pattern allowed the community to share in the person's joy or to take on their sorrow. This sharing provided important support during times of hardship and affirmed the value of the person's experiences.

## FAITH

During a spiritual, an enslaved individual often sang about the characters found in the Bible. Jesus or heroes of the Old Testament were called upon to help the individual through their struggles. Singing about these figures as if they were close friends and family emphasized many slaves' beliefs that God cared deeply for them and was with them in their times of need.

## THEME OF FREEDOM

The theme of a journey towards freedom is found in many spirituals. In spirituals this message referred to both spiritual freedom and physical freedom.

### *Spiritual Freedom*

Secure in their relationship with their God, enslaved individuals knew that their hearts and minds were free. They lived with the assurance that when they went to heaven, their freedom would be complete. To express this faith, slaves often sang of God's chosen people, the Israelites, and how God delivered them from bondage in Egypt.

### *Physical Freedom*

Many slaves believed that God would also grant them physical freedom from slavery as well. With this belief, the lyrics of a spiritual could take on a double meaning. For instance, the line "I am bound for Canaan" could both mean that a slave was spiritually bound for freedom in heaven as well as physically bound for freedom in the North. These double meanings allowed slaves to communicate secretly with one another about their plans.

# VOCABULARY



**abolitionist:** a person who believed that slavery was wrong and who worked to help free slaves.

**Big Dipper:** a constellation of seven stars that forms a bowl with a handle, sometimes referred to as the “drinking gourd.” Runaways could use the Big Dipper to help them locate the North Star.

**border states:** states that lay along the border dividing free states from slave states. The Underground Railroad was most active in border states.

**cargo:** goods to be transported from one place to another. On the Underground Railroad, “cargo” was a code word for runaway slaves.

**Civil War:** war fought between 1861-1864 between the northern and southern states that brought about the abolition of slavery.

**conductor:** a person who guided runaways on the Underground Railroad and directed them where to go next.

**enslaved:** the condition of being a slave.

**fugitive:** a person who has taken flight or run away. Fugitive slaves risked great injury and punishment if they were caught.

**Fugitive Slave Act:** A law passed as part of the Compromise of 1850, which allowed southern slaveholders to legally capture slaves who had escaped to the free states.

**master:** the owner of a plantation was called this by his slaves.

**North Star:** the brightest star in the northern sky

**Ohio River:** river that acted as the boundary between many free states and slave states.

**overseer:** person who directed the work of field slaves on a plantation.

**plantation:** a large farm on which crops were grown. Harriet Tubman was born on a plantation.

**property:** what a person owns or possesses. Enslaved individuals were not seen as human beings; instead, they were considered to be property. The master had sole authority over what to do with them.

**Quaker:** a religious group that believed slavery violated their Christian faith. Many Quakers were actively involved in the Underground Railroad serving as conductors and station masters.

**runaway:** an enslaved individual who had escaped and was trying to make his or her way to freedom.

**slave:** a person owned as the property of another person.

**station:** a place where runaways could safely find protection, food, or a place to sleep. Also sometimes referred to as a “safe house.”

**spiritual:** a religious song sung by enslaved peoples to lift their spirits and relay information. Spirituals often expressed themes of freedom.

**station master:** a person who hid runaway slaves in their homes, barns, or churches.

**Underground Railroad:** a term used to describe the secret network of people who helped slaves escape to the North.

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TOP: An attic in a safe house where runaways may have hidden. Image courtesy of the fairfieldinn.com.

# ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION, pg. 1



## REASON VS. RISK

**Goal:** To introduce students to the Underground Railroad and the condition of enslaved people in North America from the colonial period to the Thirteenth Amendment (17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries).

**Description:** In this activity, students will think about the mixed emotions an enslaved person faced when thinking about escaping. Students will theorize and articulate motivations for running away and the risks involved in seeking one's freedom.

**When:** Before the show

**Materials:** Reason vs. Risk worksheet, page 20

### Activity:

1. Review the information about the Underground Railroad with your students. Ask them to visualize what their life would be like if they were enslaved.
2. Tell students that they have a choice— they may stay where they are and continue to live in slavery or they may attempt to run away.
3. Have students write down their initial choice.
4. Next, remind students that an enslaved person faced many mixed emotions about the decision to escape and provide students with the Reason vs. Risk worksheet.
5. Ask students to think about what they would gain by running away. Students should list each of these under the 'Reasons to Leave' column.
6. Next, ask students to think about the risks involved in running away and list them under the 'Risks' column.

7. When students have filled out the worksheet, ask them to think about how the reasons to leave and the risks compare to one another. Do certain reasons or risks outweigh the others in their opinion? Why?
8. Finally, ask students to re-assess their original decision about whether they would stay or attempt to run away.

### Discussion for Before the Show:

1. What did you decide? Did you stay with your original decision or did you change your mind?
2. Was it difficult to make a decision? Why? Did you feel like you needed more information?
3. 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? Do you agree or disagree? What would you tell the student if you had a chance to have a conversation?

### Discussion for After the Show:

1. Harriet Tubman lived in slavery for many years before she ran away. What prompted her to run away when she did?
2. Could the reasons to leave change over time when circumstances change? If so, what is an example that might lead a person to change their mind about staying or leaving?
3. Are risks sometimes necessary?

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Activity adapted from the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center's "Lesson Plans" for grades 4-8.

## ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION, pg. 2



### WANTED: HARRIET TUBMAN

**Goal:** To learn more about Harriet Tubman's life and role on the Underground Railroad

**Description:** In this activity, students will conduct research about Harriet Tubman and create a wanted poster to display the information that they learn.

**When:** Before or after the show

**Materials:**

Books or internet sites about Harriet Tubman  
Paper  
Pencil  
Crayons or colored pencils

**Activity:**

1. Ask students to generate a list of everything they think they know about Harriet Tubman.
2. Next, invite students to conduct research either individually or in pairs about Harriet Tubman.
3. When students have completed their initial research, bring the class together. Remind the class that Harriet Tubman was a *fugitive*. Many slave catchers tried to catch her, not only because she was a runaway slave herself, but because she was such a successful conductor on the Underground Railroad.
4. Instruct students to create a draft of a wanted poster for Harriet Tubman. They should include information about why she was wanted as well as descriptions so that people would recognize her. Things they may want to think about include her name and nicknames, her appearance, her exploits, and areas where she was most active in her work.

5. If students need more information, allow them to conduct additional research.

6. After students have finished their draft poster, ask them to create a final version. They may use paper, crayons, and colored pencils, or a computer if they prefer.

7. Ask students to share their final posters with one another.

**Discussion:**

1. Why was Harriet Tubman a wanted person? Were their greater risks for Harriet Tubman than for other runaway slaves? Why?
2. What was one of Harriet Tubman's nicknames? How did this name come about?
3. What characteristics of Harriet Tubman made her a hero?
4. Harriet Tubman stated, "I never ran my train off the track, and I never lost a passenger." What do you think this means?

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Activity adapted from the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center's "Lesson Plans" for grades 4-8.

## ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION, pg. 3



### JOHN ANDERSON'S LETTER

**Goal:** To understand that African Americans were considered property, rather than people, by traders such as John Anderson.

**Description:** In this activity, students will examine primary sources written by John Anderson, a slave trader, in 1832 and will explore the effects of treating humans as property rather than people.

**When:** Before the show

**Materials:**

John Anderson's inventory, page 21

John Anderson's Letter, page 21

Worksheet: John Anderson's Letter, page 22

**Activity:**

1. Have students make a grocery list, listing all things that come to mind. Ask them what they put on their list. Many should respond with numerous products.
2. Next, show students John W. Anderson's inventory on the overhead. Ask students to examine it closely and see how his list differs from theirs. Students should recognize that his list includes people. Discuss this inclusion of people and then introduce the letter.
3. Guide students through the reading of the letter. Since this is a primary source, make sure students have an understanding of the document, when it was written and under what circumstances. This document was written to request slaves of childbearing age for Anderson to resell.
4. After reading the letter, have students work in pairs to complete questions on the worksheet.
5. As students work, make sure students mention the distinction in the name given to African Americans.

6. Focus on the work characteristics such as 'field woman' and the ages, which were childbearing ages. To get today's conversion of how much Anderson profited from the selling of 13 people, multiply \$7,640 by 25. For more exact conversions, you may search the web for "1832 conversion rates."

7. After students complete the worksheet, have students write from one of the following perspectives:

- a. John W. Anderson, or a slave trader's perspective
- b. Enslaved African American involved in the internal slave trade
- c. Omniscient observer

Have students portray how each might have felt, or as the omniscient observer, how people looking at the internal slave trade may have viewed it.

**Discussion for Before the Show:**

1. Were you surprised by John Anderson's list or letter? Why or why not?
2. What defines your worth? How would you feel if your worth was seen only as money?
3. How did the economics of the slave trade change the way traders and slave owners viewed African Americans? What did they value? What did they not value?

**Discussion for After the Show:**

1. Think about the economics of slavery. Where did you see money and property effect the different people's decisions in the play? Master Broda's? Harriet Tubman's? The slave catchers'?
2. Would it be possible for someone to see a slave as a real person with thoughts and feelings and to still justify the existence of slavery? Why or why not?

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Activity adapted from the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center's "Lesson Plans" for grades 4-8.

## ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION, pg. 4



Image courtesy of metalhed.com.

### POWER OF THE SPIRITUAL

**Goal:** To explore the nuances of language within a spiritual and its role in slave communities

**Description:** In this activity, students will study the spiritual *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* to discover how spirituals communicated multiple meanings. Students will also sing the song to explore the pattern and feeling generated by call-and-response.

**When:** Before or after the show

**Materials:**

“Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” lyrics, page 23

**Activity:**

1. Review the ‘About Spirituals’ information on page 14.
2. Hand out the lyrics to “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” and review as a class.
3. Discuss what the lyrics could mean within a Christian context and record students’ thoughts on the board or overhead.
4. Next, discuss what the lyrics could mean within the context of slavery and record students’ thoughts in a separate column on the board or overhead.
5. If double meanings for the same word or phrase emerged during the discussion, connect the thoughts with a line.
6. Next, prepare to sing “Sweet Low, Sweet Chariot” as a class. Model the tune if it is unfamiliar to students. The entire group will sing the chorus together. On the verses, designate a small group of students to sing the “call” of the spiritual (lines in italics). The rest of the group will sing the response (“Coming for to carry me home”).

**Discussion:**

1. What types of language did spirituals contain that allowed them to have double meaning?
2. What knowledge would you need to understand a spiritual’s different meanings?
3. How did it feel to sing the “call” line of *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*? How did it feel to sing the “response” line?
4. What did you notice about the lines sung by the small group? What did they focus on?
5. What sort of energy was there when the entire group sang?

**Additional Discussion for After the Show:**

1. What spirituals did you hear during the performance?
2. Were there certain ideas or images that recurred during the different spirituals? What do those images tell us about the role spirituals played in the lives of enslaved individuals?
3. What was your favorite spiritual that you heard? Why?

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Activity adapted [edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/spirituals](https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/spirituals).

## Reason vs. Risk Worksheet

An enslaved person faced many mixed emotions about escaping. Think about what things would be gained from running away and list them in the “Reasons to Leave” column. Then think about all the risks involved in running away and list them under “Risks.” After creating your lists, discuss with your class whether you would leave or stay.

REASONS TO LEAVE	RISKS

My choice is...

## John W. Anderson's Inventory and Letter

The names of enslaved African Americans contained in John W. Anderson's probate inventory:

Simon  
Bob  
Phenton  
William  
John (epileptic)  
Phillis  
Malinda and child  
Phebe  
Matilda  
Maria  
Mahala  
Joshua  
Matt  
William  
John  
John Wesley  
John Dimety  
Mtilda  
Mary Jane  
Mary Ann  
Ann Harriett  
Ann  
Addison  
Amada  
Israel  
George  
America (female)  
Mariah  
Albert  
Ghana (male)  
Jana  
Hannah

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center houses a structure known as a slave pen once owned by a trader named John W. Anderson. It is believed that slaves were held inside the structure before Anderson would take them to the Deep South for sale. Read portions of a letter from Anderson to Thomas Marshall, of Natchez, Mississippi, dated November 24, 1832. After reading the letter, complete the worksheet found on page 22.

November 24, 1832

Dear Friend,

May next there should not be any more negroes brought to the state for sale and I think in the spring they will be brisk. Negroe men is worth in market at this time from five hundred and fifty to \$650 and field women from \$400 to \$425. I have sold 13 and had 3 to dye with collera, 2 men that cost \$900 and one child worth \$100. The 16 cost \$5955 and the 13 I sold brought me \$7640...

I want you to find out and purchase all the negroes you can of a certain description: men and boys from 12 to 25 years old and girls from 12 to 20 and noe children. Don't give more than \$400 to \$450 for men from 17 to 25 years, sound in body and mine, and likely boys from \$250 to \$350, girls from 15 to 20 \$300-\$325 and younger...

...if there is any to be had you can git them  
...sent to my house I will give you half of the cleare profits  
We will make on them. Or, Purchois them to my hous and my overseet will take care of them amonge your friend and acquaintenance I think you might pick up 15 to 20 and that will be as much money as you...will make all year

Flour is worth 5 dollars and corn is worth one dollar per barrel.

Yours,

John W. Anderson

Letter from: Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives; Public Records Division, Mason County Circuit, case file #11648, as re-printed in the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center's "Lesson Plans" for grades 4-8.

## John Anderson's Letter Worksheet

After reading John W. Anderson's letter, complete the questions below.

1. Compare and contrast John W. Anderson's letter to our present day speaking, spelling, and grammar.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. In the letter, Anderson talks about men and boys, and women and girls. What kind of characteristics does he give for the people mentioned? Name at least two characteristics.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Why do you think he focuses on these characteristics (listed in number 2)?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. At the end of the first paragraph, Anderson talks about how much money he received for the sale of 13 slaves. Write down the amount brought in by the selling of 13 people in the original profit column below. Ask your teacher for current conversion rates. Multiply the original total by the conversation rate to solve for the profit in today's money.

**Original money received**      **x**      **Conversion Rate**      **=**      **Total Received in Today's Money**

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you think Anderson would be considered a rich man? Explain.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. On a separate sheet of paper, construct a journal entry describing the experience of one of the following people.

- A. John W. Anderson, or a slave trader's perspective
- B. Enslaved African American involved in the internal slave trade
- C. An omniscient observer

In your journal entry, explain the rationale of the internal slave trade, the feelings of people involved in the slave trade, and the feelings of people outside the slave trade. Use the economics of the internal slave trade to explain why people would allow such trading to exist.

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## Power of the Spiritual Handout

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Analyze and discuss the lyrics, of *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*. What do the words suggest in a spiritual sense? What do they say about freedom in a physical sense? After the discussion, you may choose to sing the spiritual as a class. To sing the song in the traditional call-and-response style, everyone should sing the words printed in bold. Words in italics may be sung as a solo or by a small group.

### SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT

**Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.  
Swing low, sweet chariot.  
Coming for to carry me home.**

*I looked over Jordan, and what did I see,  
Coming for to carry me home?  
A band of angels coming after me,  
Coming for to carry me home.*

**Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.  
Swing low, sweet chariot.  
Coming for to carry me home.**

*If you get there before I do,  
Coming for to carry me home,  
Tell all my friends I'm coming too,  
Coming for to carry me home.*

**Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.  
Swing low, sweet chariot.**

# RESOURCES AND SOURCES

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## CLASSROOM RESOURCES

### Print Resources

Landau, Elaine. Fleeing to Freedom on the Underground Railroad: the Courageous Slaves, Agents, and Conductors. Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2006.

Blue, Rose and Corinne J. Naden. Harriet Tubman: Riding the Freedom Train. Brookfield, Connecticut: Millbrook Press, 2003.

### Web Resources

“National Geographic Online presents The Underground Railroad.”

*Interactive website that allows students to walk in the shoes of an enslaved individual attempting to escape on the Underground Railroad. Also includes additional activities and lesson plans for classroom use.*

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

“Underground Railroad.” Thinkquest.

*Created by students for students, site contains overview of the Underground Railroad, maps, timelines, and an imagined interview with Harriet Tubman.*

[http://library.thinkquest.org/J0112391/underground\\_railroad.htm](http://library.thinkquest.org/J0112391/underground_railroad.htm)

### Local Resources

Jordan House Museum — West Des Moines

*Maintained and operated by the West Des Moines Historical Society, Jordan House was a station on the Underground Railroad in the 1850s and early 1860s. Group tours can be arranged. More info:*

[http://www.thejordanhouse.org/JordanHouse/about\\_jh/infof.html](http://www.thejordanhouse.org/JordanHouse/about_jh/infof.html)

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## STUDY GUIDE SOURCES

“African American Spirituals in the Slave Community.” National Humanities Center.

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/getback/gbafricanam.htm>

“Africans in America.” PBS. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1535.html>

“The Underground Railroad.” National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

<http://www.freedomcenter.org/underground-railroad>

Official Site of Negro Spirituals. <http://www.negrospirituals.com/song>

Official Site of Theatre Works USA. <http://www.theatreworksusa.org>

“Spirituals.” EDSITEment: the best of Humanities on the Web. National Endowment for the Humanities.

<http://www.edsiteement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/spirituals>

Theatreworks USA. “Freedom Train Study Guide.”

[http://www.theatreworksusa.org/uploads/studyguide/studyguide\\_1062.pdf](http://www.theatreworksusa.org/uploads/studyguide/studyguide_1062.pdf)

“Underground Railroad Lesson Plans: Grades 4-8.” National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

<http://www.freedomcenter.org/expand-your-knowledge/educator-resources/downloads/Teacher%20Resource%204-8.pdf>