

Escape from Slavery - The Underground Railroad

Worksheet 1

South Carolina's slave code made it legal to kill a slave who was found away from the house or plantation of his owner, even if that person did not resist. Georgia's statutes actually encouraged the killing of adult male runaways - the reward for returning a dead male slave was twice the amount offered for returning a live woman or child. Despite all these dangers large numbers of fugitive slaves risked punishment and even death in search of freedom. A large number of those tried their luck on the so-called "Underground Railroad".

Join one of these poor souls on his way to freedom

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/99/railroad/j1.html>

Before getting on the Underground Railroad he has to get rid of the restraint devices which his owner put on him to prevent his escape (you can see a picture of these devices on the first page of the "Underground Railroad").

1. How do these devices work?
2. How could he get rid of them?
3. Who could he ask for help?

Now get on the train with him and find out what happens. On your journey:

1. Make a list of the people you meet and make notes about them.
2. "Safe houses" are important steps on your way.
 - a) Why can you feel safe there?
 - b) How do you recognize them?
 - c) Who runs "safe houses"?
3. Although slavery had already been abolished in North America, you could not really feel safe there. What did you have to expect?
4. Free at last! But you also have mixed feelings. What can Canada offer you? What are you worried about?
5. Go to <http://www.history.rochester.edu/class/ugrr/hor2.html> and find out more about the Fugitive Slave Act and its regulations.
6. Why was this movement called "The Underground Railroad"? First try your own explanation, then check <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2944.html> to see if you were right. What do the terms "stations", "depots", "stationmasters", "stockholders" and "conductor" refer to in Underground Railroad terms?
7. You will have noticed that not only blacks worked on the Underground Railroad. White people, especially Quakers, also supported the movement. Have a closer look at <http://www.afsc.org/about.htm> and find out more about Quakers and their motives for helping runaway slaves.

Worksheet 2 (Mini Projects)

Preparing and giving a talk (solo, pair, or group work)

Imagine you are a member of the council of your city. There have already been debates about the erection of a monument for Frederick Douglass. Now it's your turn to make a statement before the city council in which you speak **in favour** of the monument. For more information on Frederick Douglass have a look at

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1539.html>

If you are not sure how to manage this task or if you would like some vocabulary help, check 'How to prepare a talk' and 'How to give a talk' in our toolbox.

Performing an interview (pair or group work)

Imagine you are going to be interviewed on TV about the Underground Railroad and the most prominent people (or just one specific individual) behind this movement. Prepare the interview with your partner and perform it in front of the class. If you need some more information about the people on the Underground Railroad, explore:

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

Evaluating the web site (pair or group work)

Discuss why you liked or didn't like the sites on your journey with the "Underground Railroad". Consider the following aspects:

- multimedia design
- content
- activities

You can get a model evaluation sheet for web pages at:

<http://www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/edu/rubric3.htm>

A collection of links dealing with web evaluation is also available at:

<http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/eval.html>

Report your findings back to the class.