

ACTIVITY GUIDE

ESCAPING SLAVERY ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Program Overview and Objective:

This guide was developed as a supplement to be used in conjunction with the program “Escaping Slavery on the Underground Railroad”. It focuses on the people and events that led helped many African American enslaved people escape to freedom.

The program focuses on the importance of the Underground Railroad to the abolition movement in America. Students will be provided with meaningful examples that allow them to relate to the difficulties enslaved people endured and explains why escaping to freedom was so meaningful.

It provides stirring dramatizations, photographs and colorful maps that help tell the story of the Underground Railroad. Students will understand that the Underground Railroad was a series of safe houses maintained by volunteers and were used by enslaved people to escape to freedom. The roles and key participants of the Underground Railroad will be introduced. Students will also understand how and why slavery was instituted in America.

WHOLE CLASS ACTIVITIES

Whole Class Activity #1

Discuss with students, that quilts hung on the door of a house indicated that the house was a “station” on the Underground Railroad. Students will begin this activity by writing a paragraph about the Underground Railroad, the people who operated it, and why it was so important. Students should use information they learned watching the program, as well as other sources like the Internet and books.

After writing the paragraph students should either copy or print their paragraph onto fabric squares or oak-tag squares that will be used to create the quilt. A picture that illustrates their writing should be created on a separate square. Connect the squares and hang the freedom quilt in your classroom or school.

Whole Group Activity #2

Tell the students about Henry Box Brown, who was born an enslaved person in 1815. On March 29, 1849, he entered a box and was shipped from Louisa County Virginia to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to escape slavery.

(You can find a short biography at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Box_Brown). Have your students discuss other creative ways they would have tried to escape slavery.

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

Small Group Activity #1

Break students into small groups of three to five. In the groups, have students brainstorm ideas of how to convey a message to another group member without talking. What kind of signs or symbols could they use? Then, choose one student in the group to be the leader. Give the leader a safe location in the school (ie. cafeteria, principal's office, nurses office) where they must safely deliver their group. No one in the group can know the secret location. What are the ways that the group leader can safely convey where the safe houses are, which way to go, and what paths should be avoided?

Small Group Activity #2

Have students choose a topic from Escaping Slavery on the Underground Railroad such as slave catchers, Harriet Tubman or Thomas Garrett and do more research to find additional information and interesting facts.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES

Individual Activity #1

Have students pretend they were an enslaved person who escaped on the Underground Railroad. Have them write a thank you letter to either a stationmaster or conductor who helped them along the way.

Individual Activity #2

Ask students to write a poem about the Underground Railroad.

Copyright 2008



P.O. Box 86

Bristol, CT 06011

www.mazz.com