

Slavery Bound or Underground

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OVERVIEW: This lesson explores the experiences of slaves and abolitionists as they risk their lives for the cause they believed in. Students will learn background information on the Underground Railroad and related issues through video segments, then take an interactive journey for themselves through the use of the Internet!

GRADE LEVELS: 11th grade

TIME ALLOTMENT: Two 90-minute class periods to cover the introduction, learning activities, and culminating activity, and part of a third period for presentations.

SUBJECT MATTER:

- Social Studies
- Writing
- Technology

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- describe the cultural, economic, and political issues that divided the nation, such as slavery and the abolitionist movement, and
- describe the experiences of slaves and abolitionists.

STANDARDS

Virginia Standards for History/Social Studies secondary courses

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Superintendent/Sols/historysecondary.pdf>

VUS.6c. major events during the first half of the nineteenth century

Virginia Standards for Technology by the end of grade twelve

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Superintendent/Sols/comptec12.pdf>

C/T 12.1,2, and 4. Basic understanding of computer operations, software application, and gathering, processing, and analyzing information.

VIDEO COMPONENTS

Video: United Streaming <http://www.unitedstreaming.com> video, “The Underground Railroad: Escape from Slavery” segments titled, “The Underground Railroad.”

Internet:

- National Geographic Underground Railroad
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad>
National Geographic's Underground interactive journey along the Underground Railroad is fantastic! The site contains additional information on important individuals, timelines, and much more.
- Testimony of the Canadian Fugitives
http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/texts/canadian_slaves.html
Three true accounts of slaves who escaped for freedom and made it to Canada to tell their stories.
- Underground Railroad stories from Franklin County, Virginia
http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/texts/canadian_slaves.html
Stories from Franklin County Virginia and the Underground Railroad.
- Biography Channel
<http://www.biography.com>
The Biography Channel site is an excellent resource of biographical information on history's most famous and infamous figures.

Software:

- Windows Media Player
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Microsoft Word, or other word processing software

Hardware:

- Desktop computer or laptop computer with Windows 98 or better connected to an LCD projector or television equipped with a presentation device in order to show the United Streaming video.
- A computer for each student

MATERIALS

- A computer with Internet access, PowerPoint, and word processing software for each student.
- One disk for each student to save pictures or information
- A scanner in case students wish to include pictures from library books in presentations
- Library books on slavery, abolitionists, and the Underground Railroad for supplemental research

PREP FOR TEACHERS

1. Download the United Streaming <http://www.unitedstreaming.com> video “, “The Underground Railroad: Escape from Slavery” to the desktop of the computer or burned onto a disk. Cue the video to the clip, “The Abolitionists” at 07:36.
2. Connect computer to presentation device.
3. Bookmark Web sites on student computers.
4. Schedule library time for print material research or have the library pull appropriate materials for classroom/computer lab use.
5. When using media, provide students with a Focus for Media Interaction, a specific task to complete and/or information to identify during or after viewing or video segments, Web sites or other multimedia elements.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

1. Present students with the following situation: “Suppose you are born a slave. You cannot go anywhere nor do anything without the approval of your master. If you disobey you may be beaten. You work for the master and receive no pay, just a place to sleep, food, and meager clothing. There is no reason that you can think of why you deserve to live this way. You think and feel just the same as your master, except that the color of your skin is different. That’s why you are a slave. To what lengths would you go to change your situation?” Allow students to volunteer to discuss their opinions. There are no right or wrong answers at this point. Allow the discussion continue for no more than three minutes.
2. Pose another question to students. Say, ”Suppose you live in one of the Southern states where slavery was legal and you are the son or daughter of a slave owner. You don’t understand why slaves have to be slaves. You wonder why they can’t be free and work for your family for pay, like factory workers in the North. You don’t understand how a person could have the right to own another person. You do understand that this is considered normal and acceptable where you live, and you would be sharply criticized if you let anyone know what you thought. What action are you willing to take, if given the opportunity, to change the lives of these slaves?” Allow students to discuss this proposition in similar fashion. Allow the discussion to go on for no more than 3-5 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers at this point.
3. Tell students, “Today we will explore the experiences of some people, black and white, Northern and Southern, who decided that slavery was wrong and did something about it. We will view some video clips about them to get us started.

Provide students for a focus for media interaction by saying, “As you view the first clip, listen for the term used for people who spoke out against slavery, and make a list on a piece of paper of the names of some of those people.”

Play (07:36) Audio: “In the early days of the United States, there were small pockets of people who spoke out against slavery.”
Visual: reward poster for returned slave

Stop (10:56) Audio: The narrator is humming.
Visual: artwork depicting a riot

Ask students, “What was the name given to those who thought slavery ought to end?” The correct response is “abolitionists.” Ask students, “Who were some of the people who were abolitionists?” Correct responses include William L. Garrison, Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, Gerrit Smith, and Elijah Lovejoy. Remind students that these are not the only ones, but they will learn about more people through the lesson.

4. Tell students, “One thing that abolitionists did was help slaves get to areas where slavery was illegal to the north and south of the Southeastern United States. These people helped slaves escape in an effort known as the Underground Railroad. **Provide students with a focus for media interaction** by telling students, “In the next clip, listen for how the Underground Railroad got its name.”

Play (10:58) Audio: “While the country continued to debate the issue of slavery...”
Visual: reward poster for returned slave

Stop (12:19) Audio: “The Underground Railroad is a difficult subject to research...”
Visual: a hand writing with a quill pen

Ask students, “Was the Underground Railroad really a train on tracks carrying slaves away from the South?” The correct response should be “no.” Ask students, “How did the Underground Railroad get its name?” The correct answer is that it was said that an escaped slave crossed a river and seemed to disappear as if he had been taken on an “underground railroad.”

5. **Provide students with a focus for media interaction** by saying, “In this clip, listen for the destinations of escaped slaves.”

Play (12:54) Audio: “While it is commonly thought that slaves were trying to escape to Canadian cities...”
Visual: fronts of buildings

Stop (14:06) Audio: “...and could more easily hide from the established community.”
Visual: a red brick building

Ask students where slaves went. Correct answers include Cuba, Florida to live among the Seminoles, Mexico, Northern cities, and Canada.

6. **Provide a focus for media interaction** by saying, “In this last clip, you should record the names of the heroes of the Underground Railroad.”

Play (14:06) Audio: “Most of the people involved in the Underground Railroad were just normal, everyday people like us.”
Visual: the woman in the market

Ask students to name the people they learned about. Correct answers include Lewis Hayden, Harriet Tubman, and Levi Coffin.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Tell students, “Now you will take an interactive journey through the Underground Railroad. You will have to make choices that make the difference between life and death.” Students will go to the computer lab or library media center to view and research. Students may work in pairs or individually. Send students to the National Geographic Underground Railroad (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad>) site and **provide a focus for media interaction** by saying, “Take the interactive journey. As you go, take notes on how you feel about the experience, the choices you made, and the results. Use the pull-down menu to look at other parts of the site and take notes on what you find that could support a written assignment on what it was like to be a slave or abolitionist working on the Underground Railroad.”
2. Students should then go to the Testimony of Canadian Fugitives site (http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/texts/canadian_slaves.html). **Provide a focus for media interaction** by telling students to read the accounts of fugitive slaves and take any notes that could support a written assignment on what it was like to be a slave or abolitionist working on the Underground Railroad.
3. Students should go to the Underground Railroad Stories from Franklin County Virginia site (http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/texts/canadian_slaves.html). **Provide a focus for media interaction** by telling students to read the stories told on the site and take any notes that could support a written assignment on what it was like to be a slave or abolitionist working on the Underground Railroad.
4. Students should go the Biography Channel site (<http://www.biography.com>). **Provide a focus for media interaction** by telling students that they should research the heroes of the Underground Railroad, recording any information that could support a written assignment on what it was like to be a slave or abolitionist working on the Underground Railroad.
5. Students should use library media center print materials from the library (sent on a cart if working in the computer lab) on the Underground Railroad, abolition, and

slavery. Students should record any information that could support a written assignment on what it was like to be a slave or abolitionist working on the Underground Railroad.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY

1. When students complete their research they will have their choice of two assignments that will be completed individually. The first assignment is that students may create a PowerPoint in which they illustrate the life and influences of an abolitionist. They should use the notes they took when researching the sites as a basis. Choices include any person, black or white, free or slave, that has been mentioned in the video clips or descriptions from the Web sites. Presentations should be at least five slides and contain at least three graphics or pictures saved from the Web or scanned from a book. Information on the person's beginnings, how they got involved with the Underground Railroad, their experiences on the Underground Railroad, and their ultimate fate or outcome is expected.
2. The second choice is a writing assignment in which they use the notes they took from the sites. Students should choose one of the following topics to write a composition of no less than two typed and double-spaced pages.
Topic 1: Imagine that you are an abolitionist housing slaves in the basement of your Virginia home. Write a journal entry in which you describe the dangers that you face, your fears, experiences with the fugitives, and the rewards of involvement.
Topic 2: Imagine that you are a slave on the run. You have family in Canada that you are desperately trying to get to. You are currently hiding in a basement in a Virginia home. You can't read or write since this isn't allowed, but you want to write about your experiences yourself someday when you have had the chance to be educated. For now, you settle for letting someone else record it for you. Another slave staying with you who can read has agreed to write your thoughts for you as you dictate them to her. Tell about your experience, your struggles, your fears, the experience of interacting with whites willing to help you, and your hopes for the future.
3. When students have completed their assignments, they should make their presentations to the class.

CROSS-CURRICULAR EXTENSIONS

1. **Art:** Students may create works using a variety of media to interpret the experiences of slaves and abolitionists in the Underground Railroad experience.
2. **Music:** Students may do research on the music of American slaves such as the songs that slaves used to inform each other of planned escapes.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

1. Students may visit a museum that has an exhibit on slavery, abolition, or the Underground Railroad, such as the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia or an art or history museum that features an African American culture exhibit.
2. Secure a guest speaker who has researched slavery, abolition, or the Underground railroad to visit your class, such as someone from a local historical society.