

**LESSON TITLE:** The Underground Railroad

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Special Education, Social Studies

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**TEACHING TRADITIONAL AMERICAN HISTORY PROGRAM**

**Funded by the U. S. Department of Education**

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<http://www.chillhistoryproject.com/>

**Lesson Overview:** *This lesson will enable the students to understand the sacrifices made by and for black slaves in gaining their freedom. Additionally, the students will see how much people were willing to sacrifice for the principle of freedom.*

**Essential Question(s):** *1. What was the Underground Railroad?  
2. What was the purpose of the Underground Railroad?  
3. How did the Underground Railroad contribute to the character and culture of American Society?*

**Objectives:** *After completing this lesson, the student will be able to:*

- 1. Describe the Underground Railroad and define its purpose*
- 2. Describe cultural changes in American Society*
- 3. Analyze the evolution of American democracy in relation to its struggle for civil rights*

**Assessment:** *The students will write a R.A.F.T. (Role-Audience—Format-Topic Strategy) assuming the **role** of a slave, conductor, or station operator. Their **audience** is family or friends. Their **format** will be a letter or journal. The **topic** for the students will be the struggles, lifestyle, sacrifices, and people met along the trail. The scoring guide is attached at the end of this lesson plan.*

**Materials:**

1. *Information/Summary of the Underground Railroad from a textbook of the teacher's choice*
2. *Computer access for focused, self-directed research at the following recommended sites:*
  - a. <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/>
  - b. <http://education.ucdavis.edu/NEW/STC/lesson/socstud/railroad/contents.htm>

**Class Time:** *1 to 2 – ninety minute class periods*

**Teacher Input:**

1. *Read the selected summary of the Underground Railroad to the class*
2. *Have the students research using the two recommended web sites listed above.*

**Activities:**

1. *Define the following terms:*
  - a. *stations (sites where fugitive slaves were given shelter and food)*
  - b. *station masters (people who ran the stations)*
  - c. *conductors (individuals who took the runaway slaves from one station to the next)*

2. *After the students have had time to visit the sites, use the following questions to check for understanding and association:*
  - a. *Describe the Underground Railroad (was it exactly what the name implies?)*
  - b. *What was the purpose of the Underground Railroad?*
  - c. *If you were a slave, would you have risked your life for freedom? Why or why not?*
  - d. *If you were white, would you have risked your life and personal freedom helping slaves attain their freedom? Why or why not?*
3. *Have the students describe the conditions as the slaves were making their way to freedom. This should also include the risks of the people giving shelter to the slaves along their journey.*

**The following websites will help the students' research results:**

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

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground\\_Railroad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground_Railroad)

<http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/ugrrhome.htm>

<http://www.nps.gov/undergroundrr/contents.htm>

**Questions for review:**

1. *Why is the Underground Railroad a significant event that citizens of the United States should remember?*
2. *Can a country be considered free when some of its citizens are not?*
3. *What kind of enslavement exists in America today? (Low wages, illegal immigrants in hiding, child pornography—these issues are suggested but to be used only at the discretion of the classroom teacher. There is no intention to make political statements. The purpose is to heighten the awareness of social issues and their implications on society.)*

**Closure:** *Ask the students if they have any additional questions. The above review questions and the assessment should give the students an understanding of and identification with the difficulties encountered by those helping support the Underground Railroad.*

**Extension:** *For students who would like further information on this subject, I would recommend the following:*

**Uncle Tom's Cabin** by Harriet Beecher Stowe

**Underground Railroad** produced by the National Park Service,  
Department  
of the Interior

**References:**

**Ohio's Underground Railroad Freedom Stations**, Ohio Historical  
Society

Packaged Travel Office

**Underground Railroad**, National Park Service

**Graphics:** *The following web sites offer graphics of The Underground Railroad:*

<http://library.thinkquest.org/18802/routes.jpg>

[http://strattonhouse.com/images/underground\\_railroad\\_winter\\_lg.jpg](http://strattonhouse.com/images/underground_railroad_winter_lg.jpg)

[http://www.longwoodgardens.org/UndergroundRailroad\\_1\\_3\\_2\\_1\\_3.html](http://www.longwoodgardens.org/UndergroundRailroad_1_3_2_1_3.html)

**R.A.F.T. SCORING GUIDE**

<b>ASSIGNMENT TRAITS</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Accuracy</b>	Accurate, fully supported by history	1 historical error	2 historical errors	3 historical errors	4 historical errors	Not historically accurate
<b>Perspective</b>	Student stayed in role and was convincing to his/her audience	—————→				Out of role and story was not convincing
<b>Focus</b>	Student stayed focused on chosen format (letter or journal) with correct form and provided numerous details and examples	Student was mostly focused and provided at least 4 details or examples	Student was mostly focused and provided at least 3 details or examples	Student was not focused and only provided 2 details or examples	Student was not focused and only provided 1 detail or example	Student did not provide any details or examples
<b>Mechanics</b>	No mechanical, grammatical, or spelling errors	1 or 2 errors in mechanics, grammar, or spelling	3 errors in mechanics, grammar, or spelling	4 errors in mechanics, grammar, or spelling	5 errors in mechanics, grammar, or spelling	More than 5 errors in mechanics, grammar, or spelling
<b>Fact vs. Opinion</b>	Are opinions and conclusions research	—————→				Opinions and conclusions are not research

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**Total:** \_\_\_\_\_