



UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

A Simulated Journey From Slavery to Freedom

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The authors wish to dedicate this unit to the devoted teachers at Coker Elementary.

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STANDARDS

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

STANDARDS

The nationwide movement for high standards has not only determined what students should learn, but also has mandated that students demonstrate what they know. UNDERGROUND RAILROAD is a standards-based program addressing national History, Social Studies, and Language Arts Standards. The content presented in this unit are the targets of most state frameworks for American history and writing. The UNDERGROUND RAILROAD simulation provides many opportunities for performance assessment as students study the history and people of the Underground Railroad and write about what they have learned. Applied Learning Standards are addressed when student teams work together toward common objectives.

National Standards for History Standards in Historical Thinking

Standard 1: Chronological Thinking.

The student is able to:

- Establish temporal order in constructing historical narratives of their own.

Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

The student comprehends a variety of historical sources. The student is able to:

- Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage by identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed.
- Read historical narratives imaginatively.
- Draw upon data in historical maps.

Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation. The student is able to:

- Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions.
- Consider multiple perspectives of various people in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears.
- Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation, including the importance of the individual, the influence of ideas, and the role of chance.

STANDARDS

U N D E R G R O U N D R A I L R O A D

Standard 5: Historical issues-analysis and decision-making

The student engages in historical issues-analysis and decision-making.
The student is able to:

- Identify issues and problems in the past and analyze the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those involved in the situation.

United States History Standards

Era 4: Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)

Standard 3b: The student understands how the debates over slavery influenced politics and sectionalism.

Standard 4a: The student understands the Abolitionist movement.

Era 5: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877)

Standard 1: The student understands how the North and South differed and how politics and ideologies led to the Civil War.

NCSS Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

Strand 1: Culture

The learner can:

- Explain why individuals and groups respond differently to their physical and social environments and/or changes to them on the basis of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs.

Strand 5: Individuals, Groups, & Institutions

The learner can:

- Demonstrate an understanding of concepts such as role, status, and social class in describing the interactions of individuals and social groups.
- Identify and analyze examples of tensions between belief systems and government policies and laws.

Strand 6: Power, Authority, & Governance

The learner can:

- Examine persistent issues involving the rights, roles, and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare.
- Analyze and explain ideas and governmental mechanisms to meet needs and wants of citizens, regulate territory, manage conflict, and establish order and security.
- Explain conditions, actions, and motivations that contribute to conflict and cooperation within and among nations.

STANDARDS

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Strand 10: Civic Ideals & Practices

The learner can:

- Explain the origins and interpret the continuing influence of key ideals of the democratic republican form of government, such as individual human dignity, liberty, justice, equality, and the rule of law.
- Practice forms of civic discussion and participation consistent with the ideals of citizens in a democratic republic.

NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts

Standard 1 Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of text, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world, to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

Standard 4 Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Standard 7 Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

California Applied Learning Standards

Standard 6 Students will understand how to apply communication skills and techniques. Students will demonstrate ability to communicate orally and in writing.

Standard 8 Students will understand the importance of teamwork. Students will work on teams to achieve project objectives.

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PURPOSE

U N D E R G R O U N D R A I L R O A D

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD simulates the journey slaves took to escape from the South and gain freedom in Canada. It is designed to broaden the students' historical knowledge and understanding of this specific time period. Your students will research and discuss, and then relive history through the specific role they are given for the simulation. Specifically, your students will gain the following:

Knowledge

- The historical significance of the Underground Railroad
- Real-life accounts of escaping slaves
- Famous conductors and agents and their stories
- The "secret" language used by those traveling
- The locations of major routes of the Underground Railroad

Skills

- Working cooperatively
- Reading to locate specific information
- Note-taking and summarizing
- Following written directions
- Writing reflectively using a specific format
- Peer-teaching and retelling of facts read
- Applying map-reading skills

Feelings and Attitudes

- An appreciation of the courage required to journey on the Underground Railroad
- An understanding of trust, and the fear associated with completely trusting another person
- A positive feeling of working with a group to accomplish a common goal
- Feelings of responsibility for the group as a whole
- An understanding of the possible motives for participation in the Underground Railroad

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OVERVIEW

U N D E R G R O U N D R A I L R O A D

OVERVIEW

The stories of the Underground Railroad are as compelling as any murder mystery or drama, yet, due to the limited information in textbooks and resources commonly used in the classroom, students miss out on the drama of the past. In this simulation, students learn the history of the Underground Railroad in cooperative groups, and then take part in a simulated journey from “station” to “station” set up throughout your school building, with the ultimate goal being to reach freedom in “Canada,” which exists at the far ends of your school grounds. Each student in your class “becomes” an escaping slave, a conductor, a bounty hunter, or a patrol officer, and participates according to the specific guidelines given for that role. After this simulation activity, a group debriefing leads students to write reflectively about their thoughts and feelings during the experience.



DAILY DIRECTIONS

DAY 1

U N D E R G R O U N D R A I L R O A D



You may have your students keep a journal throughout the simulation to write down their thoughts and feelings.

What was the Underground Railroad?

Materials

- Student Guide — *class set*
- RAILROAD TERMS — *transparency*
- WHAT WAS THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD? — *transparency (optional)*
- COOPERATIVE GROUP WORK RUBRIC — *transparency, class set, or poster*
- EXPERT GROUPS — *transparency*
- STORIES OF ESCAPE (two pages) — *one set per student in group 1*
- MAJOR ROUTES OF UNDERGROUND RAILROAD (two pages) — *one set per student in group 2*
- FAMOUS AGENTS OF UNDERGROUND RAILROAD (two pages) — *one set per student in group 3*
- SECRETS AND DANGERS (two pages) — *one set per student in group 4*
- GLOSSARY — *class set*
- Highlighter pens — *one per student in “expert” groups 1, 3, and 4*
- Paper (lined) — *one sheet per student in “expert” groups 2 and 4*
- Overhead projector — *one*

Procedure

1. Read or tell:

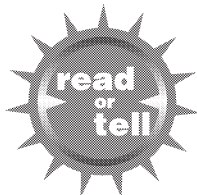
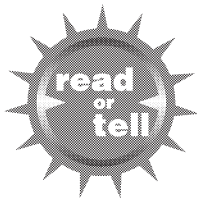
Today we’re going to discuss a secret Underground Railroad that existed in the United States during the time period we’ve been studying.

2. Elicit responses to the following question: “What does the term ‘Underground Railroad’ suggest to you?”

(Typical responses include: “a train that runs underground,” “a subway.”)

3. Read or tell:

The railroad we’ll be talking about was purposely kept completely secret, and most of what we know about it today was shared by people who experienced it first-hand. First, let’s familiarize ourselves with some railroad terms.



DAILY DIRECTIONS DAY 1

U N D E R G R O U N D R A I L R O A D

4. Using the RAILROAD TERMS transparency, in the left-hand column, write the terms used to describe the various individuals involved in running a railroad. Elicit these from the students by asking questions. Use the following prompts:
 - conductor — supervises the train's operation
 - engineer — drives/runs the train
 - brakeman — assists conductor in operation of train
 - fireman — assists conductor and/or engineer (assisting with the locomotive boiler in steam engines and on passenger trains checking safety precautions)
 - passenger — person riding the train
 - station or depot — place where a train stops
 - station master or agent — person in charge of a station
 - superintendent — person in charge of a section of the railroad

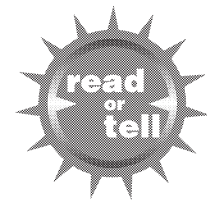
5. **Read or tell:**

Even though the Underground Railroad was not a real railroad (there were no actual trains running underground and the passengers were not traveling for business or pleasure), each of the terms used within the regular railroad system had a secret meaning for those on the Underground Railroad.

6. Distribute a Student Guide to each student and direct students to read **What was the Underground Railroad?** Introduce this reading selection by telling students that they will read to find out how the Underground Railroad was different from the regular railroad, but used similar terminology to keep it secret. They should pay special attention to what each railroad term meant for the Underground Railroad.

7. Have students discuss the Underground Railroad quietly with a partner when they finish the reading.

8. Using the RAILROAD TERMS overhead, in the right-hand column write what each railroad term signified on the Underground Railroad.
 - conductor — guide
 - engineer — they did not use this term



If you read "What Was The Underground Railroad?" as a class, you may opt to use the transparency for this purpose.

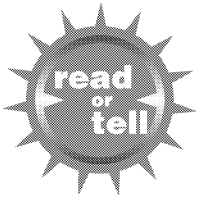
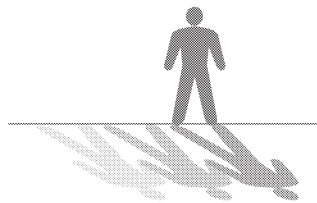
You may have students read this selection individually or in pairs.

You may use a more formal assessment of student understanding of the reading.

DAILY DIRECTIONS

DAY 1

U N D E R G R O U N D R A I L R O A D



- brakeman — term used to refer to someone who assisted with the Underground Railroad, perhaps providing resources such as money, food or other supplies or assisting the conductor with finding safe houses
- fireman — term used to refer to someone who assisted with the Underground Railroad in similar fashion to that of the brakeman
- passenger — escaping slave
- station or depot — safe house/house owned by people helping slaves escape
- station master or agent — person involved in Underground Railroad, providing safe house locations, money, food and other supplies, soliciting support (money, food, supplies) from others
- superintendent — head of a certain section of Underground Railroad

9. Divide students into four groups. These groups will work together to study one of four aspects of the Underground Railroad. See **Setup Directions # 3, Grouping Students** for more information.

10. Distribute or display the COOPERATIVE GROUP WORK RUBRIC and review your expectations for group cooperation. You may choose to post the rubric for student reference.

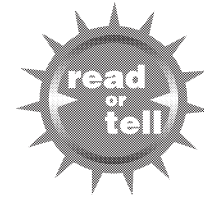
Read or tell:

We're going to spend some time in groups today unlocking the secrets of the Underground Railroad. We want to have a thorough understanding, because tomorrow (or soon) we will do a re-enactment (simulation) of this experience in which each of you will have an assigned part. Each group will study a different aspect of the Underground Railroad and then we will share this information with those in other groups.

DAILY DIRECTIONS DAY 1

U N D E R G R O U N D R A I L R O A D

11. Using the EXPERT GROUPS transparency, discuss briefly the four topic aspects that the groups will study:
Group 1: Stories of Escape
Group 2: Major Routes of the Underground Railroad
Group 3: Agents and Friends of the Underground Railroad
Group 4: Secrets and Dangers
12. Assign each group a topic area and distribute the appropriate information to each group.
Group 1: STORIES OF ESCAPE (two pages)
Group 2: MAJOR ROUTES OF UNDERGROUND RAILROAD (two pages)
Group 3: AGENTS AND FRIENDS OF UNDERGROUND RAILROAD (two pages)
Group 4: SECRETS AND DANGERS (two pages)
13. **Read or tell:**
We will spend the next 20-25 minutes in these groups. We will read the material, discuss what we have read in our groups and then complete a task related to the reading. When we have completed this research in our expert groups, we will meet in groups of four (with one member from each expert group) to discuss what each “expert” has learned about his/her aspect of the Underground Railroad.
14. Distribute the GLOSSARY and have students begin their work in the “expert” groups.
15. **Optional Activities**
 - Student groups can complete additional research beyond what is provided within this unit. They may use in-class time or do as homework.
 - Student groups can make presentations on their research to the class. The audience can take notes on the presentations as they learn more about each aspect of the Underground Railroad. A teacher-facilitated discussion can follow each presentation. Separate class periods can be used for each presentation and discussion.



You may wait before handing out the task to each group, allowing the groups to initially focus on the reading material.

You may discuss graphic organizers (e.g., webbing) with your students prior to reading. This may help your students sort out the important information and see how the information is all related.