

# Brazos Valley African American Museum



**Curriculum Learning Trunk  
Lesson Plans for Grade 10**

**Underground Railroad  
Grade 10**

**Underground Railroad: High School 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Lesson Plan**  
**BVAAM**  
**Curriculum Learning Trunk - Lesson Plan**

**OBJECTIVE:** After reading authentic narratives and using the activities provided, 10th grade students will reference *The Underground Railroad: Authentic Narratives and First-Hand Accounts*, and write a 3-4 paragraph reflection that includes 3 embed quotes with 100% completion.

**TEKS:**

**Knowledge and Skills**

**STSS.2:** The student applies critical thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources. Student is expected to:

**STSS.2C:** Read narrative texts critically and identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants

**E2.8:** Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about the author's purpose in cultural, historical, contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

**E2.8A:** Analyze the controlling idea and specific purpose of a passage and the textual elements that support and elaborate it.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Underground Railroad was system that assisted fugitive slaves on their journey across great distances to reach freedom. Slaves were considered property, and treated as such. Some slaves, such as Henry Brown, consider themselves “dead to slavery,” because there was nothing positive about being subjected to a Master. Because of the lifestyle slavery entailed, slaves opted out by escaping to the northern states and Canada. Southerners were outraged that runaway slaves were getting assistance from several sources- abolitionist, free blacks, and religious groups (Under).

During the mid 1800s legislation created the The [Fugitive Slave Act](#) as a condition of the "[Compromise of 1850](#)." The Slave Act prohibited slave-trading in the District of Columbia. However, the Act required that all runaway slaves had to be returned to their master if they were captured, even if they made it to a free state. The Fugitive Slave Act made catching runaways profitable to hire slave catchers to find and arrest slaves (Fugitive). All citizens had to comply to the Fugitive Slave Act and it became extremely dangerous to help slaves escape the south. Passage of this law was hated and spurred the Underground Railroad to continue the operation of helped escaping slaves (Fugitive). The following websites give further description and explanation of the Underground Railroad and the condition slaves entailed:

- <https://nationalcenter.org/FugitiveSlaveAct.html> (Fugitive)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground\\_Railroad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground_Railroad) (Under)
- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2944.html>

**TIME ESTIMATION:** 40-60 minutes

**MATERIALS NEEDED:**

Included in bin: *The Underground Railroad: Authentic Narratives and First-Hand Accounts* (Teacher will need to scan book pages to give to students)

Additional Items needed: Cardboard box, color utensil, paper, poster, pencil

**ENGAGE:**

Students will ideally be able to recognize/recall the term, Underground Railroad prior to this lesson. Ask students: “With a raise of hands, Have you heard of the Underground Railroad ?” To intrigue students about the lesson, show a video of the journey of [Henry “Box” Brown](#).

First ask students:

What are (wooden) boxes used for? What kind of items can you ship?

What kind of condition do you think cargo travels?

Could you imagine voluntarily for more than a day?

What happens to your body after being in a cramped space for extended period of time?

Ask for a volunteer to get inside of the box; the student should describe the experience\* \*

Then show Henry's journey video :

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPHEqdd4LVY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPHEqdd4LVY)

Takeaway: Henry served as a symbol of the Underground Railroad Freedom Movement. He used courage and resources accessible to him to obtain freedom. He went on to be an advocate for anti-slavery and vocalized his opinions to northern states. Ask students to journal their response to the following question: *What tools will you use to bring about freedom and equality today?*

**EXPLORE:**

Allow students to read journal entries (narratives) from, *The Underground Railroad: Authentic Narratives and First-Hand Accounts* written by William Still (book is included in bin; scan and print copies for students). Before the students read: define and describe main concepts to consider while reading narratives.

Concepts to ponder:

What diction is being used in the narrative, why?

What condition did this particular slave endure?

Why did slaves want to leave the south? Was risking your life worth leaving?

What would *you* have done, if you were in the position as the person in the narrative?

The text consists of reproduced descriptive accounts of personally shared stories told by slave victims. [William Still](#), the father of the Underground Railroad includes excerpts from letters, newspapers, escape plans and legal documents . \* Note: details, descriptions, and events shared in the entries contain explicit content. Inform students to avoid any form of *traumatic triggering* (not all of the narratives contain explicit brutality).

Students are expected to take notes as they read; they will refer to the notes during the evaluation portion of the lesson.

**EXPLAIN:**

**Step 1: Introduce:** Show video of “Henry Box Brown,” to intrigue student

**Step 2: Recap:** Ask students how they can use the tool around them to create a proactive change

**Step 3: Inform:** State main concepts, definitions, examples before students read entries

**Step 4: Reiterate:** Restate concepts to consider as students write reflection

**Step 5: Respond:** Students can ask questions to further knowledge base

**ELABORATE/ EXTEND:**

To check for students' understanding, allow class to group (3-4 students). Each group will describe their expect from the book entry that they read from Still's, *The Underground Railroad: Authentic Narratives and First-Hand Accounts*. Collectively, students will brainstorm single descriptive words that illustrate the “why” behind many slaves abandoning their life of slavery. Words should express emotions, thoughts, feelings, treatment, or anything that pertains to motive for slaves using the Underground Railroad to flee slavery. Observe the image to the right as an electronic example. Each group will create a poster board titled “The Why Behind the Underground Railroad.”

**EVALUATE:**

Before class ends, students will write a 3-4 paragraphs reflection with at least 3 embed quote from the excerpt they read. The response should include the following:

Describe the format of the excerpt read. Was it a poem, new article, letter?

Who was the account about? Briefly state key points of the text.

Describe the character of the slave you read about by citing the text- were they brave?

How did the excerpt make you feel, why? What are your thoughts?

**ACCOMMODATIONS:**

For students with learning disabilities, accommodation can be made to best suited for their understanding (audio alternative or larger text). Students can have the option of using assistive technology for assessment (iPad, computer, digital device). For ELL students, developing fluency and grammatical conventions of academic language must be done in a meaningful context and not in isolation. Allow a strong English speaking peer to partner with ELL students during the lesson.

Name:

Date:

*Instructions: In 3-4 paragraphs, reflect on today's activity. You must you a minimum of three embed quotes in your response. This is due by the end of class. The following items must be discussed in your reflection.*

Free Response

- Describe the format of the except read. Was it a poem, new article, letter?
- Who was the account about? Briefly state key points of the text.
- Describe the character of the slave you read about by citing the text- were they brave?
- How did the excerpt make you feel, why? What are your thoughts?