

Brazos Valley African American Museum



**Curriculum Learning Trunk
Lesson Plans for Grade 8**

**Underground Railroad
Grade 8**

Underground Railroad: Middle School 8th Grade Lesson Plan

BVAAM

Curriculum Learning Trunk - Lesson Plan

OBJECTIVE: With the use of technology, eighth grade students will complete interactive virtual activity and will respond to relevant historical quotes. Students will quiz and write and elaborate of learned aspects with 90% accuracy.

TEKS: **Knowledge and Skills**
SS 8.23: The students understand the relationships between and among people from various groups, including racial, ethnic, and religious groups, during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. The student is expected to:

- 8.23D:** Analyze the contribution of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to our national identity
- TA: 8.3:** The student acquires, analyzes, and manages content from digital resource. The student is expected to:
- 8.3D:** Process multiple process and diverse perspectives to explore alternative solutions

BACKGROUND: The Underground Railroad was a “hush-hush” system that assisted fugitive slaves on their journey to freedom in the north. Associating with runaway slaves was extremely dangerous and illegal. To ensure safety of slaves and abolitionists, their mission consisted of secret codes, several route options, and devious terminology (Underground). An abolitionist is defined as “free” person, who were anti-slavery advocates. These supporters served as “conductors,” who helped fugitive slaves travel from the south to the north. Not all abolitionists favored aiding slaves, some thought action should go toward politics. Fugitive runaways had a hard time deciphering who could be trusted.

The Underground Railroad was an extraneous trek filled with obstacles, fear, and harsh weather conditions (Underground). With minimal food, shelter, and protection slaves had to survive the living condition and stay hidden from slave catchers. Not all fugitive slaves made it to freedom. In the event they were discovered, runaway slaves were flogged, branded, jailed, sold back to slavery, or even killed (Eastern). Those that did make it to the north helped other slaves make it to freedom. The following websites & hyperlinks give further description and explanation of the Underground Railroad and prominent heroes/abolitionists:

<https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/opugrr.htm>

http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Underground_Railroad
(Underground)

http://www.eiu.edu/eiutps/underground_railroad.php (Eastern)

[Harriet Tubman](#), [Henry Bibb](#), [Addison White](#), [Thomas Garrett](#), [William Still](#), [Levi Coffin](#), [Josiah Henson](#), & [John Parker](#)

TIME ESTIMATION: 40-60 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED: Items included in associated bin: “UR Quotes”
Additional Items needed: Desktop, laptop, or iPad with Macromedia Flash Player ; access to internet. Headphones. writing utensil and paper.

ENGAGE:

Students may or may not have knowledge of the underground slave resistance that existed from 1800s to the 1860s. Allow students to view the following video as an intriguing segue into introducing the Underground Railroad. Inform students to listen attentively to the video; the significance of names, dates, and court cases varies between teacher (introduce specific names, dates, cases when applicable). The purpose of the video is to visually peak the interest of the student regarding the bravery of slaves. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24rFE5nV1uo> (video length 12:00)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEiDnW-VKD8>
(video length 4.17)

EXPLORE:

Using technology, allow students to travel back to the 1800s and undergo a virtual experience of what it was like to be a slave and deciding to escape to the North. Give students access to a desktop computer, laptop, or iPad (cell phones are not compatible for the website). Students will explore various critical choices slaves had to decide. Attached to this lesson plan is, [Pathway to Freedom Maryland & the Underground Railroad](#), typed out hard copy of the virtual interactive activity. The handout to the virtual activity can be used as instructions for students to follow, adjusted so students can take notes during activity, or used as an accommodation.

(Digital Copy: Pages 4-9)

EXPLAIN:

Step 1: Introduce: Use the YouTube video links to initiate student interest

Step 2: *Recap:* After students complete the interactive activity, have peers share their results

Step 3: *Inform:* State main concepts/ takeaways. Give definitions of vocabulary to be learned from the beginning to lesson to now. Students will write down definitions and examples.

Main topics to discuss / Questions to answer

- What was the Underground Railroad?
- Estimated amount of slaves that made it to the north?
- Condition of slaves? Why did they want to leave the south?
- What would happen if they were caught?

Step 4: *Q/A* : Students can ask questions; teacher will answer

ELABORATE:

Included in the trunk, there are note cards that contain relevant quotes/ excerpts. Pass out one card to each student (contain 30 quotes; a few are repeated). Give students 2-3 minutes to read the text and process the [mood/ tone](#). Student will apply acquired knowledge and use conscientious verbiage to explain to a partner: who they think wrote the quote and why they wrote it. Example: "I think an abolitionist wrote this, because..." or "I think a slave wrote this because..." (select student to share with the class).

*To encourage students to respond thoughtfully, play [historical slave music](#) (located in bin).

EXTENSION:

If time permits, read the poem *On The Underground Railroad*, by Frances C. Taylor . Allow students to use their new knowledge of slaves and the Underground Railroad and continue to explore its implications. They should be able to infer who wrote the poem and how the diction used reflects the desperation of freedom.

EVALUATE:

After the students have time to complete the interactive computer activity and meditate on the purpose of the quotes, students will take a True or False quiz that has 3 response questions. Administer the “Check for Understanding Quiz,” to indicate concepts that need further explanation. The quiz (attached to this lesson plan) will be used to show what the students have learned and their opinion on why slaves choose to flee the south.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

For students with learning disabilities, accommodation can be made to best suited for their understanding. Students can have the option of using assistive technology for assessment (iPad, computer, digital device) or have a hard copy of the interactive virtual activity/ texts read during lesson. 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.

Pathway to Freedom Maryland & the Underground Railroad

Website: <http://pathways.thinkport.org/following/>

Click on: following the footsteps

Read the following Instructions:

- Travel back to the 1800s and become an eyewitness to history. You are a Maryland slave who must make some important and life-changing decisions.
- Be sure to explore the scene you see by rolling your mouse over the pictures. The clues you discover might just be the ones you need to escape to freedom...
 - Read the slides or listen to the audio; pay attention to details and take observational notes



- Use : the speaker icon to turn narration on & off

Click on: Go to the interactive

Following the Footsteps

Continue →

You were born a slave here in this cabin on a farm at the tip of Maryland's eastern Shore. You've Lived here for all your twelve years - with your mom and dad and you grandma. When they all died last summer, it made your small family even smaller. But you know you could count on your brother and sister. And you always had you cousins on the next farm over.

** Roll over items to learn more*

Next →

But it is not easy. You spend most of your days in the big house doing chores like hauling wood and taking care of your master's children. They can play whenever they want. But you can't. You have to work. They are learning how to read and write. But not you. People don't want slaves to be able to do this.

Next →

Secretly, you listen when their mother teaches them these things. That's how you learned how to write your name. Your cousin's Cyrus says it might come in handy. He knows people - just like you - who wrote their own passes to be on the road and escaped. Just walked on out. Not that it did them any good. Cyrus says he's never heard of anyone ever making it to freedom.

Next →

Freedom. You often what it like. You know some people got together the money they needed to buy their freedom. But you couldn't possibly do that. Besides, that Master needs you sooo much to just let you go. There's fire to be tended. That's the way it is. And you think that's the way it will always be... until now.

Next →

Last week, the Master died. Now their is talk that you will be sold south. When people say these words, they shiver mightily. You do, too. People in the south work their slaves until they are near dead. And you know that once someone is sold south, no one ever hears form them again - so far away that you doubt they can find the North Star.

Next →

Not only that. When folks are sold, they aren't always sold as a family. The mother might go one place, the father another, and the children somewhere else, Thinking about losing your sister or brother makes you feel hollow inside. You know you have to do something.

Next →

Night comes. You're tired and sore from working all day. But you can't sleep. The song you heard that day still sits in your brain. You had heard it before. But today, it seems different. And fold were whispering, too - when they thought no one would notice. It is time, they said. Time to leave.

Next →

You hear your brother and sister talking to each other, They think you're asleep, but you're not. How could you be? Come saturday, they are going to go. Follow the Drinking Gourd, and go North to freedom. Your sister says she's ready to go.

Next →

But your brother isn't so sure. He's not going, he says. "I sure don't want to lives my days always answering to someone else," he says. "But i sure don't want to be killed like my uncle was." You know you're going to have to make your mind, too. You think and think all night. By dawn, you must decide.

Click on: Go with your sister or Stay with your brother

Option: Go with your sister

The rest of the week is full of secrets. Your sister is really quiet, but you know he's getting thing ready. You're getting things ready, to.

Next →

You know that preparing to go means more than just packing up things. You have to be ready in your mind as well. You have to be determined to succeed. To help you do that, you decide to talk with Uncle Ephraim. He's very old and knows just about everything you've ever asked him

Next →

Uncle Ephraim know just why you have come. He talks quietly and you listen carefully. He doesn't have to remind you that your life might depend on what he says. "You've gotta go north, north all the way to Canada. That's the only place where you'll be truly free. But, remember, just because you want it doesn't mean it'll happen. A lot of fold have tried before you. NOt many have made it all the way."

Next →

When saturday night comes, you're ready to go. A storm brews up just before dark. Usually, the lighting makes you scared. Tonight, you know it means safety. You head north, You try to follow the path you've seen the geese take on their way back home in the summer.

Next →

It seems as if you and your sister have walked forever. It must be close to dawn, you think, because you can now see more of the woods. Your first night on the trip to freedom is about over. You and your sis have to make a decision: should you continue during daylight?

Click on: No. you'll hide. or Yes, You'll go on.

Option 1: No. you'll hide

You hunker down and wait for dark again. During the day, you hear the slave catchers dogs, but they never get any closer. You breathe a sigh of relief when you hear their barks trail off

Next →

Night after night, you walk. Your feet have start to bleed. You and your sister try to sleep during the say, but it's never enough. The cold weather has set in. You think that you'll never be warm again. The flames from the fires you had at home dance in your mind.

Next →

The food you brought with you is about run out. As you look for a place to hide one day, you see a cornfield ahead. There are a few stalks still left on the ground. “Maybe,” you think, “there might be a few ears left.” But, to get them, you have to go out of the woods and into the open field.

** scroll down to: **Click on:** ...see if there are any ears of corn left or ...it's too dangerous **

Option 2: You'll go on

Suddenly you hear the slave catchers' dogs. They're getting closer and closer. You jump into a nearby stream and run as far as you can. You hide under the trunk of a huge fallen tree. You don't

Next →

The food you brought with you is about run out. As you look for a place to hide one day, you see a cornfield ahead. There are a few stalks still left on the ground. “Maybe,” you think, “there might be a few ears left.” But, to get them, you have to go out of the woods and into the open field.

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Click on: ...see if there are any ears of corn left or ...it's too dangerous

Option A: See if there are any ears of corn left

You creep out into the field cautiously, staying very low. You reach up to pick and ear of corn off the stalk.

Next →

Suddenly, you hear a horse approaching, Why didn't you hear it before? Your heart beats faster and faster. You want to move, but you can't. You can't even scream.

Next →

“Hey. What are you doing here? Stealing my daddy's corn?” You look up in terror. The Boy riding the horse doesn't seem to be any older than you.

Next →

You drop the ear of corn and stand. You can't think. It's as if the whole world has disappeared, and there's only you, the horse, and the boy. “You better get out of here right now. If my daddy sees you, you better bet he'll turn you back to your owners. Now run. Run away.” You do as he says, but in the back of your mind, you worry. Will he turn you in? Is your path to freedom over?

Next →

It's been nine long days and nine longer nights. One night, you've decide you've had enough. You're not going any further. This is the first time during your trip that your sister gets angry. She says you have no choice. You must go on. And she grabs you to your feet and pushes you sharply ahead of her. “Remember what's waiting for you back there,” she says.

Next →

Something about your tenth night seems different from all the rest. But you can't quite put your finger on it. From far away, you see a light. It's up high - as if it were in a tree or something. As you come closer, you realize that it's a light in the house top window of a house. Even though you thought the house was safe, it wasn't. Slave Catchers used this common signal to fool you. **Your path to freedom is over.**

Option B: It's too dangerous

It's been nine long days and nine longer nights. One night, you've decide you've had enough. You're not going any further. This is the first time during your trip that your sister gets angry. She says you have no choice. You must go on. And she grabs you to your feet and pushes you sharply aahed of her. "Remember what's waiting for you back there," she says.

Next →

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Next →

You decided to approach the house. Your sister leads the way. You hope that no one else can hear the way your heart is knocking against your chest.

Next →

Your sister talks for a few minutes with the person who opened the door. You can't hear what they are saying. She turns and walks back. "We're safe here." At last, you can start breathing again.

Next →

You know its near dawn. But you couldn't sleep at all. Your sister says it's time to go. You crown into the bottom of a wagon, nestled against your sister like a baby pig. SOmeone throws star all over you, pilling it higher and higher. It itches like crazy. Your sister tells you to be still. And so you are, for a very long time.

Next →

Just when you think you can't stand another moment of this, you start to hear a lot of noise. Must be some kind of big place , you think. Just listen to all those folk. The wagon moves stealthily and then stops.

Next →

Finally you hear your sister. "**Welcome to philadelphia,**" she says. Hands start pulling away the straw. Someone helps you up. Your legs buckle, but it feels so good to be able to stand up again. The first part of your journey is over. But the freedom of Canada is still days, weeks, even months away. Perhaps you'll never see it at all.

Option: Go with your brother

When your sister leaves, she hugs you mightily. She says she hopes that someday you'll join her in freedom. Just before she goes, she smoothes your clothes and tell you to mind your brother. You never knew how much it hurt to be so sad

Next →

You remember that day now, standing in the crowd. All around you people cry and pray. Suddenly, both you and your brother are pushed forward. "Take a look here, gentmelnt. What do I hear bid for these find young'uns? They're as strong as a pair of oxen. You can take one or the pair. What so I hear, folks?"

Next →

A voice from the crowd settles it all. They'll take you - for \$800. But someone else is bidding on your brother.

Next →

They put the shackles around your ankle. Behind you, there is a young boy. He's crying softly. But not you. You wont give them that. "Step lively now," your new overseer says. As you leave, you catch your brother's eye. **Your heart is breaking.**

Name:

Date:

Check For Understanding

Answer the following questions by circle the T (true) or F (False). This quiz is to be completed individually. Answer the response questions using proper grammar and explains form the lesson.

T or F : The Underground Railroad was a method of of sending slaves from the north to the south?

T or F : Abolitionists were pro-slavery?

T or F : All runaway slaves made it to freedom?

T or F : Southern slave owners favored the Underground Railroad

Free Response:

1. *Describe the trials you faced during the virtual interactive activity? What was your end result?*

2. *Recall the quotes discussed during class. What particularly phrase stood out to you? Why?*

Frances C. Taylor writes about the Underground Railroad in Kennett Square, Chester county and surrounding communities in eastern Pennsylvania. *Kennett Square “is the city known as the hub of the Underground Railroad activity in the important Chester county.”

On the Underground Railroad

**On and on in the dead of night
The weary slave seeks
Freedom through flight.
His clothes are tattered,
His feet are bare;
They bleed from frostbite.
Does no one care?
He follows the Star
With a hope that shines
As dark, through the night,
The trail he finds.
“The Underground Railroad”-
He’s heard its name
This railroad to freedom
Is not in vain.
“As God as my witness,
I’ll follow the Star
O’er the Underground Railroad
Though I know it’s far
To Canada’s shores.
But I’ll then be free
With manumission papers
Issued to me.
Many hands have guided
These weary feet
From station to station
May I repeat –
The conductors that guided me
Have been led by God
By a faith
That is free.”**