



Chapter 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Choice: Choose the most appropriate answer from this list below.

\_\_\_\_\_ is used in the following sentence:

\_\_\_\_\_ whipped flame to one plantation and then another.

\_\_\_\_\_ simile \_\_\_\_\_ hyperbole

\_\_\_\_\_ from the text to answer the question.

Follow the Drinking Gourd

Follow the drinking gourd.  
Follow the drinking gourd.  
For the old man is waiting for to carry you to  
freedom  
If you follow the drinking gourd  
When the sun comes back and the first quail  
sings,  
Follow the drinking gourd  
The old man is

# Underground to Canada

## A Novel Study

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Choice: Choose the correct answer.

What "place" is Mammy referring to?

Don't forget that place \_\_\_\_\_ wagon \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Big House \_\_\_\_\_ slave cabin \_\_\_\_\_

Open Response: Use your own ideas and information from the text to answer the question.

The author gives short descriptions of the slaves Ben, Adam & Lester. Which of these do you predict will receive the roughest treatment from the slave trader?

Grades  
5-7

# Underground to Canada

This Underground to Canada unit supports students to think deeply as they contemplate the dangerous situations faced by slaves from the southern United States in the 19th century who have been given the opportunity to seek freedom for themselves and their families.

Most of the activities in this resource are meant to immerse students in the characters from the story, whether it be through writing the last will and testament of an Abolitionist, becoming part of an "expert panel" on slavery consulted by Abraham Lincoln, or decoding a "slave song". I hope your students enjoy stepping into the shoes of these characters!

## Activities

<b>Frontloading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tea Party (Pictures)</li><li>• Tea Party (Character Quotations)</li><li>• Round Robin Monologue</li><li>• Music</li></ul>	<b>Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Horoscopes</li><li>• Last Will &amp; Testament</li><li>• Freedom is .... (Poetry/Choral Montage)</li></ul>
<b>Drama</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Telling Tales (A Re-enactment)</li><li>• Advice to Mr. Lincoln (a "Mantle of the Expert" activity)</li></ul>	<b>Comprehension</b> <p>19 sets of questions (1 multiple choice and 1 open response question per chapter)</p>
<b>Music</b> <p>The Music of the Underground Railroad (decoding activity)</p>	<b>Vocabulary</b> <p>Underground to Canada Crossword Puzzle</p>



# Frontloading Activities

## Frontloading Underground to Canada

For our students to successfully apply their comprehension skills to any new reading, they must have some background knowledge to help them make sense of what they are reading (or being read to). In this unit, there are several different ways you can build this background knowledge in your students:

1. Tea Party: Pictures – Print and cut out the set of “Frontloading Pictures” and distribute to students (each student receives a different image). Allow students to walk around the room sharing their images with each other, trying to determine what the upcoming story might be about. After 5-10 minutes, gather the students together to

## Lester

“Adam and I will take turns staying awake on guard until sunhigh.”

“He taught me to read and the Massa knew that too.”

“It’s gonna be late – when most folks are asleep. Listen for three calls of the whippoorwill, then walk to this tree.”

“Roll up your pants, and then we’ll walk north, straight through the middle of this stream. It will kill our scent.”

“They took us away from our wives and children.”

“It’s a surprise I planned for you, Julilly.”

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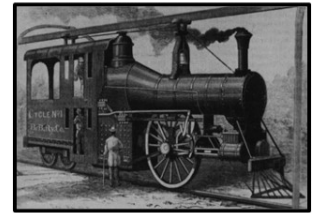
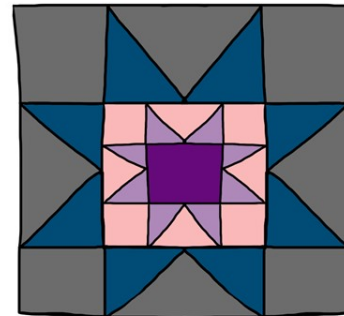
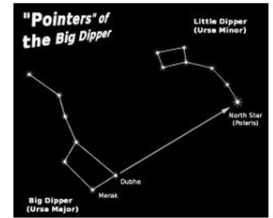
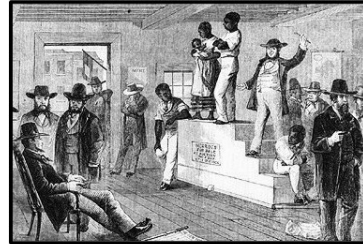
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## Who Are We?

Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

In each box write down one thing that you have inferred about your group's character, giving reasons for your inference. Glue your quotations on the back of this paper. Be ready to present your ideas to the rest of the class!

We think our character \_\_\_\_\_



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# Activate Prior Knowledge

# Writing Activities

## Horoscopes

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

This is secret talk I'm tellin' you now. Hold it quiet in your head and never let it out your mouth. There's a place the slaves been whisperin' around called Canada. The law don't allow no slavery there. They say you travel north and follow the North Star, and when you step onto this land you are free. (Mammy Sally)

How do you know where to find that North Star, girl?" she asked. (Jillily)  
You look in the sky at night when the clouds roll back. Right up there, plain as the toes on my feet, are some stars that make a drinking gourd. The front end of that drinking gourd points straight up to the North Star. (Liza)

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Now that your character has been given a birthdate, it is time to write a horoscope for him or her. Please write a horoscope that your character may have been given to your character very early in the story, and that gives your reader a hint about what he or she will face in the rest of the book.

Horoscopes are usually very "vague", and generally don't give very much detail about specific events. For example, here is a horoscope written for a Taurus for April of 2021:

Your mind will spend much time this month thinking about the past, trying to make sense of what is happening in your life now. Unfortunately, someone you thought was sincere may turn out to be a fake this month. You will be faced with an upsetting time in your family, and will find that your mood swings often from happy to sad. Keep calm, however, because there are brighter things happening in the months ahead.

Name of Character: \_\_\_\_\_

Zodiac Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Last Will and Testament

I, \_\_\_\_\_, being of sound mind and body this day of \_\_\_\_\_, declare this document to be my last will and testament.

I hereby appoint \_\_\_\_\_ to be the executor of my will, and this person will pay any

## Freedom is...

By \_\_\_\_\_

To \_\_\_\_\_, freedom is \_\_\_\_\_

To \_\_\_\_\_, freedom is \_\_\_\_\_

To \_\_\_\_\_, freedom is \_\_\_\_\_

To \_\_\_\_\_, freedom is \_\_\_\_\_

To \_\_\_\_\_, freedom is \_\_\_\_\_

To \_\_\_\_\_, freedom is \_\_\_\_\_

To me, freedom is \_\_\_\_\_

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- Horoscopes
- Last Will & Testament
- Freedom is... (Poetry/Choral Montage)

# Drama Activities

## Advice for Mr. Lincoln: A "Mantle of the Expert" Activity

If you would like your students to delve more deeply into the topic of slavery in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, you may want to have them become "experts" in the area as they prepare to offer advice to Mr. Abraham Lincoln, who is trying to decide what action he should take on this issue! Students work in "Expert Groups" to learn more about different aspects of Slavery at that time. Then each group provides their "expert advice" to Mr. Lincoln!

1. Decide how many "Expert Groups" you would like to include in this activity. Some suggestions are:

- Slaves
- Plantation owners
- Local preachers
- Quakers & Mennonites
- Canadians
- Abolitionists
- Free Blacks
- Children of Slave Owners
- United States citizens from a northern state



2. Explain the activity with students, and come to a decision with them about how students' expert knowledge will be created, shared and applied. Some suggestions are:
  - **Round-table Meeting:** After conducting research, each group selects one member to serve as a representative on a "round-table" discussion with Mr. Lincoln (played by the classroom teacher).
  - **Exhibit:** Each group creates a display table showing relevant materials pertinent to their group's views.
  - **Documentary Film:** Each group makes a short video clip about a different aspect of slavery, and then the clips are put together to create a comprehensive look at slavery. The film is to be the source of information for Mr. Lincoln.
  - **Advice column:** Each group could create a letter offering Mr. Lincoln advice on what they think he should do about the slavery issue.
3. Decide whether you would like to assign students to particular groups, or to allow students to choose which group to join. Keep in mind that just as Mr. Lincoln would have wanted to hear from a wide variety of perspectives, you will also want to make sure that various viewpoints are showcased in this activity.
4. Once students are in their groups, they will need to decide how to go about doing their research. You may want to book time in the computer lab if your students don't have access to tables or computers in your classroom, as well as take students your class to the school or municipal library to gather books to gather information. Another great source of information would be any groups or museums in your area that contain materials pertinent to the topic. My school is 20 minutes away from Uncle Tom's Cabin in Dresden, Ontario, and it is a wonderful source of information about slavery!
5. Set out a timeline for this activity, based upon the resources available and the capabilities of your particular class.

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## Telling Tales

"Telling Tales"? \_\_\_\_\_

activity that were not part of the text Underground to Canada?

story details you feel was most important. Why it this detail

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# Comprehension

## Chapter 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Choice: Choose the most appropriate answer from this list below.

What literary device is used in the following sentence?:

**Word of it spread like a wind-whipped flame to one plantation owner.**

\_\_\_\_\_ personification \_\_\_\_\_ metaphor \_\_\_\_\_ simile \_\_\_\_\_ hyperbole

Open Response: Use your own ideas and information from the text to answer the question.

Why are slaves on nearby plantations starting to be sold by their owners?

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## Chapter 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Choice: Choose the most appropriate answer from this list below.

What "place" is Mammy referring to in this sentence?

**Don't forget that place I told you about."**

\_\_\_\_\_ Big House \_\_\_\_\_ slave cabin \_\_\_\_\_ wagon \_\_\_\_\_ Canada

Open Response: Use your own ideas and information from the text to answer the question.

The author gives short descriptions of the slaves Ben, Adam & Lester. Which one do you predict will receive the roughest treatment from the slave traders?

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## Chapter 7: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Choice: Choose the most appropriate answer from this list below.

Which of the following words is a synonym for the word **savage** in this sentence?

**Sims' savage lashings became a part of every day.**

\_\_\_\_\_ gentle \_\_\_\_\_ frequent \_\_\_\_\_ beatings \_\_\_\_\_ harsh

Open Response: Use your own ideas and information from the text to answer the question.

Whose thoughts are easier to read, white men or black men according to Jullilly and Mammy Sally? Why is this?

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## Chapter 8: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Multiple Choice: Choose the most appropriate answer from this list below.

Which reason for not escaping to Canada would be most persuasive to a slave in this story?

\_\_\_\_\_ Canada is very cold. \_\_\_\_\_ A slave can be whipped if he is found escaping

\_\_\_\_\_ Cotton can't be grown in Canada \_\_\_\_\_ Only wild geese live in Canada.

Open Response: Use your own ideas and information from the text to answer the question.

What does Liza mean when she says that she is "afraid and not afraid" of running away?

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One multiple choice AND One open response question per chapter.

# Music

## The Music of the Underground Railroad

Night music droned through the slave quarters of Jeb Hensen's Virginia plantation.

These are the words that begin the novel Underground to Canada. Jullily is in her cabin listening to the slaves, with the words of the song dancing in her head:

**When Israel was in Egypt's land  
Let my people go  
Oppressed so hard, they could not stand  
Let me people go.**



The text goes on to say that the plantation owner, Old Massa Hensen, didn't like this song because it seemed that the song was sung "when there were whisperings and trouble around."

Mr. Hensen may have thought that it was a coincidence that trouble happened when the song was sung. He did not know that his slaves were actually giving each other messages when they sang. A slave who was planning to escape might sing this song in the cotton field to let the other slaves know that he or she would be leaving that night.

One of the most famous songs used by slaves was called Follow the Drinking Gourd. Here are the lyrics:

Follow the drinking gourd.  
Follow the drinking gourd.  
For the old man is waiting for to carry you to freedom  
If you follow the drinking gourd

When the sun comes back and the first quail calls,  
Follow the drinking gourd  
For the old man is waiting for to carry you to freedom  
If you follow the drinking gourd

The riverbank will make a very good road  
The dead trees show you the way.  
Left foot, peg foot traveling on,  
Follow the drinking gourd.

The river ends between two hills,  
Follow the drinking gourd.  
There's another river on the other side.  
Follow the drinking gourd.

Where the great big river meets the little river,  
Follow the drinking gourd.  
The old man is waiting for to carry you to freedom  
If you follow the drinking gourd.

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## Follow the Drinking Gourd

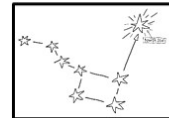
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The old man is waiting for to carry you to freedom  
If you follow the drinking gourd.



What was such an important symbol for slaves?

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# Song Analysis

# Teacher Notes



Alexander Milton Ross

Mr. Alexander Ross, the abolitionist in Underground to Canada who helps Huckleberry and Liza escape to Canada, was actually a real person.

- Born December 18, 1818
- Died October 10, 1895
- Married Hester
- Had two daughters
- Was a doctor, abolitionist
- Wrote books
- Traveled throughout the country meeting secret and information
- Protested against slavery



## Last Will and

Before a person dies, he or she usually writes a document stating the final wishes of the person.

- how the person wanted their money and paid
- how any young children or other people who care of.

The will must be signed by the person who wrote it, or by two people who sign the will as well to show that they are not preventing someone else from writing a will while the testator is alive.

Think about Mr. Ross, who seemed to be a well-managed man with many interests.

- To whom might he leave his money and belongings?
- To what charities, clubs or other organizations?
- Who would he trust to make sure that his wishes were carried out?
- Who might he choose to "witness" his will? (witness means to see something in the will; this means that the person witnesses and money or belongings in his or her will)
- When might he have signed his will?

We don't know what Mr. Ross actually wrote in his will. Write a fictional will for him! Write a one-page will using the information you have learned about Mr. Ross from Underground and any research you may do.

# Music



Music is an important source of comfort and inspiration to Jullilly and Liza on their journey to Canada, and your students may find it interesting to discover that music was also used as a source of secret communication among slaves.

If you have access to the picture book [Follow the Drinking Gourd](#) by Jeannette Winter, you may want to read it to help your students learn the story behind a song that was created to help slaves find their way to freedom. If you have access to Youtube and a projector, you could show your class an online version of the book (with extras!): [Follow the Drinking Gourd – Youtube](#)

The following sheet contains the lyrics to that song, with a separate worksheet for student to record the “key” to the song.

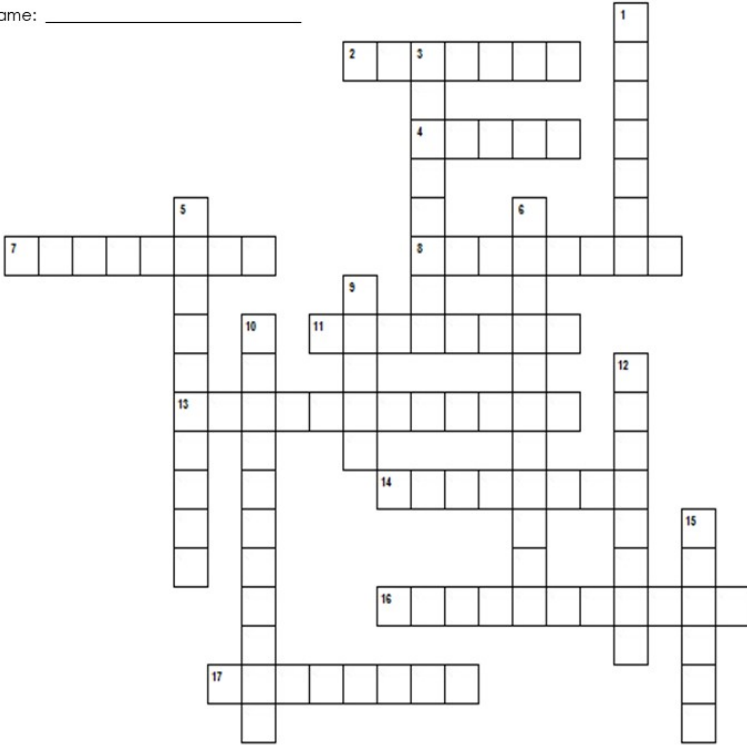
**Also...**you may want to extend the study of slavery by asking students if they think that slavery still exists (most students will likely say no, as they feel it pertains only to the practice in the southern United States in the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> centuries). Ask them if they have ever heard of child slavery, and after they finish telling you about how their parents keep pestering them to take out the garbage, show them this [video](#) about child slavery featuring Redemption Song by Bob Marley. You will definitely have an interesting classroom discussion, one that may lead your class into learning more about this practice. They may even want to take action!



# Vocabulary

## Underground to Canada

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



**ACROSS**

- 2. refusing to obey someone or something
- 4. hollowed-out plant used as a drinking cup
- 7. a tree found in the southern United States
- 8. not moving
- 11. short pants fastened just below the knee
- 13. a person who wanted slavery to end
- 14. a person who talks about the gospel
- 16. a result of an action
- 17. a sailing ship with 2 or more masts

**DOWN**

- 1. feeling upset
- 3. a runaway
- 5. big farm with tobacco, cotton or sugar cane crops
- 6. a vine with red, pink, white or yellow flowers
- 9. a thin soup
- 10. a cheap bag made of fibre used to carry crops
- 12. a person who supervises others
- 15. a noisy insect

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# Crossword Puzzle

# Answer Keys

## Follow the Drinking Gourd: ANSWERS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow the drinking gourd.  
Follow the drinking gourd.

The song *Follow the Drinking Gourd* is one that Jullilly and Liza made a journey to Canada. The song that would tell anyone signs they needed to safely. Can you breathe

Write the real meaning of words and phrases from the *Drinking Gourd*.

**Drinking gourd:** Big

**Old man:** Peg Leg

**Sun comes back and**

End of winter/Beginning

**Riverbank:** Tombigbee

**Left foot, peg foot:** and a peg foot left

**Another river:** Tennessee

**Great river:** Tennessee

**Little river:** Ohio River

What made the North

**The North Star was a**

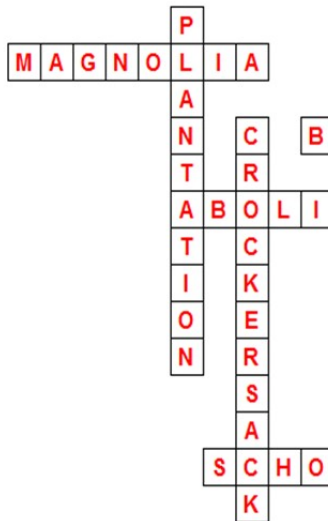
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## Underground to Canada



### ACROSS

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**Open Response:** Use your own ideas and information from the text to answer the question.

Why are slaves on nearby plantations starting to be sold by their owners?

The slaves on the plantations are starting to be sold because the land was no longer any good for planting crops as it had been used too much. The text says the masters had used the land until it bled and died. To make money, the plantation owners were selling their slaves instead, because they didn't have crops for the slaves to take care of any more.

## Chapter 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Multiple Choice:** Choose the most appropriate answer from this list below.

What "place" is Mammy referring to in this sentence?

**Don't forget that place I told you about."**

\_\_\_\_\_ Big House \_\_\_\_\_ slave cabin \_\_\_\_\_ wagon \_\_\_\_\_ Canada

**Open Response:** Use your own ideas and information from the text to answer the question.

The author gives short descriptions of the slaves Ben, Adam & Lester. Which of these men do you predict will receive the roughest treatment from the slave trader?

I predict that Lester will receive the roughest treatment from the slave trader because the text says that he has angry eyes. I know that when I am angry I refuse to do whatever I'm being told to do, and then my parents will make my punishment even worse than it was before. I think that Lester might get angry and refuse to obey the slave trader, and then the trader will treat him worse than the other slaves.