

## Underground Railroad/Library of Congress Lesson Plan Template

### Lesson Title: The Drinking Gourd-Destined for the North Star

#### Overview:

#### Narrative

*This lesson is an introduction to young students about the UGRR. Students will be introduced to the movement of runaway slaves from the South to the North and some of the routes that were used. (Michigan and Detroit specifically has a rich history as a station location on the UGRR. With Canada being the prize of freedom, Detroit's across the river location made it that last stop before many fugitive slaves obtained freedom.)*

#### Objectives

- *Students will be able to identify Michigan, Detroit and Canada on a North American map.*
- *Students will be able to follow the railroad from the slave holding South to the free North.*
- *Students will be able to describe the push and pull forces of movement during the time of the UGRR..*

3 – H3.0.1 Identify questions historians ask in examining the past in Michigan (e.g., What happened? When did it happen? Who was involved? How and why did it happen?)

3 – H3.0.2 Explain how historians use primary and secondary sources to answer questions about the past.

3 – G4.0.2 Describe diverse groups that have come into a region of Michigan and reasons why they came (push/pull factors).

4 – H3.0.2 Use primary and secondary sources to explain how migration and immigration affected and continue to affect the growth of Michigan.

4 – H3.0.7 Use case studies or stories to describe the ideas and actions of individuals involved in the Underground Railroad in Michigan and in the Great Lakes region.

4 – G4.0.1 Use a case study or story about migration within or to the United States to identify push and pull factors (why they left, why they came) that influenced the migration.

5 – U2.2.2 Describe the life of enslaved Africans and free Africans in the American colonies.

5 – U2.3.3 Describe colonial life in America from the perspectives of at least three different groups of people (e.g., wealthy landowners, farmers, merchants, indentured

servants, laborers and the poor, women, enslaved people, free Africans, and American Indians)

**Time Required** – *As an introduction, the younger classes would need 3-4 30 minute sessions, with older students two 50-60 minute period.*

**Grade level** – *Upper Elementary Students, 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade*

**Topic or Era** – *The Underground Railroad-Early to mid 1800's*

**Preparation:** If time allows, the book “Freedom Crossing” by Margaret Goff Clark may be read. This is one of many fictional stories based upon the Underground Railroad, and teachers may select another that they feel works for this topic.

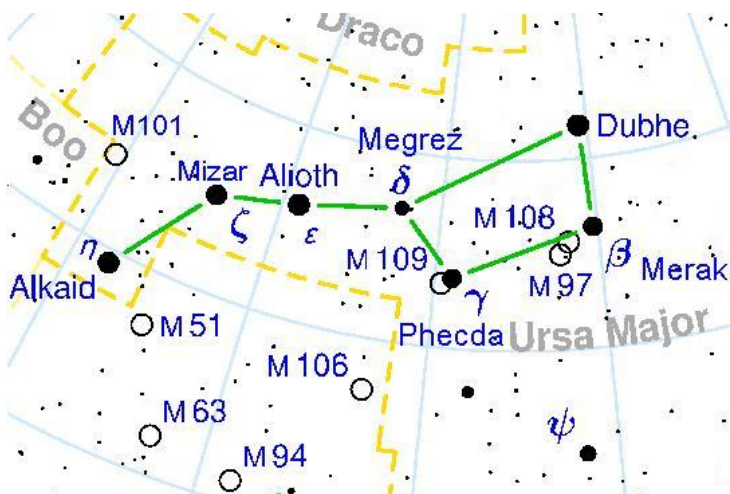
**Materials** –*U.S. Map, primary source map of the UGRR, text book, lesson vocabulary cards, picture of the Gateway to Freedom International Memorial to the Underground Railroad, KWL chart. Blackline U.S. physical map*

**Links and materials**

**Gateway to Freedom International Memorial to the Underground Railroad**



<http://www.detroitriverfront.org/east/hartplaza/landmarks.asp>



[Ursa Major constellation detail map.PNG](#) (540 × 360 pixels, file size: 199 KB, MIME type: image/png)



- **[Underground railroad map of the United States, ca. 1838-1860.**
- Manuscript; pencil.
- Includes notes.
- **MEDIUM**  
map on 4 sheets 92 x 91 cm. or smaller.
- **CALL NUMBER**  
G3701.E9 1860 .F41 Vault
- **REPOSITORY**  
Library of Congress Geography and Map Division Washington, D.C. 20540-4650 USA
- **DIGITAL ID**  
g3701e ct001517 <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3701e.ct001517>

[Vocabulary Cards.docx](#)

[KWL Chart for UGRR.docx](#)

[U.S. physical map](#)

LC control # 00029052 “Bound for the North Star: True Stories of Fugitive Slaves” by Dennis Brindell Fradin

“Freedom Crossing” by Margaret Goff Clark

### **Procedure:**

The book by Dennis Brindell Fradin is a wonderful resource. Excerpts can be used to prove background information and to assist in support of student ideas.

Explain to students that people move from one area to another for many different reasons. These are called push and pull forces. Fugitive slaves would want to escape the South where slavery is legal and they are owned. If the students have some prior knowledge of slavery this may be a review. Even though slavery was illegal in the North, the laws made it illegal in the United States, no matter where they were captured, for a fugitive slave to be helped or freed.

Also, note that fugitive slaves captured in the North were expected to be returned to their owners per Fugitive Slave Laws of 1850. For younger students an introduction may include a discussion about how slavery took place in the South and reasons people felt it was needed. This is where the KWL Chart would be distributed. Students would then complete the chart. Use this chart and discuss with students to ascertain their level on knowledge on the subject. This would end lesson 1 for younger students,

As an introduction and/or review, show the map of the United States. Ask a student to show a movement from South to North on the map. Assist or guide student as needed.

Begin a discussion on the issue of slavery in the early 1800's in the United States. Show students on the map how the areas of the North and South were divided over this issue and how the South had legalized slavery, and the North had outlawed it. Identify Michigan and Canada specifically on the map and explain how Canada is a separate country with their own government and laws. Further explain that during the time of the UGRR, Canada which was part of the British Empire, had outlawed slavery. Distribute to students the vocabulary cards for the lesson.

Review the vocabulary cards with students. Explain how the Big Dipper received its name due to its shape. Further discuss with students that the drinking gourd would be used by slaves to dip water out of a large barrel for drinking. Thus, the drinking gourd, big dipper and other similar words would be used to describe the bright stars in the Ursa Major constellation found in the northern sky. Show the constellation star cluster full screen from the Library of Congress source. This star cluster could be used as a guide for those heading North. Have students look to the North sky from home that evening as a follow up to the lesson. This would be an appropriate place to end the lesson for the day.

Display the map of the UGRR from the Library of Congress site. This is a primary document. Discuss with students why a map such as this would be difficult to find. Lead a discussion on why the people who worked on the UGRR would not want a map like this to be found by slaver owners in the South.

On the physical map of the United States, show how rivers could be followed from the South to the North. Ask what time of year would be good for travel and why. Guide students towards the idea that during Winter months, the constellation Ursa Major would be easily seen, as well as frozen rivers would be easier to move along. Discuss when movement would be safest. Further discuss why those who were conductors and working at the stations were equally as in danger as were the fugitive slaves themselves. Distribute the black line U.S. physical maps and ask students to create a route for the fugitive slaves to travel. This may be done individually or in small group, but at the teacher's discretion. Then have them describe in a paragraph, or words for differentiation, why this trip they created would work and would be a safer route. End of lesson for day 3 younger students.

Begin the last part of the lesson by displaying the image of the Gateway to Freedom International Monument.

Shown from the Detroit side, the Gateway to Freedom International Monument



<http://www.detroitriverfront.org/east/hartplaza/landmarks.asp>

Ask students to describe what they observe from the monument. They may note people pointing, possibly a family, young children, adults, carrying belongs and such. Explain that directly across the river, these people would have been able to see Canada and freedom. The North was still a dangerous place for fugitive slaves in the United States due to fugitive slave laws, but in Canada, these people would find freedom that they desperately hoped for.

As a culminating activity have students complete the Learned section on their KWL chart. Collect these with the maps and route descriptions to assess that knowledge gained.

**Evaluation:**

- *Student created map depicting possible routes taken.*
- *Students will write an explanation of why the route they created would be a possible route used.*
- *KWL chart with all sections completed. This should show knowledge of push and pull forces for moving North using the UGRR.*