

# The Underground Railroad

## A Journey to Freedom



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**Grandview Elementary – Bellevue Independent  
Social Studies/Language Arts**

**SUBJECT: Understanding Perspectives – Character  
Development – Literary Writing**

**GRADE: Fifth**

**TOPIC: Underground Railroad/Creative Writing**

**LENGTH: (Six) Consecutive Days – One hour each**

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### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1.** Students will study the various people that were involved in the slaves' journey to freedom via the Underground Railroad.
- 2.** Students will examine the various perspectives and points of view of people involved in the Underground Railroad.

3. Students will gain knowledge of the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky area and its impact on freedom and the abolition of slavery.
4. Through creative writing, students will demonstrate an understanding of the risks involved and the moral dilemma that many people felt when deciding whether or not to be involved in slavery and freedom.

### CONNECTIONS:

- 1.11 Students write using appropriate forms, conventions, and styles to communicate ideas and information to different audiences for different purposes.
- 2.14 Students understand the democratic principles of justice, equality, responsibility, and freedom and apply them to real-life situations.
- 2.16 Students observe, analyze, and interpret human behaviors, social groupings, and institutions to better understand people and the relationships among individuals and among groups.
- 2.20 Students understand, analyze, and interpret historical events, conditions, trends, and issues to develop historical perspective.

### CONTEXT:

The students have had practice writing a personal piece and are at the point where they are ready to draft a literary piece of writing. They are knowledgeable of the writing process and have had some exposure to the concepts related to the Underground Railroad.

### MATERIALS:

1. *Freedom River* By Doreen Rappaport
2. *His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker, Former Slave and Conductor on the Underground Railroad* - Edited by Stuart Seely Sprague.
3. *A Good Night for Freedom* By Barbara Olenyik Morrow
4. *The Patchwork Path* By Bettye Stroud
5. *Almost to Freedom* By Vaunda Micheaux Nelson
6. *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin* By Levi Coffin
7. Chart paper

8. Markers
9. Understanding character – worksheet
10. Prewriting graphic organizer for short stories

## PROCEDURE:

### Day 1 –

Assess prior knowledge by having students complete a KWL chart related to the Underground Railroad.

Introduce the topic of the Underground Railroad by reading *Almost to Freedom* to the students.

Discuss the vocabulary terms perspective and point of view.

Discuss the perspective/point of view from which *Almost to Freedom* was written.

Place students in groups and allow them to develop a list of the various perspectives from which they could draft a story.

### Day 2 –

Read *A Good Night for Freedom* to students.

Record various UGRR vocabulary terms that have been covered so far into Writer's Notebooks.

Discuss character traits of people involved in slavery or freedom.

Place students in groups once again, allow them to complete the Understanding Character worksheet and then discuss as a whole group.

Students will also complete the setting (when/where) portion of the worksheet based on the characters chosen.

### Day 3 –

Read the portion of *His Promised Land* in which John Parker frees the couple with the baby by snatching it from the master's bedroom.

Read *Freedom River* to students.

Assign students to complete a Writer's Notebook entry based on John Parker's actions and the emotions that he must have been feeling while snatching the baby. How would you react? Would you try to save it?

## Day 4 –

Read the story of Sally from Levi Coffin's *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin* to students. Share my version of the story titled "A Chance at Freedom."

Students will begin identifying their main character, setting etc. for their creative writing piece.

Students will complete a list of questions to help them begin to develop characterization.

## Day 5 –

Read another story from Levi Coffin's *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin* (stories from Newport).

Allow students to discuss and record additional vocabulary into the Writer's Notebook.

Discuss the importance of including proper historical vocabulary to make the piece realistic.

## Day 6 –

Students will begin completing a graphic organizer to summarize the story that they will be writing. They will focus on completing sections dealing with setting, problem, the character's attempts to solve the problem, and resolution.

Students will incorporate an antagonist and protagonist in their story.

## ASSESSMENT:

Students will be assessed on their ability to draft a creative piece that is historically accurate and deals with a character from the time of the Underground Railroad.

## RESOURCES:

Vocabulary:        *North Star* – runaway slaves' clue for their direction.  
                              *Jordan River* – geographical divide between the  
north and south. "Ohio River"

*Canaan* – ultimate land of freedom for enslaved people.

*The Promised Land* – ultimate land of freedom for enslaved people.

*Grand Central Station* – Covington and Cincinnati

*Midnight* – Detroit (the way to Canada)

*Passenger* – a runaway slave.

*Agent* – a person who arranged passage for fugitives.

*Depot/Terminal* – safe houses or churches and other safe places along the way to freedom.

*Packages* – hardware (man) dry goods (woman)

*Conductor* – a person aiding runaways to freedom.

“friend of a friend” – a code so runaways knew they were speaking to someone they could trust.

## EXTENSION:

Students will continue to focus on the Underground Railroad when they reach that unit in Social Studies.

Students will continue to draft their creative piece dealing with a character involved in the Underground Railroad.

The fifth grade will take a field trip to Ripley Ohio after hearing the novel by John Parker.

## **Rubric for Historical Fiction Piece**

### **94 – 100 A**

- ❖ Story has a well developed beginning, middle and end with lots of elaborated details, descriptive language and sensory details.
- ❖ Focuses on the purpose of solving the character's problem
- ❖ Develops characters through thoughts, actions, and descriptions
- ❖ Describes setting
- ❖ Creates a title and engaging lead which creates reader interest
- ❖ Uses dialogue throughout piece
- ❖ Organizes the piece into paragraphs and uses transition words between ideas
- ❖ Has an effective closing
- ❖ Ideas and details are in a meaningful order
- ❖ Few errors in punctuation, capitalization, grammar and spelling which do not interfere with the meaning of the piece.

### **88 – 93 B**

- ❖ Story has a developed beginning, middle and end with some elaborated details, descriptive language and sensory details
- ❖ Focuses on the purpose of solving the character's problem
- ❖ Develops characters through thoughts, actions or descriptions
- ❖ States the setting
- ❖ Creates a title and lead
- ❖ Uses some dialogue in piece
- ❖ Organizes the piece into paragraphs and uses some transition words between ideas
- ❖ Ideas and details are in order
- ❖ Some errors in punctuation, capitalization, grammar and spelling which do not interfere with the meaning of the piece

### **75 – 87 C**

- ❖ Story has a beginning, middle and end with very few elaborated details, descriptive language and sensory details.
- ❖ Focuses on the purpose of solving the character's problem
- ❖ Develops characters through thoughts or actions
- ❖ Does not have a clearly identified setting
- ❖ Creates a weak title and lead
- ❖ Uses very little dialogue in the piece
- ❖ Organizes the piece into paragraphs
- ❖ Ideas and details have some order
- ❖ Several errors in punctuation, capitalization, grammar and spelling which DO interfere with the meaning of the piece.

**70 – 74 D**

- ❖ Little or no effort for any of the above criteria and/or incomplete piece.

**70 and below F**

- ❖ Student fails to complete the assignment. Their story is not complete.