

LESSON Q

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Standards: Geography Standard One: Students will develop a personal geographic framework, or "mental map," and understand the uses of maps and other geo-graphics.

Geography Standard Three: Students will develop an understanding of the diversity of human culture and the unique nature of places.

Geography Standard Four: Students will develop an understanding of the character and use of regions and the connections between and among them.

History Standard Two: Students will gather, examine, and analyze historical data.

History Standard Four: Students will develop historical knowledge of major events and phenomena in world, United States, and Delaware history.

Objectives: 1) The students will work in teams to play a game that is based on the Underground Railroad in Delaware.

Materials: 1) *Lesson Q, Delaware Public Archives, Delaware Gazette, RG 9210 (Image Gallery)*
2) *Lesson Q, Delaware Public Archives, Thomas Garrett, General Reference Biography (Image Gallery)*
3) *Lesson Q, Delaware Public Archives, Beers Atlas, Odessa*
[backed with]
Lesson Q, Delaware Public Archives, 1874 Map of Wilmington, File II
4) *1796 Delaware Map, Delaware Public Archives, Vertical File VI (Image Gallery)*
5) *Lesson Q, Delaware Public Archives, Beers Atlas, Murderkill Hundreds*
6) Masking tape

Procedures: 1) Begin a discussion of slavery. First have students create a web with the topic "slavery" at the center. Then, brainstorm everything they know about slavery by branching off from the center topic. Ask a few students to share their webs. Continue the discussion with the following questions:

- How did slaves fight against their situation? (Claim sickness, sabotage crops and/or farm equipment, work at a slow pace when the overseer was not watching)
- What was the most destructive act a slave could commit? (He/she would run away!) Why? (The slave owner would lose labor and valuable property.)
- What may have triggered an escape? (Wanted to be free, oppressive owner, break up of family through sale of family members)

- How did slaves escape? (Slaves escaped through an operation known as the Underground Railroad)
 - What was the Underground Railroad? (The Underground Railroad was a series of routes north that escaped slaves used in order to reach freedom. These routes would include "stations" and "stationmasters." A station was a place where a slave or a group of slaves could hide along the route. The stationmaster was a person who helped hide the escaped slaves and may have provided them with food and supplies.)
- 2) Inform the students that they will be playing a game focusing on the Underground Railroad in Delaware. Using masking tape create a map of the Delmarva Peninsula and the western shore of Maryland on the floor (See Lesson B for a map.) Invite the students to help in this procedure. Ensure that the following points are included: Wicomico River, Nanticoke River, Choptank River, Sassafras River, Camden, Odessa, and Wilmington. The location of the rivers can be found on the 1796 map (image gallery).
 - 3) Place an individual strip of masking tape from the western shore of the Peninsula to Camden and then north through Odessa and Wilmington and into Pennsylvania. This line will serve as the game route for the teams. Along the route place space markers where a team may move with its next correct answer. There are a total of 15 questions. There should be at least 8 to 10 stops. Although some of the questions deal with a specific area of Delaware it is impossible for all the teams to reach these destinations when the questions concerning them are presented.
 - 4) Divide the class into groups of four. Each group will need a game marker that can either be pre-made by the teacher or can be created by the group itself. Pass out the documents that are a part of this lesson.
 - 5) These are the rules:
 - a. All the groups will be asked the same question aloud. Each question will have multiple answers. The groups will have several minutes to discuss the possible answers among themselves. A group answer will then be requested.
 - b. In order for the group to continue northbound along the Underground Railroad, the groups must answer the question correctly. If the answer is incorrect, the group will not be allowed to proceed.

NOTE: It is not expected that the students will know the bulk of information presented during the game. The game is designed to present information to the students in a manner that is both interesting and educational.

Before playing the game, the teacher may want to create transparencies of the game questions so students can see the answer choices, or the game questions can be made into a PowerPoint presentation and projected.

- 6) All game pieces will be placed on the western shore of Maryland to begin the game. Some of the answers have additional notes in parentheses or brackets. These notes will not be presented until after all the groups have given their answer. Let's get started!

THE GAME

1. Why did many slaves choose to escape through Delaware?

- a) Many of the waterways from the Chesapeake Bay led deep into the Delmarva Peninsula - providing a means of fast transportation for many fugitive slaves.
- b) Delaware had many attractions to see and enjoy.
- c) Many escaped slaves wanted to live in Delaware. (Although Delaware's number of slaves was declining it was still a hostile state for many African-Americans to live.)

ANSWER: A. Project the 1796 map. Point out the waterways that travel into Delaware. Point out the Wicomico River, the Nanticoke River, the Choptank River, and the Sassafras River. [The Wicomico River is on the southern border of Delaware while the other three rivers are along the western border of Delaware.]

2. [Keep projecting the 1796 map for this question.] Which of the following two rivers would you choose to enter if you were crossing the Chesapeake Bay?

Remember:

- You want to get as far north as fast as possible
- Many people living on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and in Sussex County, Delaware still held slaves. (Point out both areas on a map.)

- a) Wicomico River
- b) Nanticoke River
- c) Choptank River
- d) Sassafras River

ANSWERS: C. and D. Both are the two northernmost rivers in Delaware and were known to be used as escape routes on the Underground Railroad.

3. How did many of the slaveowners react when their slaves escaped?

- a) They did not care one way or another.
- b) They hoped the escaped slaves would enjoy their new lives.
- c) They tried to get their slaves back.

ANSWER: C. Many slaveowners felt they were losing valuable "property" and took measures to get their slaves back. Many put advertisements in the newspapers with rewards for returning escaped slaves. [Project the Delaware Gazette (image gallery) . Read the escaped slave advertisement with reward]. Other slaveowners hired men to track down their slaves and bring them back. Discuss the 1793 Federal Slave Law and the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. (See background of lesson). Other slaveowners tried to track down slaves by themselves.

4. You are now making your way through Delaware. How will you probably be traveling?

- a) automobile
- b) horseback
- c) walking
- d) bicycle

ANSWER: C. walking

5. What time of day will you be traveling?

- a) During the day
- b) During the night

ANSWER: B. During the night. Remember you are a fugitive and do not want to be seen by many people. Escaped slaves traveled at night and hid during the day in order to avoid detection by people who may report them to the authorities.

6. You have reached the area of Kent County, Delaware. Instruct the students to look at the Beers Atlas for the Murderkill Hundreds. Note: "Hundred" is an old english term that refers to a subdivision of a county. Inform the students that there are people at the following locations that will either

help you or arrest you. Point out each place on the atlas. These are your choices:

a) The Cooper House in Camden. Built by a Quaker named Jabez Jenkins, the house remained in the Jenkins family until after the Civil

War. [Point to the town]

b) Great Geneva - the home of Jonathan Hunn. [Point to the area east of Camden. It is listed under "E. Hunn". It is near Fores Landing]

c) Star Hill Community where many free African Americans lived [Point to area southeast of the town of Camden. Look for Af. School and Af. Church]

d) Mary Darby - large landowner and a member of a wealthy farming family [located near Frederica]

ANSWER: All answers are correct except D. She was a slave owner who would probably not help the escaped slaves. The Jenkins Family, Jonathan Hunn and the free African-American community of Star Hill helped fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad.

7. True or false - all the slaves who escaped on the Underground Railroad reached freedom.

ANSWER: False. Many were either caught or betrayed along the route. Fugitive slaves usually received harsh punishments when they were returned to their owner.

8. Your next destination is Odessa, Delaware. Point out the general area of Odessa on a Delaware map - use the game's floor map if no other map is available. Instruct the students to look at their Beers Atlas map of Odessa. Your stationmaster in Camden has given you the name of an individual who will give you assistance when you reach this area. Find the following names and places on the Beers Atlas map of Odessa.

a) Friends M.H. - stands for Friends Meeting House (located on Main Street)

b) Daniel Corbit - (his name is listed several times because he owned numerous properties in the area.)

c) John Appleton - wealthy farmer (his property is located on High Street)

What person should you contact and what place can you use to hide?

ANSWER: A. and B. Point out the property of the individuals as well as the Friends (Quaker) Meeting House in Odessa. Daniel Corbit was a Quaker who aided fugitive slaves. The Friends Meeting House was used as a hiding place for runaway slaves. John Appleton was a slave owner who probably would not help escaping slaves.

9. Your next destination is Wilmington - the home of Thomas Garrett. However, the bridges across the Christina River into Wilmington are guarded by police looking for runaway slaves. Instruct the students to look at the 1874 Wilmington map showing the Christina River and the bridges. The students must work within their group to think of a way to get across the river to Wilmington without being detected.

ANSWER: There are numerous answers for this question. If the answer shows that the group has used creative effort, logic and thought they should be allowed to advance another step. If these characteristics are not present, their team should remain in place. (In one instance where this situation occurred - Garrett had been told in advance that a group of runaways were on their way and sent out two wagons to pick up the fugitives. The wagons, both carrying a load of straw with the slaves hidden underneath, were driven by a group of bricklayers. The bricklayers acted as if they had been having a party that day and convinced the police that they were not smuggling escaped slaves. Consequently, the wagons were allowed to pass without being inspected.)

You have now reached the home of Thomas Garrett, a wealthy Quaker who served as one of the most active stationmasters on the Underground Railroad. Garrett helped more than 2,700 escaped slaves move northward on the Underground Railroad. (Project Garrett's letter) (Image Gallery). Read the letter aloud. Emphasis the parts of the letter that concern the Marylanders kidnapping him.)

10. Why did Garrett's friends want him to leave his home for a few weeks and possibly go to England?

- a. They wanted him to travel and see different places.
- b. They feared for his safety.

ANSWER: B. Thomas Garrett's friends feared that Garrett would be kidnapped by angry slaveowners who had lost slaves through the Underground Railroad.

11. Why did some Marylanders want to kidnap Garrett?

- a. They wanted to stop his work on the Underground Railroad.
- b. They wanted to help Garrett with his Underground Railroad activities.

ANSWER: A. Slaveholding Marylanders wanted to stop his work on the Underground Railroad. Garrett was so successful in helping slaves to freedom that many people in the southern United States hated him and wanted to stop his anti-slavery activities.

12. Many of the slaves who Garrett helped to freedom had been traveling on foot for hundreds of miles by the time they had reached Wilmington. Garrett was known to have provided many fugitives with

_____?

- a) shirts
- b) pants
- c) coats
- d) shoes

ANSWER: D. Many had worn out their shoes by the time they reached Wilmington.

13. Garrett had many friends in Wilmington, both white and African-American, who aided him in his Underground Railroad activities. Listed below is a list of names along with their occupations. Can you guess who were agents on the Underground Railroad?

- a) Patrick Holland, laborer
- b) James Fountain, Ship Captain
- c) John Hollis, Brickyard Owner
- d) Abraham Shadd, Shoemaker
- e) Comegys Munson, Severn Johnson - laborers

ANSWER: All answers are correct. Agents on the Underground Railroad came from many backgrounds and social classes.

BONUS QUESTIONS

14. The year is 1856. You are an escaped slave on the Underground Railroad and you have reached the state of Pennsylvania - a state that has outlawed slavery. Since you have reached the northern portion of the United States are you free from slavery? Yes or No?

Choice of Responses:

Yes - when escaped slaves reached the northern states they did not have to fear being enslaved again.

No - escaped slaves still had to fear that they could legally be enslaved again.

ANSWER: No! The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 allowed escaped slaves to be

tracked down anywhere in the U.S. and returned to slavery.

15. The northern portion of the United States was still unsafe for many former slaves. What country was seen as a safe place for fugitive slaves?

- a) Canada
- b) England
- c) Mexico
- d) France

ANSWER: A. Many escaped slaves settled in Canada.

16. Very few written records were kept by stationmasters and conductors on the Underground Railroad. The operation was very secretive. Many of the records that were kept were intentionally destroyed by the people who wrote them. Why?

- a) The people who wrote the records did not feel the records were worth saving.
- b) The people involved in the Underground Railroad thought the records could be used against them or their families.

ANSWER: B. Many people who lost their slaves were angry at the people who helped the slaves escape and wanted revenge. In addition, helping people on the Underground Railroad was illegal.

To conclude the lesson, have students look back at their “slavery” web and using a red pen create additional branches with any new information learned through playing the game.

DOCUMENT TRANSCRIPTION

THOMAS GARRETT LETTER

Wilmington June 7th 1860

Dear Friends

Joseph, Ruth, Isaac and Dinah and Benjamin Kent is going to your place to- day I write to say that I have not yet been kidnapped by the Marylanders and I hope by this time my friends may breathe freer. I have had sundry letters from friends some advising me to leave home for a few weeks and one to go to England for a year or two and take my wife along. I presume you have not been so much alarm'd about me, it is true the papers have made very free with my name, but I have given myself no trouble about what has been said until yesterday. I wrote a statement of my position respecting aiding slaves and sent it to the Peninsular News for insertion I will enclose a scurrilous piece cut from the Pennsylvanian of the 30th of last month. by which you will see that they have

placed me in good company, but the writer has stooped so low that it is not worthy of notice the meeting here on the news[?] side abandon'd the case on music[?] so long pending without disowning [?] Elizabeth Gruble. My wife keeps quite smart this winter, the rest all well. Much love to all of you.
T. & R. Garrett

BACKGROUND

The Underground Railroad was a 19th century network of individuals and safe havens that helped fugitive slaves escape to the northern United States or to Canada. Among these individuals, known as "conductors" and "stationmasters", were free African-Americans, Quakers, and other white abolitionists. These people would help in many different ways including sheltering the fugitives from slave hunters, providing food and clothing, and helping them to reach their next destination. However, the Underground Railroad was an extremely secretive operation. The Federal Government passed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 which permitted masters and their hired slave catchers to enter free states and bring back their runaways. In 1850, another Fugitive Slave Law was passed that ordered federal authorities in all states, including free states, to send back runaway slaves to their owners if they were found. In addition, the new law punished those individuals who helped the runaways. Because of the secrecy surrounding the operation, there are very few primary sources that discuss the Underground Railroad. Much of the information we have is a combination of fact, fiction, and tradition.

In Delaware, there are a number of places that are traditionally viewed as stops on the Underground Railroad. Most of these locations are in Kent and New Castle County. Although Sussex County's slave population was declining in the 19th century, the area still held the majority of Delaware's slaves and was viewed as a bastion of proslavery sentiment.

The most famous "conductor" who led fugitive slaves to freedom through Delaware was Harriet Tubman. Born a slave about 1820 in Dorchester County, Maryland, Tubman escaped from her master in 1849 and settled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Tubman returned to Maryland numerous times to bring slaves to freedom. While leading her fugitive groups through Delaware she is known to have stopped at "stations" in the areas of Camden, Dover, Blackbird, Odessa, Middletown, New Castle, and Wilmington.

The most famous Delawarean on the Underground Railroad was Thomas Garrett of Wilmington. A Quaker merchant, Garrett moved to Wilmington from Pennsylvania in 1822. Being a staunch abolitionist, Garrett's home on Shipley Street became a sanctuary for slaves escaping north. Although by Garrett's own account he helped over 2,700 fugitives escape, it did not come without a price. In 1848, Garrett, along with fellow abolitionist John Hunn, was found guilty in court of assisting two runaway slaves. For this offense, Garrett had to pay a substantial fine that temporarily ruined him financially. However, Garrett continued to help runaway slaves. Southern slaveholders hated Garrett for his actions.

Although Garrett is the most well known Delawarean on the Underground Railroad, there were many people in the state that helped runaway slaves escape north. However, the real heroes of the Underground Railroad were the fugitive slaves themselves. They were the ones who took the greatest risks and faced the most severe consequences if they were caught.

DOCUMENT BACKGROUND

1868 BEERS ATLAS OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE

Published in 1868, this atlas was the first statewide map showing individual houses and property owners. Other landmarks such as roads, schoolhouses, and churches are also represented. Along with the maps of the state, this atlas includes Delaware history, census information, and agricultural and

manufacturing production statistics.

1874 MAP OF WILMINGTON

This is a section of a Wilmington map published in 1874 by O.H. Bailey and Company of Albany, New York. It can be accessed through the map collection of the Delaware Public Archives (File II, Delaware Towns and Cities, 1874).

THE DELAWARE GAZETTE

The Delaware Gazette was a Wilmington newspaper created by Peter Brynberg and Samuel Andrews. Published from 1791 to 1799, the Delaware Gazette usually appeared on a semi-weekly basis. This newspaper may be found in the newspaper collection (The Delaware Gazette, September 24, 1791, Record Group 9210).

THOMAS GARRETT LETTER

This letter is part of the Thomas R. Garrett General Reference Biography File. Garrett was in constant danger of being harmed by people who disagreed with his Underground Railroad activities. The question marks represent words that are difficult to transcribe.