



SING TO FREEDOM: MUSIC AND STORIES OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

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This workshop was developed by Kim and Reggie Harris
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**SING TO FREEDOM:
Music of the Underground Railroad
with Kim and Reggie Harris**

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Introduction

Purpose of the Workshop

The Underground Railroad was a multi-racial, multi-faith freedom movement in Antebellum America from approximately 1830-1860. Secret code songs were an important part of the planning and implementation of escapes from slavery by African Americans and their allies for freedom.

The purpose of this workshop is to explore the history of this time period and to help teachers to give students information and context on how music and culture are instrumental in history. Learning to sing, write, and update “code songs” based on historical words and phrases along with contemporary composition brings together both the musical and historical material contained in the workshop.

Rationale for the Workshop

Learning secret code songs of the Underground Railroad will help your students synthesize their knowledge of the many events, people, and applicable laws and cultures contained in the curriculum*. Secret code songs composed by students can provide a useful tool for teacher’s assessment of student knowledge of the Underground Railroad. Teacher’s basic facility in song leadership and song writing provides a useful model for creativity, risk taking, and achievement that students may emulate.

*National content standards for music and history education are located in the Supplementary Materials, located at the end of the workshop packet.

Objectives for the Workshop

By the end of the workshop, participants will:

- Know the history of the Underground Railroad era.
- Know why secret code songs were important during the Underground Railroad era.
- Be able to lead students in basic vocal warm-ups and singing songs.
- Be able to engage students in analyzing secret code songs for their meaning.
- Be able to lead students in writing secret code songs based on historically accurate information about the Underground Railroad.
- Appreciate how singing and song writing can enliven learning about a historical time period.

The Kennedy Center's Definition of Arts Integration

**Arts Integration is
an APPROACH to TEACHING
in which students
construct and demonstrate
UNDERSTANDING
through an
ART FORM.**

**Students engage in a
CREATIVE PROCESS
which CONNECTS
an art form and another subject area
and meets
EVOLVING OBJECTIVES
in both.**

Background Information

SPIRITUALS: Spirituals are songs that were composed by communities of enslaved African Americans in the years between 1830 and 1860 in the rural South. They are songs with mainly biblical themes that express meaningful thoughts, desires, emotions, and reflections on the situation of people in bondage. They are still sung in many churches today.

SECRET CODE SONGS: A code song is one in which the words you sing have two or more meanings and can be used to send messages of information to others. Songs (spirituals, work and play songs) sung by free and enslaved African Americans contained veiled messages of protest and/or plans for escape. Many slave masters and their allies thought that the singing by slaves indicated contentment and therefore underestimated the intellectual capacity and ingenuity of the people they held in captivity.

GRIOT: A griot is a song leader/historian/storyteller in many traditional African and in some modern African and African American communities. Enslaved griots were natural gatherers and dispensers of information as the secret code song traditions developed in the “New World.”



#1 Learning Activities – Introduce Traditional African American Spirituals and Code Songs

Song: “Let Us Break Bread Together On Our Knees”

(#3 on *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad*)

Goals:

- To explain what a “spiritual” is and how they were “composed” in slave communities.
- To introduce the idea of how spirituals were used to pass secret codes and information during the time of the Underground Railroad (1830 -1860).

Song Lyrics

Verse

Let us break bread together on our knees
Let us break bread together on our knees
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun
Oh Lord have mercy on me

Verse

Let us praise God together on our knees
Let us praise God together on our knees
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun
Oh Lord have mercy on me

Directions

Step 1: Introduce the Song

1. Play the song, “**Let Us Break Bread Together On Our Knees**” (#3 on *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad*). Ask for a show of hands of the students who have heard the song before. Some students may recognize the songs from their churches. This fact must first be acknowledged as these are songs not only of freedom but also of faith.
2. Using the background information listed above, tell the students (or help them to discover) what a spiritual is, explain that there are Underground Railroad secret codes contained in the code songs and about the role of griots.
3. Play the song on the CD again, this time instructing students to listen with the “ears” of a person or community of people in slavery who long for freedom.

#1 Learning Activities – Introduce Traditional African American Spirituals and Code Songs – continued

Step 2: Interpret the Meaning of the Song

1. Discuss the first phrase, “Let us break bread together on our knees.” If the key word in the phrase is “together,” what message might the singer be passing along to the listener? Ask for ideas from students. The meaning of, “Let us break bread together” is a call for a secret meeting of the slave community.
2. Ask students, “To be able to meet with other people, what two things do people need to know?” (The time and place of the meeting.) Explain the meaning of the lyrics: “When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun” = time and place of meeting.
3. Students may be surprised at the codes contained in the song. Remind them that all groups of people have ways of speaking that only those inside of the group truly understand. Ask students if their families or friends have special words and phrases that only they know and use. Ask for a show of hands, but do not ask students to share these words/phrases. Students may show surprise that teachers/adults realize that special “student” language exists.
4. Consider some of the following questions with students:
 - What are other examples of codes used in history by groups of people working for freedom?
 - How do natural resources play any role in social movements in contemporary times?
 - How might the use of coded language or symbols that a community uses alter their status or change their relationship with those who are not part of the code?
 - What difficulties do you think Underground Railroad code users encountered and what adjustments might one need to contemplate to make a code remain successful?
 - Slaves lived in a variety of places and situations (e.g., farms, plantations, villages, and cities.) How might these codes be affected by the physical location of those using it?
 - Why would meeting BEFORE sunrise be advantageous? (Early morning might provide the only personal time of the day before work started.) Can you think of any religious reasons why some slaves might be rising early before work and how would this “aid” the use of the code? (10-15% of persons brought from Africa were of Islamic traditions and rose early for prayer. A master MIGHT be sympathetic to slaves’ pleas for worship time.)

#2 Learning Activities - Vocal and Physical Warm-Ups

Song: “Follow the Drinking Gourd”

(#10 on *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad*)

Goals:

- To prepare students for public speaking or singing.
- To build self-confidence as well as awareness of one’s own speaking/singing voice.

Materials:

- *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad* CD
- Lyrics for “Follow the Drinking Gourd”

Directions:

Step 1: Physical Warm-up

Lead your students through a physical warm-up of your choosing or follow the instructions below and have students do this activity with you. To alleviate possible embarrassment, ask students why it is important to “warm up.” You might mention to students that their favorite sports figures, singers, and entertainment figures warm up before they begin their work. Be sure to “KEEP IT LIGHT!”

1. Instruct students to stand in their places and silently become aware of their bodies and their breathing.
2. Have the students slowly take several deep breaths in and out.
3. Ask if they notice any tight spots in their bodies and suggest they focus on relaxing those spots.
4. Have the students tighten and release the muscles in their faces. Repeat the same sequence with shoulders, arms, legs, etc.
5. Have students raise their right hands/arms. Have everyone count from 1-8 while gently shaking the hand/arm. As you lead the counting, be sure to encourage the students to count out loud with you. It is important that they hear their voices and that of other class members. It is also important for the students to SEE YOU warming up along with them. Ask students to lower right hands/arms. Have students raise their left hands/arms, count to 8 while shaking hands/arms, and lower them. Repeat with right feet/legs. Repeat with left feet/legs.
6. Repeat the entire process; this time counting from 1-4.
7. Repeat the entire process; this time counting from 1-2.
8. Repeat the entire process; this time using 1 count for each hand and foot.
9. Prepare yourself on the count of one, many students (and teachers) begin to laugh.

#2 Learning Activities - Vocal and Physical Warm-Ups - continued

Step 2: Vocal Warm-up

To prepare yourself to lead this activity, practice singing in low and high pitches, beginning softly and growing slowly louder, while standing in front of a mirror. You should be well acquainted with hearing and being in control of your own voice in order to be an effective song leader in front of the students.

1. Have students stand in place and invite them to imagine that they are riding on a motorcycle. Their hands and fists should be held out to the sides like they are holding onto imaginary handlebars. Sit down slightly in the air, as if riding the motorcycle. Then, while buzzing their lips, make the pitch of the sound of the “engine” go high, then low, then, high, then low. (Always end low, never end up high.)
2. Using a very simple song that most of your students AND YOU already know, begin to sing one line (from the chorus of the song) softly and starting on a low pitch.

HINT: If you do not know how to find a low pitch, simply sing the phrase in a part of your voice that feels low to you. This will also seem low, perhaps very low to the students. (The vocal range of adults is wider than that of students.) They may laugh a bit, but you will all be singing together.

REFRAIN for “Follow the Drinking Gourd”

(#10 on *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad*)

Follow the drinking gourd
Follow the drinking gourd
For the old man is a waitin’ for to carry you to freedom
Follow the drinking gourd

3. Repeat the line of the song, singing just a little higher each time. As you sing higher, you and the students will almost naturally begin to sing louder. Very slowly increase the volume of your singing as the pitch of the songs becomes louder. The sound of the song, however, should never become so loud as to sound like screaming. The key is to sing so you can hear your voice and the voices of others.
4. As you continue to repeat the phrase, you will eventually come to a pitch that seems “comfortable” in both pitch and volume for the STUDENTS to sing. (Remember that student vocal range is much smaller than your range.) At this point, sing the entire chorus of your warm-up song at a loud volume. (Be sure that students sing loud but avoid straining or screaming.) Sing the line again softly and end the vocal warm-up.

HINT: Have fun with vocal warm-ups. When using them to lead into another activity, end with a quieter warm-up to help calm the students and focus their thoughts and breathing. End the warm-up with the students standing still and breathing quietly in unison. Then ask students to be seated.

#2 Learning Activities - Vocal and Physical Warm-Ups - continued

5. Lead the students through another vocal warm-up of your choosing. (e.g., slowly singing through a musical scale). The music specialist at your school can provide ideas about appropriate vocal warm-ups.

Teacher Reflection:

1. What feelings/thoughts did you experience as you participated in the warm-up?
2. How can this activity be helpful to your students as you prepare them to sing?

Notes:

#3 Learning Activities - Listen, Interpret and Sing a Code Song

Song: “No More Auction Block for Me”

(#2 on *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad*)

Goals:

- To compare the use of coded spirituals with songs of protest and self-determination.
- To provide students with additional information about living conditions in slavery and the motivation for escape.

Materials:

- *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad*
- Lyrics for “No More Auction Block For Me”
- Whiteboard, chalkboard, or large sheet of chart paper/poster paper to capture a list

Directions:

Step 1: Listen to the Song

1. While the students are seated, play the song “No More Auction Block for Me.” (Do not give the students lyric sheets yet.)
2. After students listen to the song, slowly read the lyrics to the class to be sure that students hear and understand each verse. (Teachers may wish to explain that a peck of corn is about 2 gallons.)
3. While listening to the song again, students are to identify answers to the following questions. To what do the enslaved people want to say “NO”? To what do the enslaved people want to say “YES”?

Step 2: Begin to Interpret the Meaning of the Song

1. On a large sheet of paper, make 2 columns—one titled NO and the other titled YES. Lead the class in a discussion to compile a list of possible thoughts of enslaved persons.
2. Instruct the students to stand. Have them repeat the word “NO” after you. You may begin softly and then say the word in a louder voice. It can be helpful for students to think of some of the words and phrases on the large class list when saying the word as they say, “No.” Have students say the following phrases:
 - ”No to being sold.”
 - ”No to being whipped.”
 - ”No to having my name changed.”
 - ”No to being a slave.”

#3 Learning Activities - Listen, Interpret and Sing a Code Song - continued

1. After repeating the phrases, have the students say a very loud “NO” and then stand quietly.
2. Discuss the following questions with students:
 - How does it feel to say “No” in a very loud voice? (Powerful? Exciting? Awkward?) Have
 - They share descriptive words of thoughts.
 - Where does the feeling “resonate” in your body when you speak in a loud voice? (Throat? Chest? Stomach? Head?) Note: Students should notice that when they sing, their voice resonates. Discuss how the act of speaking or singing is a “whole body experience” and how emotions, confidence, and/or one’s physical condition aids or compromises communications, e.g., the presence or the lack of stress can affect vocal power, expression, control, and clarity.

Step 3: Sing the Song

1. Distribute lyrics for “**No More Auction Block for Me**” to the students.
(See lyrics below.)

No more auction block for me, no more, no more
No more auction black for me, many thousand gone

No more master’s call for me, no more, no more
No more master’s call for me, many thousand gone

No more peck of corn for me, no more, no more
No more peck of corn for me, many thousand gone

No more driver’s lash for me, no more, no more
No more driver’s lash for me, many thousand gone

2. Instruct the students to stand. Lead them in speaking the words together. Their voices should convey the feelings that these words contain.
3. Play track #2 on *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad* so you and the students can sing along with the song.
4. Is there a student in the classroom who feels able to sing the song alone as a solo? Ask that student to sing one verse from their place. Have another student sing one of the other verses. If the students are very nervous about singing, having you model this activity in front of the students can help to alleviate student nervousness.

#3 Learning Activities - Listen, Interpret and Sing a Code Song – continued

HINT: Practicing singing in front of a mirror can help to alleviate your nervousness about singing in front of a group.

Step 4: Further Discuss the Meaning of the Song

1. Instruct the students to sit down and lead them in a discussion about each line of the chorus. Use the following questions to help students construct a better understanding of the song and why it was useful.

Chorus Line: “NO MORE AUCTION BLOCK FOR ME”

- How does it feel to sing “No” and “Yes”?
- Does singing together “feel” different from singing or speaking the words alone?
- How do you think the words of the song relate to the lives and experiences of those in slavery?
- Under what conditions a person might be sold at auction during slavery?
- What would happen to the family of someone who was sold at auction?
- How might a person in slavery feel about saying the word “NO” in resistance?
- Could slaves use this kind of language in front of their masters? Why or why not?
- If slaves had to be cautious about using the word “NO” out loud to their masters, in what other ways might a person in slavery act against their life conditions (e.g., running away, breaking tools, working very slowly)?

Chorus Line: “NO MORE MASTER’S CALL FOR ME”

- Who made choices about a slave’s work and life?
- What type of choices could a master make for a slave (e.g., name, job, where to live, who to marry, etc.)?
- Did slaves ever have ideas of their own?
- Can you give examples of slaves putting their own thoughts or desires in action?

Chorus Line: “NO MORE PECK OF CORN FOR ME”

- How much is a peck of corn?
- What was the average amount of food given to slave and their families on a weekly basis?
- In what ways could a person in slavery supplement their diet?
- What does this song suggest about the food needs of those in slavery?

Chorus Line: “NO MORE DRIVER’S LASH FOR ME”

- Who is the driver?
- How did masters punish the slaves?

#3 Learning Activities - Listen, Interpret and Sing a Code Song – continued

Step 5: Lesson Closure

1. Ask the students if a song with these lyrics could be sung in the presence of the master? Why or why not?
2. How is this song different from “Let Us Break Bread Together” in the way that the message of the song is delivered? (Are these words intended as a code?)
3. Why would people in slavery choose to sing a song with lyrics that so obviously described their feelings about being in bondage (e.g., empowerment, resistance, emotional release)?
4. Ask students to quietly think of some situation in which they need to be able to say, “No.” Have they ever felt unable to say “No” aloud? Why? (fear, shyness, peer pressure, unsure of their rights)

EXAMPLE: No to drugs. No to violence, abuse, bullying, smoking. etc.

5. Have the students stand and find a posture that feels powerful. While imagining one of the situations in which they have trouble saying “No,” instruct the students to say “NO” all together and in a loud voice.
6. To help bring this activity to an up-beat conclusion, ask students to quietly think of some situation in which they want to say “Yes.” For example, Yes to good grades! Yes to self-respect! Yes to safety! Yes to good food!

HINT: Many students enjoy saying “Yes,” while using an arm motion to emphasize the point.

While imagining a situation in which they want to say “Yes,” instruct students to say the word together and in a loud voice. Ask students how it feels to say the word “Yes” out loud.

Teacher Reflection:

1. What does this lesson indicate to you about the situation of those in slavery?
2. What parallels are present in the lives of your students that can be represented here?
3. How does this lesson call attention to the desire for self-determination?
4. In what ways can you translate this activity into your classroom?

#4 Learning Activities - Listen, Interpret and Sing a Code Song

Song: “Go Down Moses”

(#5 on *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad*)

Goals:

- To give background information on two historical figures (Moses and Harriet Tubman).
- To contrast songwriting styles often used in songs of the Underground Railroad (verse /chorus and call/response).
- To show how history, art, language, and culture were used by slaves to aid their quest for freedom.

Materials:

- *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad CD*
- Lyrics for “Go Down Moses”

Background Information

In most cases, slaves were forbidden to learn to read or write, but were often encouraged to go to church where they would hear stories from the Bible. The story of Moses, who led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, resonated with their condition and became the focus of many spirituals. They recount that story here as the Griot (song leader, storyteller, and historian) would lead songs in a call and response fashion.

Directions

Step 1: Listen to the Song and Sing it Together

1. Play the song, “Go Down Moses” (#5 on the CD).
2. You may wish to provide a short synopsis of the biblical story of Moses or ask questions of the students to tell it as a group from what they know. (Many students may not have knowledge of the story depending on their background.)
3. Sing through the song with the students first together and then again with you or a student in the role of the song leader, the Griot.

Griot: When Israel was in Egypt land.

All: Let my people go.

Griot: Oppressed so hard they could not stand.

All: Let my people go.

All: Chorus

#4 Learning Activities - Listen, Interpret and Sing a Code Song – continued

Step 2: Begin to Interpret the Meaning of the Song

1. Why would slaves call Harriet Tubman, “Moses?” What are the parallels between the two historical figures?
2. Ask the students to consider if there are other possible codes in the song (e.g., Egypt = slaveholding states, Pharaoh = masters or slaveholders; Israel = those in bondage).

Step 3: Sing the Song

1. Distribute lyrics for “**Go Down Moses**” to the students. (See lyrics below.)

Verse

When Israel was in Egypt’s land,
Let my people go
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
Let my people go

Chorus

Go down Moses, way down in Egypt’s land, tell ol’ Pharaoh,
Let my people go

Verse

Thus spake the Lord, bold Moses said,
Let my people go
If not I’ll strike your first born dead
Let my people go

Chorus

Go down Moses, way down in Egypt’s land, tell ol’ Pharaoh,
Let my people go

Verse

No more in bondage shall they be
Let my people go
And then shall all humankind be free
Let my people go

Chorus

Go down Moses, way down in Egypt’s land, tell ol’ Pharaoh,
Let my people go

#4 Learning Activities - Listen, Interpret and Sing a Code Song - continued

2. Instruct the students to stand. Lead them in speaking the words together. Their voices should convey the feelings that these words contain.
3. Play track #5 on *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad* so you and the students can sing along with the song.

Step 4: Further Discuss the Meaning of the Song

1. Sing the chorus of the song again with the following words “composed” by an unknown woman standing in a group near the Capitol in Washington, D.C. on the evening December 31, 1862.

Go down Abraham, way down in Dixie land
Tell Jeff Davis, to let my people go!

Depending on the grade, you may need to tell the students who Jefferson Davis was and why the group would sing that verse for him. (This was on the eve of the Emancipation Proclamation.)

2. Consider discussing any of the following additional questions.
 - How might that group have sung the song differently? (Clapping, upbeat and celebratory)
 - Why would this song and others like it be useful to people who cannot read or write?
 - Why would the use of this story make the codes in the song so successful?
 - It was widely believed that singing slaves were “happy” especially when singing about Biblical themes and, therefore, singing was encouraged.
 - Slaves were thought to be “less than human” and not capable of thinking for themselves and as such were often underestimated. How would this aid them in the quest for freedom?
 - Ask your students if they ever feel underestimated by others and how they cope with that?

#4 Learning Activities - Listen, Interpret and Sing a Code Song – continued

Teacher Reflection:

1. In what ways did this lesson help you to gain perspective on the use of biblical and cultural themes in the music of the Underground Railroad?
2. How will you use/adapt this in your classroom?

#5 Learning Activities - Song Writing: Adapting and Updating Underground Railroad Secret Code Songs

It is best to lead your students in this activity AFTER they have either participated in the previous activities contained in this workshop OR completed at least the beginning of their course of study on the Underground Railroad.

Materials:

- *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad* CD
- Lyrics for “Let Us Break Bread Together On Our Knees,” “Go Down Moses,” and “No More Auction Block.” (see page 21)
- Sample lyrics of adapted secret code songs (see pages 22-25)
- 1 copy of the Glossary of Secret Code Words and Phrases per student (see pages 30-32)
- Pencils and paper for each student.

Directions:

1. To build background knowledge about the Underground Railroad, have students watch this video (www.youtube.com/watch?v=rT-jzF02pC0) created by Kim and Reggie Harris or have students do further research using other sources.
2. Refer to the lyrics of “**Let Us Break Bread Together on Our Knees,**” “**No More Auction Block,**” and “**Go Down Moses.**” Notice the chorus and verse of each song. The secret codes in these songs have already been discussed.
3. Tell students they are going to work in a small group (3-4 students) to write a code song. The songs they write should show their understanding of the time period of the Underground Railroad and contain veiled messages of protest and/or plans for escape. The song could be from the perspective of a fugitive slave, someone who has made a successful escape, and/or an abolitionist. To help them write their code songs, they may choose to write new words for either the:
 - **CHORUS** of the song,
 - **VERSE** of the song,
 - **CALL** of the song and leave the response as is.
4. Sing each song’s verse or chorus aloud to show that the words they write must work properly into the rhythm and tune of the song. Share examples of how the chorus, verse, or call could be constructed. (For your information, additional examples created by students are located on pages 22-25, however, it’s best not to show them examples until they have created some of their own.)

Example of new words for the CHORUS “Go Down Moses”

Travelers, travelers.
Look to the drinking gourd
Keep on trampin’
We’re bound for the Promised Land!

#5 Learning Activities - Song Writing: Adapting and Updating Underground Railroad Secret Code Songs - continued

Example of new words for the VERSE of “Let Us Break Bread Together” (Let Us Break Bread Together)

There’s a load of potatoes on the way
There’s a load of potatoes on the way
It may be there tomorrow
It will get to you soon
Keep your eye wide open and be glad!

Example of how new words for the call could be written:

Don’t look back, stay near water (CALL)
Follow the drinking gourd (RESPONSE)
Escape at night, wait for the *shepherd* (CALL)
Follow the drinking gourd (RESPONSE)

HINT: Though many in slavery were unable to read and write, some slaves were literate because of their occupations or because they learned in secret. Historians have collected some of their letters in books, such as:

Starobin, Robert S. *Blacks in Bondage, Letters of American Slaves*. New York: Markus Wiener Publishing, 1988.

5. Discuss the Glossary of Secret Code Words and Phrases and then provide students with 10-15 minutes to write their code songs.
6. Choose a few groups to stand and read their songs to the entire class. This process will help you to assess if students understand the content. Singing a cappella, (or with you, if you play an instrument) instruct each group to sing their version of the re-written song.
7. Once each group has shared their song, discuss the following questions.
 - As you listened to each group’s song, what were their codes? What did the song mean in code language?
 - What challenges did you encounter as you tried to incorporate secret codes into your song?
 - Would this be a song you could sing in the presence of someone who might endanger the cause of freedom without detection?
 - How could you make it more deceptive?
8. Repeat this process, adapting and/or updating the chorus, verse, or call of different songs.

#5 Learning Activities - Song Writing: Adapting and Updating Underground Railroad Secret Code Songs – continued

Teacher Reflection:

1. How did the writing of the code song highlight your understanding of the material discussed in the earlier activities here?
2. What parts of the process were most helpful to your writing?
3. How do you think this activity will help your students to better understand the place of songs on the Underground Railroad?

Original Lyrics

“Let Us Break Bread Together On Our Knees” Song Lyrics

Verse

Let us break bread together on our knees
Let us break bread together on our knees
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun
Oh Lord have mercy on me

Verse

Let us praise God together on our knees
Let us praise God together on our knees
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun
Oh Lord have mercy on me

“No More Auction Block for Me” Song Lyrics

No more auction block for me, no more, no more
No more auction block for me, many thousand gone

No more master’s call for me, no more, no more
No more master’s call for me, many thousand gone

No more peck of corn for me, no more, no more
No more peck of corn for me, many thousand gone

No more driver’s lash for me, no more, no more
No more driver’s lash for me, many thousand gone

“Go Down Moses” Song Lyrics

Verse

When Israel was in Egypt’s land,
Let my people go
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
Let my people go

Chorus:

Go down Moses, way down in Egypt’s land, tell ol’ Pharaoh,
Let my people go

Verse

Thus spake the Lord, bold Moses said,
Let my people go
If not I’ll strike your first born dead
Let my people go

Chorus:

Go down Moses, way down in Egypt’s land, tell ol’ Pharaoh,
Let my people go

Verse

No more in bondage shall they be
Let my people go
And then shall all humankind be free
Let my people go

Chorus:

Go down Moses, way down in Egypt’s land, tell ol’
Pharaoh,
Let my people go

Sample Secret Code Song

Adapted by Reggie Harris

Actual Lyrics "Go Down Moses"	Adaptation by Reggie Harris
<p>Verse When Israel was in Egypt's land, Let my people go Oppressed so hard they could not stand, Let my people go</p> <p>Chorus: Go down Moses, way down in Egypt's land, tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go</p> <p>Verse Thus spake the Lord, bold Moses said, Let my people go If not I'll strike your first born dead Let my people go</p> <p>Chorus: Go down Moses, way down in Egypt's land, tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go</p> <p>Verse No more in bondage shall they be Let my people go And then shall all humankind be free Let my people go</p> <p>Chorus: Go down Moses, way down in Egypt's land, tell ol' Pharaoh, Let my people go</p>	<p>Verse: <i>The wind blows from the South today</i> Bound for <i>Heaven</i> now. Our <i>shepherd</i> tells us "Mind the way!" Bound for <i>Heaven</i> now.</p> <p>Verse: The burden is so heavy here Bound for <i>Heaven</i> now. We must move quickly Show no fear! Bound for <i>Heaven</i> now.</p> <p>Chorus <i>Travelers...Travelers</i> Riding the <i>Gospel Train</i> Stations...passing... Bound for <i>Heaven</i> now!</p> <p>© 2010 Reggie Harris</p>

Sample Secret Code Song

Adapted by Students

Actual Lyrics “Follow the Drinking Gourd”	Adaptations by Kim and Reggie Harris with Mrs. Silver’s 4 th Grade Class The Hartshorn School, Short Hills, NJ
<p>Refrain <i>Follow The Drinking Gourd</i> <i>Follow The Drinking Gourd</i> <i>For The Old Man Is A Waitin’ For To Carry</i> <i>You To Freedom</i> <i>Follow The Drinking Gourd</i></p> <p>Verse When The Sun Comes Back And The First Quail Calls Follow The Drinking Gourd For The Old Man Is A Waitin’ For To Carry You To Freedom Follow The Drinking Gourd</p> <p>Refrain</p> <p>Verse The River Bank Would Make A Mighty Good Road Dead Trees Will Show You The Way Left Foot, Peg Foot, Traveling On Follow The Drinking Gourd</p> <p>Refrain</p> <p>Verse The River Ends Between Two Hills Follow The Drinking Gourd But There’s Another River On The Other Side Follow The Drinking Gourd</p> <p>Refrain</p>	<p>Verse Don’t Look Back, Stay Near Water Follow The Drinking Gourd Escape At Night, Wait For The <i>Shepherd</i> Follow The Drinking Gourd</p> <p>Refrain</p> <p>Verse Don’t Get Caught, Hide In The <i>Courthouse</i> Follow The Drinking Gourd Sing Quietly, Stay Focused Follow The Drinking Gourd</p> <p>Refrain</p> <p>Verse Think Of Where You’re Going, To The <i>Promised Land</i> Follow The Drinking Gourd Don’t Give Up, Throw The Dogs Off The Track Follow The Drinking Gourd</p> <p>Refrain</p> <p>Verse Believe In Yourself, Go With Friends Follow The Drinking Gourd Follow The Signals, Work For Freedom Follow The Drinking Gourd</p>

Sample Secret Code Song

Adapted by Students

Actual Lyrics “No More Auction Block for Me”	Adaptations by Kim and Reggie Harris with Mrs. Howard’s 4th Grade Class The Hartshorn School, Short Hills, NJ
<p>No more auction block for me, no more, no more No more auction black for me, many thousand gone</p> <p>No more master’s call for me, no more, no more No more master’s call for me, many thousand gone</p> <p>No more peck of corn for me, no more, no more No more peck of corn for me, many thousand gone</p> <p>No more driver’s lash for me, no more, no more No more driver’s lash for me, many thousand gone</p>	<p>CHORUS Freedom! No more auction block for me, no more, no more No more auction black for me, many thousand gone</p> <p>(In rap style) We’re standing up, We show our courage, we’re trying to get away. To be a slave and get no pay! 1-2-3-Freedom!</p> <p>CHORUS No more auction block for me, no more, no more No more auction black for me, many thousand gone</p> <p>(In rap style) We say “Yes” to bravery! “No” to slavery! Our allies help and give us hope So we can keep our family. 1-2-3- Freedom</p> <p>CHORUS No more auction block for me, no more, no more No more auction black for me, many thousand gone</p> <p>(In rap style) We stand up for education, Equal rights for all the nation. Life and joy and liberty, our nation’s founding legacy. 1-2-3 Freedom</p> <p>CHORUS No more auction block for me, no more, no more No more auction black for me, many thousand gone Many thousand gone, many thousand gone, many thousand gone</p>

Sample Secret Code Song

Adapted by Students

Actual Lyrics "Trampin'"	Adaptations by Kim and Reggie Harris with Mrs. Hellman's 4 th Grade Class The Hartshorn School, Short Hills, NJ
<p>I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home</p>	<p>I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home</p>
<p>Well I never been to heaven, by I've been told Trying to make heaven my home The streets up there are paved with gold Trying to make heaven my home</p>	<p>I want to be free, my people and me Trying to make heaven my home I want to run away to be free someday Trying to make heaven my home</p>
<p>I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home</p>	<p>I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home</p>
<p>Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down Trying to make heaven my home Sometimes my soul feels heavenly bound Trying to make heaven my home</p>	<p>Some people get ill and don't have a pill Trying to make heaven my home I'm tired, in the pitch black, carrying my sack Trying to make heaven my home</p>
<p>I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home</p>	<p>I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home</p>
	<p>My family needs water and food and light Trying to make heaven my home Shelter's gonna help us make it through the night Trying to make heaven my home</p>
	<p>I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home</p>
	<p>Look! There's something over there. Trying to make heaven my home I see a bear and I'm getting scared Trying to make heaven my home</p>
	<p>I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home</p>
	<p>I'm trampin' trampin', trying to make heaven my home</p>

Final Teacher Reflection

1. Review the Kennedy Center’s definition for arts integration (see page 3). In the work we did today, students will be able to construct and demonstrate their understanding of code songs and the Underground Railroad through the process we experienced —listening to code songs, interpreting the songs’ meanings, singing code songs, and writing our own code songs. How will you be able to assess students’ understandings of the Underground Railroad and music?
2. What other applications can you find for the “finished product” of the students’ songs?

Closing Song: “Free At Last”

(#14 on *Steal Away: Songs of the Underground Railroad*)

This is a song sung by those who made it to freedom and in celebration of freedom when slavery was abolished by the 14th amendment to the U.S. constitution. It was also sung during the modern civil rights movement as referenced in Dr. Martin Luther King’s speech, “I Have a Dream!”

“Free at Last”

Free at last, Free at last
Thank God almighty we’re free at last

One of these mornings bright and fair
Thank God almighty we’re free at last
I’m gonna put on my wings and try the air
Thank God almighty we’re free at last

Free at last, Free at last
Thank God almighty we’re free at last

If you get there before I do
Thank God almighty we’re free at last
Tell all of my friends I’m coming too

Free at last, Free at last
Thank God almighty we’re free at last

Supplementary Materials:

Basic Chronology of Slavery in Colonial/Antebellum America

- 1619:** Twenty Africans brought to Jamestown, Virginia as indentured servants.
- 1641:** Slavery legalized in Massachusetts Bay Colony.
- 1660:** Slavery legalized in Virginia.
- 1702:** In colonial New York, 200 pounds must be paid by a master wishing to free a slave.
- 1776:** Continental Congress in Philadelphia adopts the Declaration of Independence.
- 1787:** United States Constitution counts enslaved persons as three-fifths of a person for census purposes and protects slave trade from interference by Congress before 1808.
- 1793:** Cotton Gin patented by Eli Whitney.
- 1800:** Gabriel Prosser (inspired by the Haitian slave revolts) leads slave revolt in Virginia.
- 1803:** Thirteen year Haitian rebellion against France results in Haitian independence and abolition of slavery in Haiti.
- 1820-21:** Maine and Missouri admitted into the Union in the Missouri compromise. The compromise maintains a balance between free and slave states.
- 1820 (circa):** Araminta Ross (Harriet Tubman) is born.
- 1825-1865:** John and Jean Rankin along with their neighbors in Ripley, Ohio, including former slave John Parker, help thousands to escape.
- 1831:** Nat Turner leads slave rebellion in Southampton County, Virginia. Subsequently, Virginia and other slave states enact tougher laws governing both enslaved and free African Americans.
- 1831:** Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison begins publication of the *Liberator* newspaper.
- 1845:** Frederick Douglass, runaway from slavery, publishes autobiography.
- 1846:** Runaway, Dred Scott, sues for freedom on the basis of residency in a free state.
- 1847:** Supreme Court rules that as a slave, Dred Scott is not a citizen of the United States under the Constitution. He, therefore, is not eligible for legal redress.
- 1847:** Frederick Douglass publishes the *North Star*, an abolitionist newspaper.
- 1848:** Women's Rights Convention held in Seneca Falls, New York.
- 1849:** Josiah Henson's story of escape inspires Harriet Beecher Stowe.
- 1850:** Fugitive Slave Act endangers both escaped and free African Americans. Many choose to leave the United States for Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Europe.
- 1852:** Harriet Beecher Stowe publishes *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
- 1859:** John Brown and 21 others, hoping to inspire mass slave revolts, unsuccessfully raid the arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia.
- 1861:** Civil War begins.
- 1863:** Emancipation Proclamation becomes effective on January 1.
- 1865:** Civil War ends. On December 18th, the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution is ratified by three-fourths of the states in the Union. Slavery is abolished!

What important dates, persons, or events could be added to this timeline?

Supplementary Materials:

Content Standards Addressed in the Workshop

Sample State Social Studies Standards

MARYLAND

Social Studies Standard-5.0-History

Students will examine significant ideas, beliefs, and themes; organize patterns and events; and analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time in Maryland and the United States.

Topic C. Conflict between Ideas and Institutions

Indicator:

4. Analyze how the institution of slavery impacted individuals and groups in Maryland.

Objective (Grade 4):

- e. Describe the growth of the Underground Railroad.

VIRGINIA

Grade 6: Expansion and Reform: 1801 to 1861

USI.8 The student will demonstrate knowledge of westward expansion and reform in America from 1801 to 1861 by.

- d) Identifying the main ideas of the abolitionist and suffrage movements.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Grade 5:

THE GROWTH OF THE REPUBLIC (1800–1860)

5.3. Broad Concept: Students describe the rapid growth of slavery in the South after 1800.

Students:

1. Describe how Southern colonists slowly altered their attitudes toward Africans, increasingly viewing them as permanent servants or slaves; the harsh conditions of the Middle Passage; the responses of slave families to their condition; and the ongoing struggle between proponents and opponents of slavery. (S)
2. Identify the characteristics of slave life and the resistance on plantations and farms across the South. (P, S)

Supplementary Materials: National Music Standards

National Standards for Arts Education K-4

1. Sing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.

Students are able to:

- sing independently, on pitch and in rhythm, with appropriate timbre, diction, and posture, and maintain a steady tempo.
- sing from memory a varied repertoire of songs representing genres and styles from diverse cultures.

2. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.

Students are able to:

- identify by genre or style aural examples of music from various historical periods and cultures.
- describe in simple terms how elements of music are used in music examples from various cultures of the world.
- identify and describe roles of the musician in various music settings and cultures.

Supplementary Materials:
Glossary of Secret Code Words and Phrases
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Abolitionist: A person who demanded the immediate emancipation of those in slavery.

Agent: A person who plotted the course of escape for freedom seekers.

Antebellum: Events existing before the Civil War.

Baggage: A code word used for freedom seekers.

Bondage: The institution of slavery.

Conductor: The person who directly transported freedom seekers.

Drinking Gourd: A code term for the Big Dipper; pointing toward the North Star.

Emancipation Car, The: A name for the Underground Railroad

Forwarding: Taking freedom seekers from station to station.

Freedom Road: The freedom seeker's route of travel.

Freedom Seeker: A fugitive from slavery or free person endangered by the laws of slavery. (This is a modern term that more accurately describes those who used the services of the Underground Railroad, especially after 1850.)

Freedom Train: A term used to describe the Underground Railroad.

Friends of Freedom: A group of people who worked for emancipation.

Fugitive Slave: One who was on the run from slavery and still considered, by law, the property of a particular master.

Go free: Code word used by runaway slaves.

Heaven: A code word for Canada or any state or territory beyond the jurisdiction of the laws of slavery.

Heavy/ Light Burden: An indication of how many were in an escaping group.

Home: A code word for Canada or any state or territory beyond the jurisdiction of the laws of slavery.

John Brown's Trail: A route of travel for freedom seekers.

Jumping Off Place: A place of shelter for freedom seekers.

Lightning Train: A name for the Underground Railroad.

Lines: Routes of travel for freedom seekers.

Load of Potatoes: A code to indicate a wagonload of freedom seekers hidden under farm produce.

Middle Passage, The: The route of travel between slavery and freedom in the North.

Mysterious Track: A name for the Underground Railroad.

Operators: People who aided freedom seekers as conductors or agents on the Underground Railroad.

Overflow Stations: A place of hiding for a number of freedom seekers.

Passengers: Escaping freedom seekers.

Patrollers: Persons (usually men) in slave states who guarded roads against escaping slaves.

Pilot: A person who served as a guide for freedom seekers.

Preachers, Cows, and Courthouse: Code words for conductors, freedom seekers, and a station.

Promised Land: Code word for Canada or any state or territory beyond the jurisdiction of the laws of slavery.

Refugees: Escaping freedom seekers.

Sanctuary: A place of hiding.

Shepherd: A person who directly enticed persons to escape from slavery.

Slave Haven: A town or settlement of freedom seekers.

Star Pointed North, A: Code for the North Star.

Station: A place of safety where freedom seekers could be sheltered.

Station Master: A person in charge of a hiding place.

Stockholder: A person contributing food, clothing, or money to the Underground Railroad.

Travelers: Freedom seekers.

“The wind blows from the South today”: A warning to Underground Railroad workers that fugitive slaves were present in the area.

Underground Railroad: A method of transporting freedom seekers.

Vigilance Committees: Groups that offered aid to freedom seekers and assistance in moving them from station to station. Such committees also agitated against the institution of slavery.

Supplementary Materials: Additional Codes within Songs

“Follow the Drinking Gourd” Background Information

Below are several meanings of the code words and phrases. Additional secret code words and phrases of the Underground Railroad found within “Follow the Drinking Gourd.”

Code Words and Phrases	Meaning
Drinking Gourd	Big Dipper (helpful in locating the North Star)
When the sun comes back and the first quail calls	Springtime-- when days are longer
The river bank would make a mighty good road	Drinking water, covering tracks, going the right direction, dispersing runaway’s scent easier transport (perhaps)
Dead trees will show you the way	Follow the moss on dead and live trees
Left Foot Peg Foot	Particular mark left by an Underground Railroad conductor
River ends between two hills	Possibly referring to the Little Tom Bigbee River and the Big Tom Bigbee River (TN)

“O Freedom!” Background Information

1. “Oh Freedom”--Composed circa the beginning of the Civil War 1861
2. Darkness = the institution of slavery
3. Glory = a free state, territory, or country

“Harriet Tubman” Background Information

Song Lyrics	Meaning
“Dark and thorny is the pathway, where the sinner makes his way But beyond this vale of sorrow lies the fields of endless day”	For African-Americans in slavery, a “dark, thorny, vale of sorrow” was a way of speaking about their lives in slavery, as well as the dangerous journey to freedom. “Fields of endless day” indicated both the heaven of religious belief and a place to be free, such as Canada.
“I thought I heard them say, There were lions along the way, I don’t expect to stay Much longer here. Run to Jesus- shun the danger- I don’t expect to stay Much longer here”	“[This] was a favorite air, and had a double meaning. In the lips of some, it meant the expectation of a speedy summons to the world of spirits; but in the lips of <i>our</i> company, it simply meant a speedy pilgrimage toward a free state, and deliverance from all the evils and dangers of slavery.” --Taken from <i>Narrative Of The Life Of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave</i> by Frederick Douglass

Supplementary Materials: Websites

Selected Arts Education Advocacy Websites

Americans for the Arts: www.artsusa.org

Extensive arts industry research, information and professional development opportunities for community arts leaders; including an annual convention.

Arts Education Partnership: www.aep-arts.org

Demonstrates and promotes essential role of the arts in the learning and development of every child and in the improvement of America's schools.

Artsedge <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators.aspx>

The Kennedy Center's education portal designed to support the use of technology and enhance the educational experience for teachers, parents, and students.

Gaining the Arts Advantage: Lessons from School Districts That Value Arts Education: <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED429029>

First national study to examine implementation of arts education throughout entire school districts.

Keep Arts In Schools: <https://www.causes.com/keepthearts>

Collection of opinion research to determine how best to frame arts education for advocates.

The Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network:

www.kennedy-center.org/education/kcaaen

Coalition of statewide non-profit Alliances for Arts Education working in partnership with the Kennedy Center to support policies and practices that ensure the arts are an essential part of American K-12 education.

Support Music: www.supportmusic.com

Effective tips for taking action and the latest evidence of music's importance, as well as a free advocacy tool kit from the American Music Conference.

VSA: www.vsarts.org

Various inclusive programs and resources designed to integrate the creative arts into education and community programs for persons with and without disabilities.

Historical and Cultural Websites

The Spirituals Project

www.Spiritualsproject.org, ctl.du.edu/spirituals/

A great resource for information and context about the spiritual in form and history.

Sweet Chariot

<http://ctl.du.edu/spirituals/>

A site dedicated to historical information for Africa to the freedom songs in present day America.

National Underground RR Freedom Center

This organization has a museum devoted to "the Underground Railroad" and programs that educate the public about modern slavery and human trafficking.

<http://www.freedomcenter.org/>

Negro Spirituals

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/twh/higg.html>

(An eyewitness Article in the *Atlantic Monthly* from 1867)

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Literature/Douglass/Autobiography/>

(In his own words, the great abolitionist talks about spirituals and code songs)

National Geographic

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/>

This is an entire site devoted to information on the Underground Railroad.

Loudoun County, VA

<http://www.loudounhistory.org/history/underground-railroad.htm>

A site on the Underground Railroad history of Loudoun County, VA

Pathways To Freedom on the Maryland Underground Railroad

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

Supplementary Materials: Books and Materials for Teachers

Blockson, Charles L. "The Underground Railroad," *National Geographic*, 186 (July 1984).

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Burns, Elanor. *The Underground Railroad Sampler*, (a quilting book),
Publisher: Quilt In A Day, April 1, 2003, ISBN: 1891776134.

Chase, Henry. *In Their Footsteps; The American Visions Guide to African-American Heritage Sites*. New York: Holt, 1994.

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself*. The Anti-Slavery Office, 1845. Reprint, New York: Penguin Books, 1982.

*This book is also available, in full, on-line.

Franklin, John Hope and Moss, Alfred A., Jr. *From Slavery to Freedom* (6th edition). New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1988.

Hagedorn, Ann. *Beyond The River: A True Story of the Underground Railroad.*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002.

Horton, James Oliver, and Lois E. Horton. *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, and Protest Among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Jacobs, Harriet A. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.

*This book is also available, in full, online.

Southern, Eileen. *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3rd Edition. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997.

Tobin, Jaquelin L. and Raymond G. Dobard, Ph.D. *Hidden in Plain View: The Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad*. New York: Doubleday, 1999.

Soodalter, Ron. *Hanging Captain Morgan, The Life and Trial of an American Slave Trader*. New York, NY: Atria Books, 2006.

Supplementary Materials: Books and Materials for Students

Available from Jackdaws Publications: Hands-on Primary Source Documents
1-800-789-0022, www.jackdaw.com

Jackdaws provides hands-on transcripts and translations of difficult to read documents for a fee. Most documents are reproduced in their actual sizes that can be handled and explored.

Slavery Comes to the New World (Grades 5-8)

The development of the slave trade in the Americas from 1503 to its abolition throughout the British Empire

Slavery Comes to America (Grades 5-8)

Slave sale posters, bills of sale, the Emancipation Proclamation, timeline, activities for students

Underground Railroad (Grades 5-8)

Primary source documents including narratives by Underground Railroad conductors and runaways from slavery

Blight, David W. Blight, *Passages to Freedom: The Underground Railroad in History and Memory*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2004.

*(Published to accompany the opening of the National UGRR Freedom Center, Cincinnati, OH)

Hansen, Joyce, Gary McGowan and James Ranson. *Freedom Roads: Searching for the Underground Railroad*. Chicago, IL: Cricket Books/ A Marcato Book Carus Publishing, 2003 (Ages 9-12).

Hendrick, George and Willene Hendrick. *Fleeing for Freedom: Stories of the Underground Railroad as Told by Levi Coffin and William Still*. Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 2003.

Parker, John P., Stuart Seely Sprague and Stuart Sprague. *His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker, Former Slave and Conductor on the Underground Railroad*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998.

Wyeth, Sharon Dennis. *Freedom's Wings: Corey's Underground Railroad Diary (My America)*, New York, NY: Scholastic, 2002 (Ages 9-12).

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