

## **The Underground Railroad**

**The Underground Railroad was a term used for a network of people, homes, and hideouts that slaves in the southern United States used to escape to freedom in the Northern United States and Canada.**

### **Was it a railroad?**

The Underground Railroad wasn't really a railroad. It was a name given to the way that people escaped. No one is sure where it originally got its name, but the "underground" part of the name comes from its secrecy and the "railroad" part of the name comes from the way it was used to transport people.

### **Conductors and Stations**

The Underground Railroad used railroad terms in its organization. People who led the slaves along the route were called conductors. Hideouts and homes where slaves hid along the way were called stations or depots. Even people who helped by giving money and food were sometimes called stockholders.

### **Who worked on the railroad?**

Many people from various backgrounds worked as conductors and provided safe places for the slaves to stay along the route. Some of the conductors were former slaves such as **Harriet Tubman who escaped using the Underground Railroad and then returned to help more slaves escape.** Many white people who felt that slavery was wrong also helped, including Quakers from the north. They often provided hideouts in their homes as well as food and other supplies.

### **If it wasn't a railroad, how did the people actually travel?**

Traveling on the Underground Railroad was difficult and dangerous. Slaves would often travel by foot at night. They would sneak from one station to the next, hoping not to get caught. Stations were usually around 10 to 20 miles apart. Sometimes they would have to wait at one station for a while until they knew the next station was safe and ready for them.

### **Was it dangerous?**

Yes, it was very dangerous. Not only for the slaves who were trying to escape, but also for those trying to help them. It was against the law to help escaped slaves and, in many southern states, conductors could be put to death by hanging.

### **When did the Underground Railroad run?**

The Underground Railroad ran from around 1810 to the 1860s. It was at its peak right before the Civil War in the 1850s.

### **How many people escaped?**

Since the slaves escaped and lived in secrecy, no one is quite sure how many escaped. There are estimates that say over 100,000 slaves escaped over the history of the railroad, including 30,000 that escaped during the peak years before the Civil War.

## **Fugitive Slave Act**

In 1850 the Fugitive Slave Act was passed in the United States. **This made it a law that runaway slaves found in free states had to be returned to their owners in the south.** This made it even more difficult for the Underground Railroad. **Now slaves needed to be transported all the way to Canada in order to be safe from being captured again.**

## **Abolitionists**

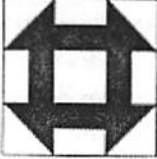
Abolitionists were people who thought slavery should be made illegal and all current slaves should be set free. The abolitionist movement started with the Quakers in the 17th century who felt that slavery was un-Christian. The state of Pennsylvania was the first state to abolish slavery in 1780.



1. How might songs help slaves who planned to escape from being caught?
  - A. Slaves would sing encoded messages used to give directs on the underground railroad.
  - B. Slaves sang to keep their spirits high.
  - C. Slaves would sing in code to talk bad about their master.
  - D. Slaves would sing to pass the time.
2. What did it mean to be a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad?
  - A. To lead slaves to freedom using secret passages.
  - B. To lead slaves to their masters when they ran away.
  - C. To lead slaves to South America.
  - D. To lead slaves to boats traveling to Africa.


Use the image answer the question.

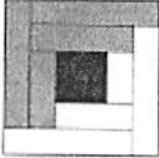
### OZELLA'S UNDERGROUND RAILROAD QUILT CODE


There are *five square knots* on the quilt every *two inches apart*. They escaped on the *fifth knot* on the *tenth pattern* and went to Ontario, Canada.

The monkey wrench  turns the wagon wheel

 toward Canada on a bear's paw trail 

to the crossroads.  Once they got to the crossroads they

 dug a log cabin on the ground.

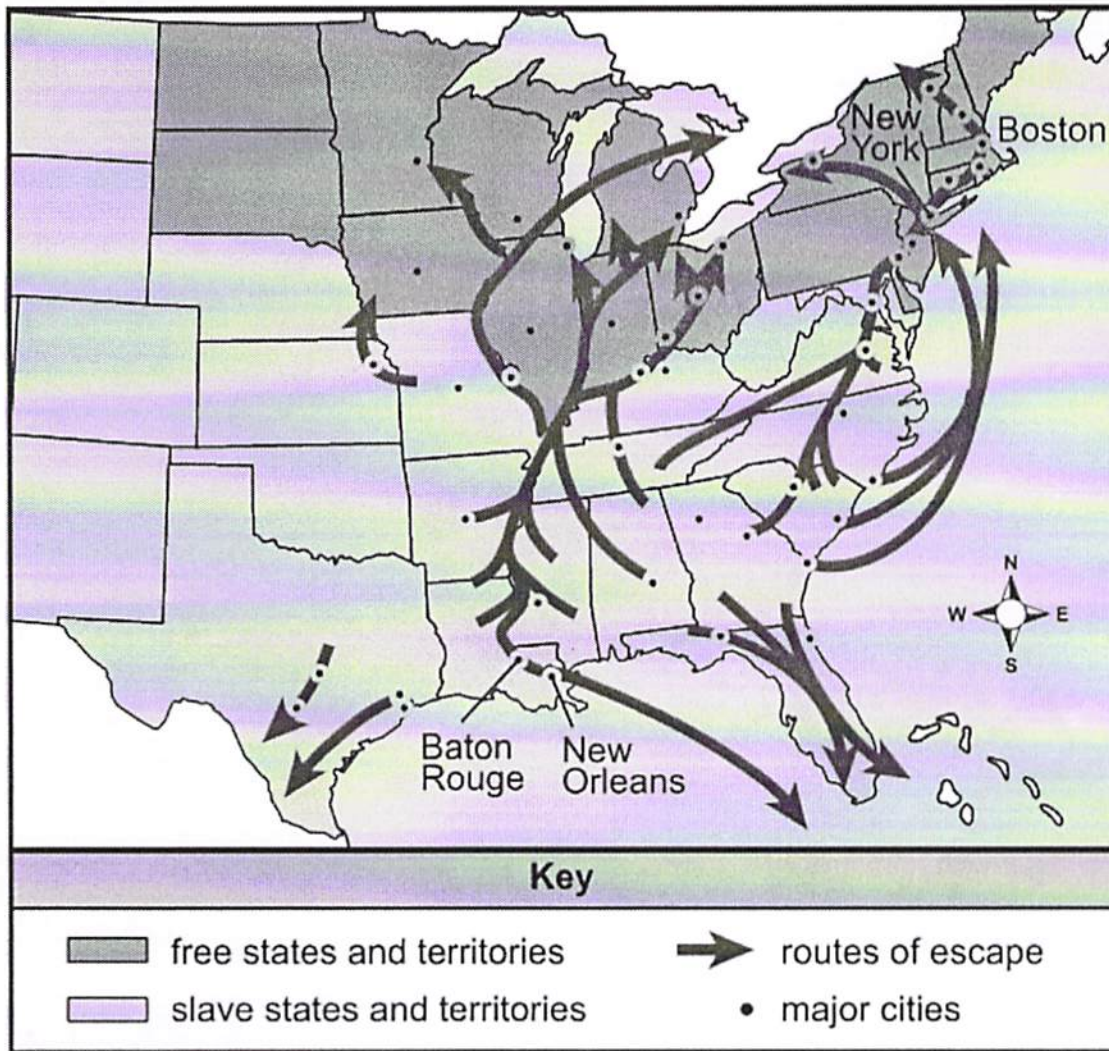
 Shoofly told them to dress up in

3. Why would abolitionists use quilts and patterns to communicate with fugitive slaves instead of posters or written text?

- A. Slaves could read but not write.
- B. Slaves were unable to speak english.
- C. Slaves were allowed to make quilts.
- D. Slaves could not read or write.

Source: 1

(The Underground Railroad, 1850)



Source: 2

Source: Angelina Grimké, "Appeal to the Christian Women of the South," 1836.

Let [the Christian women of the South] embody themselves in societies, and send petitions up to their different legislatures, entreating their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons, to abolish the institution of slavery; no longer to subject *woman* to the scourge and the chain, to mental darkness and moral degradation; no longer to tear husbands from their wives, and children from their parents; no longer to make men, women, and children work *without wages*; no longer to make their lives bitter in hard bondage; no longer to reduce *American citizens* to the abject condition of *slaves*, of "chattels personal"; no longer to barter the *image of God* in human shambles for corruptible things such as silver and gold.

### Source: 3

Source: William Lloyd Garrison, "Declaration of Sentiments of the American Anti-Slavery Society," 1833.

With entire confidence in the overruling justice of God, we plant ourselves upon the Declaration of Independence, and upon the truths of Divine Revelation. . . .

We shall organize Anti-Slavery Societies, if possible, in every city, town, and village of our land.

We shall send forth Agents to lift up the voice of remonstrance, of warning, of entreaty and rebuke. . . .

[W]e will do all that in us lies, consistently with this Declaration of our principles, to overthrow the most execrable system of slavery that has ever been witnessed upon earth; to deliver our land from its deadliest curse; to wipe out the foulest stain which rests upon our [nation]; and to secure to the colored population of the United States, all the rights and privileges which belong to them as men, and as Americans—come what may to our persons, our interests, or our reputations—whether we live to witness the triumph of Justice, Liberty and Humanity, or perish untimely as martyrs in this great, benevolent, and holy cause.

### Source: 4

Source: American Colonization Society, petition presented to Congress, February 2, 1820.

The last census shows the number of the free people of color of the United States, and their rapid increase.

. . . The least observation shows that this description of persons are not, and cannot be, either useful or happy among us; and many considerations, which need not be mentioned, prove, beyond dispute, that this is best, for all the parties interested, that there should be a separation . . .

[We] cannot believe that such an evil, universally acknowledged and deprecated, has been irremovably fixed upon us. Some way will always be opened by Providence by which a people desirous of acting justly and benevolently may be led to the attainment of a meritorious object. And [we] believe that . . . the colonization of Africa, in the manner proposed, present[s] the fairest prospects of success.

4. Using Source 1, which statement **best** explains how a large number of free people and enslaved people responded to the institution of slavery in the mid-1800s?

- A. They argued that slavery was acceptable only in some parts of the nation.
- B. They organized groups to discourage people from moving to southern states.
- C. They created a network of people and places to help individuals escape slavery.
- D. They worked together to keep slavery from expanding into the northern states.

5. Based on Source 2, what does the author, Grinke, **argue** that women should do?

- A. Encourage their legislators to vote for anti-slavery laws.
- B. Encourage their male relatives to petition for anti-slavery laws.
- C. Encourage the president to support anti-slavery laws.
- D. Encourage women to petition for anti-slavery laws.

6. Based on Source 3, which actions were the abolitionists **most likely** to do for the cause?

- A. Abolitionists are willing to capture slaves using the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.
- B. Abolitionists are willing to go to Africa for the cause.
- C. Abolitionists are willing to send African Americans back to Africa.
- D. Abolitionists are willing to die for the cause.

7. Which statements **best** explain how the abolitionists felt about the Declaration of Independence, as shown in Source 3?

- A. The Declaration of Independence needs to be amended to include stricter pro-slavery laws.
- B. The Declaration of Independence is the foundation of anti-slavery and abolitionist thought.
- C. The Declaration of Independence does not include equality for all.
- D. The Declaration of Independence is not aligned to the belief of the abolitionists.

8. Using all the Source 4, which statement **best** explains how the author thinks America should solve the issue of slavery during the 1800s?

- A. We should pass amendments to resolve slavery conflicts between the North and South.
- B. We should create technological innovations to decrease the diversity between the North and South.
- C. We should create more jobs in the cities for the African Americans.
- D. We should send the African Americans back to Africa.

## Harriet Tubman Reading Comprehension

Harriet Tubman was one of the most famous American women in history. She was born on March 10, 1821 in Dorchester County, Maryland, the daughter of slaves on a Maryland plantation. Her original name was Araminta Ross and she was nicknamed "Minty." From an early age she worked as servant at the plantation house. As a teenager, she suffered a vicious head wound as she tried to protect a fellow slave from a beating. According to legend, the woman who was beating the other slave hurled a two pound weight, hitting Harriet in the head. Her injury would haunt her for the remainder of her life, resulting in periodic fainting spells.

Tubman spent her early life as a slave. In 1844, she married a free Black man named John Tubman, who would prove disloyal. Life as a slave was extremely difficult. They were forced to work in the merciless heat without rest. They were often beaten and forced to live in poor conditions. In the early and mid 1800's, slaves were often sold to southern plantations where they would never have contact with their families again. Harriet was a particularly strong and powerful woman who could be sold for a hefty sum. Fearing that she was about to be sold, Harriet resolved to run away. Despite the brutal punishment that would be inflicted upon her if she was caught, Harriet took off in the middle of the night sometime in 1849 and headed north to freedom. She gained assistance along the way by abolitionist Quaker families who hung specially designed carpets or lights on the outside of their houses as a sign that runaway slaves were welcome and would receive help. She traveled by night through the dense woodlands of Maryland, guided north by the North Star and the moss that grew on the north side of the trees. She eventually made it to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a free city where she landed a job and saved money. After living in Philadelphia for two years, Harriet decided to return to Maryland, in the hopes of freeing her family members. She succeeded in guiding her sister and mother to freedom along the same path that she had taken. This path became known as the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was a network of woodland paths scattered throughout parts of the south that led to freedom in the north. Harriet returned again and guided her father and brother to freedom.

Soon, Harriet became known as the "conductor" on the Underground Railroad and made more daring trips to the south to guide more slaves to their freedom. Harriet devised strategies to trick various parties that tried to capture her. If she was traveling with a baby, she would use herbal drugs to ensure it didn't cry. She made sure that she traveled on Saturdays as "runaway notices" in southern newspapers could not be printed until Monday. Harriet's daring "forays" continued to elude slave hunters who were offered huge bounties for returning slaves to their owners. By 1856, a \$40,000 bounty was placed on her capture - dead or alive. She became a serious threat to southern plantation owners who made large investments in their slaves. In one famous story, Harriet was close to being captured at a bus station. To avoid capture, she pulled out a book and pretended to read. Since nearly all slaves were illiterate, the hunters simply ignored her and continued their search.

By 1860, Tubman was said to have completed 19 successful journeys on the Underground Railroad, freeing as many as 300 slaves. She was never captured, nor were any of her "passengers." During the Civil War, she served as a cook, nurse, and spy for the Union army. After the war, she settled in Troy, New York, where she would die in 1913.

**1.) Harriet Tubman suffered a head injury while...**

- A. working in the fields
- B. falling
- C. protecting a fellow slave
- D. lifting heavy weights

**2.) Which of the following was an EFFECT of Harriet's head injury?**

- A. She was sold to another family
- B. She became a conductor on the Underground Railroad
- C. She married a free black man
- D. She suffered from fainting spells

**3.) Why did Harriet Tubman ultimately run away from her owners?**

- A. To re-unite with her husband
- B. To find better pay in the North
- C. She was afraid she'd be sold
- D. She was very strong

**4.) Who helped Harriet in her escape to freedom?**

- A. The police
- B. Her husband
- C. Quaker families
- D. The people of Maryland

**5.) Which of the following did Harriet NOT take into consideration in her quest for freedom?**

- A.) Specially designed carpets on the outsides of houses friendly to runaway slaves
- B.) The position of the North Star
- C.) The tendency of moss to grow on the North side of trees
- D.) The disappointment of her owners when they learned she had runaway

**6.) Why did Harriet Tubman travel on Saturdays?**

- A. To get a head start on the runaway notices that would appear in Monday newspapers
- B. Because runaway notices would be printed on Sundays
- C. Because slave hunters never worked on Saturday
- D. Because she was too tired during the work week

**7.) Which of the following best describes the Underground Railroad?**

- A. A network of paths and forest trails that led Slaves to freedom in the South
- B. A network of trains and railroad tracks that led Slaves to freedom in the North.
- C. A network of paths and forest trails that led Slaves to freedom in the West.
- D. A network of paths and forest trails that led Slaves to freedom in the North.

**8.) Harriet Tubman helped as many as \_\_\_\_\_ slaves to their freedom.**

- A. 40
- B. 100
- C. 300
- D. 40,000

**9.) Which of the following questions is answered in the last paragraph?**

- A. What happened to Harriet's husband?
- B. Was Harriet Tubman able to read or write?
- C. How did Harriet Tubman contribute to the Union Army in the Civil War?
- D. How did Harriet Tubman avoid capture on the Underground Railroad?

**10.) What does the word "illiterate" mean in the following sentence?**

Since nearly all slaves were illiterate, the hunters simply ignored her and continued their search.

- A. unable to read or write
- B. slow
- C. quiet
- D. captured