

There Were Many Paths to Freedom

Underground Railroad

Worksheet #1: Interpreting an Illustration

Directions: Carefully study **Source #1: Charles Webber's Painting of Levi Coffin's "Station"** showing fugitive slaves arriving at Levi Coffin's home. Then, answer the following questions and draw some conclusions about the Underground Railroad as portrayed in this illustration.

1. What general feeling does this painting convey? How does the artist create that feeling?
2. How many fugitives do you see in this picture? What does that tell you about the difficulty of the journey on the Underground Railroad?
3. Choose a character in the painting. Describe the emotions this person is feeling. How does the artist show these emotions? What is this person's relationship to the others in the painting?
4. What will the fugitives do after getting off the wagon? Where will they be the next day?
5. What is the artist's opinion of this event? How does he show it in the illustration?
6. What details from the painting reveal the messages the artist is sending about slavery, personal freedom, white station masters and travel on the Underground Railroad?
7. If this painting were your only source of information, list impressions that you would have about the Underground Railroad, slavery, runaway slaves and those who helped them escape:
8. Pretend that you are a newspaper editor who just witnessed the scene shown in the illustration. Draw a political cartoon or write an editorial to your fellow citizens (northerners or southerners) that expresses your opinion about the Fugitive Slave Act and the Underground Railroad.

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Source #1: Charles Webber's Painting of Levi Coffin's "Station"



Charles T. Webber's painting of a group of fugitive slaves arriving at the Levi Coffin safe house "station" on the Underground Railroad.

Cincinnati Art Museum

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Worksheet #2: Searching for Information in Primary Sources

Directions: Read the **Sources 2-4** on William and Ellen Craft, Henry Box Brown, and the four groups of arrivals at the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee on May 31, 1856. Then, go back and reread each narrative carefully with three copies of this worksheet. Locate answers for as many of the questions as possible.

The Who, What When, Where, Why, and How of Primary Sources

Some answers are easy to find (like who is the primary source about). Sometimes, though, it is about a whole group of people (such as a group of fugitive slaves,). You may have to “read between the lines” to discover the attitude or opinion of the person (s) in the document. Good luck to you as you begin to be an historical detective.

You may **not** find answers to all of these questions in any one primary source. If it includes some information about an individual and some about a group, answer as many questions as you can in both columns. Treat Henry Box Brown as an individual. William and Ellen Craft also may be treated as individuals. The four groups of arrivals on May 31, 1856, should be treated as a group of fugitive slaves.

If this primary source is mostly about one person, answer these questions:

1. Who is this document about?
2. When did the person live?
3. Where did the person live?
4. Why was this document created? (In other words, is this a personal diary, a public document like a birth certificate, or something else?)
5. Tell one thing you found out about the life of this person.
6. If possible, give some details about an event that influenced the person in this primary source.

If this primary sources is mostly about a group of people, answer these questions:

7. Which group(s) does it give information about?
8. Tell one thing you found out about a group of people in this primary source. If you found out about more than one group of people, identify the groups, and tell what you learned.
9. What opinions are expressed either about slavery, fugitive slaves, or abolition?
10. What emotion is expressed in the primary source?

Bonus Question: Why do historians value primary sources such as the one(s) you have just read?

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Worksheet #3: Philadelphia Vigilance Committee: Role-Playing Task Sheet

Directions: You will work in group four or five students. Make sure you have read the fugitive slave narratives (**Sources 2-4**). One at a time, choose a fugitive slave to role-play before the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee.

Everyone else in your group will act as members of the Vigilance Committee. One person should role-play William Still, the chairman, and serve as recorder. Other committee members will ask the fugitives questions about their experiences and, in the process, try to uncover possible frauds. Remember, the committee was trying to help people escape from slavery, an illegal act under the Fugitive Slave Laws of 1793 and 1850.

List the students in your role-playing group, and the historical characters each will portray:

As a group, create at least five questions to ask the the "fugitive slaves."

Questions the Vigilance Committee will ask William and Ellen Craft:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

Questions the Vigilance Committee will ask Henry "Box" Brown:

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

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Worksheet #3: Philadelphia Vigilance Committee: Role-Playing Task Sheet, con't.

Questions the Vigilance Committee will ask the "Four Arrivals"

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____

Tips on role-playing historical characters

To role-play convincingly, you must be prepared. It is not a skit, -- instead, you will speak and react as if you were really experiencing the thoughts and feelings of the person you have chosen. Though you won't have a script, you can use a piece of paper or note cards to create an outline of the main points in your fugitive's story. Making a list of **key words** will remind you of things you want to say about your life and your escape to freedom.

Before you appear before the Vigilance Committee of Philadelphia, **practice** with a partner! Create an historical costume, if you wish, to make your appearance more authentic.

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Worksheet #4: Analysis of Two Newspaper Accounts

Newspaper Accounts of Anthony Burns and John Finly

Directions : Carefully read primary Sources 4 and 5, then analyze these documents by answering the following questions.:

1. List at least three things Anthony Burns and John Finly had in common:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
2. How were their attempted captures different?
3. How was the outcome for each man different?
4. Anthony Burns was a fugitive slave living in the North. "Reading between the lines" would you say John Finly was a fugitive or a free black? What clues can you find in the story?

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Worksheet #5: Finishing Martin R. Delany's Poem

Martin R. Delany's Untitled Poem

Directions : Read Dr. Martin R. Delany's untitled poem and answer the questions below. Then name the poem and add a verse. Try to feel Delany's feelings as he wrote.

Untitled Poem

by Martin R. Delany

I'm on my way to Canada,
 That cold and dreary land;
 The dire effects of slavery,
 I can no longer stand.
 My soul is vexed within me so,
 To think that I'm a slave,
 I've now resolved to strike the blow,
 For Freedom or the grave.

Chorus:

O, righteous Father
 Wilt thou not pity me;
 And aid me on to Canada,
 Where the fugitives are free?
 I heard old England plainly say,
 If we would all forsake,
 Our native land of Slavery,
 And come across the lake.

1. What was Delany's message in this poem?

2. What title would you give this poem?

3. Try your hand at writing a poem by adding your own verse to Delany's poem. Make it consistent in style and message with the rest of the poem.

From *Blake*, Chapter 31 cited at www.libraries.wvu.edu/delany/home.htm written by Martin R. Delany

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Worksheet #6: Conclusions about the Underground Railroad

Drawing Conclusions

Directions: Look again at the illustration of the fugitive slaves arriving at this station on the Underground Railroad (ugrr_ms_img05-01). Now, think about what you have learned from reading the primary sources in this lesson about the escape of fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad.

Under each of the common stereotypes of the Underground Railroad below, use what you have learned to say why the stereotype is simplistic or inaccurate. Use examples from the primary sources that you read to prove your point.

Stereotype # 1

Fugitive slaves were always escorted from station to station on the Underground Railroad.

Stereotype # 2

Those who helped the fugitive slaves were exclusively White.

Stereotype # 3

The Underground Railroad only operated hidden from the watchful eyes of the authorities.

Stereotype # 4

Fugitive Slaves were safe when they got to a northern state such as Pennsylvania.

Stereotype # 5

There was very little variety in the ways that fugitives traveled on the Underground Railroad. Either they walked or were transported hidden under hay or other items in wagons.