

Follow the Drinking Gourd

(GPN #96/PBS #1001)

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Program Description:

Runaway slaves journey north along the Underground Railroad by following directions in a song, "The Drinking Gourd." LeVar celebrates the road to freedom paved by the Underground Railroad, introducing viewers to the history, heroes, stories and music of the African American culture, which emerged from slavery.



An a cappella group, Sweet Honey In The Rock, performs and shares their historical knowledge of slavery.

Social Studies Concepts:

- history
- culture
- geography
- heroes



Classroom Activities:

History

Before viewing the video, have students define "slavery" and compare their definition to that in the dictionary. Discuss what students know about slavery by brainstorming things enslaved African-Americans were expected to do and things they were not allowed to do. Have students record their responses in a two-column chart.

History

In the video LeVar explains that the Underground Railroad was not a conventional railroad with a train on a track, but was a way for slaves to travel from one "safe house" to another on their way to Canada or to states where slavery was illegal. Have students work in small groups to talk about why they think the term "Underground Railroad" was used to describe the transporting of slaves from one safe place to another.

Culture

Music had a very important role in the lives of slaves. They used it to send messages to one another as well as to give hope, comfort and encouragement. Teach students the melody for "Follow the Drinking Gourd" and listen to other spirituals that were sung during the time of the Underground Railroad. Some suggestions are:

- "Hambone, Hambone, Where You Been"
- "The Old Tar River"
- "In That Great Getting-Up Morning"
- "And de Moon Will Turn to Blood"
- "In Dat Great Day"
- "O, Rocks, Don't Fall on Me"
- "Steal Away Steal Away"

Have the students draw pictures in response to the music as it plays.



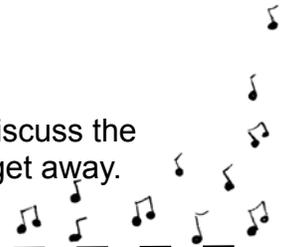
Geography

Use a classroom map of the United States to help students locate the southern states from which slaves escaped, the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, and the states where the vast network of the Underground Railroad was located.

To help students understand the physical picture of the era, give them individual maps and have them color the southern states (which eventually became the Confederate States of America) orange. These states included:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| South Carolina | Mississippi |
| Alabama | Georgia |
| Louisiana | Texas |
| Virginia | Arkansas |
| Tennessee | North Carolina |
| Florida | |

On the same map have them color the northern states blue and Canada tan. Discuss the location of each color block and what might be the route slaves would travel to get away.



Heroes/Geography

Enlist older students to help research famous African American heroes. Pair an older student with one or more younger students to find information for the following people:

Langston Hughes	Harriet Tubman
Martin Luther King, Jr.	Rosa Parks
Marian Anderson	Bessie Coleman
Madame C.J. Walker	Bessie Smith
Zora Neale Hurston	Mary McLeod Bethune
Jackie Robinson	Louis Armstrong
Phyllis Wheatley	Frederick Douglass
Benjamin Banneker	Elijah McCoy
Garrett Morgan	Sojourner Truth
Booker T. Washington	George Washington Carver

As small groups do their research, have them look specifically for the following information:

- When and where the person lived and died?
- What the person is best noted for?
- What is remarkable about the person's contributions?
- How does this person's contributions affect our lives today?

Have students share the information they find with the class. As a follow-up help them create a timeline of African American History with the names and dates of the people they have researched, along with other important dates of historical happenings.

Do-At-Home Activity:

Our Story

Encourage parents to help their child understand that most slaves were not allowed to read and write, and that because of this, storytelling became an important means of communication. All families have stories they tell and these stories are part of their oral history and identity. The Do-At-Home-Activity "Our Story" provides families an opportunity to put one of these family stories on paper.

Suggested Reading:

Review Books:

Shake It To The One That You Love The Best: Play Songs And Lullabies From Black Musical Traditions collected and adapted by *Cheryl Warren Mattox*

A Picture Book Of Harriet Tubman by *David A. Adler*

Sweet Clara And The Freedom Quilt by *Deborah HopkinsonHamilton*

Now Let Me Fly: The Story Of A Slave Family by *Dolores Johnson*

Our Story

All families have stories they tell, such as how the very first relatives settled in America or how the family business was started or a funny story about a grandparent or great-aunt or uncle who was a special family member.

Tell your child a family story. Then help your child record the story in words and pictures so that it can be shared with our class.

A large rectangular box with a double-line border, intended for writing a family story. It contains 14 horizontal lines for text. The first line is indented to the left, and the last line is also indented to the left, leaving a margin at the top and bottom.