

Journey on the Underground Railroad Teacher Resource Packet

Thank you for registering for a Historic Newton youth program! In this packet you will find information about your visit, pre- and post-visit activities, and additional resources to support your teaching. Please reach out to education@historicnewton.org with any questions.

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Program Overview

Location: The Jackson Homestead & Museum, 527 Washington Street, Newton, MA 02458

Audience: Grades 5-12

Duration: 1 hour

Essential Question: How have people historically responded to injustice, and how can we continue to do so?

Overview: In *Journey on the Underground Railroad*, students will explore the topic of slavery in the United States, with a specific focus on Newton and Massachusetts, and the roles of both Blacks and whites in the struggle for freedom and equality. Students will investigate the stories of three enslaved people who sought freedom, then learn about the Jackson family's role in the Underground Railroad. Students will then discuss the direct and indirect consequences of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. Through primary source documents and cooperative learning approaches, they will draw connections between local and national events to consider how individuals respond to injustice. Students will leave the program with a deeper understanding of the complex institution of slavery and appreciation of the variety of ways in which people battled against it.

About Your Visit

Journey on the Underground Railroad is held at the Jackson Homestead and Museum. In order to preserve the artifacts and documents on display, flash photography is not allowed in the museum.

Parking is available on Washington Street and Jackson Road. Groups arriving on buses may be dropped off at the museum's driveway, but please do not park there. Parking is not permitted within five feet of the driveway.

We ask for at least 1 chaperone for every 6 students. Chaperones are expected to:

- Remain with the group at all times and model appropriate museum behavior.
- Assist the museum educator as needed, such as reading aloud to students, dividing students into groups, escorting students to the bathroom, or other classroom management tasks.
- Keep cellphones and other electronic devices silent.

If you wish to conclude your program with a snack, please notify the staff in advance and plan for an additional 15 minutes. You must bring all snack supplies. There are no water fountains on site, but students can fill their water bottles from the kitchen tap.

Teaching About Slavery

Slavery, race, and systems of oppression are difficult, and even uncomfortable, topics to teach. Below are some tips to support you in feeling more comfortable leading students in discussion about these topics. Be aware of your privilege and responsibility to be more knowledgeable and have professional preparation for students so they feel supported in their learning.

1. Model for students that slavery is an upsetting topic. Express that it is hard for you as an adult to understand how people did this to one another and validate student's responses and/or feelings of discomfort. Normalize that it is okay to be upset but also set a serious tone.
2. Communicate that horrible things happened to people because of the color of their skin, but that some of them overcame extreme obstacles to free themselves. Slavery is a sign of resilience for African American communities, not shame.
3. Model for students that we cannot expect any one individual to be a spokesperson for their entire group; this is especially important if white students look to Black students in the discussion to speak on behalf of all of those of African descent. Would you expect to be able to speak on behalf of all of those from whom you are descended?
4. Make sure students understand that slavery is all our history and is thus important for everyone to learn. You can model this by saying something along the lines of "I also own this history and therefore have to own responsibility for the past."
5. Stay away from simplifications; encourage students to think about the complex nature of relationships.
6. Be empathic and respectful to students. Treat their questions with respect, students are trying to understand how these systems worked, and may genuinely not have received education on these topics. Think about the point of view of the student: what experiences and/or background are they bringing to the discussion?

Studying Primary Sources and the Underground Railroad

Primary sources include letters, maps, drawings, photographs, and diaries created by the actual people who witnessed or participated in an event in the past. These documents provide much needed information, in the words of historical people, but also raise questions that we may or may not be able to answer. We are given only the information the author or the creator chose to include; we must interpret unclear information and we must infer information about primary sources that did not survive as complete documents to be studied.

Secondary sources are created by researchers based on primary sources. But because people interpret information differently and can make mistakes, these sources must be used carefully. There are many secondary sources, primarily books, written about the Underground Railroad. But to understand more fully this important movement, we must go back to the actual words written and recorded by the people who struggled and sacrificed to abolish the institution of slavery in America. These records are rare, because of the risk involved in creating them, and thus the study of abolition is a challenge.

Suggested Vocabulary

Below are some terms that you might incorporate in your teaching about slavery and abolition. Once you define the word with students, reinforce their understanding by using the term in context and supporting them in using their own words to describe what it means.

Abolitionist: A person who advocates for or supports the end of slavery.

Slavery: The practice and systems of owning people.

Enslaved person: One who has been forced into slavery and, as a result, lost their freedom and choice. Note that the term “enslaved person” is preferred over “slave” because slave as a noun implies that is the core of that person’s existence, whereas “enslaved” shows that they are human beings who had slavery inflicted upon them.

Evidence: The available facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true.

Fugitive: A person who has escaped from a place or is in hiding, especially to avoid arrest or persecution.

Primary Source: A first-hand account from people who had direct connection to it. Primary sources can include texts, reports, speeches, diaries, letters, datasets, photographs, and more.

Underground Railroad: A loose network of Black and white people that assisted those freeing themselves from slavery. Despite its name, it was neither underground nor a railroad.

Suggested Activities to Supplement Your Visit

Below are some short activities you can incorporate into your classroom practice before and after students participate in the *Journey on the Underground Railroad* program. Please note you may need to scale up or down the activities based on the needs and abilities of your students.

Pre-Visit Activities

Understanding the Past. To help students understand the concept of “the past,” have them create a timeline to share with the class. This exercise will also help students to understand the existence of slavery during the founding of our nation, and the persistence of discriminatory practices in our nation’s history. The events you choose to include in the timeline should be relevant to what your students have been or will be learning about in class.

Lives of Enslaved People. Encourage students to understand the multi-faceted lives of enslaved people, including their work as craftspeople, house servants, field laborers, and sailors, as well as their family life, religion, recreation, food, clothes, and housing. Students write essays that emphasize both the differences and the similarities in the lives of enslaved people throughout the United States. The resources listed in the bibliography at the end of this document, as well as the primary source collections below, can serve as a starting point for this project.

Examining Primary Sources. Support students in searching for primary source accounts of enslaved life and abolitionist activity. Students review the primary sources and record what they know from the documents, what the documents do not tell them, and what they can infer from the documents. As a class, discuss the value each source has for the historical study of this period of American history. Below are some suggested sites:

- New York Public Library’s database of portraits of notable African Americans: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/portrait-collection>. Use the tabs on the left to filter for images from the 19th century.
- University of North Carolina/Chapel Hill Libraries Documenting the American South project: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/>. Includes a searchable collection of e-texts of the narratives of enslaved people.
- The Library of Congress African American Odyssey: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aahtml/aohome.html>. Contains links to related Library of Congress websites and digitized collections:
- University of Virginia American Slave Narratives: An Online Anthology: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/WPA/wpahome.html>. First-hand accounts from formerly enslaved people.
- PBS Africans in America: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/home.html>. Contains a resource bank of annotated historical documents and images.
- Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture’s Learning History Through Objects series: <https://learninglab.si.edu/org/nmaahc>. Curated primary source documents and resources on a variety of topics, including slavery and abolition.

Post-Visit Activities

Why Newton? Looking at maps of Newton, Boston, and the surrounding areas from the 19th century, students investigate why freedom-seekers made their way through Newton. Students can also look at maps of other Underground Railroad routes to find similarities and differences between routes through Newton and those routes.

More Information on Henry Brown. After his escape, Henry “Box” Brown wrote a memoir titled *The Narrative of the Life of Henry “Box” Brown, Written by Himself*. A man named Samuel Smith helped Henry Brown get to freedom. Have students write a letter as either Brown or Smith as they planned the escape. What might they have planned? What risks did each of them face? How did they avoid getting caught? Unfortunately, Smith was later convicted of helping to free two enslaved people and was sentenced to six and a half years in jail. Students can also read passages from this primary source: <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=630IAAAQAAJ&pg=GBS.PP1&hl=en>.

Anti-Slavery Almanac. From 1836-1843 the American Anti-Slavery Society published an annual almanac that included anti-slavery literature, art, and more. At the end of your unit on slavery and abolition, compile a class almanac featuring student-made poems, essays, drawings, etc. to convince people to abolish slavery.

Modern Issues. Support students in identifying what injustices today they might be willing to protest in order to create change. Students identify their chose issue, identify key people, make a plan for bringing awareness to the issue, and brainstorm ways they can make change. This could include, writing letters to local, state, and national representatives; creating protest signs; drafting new laws as a class; making a video for social media; presenting to another class, and more.

Suggested Reading List

The following books can be used with students to support their understanding of the Underground Railroad. The list is organized by grade level.

Book	Author	Grade Level	Description
<i>Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky</i>	Ringgold, Faith	PreK-2	Characters from Tar Beach once again fly-this time in a fantastical sky train run by Harriet Tubman that traces a route on the Underground Railroad.
<i>Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt</i>	Hopkinson, Deborah	PreK-2	Clara, a young slave, works as a seamstress and dreams of freedom. Overhearing drivers talk of escaping North enables her to make a patchwork map of the area. When she escapes, she leaves the quilt behind to guide others.
<i>Frederick Douglass: The Lion Who Wrote History</i>	Myers, Walter Dean	PreK-3	Pictorial biography of the life of Frederick Douglass.
<i>Henry's Freedom Box</i>	Levine, Ellen	PreK-3	Fictionalized account of Henry "Box" Brown, who mailed himself to freedom.
<i>The Bell Rang</i>	Ransome, James E.	PreK-3	A young slave girl witnesses the heartbreak and hopefulness of her family and their plantation when her brother escapes for freedom.
<i>The Drinking Gourd</i>	Monjo, F.N.	K-3	The stars of the Big Dipper have led a runaway slave family to Deacon Fuller's house, a stop on the Underground Railroad. Will Tommy Fuller be able to hide the runaways from a search party—or will the secret passengers be discovered and their hope for freedom destroyed?
<i>Sojourner Truth's Step-stomp Stride</i>	Pinkney, Andrea Davis	K-4	A dynamic portrait of the freed slave whose physical and spiritual strength made her one of America's most powerful abolitionist voices.
<i>Words Set Me Free - The Story of Young Frederick Douglass</i>	Cline-Ransome, Lesa	K-4	Fictionalized biography of the early life of Frederick Douglass, based upon his autobiography.
<i>I Lay My Stitches Down - Poems of American Slavery</i>	Grady, Cynthia	2-3	A collection of poems that chronicles the various experiences of enslaved people in America. Drawn together through imagery drawn from quilting and fiber arts, each poem is spoken from a different perspective.

Book	Author	Grade Level	Description
<i>Freedom's Wings</i>	Wyeth, Sharon Dennis	2-5	Corey Birdsong is a lively young boy in search of freedom in the same country that made an economy of slavery. He and his family are owned by the Hart family of Kentucky. But, when Corey's father flees to the North, Corey and his mother follow.
<i>Anthony Burns - The Defeat and Triumph of A Fugitive Slave</i>	Hamilton, Virginia	3-7	Fictionalized account of Anthony Burn's story, from slavery to escape to capture in Boston from his point of view.
<i>Eliza's Freedom Road: An Underground Railroad Diary</i>	Nolen, Jerdine	3-7	Fictionalized account of a young woman's journey from slavery to freedom.
<i>Harriet Tubman</i>	Petry, Ann	3-7	This classic biography is a vivid and accessible portrait of one of America's most inspiring heroes who guided over 300 enslaved people to freedom.
<i>The Underground Abductor - An Abolitionist Tale</i>	Hale, Nathan	3-9	Graphic novel about Harriet Tubman.
<i>Beyond Freedom</i>	Wall, Patricia Q.	4-6	Fictional work exploring life of free people of African descent on Beacon Hill in the early 19th century.
<i>Hand in Hand - Ten Black Men Who Changed America</i>	Pinkney, Andrea Davis	4-7	This book presents the stories of ten men from different eras in American history, organized chronologically to provide a scope from slavery to the modern day. The stories are accessible, fully drawn narratives offering the subjects' childhood influences, the time and place in which they lived, their accomplishments and motivations, and the legacies they left for future generations as links in the "freedom chain."
<i>Never Forgotten</i>	McKissack, Pat	4-12	Set in West Africa, this a lyrical story-in-verse is about a young black boy who is kidnapped and sold into slavery, and his father who is left behind to mourn the loss of his son.
<i>A Picture of Freedom - The Diary of Clotee, A Slave Girl</i>	McKissack, Pat	5-9	In 1859 twelve-year-old Clotee, a house slave who must conceal the fact that she can read and write, records in her diary her experiences and her struggle to decide whether to escape to freedom.
<i>Maritcha - A Nineteenth-century American Girl</i>	Bolden, Tonya	6-8	A primary-source driven account of 19th century free African American life. Discusses African American participation in the Underground Railroad.

Book	Author	Grade Level	Description
<i>Lest We Forget</i>	Thomas, Velma Maia	6-12	An interactive, three-dimensional study of African American history traces the history of slavery in the United States, from the agonizing journey from Africa to America, through the experiences of slaves, to the final emancipation.
<i>Crossing Ebenezer Creek</i>	Bolden, Tonya	7-9	Historical fiction about the December 9, 1864 Massacre at Ebenezer Creek.
<i>True North - A Novel of the Underground Railroad</i>	Lasky, Kathryn	7-9	In the years before the Civil War, the paths of two adolescent girls - one a Boston socialite, the other a runaway slave from Virginia - converge, and together they embark on a treacherous journey to the Canadian border.
<i>The Glory Field</i>	Myers, Walter Dean	7-9	An in-depth look at five generations of an African American family traces the Lewises from Africa to slavery in the southern United States.
<i>Copper Sun</i>	Draper, Sharon M.	7-12	Fictionalized account of the life of enslaved girl from capture in Africa to freedom.
<i>Nightjohn</i>	Paulsen, Gary	7-12	Fictional work traces the experiences of a 12-year-old slave girl in the 1850s.

Background Information for Educators

The Jackson family and the Jackson Homestead

Edward Jackson, one of the earliest settlers in Newton, arrived in 1642 from London. In 1646 he purchased a 500-acre farm covering much of what is today Newton Corner and Newtonville. On this land he built a saltbox house in about 1670. Over the years the Jackson family grew, and in 1809 Timothy Jackson, Edward's great-great-great-grandson, built the Homestead that stands today. This Federal-style house, marked by its symmetry, was "a fine house for its time" according to William Jackson's daughter, Ellen, who lived her entire life in the house.



The Jackson Family, 1846

Timothy's son, William, was living in Boston when he inherited the house. He returned to Newton in 1820, with his family. William was involved in local and state government, was a prime mover in the creation of the Newton Temperance Society, and foresaw the possibilities for suburban development in Newton. He played a major role in attracting the first railroad to Newton, the one that would run in front of his home. He also moved the tallow (animal fat) soap and candle manufactory, started by his father, from Boston to the Homestead.

The Jackson Homestead was a busy place in the nineteenth century. William had a large family. He married Hannah Woodward in 1806 and, after her death in 1812, he married Mary Bennett, Hannah's nurse. He had five children with Hannah and twelve children with Mary (three of whom died as infants).

The Jacksons as Abolitionists

In Newton during the 19th Century, William Jackson and his family opened the Jackson Homestead as a stop on the Underground Railroad. Because William and his family were breaking the law to hide fugitives, they kept few records. We have only one documented account of a freedom seeker sheltered at the Homestead. The stay was recorded in a book of recollections written by William's daughter, Ellen. However, a Mr. Bowditch, an Underground Railroad conductor, wrote in a letter that he often brought fugitives to the Homestead.



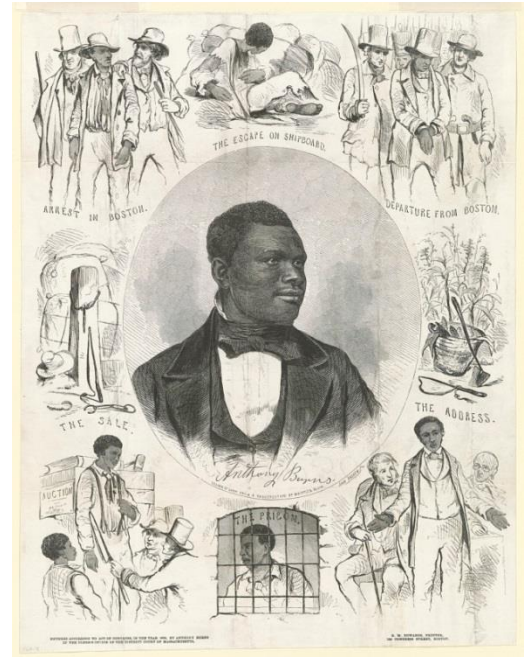
The Jackson Homestead and Museum

William's brother, Francis Jackson, was also an abolitionist. He was a colleague of William Lloyd Garrison, editor of *The Liberator* in Boston. As the treasurer of the Boston Vigilance Committee, Francis raised monies to help people house and care for fugitives. William died in 1855 and Francis died in 1861; neither lived to see the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution that ended the institution of slavery in the United States.

Northern Slavery, Abolition, and the Underground Railroad

Enslaved Africans were first brought to what would be the United States in 1619. Enslaved people were owned in all of the American colonies, including thousands in Massachusetts, until after the American Revolution. We know of a total of 36 slaves owned in Newton during the 17th and early 18th centuries; most enslaved people, however, were never recorded.

In 1780 Massachusetts ruled slavery unconstitutional, one of the first northern states to do so. However, slavery in Massachusetts was not formally made illegal, and slavery persisted in the state through the 1830's. Ideals like "All men are created equal . . ." from the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the lack of large-scale farming contributed to the decline of slavery in the north. In 1808 the United States legally abolished its trade in enslaved people from Africa, after approximately 250,000 had been brought to the United States. But the institution of slavery continued on American plantations in the southern states.



Anthony Burns / drawn by Barry from a daguerotype [sic] by Whipple & Black; John Andrews, sc.

Enslaved people, through their own bravery and without the benefit of the power of reading and writing, had always been escaping to freedom. Formal abolition movements began in the 1830s with the establishment of vigilance committees and anti-slavery societies, including those in Boston, to prevent the return of freedom seekers to their owners. While abolitionists were united in their desire to abolish slavery, their motives for involvement were different: ethical, economic, political, and religious. In addition, they disagreed on the best method to end slavery: legislation, isolated violence, or outright war.

The term "Underground Railroad" did not gain its legendary status until after the Civil War ended. Commercial railroads, started in the 1830s, needed to be well established for the term to have any meaning. The Underground Railroad was neither centralized nor organized nationally. Freedom seekers used many routes, on land and sea, to flee slavery and reach freedom. Not all enslaved people escaped north. Some went west into the American territories. Others went further south into the swamps of Florida or the islands off Central America. But many went north, as far as Canada where Great Britain had banned slavery in 1833. Much of the abolition activity in Massachusetts, particularly Boston, took place around and after 1850, the year the United States Fugitive Slave Act was passed. A similar law had been passed in 1793 to uphold slave owners' rights to their enslaved people. The 1850 law required the return of freedom seekers to their owners, if necessary, with the help of northern law officials.

Related Content Standards from the MA History & Social Science Framework

Grade 5

Topic 1. Early colonization and growth of colonies [5.T1]

- Describe the origins of slavery, its legal status in all the colonies throughout the 18th century, and the prevalence of slave ownership, including by many of the country's early leaders (e.g., George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, George Mason).
- Describe the Triangular Trade and the harsh conditions of trans-Atlantic voyages (called the Middle Passage) for enslaved Africans.
- Compare and contrast the living and working conditions of enslaved and free Africans in the colonies in the 18th century, and explain how some enslaved people sought their freedom.

Topic 5. Slavery, the legacy of the Civil War, and the struggle for civil rights for all [5.T5]

- Trace the state-by-state abolition of slavery in the Norther states in the 18th and 19th centuries and the expansion of slavery into western states; explain the effects of the 1808 law that banned the importation of slaves into the United States and explain how a robust slave trade nonetheless continued within the United States until the mid-19th century.

Grades 9-12

Topic 3. Economic growth in the North, South, and West [USI.T3]

- Research primary sources such as antebellum newspapers, slave narratives, accounts of slave auctions, and the Fugitive Slave Act, to analyze one of the following acts of slave life and resistance (e.g., the Stono Rebellion of 1739, the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804, the rebellion of Denmark Vesey of 1822, the rebellion of Nat Turner in 1831; the role of the Underground Railroad; the development of ideas of racial superiority; the African American Colonization Society movement to deport and resettle freed African Americans in a colony in West Africa).

Topic 4. Social, political, and religious change [USI.T4]

- Using primary sources, research the reform movements in the United States in the early to mid-19th century, concentrating on one of the following and considering its connections to other aspects of reform:
 - The Abolitionist movement, the reasons individual men and women fought for their cause, and the responses of southern and northern white men and women to abolitionism.

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