

**Slavery's Messages of Hope**  
Submitted by Peggy Smyth  
Sweetwater Elementary School  
Sweetwater, Tennessee

**Unit:** Slavery's Messages of Hope

**Lesson Title:** Underground Railroad Quilts

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup>

**Essential Question related to Vital Theme:** How important was it to be able to read a quilt?

**Lesson Time:** Two class periods.

**Curriculum Standards:**

4.1.08 Use active comprehension strategies to derive meaning while reading and to check for understanding after reading.

4.1.10 Develop skills to facilitate reading to learn in a variety of content areas.

4.1.12 Experience various literary and media genres.

4.6.spi.1. recognize how groups work cooperatively to accomplish goals and encourage change (i.e., American Revolution, founding of Tennessee, the failure of the Articles of Confederation, colonies).

4.6.spi.2. determine how the issue of slavery caused political and economic tensions between government policy and people's beliefs (i.e., abolitionists, plantation owners, state's rights, central government, Loyalists).

**Technology used and how:** Class will view website  
<[http://home.columbus.rr.com/bradshaw/UNDERRR/quilt/underground\\_railroad\\_quilt.htm](http://home.columbus.rr.com/bradshaw/UNDERRR/quilt/underground_railroad_quilt.htm)>

**Materials:** Students choice: markers, crayons, construction paper, paper, fabric, etc.

**Activity description (s) and overview of instructional strategies:**

Students will view the website that shows different designs and meanings. The class will divide into groups and each group will make a quilt section with message

**Supporting Assignment/Homework:**

Students will complete their section at home. The pieces will be connected together the next class period.

**Assessment:** The groups will present their quilts to the class and explain the meaning of their design.

**Slave's Messages of Hope**  
Submitted by Peggy Smyth  
Sweetwater Elementary School  
Sweetwater, Tennessee

Personal freedom was always at the core when people were looking for reasons to settle in the New World. Freedom of religious practice, freedom from the cast system in England and freedom to choose one's personal way of life. Personal freedoms however were not within the grasp of African Americans when they were brought to this new land. Their reason for coming to this country was not of their own choosing but was merely to provide a work force for the newly settled lands in America. In coming to this country; however, they brought with them an African culture that sustained them through their darkest and most trying years. Religious teachings by their owners taught them to put their faith in a higher power and provided them with hope. Hope was deep within their soul that one day they too would be free. Free to work as they chose. Free to raise their own families without the fear of them being sold away. This hope that they shared with each other could be heard in their music, seen in their quilts and expressed in the voices of the abolitionists. Messages were sent throughout the land of freedom to be heard by all. The messages were stories of inspiration to keep going, stories of the past, stories of the future, stories of courage, and stories of hope.

From the very beginning, music was an integral part in the lives of African American people. Everyone participated either in singing, dancing or in playing instruments. Music was their way of preserving history, keeping in rhythm while working, celebrating an event in their lives, in worship and provided an escape from their servitude if only for a small period of time. During good times or bad, music was part of their everyday lives, and could be heard throughout the entire slave community. (Williamsburg)

The enslaved people in American were a mystery, yet a necessity to the slaveholders. Because the slave holders couldn't understand the slaves language and were mystified by their music and ability to play musical instruments, they feared that they must take control of the situation. The slaveholder's answer to this problem was to ban drum playing that they feared was some sort of method of communication with other slaves. The slaves were considered heathens much like the Native Americans and the slaveholder convinced themselves that they must protect the slaves from their heathen ways. The aim of the slaveholder was to demand that the slaves forget Africa and be content with their lot in life.

The slaveholders didn't believe that the slave was a human being with a soul. Therefore, teaching religion posed a problem for the slaveholder. The answer came in teaching the slaves the parts of the Bible dealing with slaves being loyal to their masters.

Slaveholders hide themselves behind the church. A more praying, preaching, psalm-singing people cannot be found than the slaveholders in the South. The religion of the South is referred to everyday, to prove that slaveholders are good and pious men, but with their pretensions, and all of the aid, which they get from the Northern church, they cannot succeed in deceiving the Christian portion of the world. Their child-robbing, man stealing, woman-whipping, chain-forging, marriage-destroying, slave-manufacturing, man-slaying religion, will not be received as genuine; and the people of the free states cannot expect to live in union with slaveholders, without becoming contaminated with slavery (La Bohne.)

Slaves began to embrace various aspects of Christianity. They treasured the idea of an afterlife and were sure that in this afterlife there would be no slavery or slaveholders. This belief gave them hope in the future, however, their goal remained to be free here on earth and as well as

in heaven.

Music became the instrument used to send hidden messages or codes. The words remained the same, but the meaning of the phrases took on new meaning. Songs such as *Follow the Drinking Gourd*, *Wade in the Water*, *Let Us Break Bread Together* and *Go Down Moses* all had hidden meaning in them.

*Follow the Drinking Gourd* was sung telling the slaves who wanted to escape that they must follow the North Star that was located off the end of the Big Dipper. This song also let them know that it was best to travel in winter. The mention of the rivers meeting referred to the Tombigbee River, Tennessee River and later the Ohio River. At the end there would be someone from the Underground Railroad to meet them.

*Wade in the Water* was used to express the importance of water being able to hide from the dogs hunting them. Water also provided the possibility of food along the way. Again it was important to travel in the winter.

*Let Us Break Bread Together* was sung when it was necessary to have a meeting in the morning. These meetings were used for a time of prayer, to talk about important matters or the most recent plan for an escape.

*Go Down Moses* was sung comparing the plight of the American slaves to the plight of the Jews of long ago. Soon people referred to Harriet Tubman as “Moses” because of her efforts to lead slaves to freedom. (LaBohne)

Another method used to communicate important information to slaves on the run was through the intricate details sewn in the form of patterns on quilts. Not being able to read or write, quilt designs were a welcomed sight to the slaves. These quilts forewarned the runaway slave of what to expect next on their journey and could be hung in plain sight without fear of

slave catchers apprehending them.

Some symbols that were sewn into the quilts indicated sails, meaning that a ship would take them across important waterways. The North Star pattern reminded them to travel in a northerly direction. The Log Cabin design informed them of a safe house ahead. The Drunkard's Path design told of the necessity of traveling not in a straight line but from east to west.

(Weadon)

The Underground Railroad was the vehicle many slaves chose by which to escape the South. A well thought out network of routes had been painstakingly put into place by abolitionists, mainly from the north. The Quakers were the predominant religious group that began speaking out against the institution of slavery and helped slaves escape to the north. As time went on, more and more people in the north and upper south began to spread the word of the evils of slavery. (Weadon)

Code words were used by the slaves as they made their way north. Examples of the code words are:

Abolitionists = a person who demanded immediate emancipation of slaves

Agent = coordinator, plotting course of escape, making contacts

Drinking gourd = Big Dipper and the North Star

Freedom train or Gospel train = code name for the Underground Railroad

Heaven or Promised Land = Canada

Preachers = leaders, speakers underground railroad

Shepherds = people escorting slaves

Station = place of safety and temporary refuge, safe-house

Station Master = keeper of safe-house

Stockholder = donor of money, clothing, or food to Underground Railroad  
(Toonari)

There were many different people contributing to the abolitionist movement in America. William Lloyd Garrison was the editor of "The Liberator" an abolitionist newspaper. Sojourner Truth, Harriett Tubman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frances Watkins Harper were women who became famous for the speeches they gave on the subject of abolishing slavery. Wendell Phillips became known as the best speaker on the subject. Former slave Fredrick Douglas became known for his writings and lobbying force that he used to get changes to take place in the federal government. Harriett Beecher Stowe's eye opening novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* made a profound difference in how America looked at the institution of slavery. There were numerous lesser-known people who contributed greatly to the cause of liberty. (Stewart)

As the years passed and the slaves continued to be in bondage, the Underground Railroad continued to lead more slaves to freedom in the North. The difficulty of escaping north became more difficult with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Laws in 1850. This law meant that a former slave living in the North could be recaptured and sent back South. This made it necessary for many of the more famous former slaves to move again either to Canada or perhaps England. (Stewart)

Messages were being sent across the land through the use of music, quilts and abolitionists. There was an undercurrent of change that was about to take place before the Civil War. This change was bound to happen but to many it took far too many years to take place.

With a deep faith in their Creator, the slaves sang of the land across the Jordan. They sang of the Promised Land and peace that would be experienced by all. These messages were messages of hope for the future. These messages were positive goals that they held near to their

hearts, as they were required to continue in their lives of servitude. Even though it was a dark existence, to the slave the idea of hope at the end of the journey kept them going. The strategies of using their music and quilts to hide escape plans and other bits of information, they worked together toward the common goal of freedom. The abolitionist helped prepare the way but it was the courage shown by the runaway slave and the determination of obtaining freedom that kept them going.

## Annotated Bibliography

Crews, Ed. "Juba and Djembe: Music Helps Interpret Slavery." Colonial Williamsburg Journal. Winter 2002-2003. 23 July 2005  
<<http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/winter02-03/music.cfm>>

This article was a wonderful resource of slave music.

LaBohne, Merida P. "Lessons From the Past." 2003. 24 July 2005  
<<http://www.uh.edu/hti/cu/2003/v01/05.htm>>

LaBohne's article was the best information that I could find on music and the hidden meanings.

Stewart, James Brewer. "Abolitionist movement." July 2005  
<<http://afgen.com/abmovement.html>>

Provided an overall look at the abolitionist movement.

Toonari. "Code Words." Black History 25 July 2005.  
<[http://www.africanaonline.com/slavery\\_codewords.htm](http://www.africanaonline.com/slavery_codewords.htm)>

Toonari gave a list of code words and their meanings.

Weadon, Patrick D. "Follow the Drinking Gourd." 26, July 2005  
<<http://www.nsa.gov/publications/pubi00011.cfm>>

Weadon provided information on quilts and their meanings.

**Slavery's Messages of Hope**  
Submitted by Peggy Smyth  
Sweetwater Elementary School  
Sweetwater, Tennessee

**Unit:** Slaves: Messages of Hope

**Lesson Title:** Messages in the music.

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup>

**Essential Question related to Vital Theme:** What did the words in the music mean?

**Lesson Time:** Two class periods.

**Curriculum Standards - list:**

4.1.08 Use active comprehension strategies to derive meaning while reading and to check for understanding after reading.

4.1.spi.2. identify cultural groups who inhabited North America in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (i.e., Puritans, Quakers, Spanish, French).

4.1.spi.3 determine how various groups resolve conflict (i.e., school, tribal councils, courts).

**Technology used and how:** Computers can be used to investigate spiritual. CD "African American Spirituals: The Concert Tradition" will be played in class.

**Materials:** Student worksheets, pencils, paper, and CD.

**Activity description (s) and overview of instructional strategies:**

The class will have the works of "Wade in the Water" to read as the CD plays. The class will work in their groups to see if they can figure out the message in the song. The class will also be asked to decide when the song would have been sung.

The class will discuss their interpretation of the songs. The teacher will (if necessary) give the

correct meaning of the word and inform the class when the song would have been sung.

**Assessment:** Working in groups, the children will write a song with hidden messages. This song can use the tune to another song, but use different words. The group will “sing” their finished product to the class. They will give a copy of the words to the class to see if they can guess the hidden meanings.

An excellent website for information on slave music is:  
<<http://www.uh.edu/hti/cu/2003/v01/05.htm>>

**Slavery's Messages of Hope**  
Submitted by Peggy Smyth  
Sweetwater Elementary School  
Sweetwater, Tennessee

**Unit:** Slaves: Messages of Hope

**Lesson Title:** Time Line

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup>

**Essential Question related to Vital Theme:** When, where, why and how did slaves arrive in America.

**Lesson Time:** This lesson is on going. Will update the class time line when pertinent to the lesson being studied.

**Curriculum Standards - list:**

1.03 Recognize the contributions of individuals and people of various ethnic, racial, religious, socioeconomic groups to the development of civilizations.

4.03 Understand the rights, responsibilities, and privileges of citizens living in a democratic republic.

4.04 Recognize the qualities of a contributing citizen in our participatory democracy.

4.1spi.2 identify cultural groups who inhabited North America in the 17<sup>th</sup> century

4.2.spi.1 recognize the concept of supply and demand

4.1.12 Experience various literary and media genres.

4.6.spi.2. determine how the issue of slavery caused political and economic tensions between government policy and people's beliefs (i.e., abolitionists, plantation owners, state's rights, central government, Loyalists).

**Technology used and how:** Computer will be used to research in more detail the information that is being added to the class time line.

**Materials:** Large roll of paper for the class time line.

Receipt paper or roll of computer paper for the student time line.

Color pencils for students.

Markers for class time line.

Textbook: Social Studies: Early United States (Harcourt Brace 2002 Ed.)

Important dates: [http://www.africanaonline.com/slavery\\_timeline.htm](http://www.africanaonline.com/slavery_timeline.htm)

**Activity description (s) and overview of instructional strategies:**

(This time line will begin at the beginning of the school year. As we study the early years of the United States and list the important events, the students will have a clearer picture of how our history unfolded.)

**Assessment:** Flow Chart: Students will be able to show cause and effect of events that were on the time line.



## Flow Chart

Show cause and effect of events on the time line.

1<sup>st</sup> Event

2<sup>nd</sup> Event

3<sup>rd</sup> Event

4<sup>th</sup> Event

**Slavery's Messages of Hope**  
Submitted by Peggy Smyth  
Sweetwater Elementary School  
Sweetwater, Tennessee

**Unit:** Slavery's Messages of Hope

**Lesson Title:** Composition on an Abolitionist

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Essential Question related to Vital Theme:** Who were the people who were working for the freedom of the slaves? What did they do to get a message of hope to the slaves and America?

**Lesson Time:** One class period

**Curriculum Standards - list:**

4.2.spi.1. choose a topic sentence for a paragraph.

4.2.spi.2. rearrange sentences to form a sequential, coherent paragraph.

4.1.spi.3 determine how various groups resolve conflict (i.e., school, tribal councils, courts).

**Technology used and how:** Computer will be used to search for information.

[<http://www.answers.com/topic/abolitionism>](http://www.answers.com/topic/abolitionism)

**Materials:** paper, pencils and project sheet completed from "People of Hope" lesson.

**Activity description (s) and overview of instructional strategies:**

Students will take the information from their project sheet they used in their lesson entitled "People of Hope" and write an expository composition.

The elements of an expository composition will be taught before the students begin.

**Supporting Assignment/Homework:** Complete the composition.

**Assessment:** The finished product will be graded.

**Slavery's Messages of Hope**  
Submitted by Peggy Smyth  
Sweetwater Elementary School  
Sweetwater, Tennessee

**Unit: Slaves: A Message of Hope**

**Lesson Title:** People of Hope

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Essential Question related to Vital Theme:** Who were the people who were working for the freedom of the slaves? What did they do to give a message of hope to the slaves?

**Lesson Time:** Two week project.

**Curriculum Standards - list:**

4.1.08 Use active comprehension strategies to derive meaning while reading and to check for understanding after reading.

4.1.tpi.24. use library media sources to access information (e.g., encyclopedias, Internet, electronic catalog).

4.1.spi.2. identify cultural groups who inhabited North America in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (i.e., Puritans, Quakers, Spanish, French).

4.1.spi.3 determine how various groups resolve conflict (i.e., school, tribal councils, courts).

4.1.tpi.5 create a poster about a cultural group.

**Technology used and how:** Computer will be used to search for information.  
<<http://www.answers.com/topic/abolitionism>>

**Materials:** Poster board, markers.

**Activity description (s) and overview of instructional strategies:**

Students will be given a list of abolitionists who were noted for their contribution in urging the ending of slavery. They will research the person they are to investigate and create a poster that depicts the life of that person.

Students will be able to research their person on the internet or use the books in the school or public library. Students will be given a project sheet to follow during their investigation.

**Assessment:**

The students will present their poster to the class and share the information they have learned about their abolitionists.

Grades will be given according to the information the student was able to get using the project sheet as a guide.

Project Sheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Project sheet due to be signed and returned \_\_\_\_\_.

Project to be completed by \_\_\_\_\_.

\*\*\*\*\*

You will be researching an abolitionist for this project. You may research your person on the computer, in the school library or our public library. The grade you earn will be based on the details you present about your character.

To aid you in your search, I am providing a list of information you may want to investigate.

Name of abolitionist \_\_\_\_\_

Early life: Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_

Where they lived: \_\_\_\_\_

Information about parents: \_\_\_\_\_

Siblings: \_\_\_\_\_

Education: \_\_\_\_\_

What life was like in early years: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Middle years: Job/Career: \_\_\_\_\_

Training/education for job/career: \_\_\_\_\_

Community effort: \_\_\_\_\_

Accomplishments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Late years: How will this person be remembered? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Year of death: \_\_\_\_\_

This information comes from: <<http://www.answers.com/topic/abolitionism>>

## Notable American abolitionists

[Gamaliel Bailey](#)

[Henry Ward Beecher](#)

William Henry Brisbane

[John Brown](#)

[Levi Coffin](#)

[Richard Dillingham](#)

[Frederick Douglass](#)

[Ralph Waldo Emerson](#)

[Calvin Fairbank](#)

[Benjamin Franklin](#)

[Amos Noë Freeman](#)

[Thomas Garret](#)

[William Lloyd Garrison](#)

[Angelina Emily Grimke](#)

Laura Smith Haviland

Lewis Hayden

[Julia Ward Howe](#)

[Samuel Gridley Howe](#)

[Benjamin Lundy](#)

[Elijah Lovejoy](#)

[James Russell Lowell](#)

[Maria White Lowell](#)

[Henry G. Ludlow](#)

[Lucretia Mott](#)

[Wendell Phillips](#)

[Ernestine Rose](#)

[Benjamin Rush](#)

[Gerrit Smith](#)

[Silas Soule](#)

[Lysander Spooner](#)

[Elizabeth Cady Stanton](#)

[Henry Stanton](#)

[William Still](#)

[Harriet Beecher Stowe](#)

[Arthur Tappan](#)

[Henry David Thoreau](#)

[Sojourner Truth](#)

[Harriet Tubman](#)

Delia Webster

[Theodore Dwight Weld](#)