

The Underground Railroad

Note to teachers: This supplement includes a discussion guide, lessons and Michigan Content Standards to use with the Michigan Time Traveler page. You may reproduce the pages in this supplement to use with students.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

(SOC 1.3. Analyze and Interpret the Past; SOC 1.4. Judging Decision from the Past; SOC III.2. Ideals of American Democracy; and SOC III.3. Democracy in Action; SOC VII.1. Responsible Personal Conduct)

- **What was the Underground Railroad?** How did it work? Who was involved with it? What would it have been like to be part of it—as a fugitive? a conductor? an operator? Why was it an important part of American history?
- **Ramptown and Uncovering Clues to Ramptown—Virginia Springsteen's Story.** What was Ramptown? Michigan is far away from the states that permitted slavery, but it played an important role in the Underground Railroad. What role did Michigan's geography play in the Underground Railroad? What role did Michigan's citizens play?
- **The Crosswhite Story.** Who were the Crosswhites? Discuss the meaning of each core value—life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, the common good, equality, justice, diversity, truth, popular sovereignty and patriotism—in the context of the Crosswhite story. How would the people who lived in Marshall describe their own actions in terms of these values? How would the slave catchers describe these Marshall citizens' actions? Who do you think was right? What risks did the Marshall people take to do what they believed was right? Can you think of examples where you might take a risk to do what is right?

ACTIVITY ONE: Who is telling the story?

(ELA 2. Meaning and Communication: Writing; ELA 6. Voice; ELA 9 Depth of Understanding; ELA 10. Ideas in Action; ELA 12. Critical Standards)

History is shared in many different ways. Individuals sometimes write autobiographical stories. Historians and journalists write about other people's stories. When researching the Underground Railroad we may find **primary sources** created at the time, such as documents, official records, court records, photographs, speeches, first-person accounts, letters, maps, diaries/journals, artwork, reminiscences, advertisements or artifacts. We may also find many **secondary sources**, those written by an individual not immediately or directly involved in the event, including articles and books written by historians or journalists several years later or oral histories of the descendants of fugitives.

This exercise asks students to consider who is writing the text and from what perspective. The viewpoint of the writer influences the content, significance and validity of the document. The timeframe is also important. Was the document written at the time of the event, a few years later or 100 years later? Even two people writing about an event right after it happens may give differing accounts.

Step One: Analyze the *Michigan Tribune* article.

Discuss from whose perspective the article is written. Today we try to make a clear distinction between a news story reporting facts and an editorial giving an opinion. In 1847, newspapers were not as careful about this. What is fact in this story? What is opinion? What did you learn about the people living in the community? The Quakers? The fugitives? What did you learn about the Crosswhites?

Step Two: Analyze the *Sunday Morning Call* article.

Perry Sanford told this story to a reporter in 1884. Who did Perry Sanford make the heroes of his story? Who

was in the wrong in his story? What words let you know that this story was written a long time ago? How does this kind of interview story differ from the *Michigan Tribune* article? See the Library of Congress American Memory for examples of Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers Project 1936-1938: memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html.

Step Three: Create a map and write a letter.

On a map have students locate Kentucky, Michigan and the states in between. Have them estimate how many miles it is from Carroll County, Kentucky, where the Crosswhites started their trip to Marshall, Michigan. How many more miles is it to Canada?

Ask students to pretend they are one of Adam and Sara Crosswhites' children. Set the scene as follows: You are now grown up. You want to write a story about your family's experiences for future generations. Write about what it was like escaping on the Underground Railroad. What was it like living in Michigan? How did you feel when the slave catchers came to town to get you? How did you feel when they broke into your home? How did you feel when people from the community helped you escape to Canada?

ACTIVITY TWO: Think like an archaeologist.

(SOC II.1. Diversity of People, Places and Cultures)

DISCUSS: Archaeology helps us learn about past human life and culture through the study of artifacts—things that people made and used. Written documents are created in a conscious process. Archaeology is produced unconsciously when people lose or throw away things. One of the benefits of archaeology is that it records history whether an individual intends to or not. It gives you a record for those who had no voice, no oral tradition, no written accounts. Sometimes archaeology contradicts a written story. Archaeologists find evidence for things you did not know or didn't think of. Artifacts help develop a broader picture of the past.

Ask students to pretend they have to leave home and can only carry with them what fits in their knapsack.

- Have each student collect at least one artifact—such as an item of clothing, a cooking utensil, a photograph and/or an archival document—from each member of their family and bring the collection to school in a knapsack or bag. (They can bring more than one artifact from each family member if it fits in the knapsack or bag.)
- Put the knapsacks and bags in a pile.
- Have each student pick another student's knapsack or bag, explore the contents and write about what they can hypothesize about the life of that particular family based on their observations of the artifacts in the knapsack or bag. They can think about these questions and more: How many males? How many females? What are their ages? Do animals live in the house?
- Ask students to explain how they came to their conclusions.
- Have the students read their stories to their classmates.
- Have the owner of each knapsack or bag talk about the artifacts that they brought and verify the "archaeologist's" conclusions.

INTERNET RESOURCES:

- Take the minitour of the Michigan Historical Museum's "Civil War Gallery"
<http://www.sos.state.mi.us/history/museum/explore/museums/hismus/prehist/civilwar/index.html>
- Themes in Michigan History—Black History
<http://www.sos.state.mi.us/history/museum/techstuf/themes.html>
- The Digital Classroom Primary Sources, Activities, and Training for Educators and Students
<http://www.nara.gov/education/classrm.html>
- Africans in America (WGBH)
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/index.html>

MICHIGAN TRIBUNE.

VOL. 1. BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 1847. No. 25

Recapture of Slaves

Our village was thrown into a fever of excitement day before yesterday, by an effort on the part of four Kentuckians, to arrest a family of colored persons, alleged to be fugitives from slavery, and take them back into slavery.

One of the Kentuckians was here a week or two ago, and on Monday night the rest of them arrived; on Wednesday morning about sunrise, aided by constable Dixon, they proceeded to the house of Adam Crosswhite, a mulatto man, which they broke into, and attempted to bring him and his family before a magistrate. A crowd soon collected, and some strong and noisy demonstrations were made; the results of which was that the Kentuckians gave up the immediate pursuit of the object.

Meanwhile a civil action was commenced against them for breaking into Crosswhite's house. This was tried yesterday and resulted in a verdict of \$100 and costs all against the Kentuckians. Following it came an action for assault and battery on C. Hackette, a colored man, by one of the Kentuckians, which was in progress when we went to press. [Marshall Expounder]

We are further informed by the Expounder, and other sources, that the colored people are in Canada, where the protection refused them in a Republic, will be extended to them under a Monarchy, against the assaults of wicked men. It is a credit to the citizens of Marshall, that, in this instance, they showed themselves alive to the feelings of humanity and justice. We should like to know what business constable Dixon had to aid these southern slave catchers? It is said that our fellow citizen, John Van Arman, Esq. made a splendid speech on the occasion.

The Sunday Morning Call

VOI. 1. No. 1 Battle Creek, MICH. SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 8, 1884. PRICE, 6 CENTS

Excerpt from "OUT OF BONDAGE"

A Reminiscence of the Under Ground Railroad"

How Perry Sanford Escaped from Slavery—Thrilling Experiences on his way to Michigan.

"The colored people have good reasons for respecting and honoring Quakers," said Perry Sanford, one of our well known colored citizens, to a SUNDAY MORNING CALL reporter, while conversing together upon the street.

"Why so," said the reporter.

"Because they were the first people to espouse the anti-slavery cause, and did practical work by inaugurating and assisting to carry on the underground railway system. . . .

"Did you escape from slavery by the Underground railway?"

"I did."

"You said that your first permanent stopping place was in Cass County?"

"Yes, we stopped with the Quakers on Young's Prairie, about three miles from Cassopolis, and near Diamond Lake. . . . and then went to work for old Stephen Bogue. It was here that some forty slave dealers swooped down on the fugitives early one morning and captured them."

"Did they capture you?"

"No. I got away"

"How did you make your escape?"

"I and Rube Stephens were living with Joe Sandford and his family which consisted of his wife and little daughter. It was in one of Stephen Bogue's log cabins. . . . About 4 o'clock there came a knock at the door. Sanford enquired: 'Who's there.' 'A friend' came the reply. We all recognized it as the voice of Jack Graves . . . the brother of my [former] master. He said: 'Open the door. . . .' "Sandford attempted to run but was captured, as was also his wife and daughter.

Rube Stephens ran out and succeeded in escaping. . . . Our cabin roof was what is known as a shake roof. I pushed aside the shakes, crawled out and then jumped to the ground. If you ever saw lively running I did it then.

I reached a corn field and got away from them. I alarmed Stephen Bogue and he mounted his horse and ran him to Cassopolis to alarm the people there Mrs. Bogue secreted me upstairs in their house

"[Wm. Casey] had a terrible fight with them. . . . Three of them came into his cabin, when he grabbed a three legged stool and gave them battle. . . . Mrs. Casey escaped to the cornfield, where one of her young masters attacked her, but she was too much for him and gave him a dreadful licking and escaped"

"Rube Stephens, when he escaped, started for 'Bill Jones' house, a Quaker. . . . Jones mounted his horse and headed off the whole party until a party of forty men came up from Cassopolis under command of that good old Quaker, Stephen Bogue, who had got out the papers for their arrest for destroying his property and breaking into his houses. They were taken to Cassopolis, and darkies and all put into jail."

"How did the trial result?"

"I have forgotten. Besides this trial they then commenced suit for the recovery of their slaves. . . . The trial lasted several weeks, when the verdict was given that colored men were not property in Michigan. Before this, however, all of them had made their escape from jail. Every time, they would take them from the jail to the court house one or two of them would very mysteriously escape from the Sheriff. The slave owners finally went home an awfully disgusted and mad crowd."

Note: Joe Sandford's name was sometimes spelled Sanford in the article.