UNDERGROUND RAILROAD COMPREHENSIVE UNIT PLAN*

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Abstract

This is a 10-day unit plan on the Underground Railroad intended for 3-5 graders. Although structured as a CALLA unit for ESL learners, it is ready for use in any classroom. Inspired by Jeanette Winter's book "Follow the Drinking Gourd," this unit explores the historical and social significance of the Underground Railroad. The unit incorporates vocabulary related to the movement, relates the life of escaped slaves, analyzes songs of the time, defines Polaris and the Big Dipper, and discusses the life of Harriet Tubman. Students explore these concepts using a variety of learning strategies, such as graphic organizers, heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings, Internet research, group presentations, and journal writing.

Underground Railroad Unit

Grade Level

3rd - 5th grade

Subject

History/Social Science

ESL Level

Pre-Production to Intermediate and Advanced

Topic

Follow the Drinking Gourd, in conjunction with Black History Month

CA Standards

English Language Arts 1.7, 2.4, 2.5 and Visual and Performing Arts/Music 3.1, Earth Science 4a, History-Social Science 3.4

Content Objectives

- Students will understand the historical and social significance of the Underground Railroad
- Students will comprehend the multiple uses of music across cultures and time periods
- Students will learn the patterns of stars in the night sky, particularly Polaris and the Big Dipper

Language Objectives

- Read, comprehend and orally communicate the vocabulary related to the Underground Railroad movement
- Analyze song lyrics for hidden meanings, memorize song lyrics and present chorally.

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Learning Strategies

- Listening and speaking strategies, heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings
- Activating prior knowledge
- Conducting research via the Internet
- Graphic organizers
- Writing, illustrating

Materials

- Follow the Drinking Gourd book by Jeanette Winter
- "Reading Rainbow" Video
- "Shakin' a Tailfeather" audio CD (containing Follow the Drinking Gourd and other slave songs)
- Glow-in-the-dark markers or glitter-glue
- Chart Paper
- Black construction paper
- Dot-to-dot of Big Dipper handouts
- Copies of song lyrics
- Computers/Internet
- Wanted posters for escaped slaves
- "Writing My Ideas" handouts
- Crayons, markers, etc
- Images and questions from http://www.siue.edu/EDUCATION/AAM/lesson/gallagher/AAM%20webpage/gourd%20ta

Procedures:

Preparation Day 1

Students will be divided into 4 groups. Each group will be given a set of pictures; group #1 former slaves, group #2 former slaves, group #3 drinking gourd/big dipper, group #4 plantation houses and slave quarters. Each group will also have a set of questions to answer.

Preparation Day 2

Explain the significance of Black History Month. Use a pictorial input lesson to introduce the concept of slavery, freedom, Underground Railroad, and other key vocabulary words found in the story. Post the new vocabulary words on the pocket chart.

Preparation Day 3

Play the audio of the song "Follow the Drinking Gourd" as students prepare for beginning of class. Activate prior knowledge about what we remember from the previous day's reading.

Preparation Day 4

Third read, concentrating on the technique of visualization. Pause frequently to ask students to think about how Molly is feeling at any given point. Share my own visualizations of the text. Tell students how I would describe the illustrations, and describe certain parts of the illustration such as the dogs' teeth or the family huddled together. Have students visualize themselves in Molly's place, contemplating how Molly is feeling. Model this, using the illustrations and text to articulate my feelings.

Preparation Day 5

Post enlarged copies of actual Reward posters for escaped slaves.

Preparation Day 6

Students will construct a graphic organizer: the KWL Chart. The K section will list "What Do I Know About The Underground Railroad?" The W section will list "What Do I Want To Know About The Underground Railroad?" At the end of the lesson, students will fill in under the "L" section, "What Have I Learned About The Underground Railroad?"

Preparation Day 7

Ask students what heroes are and who their heroes are. Ask students to name some famous women heroes.

 $^{^{-1}}$ http://www.siue.edu/EDUCATION/AAM/lesson/gallagher/AAM%20webpage/gourd%20take%203%2B.htm

Preparation Day 8

Astronomy lesson- The drinking gourd - What is the Big Dipper? What does it look like? Has anyone viewed the Big Dipper in the night sky?

Preparation Day 9

View the Reading Rainbow production of "Follow the Drinking Gourd."

Preparation Day 10

Students will write three questions they still have about this unit.

Presentation Day 1

Hang a sheet of chart paper on blackboard with each group labeled at the top. Invite each group to share their questions and answers with the class (example questions: who do you think these people were? How old do you think they were in this picture? Where do you think they lived? What kind of work did they do? What else can you tell me about these pictures?). Record their answers on the chart paper.

Presentation Day 2

Introduce the book, <u>Follow the Drinking Gourd</u> by Jeanette Winter, and review what an author does, what an illustrator does and discuss the cover and have students make predictions about the story. Read the story aloud, stopping occasionally to give students opportunities to ask questions and make predictions.

Presentation Day 3

Second Read. Brainstorm main topic and details using a graphic organizer such concept map graphic organizer.

Presentation Day 4

Pair students and have them tell one another how they would feel and what they would do in Molly's place. Discuss student responses, guiding them to use clues in the text and illustrations. Encourage students to use their imagination to describe how they would feel, and invite many students to participate in the discussion. Focus on the visualizations and remind students that there is not just one correct answer to these questions. Students complete The Five Senses Graphic Organizer.

Presentation Day 5

Go into depth about the story behind the song, the historical significance, the power of song, hidden meanings.

Presentation Day 6

In open discussion, students will consider the following questions relating to the flight and plight of the slaves. What would be the advantages or disadvantages for slaves traveling at night? Where would slaves take refuge during the daylight hours? Consider the advantages or disadvantages of weather and geographical conditions on the rate slaves could travel from one region to another? Consider the possibility that some slaves may be traveling with family. How could slaves eat on the escape routes?

Presentation Day 7

Presentation on the life of Harriet Tubman and other people who helped slaves escape to freedom.

Presentation Day 8

Beginning-level students will complete a dot-to-dot of the big dipper and create individual glow-in-the-dark posters of the Big Dipper. Intermediate-level students will work in pairs to create and illustrate a web graphic organizer on issues related to the Underground Railroad. Advanced EL level students will work in teams to research the Underground Railroad via www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/j4.html² and present their findings to the class. Class discussion on how people depended on the stars to guide them.

Presentation Day 9

Whole group discussion of some of the issues presented in the video.

Presentation Day 10

As a group, we will answer all the questions we can and earmark other ones for future lessons.

Practice Day 1

After all groups have finished, students will discuss other questions they have about all of the pictures.

²http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/j4.html

Practice Day 2

Following the first read, students will work in pre-selected groups of 3 to discuss the topics: What was the drinking gourd? What was the Underground Railroad?

Practice Day 3

Class will be divided into four small heterogeneous groups. Each group will receive a handout with the lyrics from the song "Follow the Drinking Gourd." We will play the song and sing-along with the lyrics. Each group will then be assigned one stanza to discuss and to interpret. One member of each group will be selected to present their group's analysis.

Practice Day 4

Expand to a whole class discussion on their visualizations. Ask how students went about imagining themselves in the characters' shoes. Did they picture themselves in the story? Was there a part of the story that was particularly vivid? If so, what made it that way? Was it easier to imagine themselves in the roles of the children or the adults? As the conversation continues, reinforce ideas that refer to visualization as a technique for understanding the content.

Practice Day 5

Sentence frames based on EL levels. From Yes or No answers to "Slaves" The Underground Railroad was not a railroad. It was a" If I were a slave, I would......." Vocabulary review and quiz based on EL levels.

Practice Day 6

After addressing the issues escaped slaves faced, students will write a journal/diary entry from the viewpoint of an escaped slave of their age during that time. They must include information about where they escaped from, with whom, why, describe their journey, where are they now, etc.

Practice Day 7

Students will write or verbally explain what makes Harriet Tubman and all the people who helped slaves escape to freedom heroes.

Practice Day 8

Small groups will discuss how they would feel if they were owned by other people and had no rights. Groups will present their projects and presentations.

Practice Day 9

Students will complete a "Writing My Ideas" book report. They will record the title, author, and illustrator. They will rate the book from 1-5 (from sad face to happy face). They will then draw a picture of their favorite part of the story.

Practice Day 10

Students will rank their favorite topics within this unit (slavery, the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman, constellations, etc.) They will then think-pair-share their favorites and use persuasive arguments to support the topic they ranked number one.

Evaluation Day 1

When the groups have finished, display concept map for this unit and discuss each item, checking for understanding.

Evaluation Day 2

Teacher observations and monitoring of group discussions to gage comprehension.

Evaluation Day 3

Prepare and give a class presentation based on their assigned stanza. Students will rate the success of their cooperative groupings using evaluation rubric.

Evaluation Day 4

Assess student progress in visualization is to reflect on the changes in your students' ability to empathize with the characters as the discussion progressed. Were they able to actually picture the story? Were they able to recall at least one scene in detail?

Evaluation Day 5

Evaluation of leveled (1-5) sentence frames. Vocabulary review and quiz in homogeneous groupings based on EL levels.

Evaluation Day 6

The journal entry will be graded using a rubric for content and imagination.

Evaluation Day 7

Evaluate content of their answers. Example key words: providing food, shelter, directions, putting their own lives in jeopardy for others, time, money, caring...

Evaluation Day 8

The "Writing My Ideas" template will provide evidence of comprehension and understanding of the text. Students will rate the book from 1-5 (from sad face to happy face).

Evaluation Day 9

Evaluate using rubric depth and use of descriptives in assigned group's projects.

Evaluation Day 10

The rankings and arguments will be used to guide further instruction on these topics.

Expansion Possibilities

- Research and write a biography of Harriet Tubman
- Draw a picture map using the directions found in the song and book
- Read other books on this topic
- Further Internet research on actual persons who followed the Underground Railroad to freedom
- Find other songs written during this time period
- Write a journal as if student were traveling on the Underground Railroad with Molly and James.
- $\bullet \quad 1860 \text{ maps project from http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/ntti/resources/lessons/h_catch/b.html}^3$
- $\bullet \quad Using \ map \ from \ http://education.ucdavis.edu/NEW/STC/lesson/socstud/railroad/Map.htm^4$

Sample Graphic Organizers

 $^{^3}$ http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/ntti/resources/lessons/h_catch/b.html 4 http://education.ucdavis.edu/NEW/STC/lesson/socstud/railroad/Map.htm

Concept Map Template

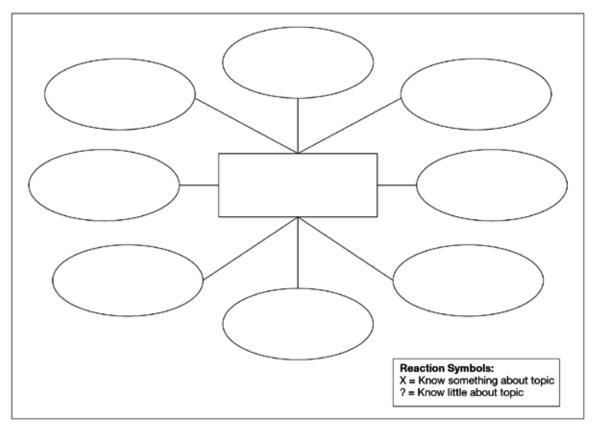


Figure 1

Completed Concept Map PLANTATIONS SLAVE QUARTERS CULTURE SLAVERY FOLK SONGS UNDERGROUND ROAD POLARIS/ NORTH DRINKING GOURD STAR CONDUCTORS SAFE HOUSES

Figure 2

The Five Senses Graphic Organizer

Title of the novel: _______Character or scene being described:______ Looks like... Sounds like... Tastes like... Smells like... Feels like... Copyright, Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic ®

Figure 3

KWL Example

K	W	L
What do you think you <u>KNOW</u> about slavery?	What do you <u>WANT</u> to know about slavery?	What did you LEARN about slavery?

Figure 4

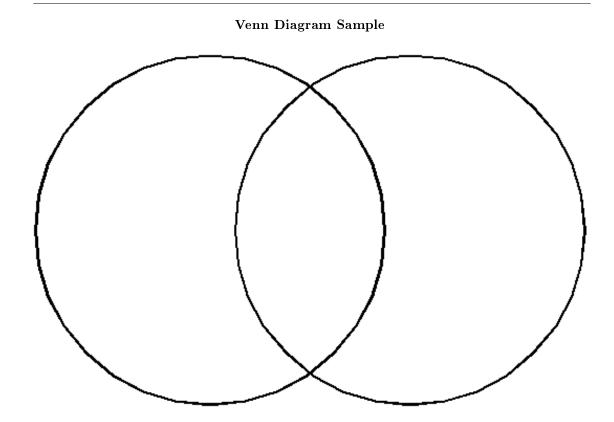


Figure 5

Sample Writing Rubric

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Reasoning (makes sense)	The student reasons inconsistently and with limited understanding.	The student reasons consistently and with limited understanding.	The student reasons consistently and with general understanding.	The student reasons consistently and with thorough understanding. The student uses complex ideas.
Communication (vocabulary expected at grade level)	The student communicates unclearly.	The student communicates with some clarity and understanding.	The student communicates clearly and precisely.	The student communicates clearly and precisely. The student uses complex forms.
Organization of Ideas	The student organizes incompletely.	The student independently organizes a report.	The student independently organizes a report. The student reports appropriately and logically.	The student organizes a newspaper report. The student reports in complex and logical ways.
Application of Language Conventions (spelling, grammar. punctuation, and style)	The student writes a report with several major errors and/or omissions.	The student writes a report with several minor errors and/or omissions.	The student writes a report with a few minor errors and/or omissions.	The student writes a report with practically no errors and/or omissions.

Figure 6: Modify for individual student's grade-level performance and EL level