

## **Simulated Underground Railroad Experience (Culminating activity of a 3 week unit)**

By Sandy Frasch (In collaboration with Kim Markley)  
Williamsport Elementary  
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### ***Topic (Overall theme):***

Traveling the Underground Railroad

### ***Classroom sessions:***

60-70 minutes (must have prior knowledge of URR and related vocabulary)

### ***Grade Level(s):*** 4

### ***Purpose:***

Exploring the emotional, physical, and intellectual experiences of traveling the Underground Railroad. (Music, Physical Education, and classroom integration)

### ***Geography Standards Addressed:***

9, 12, 13- human systems, 15-environment and society

### ***Indiana Social Studies Academic Standards addressed:***

4.1.12-Civil War Era  
4.1.16-growth and development  
4.1.25- comprehension, analysis, and interpretation  
4.2.9-roles of citizens  
4.3.10-human systems  
4.5.7-individuals, society and culture

### ***PE Standards:***

4.5.1 (Standard 5)-Work cooperatively with others to obtain a common goal  
4.6.1 (Standard 6)-Explore the role of culture  
4.7.1, 4.7.2, 4.7.3 (Standard 7)-participation, interaction, and social challenges  
4.1.1-demonstrate mature movement patterns

### ***Objectives:***

- While traveling through a simulated UGRR, students will apply the skills of balance, climbing, crawling, pulling, pushing, rolling, and walking through different pathways and levels while moving through the obstacle course.
- Students will maintain complete silence and cooperate by assisting each "slave" to complete the obstacle without ringing the attached bells.
- Students will travel North by locating and following the North Star.

### ***Teacher Background Materials:***

Website: <http://www.lyris.sportime.com> 07-24-01-click on PE Talk- This site is where

the original idea for the URR obstacle course was found. <http://www.connerprairie.org>  
07-01-01- interactive activity location/educational materials  
<http://www.nps.gov/undergroundrr> –National Park Service information on the URR

Books: Winter, Jeanette. Follow The Drinking Gourd. New York: Dragonfly Books, 1998.

McGovern, Ann. “Wanted Dead or Alive” The True Story of Harriet Tubman (original title: Runaway Slave). New York: Scholastic, 1965.

Douglas, Frederick. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. Boston: Published at the Anti-Slavery Office, 1845.

Howell, Donna Wyant. I Was A Slave: Book 1: Description of Plantation Life. Washington DC: American legacy Books, 1995.

Videos: Follow the Drinking Gourd. Video. Rabbit Ears, 1992. 30 minutes.

Harriet Tubman. Video. Nest Entertainment, 1996. 30 minutes.

### ***Purpose of Materials:***

1. Various pieces of equipment to create a simulated journey on the URR. Example: Balance Beam (log); Climbing Ladder (wall); Tunnel, etc. \*See attachment
2. Bells and String: Bells are tied to each piece of equipment. Students must complete station without ringing the bells.
3. Full Size Black Sheet: Cut holes in the sheet in the pattern of the Big and Little Dipper. Hang the sheet at the North end of the gym.
4. Trouble Light: This light is hung behind the sheet in the darkened gym as the only source of light. Students follow the illuminated North Star.
5. Tape: A tape of howling dogs and voices yelling is played for effect as they begin their journey.
6. Lanterns (2): These lanterns are used to signal the “all clear” to conductors who are leading their group to freedom.
7. Tape: A tape of spirituals or songs such as: “Follow the Drinking Gourd”, “Steal Away”, and “Swing Low Sweet Chariot”. This tape will play softly in the gym during the entire journey.

\*\*\*The 5th graders from the previous year are the conductors, stationmasters, slave catchers, slave overseers, and lantern people.

1. Station Masters: (1 person per each station) Example: Balance Beam: Kayla: This person would whisper to the conductor, “Walk across the log- do not leave anyone behind-remember not to ring the bells.

2. Slave Catchers: (2 people) These students hide and circulate through the URR as they listen for a bell to ring. They usually wait for the second ringing of a bell before capturing the group and returning them to the plantation. \*\*Select students who will understand that all students should not be captured-probably 2-3 groups.
3. Slave Overseers: These students remain in the classroom (plantation) with a classroom teacher. When students (slaves) are returned to the plantation, the overseers make them wash desks, clean cupboards, straighten bookshelves, etc.
4. Conductors: Each conductor is assigned 4 slaves to lead to freedom. They wait for the signal from the lantern people that all is clear before starting their people on the URR journey.
5. Slaves: Pre-assign 4 slaves per conductor. Teacher will send the conductor to pick-up slaves who will follow their conductor during the entire journey. Conductors and slaves must remain together and remain at each station until all have safely made it through the obstacle. The group then moves to the next station on the route.

***Procedures:***

\*\*\*Before beginning this activity, students should know the terms listed above. They should be instructed to be very quiet; listen to their conductor; be responsible for everyone in their group. If one person is captured, the entire group will be returning to the plantation.

The lantern person signals the 1st conductor by swinging the lantern. This conductor leaves the 5th grade room and travels to 4th grade to pick-up his group. They proceed to the gym and wait(hiding quietly outside the gym until teacher has them enter. Upon entering, they proceed to the first station where the stationmaster whispers directions to the conductor. The group continues through the URR. When the first group is ½ way through, the teacher signals to the lantern person who signals the next conductor to begin.....

After crossing the Ohio River, students wait in the hall for the next lantern person to signal for them to go on to Cabin Creek. PART B.

\*\*The groups that are captured will be given a second chance to complete the journey. They should not be told about the 2nd chance until after they have worked on the plantation. I send for them after all other groups have finished.

***Assessments:***

After completing part B, students return to classroom and gym for assessment and discussion.

Gym Assessment: (group)

In the groups used to travel the route, students discuss and complete a checklist as follows:

1. During your journey, discuss how your group helped each other using cooperation

and problem solving. Did your group use these life skills?

2. Did everyone safely make it through the URR: (participation)

3. Choose 3 stations on the URR. What part of the journey could these obstacles have represented? Example: The ladder may have represented climbing over a wall or fence

***Adaptations and/or Extensions:***

***Adaptations:***

\*Any piece of equipment may be used to design the obstacle course.

\*Black paper may be used instead of a sheet for the Big and Little Dippers.

\*Adapt as closely as possible to allow for movement through the obstacle course. Example: A child in a wheelchair could go around the obstacles.

\*If this is the first year to use this idea, an older class could be trained on how to run the stations and other jobs.

***Extensions:*** The above lesson allows slaves to reach Indiana. The next step would be to travel from Indiana to Canada by mapping a route, estimating mileage and determining how many laps in the gym would equal the distance between each station on their route. Students would jog the first 5 minutes of each class and record the number of laps for the class. As the class acquired enough laps to reach a station on their route, a marker would be placed on the map. Students could then follow their journey to Canada.

***Resources:***

Pamphlets:

Second Baptist Church of Detroit. Abbreviated History by Nathaniel Leach. 441-461 Monroe Ave., Detroit, Michigan, 48226.

Levi Coffin House State Historic Site. An Underground Railroad Station. Lesson Plan for Grades K-12. 113 US 27 North, Fountain City, IN., 47341.

Books:

Coffin, Levi. Reminiscences of Levi Coffin. Cincinnati: Western Tract Society, 1876.

Websites:

[www.Connerprairie.org](http://www.Connerprairie.org).

Government Publication:

U.S. Department of the Interior. National Park Service Handbook. Underground Railroad. Washington, D.C.

