

# **Pathway to Freedom: The Underground Railroad**

**Museum Connection:** Family and Community

**Purpose:** In this lesson students will study the heroes of the Underground Railroad which will lead to discovery of the struggles and perils encountered by slaves escaping to freedom. Students will have several choices for thematic work based on the dichotomy of freedom versus slavery. Students will work in groups to research and choreograph a dance based on the Underground Railroad.

**Course:** High School Dance

**Time Frame:**

Three two-hour sessions will be needed to complete this lesson:

1<sup>st</sup> Session: Research and planning

2<sup>nd</sup> Session: Choreographing

3<sup>rd</sup> Session: Performance of dances and discussions

**Correlation to State Standards:**

## **Maryland Dance Essential Learner Outcomes**

1.B.1 The students will describe the aspects of a dance that convey its meaning.

1.B.2. The students will interpret the meaning of different dances.

2.C.4 The students will create an interdisciplinary project that combines dance with one or more other subject area(s).

3.A.1 The students will improvise dance phrases using a variety of stimuli, including ideas, feelings, and emotions.

3.A.2 The students will improvise variations to dance phrases by selecting and manipulating elements of movement: time, space, and energy.

3.A.3 The students will improvise movement patterns/dance phrases individually and in groups.

3.B.3 The student will apply aesthetic principles such as unity, variety, and contrast to dance composition.

3.C.1 The student will perform and analyze dance focusing on performance competencies, such as awareness of space, expression in movement, or choreographic intent.

4.A.5 The student will apply aesthetic criteria when participating in the assessment of peer performance.

4.B.1 The student will identify specific aesthetic criteria, and analyze personally performed works in relation to those criteria, such as interpretation of theme, use of space, and selection of accompaniment.

4.B.2 The students will identify specific criteria and analyze self-constructed choreography in relation to those criteria.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will read and respond to the historical background of slavery in order to problem solve creative ways in which choreography through improvisation may be used to communicate ideas.

2. Students will select movements that communicate ideas explored by the group and organize them into a dance that is based on aesthetic criteria. Movement ideas for persons with challenges will be incorporated creatively into the choreography.

**Vocabulary:**

| (Word or Concept)    | (Definition)   |
|----------------------|--|
| Abolitionist         | a person who advocated or participated in the movement to end slavery. |
| Anti-slavery         | a person who opposed or acted against slavery was anti-slavery.        |
| Anti-Slavery Society | the American Anti-Slavery Society was an                               |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | organization formed by black and white abolitionists in Philadelphia in 1833 to make people aware of the conditions of enslaved people and to end slavery.  |
| Auction (this is probably common knowledge in high school – see note in definition) | a public sale of goods or property in which articles are sold to the person who offers the most money. In what context was this used for slaves?  |
| Conductor   | a person who led fugitive slaves to safety along the Underground Railroad.  |
| Conflict  | a disagreement among people or organizations.   |
| Discrimination  | the unfair treatment of a person or group based solely on race, gender, religion, or other differences.   |
| Fugitive  | a person who runs away or tries to escape captivity.  |
| Hardship  | something that causes suffering.  |
| Hounds  | dogs that are trained to hunt. Hounds were trained and used during slavery to track run-away slaves, and are used today by police to find criminals.  |
| Manumission   | the name for the formal release of a slave. The slave was given papers declaring s/he was a free person.  |
| Master  | the person who owned a slave.   |
| Overseer  | an employee hired by a slave owner to tend to the daily control of the slaves.  |
| Passengers  | fugitive slaves who fled from the South along the Underground Railroad.   |
| Plantation  | large farms in the southern states that grew crops, such as tobacco or cotton that were sold or exported. Usually there was a large house in which the owner of the plantation lived with his family, and small shacks or huts in which the slaves lived. |
| Prejudice   | an irrational attitude of hostility directed at a certain group or race.  |

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Respect              | to show deference or attention to another person.  |
| Rule                 | a guide for conduct; specifically, what must or must not be done.  |
| Safe House           | a home or stopping point at which fugitive slaves could hide or find safety along the Underground Railroad.  |
| Segregation          | separation of people solely based on race, gender, or affiliation is called segregation. Segregation also refers to the policy or practice of compelling groups of people to live apart from others, attend separate schools, use separate social facilities, etc. |
| Settler              | a person who makes a home in a new land.   |
| Slave Narrative      | the written autobiography or reminiscences of escaped and freed slaves.  |
| Slavery              | a system in which one person owns another as if that person were a piece of property to be bought or sold. Slaves were made to obey their owners (masters), often under threat of cruel punishment, and were made to work hard for no payment.                     |
| Station              | a “safe house” or stopping point along the Underground Railroad.   |
| Tether               | a rope or chain that limits the range of motion of an animal that was also used to control slaves.   |
| Tolerance            | tolerance is the willingness to let others have and express their own beliefs and ways of behaving, even though they may be different from your own.   |
| Underground Railroad | in the years before the Civil War, this is the name given to a secret network of trails, “safe houses” and people who provided escaped slaves with shelters and provisions so that they might safely reach freedom in the “North” (northern states) or Canada.     |

## **Materials:**

### ***For the Teacher:***

- Several Boom Boxes or iPods with speakers for teacher and/or students to select, play music, and to perform.
- A box of material remnants or interesting clothing for children to construct simple costumes or suggestions of costumes if they wish (not mandatory for success of project).
- Several open spaces for students to choreograph and rehearse.
- An open space for performance with an area for audience to sit.
- A DVD player and monitor to show participating students a DVD
- A DVD of Bill T. Jones' "Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land" to show the section with the dogs or you may use an alternative DVD or video of your choice that relates to the lesson.
- A video camera and necessary recording materials to record the performances.

Resource Sheet 1: Guide for Student Research Notes

Resource Sheet 2: The Dichotomy between the Declaration of Independence and Slavery

Resource Sheet 3: Escape

Resource Sheet 4: The Underground Railroad

Resource Sheet 5: Harriet Tubman: Heroine of the Underground Railroad

Resource Sheet 6: Josiah Henson: A Hero of the Underground Railroad

Resource Sheet 7: Guide for Choreographing

Resource Sheet 8: Guide for Choreography

Resource Sheet 9: Guide for Audience Participation

***For the Students:***

Resource Sheet 1: Guide for Student Research Notes

Resource Sheet 2: The Dichotomy between the Declaration of Independence and Slavery

Resource Sheet 3: Escape

Resource Sheet 4: The Underground Railroad

Resource Sheet 5: Harriet Tubman: Heroine of the Underground Railroad

Resource Sheet 6: Josiah Henson: A Hero of the Underground Railroad

Resource Sheet 7: Guide for Choreographing

Resource Sheet 8: Guide for Choreography

Resource Sheet 10: Underground Railroad Choreography Project – Self Evaluation

**Resources:**

***Publications:***

Beecher Stowe, Harriet, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Blassingame, John W., ed. *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews and Autobiographies*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1977. p167, 169. "Escape and Capture of Stephen Pembroke, Related by Himself"

Clinton, Catherine. *Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom*. NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2004.

Fields, Barbara Jeanne. *From Slavery to Freedom on the Middle Ground*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1986.

Foster, Francis Smith, ed. *A Brighter Coming Day: A Francis Ellen Watkins Harper Reader*, NY: The Feminist Press, 1990.

Koestler-Grack, Rachel A. *The Story of Harriet Tubman*. Philadelphia: Chelsea Club House, 20004.

Petry, Ann. *Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad*. NY: HarperCollins, 1955. Reprint HarperTrophy, 1996.

Yacovone, Donald. "Bury Me in a Free Land" *Anti-Slavery Bugle* (Nov 20, 1858). Poem by Francis Ellen Watkins Harper.

### ***Video/DVD***

Jones, Bill T., *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land*  
[www.billtjones.org](http://www.billtjones.org)

### ***Websites:***

Harriet Tubman Biography  
[www.harriettubmanbiography.com](http://www.harriettubmanbiography.com)

National Underground Railroad Freedom Center  
<http://www.undergroundrailroad.org>

Pathways to Freedom: Maryland and the Underground Railroad, Josiah Henson  
<http://www.ku.edu/carrie/docs/texts/canadian.slaves.html>

Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman, by Sarah Branford  
<http://www.docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bradford/bradford.html>  
The first book-length biography of Tubman, Published 1869. Written to help Tubman pay her mortgage.

Taking the Train to Freedom. Underground Railroad. Resource Study  
National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/undergroundrr/>

The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada.  
A Narrative by Himself, Henson, Josiah.  
<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/ute/ablitn/henson49hp.htm>

The Underground Railroad  
National Geographic Society  
<http://nationalgeographic.com/railroad/map.html>

## **Historical Background:**

Three great democratic revolutions took place during the 1700s: the American, the French, and the Haitian. Famously enumerated in the American Declaration of Independence (“We hold these truths to be self evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”), visions of democracy, freedom, and equality drove these revolutions.

Freedom did not come easily for slaves in North America; however, manumission, the formal release of a slave by his or her owner, was the most common route to emancipation. Those former slaves who had been manumitted—either privately by an individual or officially by a state law—were known as free blacks. Not all free blacks, however, were formally manumitted. Some free blacks had the means to purchase their freedom. Thousands of others gained their freedom only after running away from their owners. Thousands more failed to gain their freedom at all. They were captured by white bounty hunters and either returned to their owners or executed.

Free blacks were first documented in Northampton County, Virginia, in 1662. By 1776, 60,000 African Americans—approximately eight percent of the new nation’s black population—were free. In the decades that followed, the number of free blacks rose steadily, a fact which intimidated those whites who favored slavery. Between 1800 and 1810, the free black population increased from 108,395 to 186,446. By 1810 four percent of all African Americans in the Deep South (South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana), ten percent in the Upper South (Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky), and 75 percent in the North (Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and the states of New England) were free.

The status and treatment of free blacks before the Civil War varied from region to region. Those in the North were excluded from most public schools, prohibited from interstate travel, barred from voting in many states, and often harassed by hostile white mobs. Finding a decent job was extremely difficult, and the few jobs that were open to free blacks were limited to domestic service and subsistence farming. Few free blacks in the North could make a living as skilled artisans.

A significant proportion of free blacks in the Deep South were wealthy and light-skinned, and they were commonly referred to as Creoles or mulattoes. Some Creoles looked down on dark skinned free blacks, and many despised the stigma that was associated with being black. Whites in the Deep South employed the few free blacks primarily as day laborers and domestic servants. Other free blacks worked as carpenters, masons, mechanics, and tailors.

Free blacks in the cities of the Upper South, such as Baltimore and Washington, D.C., tended to be poorer and less educated than free blacks in other regions. Nevertheless, they had less trouble finding employment than those in the North. Most free blacks in the Upper South worked alongside slaves as farmhands, casual laborers, dockworkers, and factory hands. Thousands more found work as blacksmiths, barbers, and shoemakers. Because they worked closely with slaves, free blacks working in the Upper South felt a psychological and geographic connection with them. As a result, in 1800 free blacks in the Upper South supported a planned slave rebellion organized by Gabriel Prosser, a black slave in Virginia. However, Gabriel along with twenty-six other slaves was hanged because the revolt was revealed prior to it occurring.

It may surprise you to know that there were many free blacks living in Maryland during the time of slavery. In 1790, only 7 percent of all blacks in Maryland were free, but in 1860 that number had increased to 49 percent. (Delaware was the only slave state that had a higher number of free blacks.) Within the city of Baltimore, the percentage of free blacks was even higher; it reached 90 percent in 1860. In fact, Baltimore had the largest concentration of free blacks of any city in the country at this time.

There were several ways in which the free blacks of Maryland may have gained their freedom. Some blacks, for instance, were free because they had been born free. Two well-known examples were Marylanders Benjamin Banneker and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. Yet even, blacks who were born into freedom risked the danger of being kidnapped and sold into slavery elsewhere. Free blacks were required to carry “freedom papers” (a legal document that proved they were free) with them at all times. Nevertheless, kidnappers frequently ignored those papers in favor of the money they could make by selling a person into slavery.

The upheaval caused by the Revolutionary War provided opportunities for other slaves to gain freedom. Many slaves took advantage of the circumstances and escaped during the fighting and disorder created by the war. Because they had been promised freedom, some slaves worked for the British and against American patriots. For example, in 1775, Lord Dunmore, the governor of Virginia, promised in his proclamation freedom to those slaves who were willing to fight for England. About 800 joined him, and Dunmore used them to raid the coast of Virginia.

Slaves could also become free by purchasing their freedom or by having their freedom purchased by others. Because some enslaved blacks had been trained as artisans or were skilled in the boating trades, they were able to earn money for their services. Employment ranged from bakers and printers to stable keepers. Some hired themselves out to others, some created handicrafts to sell, and others worked in their gardens and sold surplus produce. All of these slaves used the cash they received in order to buy their freedom or the freedom of a family member or friend. However, any arrangement to purchase freedom could be ruined by a slave owner who refused to honor the agreement or who would increase the price at the last moment. Sometimes a slave owner might sell a slave who was about to purchase his or her freedom. Although this decision could create tough economic conditions for slave families, the idea of freedom far outweighed any desire to buy property, food, and clothing, or even to pass money down to the next generation.

Enslaved blacks might gain their freedom by manumission. In most colonies this process had been strictly legislated. In Virginia, for example, an enslaved African could not be set free except for some meritorious service, to be adjudged and allowed by the governor and council. Many owners manumitted their slaves as part of their wills. In some states, however, legally free slaves could be re-enslaved in order to pay the debts of their former owners.

Finally, some enslaved blacks decided to leave familiar surroundings, family, and friends and run away from their owners. Because so many slaves ran away to find freedom, the Underground Railroad emerged as a secret network to help them escape. In most places, the Underground Railroad was comprised of individuals, families, and organizations that formed a loosely connected network of blacks and whites who provided fugitive slaves with directions, provisions, and “safe houses” so they could get to the free states

in the North or Canada. Some slaves ran away by themselves while others ran away in groups; some forged passes and used various disguises to escape to freedom.

Slaves had a better chance to escape to freedom in the Chesapeake region because they could follow the many creeks and inlets of the tidewater areas. Fugitive Slave Laws were enacted in order to help return runaways to their owners, and they set fines upon those who would harbor or help fugitive slaves gain freedom. As a result, runaways were hunted like animals and escapes were treacherous. Those who were captured suffered cruel punishments such as whipping, branding, or crippling. Others were sold far away.

## **The Underground Railroad**

Most active between 1830 and 1860, the Underground Railroad was not a true railroad but rather a network of escape routes for slaves that stretched from the southern slave states into the northern states and Canada. The term “underground” was used because runaways, called “passengers,” were hidden in secret places known as “stations.” These places included safe houses, barns, and haylofts. Every home that welcomed runaways and every individual who offered food, clothing, or other help became part of the Underground Railroad.

Those who led “passengers” from one “station” to another were black, white, and Native American anti-slavery activists called “conductors.” Other workers along the Underground Railroad came from all backgrounds and included ministers, shopkeepers, farmers, and former slaves. Harriet Tubman, a runaway slave from Maryland, made at least 11 trips into the South and helped to rescue at least 80 runaways.

The majority of runaways were men between the ages of 16 and 35 years. Women and children also escaped, but they were more likely to be caught. Any runaway who was caught might be beaten then returned to his or her owners and subjected to even harsher conditions. Enacted in 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law, otherwise known as the “Bloodhound Law” by abolitionists, made the capture of escaped slaves a lucrative business.

The Fugitive Slave Law also allowed masters or professional bounty hunters (called “slave hunters”) to capture runaways, even in a free state. More than

3,200 “workers” along the Underground Railroad helped thousands of runaway slaves escape, sometimes helping them travel hundreds of miles in order to reach freedom. Some runaways made it to the northern states, while others escaped to Canada, Texas, Mexico, and through Florida to the Caribbean. Fugitive slaves traveled through forests, over fields, through swamps, and across streams and rivers. Often they moved at night and used the stars to navigate. They traveled on coaches, trains, and steamships, but most often by wagon or on foot.

## **Harriet Tubman**



<https://www.google.com/#q=picture+of+harriet+tubman+in+public+domain>

Harriet Tubman was born a slave in Dorchester County on the Eastern Shore of Maryland around 1822. Her real name was Araminta Ross, and she was the fifth of nine children of slaves Harriet and Ben Ross. Although she used her mother’s name, Harriet, when she got older, as a child she was simply called “Minty.”

When Harriet was young, her master (Edward Brodess) often hired her out to other plantation owners, who were cruel and who forced her to live under very harsh conditions. As a young teen, Harriet once refused to help an overseer punish a fellow slave, and the overseer seriously injured her by hitting Harriet in the head with a heavy object. As a result, Harriet suffered from headaches, seizures, and sleeping spells for the rest of her life. In 1844, 22- year-old Harriet married John Tubman, a free African American. Five years later, she escaped because she was afraid that she would be sold south. Since her husband John was already free, however, he did not want to follow her north.

A white neighbor helped Harriet to the first “safe” house, a place where abolitionists would protect her. After receiving assistance from many black and white abolitionists, she settled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where she

met William Still, Philadelphia's most famous African American "Stationmaster" on the Underground Railroad. With help from Still and other members of the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society, Harriet learned how the Underground Railroad operated. Having operated successfully for decades, the Underground Railroad included in its network both African American and white agents throughout Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York.

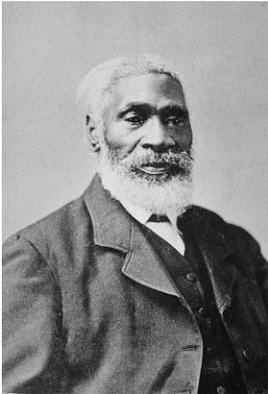
In 1851, Harriet began relocating members of her family to St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. In order to finance her activities as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, she worked as a cook and domestic worker in private homes and hotels in Philadelphia. Harriet returned to Maryland approximately thirteen times to rescue sixty or seventy friends and members of her family. She also passed along valuable information about the Underground Railroad to many more family and friends on the Eastern Shore of Maryland so that they could find their way to freedom on their own.

Family and community—for whom she frequently risked her life—remained the focal point of Harriet's long life. Three of Harriet's sisters, Linah, Soph, and Mariah Ritty, had been sold into the Deep South before she ran away, but she successfully rescued her four brothers, Robert, Ben, Henry, and Moses. Her remaining sister, Rachel, died before Harriet could rescue her. Harriet herself would be called "Moses" for her remarkable efforts to save her family and friends from slavery.

During the Civil War, Harriet served in the Union Army in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida as soldier, spy, and nurse. She also served as a nurse at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, at the end of the war. After the war she returned to her home in Auburn, New York, where she helped settle her parents and other family and friends. There she also married veteran Nelson Davis, and together they operated a brick making business and a small farm. Later she purchased an adjoining property and opened a convalescent home for aged and sick African Americans. These buildings still stand in Auburn.

Harriet Tubman died in 1913 and was buried with military honors in Fort Hill Cemetery in Auburn, New York. Since her death, she has received many posthumous honors, including the naming of the World War II liberty ship *Harriet Tubman*.

## The Life of Josiah Henson



[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Josiah\\_Henson\\_bw.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Josiah_Henson_bw.jpg)

Josiah Henson was born in Charles County, Maryland, on June 15, 1789. He was the youngest of six children, all of whom were born into slavery. When Josiah was a young child, his father was whipped 100 times and his ear was cut off. This event is one of Josiah's clearest memories of his father, and it was one that he never forgot. As was frequently done during the time of slavery, Josiah's father was "sold South," leaving his mother alone with six children.

Josiah's mother found solace in her faith and often recited the Lord's Prayer and other scriptural verses. Her faith sustained her, and she would often teach these verses to her children. Day to day she lived with the fear that her children would be sold away from her. Soon her nightmare became a reality when all of her children were sold to different owners. Josiah's mother tried desperately to beg for Josiah to stay with her since he was the last child to be auctioned. The auctioneer was cruel, and he sold Josiah while she cried and wept uncontrollably.

Mrs. Henson was sold to Isaac Riley. Soon after this, Josiah became very ill and was not able to work as hard as his new owner had planned, so he was sold to Mr. Riley for a cheap price. Mrs. Henson was overjoyed! She was able to nurse her son back to health. Like most slave children, Josiah's early jobs consisted of bringing food and water to the field slaves. A typical food for slaves consisted of corn mush. As he grew older and became stronger he took on more difficult jobs. Sometimes Josiah would kill a pig or a hen in order to add variety to the slaves' meals. He would do this secretly as it would be a crime for which he would get punished.

Josiah soon became a strong and trustworthy slave. His owner trusted him so much that he was often allowed to go to town to buy and sell goods for his owner. One day Josiah's owner got into a fight and, when Josiah came to Riley's aid, the other man fell and blamed Josiah. It was against the law for a black man to hit a white man. Josiah was severely beaten for this "crime."

Josiah continued in his trustworthy ways and was soon allowed to take 21 slaves to Kentucky. The slaves had to walk the entire journey. The trip took the slaves by the Ohio River. Ohio was a free state, and many slaves knew that once they were there they would be free; however, out of a sense of loyalty, Josiah and the other slaves did not cross the Ohio River.

Josiah then worked for Amos Riley, his owner's brother. It was during this time that the other slaves on the plantation were sold, everyone except for Josiah and his family. At this point he began to think seriously about his freedom. Josiah remembered the early teachings of his mother and decided to begin preaching. He was able to travel around to preach; and as people gave him donations for his preaching, he saved his money. He was allowed to preach because he was trusted to return to his master; he carried a special pass while traveling, stating his destination and identifying his owner.

Josiah began asking about the price for his freedom. During this time, many slave owners would allow slaves to "purchase" their own freedom. Josiah's price was \$450, a substantial amount of money for a slave to obtain. Josiah saved his money and offered it to his master, who then raised the price. Josiah was very hurt by this trickery. Soon Josiah learned that he would be sold away from his family. He was so angry that he took an axe and was going to kill his owner, but fate intervened and Josiah chose not to do this. He then decided to run away and take his family with him because he could not bear the thought of their being apart. Henson had to convince his wife, Charlotte, that running away was the only way to give their children a future. Josiah told only one other person, another slave, of his plan. Josiah, Charlotte, and their children left late at night. The trusted friend rowed them across the Ohio River from Kentucky to Ohio. They were going to Canada, the only place Josiah felt they would be safe.

The journey was long and difficult. His wife had made a knapsack large enough to carry his two youngest children, and Josiah carried them on his back while his two other children walked. Along the way they were

befriended by some Native Americans who gave them food and shelter. The family was also assisted by workers on the Underground Railroad.

Josiah and his family arrived in Canada on October 28, 1830. He was 42 years old. During his time in Canada, Josiah started the Dawn Settlement, a refuge and a new beginning for former slaves. Fugitive slaves were taught reading, writing, and a trade. Josiah also became a leader on the Underground Railroad. He never forgot how the Underground Railroad helped him and his family, and he helped more than 200 slaves escape to Canada.

Josiah Henson is believed to be the model for Uncle Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stowe was so impressed with Josiah Henson's life story that it is believed that she based her main character on him. She was an avid abolitionist who spoke frequently against slavery, and her book affected many people who became outraged by the horrors of slavery.

Josiah Henson endured the horrors of slavery. Throughout his life, he showed himself to be a man of high ideals. Josiah is to be admired because he bravely made a better life for himself and his family, and because he helped many other slaves escape to freedom.

### **Lesson Development:**

- Students will study the personal accounts from museum exhibits about individuals who were involved in the Underground Railroad.
- Students will be divided into groups and each group will choose a story upon which to choreograph a dance. In many cases, they will have to do further research in order to understand the details of the story.
- Students will choreograph their dance with an understanding of the characters and situations encountered on the pathway to freedom. Students will be encouraged also to understand the emotions and physical trials endured by the characters and include the expression of them in their choreography.

- Students will perform their dances for one another, and possibly for family and friends. A video viewing of a portion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Bill T. Jones can be shown as an example (the section with the dogs).
- Students will share their observations and thoughts about their own dance and the dances of other groups. The audience will also share their thoughts and what they learned from the dances.

***Motivation:***

**Session 1:**

1. Movement Warm Up:

Introduce students to movements that are “bound:”tight, constricted, and limited in space.

Introduce students to movements that are free: open, flowing, wide in use of space.

Discuss the differences felt in these two types of movements. Discuss the effect it had on emotions. Discuss the effect it had on a sense of personal empowerment.

2. Introduce students to the exhibits that pertain to the Underground Railroad. If you are not able to take students on a field trip to the Reginald F. Lewis Museum, go directly to step 3.

3. Show, at a minimum, the dog section in the DVD of Bill T. Jones's dance “Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land.”

[http://www.billtjones.org/repertory/past/last\\_supper\\_at\\_uncle\\_toms\\_cabi/](http://www.billtjones.org/repertory/past/last_supper_at_uncle_toms_cabi/)

<http://www.amazon.com/BILL-T-JONES-Dancing-Promised/dp/B00028G4TQ>

Teachers may choose to use part of the documentary by going back and forward from rehearsal to performance footage.

Teachers may also use some clips from Alvin Ailey's *Revelations* in order to help students make connections between historical events and choreographic intent.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWJzSP7irwM>

4. Divide students into groups. The size of the groups will depend on how many children are involved in the activity. Each group will choose an exhibit or episode as a basis upon which they will create a dance.

5. Students will plan the structure and outline of their dance based upon the information researched about the historical episode chosen. (See resource sheets 2-6.) Students may choose to explore a concept from the exhibit and/or create a narrative based on the stories. Teachers may have to spend additional time in clarifying how to translate a narrative into choreography.

- Create the beginning of the dance.
- Decide on the ending of the dance.
- Develop the storyline of the dance that includes a problem, development of the issues, and a resolution of the issues leading to the outcome that is the ending.

6. Students will choose music for their dance. It can be music provided by the teacher or music owned by one of the students. The teacher must approve the music to assure it is appropriate for the class and the dance.

7. Students will choose a scribe for the group to write down the ideas of the group.

## **Session 2:**

### **1. Movement Warm-up:**

Students will form a circle. One student at a time will enter the circle. They will begin dancing as if they were bound in some way. They will gradually find freedom in movement. They will finish their dance by dancing to the next person to enter the circle.

2. Students will continue working in their groups. The scribe will review the previous day's work with group members, and the students will begin to choreograph their dances.
3. The teacher will travel from group to group to review progress, help facilitate decisions, and offer suggestions.
4. Groups will decide whether to have costumes, suggestions of costumes, or other accessories. Students may choose from a collection or remnant materials or props supplied by their school, teacher, and/or themselves.
5. Groups will practice their dances in preparation for performing them.

### **Session 3:**

1. Movement Warm-up:

Students will review and rehearse their dances.

2. Each group will perform its dance for the other groups, or perhaps for parents, family, and friends.
3. A video recording will be made of each performance for viewing by the choreographers and performers.
4. After each dance, the dancers will explain their dance "story" to the audience. The audience will have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the meaning of the dance.
5. After all the dances are completed dancers and audience will discuss the Underground Railroad concentrating on its historic and personal impact. Dancers will communicate what they learned from the project.

6. Discuss:

- The reasons slaves wanted their freedom.
- The personal characteristics slaves needed to try to escape from their masters.
- The personal characteristics slaves needed to succeed in their escapes.
- The personal characteristics needed by the people who helped the slaves escape and gave them asylum.

- The historical significance of the Underground Railroad.

***Assessments:***

**Session 3:** Provides assessment for the dances and the lesson.

*Performance:* The ability to complete the project outcome of a performance is a measure of success of the activity.

*Explanation of the intent and meaning of the dance:* Students must learn the content of the dance and understand it to offer explanation to the audience. Students must be able to articulate the content.

*Audience feedback and discussion:* The audience must reflect upon and understand the intent and meaning of the dance to offer feedback and discussion.

***Closure:***

*Video viewing:* A video viewing of the performances will provide opportunity to self-reflection and assessment.

**Thoughtful Application(s):**

The students may discuss other areas of the world today in which populations of people are not treated fairly or are oppressed. How can people escape from oppression? How can other more fortunate people help them?

**Lesson Extension(s):**

- The Museum offers several school programs that connect to the curriculum lessons.
  - *Journey in History Theater* and *Living History to Go* provide living history and theatrical performances which highlight African Americans in the museum's gallery.
  - Take the theme tour, *Paths to Freedom* to explore the story of slavery through the eyes of enslaved and free blacks from Maryland's colonial past to the end of the Civil War.
  - Contact group reservations for schedule updates.

- Visit *Strength of the Mind* gallery to view the exhibition connected with the dance form called stepping. Have students research the history of stepping and choreograph a dance presentation showcasing its evolution. On YouTube view examples of step performances by Step Afrika including the presentation with Step Afrika and Richmond Boys Choir.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-JG\\_I26eeE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-JG_I26eeE)

1. The format of this lesson may be applied to exhibits in the Reginald F. Lewis Museum or topics studied in the school classroom:

- Introduction to historic material of lesson.
- Introduction to movement application about historic lesson.
- Division into groups to explore topics and decide on historic episode to be basis of a dance.
- Understanding of choreographic structure to serve as a scaffold of the dance.
- Choreograph dances that communicate the historic episodes.
- Perform the dances for friends or family.
- Discuss the personal and historic meaning of the dances.

2. Students may perform their dances in other venues: their schools, other schools, for organizations such as “International Association of Blacks in Dance,” Elijah Cummings Youth Summit, and at other exhibits in museums.

3. There were many routes to freedom—west, north, and east into the coastal islands of the Carolinas—and many means of “conduct” and passage provided by individuals, families, and communities. Collections on display in the “Things Hold, Lines Connect” gallery at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum document the flight of several individuals from Montgomery County, Maryland, to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. For example, Ann Marie Weems made a daring escape in 1855 along the Underground Railroad. Students may explore how Weems’ story relates to this gallery’s title.

4. Visit the National Park Service Web site in order to learn more about Underground Railroad routes, conductors, passengers, and safe houses.

<http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/Ulnmore.htm>

**Resource Sheet 1**  
**Guide for Research Notes**

**Pathway to Freedom: The Underground Railroad**

**Researcher's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title of Document or Exhibit:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Importance of Research:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

| <b>Fact, Idea, or Comment</b> | <b>Main Idea (M) or Detail (D)</b> | <b>Importance of Information</b> | <b>Related Movement Ideas</b> |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                               |                                    |                                  |                               |

## **Resource Sheet 2**

### **The Dichotomy of the Declaration of Independence and Slavery**

#### **Pathway to Freedom: The Underground Railroad**

On July 4, 1776 representatives from the 13 American Colonies created the Declaration of Independence. It states:

“We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these of Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

But it took almost another 100 years until these words applied to the Black peoples brought from Africa to America to serve as slaves.

#### **Theme for Choreography:**

Create a dance about the dichotomy between the assertion of equality and freedom in the Declaration of Independence and the existence of slavery in America.

Choose an aspect of this dichotomy from the list below as the subject of choreography:

- 1) the difference between equality and inequality
- 2) the contrast between freedom and bondage
- 3) the life of the socially elite class versus life as a slave

## **Resource Sheet 3**

### **Escape**

#### **Pathway to Freedom: The Underground Railroad Resource**

Because America's southern economy depended upon their labor, slaves were forced into hard labor in the hot agricultural fields of the south. The quality of a slave's life depended entirely upon the goodness of his or her master. Many masters were harsh, cruel, and treated their slaves like livestock with no concern for them as humans.

Many slaves, even whole families, decided to run away from their masters rather than suffer the indignities and tortures they were suffering. They did so at great risk of failure. Once their disappearance was realized, they were hunted down by professional bounty hunters with hounds who were trained to find and attack them. The majority of fugitive slaves were men between the ages of 16 and 35 years. Women and children also escaped, but they were more likely to be caught. Those who were captured suffered cruel punishment and sometimes torturous death.

Fugitive slaves traveled through forests, over fields, through swamps and across streams and rivers. Since it had many waterways where dogs could not track the scent of a fugitive and is geographically near the northern states where slaves reached freedom, Maryland was a major area of escape.

#### **Theme for Choreography:**

Choreograph a dance about the need to escape from slavery, and escape, and a chase by bounty hunters. Include the aspects below in the dance:

- 1) Explore the reasons that slaves risked torture or death to escape from slavery.
- 2) Explore the hardships fugitives endured during their escape.
- 3) What dangers did fugitives encounter during their escape?

- 4) What personal characteristics did fugitives need to escape from slavery?
- 5) Explore the emotions slaves must have felt when attempting escape.

## **Resource Sheet 4**

### **The Underground Railroad**

#### **Pathway to Freedom: The Underground Railroad**

The Underground Railroad was not a train but a network of escape routes, safe houses, and individuals who helped slaves escape to freedom. It was most active from the 1830s until emancipation. The Underground Railroad stretched from the southern states to the northern states and Canada. The term “underground” was used because it was illegal for anyone to help a fugitive slave and individuals who did so were severely prosecuted. It was therefore a secret network. Even so, there were more than 3,200 “workers” along the Underground Railroad who helped thousands of runaway slaves.

Fitting the “railroad” metaphor, fugitive slaves were called “passengers” and their rescuers were “conductors.” These persons provided fugitives safe haven and directions to the next safe house or “station;” sometimes accompanying them or providing transportation. Conductors or workers were black, white, Native-American anti-slavery activists from all backgrounds and professions. They hid the fugitive slaves in haylofts, barns, basements, attics, and any safe corner. They offered food, clothing, and whatever assistance available and also, sometimes accompanied the passengers hundreds of miles.

#### **Theme for Choreography:**

Choreograph a dance that communicates how the conductors and workers helped the passengers to escape to freedom.

Choose at least one aspect of the Underground Railroad from the list below as the subject of choreography:

- 1) Communicate in movement the relationship between the fugitive passenger and the rescuer, conductor, or worker.
- 2) Choreograph a network through which the passenger can travel.

- 3) Choreograph the journey of a passenger depicting their escape from a plantation to freedom using the Underground Railroad.

## Resource Sheet 5

### Harriet Tubman: Heroine of the Underground Railroad

#### Pathway to Freedom: The Underground Railroad

Harriet Tubman was affectionately dubbed “Moses” for her heroic efforts to save family and friends from the grip of slavery and lead them to freedom. After her own successful escape, she returned to her native Maryland’s Eastern Shore thirteen times, risking her own life and possible recapture for the sake of others.

Tubman was born in Dorchester, Maryland, around the year 1822. Her parents, Harriet and Ben Ross, had nine children. They named their fifth child Araminta Ross, but everyone called her “Minty.” Minty adopted her mother’s name later in life and became historically known as Harriet Tubman.

When Minty was young her master, Edward Brodess, often hired her out to other owners who were cruel and forced her to live under harsh conditions. As a teen, Minty once refused to assist in a fellow worker’s punishment, and was struck in the head with a hard object. She suffered headaches, seizures, and sleeping spells for the remainder of her life.

At age 22, Minty married John Tubman, a free African American. Five years later, she was afraid she was to be sold “South” following three of her sisters,” and so she fled to the North. Her husband did not join her.

In her path to freedom, a white neighbor helped Minty escape and reach her first “safe house” on the Underground Railroad. She received assistance from many black and white abolitionists, and finally reached Philadelphia where she found work as a cook or domestic in homes and hotels.

In Philadelphia she met William Still, a leading African American “Stationmaster” on the Underground Railroad. He taught her about the organization and operations of the network. With the help of Still and other members of the Philadelphia Anti-slavery Society, Minty rescued about 70 members of her family, friends, and others and found them asylum in Saint

Catharines, Ontario, Canada. She also informed many other slaves about the Underground Railroad so they could initiate their own escapes.

During the Civil War, Tubman served in the Union army as a soldier, spy, and nurse. After the war, she settled in Auburn, New York, where she brought her parents and other family and friends. She died in 1913 and was buried with military honors. Many other honors have been bestowed since her death.

**Theme for Choreography:**

Choreograph a dance about Tubman's life and accomplishments.

Use narrative choreographic techniques such as:

1. Start with the end of Tubman's life as an accomplished heroine, her retrospective reflection on her life, how she became a major Conductor in the Underground Railroad, and her accomplishments.
2. Choose several episodes in Tubman's life that depict important moments of decision or change and choreograph short dance "skits" for each episode.
3. Choose one crucial moment in Tubman's life and choreograph a dance. Analyze and communicate in depth all the personal attributes and situational conditions that affected her decisions and actions.

## **Resource Sheet 6**

### **Josiah Henson: A Hero of the Underground Railroad**

#### **Pathway to Freedom: The Underground Railroad**

Josiah Henson was born into slavery in Charles County, Maryland, on June 15, 1789. As a young boy he witnessed his father being brutally flogged and his ear cut off. Soon afterwards his father was sold “South” and his mother was left with five children. Josiah was the youngest.

In spite of his mother’s steadfast faith in the gospel, she and her children were sold to different owners and separated. Josiah became sick and was of no use to his new owner, and so he was resold at a loss to his mother’s master. His mother nursed him back to health.

Like most child slaves, Josiah’s responsibility was to bring water and food to the field slaves. As he got older he was assigned more difficult jobs, and given roles of responsibility over other slaves and men. He proved faithful, loyal, trustworthy, careful and prudent. His owner trusted him to go into town and make purchases. Other men respected and listened to him.

He was permitted to transport 21 slaves to Kentucky on foot. They crossed the Ohio River, but out of a sense of duty and loyalty, Josiah and the slaves did not try to escape. However, other slaves on the plantation were being sold, all except Josiah and his family, and Josiah was concerned about his own and his family’s fate.

During this time, many slave owners allowed slaves to “purchase” their own freedom, and Josiah’s owner agreed the price for Josiah would be \$450, a substantial sum for a slave to acquire. Since Josiah was given a special pass to journey off the plantation, he traveled to local communities and preached gospel for donations. He saved these funds and offered the full fee to his master, who then raised the price and refused the promised freedom. Josiah soon learned he was to be sold away from his family.

In anger, Josiah decided to run away with his family. He had to convince his wife that escape was the only alternative to provide his children with a

future. Late one night, he stuffed the two youngest children into a knapsack which he carried on his back, while he, his wife, and the two oldest children walked. A trusted friend rowed them across the Ohio River from Kentucky to Ohio. They were befriended by Native Americans, who gave them food and shelter, and assisted by the Underground Railroad. They were heading to Canada where Josiah felt they would be safe.

The family arrived in Canada on October 28, 1830. Josiah was 42 years old. He started the Dawn Settlement, a refuge for former slaves where they were taught to read, write, and start a new life. He helped more than 200 slaves escape to Canada.

Josiah Henson is believed to be the model for Uncle Tom in Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The book affected many generations of readers who became outraged at the brutality of slavery.

### **Theme for Choreography:**

Choreograph a dance about Josiah Henson's life and accomplishments.

Use narrative choreographic techniques such as follows:

1. Start with the end of Henson's life as an accomplished hero, his retrospective reflection on his life, how he became a major worker in the Underground Railroad, and his accomplishments.
2. Choose several episodes in Henson's life that depict important moments of decision or change and choreograph short dance "skits" for each episode.
3. Choose one crucial moment in Henson's life and choreograph a dance. Analyze and communicate in depth all the personal attributes and situational conditions that affected his decisions and actions.

**Resource Sheet 7**

**Guide for Choreographing**  
(to be used in the second Session)

**Pathway to Freedom: The Underground Railroad**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title of Dance:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Choreographer(s):**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Dancer(s):**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What is Dance about?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative describing the Dance:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

| <b>Section of Dance</b> | <b>Idea or Meaning of Movement</b> | <b>Movements to Communicate Idea or Meaning</b> | <b>Details of Choreography</b> |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
|                         |                                    |   |                                |

**Resource Sheet 8**

**Guide for Choreography**  
(to be used in the second Session)

**Pathway to Freedom: The Underground Railroad**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title of Dance:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Choreographer(s):**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Dancer(s):**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Music Title and Composer:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**What does the opening/beginning of the dance make you think the dance is about?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**How does the dance develop? Is the dance telling a story? Is there a main issue or theme? Is there a conflict? Is the dance abstract? Is it entertaining movements or serious? Describe how the dance progresses.**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**What is the ending of the dance? What do you want it to communicate?**

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**Choreography Check List**

| <b>Element of Movement</b>  | <b>Used Creatively with Great Variety</b> | <b>Somewhat Varied</b> | <b>Not Varied Or Not Included</b> |
|---|---|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Use of Body:</b>   |   |                        |                                   |
| Movements use the whole body: limbs, torso, and head  |   |                        |                                   |
| Movements have definition and detail using isolated body parts  |   |                        |                                   |
| Use of body expresses idea of the choreography  |   |                        |                                   |
| <b>Use of Space:</b>  |   |                        |                                   |
| Dancers face in different directions  |   |                        |                                   |
| Dancers travel in different pathways  |   |                        |                                   |
| Movement uses different levels  |   |                        |                                   |
| Dancers make interesting and complex shapes with their bodies   |   |                        |                                   |
| Dancers make interesting and complex shapes moving through space  |   |                        |                                   |
| <b>Music, Rhythm, and Phrasing</b>  |   |                        |                                   |
| The music fits the mood and enhances the meaning of the dance   |   |                        |                                   |
| Does the accompaniment have words? If so, how well the relationship work between the words and the movement ? |   |                        |                                   |

|   |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| Rhythms and phrasing of the movements work with the style and meaning of the dance. |  |  |  |
| <b>Movement Dynamics</b>  |  |  |  |
| The style of movement communicates the meaning of the dance.                        |  |  |  |
| There is an interesting variety of movement qualities.                              |  |  |  |
| The movement expresses the meaning of the dance.                                    |  |  |  |

**Resource Sheet 9**

**Guide for Audience Participation**  
(to be used in the third Session)

**Pathway to Freedom: The Underground Railroad**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title of Dance:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Choreographer(s):**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Dancer(s):**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Music Title and Composer:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**What does the opening/beginning of the dance make you think the dance is about?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**How does the dance develop? Is the dance telling a story? Is there a main issue or theme? Is there a conflict? Is the dance abstract? Is it entertaining movements or serious? Describe how the dance progresses.**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Do the dancers each have separate roles or are all the dancers doing the same movements:**

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**Are there changes of facings and directions, or are the dancers all facing front?**

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**Are there a variety of levels (on ground, middle, high on toes or in air) or do dancers mainly stay on their feet?**

---

**What was the relationship of the dance to the music (if there was any music played)?**

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**Does the accompaniment have words? If so, what is the relationship between the words and the movement? Do they echo one another or do they give a different perspective to the meaning of the dance?**

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**Was there a particularly exciting part of the dance or a climax in the story?**

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**What is the ending of the dance? What does it mean to you?**

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**Now that you have seen the whole dance, what do you think the Dance is about?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Resource Sheet 10

### Underground Railroad Choreography Project – Self and Group Evaluation

(to be used in the third Session)

1. How was this project different from other choreography projects that you have done? Please answer this question as both a choreographer and as a dancer (performer).

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2. How did you go about creating the narrative for your group? How did you then connect it to the choreography? In viewing the video, do you think it was successful?

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3. How did you go about choosing your music? Do you think this choice worked for the overall assignment? Discuss the effect of the music choice on your dance.

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4. After watching the video of your group's performance, what do you think? How was your personal performance and that of your whole group?

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5. What aspects of your dance could have been improved? How would you improve them to make your choreography clearer for the audience?

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6. What will you walk away with from doing this choreography project? How did it affect you as an individual?

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7. Group grading: Please list all members of your group and give them a grade from 1-10 (1 being the lowest) about their contribution and performance in the group.

**Name**

**Grade 1-10**

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| <hr/> | <hr/> |

Statement defending your grading:

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