



**The Toronto Heschel School**

**בית הספר על שם השל**

Inspiring Jewish students to make a difference

## **From Slavery to Freedom**

**Grade 5 Integrated Unit**

**LANGUAGE ARTS AND  
SOCIAL SCIENCE**



## Grade 5 Language Arts

# Ways to Escape from Slavery

There were not many ways for escaping slaves to travel in the 1800's. Although they sometimes traveled on boats or real trains, most runaways traveled on foot or by wagon. It was dangerous to travel on foot because bounty hunters were everywhere. It was safer to catch a ride on a wagon, because one could hide in coffins, boxes, or sacks that would then get carried to the north.

To avoid capture, runaways walked at night and rested during the daytime. They walked hundreds of kilometers through waterways, mountains, and forests. When stations were not available, they hid in caves, swamps, and trenches.

Here are some examples of the clever and creative ways slaves found to escape:

- When abolitionist John Fairfield needed to sneak 28 slaves over the roads near Cincinnati, he hired a hearse and disguised the group as a funeral procession.
- Henry "Box" Brown, a slave, had himself shipped from Richmond, VA to Philadelphia, PA in a wooden box.
- Ellen and William Craft made a dangerous journey from the South to the North by train, steamship, and coach, dressed up as a sickly white master and his slave.



RESURRECTION OF HENRY BOX BROWN.

Most escapes were by individuals or small groups. Most escapees were young men. The journey was seen as too treacherous for women or children to complete. Many men who escaped later purchased their wives, children, and other family members out of slavery. Because of this, the number of slaves who owed their freedom at least in part to the Underground Railroad was greater than the many thousands who actually traveled its secret routes.



## Grade 5 Language Arts

# The Underground Railroad



The Underground Railroad was the name of the secret organization that helped slaves in the United States escape to freedom. The Underground Railroad was named unofficially in 1831 when a slave escaped across the Ohio River and disappeared without a trace. The slave's bewildered owner said he "must've gone off on some underground railroad."

The Underground Railroad was NOT a real railroad and it was NOT underground. "Underground" meant that it was secret. There was no real railroad, just many secret routes leading north. It was called a "railroad" because it used secret codes based on railroad vocabulary. Escaped slaves, or "passengers", were helped by "conductors" who moved them along their route between safe houses called "stations", as they steadily made their way north.

By 1831 the Underground Railroad began sending people into the South to secretly teach slaves specific routes they could use to escape, using Polaris (the North Star) as a guide. By the beginning of the Civil War in 1861, as many as 500 abolitionists were traveling in the South each year, teaching escape routes to slaves. Routes were often indirect in order to confuse pursuers. Information about routes was passed along by word of mouth to reduce the risk of being discovered. "Conductors" who plotted the course of escape and made contacts on the railroad were Black, White and Native. Many belonged to a Christian group known as the Quakers.

In 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law was passed, requiring all US citizens who knew the whereabouts of runaway slaves to report what they knew or be punished. With this law in force, it was no longer safe for slaves to run away to northern states. In order to be truly safe, they had to take the Underground Railroad all the way to Canada. Canadian officials refused to return escaped slaves to the United States. By 1865, almost 40,000 Blacks lived in Canada, where they were free people who were allowed to vote and own property.

As many as 100,000 people may have escaped slavery on the Underground Railroad in the years between the American Revolution (1776) and the Civil War (1863). The Underground Railroad ended in 1865 when the United States passed a law freeing more than 4 million slaves.



## Code Words of the Underground Railroad

**"A friend with friends":** An Underground Railroad conductor would use this password as a signal that fugitive slaves had arrived.

**Baggage or Cargo or Freight:** escaping slaves. Males were referred to as "hardware" and females as "dry goods".

**Bundles of wood:** fugitives to be expected

**Canaan or Heaven or Promised Land:** Canada

**Conductor:** the men and women who operated the Underground Railroad and "conducted" escaping slaves along the route to safety

**Drinking Gourd:** refers to the constellation known as the Big Dipper, which includes the North Star. The North Star was the escaping slaves' main navigational tool as they travelled North to freedom, usually Canada.

**Entry Ports:** Words of praise and thanksgiving to God were used as code words for the routes into Canada, e.g. Windsor = Glory to God and Port Stanley = God be Praised

**Forwarding:** Transporting escaping slaves from one station to the next

**Freedom Seekers:** the thousands of escaped slaves who risked their lives traveling north to Canada and personal liberation

**Freedom Train:** The Underground Railroad

**Gospel Train:** The Underground Railroad

**Load of Potatoes:** In a wagon, escaping slaves hidden under farm produce

**Moses:** Harriet Tubman, a famous "conductor" who, like Moses, helped her people escape slavery.

**Parcels:** fugitives to be expected

**Passengers:** escaping slaves

**Preachers:** leaders, speakers of the Underground Railroad

**River Jordan:** the Mississippi River or the Ohio River

**Shepherds:** people escorting slaves

**Station Master:** the keeper of the safe-house or "station"

**Stations:** the places of safety and temporary refuge where slaves hid along the escape route. Safe-houses. They could be churches, barns, or houses. Station names were referred to in code, e.g., Pennsylvania = #10, Ohio = #20, Cleveland = Hope, and Detroit = Midnight.

**"Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus":** sung to alert other slaves that an escape attempt would be happening soon

**Stockholder:** someone who donated money, clothing or food to the Underground Railroad



## Grade 5 Language Arts

# Get on Board, Little Children (The Gospel Train's A'Comin')



Slaves sung the spiritual, "The Gospel Train's A'Comin'", to alert other slaves that a group was preparing to escape and travel north to freedom. Plantation owners would not realize that their slaves were planning to escape because slave songs were part of the daily routine. A plantation owner would simply hear the religious and Biblical references and assume the slaves were singing for spiritual reasons. However, "Gospel Train" was actually code for the Underground Railroad.

### Chorus:

Get on board little children  
Get on board little children  
Get on board little children  
There's room for many a more

The Gospel train's a'comin'  
I hear it just at hand  
I hear the car wheels rumblin'  
And rollin' through the land

### Chorus

I hear the train a'comin'  
It's comin' round the curve  
Puttin' on its steam and brakes  
And strainin' ev'ry nerve

### Chorus

The fare is cheap and all can go  
The rich and poor are there  
No second class aboard this train  
No difference in the fare

### Chorus



## *Underground to Canada*



## Secret Quilt Codes

Ozella Williams, an African American woman who lives in South Carolina, recalls the story that her mother told her about the Underground Railroad Quilt Code. Apparently, there were a number of different quilt patterns that were used to communicate secret messages to escaping slaves. A quilt featuring one of the patterns was placed on a fence where it would be visible to the slave community. Since it was common for quilts to be aired out, the master or mistress would not be suspicious when seeing a quilt displayed in this fashion. Only one quilt would be displayed at any given time. Each quilt signaled a specific action for a slave to take at the particular time.



### Monkey Wrench

Meant for them to gather tools needed for a long journey—both mental and physical.



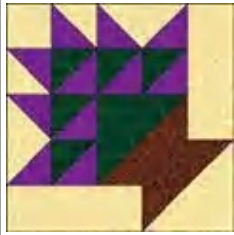
### Wagon Wheel

Meant for them to load the wagon, or prepare to board the wagon to begin the escape.



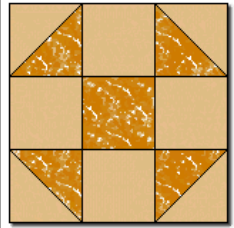
### Bear Paw

Meant for them to take a mountain trail, out of view, and follow the path made by bear tracks. The tracks would lead them to water and food.



### Basket

Meant for them to bring enough food and supplies to get to the crossroads.



### Shoo-fly Block

It identifies a friendly guide who is nearby and can help.



### Bow Tie Block

Meant for them to dress in disguise, or put on a change of clothes.



### Flying Geese Block

The points were meant to follow that direction, such as where geese would fly during spring migration.



### Drunkard's Path Block

Meant for them to create a zig-zag path and not to walk in a straight line so to avoid pursuers in this area.



### Sailboat Block

Meant for them to take the sailboat across the Great Lakes.



### North Star

Meant for them to follow the north star.



## Grade 5 Language Arts

### *Underground to Canada*



# Written Assignments

## Station Meetings

"Station Meetings" will offer you a way to respond to Underground to Canada in a creative and meaningful way. They will also provide an opportunity to share your ideas with your classmates and to learn from one another. For your Station Meetings, the members of your group will rotate through the roles and tasks described in the pages that follow. With every piece that you prepare, remember that you are the only person in your group addressing that portion of the book from that particular perspective. **Therefore, your classmates will be counting on you to do your best work.**

Station Meeting presentations may be either typed or handwritten (double-spaced in either case) on separate sheets of paper. At the conclusion of the Station Meeting, they should be given to the conductor who will hand them in to the teacher for marking. When presentations are handed back, they should be kept in your binder. Having a neat and complete binder with thoughtful, creative, and well-written entries is an essential requirement for this unit and will form a major part of your mark.

The Station Meeting roles and responsibilities are described on the next two pages.



# Station Meeting Roles



## Conductor

Your job is to lead the Station Meeting. Here is what you must do in advance:

- Develop **three** comprehension questions for your group to discuss and answer in class. The purpose of these questions is to help you and the other members of your group to think about what has happened in the chapters you just read and to deepen your understanding of what it means. Try to ask questions that will spark discussion rather than just short, factual answers.

Here are your tasks during the Station Meeting itself:

- Call the meeting to order (using the secret password).
- Beginning with the Storyteller, invite each group member to share his or her work with the group.
- After each presentation, invite the rest of the group to give positive feedback and to share their reactions.
- As group members share their presentations, fill in the Conductor's Schedule.
- Invite each group member to share a selection related to **ספר שמות** (explained below).
- As time permits: Share your three comprehension questions, one at a time, and invite the group to discuss them.
- During the meeting, it is your job to ensure that everyone participates and that everyone is attentive and respectful. You may ask your teacher for assistance, if needed.
- At the end of the meeting, collect everyone's written work and submit it to your teacher, along with the Conductor's Schedule.

## Storyteller

Your job is to prepare a written summary of the chapters that the group has read for this meeting. Your summary should include the most important events and experiences in the assigned chapters. Your summary should be written in your own words and should read like a short story.

## Preacher

Your job is to inspire the passengers who come your way, with a **song** or **poem** based on something you have read in the assigned chapters. If you decide to write a song, you can compose your own tune or you can borrow a tune from another song that you know. Your poem or song should be one full page, handwritten or  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a page, typed.

## Passenger

Your job is to “walk in the shoes” of a character in the book. Pick a specific character and tell the part of the story you have just read from his or her point of view. Your entry should be two pages, handwritten or one page, typed. Here are some ideas for what you might include in your entry:

- What has been happening in the chapters you have just read?
- What have you, yourself, been doing?
- Who have you been interacting with and how do you feel about them?
- What are you finding most difficult or challenging?
- What are you most afraid of?
- What are you most hoping for?

## Fly on the Wall

Your job is to retell the story from the point of view of a minor character in the story—a person in the crowd or an animal who is not emphasized or even mentioned in the book but who is watching what is going on. Explain who (or what) you are and then tell the story from your unique point of view. Be sure to share not only what you see and hear but also your reactions. Your entry should be two pages, handwritten or one page, typed.

## Binder

Your binder should be organized by Station Meeting. As you begin to read the chapters for the upcoming Station Meeting, start a new page in your binder and create a heading. Your heading should include the number of the Station Meeting and the chapters that have been assigned for that meeting. Please see the illustration below for an example of what a heading will look like.

You will use your notebook for two purposes. The first purpose is to keep a list of selections from the book that relate in some way to **ספר שמות**. For every Station Meeting, you will need to select one or two short passages (between one sentence and one paragraph in length) from the chapters you have just read that have some connection to the characters, story or themes in **ספר שמות**. (Consider using post-its as you read to help you keep track of possible passages.) For each quote, please cite the chapter, page, and line number where the quote begins. Here is the format that you should use:

**4:28:7**

This means that your quote is in Chapter **4** and begins on page **28**, line number **7**.

After you have written down your quote, explain how the quote relates to **ספר שמות** (using complete sentences).

Here is an example of how a heading, quote, and explanation will look in your notebook:

## Station Meeting 2 (Chapters 4 - 6)

### Selection #1: 4:28:7

"The children clung to Julilly and she warmed them as best she could in her thin, strong arms."

I think this selection relates to ספר שמות because Julilly shows kindness and compassion to the children she is traveling with just as the מַלְאָכִים אֱלֹהִים and אֱלֹהִים showed kindness and compassion to the Hebrew babies and to מֹשֶׁה.

The second purpose of your notebook is to keep track of the words that you find challenging—because of spelling, meaning or both. When you come across a word that is unfamiliar to you, include a brief definition and a sentence which uses the word in a way that will help you to remember the meaning.

I hope you find this unit both meaningful and enjoyable.

בהצלחה!

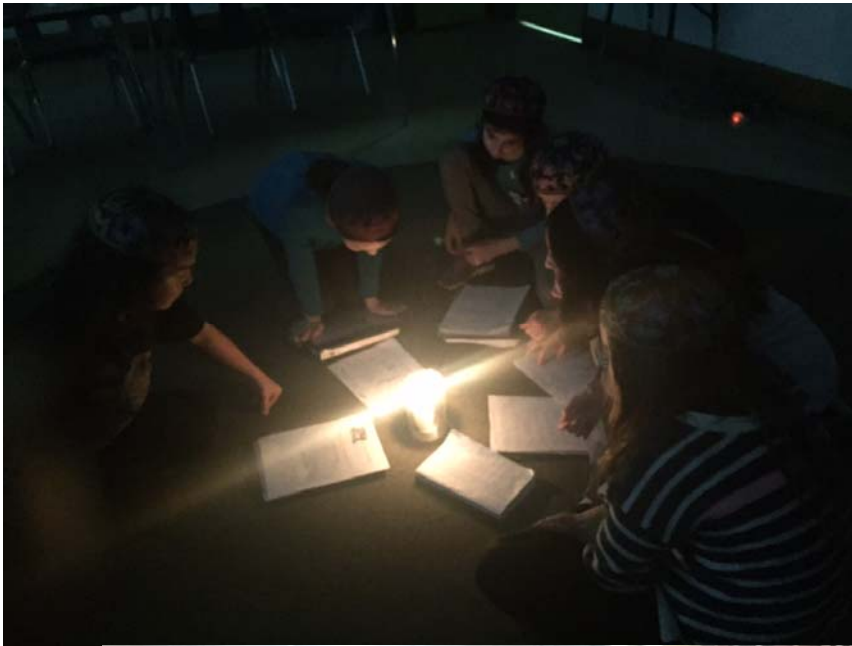




## Grade 5 Language Arts *Underground to Canada*

### Station Meetings

In the images below, the grade 5 students work in groups in Language Arts class to unpack the novel together. At each "Station Meeting", the students rotate roles and tasks as outlined in the project overview.





## Grade 5 Language Arts

# Safe Houses, Conductors, & Shepherds



For Julilly, Liza, Lester, and Adam in Underground to Canada, and for משה and בני ישראל in ספר שמות, there were many enemies and dangers. There were also "safe houses," "conductors," and "shepherds" – people and places where a combination of courage and kindness made survival possible.

Consider the two stories we have studied and, in the space below, list all of the safe houses, conductors, shepherds, and other friends who helped the African and Hebrew slaves survive and who guided them on their way to freedom. Begin at the beginning of both books and work your way forward. For everything you include, please write a brief explanation of the role he/she/it played and give the location in the text.

ספר שמות	Location	<u>Underground to Canada</u>	Location
<b>Moshe's mother.</b> Hid Moshe and kept him safe for 3 months. Nursed him and perhaps transmitted identity and values.	הַיְדֵּם הַיְדֵּם	<b>Mammy Sally.</b> Gave Julilly strength & the goal of seeking freedom in Canada.	Page 16

(Continue on the back as needed.)

ספר שמות	Location	<u>Underground to Canada</u>	Location





## Grade 5 Language Arts

### *Underground to Canada*



”בְּכֹל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיֵּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עֲצָמוֹ כְּאִילוֹ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם.”

Explain what this phrase means.

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How could reading and studying *Underground to Canada*, a book about American slavery, help a student in Grade 5 to fulfill this obligation?

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## Grade 5 Language Arts

### Ways to Escape from Slavery – Summary

In the Antebellum South, escape from slavery was a dangerous endeavour that generally involved traveling either on \_\_\_\_\_ or by \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ were the safer option because the runaway could be \_\_\_\_\_ and carried north. To avoid \_\_\_\_\_, runaways generally traveled at \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ during the \_\_\_\_\_. Most escapees were \_\_\_\_\_ who, in many cases, were later able to \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ members.



## Grade 5 Language Arts

### Ways to Escape from Slavery – Summary

In the Antebellum South, escape from slavery was a dangerous endeavour that generally involved traveling either on \_\_\_\_\_ or by \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_ were the safer option because the runaway could be \_\_\_\_\_ and carried north. To avoid \_\_\_\_\_, runaways generally traveled at \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ during the \_\_\_\_\_. Most escapees were \_\_\_\_\_ who, in many cases, were later able to \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ members.





# קדש

How would Julilly, Mammy Sally, Liza, Lester, and/or Adam describe the colour and shape of freedom and slavery?

Use this template **or** create your own script below:

: If I had to paint a picture of slavery, the colour I'd use is \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_.

: And the shape of slavery would have to be \_\_\_\_\_ because  
\_\_\_\_\_. But what about  
freedom? What colour is freedom?

: For me freedom is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

: And the shape of freedom for me is \_\_\_\_\_ because  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**Cast** (circle the characters you are including): **Julilly**    **Mammy Sally**    **Liza**    **Lester**    **Adam**

**Script:**

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# ורחץ

If Julilly and company were to talk about the role of water in their own escape story, what memories would they share?

Ideas:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Cast** (circle the characters you are including): **Julilly**    **Mammy Sally**    **Liza**    **Lester**    **Adam**

**Script:**

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# הא לחמא עניא

Can one be rich in spirit even if one is poor in physical resources? Imagine Julilly and the others talking about how even though they had it rough in a lot of ways, they were rich in the things that really count (e.g., courage, friendship, the kindness of strangers, etc.)

Ideas:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Cast** (circle the characters you are including): **Julilly**      **Mammy Sally**      **Liza**      **Lester**      **Adam**

**Script:**

<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> </div>	:	_____
		_____
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> </div>	:	_____
		_____
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> </div>	:	_____
		_____
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 30px; display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> </div>	:	_____
		_____



# ארבעה בנים

In *Underground to Canada*, who is the חכם, who is the רשע, who is the תם, and who is the  
לאינו יודע לשאול?

Use this template **or** create your own script below:

: Looking back at the story of our escape, if I had to pick a wise child, it definitely be  
\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

: And the wicked child be \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

: I think \_\_\_\_\_ was the simple child because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

: Yep, and \_\_\_\_\_ was the child who didn't know what to ask  
because \_\_\_\_\_.

**Cast** (circle the characters you are including): **Julilly** **Mammy Sally** **Liza** **Lester** **Adam**

**Script:**

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# מגיד

Imagine Julilly and company hearing “עבדים היינו.” Have them complete this sentence:

“We were slaves to \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ and then \_\_\_\_\_!”

Use this template **or** create your own script below:

: We were slaves to \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.

: But \_\_\_\_\_ brought us out with \_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_.

: And if not for \_\_\_\_\_ we would  
still be slaves in \_\_\_\_\_.

: Therefore, it is our duty to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**Cast** (circle the characters you are including): **Julilly**    **Mammy Sally**    **Liza**    **Lester**    **Adam**

**Script:**

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## ברך/הלל

**At the סדר, we express our gratitude to God for freeing us from Egypt and leading us to ארץ ישראל. If Julilly and company were to express a prayer of thanksgiving, what might they say?**

Use this template **or** create your own script below:

	: On this day, as we remember the gift of freedom, let us bow our heads in prayer.
	: Dear Lord, we thank you for _____.
	: We also thank you for _____.
	: And for _____.
	: And finally, God, we thank you for _____.

**Cast** (circle the characters you are including): **Julilly**      **Mammy Sally**      **Liza**      **Lester**      **Adam**

**Script:**

	:	
	:	
	:	
	:	
	:	



# נרצה

The סדר ends with the ancient Jewish hope: “Next year in Jerusalem.” What hopes might Julilly and company express as they looked to the coming year in Canada?

Use this template **or** create your own script below:

(E.g., “Next year, may we....” or “Next year, we hope that....” or “Next year, we pray that....”)

	: Next year, _____.
	: Next year, _____.
	: Next year, _____.
	: Next year, _____.

**Cast** (circle the characters you are including): **Julilly**    **Mammy Sally**    **Liza**    **Lester**    **Adam**

**Script:**

	: _____ _____
	: _____ _____
	: _____ _____
	: _____ _____