

## **Lesson Title:** Communication: the Power to Free (Introductory Lesson)

**By:** Angela Choberka and Dee Anne Squire, Teacher Consultants, Wasatch Range Writing Project

**Burning Questions:** Through reading and discussing a picture book in a group can students determine what forms of communication we use to share our ideas, how we choose which forms to use, and how communication can help us navigate situations?

### **Objectives:**

- Students will explore various methods of communication used by slaves to gain freedom.
- Students will relate prior knowledge to make connections to text (e.g., text to text, text to self, text to world).
- Students will identify and evaluate forms of communication and how they are used in particular situations.

**Context:** Introductory Lesson K-6 (extensions may apply across grade levels)

### **Materials:**

- Winter, Jeanette. *Follow the Drinking Gourd*. New York: Dragonfly Books, 1988
- White board/markers to facilitate discussion for older students

**Time Span:** 30 - 45 minutes

### **Procedures:**

1. Students will think about/draw/write the following image (or something similar):
  - Pretend you have hidden a treasure on the playground and it is for your friend. You need to tell him/her where it is without telling anyone else. How will you tell your friend where it is? Remember, I am watching, too.
  - Open for discussion of student ideas and lead them to determine the variety of forms of communication they already understand.
2. Students will discuss issues such as escape, running away, slavery, the Underground Railroad. What do students already know about the topics? Fill in the gaps appropriately based on the age of students, their prior experiences, and how deeply you plan to cover the topic in this lesson (reference “Note about the Story” after title page in picture book or other sources provided in this packet).
3. Share *Follow the Drinking Gourd* with the students appropriately based on their age and ability. For example, your intent with younger students may be to provide an exposure to the spiritual rather than delving deeply into issues with slavery, but with an older group there may be questions raised regarding the topic that need to be addressed.
4. Follow the reading with questions relating to prior discussion:
  - Are any of the students’ ideas regarding methods of communication reflected in the story?

- What are some ways the people communicate throughout the story? (singing, following the stars, symbols like the foot and the peg, seasons, hoot, drawing of map, lamp being lit)
- Why did they choose those particular forms? Why didn't they write a note or draw a map to carry? Why did they sing a song?
- Older students could be prompted to reflect on any of these ideas and write in a journal or writing notebook for a period of time to complete this lesson.

**Adaptations/Extensions:**

- Students could do more research on astronomy in relation to the Underground Railroad or other kinds of escape or navigation. Instructions for plotting latitude are available from NASA: <http://quest.nasa.gov/lrc/special/mlk/route.html>
- Students could do more research on the history of the song and other African American songs. Numerous resources and examples of songs can be found on the internet as well as in books such as *The Sounds of Slavery* by Shane White and Graham White, which includes explanations and a CD of recordings of slave songs.

**Rationale:** We feel that it is important to discuss how the slaves needed to find alternate ways of communicating in order to escape from their situation. The picture book retelling the story surrounding the song explicitly shows some ways this journey was undertaken. They learned a song that told of an escape route but had to “read” the signs such as facial expressions, stars, seasons, rivers, in order to be successful at their pursuit. This lesson was designed as an introductory lesson for any age/ability level. Students at all ages love to be read to from a picture book, so even 6th graders would find this lesson interesting and fun. We wanted to create a flexible guideline in order to help guide the lesson, but to leave most of the decisions up to the teacher within their own classroom with their particular students.

**Resources:**

- Winter, Jeanette. *Follow the Drinking Gourd*. New York: Dragon Fly Books, 1988.
- Joel Bresler has created an online site, *Follow the Drinking Gourd: A Cultural History*, which includes several interpretations of the song: <http://www.followthedrinkinggourd.org/>.
- Winter's book became the basis of a show at the DuPont Planetarium: <http://www.usca.edu/rpsec/planetarium/gourd.html>. The Virginia Living Museum produced videos based on the text: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohEFi14rgnc>.
- NASA posts an explanation of the words to the song: <http://quest.nasa.gov/lrc/special/mlk/gourd2.html>.
- Maryland Public Television also posts an explanation of the words: <http://pathways.thinkport.org/secrets/gourd2.cfm>.
- Owen's Sound on the Canada-United States border was the northern terminus of the Underground Railroad. Many escaped slaves remained in the town (now called Sydenham). The city has created a web page commemorating that history which includes a section on “Freedom Songs” <http://www.osblackhistory.com/songs.php>.

**Lesson Title:** Communication: the Power to Free – Frederick Douglass

**By:** Dee Anne Squire, Teacher Consultant, Wasatch Range Writing Project

**Burning Questions:**

- What forms of communication do we use to share our ideas?
- How do we choose which form to use?
- How can communication help us navigate various situations in our lives?

**Objectives:**

- Students will explore various methods of communication used by Douglass and others.
- Students will relate prior knowledge to make connections to text (e.g., text to text, text to self, text to world).
- Students will evaluate forms of communication and how they are used in particular situations.

**Context:** Grades 4-6

**Materials:**

- Adler, David A. *A Picture Book of Frederick Douglass*. New York: Holiday House, 1993.
- Paper for individual student responses

**Time Span:** 45min. - 1 hour

(It may be broken up a variety of ways based on the needs of your students.)

**Procedures:**

1. Refer back to the book *Following the Drinking Gourd* and the discussion about communication.
2. Define the word communication as: “The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, signals, writing, or behavior.” Discuss this as a group to ensure that everyone understands it.
3. Organize students into groups of four. Direct them to take 3 minutes and come up with specific examples of communication that support this definition and record them on a piece of paper.
4. Begin with one group and list all of their ideas on the board. Each group should listen carefully and cross out similar answers on their own paper. Continue sharing group ideas until each group has had an opportunity to list their unique ideas on the board.
5. Give a brief introduction of Frederick Douglass. Hand each group a few photocopied pages from the book, *A Picture Book of Frederick Douglass*. (Break the pages down so that each group has a few pages so the entire book will be covered by presentations.) Instruct the groups to read the passage out loud together. They should organize a brief class presentation that contains the following:
  - Important information about Douglass from their section

- Examples of varying forms of communication exhibited by the individuals within their text. (They can look at the list on the board for ideas.)
6. When all the groups have completed the preparation, begin with the group that had the first pages of the book and have each group present their ideas in sequence. List the examples of communication each group finds on the board, and have all students make the same list on their own paper.
  7. After all presentations are complete, discuss, as a group, why each form of communication was chosen. (For example, Douglass used public speeches to share his ideas with white audiences because it was a respected form of communication in that population.) Discuss how communication helped Douglass handle various difficult situations in his life.
  8. Have each individual student choose a challenging situation in his or her life. Complete the following writing assignments based on that situation:
    - A short paragraph describing that situation
    - A description of a form of communication that can help to rectify the situation
    - A short role-play of how the situation will play out
    - A defense of your choice of communication for that situation. (Role-play a situation of your own for the students and discuss how you would follow this writing pattern for your situation.) Challenge students to use their proposed solution to rectify the situation they have described. Do not force students to share this writing as some may choose to write about sensitive subjects.

**Extension:** Follow-up Journal: In class a few days later ask students to write about the results of their communication plan. What happened? Was it similar to, or different from your role-play? Did you choose the right form of communication, or would something else have worked better?

**Rationale:** By making a careful analysis of the life of Frederick Douglass and his use of communication, students will begin to understand the power of communication in their own lives. This lesson will help them to understand that while we all have problems; we each have the ability to improve the situation in which we live. Well-chosen communication plays a big role in changing that situation.

**Note:** In studying slavery and slave narratives, students may encounter images, language, descriptions, and opinions that they find offensive or unsettling. Teachers should be mindful of student backgrounds and be sensitive to these issues.

**Resources:** Adler, Davis A. *A Picture Book of Frederick Douglass*. New York: Holiday House, 1993.

## **Lesson Title:** How Important Is What You Value

**By:** Mary Thomas and Natalie Wilson, Teacher Consultants, Wasatch Range Writing Project

**Burning Question:** How can Harriet Jacobs' experience hiding for seven years help students understand the importance of what they value?

**Objective:** Students will try to get a feel for what it would be like to be in hiding and determine if they value anything in their lives enough to give up something.

**Context:** K-6 grade levels. This lesson analyzes Harriet's experience and what she valued most. This lesson will help students connect to what they value in their own lives and think about if those values are evident in the choices they make.

### **Materials:**

- PowerPoint slides
- White board and markers
- Writing equipment for students

**Time Span:** 20 minutes for Home Base or Advisory class

### **Procedures:**

1. Have students pretend they are runaway slaves. Have them hide under their desks and be perfectly still and quiet for two or three minutes. Teacher should mention that men are looking for them and if found they will be whipped.
2. Show the power point that talks about Harriet Jacobs' experience of being a runaway slave.
3. Discuss and list what Harriet Jacobs valued and how that was evident. Then students could make their own list of what they value and how this shows in their lives by their choices and actions.

### **Extensions:**

1. Teacher could give a quote from *I Was Born a Slave, The Story of Harriet Jacobs* and have the students write a reflection paper.

“Even so, more than once, she had to lie listening without moving to her children's heartbreaking cries when something had gone wrong. These were the hardest times for the slave mother's tortured heart. One day she heard Joseph scream, and when she looked through her peephole she saw him standing in the street, drenched in blood from being bitten by a dog. At times like these, she felt mangled by frustration, guilt, sorrow, and anger. That she should be reduced to lying in this coffin-like space, as if she had done something wrong.” (p 71)

2. Students could compare the experience of Harriet Jacobs in hiding with that of Anne Frank.

**Rationale:** This simulation will help students experience a tiny idea of what it would have been like to be in hiding. Students will also have the opportunity to think about what is most important to them.

**Note:** In studying slavery and slave narratives, students may encounter images, language, descriptions, and opinions that they find offensive or unsettling. Teachers should be mindful of student backgrounds and be sensitive to these issues.

**Resources:**

- Fleischner, Jennifer. *I Was Born a Slave, The Story of Harriet Jacobs*. Minneapolis: Millbrook Press, 2000.
- From *Teacher Vision* is a lesson plan which focuses on Jacobs hiding for 7 years in the attic of her grandmother's house: <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/slavery-us/lesson-plan/3847.html>
- Power Point Slides

## **Lesson Title:** Communication: The Power to Free - Quilts

**By:** Angela Choberka, Teacher Consultant, Wasatch Range Writing project

**Burning Question:** How can I help students understand the communication techniques used in creating/reading quilts during the time of the Underground Railroad? Can discussing the symbology and creating their own quilt squares help students to understand why this form of communication may have been used effectively in this particular context?

### **Objectives:**

- Students will identify and analyze symbols and metaphoric language used in a folk tale/song.
- Students will evaluate differing meanings of shapes, colors and symbols used in quilt making.
- Students will design their own quilt square and write about its meaning.

**Context:** K-6 (Options are given that can be used for a variety of students depending on ability, age, materials and resources available, time constraints and the teacher's desired immersion in the subject matter. There are so many wonderful resources online and in texts that this topic could be delved into quite deeply depending on the teacher's/student's desire to do so.)

### **Materials:**

- Winter, Jeanette. *Follow the Drinking Gourd*. New York: Dragonfly Books. 1988.
- Images of fugitive slaves (select based on age appropriateness)
- Images of quilts/quilt squares
- Black line masters of quilt square blanks and stencils from story attached
- Colored paper/crayons/markers/fabric -depending on materials you have easily available
- Glue
- Scissors
- Pencils

**Time Span:** 2-3 hours

### **Procedures:**

1. Read *Follow the Drinking Gourd* as described in introductory lesson.
2. Tell the story of how some people believe that quilts were made in order to communicate messages about the Underground Railroad much like verses of "Follow the Drinking Gourd."
3. Show some examples of types of communication in quilts. You could create some actual examples from web sources or show students symbols by drawing them on the board/overhead. They could also be shown through examples online.
4. Depending on the ages and abilities of students, the following suggestions may be used in order for the students to design and create their own quilt squares:

- Younger students could cut or use precut pieces of colored paper to create quilt squares based on *Follow the Drinking Gourd*. Students could work on quilt blocks as a segment of story which has been read aloud in class and then assigned to them randomly. Students could also work in small groups.
  - Students could color with pencils, markers, or crayons to create a quilt square based on an experience in their own lives. They could paste their square onto a larger class quilt. Students could follow this up by either dictating to the teacher so she/he could write the explanation of the symbols or older students could write their own paragraphs describing the symbols they used in their quilt block. Some examples of these kinds of quilt squares are:  
<http://www.beavton.k12.or.us/greenway/leahy/ugrr/index.htm>.
  - Students could work with geometric shapes-- triangles, squares, rectangles, etc. – and the “quilt code” to create quilt blocks which convey particular messages.
  - Students could complete the online interactive version available at the Maryland Public Television site: [http://pathways.thinkport.org/secrets/secret\\_quilt.cfm](http://pathways.thinkport.org/secrets/secret_quilt.cfm) and then print out their pieces.
5. Display the students’ work either as a complete quilt hung together or in some fashion so everyone is able to appreciate the work.
  6. Facilitate a discussion with the group once the work is displayed regarding the messages students chose to create and how they have gone about doing so. Ask questions like: What does that color mean to you? Which square seems to have a clear message and how does it work? What do the squares say to you? Each student could tell the group about their own square and talk about the designing process.

**Adaptations/Extensions:**

- Students could use cartography skills to create maps either real or imagined.
- Students could actually design and then sew a quilt.

**Rationale:** Through exploring the type of communication a quilt may have been used for during the times of slavery in the U.S., I hope to help students create a context for this form by learning to read the symbols and creating their own thoughtfully. The picture book describing the song that slaves may have sung to find their way is one example of the secretive forms of communication used, so I hope that this can translate to a similar secretive form like the quilts. Through this exploration I hope the students will also make a connection to the various forms of communication that are available to them in their own particular situations in life.

Because the subject matter is to be dealt with in a sensitive manner and the students reactions may vary, I hope that the lesson will lend to much discussion and contemplation. Creating the quilt squares can be a more accessible way to deal with these issues. Beginning with a student led discussion and following up with writing about and discussing the square as a group is an attempt to let the students deal with the material on their own terms rather than having too much and too mature content delivered at a particular time and place. Hopefully, we can let the audience dictate the terms of this lesson rather than feeding too much excess and unnecessary content for the younger audience. At the same time some younger students may have some experiences that we must be sensitive to that may relate closely to the family’s experience in the

story. I would just advise the teacher to know the students well before giving this lesson even though it is a picture book story. It does deal with a serious and horrendous part of our country's history that may scare and/or intrigue the group.

**Note:** In studying slavery and slave narratives, students may encounter images, language, descriptions, and opinions that they find offensive or unsettling. Teachers should be mindful of student backgrounds and be sensitive to these issues.

**Resources:**

- Winter, Jeanette. *Follow the Drinking Gourd*. New York: Dragonfly Books, 1988.
- Owen's Sound on the Canada-United States border was the northern terminus of the Underground Railroad. Many escaped slaves remained in the town (now called Sydenham). The city has created a web page commemorating that history which includes a section on "The Underground Railroad Quilt Code"  
<http://www.osblackhistory.com/quilts.php>.
- *National Geographic* has a lesson plan "Quilting: The Story of the Underground Railroad," <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/17/g35/quilts.html>.
- From *Quilt History*: "Putting it in Perspective: The Symbolism of Underground Railroad Quilts," by Kris Drieseen: <http://www.quilthistory.com/ugrrquilts.htm>.
- An example of an elementary class which created a quilt is David Leahy. *Our Virtual Underground Railroad Quilt*, Greenway Elementary School, 1999:  
<http://www.beavton.k12.or.us/greenway/leahy/ugrr/>.
- *Hart Cottage Quilts* has an extensive web site critiquing the Underground Quilt Code:  
<http://ugrrquilt.hartcottagequilts.com/>.
- Maryland Public Television has a web site *Pathways to Freedom: Maryland and the Underground Railroad* which includes instructions for making a quilt message:  
[http://pathways.thinkport.org/secrets/secret\\_quilt.cfm](http://pathways.thinkport.org/secrets/secret_quilt.cfm).
- From the *Network for Instructional Television* is a lesson plan: "Signs in Stitches and Song" <http://www.teachersfirst.com/share/ugrr/index.html>.
- David Chasin and Carlo Rodes have created a web site *All Aboard the UGRR*, which includes patterns for quilt codes:  
<http://sheetmusic.berkeley.edu/courses/is182/papers/UGG/Quilt%20Codes.htm>.
- There are a number of other picture books based on Underground Railroad quilts:
  - Hopkinson, Deborah. *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*, 1995. Also: *Under Quilt of Night*, 2005.
  - Ringgold, Faith. *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*, 1995.
  - Stroud, Bettye. *The Patchwork Path: A Quilt Map to Freedom*, 2007.


**Lesson Title:** Communication: the Power to Free – Choices

**By:** Dee Anne Squire, Teacher Consultant, Wasatch Range Writing Project

**Burning Questions:**

- What forms of communication do we use to share our ideas?
- How do we choose which form to use?
- How can communication help us navigate situations in our lives?

**Objectives:**

- Students will explore various methods of communication used by slaves, slave catchers, and members of the Underground Railroad.
- Students will relate prior knowledge to make connections to text (e.g., text to text, text to world).
- Students will evaluate forms of communication and how they are used in particular situations

**Context:** Grades 4-6

**Materials:**

- Lassieur, Allison, *The Underground Railroad: An Interactive History Adventure (You Choose Books)* New York: Capstone Press, 2008.
- Paper for individual student responses.
- Chart for each student
- Computer access for students or paper copies of the information
- Clickers (if available)

**Time Span:** 1-2 hours broken up as desired and depending on the depth of the learning stations

**Procedures:**

1. Review the discussion about communication from the Douglass lesson, or if you haven't given that lesson use steps 1-4 from that lesson to give students an idea of the many forms of communication in our world.
2. Set up three different learning stations:
  - The slave
  - The slave catcher
  - "Conductor" on the Underground Railroad.Provide students with information about their persona. This maybe done by giving students access to a computer or by printing out the information and having it available for students.
3. Give students an opportunity to rotate through each station and complete the attached chart as they learn about each type of individual. The following resources are available for each station. There is a lot of information available and some of it does crossover. Review it and decide what will be best for your students. Feel free to add your own information.

4. Bring students back together and have a discussion about what the students have learned. Were they surprised by anything? Did they see any similarities or differences between the different people?
5. Introduce the story, *The Underground Railroad: An Interactive History Adventure*, by Allison Lassieur. Explain how to choose your own adventure story works.
6. Using clickers (if available) or regular hand voting, allow students to decide which story path they want to take. Begin reading the book based on that choice. Whenever an opportunity to make a choice is reached stop and allow all students the chance to vote. Follow the vote of the majority. When you reach the final vote, stop reading and don't take a vote.
7. At this point instruct students to make an individual choice and begin writing the end of the story based on that choice. Students should pay special attention to communication while writing the end of their stories. Think about what forms of communication are used, whether or not they are appropriate for the situation, and if communication was able to transform the situation. Also refer students to the chart they created at the beginning of the lesson to help them create a richer character. Allow students time to share their stories with each other in small groups. Each group can then choose their favorite to share with the entire class. Discuss the endings and the use of communication in each one. Also discuss the differences in the endings based on the choice of communication.

**Variation:** Rather than writing as an individual, students can form groups to create their stories.

**Rationale:**

As students are introduced to a variety of individuals with different roles and motives they will see the importance of communication in the life of each person. Also they will be able to see why different forms of communication are needed at different times. We hope they will begin to make a connection to their own life and the way they choose to communicate.

**Resources:**

- Lassieur, Allison, *The Underground Railroad: An Interactive History Adventure*. Minnesota: Capstone Press, 2008.
- *Slavery in America* is site created to accompany the film series *Slavery in America*. There are many resources for teachers and short biographies of specific persons which might help student create their personas: <http://slaveryinamerica.org/home.htm>
- Rebecca Flanders has posted her lesson plan for 4<sup>th</sup> graders, "Underground Railroad Simulation," <http://users.manchester.edu/student/RJFlanders/ProWeb/slavery%20lsson%20plan.pdf>
- From *HotChalk*, a lesson plan on the Underground Railroad for 4<sup>th</sup> grade: <http://www.lessonplanspage.com/SSMathMusicArtLACIMDBlackHistoryMonthSecretsOfTheUndergroundRailroad10DayUnit4.htm>
- From *History by the Minute* is a video about the Underground Railroad: <http://www.histori.ca/minutes/minute.do?id=10166>
- *National Geographic Online: The Underground Railroad*: <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/hfame.html>
- *Pathways to Freedom: Maryland and the Underground Railroad*. Maryland Public Television: <http://pathways.thinkport.org/eyewitness/penningtonintro.cf>  
<http://pathways.thinkport.org/eyewitness/tubmanintro.cfmm>

- From Northern Kansas University, *Institute for Freedom Studies*, are a number of lesson plans for “Teaching the Underground Railroad”:  
<http://www.nku.edu/~undergroundrr/lessonplans/>
- The web site for the National Underground Railroad Museum, in Cincinnati, Ohio, has a number of lesson plans: <http://www.freedomcenter.org/expand-your-knowledge/educator-resources/lesson-plans/>
- PBS has a web site in support of their series *Africans in America*:  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/home.html>
- There are a number of print sources:
  - Fradin, Dennis Brindell. *Bound for the North Star: True Stories of Fugitive Slaves*. New York: Clarion Books, 2000. Retells the true-life stories of the escapes of slaves such as Henry 'Box' Brown, John Anderson, and Harriet Tubman. Includes reproductions of handbills and posters.
  - Donlan, Leni. *Following Freedom: The Underground Railroad (American History Through Primary Sources)*. Mankato, MN: Heinemann-Raintree, 2007.
  - Brill, Mariene Targ. *Allen Jay and the Underground Railroad (On My Own)*. New York: First Avenue Editions, 1993. Recounts how Allen Jay, a young Quaker boy living in Ohio during the 1840s, helped a fleeing slave escape his master and make it to freedom through the Underground Railroad.
  - Levine, Ellen and Larry Johnson. . . . *If You Traveled on the Underground Railroad*. Scholastic Books, 1993. In a question-and-answer format, the reader is introduced to what the underground railroad was and how it was used between 1830 and 1860 to help slaves in America escape to the North
  - Carson, Mary Kaye. *The Underground Railroad for Kids: From Slavery to Freedom with 21 Activities (For Kids series)*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2005. Beginning with a time line that traces the history of slavery in America, this thorough overview includes a narrative history, many quotes from primary sources, archival drawings and photographs, and 21 related projects.

	<b>The Slave</b>	<b>The Slave Catcher</b>	<b>Member of the Underground Railroad</b>
<b>Who had this “job”?</b>			
<b>What characteristics did they need in order to “work”?</b>			
<b>How did they communicate with each other?</b>			
<b>What were they paid?</b>			
<b>What rules or laws did they follow?</b>			
<b>What laws did they break?</b>			