

Interdisciplinary Ideas

SOCIAL STUDIES

1. Research life on a plantation as a master's child or as a slave child.
2. Research the Underground Railroad. What states were involved? Map possible routes.

SCIENCE

1. Study summer constellations.
2. Research how the constellations were named. Did any have more than one name? Why do you think the Big Dipper is also named the Drinking Gourd, the Big Bear, or Canis Major?

MUSIC

1. Locate and learn additional folk songs of the time.
2. Write another verse to "Follow the Drinking Gourd" that tells of the safe arrival in Canada.

Follow the Drinking Gourd

Jeanette Winter
1988
New York: Alfred A. Knopf

COURAGE
U.S.A./African-American
Reading Time: 7 minutes

CONCEPTS

Courage
Respect
Justice
Fairness
Freedom

SUMMARY

With this inspiring tale of slavery and the Underground Railroad, the reader follows a group of runaway slaves north to Canada — and to freedom. The bold American folk-style illustrations capture the courage and emotions of this historic journey.

OBJECTIVE

The student will be able to define and discuss courage, respect, trust, freedom, fairness, and justice as they apply to this story.

After the Story

Follow the Drinking Gourd

DISCUSSION

1. Slavery was legal in the United States at the time of this tale. Describe Molly, James, and Peg Leg Joe in terms of courage, justice, respect, and fairness.
2. Why do you think Molly and James did not run away before this? What led them to their decision to "follow the drinking gourd"?
3. The runaway slaves risked their lives in their search for freedom. Think about the world today. Are there still people who risk their lives for freedom? Discuss.
4. Many of the characters in this story acted in opposition to the law. Share your thoughts. Were Molly, James, and Peg Leg Joe criminals? What about the Quakers? What might have happened to them if they were caught? Why do you think they risked their lives?
5. Are there any laws today that you would like to change? Any that you would like to add? Why?
6. Many things enslave people today (drugs, poverty, abuse). Talk about the courage needed to "follow the drinking gourd" to freedom from these problems.

ACTIVITIES

1. Locate the Ohio River on the world map and place story pin.
2. Role-play the story. Present it to another class.
3. Improvise the evening of Molly and James's departure. What would they have said to each other? How did they talk Hattie and her grandson into going with them?
4. Learn the folk song "Follow the Drinking Gourd" and tape record it.

WRAP-UP

1. After students draw their understanding of freedom, put their drawings together to make a freedom picture quilt.
2. Collect examples of "Decisions That Took Courage to Make," of newsworthy events, and of personal choices that students wish to share. Display the collection on a bulletin board.

EXTENSION

1. At home, locate the Big Dipper and the North Star in the sky at night. Retell *Follow the Drinking Gourd* to your family.
2. Pretend you are living in the early 1800's. Hold a family meeting to discuss whether you would have the courage to be a safe house.
3. Discuss with family and others the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's.

VOCABULARY

safe house
Underground Railroad
quail