

Safe Passage CD-ROM Discussion Guide

The *Safe Passage* CD-ROM has four routes that students follow on the Underground Railroad: Florida Route, Northeast Route, Maritime Route and West/Mexico Route. Students move through a map of the United States and click on the diamond shapes to learn about the people, events and sites of the Underground Railroad. Each route has three to six points where the students stop to learn about the Underground Railroad. You may use the CD-ROM as a group activity or have students explore the routes independently. You may find that students retain more of the information from the CD-ROM if they only do one route per sitting. The CD-ROM can be useful as an introduction or a review of an Underground Railroad lesson unit.

Full texts of primary documents, additional lesson materials and recordings and lyrics of slave spirituals are provided in addition to the interactive map of the United States. To view the additional lesson material, open the CD-ROM through the “My Computer” icon on a Microsoft Windows computer. This will show the file names of all the additional materials. Click on the desired file name to access the material. This material also can be accessed through an Apple computer.

Below are discussion points for each of the Underground Railroad routes.

FLORIDA ROUTE

CONDITIONS

Compare the weather and terrain you are used to in your hometown to the weather and terrain enslaved persons would encounter. When do you think they would be more likely to try to escape? Why? How would that compare with your decision if you were enslaved or running from bounty hunters in this area?

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Think about the figure \$700,000. It is a lot of money today. It was a huge sum in 1857. Do some research and see if you can find out what \$700,000 would be equivalent to in 21st century dollars.

Discuss the differences in perspective among (1) the slave-owner Pierce Butler, (2) the slave purchasers and (3) those being sold. What other terms do you think capture the perspective of these three, in the same manner that “The Weeping Time” captures that of the enslaved?

FORT MOSE AND ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA

What can you conclude about the attitudes and practices of Spanish Floridians versus British Georgians and South Carolinians, from viewing this segment?

EVERGLADES, FLORIDA

Examine the status of Seminoles in the United States today. How do they compare to other Native Americans?

What was it that enslaved people and Seminoles had in common that led them to seek freedom in Florida?

NORTHEAST ROUTE

CONDITIONS

Research the Dismal Swamp of North Carolina. How did it work to the advantage of freedom seekers? How was it a disadvantage?

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Compare the language of the 1793 and 1850 Fugitive Slave Laws. What other provisions of the compromise of 1850 related to slavery?

HARPER'S FERRY, VIRGINIA

Research the life of John Brown. What was his motivation to plan and lead such a risky, and eventually fatal, raid?

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

Compare Thomas Garrett's experiences with aiding escaping slaves, and the consequences of getting caught, with the circumstances of Levi Coffin and John Rankin.

CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Discuss how William Still's perspective on Underground Railroad heroes is different from that of white abolitionist accounts.

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

What is significant about Frederick Douglass choosing *The North Star* as the title of his newspaper?

ONTARIO, CANADA

Why would escaping slaves continue their arduous journey to Canada? William King wanted to guarantee that the slaves he inherited would remain free. Why did he need to move to Canada to guarantee this?

MARITIME ROUTE

CONDITIONS

Discuss how the conditions of sea travel for escaping slaves changed the types of planning and execution needed.

BEAUFORT, SOUTH CAROLINA

What was the Union's policy on recruiting blacks—free or escaping—as soldiers? Was Robert Smalls an exception or part of a frequently occurring pattern?

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

Henry Brown's escape illustrates the inventiveness of many freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad. Discuss other examples that you have encountered in this unit of resourcefulness and creativity in finding ways to escape slavery.

POINT LOOKOUT, MARYLAND

Discuss the Pearl Incident as a microcosm of the larger irony of the Union fighting to abolish slavery, while fugitive laws were in effect in Northern states and the Union capital. What does this tell you about people's attitudes at the time?

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

Discuss how Thoreau's concept of civil disobedience came into play in the Anthony Burns case. What were the consequences for Burns, the abolitionists, the bounty hunters and the laws of Massachusetts?

WEST/MEXICO ROUTE

CONDITIONS

Compare the conditions people experienced traveling west to the conditions of people seeking freedom traveling south.

EVERGLADES, FLORIDA

In the early 1900s, Geronimo and the remains of his Apache band were transported east to reservation lands in Florida. Research the U.S. government policy of this era regarding Indian location, and compare it to policy of the 1850s during John Horse's time.

QUINDARO, KANSAS

Compare the conditions in Quindaro, Kansas, and Parkville, Missouri, to those along the Mason-Dixon Line, especially Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky.

How do the tribal differences between Creeks and Seminoles reflect the more prominent divisions in the United States at this time? What do these differences, and the policies enacted because of them, say about human nature?

COAHUILA, MEXICO

The Mexican government employed the Black Seminoles because they performed a much-needed service others could not or would not do. Discuss how this pattern has occurred at other times in U.S. history.

GALVESTON, TEXAS

The Juneteenth situation illustrates how different life was before the age of the Internet, television and instant messaging. Brainstorm the consequences, for various people, of not finding out such momentous news for more than two years.