

## Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Analyze Multiple Accounts

Read the short story and answer each question.



### The Underground Railroad: A Journey Toward Freedom

In the early 1800s, thousands of enslaved African Americans risked everything to escape to freedom in the northern United States and Canada. They followed a secret network known as the *Underground Railroad*—not an actual railroad, but a system of people, places, and paths that guided them toward freedom.

*Conductors* were brave individuals who helped guide freedom seekers from one safe location, or *station*, to the next. Harriet Tubman, one of the most famous conductors, escaped slavery herself and returned over a dozen times to rescue others. She used signals like owl calls or lanterns in windows to communicate secretly.

Escaping wasn't easy. People traveled mostly at night, through forests, rivers, and farmlands. They had to avoid slave catchers, follow the stars for direction, and find shelter with people who believed slavery was wrong. These allies—both Black and white—risked prison or worse for helping.

Maps were rarely used, as they could fall into the wrong hands. Instead, travelers relied on memorized routes, songs with hidden messages, and even quilts sewn with codes. A pattern of flying geese, for example, could signal the direction north.

By learning about the Underground Railroad, we see how cooperation, courage, and communication helped people resist injustice. Today, museums, historical homes, and digital archives help us retrace this powerful journey toward freedom.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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## The Underground Railroad: A Journey Toward Freedom

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1. Why did travelers avoid using written maps during their escape?

- A. They didn't know how to read.
- B. Maps were banned in the northern states.
- C. Maps could be dangerous if found by the wrong people.
- D. Conductors refused to give directions.

2. What was the role of a conductor on the Underground Railroad?

- A. They created quilt codes for travelers.
- B. They built trains for enslaved people.
- C. They acted as guides and helped move people from one safe place to another.
- D. They lived in the northern states and offered money to escapees.

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3. Fill in the blank:

Harriet Tubman used \_\_\_\_\_, such as owl calls and lanterns, to communicate secretly with travelers.

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4. How did the people involved in the Underground Railroad work together to protect travelers?

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5. What does the use of symbols, songs, and secret codes show about the people who used them?

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# Parent and Teacher Guide

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**Guide Reading Level:** V

**Lexile Level:** 950L–1100L

**Grade Level:** 5th Grade, End of the Year

**Genre:** Informational Text / Social Studies / U.S. History

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## Introducing the Text

*“Today we’ll explore a powerful moment in American history—how enslaved people used the Underground Railroad to escape to freedom. As we read, we’ll look at how people used information, signals, and teamwork to solve the enormous problem of escaping slavery. We’ll also focus on how different sources and features in the text help us locate answers efficiently.”*

**Vocabulary:** conductor, station, resistance, enslaved, code

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## Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What do you already know about slavery in U.S. history?
  2. Why might people have needed to escape secretly?
  3. What do you think the phrase “Underground Railroad” means?
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## During Reading Discussion Questions

1. Why was Harriet Tubman an important part of the Underground Railroad?
  2. How did people communicate without being caught?
  3. What were some of the dangers freedom seekers faced?
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## After Reading Discussion Questions

1. What can this story teach us about courage and justice?
  2. How does this article help us understand the importance of cooperation?
  3. If you could visit a site on the Underground Railroad today, what would you want to learn?
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## Activity Idea

Students will create an interactive “Freedom Map” by choosing 3–5 stops on a fictional Underground Railroad route. For each stop, they’ll draw symbols (like a star or quilt pattern), name the safe house or landmark, and describe how the station helps travelers. They can present their map to the class or display them gallery-style.

