**The Underground Railroad**

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| Level | L |
| Content Area | Social Studies |
| Reading Focus | Students will learn to use the comprehension strategy of Drawing Inferences to Monitor Comprehension and Repair Understanding as they read, think, talk and write in response to the text. |
| Text Type | Informational |
| Academic Vocabulary | Abraham Lincoln, farm, farming, freedom, government, human rights, law, money, ocean, race, railroad, religion, skills, song, state, transportation, United States, vote, war |

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| **Topic Talk** | [Teacher note: be aware that this is an important topic that will require sensitivity, as some students may find it troubling to discuss.]   * Ask students if they know what slavery is. Explain to students that slavery is when people are forced to work for no money, and are owned by another person. This means that they are not free. * Discuss with students that slavery is very bad because every human has the right to be free, and it is now against the law. * Explain that this story is about slavery in the United States, and the African Americans who escaped slavery to get to freedom. * Read the title and blurb aloud, and look closely at the cover image. * Ask students to think, pair, share and use text clues from the blurb and their background knowledge to draw inferences about what is happening in the picture. * Ask: “What type of book do you think this is? Science, Social Studies, Math, or English Language Arts?” Have some students share their ideas, and ask why they thought that. * Explain that this book is most likely to be a Social Studies book, and discuss what reading challenges there might be (e.g., historical language, breakouts, photographs). |
| **Contents** | * Open to the contents page, and read the titles of the chapters aloud. * Have students think, pair, share about what they have learned about the book from the contents page. * Introduce students to “Nat the Ant” at the bottom of the page and read the speech bubble aloud. |
| **Opening Chapters** | * Read the chapter 1 title and pages 2 and 3 aloud. * Discuss that the text says the Underground Railroad was an escape route for slaves, but to figure out more information about it, it might be helpful to draw inferences. * Have students think, pair, share and draw inferences about what the Underground Railroad was from the text clues on these pages. * Have students think, pair, share about why they think so many slaves made such a dangerous journey. * Read the chapter 2 title and pages 4 and 5 aloud. * Have students look at the images closely, and read the captions. Discuss how the captions help to figure out what the picture is showing. Ask: “How do captions help you to better understand what you are reading?” * Together, read pages 6 and 7 aloud. * Discuss together how the slaves fought back and why. * Have students think, pair, share about the challenges slaves faced if they managed to escape. * Ask: “What help might people need to make a journey like this safely? How might the Underground Railroad have helped?” * Set a purpose for reading from chapter 3 to the end of the book:   + Try to notice when you are having trouble understanding what you are reading.   + If you don’t understand, try to practice using a comprehension strategy to help “fix-up” your understanding – maybe using their knowledge and clues in the text to try Drawing Inferences from what the author has written.   + Pause at the ant questions to answer them, and read the Ant Tunnel carefully. |

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| As students read on independently, you can check in with them to discuss the ant questions, or personalize learning by using the *Mini-Lessons* and *Fluency, Language and Text Features* to scaffold parts of the book that might be unfamiliar or challenging.  Bring students together again for reflection using the “After Reading” prompts. |

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| **After Reading** | 1. Have students think, pair, share to summarize what the Underground Railroad was. 2. Ask: “Did you find it easy or hard to summarize the book?” Explain that summarizing is a useful way to check whether you have understood what the text was saying, or whether you need to go back and re-read or use strategies to “fix up” your understanding. 3. Have students think, pair, share about why slaves were prepared to risk their lives to escape using the underground railway and why many people helped them, risking great punishment. 4. Discuss how using text features like images and captions helped to better understand the text during reading. 5. Ask: “As you were reading, what parts of the book did you notice were harder for you to understand right away?” Discuss strategies that might help to figure out these parts of the book. | |
| **Writing Prompts** | *Fiction* | Imagine that you work on the Underground Railroad. Write a story about helping a group of slaves travel north toward Canada. |
| *Informational* | Draw map showing the route escaped slaves took from the South toward Canada. Add labels to your map to explain the journey. |
| *Letter writing* | Imagine you live in 1850. Write a letter to one of the important people from the Underground Railroad (Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, William Still, or Josiah Henson), and tell them what you think about their work. |
| *Opinion* | Some jobs are “backbreaking,” which means they are very hard work. Slaves used to be used for this kind of work. What do you think is the best way to get this work done now? |
| *Research* | Choose one of the important people from the Underground Railroad, and research them. Write down three important things they did in their life. |