



Using the Legacy of the Underground Railroad Website In Your Classroom

This website serves as a companion piece for the B&O Railroad Museum's exhibition, *The Underground Railroad: Freedom Seekers on the B&O*. Lyrics for the song *Network to Freedom*, written by Wordsmith and performed with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra in the historic Roundhouse of the museum forms the foundation that will guide you through the major milestones of the African American Railroading Legacy, including the Underground Railroad, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights Movement. Select lyrics have been paired with a relevant historical document, allowing students to complete an interactive task with each to deepen their understanding of this history and their analysis of primary source materials. We hope through this website, your students gain a greater understanding of how primary source documents are used to help us interpret the past as well additional practice with document analysis.

Broken down into three movements, the musical composition tells the story of the rise of America's first commercial railroad, the B&O Railroad, its connections to the freedom journey of many enslaved people using the Underground Railroad, influences on the Civil War, and the post-Reconstruction Jim Crow Laws and eventual Civil Rights Movement of the 1900s. The website is designed to give the teacher freedom to incorporate it in the most rewarding way for your students. You can pick and choose individual documents to explore with students, take the website one movement at a time as that content comes up in your curriculum or as one all encompassing activity.

Additionally, we have included on the next page ways to extend the learning as it relates to each of the song's three movements. We hope the resources and lesson extension ideas below can serve as inspiration for more ways to teach your students about African American history and primary source analysis.





Extend the Learning

Movement 1 Extension Ideas:

- In movement 1, Wordsmith's lyrics discuss how Abraham Lincoln signed the Pacific Railway Act of 1862 into law that enabled the east and west coasts to meet through the development of the Transcontinental Railroad. To extend learning on this topic, students can research the Transcontinental Railroad and the Pacific Railway Act signed by Abraham Lincoln and plot the points on a map connecting the B&O Railroad to the Transcontinental Railroad.
- By the end of movement 1, Wordsmith's lyrics portray the outbreak of the Civil War. To extend learning on the build-up to the Civil War, students can research and lay out on a timeline the causes of the Civil War. Students can then reflect on which of the causes researched they think had the biggest impact on the outbreak of war.

Movement 2 Extension Ideas:

- In movement 2, we meet William and Ellen Craft on their journey to freedom. After they reach freedom in Philadelphia, William and Ellen Craft's journey continues to England. Through the historical record we can trace their lives after reaching freedom and discover how the threat of being forced back into slavery continued to hang over them. Explore the National Archives Docs Teach online primary source activity on William and Ellen Craft's life after freedom here:

<https://www.docsteach.org/activities/teacher/oh-freedom-sought-under-the-fugitive-slave-act>

- Just as Wordsmith used the historical record to write the lyrics to the song presented on this website, your students can now do the same. Have students write a set of lyrics continuing William and Ellen Craft's journey to freedom using the documents explored on the National Archives site.

Movement 3 Extension Ideas:

- In movement 3, Wordsmith's lyrics explore the African American experience after slavery is abolished. One source of income for many African Americans following the Civil War was to work on the railroad for the Pullman Palace Car Company as porters. Not only was the first Black labor union in America in 1925 (Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters) formed from porters at the Pullman Palace Car Company but it's first president A. Philip Randolph was at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement and advised Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on his March on Washington. Two well-known African Americans, Malcolm X and Thurgood Marshall both also worked as Pullman porters. To extend learning about these figures, have students explore the historical facts presented in children's books about either Malcolm X or Thurgood Marshall. Just as this website presents historical documents related to the facts of Wordsmith's lyrics, have students research the facts of these men's lives presented in the storybooks. Can they find any primary source documents related to their lives? Can they classify the documents they do find as primary, secondary or tertiary sources?

