Lauren Sahm

**Topic:** Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad

**Grade Level:** Third-sixth

**Time Allotted:** One to one and a half hours

**Materials:** Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom by Carole Boston Weatherford (Read-aloud book) NOTE: This book has a lot of religious references so I am not sure if I would use it in a public school setting.

-“Follow the Drinking Gourd” performed by Richie Havens (video from YouTube)
  
  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBOP8t2h1FQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBOP8t2h1FQ) (only play sound not video)

-“Follow the Drinking Gourd” song lyrics

-Big Dipper and drinking gourd pictures

-Maps of the Underground Railroad routes

-Putting Together Harriet Tubman activity

-Scissors, glue and a stapler

-Markers/crayons/colored pencils

**Key Vocabulary:**

-Abolitionist- a person who advocated for or supported the end of slavery in the United States.

-Activist- an especially active, vigorous advocate of a cause; someone who supports or opposes one side of a controversial issue.

-Underground Railroad- a secret network of people and hideaway locations who helped runaway slaves escape to freedom; not literally a railroad or underground

-Runaway- and escaped slave trying to make his or her freedom. (Runaways could be killed)

-Slavery- a practice in which one person, known as a master, is allowed to own another human being. As property, African American slaves in the U.S. had no rights. Slaves had to work long
hours doing hard tasks and could be sold from one master to another which could separate families. A person born into slavery was a slave for life and most slaves were not allowed to read or write.

Discrimination- prejudice; unfair treatment of a person based on their class, race, sex (gender), religion, sexual orientation etc.

-Segregation- the policy or practice of separating people of different races, classes, or ethnic groups in housing, schools, public transportation, etc. African Americans were denied their civil rights and were provided with inferior facilities and services especially during times of slavery.

-Civil rights- rights belonging to every citizen on the United States of America; 13th and 14th amendments to the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights; inalienable human and natural rights; Freedom of speech, press, assembly, right to vote, right to equality in public places, right to due process; Rights of Life, Liberty and Property.

**Essential Question(s):** Who was Harriet Tubman and why is she considered to be such an important person to the history of African Americans?

What did Harriet Tubman do in her lifetime that made her so famous (why is she still remembered to this day)?

What was the Underground Railroad and how did it help slaves escape north to freedom?

**New York State Standards:** Social Studies

Standard 1: History of the United States and New York

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

Standard 3: Geography
Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth’s surface.

Standard 5: Civics, Citizenship, and Government

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the United States and other nations; the United States Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.

**Objectives:** After listening to “Follow the Drinking Gourd” song once then singing it the second time, students will understand the importance of singing songs to African American runaway slaves. Songs were their way of sharing information and feelings much like story telling. Students will also be able to tell me what it is meant by a drinking gourd in the song (the big dipper in the sky) and what an actual drinking gourd is.

- After a read-aloud students will be able to tell me some important information about the life of Harriet Tubman. Students will understand just how difficult it was for her to escape by herself let alone with groups of other African Americans. Students will see what kind of strength and courage it must have taken to escape then help free other slaves.

- After a mini-lesson on Harriet Tubman students will have further understanding of who she was and why she is important to the history of African Americans. Through putting together the little booklet for the activity students will understand and see just how hard it was to escape from slavery, always have to hide and fear that you would be captured.
-During the closure writing activity students need to be able to tell me in their own words what slavery means to them. Also whether they agree or disagree with slavery and finally describe what life was like for a slave in captivity or a slave running away.

**Anticipatory Set:**

10-20 minutes

(Some of anticipatory set is instruction and can overlap into the next section)

The lesson will begin with the students sitting in their seats with the lyrics to “Follow the Drinking Gourd” on their desks.

-Before playing the song I will ask students by looking at the paper if they knew who or what we may be learning about today.

-“Today we will be learning about a woman named Harriet Tubman and her role in the history of African Americans. We will also be learning about the Underground Railroad and how Harriet Tubman was an instrumental part to it.”

-Then I would ask students “can anyone tell me anything about Harriet Tubman or the Underground Railroad.”

-After a few student responses I will introduce the song to the students.

-The first time I play the song I will ask students to just listen to and follow along with the lyrics of the song.

-The second time playing the song I will ask students to sing along with the lyrics of the song.

-After playing the song the second time I will turn to the students and ask them what they think the lyrics of this song mean. (I am not expecting many responses here because this is a difficult song to interpret)
-Then I will explain to the students that this song is a complete coded map with full details of how slaves should escape into Canada. Also, there is meaning behind everything said in this song.

-Here I will pass out the pictures I have prepared of the big dipper and an actual drinking gourd. In particular I want to focus in on the meaning of a drinking gourd. The Drinking Gourd is a reference to the big dipper which is very close to the North Star. The Big Dipper looks like a giant drinking gourd and it is a clear indication of a northern direction. Runaway slaves on the Underground Railroad would follow the drinking gourd or big dipper to the north and freedom. A real drinking gourd however is a hollowed out gourd used by slaves as a water dipper.

-Songs and storytelling were so important to the success and survival of runaway slaves because it was a way for them to share information and feelings because the majority of the fleeing slaves could not read or write.

-Then I will hand out the maps that I have with the general routes of the Underground Railroad. I will ask students to tell me what the key on the map says and then ask them to point out to me the free states and the slave states. I will then ask students where the majority of the free states were located in the United States (the north). Then where the majority of the slave states were located in the United States (the south).

-After this I will ask student to trace the major routes of escape with their fingers and tell me where the majority of them lead to (North and Canada; some pointed further south towards Mexico, Cuba, and the Bahamas, etc.).

-Then I will ask for a student volunteer to tell me what a drinking gourd is in relation to the song, then what it physically is. Then I will ask students to raise their hands and tell me where slaves were looking to go (To the north and Canada).
**Instruction/Procedure:**


2. Students will return to their seats and I will ask them to raise their hands and tell me what they learned about Harriet Tubman from the book.

3. After a discussion I will reiterate important information about Harriet Tubman and her life. Also, how instrumental she was to the Underground Railroad system and the history of African Americans.

4. After the mini-lesson and read-aloud I will introduce the students to the Putting Together Harriet Tubman activity. I will read the instructions aloud to the students then ask a student to describe in their own words what I will be expecting them to do for this activity.

5. Students will have about 15-20 minutes to complete this activity before I begin the closure questions assessment.

**Closure:**

- As part of my assessment I will ask the students to journal write and hand in their work after the end of the lesson.

  ~I will ask students to describe in their own words what slavery means to them.

  ~Then I will ask students if they agree or disagree with slavery.

  ~Next I will ask students to describe for me what life was like for either:

  A. A runaway slave on the Underground Railroad **OR**

  B. A slave being held captive by their master.
~Finally, I will ask the students to write down one word that they would use to describe Harriet Tubman. Also, I want students to briefly explain why they chose the word they did.

As an example I will tell students I would describe her as courageous because she escaped from slavery and then helped many other slaves escape too. (You must choose a different word than my example)

(I want students to spend a lot of quality time working on this journal writing task. I think that this is a good way to check for the students understanding of who Harriet Tubman was and what her life was like.)

**Independent Practice:** Students will work independently on the activity and closure questions.

There will be no out of class work assigned for this lesson.

**Modifications:** This lesson plan touches on many different styles of learning.

For kinesthetic learners it will be good for them to get up and move from their seats to the carpet and back.

For linguistic students listening to and singing along with the song will be helpful.

For spatial and visual learners the activity and read-aloud book will be beneficial with the pictures.

For the auditory learner listening to “Follow the Drinking Gourd” and various discussions in class will be essential tools.

Other modifications can be made for a specific student as needed.