

Samuel,  
conductor of the  
Underground  
Railroad

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# Slavery

## **When did slavery start?**

Slavery has existed for a very long time. It predated writing. The first reference concerning slaves is written in the code of Hammurabi, an old document written 3500 years ago. Even the Bible talks about slavery.

Unfortunately, slavery still exists today. Even if many countries have banned slavery, in some poor countries where little for of authority prevails (police or army) some people have been captured and must work for masters who keep them prisoners. It is estimated that there are between 13 and 27 millions slaves today.

## **What is a slave?**

A person who is not free and belongs to a master. A slave must work for a master; he/she cannot flee and have almost no rights.

## **How does a person become a slave?**

A soldier who has been captured by his enemies can become a slave. A person who is born of a slave mother may become a slave himself/herself. A person who owes someone a debt could also cancel the debt by becoming a slave to that person. Lastly, some people simply get captured and cannot escape slavery.

## **What is an abolitionist?**

People who believe that slavery should not exist are called abolitionists. In Canada, slavery was abolished in 1793 by the governor general Lord Simcoe.

# Slavery in Canada

## Before the arrival of the Europeans

Before the arrival of the Europeans, some first nation tribes practiced slavery. When a war would take place, warriors who had surrendered, could become slaves of the winning tribe. The children of slaves became also slaves.

## French colonies

Slavery was already banned in France when the French tried to colonize the new continent; however, the colonies were granted the right to import slaves from Africa. The French used both black and first nation slaves. In Canada, most slaves were used as servants.

## British colonies

When the British took over the French colonies, slavery continued. Many English Loyalists came to Canada and brought their black slaves.

## The condition of slaves in Canada

In general, slaves were treated well in Canada. Very little violence was used to keep slaves. They were encouraged to become Christians, to learn how to read and write. Marriages between slaves were recognized by law.

## The role of governor Simcoe

The governor general of Canada, Lord Simcoe, did not like slavery and wanted to abolish it in the Canadian provinces. He passed a law in 1793 against slavery. The “Act against slavery” stated that no one could bring slaves in Canada and that the children of slaves would need to be freed by age 25. The ones who had become slaves before 1793 would remain slave until their death. But gradually, within a generation, no slaves would be found in Canada.

## England’s law

In 1843, England forbade slavery on the majority its colonies, including Canada.

### **Canada and the Underground Railroad**

Between 1800 and 1865, the abolitionists in the United States created a clandestine network called the Underground Railroad. This network helped fugitive slaves to reach Canada where slavery was illegal. In Canada, blacks were not necessarily treated well, but at least, they were free. Canada refused to return any fugitive black to the United States. It is believed that between 30,000 to 100,000 slaves made their way to Canada.

### **American emancipation**

In 1865, after the American civil war, Abraham Lincoln, the American president adopted a law putting an end to slavery. Many blacks chose to return to the United States.

# Slavery in the United States

## The start of the American colonies

Since the start of the colonisation of the American continent, British colonists needed cheap labour. Two methods were used. Many Europeans became “Indenture servants”. They promised to work for free for a master, for a number of years, in exchange for a ticket to America. After having completed the required years, they were free and could become colonists themselves.

The second method was slavery. Many blacks were captured in Africa and were sold to colonists. The slaves belonged to their masters and had no rights.

In the southern part of the American continent, blacks worked mostly in rice, cotton and tobacco fields. In the northern part, they worked mainly as servants, or factory workers.

## American independence (1776)

Around 1774, the British colonists decided to start a new nation. They fought the British soldiers and pushed them out of the American continent. In 1776, they declared themselves independent and started a new nation, the United States of America.

Thomas Jefferson in the declaration of independence wrote those words:

*“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”*

Unfortunately, Thomas Jefferson and the other authors of the declaration of independence were slave owners. They decided that slaves were not to be included in this statement.

## Between the Independence and Civil War (1776-1862)

In that time period, the number of slaves increased. There were roughly 4 million slaves in the United States in 1860. Because of the number of slaves compared to the number of whites, the whites had to take drastic measures to limit the freedom of the slaves and avoid mutinies. As a result, slaves the treatment of slaves became harsher and harsher.

The majority of slaves did not know how to read and write. If they caused too much problems, they were beaten or sold. A black who tried to escape risked his life.

## **Abolitionism**

Many Americans did not like slavery. Some religious groups and some other citizens opposed to slavery started movements to stop slavery. They were called abolitionists since they were trying to abolish, eliminate slavery.

## **The Underground Railroad**

Some radical abolitionists created a secret society called the “Underground Railroad”. This illegal network of smugglers transported fugitive slaves all the way to Canada where slavery had long been forbidden. This network was composed of many stations where each smuggler’s duty was to bring slaves to the next station.

## **The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850**

Many slaves were escaping from their masters. In 1850, a new law was created to restrict the aid given to fugitive slaves. People caught smuggling slaves to Canada could now face prison or heavy fines. Despite this new law, many people continued to help the slaves reach Canada.

## **The civil war (1861-1865)**

Since the Independence, the Northern states used less and less slaves, and in the middle of the 1800, some states considered abolishing slavery altogether. In the South, they used more and more slaves and the conditions of the slaves became worse. In 1862, the southern states of the United States threatened to separate from the Northern State. One of the major disagreements was slavery, the North wanted to abolish slavery and the South needed the slaves. The civil war lasted 4 years and in the end, the North won. Slavery was abolished.

## After the Emancipation

When the war was over, the slaves were now free. But they continued to live in poverty. Most slaves did not know how to read and write. The masters who had freed the slaves did not want to pay high salaries for their workers.

### Segregation and the “Jim Crow” Laws

The Jim Crow laws were created to give the blacks the same rights as the whites. But the two groups were to exercise those rights separately (Segregation). The laws stated that the black were to receive “**separate, but equal**” laws. Schools for blacks were built. Bus and train stations now had a separate area where whites could sit and another where blacks could sit. Restaurants served food to both blacks and whites but in different rooms.

The Jim Crow laws were beneficial for black because they now had access to services that were not available before the emancipation. It however became clear that the whites never intended to provide “equal” opportunities.

### American civil rights (1955-1968)

Many black leaders started to demand the same rights that were given to the whites. They rejected segregation because it was obvious that the whites did not wish to give up their advantages over the blacks

Many leaders started to demand from the government the end of discrimination. Martin Luther King Jr. instituted a system of passive resistance. Blacks refused to use services or buy products from companies who remained segregated.

### Rosa Parks (1955)

In the city of Montgomery Alabama, blacks had to sit at the back of city buses while the white would sit at the front. One day, Rosa Parks, a black lady refused to give up her seat to a white man while she was sitting in the section reserved for blacks. The bus driver called the police and Rosa Parks was arrested. For 381, the blacks of Montgomery refused to take the city bus until the city stopped its discrimination against blacks.

### **Woolworth's Restaurant**

In 1960, four black students sat at the counter of the Woolworth's restaurant in Greensboro in North Carolina. Blacks were allowed to eat in the restaurant but they had to stand up. The seats were reserved for whites. The students came back every day for 5 months until the restaurant changed its discriminatory rules.

### **Civil Rights Act of 1964**

In 1964, the American government passed a law forbidding segregation. Blacks would not be treated as well as whites. No discrimination could be done on the basis of race, gender, religion or ethnic origin. It had taken 188 years for the words of the independence declaration to be fulfilled. Now all Americans were deemed "*created equal*".

## Laws concerning slavery / conditions of blacks

Date	Author	Law
1776	Thomas Jefferson	<p><b>United States Declaration of Independence:</b></p> <p>We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.</p>
1850	American congress	<p><b>Fugitive Slave Act:</b></p> <p>Anyone caught helping a runaway slave can be jailed or given an expensive fine.</p>
1865	Abraham Lincoln	<p><b>Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution:</b></p> <p>Slavery is now illegal in the United States.</p>
1876-1964	Multiples authors	<p><b>Jim Crow Laws (Segregation):</b></p> <p>The Jim Crow laws are a number of municipal or state laws that separated blacks and white. The whites and blacks were to have “separate, but equal” privileges.</p>
1964	Lyndon Johnson	<p><b>Civil Rights Act:</b></p> <p>It is now illegal to discriminate on the basis of ethnic background, color, gender or religion.</p>

## The Underground Railroad

When the abolitionists created the Underground Railroad, they used a secret system so that no one could guess their activities. The railroad was a recent invention and the smugglers used the railroad keywords as their own codes. Here are some of the keywords and expressions of the Underground Railroad

### Keywords

**Agent** - coordinator, one who plotted the course of escape and made contacts

**Drinking Gourd** - Big Dipper and the North Star

**Freedom Train or Gospel Train** - code name for the Underground Railroad

**Heaven or Promised Land** - Canada

**Preachers** - leaders/speakers of the Underground Railroad

**Shepherds** - people who escorted the slaves

**Station** - place of safety and temporary refuge, a safe house

**Station Master** - the keeper of a safe house

**Stockholder** - donor of money, clothing, or food to the Underground Railroad

**The River Jordan:** The Mississippi River

### Expressions

**"The wind blows from the south today"** - the warning of slave bounty hunters nearby

**"A friend with friends"** - A password used to signal the arrival of fugitives with an Underground Railroad conductor

**"The friend of a friend sent me"** - A password used by fugitives traveling alone to indicate they were sent by the Underground Railroad network

**Load of potatoes, parcel, or bundles of wood** - fugitives to be expected

## Follow the drinking Gourd

When the sun comes back,  
and the first Quail calls,  
Follow the drinking gourd,  
For the old man is waiting  
for to carry you to freedom  
If you follow the drinking gourd.

Chorus:

Follow the drinking gourd,  
Follow the drinking gourd,  
For the old man is waiting  
for to carry you to freedom  
If you follow the drinking gourd.

The riverbank will make a very good road,  
The dead trees show you the way.  
Left foot, peg foot traveling on,  
Following the drinking gourd.

The river ends between two hills,  
Follow the drinking gourd,  
There's another river on the other side,  
Follow the drinking gourd.  
When the great big river meets the little river,

Follow the drinking gourd.  
For the old man is waiting  
for to carry you to freedom  
If you follow the drinking gourd.

## Definitions

**Abolitionist:** A person who believes that slavery should be abolished, that it should no longer exist.

**Colony:** A group of people who leave their native country to form in a new land a settlement subject to, or connected with, the parent nation.

**Discrimination:** Treatment or consideration of, or making a distinction in favour of or against, a person or thing based on the group, class, or category to which that person or thing belongs rather than on individual merit.

**Emancipation:** The act of freeing or state of being freed; liberation.

**Fugitive:** A person who is fleeing, from prosecution, intolerable circumstances, etc.

**Loyalists:** A person who remained loyal to the British during the American Revolution.

**Passive resistance:** Opposition to a government or to specific governmental laws by the use of noncooperation and other nonviolent methods, as economic boycotts and protest marches.

**Segregation:** The practice or policy of creating separate facilities within the same society for the use of a minority group.

**Underground Railroad:** a system for helping fugitive slaves to escape into Canada or other places of safety.

# Teacher's Guide

Samuel,  
Conductor of the  
Underground Railroad

Dear teachers,

Your school will soon see the multimedia presentation: “*Samuel, conductor of the Underground Railroad*” from FrancoFolk Folkloric Workshops. This presentation shows the life of American slaves and most of all, the life of a young man who smuggles black slaves towards Canada.

DO NOT READ THE FOLLOWING SYNOPSIS TO YOUR STUDENTS

Synopsys

Samuel is growing up in a city from the Northern part of the United States, in a Quaker village, sympathetic to the abolition of slavery. As he is growing up, Samuel sees a slave merchant leave black slaves in this village. That Merchant Mr. Sweeney comes back after a few weeks to take his slaves back to the Southern states to sell them.

Disgusted by the lack of compassion in his villages, Samuel asks an elder in his village if he has connections with the Underground Railroad. One night, Samuel is awoken and brought to a secret meeting of the Underground Railroad. This meeting is held in the church basement, but Samuel must remain hidden behind curtains as to not know the identity of the secret workers.

After a few weeks, Samuel will join Mr Sweeney, who really is a smuggler rather than a slave merchant. Samuel will go to live in a different city where he will become a clerk for the general store. When he is called to travel from city to city, he will also transport runaway slaves.

In one such trip, bounty hunters will confront Samuel. He will need to use his imagination to get himself out of that situation...

How to use this guide:

This document can be photocopied and given to students who will see the presentation of ***Samuel, conductor of the Underground Railroad***. This guide cannot be modified.

**Pre presentation activities:**

- Read pages 1-7 to explain the context of the story and the story of slavery.
- Do the research project of heroes
- Do not explain to the students the meanings of the song “follow the drinking gourd”, it will be covered during the presentation.

**Post presentation activities:**

- Do the Discrimination game
- Take the Quiz on black and slavery laws

# Discrimination game

This is a classroom game that can be rather emotionally charged, but that will give insights into the conditions of blacks during the segregation years. This game will stir emotions, but will also help students understand the dynamics.

In your classroom, one student out of five will become “the minority”. The victims should be drawn rather than assigned.

## Ways to discriminate against the “minority”.

- Their desks will be moved to the back of the class.
- If textbooks are used, they will have to share one.
- They will have to eat in the classroom while the others are eating in the cafeteria.
- The teacher will refuse to answer any questions, be rude or explain that they would not understand anyway.
- The measures of disciplines have to be applied unequally. (If the student complains about the unfairness, be sure to apply even more discipline!)
- Treats may also be given unfairly.
- Student may be graded differently on class work.
- Every minority students except one, must leave the content of their desk in their desk. They must all share the material (pen, pencils, erasers, calculator etc...) with the remaining student.
- Majority students should avoid talking or playing with minority students.

## Ground rules:

- The game starts in the morning and must end 45 minutes before the end of the class (To allow a period of discussion at the end of the day)
- As soon as the students are outside of the classroom (Recess, lunch) the game must end. That way, no outside personnel (supervisor, administration) have to deal with artificial conflict resolution.
- A safe word must be introduced if a minority student becomes too involved in the activity. EVERYONE must respect the safe word.
- When the day is over, compensation may be given to the minority (The treat they did not get, the proper grade they should have received).
- The minority students may be praised for their participation into this “bad day”.

**You may find that the majority students feel more embarrassed about the situation than the minority.**

# Discrimination game

## Discussion questions

### To the minority students:

- Did you feel the situation was unfair?
- Did you feel helpless, angry or sad?
- How would you feel if this game was real and would last for the rest of your life?
- Do you have a different opinion of discrimination than you did before the game?

### To the majority students:

- Did you feel the situation was unfair?
- Did you feel like you wanted the situation to change?
- Did you have to force yourself not to play or talk to the minority students?
- Do you have a different opinion of discrimination than you did before the game?

### To everyone:

- What would be examples of minority in a Canadian classroom today?
- What would be examples of minority in the world today?
- What can be done to help minority feel less like a minority?

## Quiz on black / slavery laws

Please fill letter of number in the appropriate square

	Author	Law Name	Text
1776	B	3	ii
1850			
1865			
1876-1964			
1964			

### Authors:

- A) American congress
- B) Thomas Jefferson
- C) Multiples authors
- D) Abraham Lincoln
- E) Lyndon Johnson

### Law

1. Fugitive Slave Act:
2. Jim Crow Laws (Segregation):
3. United States Declaration of Independence:
4. Civil Rights Act:
5. Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution:

### Text:

- i. It is now illegal to discriminate on the basis of ethnic background, color, gender or religion.
- ii. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.
- iii. Anyone caught helping a runaway slave can be jailed or given an expensive fine.
- iv. Those laws are a number of municipal or state laws that separated blacks and white. The whites and blacks were to have "separate, but equal" privileges.
- v. Slavery is now illegal in the United States.

## Quiz on black / slavery laws (ANSWERS)

Please fill letter of number in the appropriate square

	Author	Law Name	Text
1776	B	3	ii
1850	C	1	iii
1865	A	5	v
1876-1964	D	2	iv
1964	E	4	i

### Authors:

- B) American congress
- D) Multiples authors
- F) Lyndon Johnson
- B) Thomas Jefferson
- D) Abraham Lincoln

### Law

- 6. Fugitive Slave Act:
- 7. Jim Crow Laws (Segregation):
- 8. United States Declaration of Independence:
- 9. Civil Rights Act:
- 10. Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution:

### Text:

- vi. It is now illegal to discriminate on the basis of ethnic background, color, gender or religion.
- vii. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.
- viii. Anyone caught helping a runaway slave can be jailed or given an expensive fine.
- ix. Those laws are a number of municipal or state laws that separated blacks and white. The whites and blacks were to have "separate, but equal" privileges.
- x. Slavery is now illegal in the United States.

## Research project on heroes

A group of 12 black activists have been named in this research project. Some are Canadians, some Americans, some men, some women, some contemporary, most now deceased.

The research project can be done in small group or individually. Students are encouraged to read up on a hero and make a small presentation to the rest of the class.

They must answer the questions but can add to the required questions. The answers to the projects are included in this guide.

Research Formats:

- PowerPoint presentation
- Poster
- Oral presentation

You can assign a hero to each student or pair them in small groups. Alternately, each student can choose the hero of their choice.

All the heroes can be found on Wikipedia.

# Research project on heroes

Heroes:

Harriet Tubman	Abraham Lincoln	Henry "box" Brown
Martin Luther King Jr.	Harriet Beecher Stowe	Henry Bibb
Jackie Robinson	Rosa Parks	Thurgood Marshall
Vanessa Williams	Jesse Owens	Michaëlle Jean

**Please answer the questions concerning your hero:**

Where was your hero born? \_\_\_\_\_

What year? \_\_\_\_\_

Is your hero black? \_\_\_\_\_

How did your hero help the cause of the blacks?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What risks were taken by your hero?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What can you do today to help the cause of other less fortunate people?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Harriet Tubman

Birth Place	Year of birth	Black?
Maryland U.S.	1820 or 1822	Yes

## How did he/she help the cause of blacks?

- Harriet Tubman helped many slaves to escape.
- She proved that the Underground Railroad worked!
- She helped the Northern soldiers during the Civil War.

## Risks taken

- Harriet Tubman Escaped her master.
- She risked capture by returning to get her family and other blacks.

# Abraham Lincoln

Birth Place	Year of birth	Black?
Kentucky U.S.	1809	No

## How did he/she help the cause of blacks?

- He forced the southern states to free the slaves.
- He wrote the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment (concerning the end of slavery)

## Risks taken

- Risked his political career.
- Sent the Northern army against the Southern soldiers.
- He was assassinated shortly before the emancipation took place.

# Henry Box Brown

Birth Place	Year of birth	Black?
Virginia U.S.	1815	Yes

## How did he/she help the cause of blacks?

- Proven that it was possible to escape.
- Became a speaker for the Anti-Slavery Society.

## Risks taken

- Could have died from the rough handling of the box. The box was put upside down often in the travel
- Risked getting recaptured by becoming a speaker for the Anti-Slavery Society.

# Martin Luther King Jr.

Birth Place	Year of birth	Black?
Georgia U.S.	1929	Yes

## How did he/she help the cause of blacks?

- Used a system of passive resistance to help the cause of the blacks.
- Had a great influence on many politicians to further the cause of the black people.
- Won the Nobel peace prize.

## Risks taken

- A bomb was thrown against his house.
- He was killed in 1968.

# Harriet Beecher Stowe

Birth Place	Year of birth	Black?
Connecticut U.S.	1811	No

## How did he/she help the cause of blacks?

- Wrote the book "Uncle Tom's cabin"
- In this book she showed the Northern people the atrocities that were taking place in the south.

## Risks taken

- Many readers did not like the way the South was portrayed in the book.

# Henry Bibb

Birth Place	Year of birth	Black?
Louisiana U.S.	1815	Yes

## How did he/she help the cause of blacks?

- Escaped his master and made his way to Ontario.
- Set-up the first African Canadian newspaper in Canada.

## Risks taken

- Had to flee his master in Kentucky.

# Jackie Robinson

Birth Place	Year of birth	Black?
Georgia U.S.	1919	Yes

## How did he/she help the cause of blacks?

- Became the first black professional baseball player.
- Became a spoke person for black rights

## Risks taken

- Had to endure all the racial insults that were said to him to make him lose!
- Received countless threat letters.

# Rosa Parks

Birth Place	Year of birth	Black?
Alabama U.S.	1913	Yes

## How did he/she help the cause of blacks?

- Worked as a secretary for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.
- Refused to vacate her seat for a white patron in a Montgomery bus.
- Participated in many civil rights activities

## Risks taken

- Was arrested.
- Many whites did not like that she defied the system.

# Thurgood Marshall

Birth Place	Year of birth	Black?
Maryland U.S.	1908	Yes

## How did he/she help the cause of blacks?

- He was a lawyer and took cases where blacks were not granted the rights they should have been given.
- Worked for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

## Risks taken

- Many Southern senators tried to stop his nomination to the senate because of his stance against segregation.

# Vanessa Williams

Birth Place	Year of birth	Black?
New York U.S.	1963	Yes

## How did he/she help the cause of blacks?

- Became the first African American woman to win the Miss America contest.

## Risks taken

- Worked very hard as a singer, model and actress.

# Jesse Owens

Birth Place	Year of birth	Black?
Alabama U.S.	1913	Yes

## How did he/she help the cause of blacks?

- Won 4 medals in the Berlin Olympics of 1936.
- Showed the Nazis that their racist beliefs were not quite fight.

## Risks taken

- Had to work hard for his medals.

# Michaëlle Jean

Birth Place	Year of birth	Black?
Jacmel Haiti	1957	Yes

## How did he/she help the cause of blacks?

- She became the first black governor general of Canada

## Risks taken

- Worked hard as a T.V. show host in Quebec.