

*Discovering the Story: A City and Its Culture*

*Courage to Create*

A Language Arts Lesson for  
Grades 9-12

Based on *The Underground Railroad, 1893*  
by Charles T. Webber



Charles T. Webber (1825-1911)  
United States (Cincinnati)  
*The Underground Railroad*, 1893  
Subscription Fund Purchase, 1927.26

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## CONCEPT STATEMENT

Americans have always admired courageous individuals because they improve the quality of our society. Courageous individuals must often overcome obstacles of isolation, fear, hardships, peer pressure and even extreme risk to realize their goals. In this lesson, students will investigate the meanings of courage. They will define courage in their own environments and learn about other heroic individuals by examining [\*The Underground Railroad\*](#) by C.T. Webber. Through this lesson, students will reinforce skills in observation, comparing/contrasting, vocabulary development, writing conventions and critical thinking. The teacher will facilitate students in their understanding through pre-videoconferencing activities, a [videoconference](#) visit with the Cincinnati Art Museum and post-videoconferencing activities.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will expand their understanding of courage using prior knowledge, readings, graphic organizers, class discussions, and through close inspection of [\*The Underground Railroad\*](#) by C.T. Webber.
- Students will create writings related to courage.
- Students will gain knowledge of the Underground Railroad and Cincinnati's role in it.

## TEACHER PREPARATION

### CLASS PERIODS REQUIRED

- 1 to 2 (30-50 mins.) class periods for Pre-Videoconference Lesson Activities
- 1 (50-min.) class period for the Videoconference
- 1 to 2 (30-50 mins.) class periods for Post-Videoconference Lesson Activities.
- 1 to 2 (30-50 min.) periods for Art Enrichment Activity (optional)

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Refer to [Background Information](#) for more on the painting *The Underground Railroad* and the artist who created it. This information also provides an historical background for the Underground Railroad and Cincinnati's involvement in this movement. This resource has been written for teachers to review before the lesson and then share with students.

## VIDEO

Share the [video](#) that accompanies this lesson with your students prior to the videoconference. The video depicts the installation of an exhibit at the Cincinnati Art Museum that was inspired in part by C.T. Webber's *The Underground Railroad* and the overarching concepts of courage and freedom.

Video Duration: approx. 6 minutes.

## PRE- VIDEOCONFERENCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

### VOCABULARY

Definitions can be found in the [Glossary](#) on the [Discovering the Story](#) Website.

Abolitionist  
Conductor  
Controversial  
Courage  
Station  
Freedom Seeker  
Slavery  
Social Commentary  
Underground Railroad

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What constitutes courage?
- Why do people choose to be courageous/take risks to help others?
- How were abolitionists and freedom seekers courageous?
- What are some of the choices of today that require courageous behavior?
- In what ways is courage needed when creating works of art?

### MATERIALS

- Copy of [The Underground Railroad](#) – class set downloaded and printed from the [Discovering the Story](#) website
- “The Big Picture” graphic organizer

## PROCEDURE

### *Teacher will:*

- Supply each student with a copy of History Background Information and accompanying question sheet.
- Allow students time to read the information and answer the questions. (This can be done in class or as a homework assignment.) Share/discuss answers.
- Introduce students to a print of C.T. Webber's painting *The Underground Railroad*. Use background information provided by the Museum when appropriate.
- Distribute individual copies of "The Big Picture" worksheet to students. Discuss the elements of the worksheet so that students will understand how to use observation skills while looking at the painting.
- Compare individual or team responses.
- Initiate further discussion by using the guiding questions from above.
- Show video. Discuss with the students what they learned.
- Based on observation of the painting, background information and classroom activities, develop a list of questions for the videoconference.

## VIDEOCONFERENCE

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will interact with the Cincinnati Art Museum staff through a sixty-minute [videoconference](#).
- Students will learn about Cincinnati's contribution to the Underground Railroad.
- Students will use Museum objects to reinforce activities completed in preparation for this [videoconference](#).

### CONCEPT

A [videoconference](#) conducted by the Cincinnati Art Museum staff extends student learning through emphasis on the viewing and discussion of art objects. During this [videoconference](#) with the Museum, students will explore Cincinnati's place in the story of the Underground Railroad movement and major tristate figures, such as Levi and Catharine Coffin, John Parker and John Rankin.

## SCHEDULE

- **5 minutes** Introduction to CAM staff (*This is also buffer time in case of connection complications*)
- **10 minutes** Brief discussion of student pre-videoconferencing activities.
- **10 minutes** Museum staff will lead students in an in-depth investigation of C.T. Webber's painting *The Underground Railroad*
- **15 minutes** Museum staff will lead an interactive discussion with students on Cincinnati's place in the story of the Underground Railroad movement.
- **10 minutes** Questions and student sharing of art projects.
- **5 minutes** Closing (*This is also buffer time in case of connection complications*)

## POST- VIDEOCONFERENCE LESSON ACTIVITIES

### MATERIALS

To be determined by students

### PROCEDURE

#### *Teacher will:*

- Discuss with students controversial issues of today, just as slavery was a controversial issue of the 1800s.
- Generate a list of controversial topics.
- Have each student select a topic of personal interest.
- Ask students to gather information through research methods including reading articles, listening to the news, searching the Internet and interviewing people.
- Have students create a political cartoon, writing, drawing, song, or poem regarding the controversial topic they selected. Students will defend their point of view through an oral presentation.

## HISTORICAL QUESTIONS

1. What was the purpose of the Underground Railroad?
2. What groups of people organized the Underground Railroad?
3. What were the goals of abolitionist organizations?
4. What did most northerners think about the goals of the abolitionist movement?
5. How did the northern Union states force the South to comply with the laws and constitutional amendments of Reconstruction?
6. What were some positive things for African Americans that occurred as a result of Reconstruction?
7. Why did southern states and some northern states create Black Codes? In other words, what was the purpose of Black Codes?
8. What were some things that African Americans had to deal with under Black Codes?
9. In what ways are the effects of slavery still with us today?
10. Do you believe that American society has healed from the wounds of slavery?
11. How might our country be different today if Reconstruction had been allowed to fully develop?
12. Would you have been willing to be part of the Underground Railroad?

## ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

- Students are able to verbalize/write about courage, compare/contrast types of courage and identify dangers related to being courageous.
- Students are able to meet criteria for written composition and visual illustration.

# ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS

## NATIONAL STANDARDS: LANGUAGE ARTS

### Reading

**Standard 5:** Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.

**Benchmark 4:** Understands writing techniques used to influence the reader and accomplish an author's purpose.

### Writing

**Standard 2:** Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing.

**Benchmark 1:** Uses precise and descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas and supports different purposes.

**Standard 4:** Gathers and uses information for research purposes.

**Benchmark 1:** Uses appropriate research methodology.

**Benchmark 2:** Uses a variety of print and electronic sources to gather information for research topics.

**Benchmark 5:** Synthesizes information from multiple research studies to draw conclusions that go beyond those found in any of the individual studies.

### Visual Art

**Standard 4:** Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

**Benchmark 1:** Differentiates among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of characteristics and purposes of works of art.

**Benchmark 2:** Describes the function and explores the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times and places.

## OHIO STANDARDS: LANGUAGE ARTS

**Reading Applications: Informational, Technical and Persuasive Text:** Students gain information from reading for purposes of learning about a subject, doing a job, making decisions and accomplishing a task. Students need to apply the reading process to various types of informational texts, including essays, magazines, newspapers, textbooks, instruction manuals, consumer and workplace documents, reference materials, multimedia and electronic resources. They learn to attend to text features, such as titles, subtitles and visual aids, to make predictions and build text knowledge. They learn to read diagrams, charts, graphs, maps and displays in text as sources of additional information. Students use their knowledge of text structure to organize content information, analyze it and draw inferences from it. Strategic readers learn to recognize arguments, bias, stereotyping and propaganda in informational text sources.

**Benchmark D:** Synthesizes the content from several sources on a single issue or written by a single author, clarifying ideas and connecting them to other sources and related topics.

**Benchmark E:** Analyzes an author's implicit and explicit philosophical assumptions and beliefs about a subject.



**Writing Process:** Students' writing develops when they regularly engage in the major phases of the writing process. The writing process includes the phases of prewriting, drafting, revising and editing, and publishing. They learn to plan their writing for different purposes and audiences. They learn to apply their writing skills in increasingly sophisticated ways to create and produce compositions that reflect effective word and grammatical choices. Students develop revision strategies to improve the content, organization and language of their writing. Students also develop editing skills to improve writing conventions.

**Benchmark B:** Selects and uses an appropriate organizational structure to refine and develop ideas for writing.

**Writing Applications:** Students need to understand that various types of writing require different language, formatting and special vocabulary. Writing serves many purposes across the curriculum and takes various forms. Beginning writers learn about the various purposes of writing; they attempt and use a small range of familiar forms (e.g., letters). Developing writers are able to select text forms to suit purpose and audience. They can explain why some text forms are more suited to a purpose than others and begin to use content-specific vocabulary to achieve their communication goals. Proficient writers control effectively the language and structural features of a large repertoire of text forms. They deliberately choose vocabulary to enhance text and structure their writing according to audience and purpose.

**Benchmark B:** Writes responses to literature that extend beyond the summary and supports references to the text, other works, other authors or to personal knowledge.

**Research Standard:** Students define and investigate self-selected or assigned issues, topics and problems. They locate, select and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference and technological sources. Students use an appropriate form to communicate their findings.

**Benchmark B:** Compiles, organizes and evaluates information, takes notes and summarizes findings.

**Benchmark E:** Communicates findings, reporting on the substance and processes orally, visually and in writing or through multimedia.

## Visual Arts

**Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts:** Students understand the impact of visual art on history, culture and society from which it emanates. They understand the cultural, social and political forces that, in turn, shape visual art communication and expression. Students identify the significant contributions of visual artists to cultural heritage. They analyze the historical, cultural, social and political contexts that influence the function and role of visual art in the lives of people.

**Benchmark A:** Explains how and why visual art forms develop in the contexts (e.g., cultural, social, historical and political) in which they were made.

**Connections, Relationships and Applications:** Students connect and apply their learning of visual art to the study of other arts areas and disciplines outside the arts. They understand relationships between and among concepts and ideas that are common across subjects in the curriculum. Students recognize the importance of lifelong learning and experience in visual art.

**Benchmark A:** Summarizes and explains the impact of an historical event or movement on the development of visual art.