

Discovering the Story: A City and Its Culture

The Underground Railroad Through Editorial Eyes

A Social Studies 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

The Underground Railroad by C.T. Webber is a narrative painting that gives us a glimpse of just one scene in the story of the Underground Railroad. Upon viewing the painting and further research, using nonfiction texts, students will discuss the scene and whether it is an honest depiction of this time in history. Students will also explore fictional texts and discuss their validity as they pertain to the Underground Railroad.

The teacher will facilitate students in a thorough investigation and study of the Underground Railroad through pre-videoconferencing classroom activities, a [videoconference](#) visit with the Cincinnati Art Museum and post-videoconferencing lesson activities. Student understanding of the objectives will be assessed through a written and oral presentation on the validity of this painting and their chosen fictional text as reputable depictions of the story of the Underground Railroad.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will closely examine the painting *The Underground Railroad* by C.T. Webber and learn that art can portray a moment in history and/or a point of view about that moment in history.
- Students will learn/review late nineteenth century African-American history, specifically the Underground Railroad, through close examination of the painting *The Underground Railroad* and historical editorial cartoons.
- Students will examine contemporary editorial cartoons and discuss the point of view being expressed by the artist and how that point of view either did or did not sway their opinion about the topic.

TEACHER PREPARATION

CLASS PERIODS REQUIRED

1 to 2 class periods (40-50 mins.) for Pre-Videoconference Lesson Activities

1 (50-min.) class period for the Videoconference

1 to 2 class periods (40-50 mins.) for Post-Videoconference Lesson Activities. Students should be given a week to collect cartoons and write report.

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
Civil War
Contemporary
Editorial Cartoon
Historical Era
Jim Crow
Narrative
Propaganda
Reconstruction
Underground Railroad

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What was slavery?
- What was the Underground Railroad?
- What were the Jim Crow Laws?
- What is propaganda?
- What is an editorial cartoon?

MATERIALS

Copy of *The Underground Railroad* – class set downloaded and printed from the *Discovering the Story* website

[Biographical information](#) on C.T. Webber and painting – downloaded and printed from the *Discovering the Story* website

Copies of editorial cartoons downloaded and printed from the [Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division](#) website.

PROCEDURE

Teacher will:

- Divide the class into small collaborative teams (3–4 students each).
- Distribute a copy of C.T. Webber’s *The Underground Railroad* and a copy of the biographical information on the artist and the painting to each team.
- Have each group discuss the painting using the questions provided. One team member should record the team’s responses to each question.
 - What do you see happening in this painting?
 - Who are these people?
 - What time of day is it, and how do you know this?
 - What season is it, and how do you know this?
 - What is the artist telling us about this event?
 - What historical event is being portrayed in this painting?
 - What message is the artist conveying about the Underground Railroad?
 - What year was this painting created?
 - What was happening in America at the time that might have caused C. T. Webber to create this painting?
- Inform the students that often paintings like the *Underground Railroad* are used to record an historical event or express a particular point of view. This painting was created in 1893 during the height of the Jim Crow Law period and may have been a reaction to the lack of equality for the African-American people during the late nineteenth century.
- Using the Background Information provided on the *Discovering the Story* website, your history textbook and/or age-appropriate books, introduce/review and discuss African-American history during the late nineteenth century (1840–1900, including slavery, the Underground Railroad, Emancipation Proclamation, Reconstruction, Jim Crow Laws, etc.) with students.
- Divide class into teams again and pass out a selection of editorial cartoons from this period in history. Have each team answer the following questions about their editorial cartoon:
 - What do you see?
 - What is happening in this cartoon?
 - What is the artist’s point of view?
 - What historical event, if any, does the cartoon represent?

All cartoons from the [Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division](#) Washington D. C.

- *The Political Quadrille, Music by Dred Scott* (Reproduction number: LC- USZ62-14827)
 - *A Dish of “Black Turtle”* (Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-10357)
 - *The Constitutional Amendment* (Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-32499)
 - *Effects of the Fugitive Slave-Law* (Reproduction number: LC-USZC4-4550)
 - *Abolition Frowned Down* ((Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-9916)
 - *The Hurly-Burly Pot* (Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-11138)
 - *Northern Coat of Arms* (Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-19673)
 - *The Fugitive Song* (Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-7823)
 - *The Freedman’s Bureau* (Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-40764)
 - *I’m Not to Blame, for Being White* (Reproduction number: LC-USZ62-12771)
- Remind students that like the painting *The Underground Railroad*, editorial cartoons portray the point of view of the artist who created it. How do these cartoons compare/contrast with C.T. Webber’s painting? Discuss.
 - As preparation for the videoconference with the Museum, ask students to write down any questions they might have about the painting or this period in history and email these questions to the Cincinnati Art Museum so that the museum representative may address them.

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

Newspapers
Computer with Internet access

PROCEDURE

Teacher will:

- Upon completion of the videoconference with the Cincinnati Art Museum, review with students information learned during the pre-videoconference lesson activities and the videoconference. Before proceeding with the next step, all students should have a firm grasp of the story of late nineteenth century African-American history, specifically the Underground Railroad.
- Look again at the painting *The Underground Railroad* and the editorial cartoons used in the pre-lesson. Review with students that the painting and the editorial cartoons both tell the artist's point of view on subjects in African-American history.
- Ask students how people today express their point of view. List and discuss the expressions students mention (oral - speech / debate, written - newspapers / magazines / books, etc.). Ask students if they have ever read an editorial/political cartoon.
- Tell students that they are each going to collect editorial cartoons from a newspaper or website. Each student should choose a different newspaper or website and copy off each day's cartoon for a week.
- Have students compile their cartoons in a notebook and write their responses to each. At the end of the week, students will write a response paper that discusses the artist, subject matter of the cartoons and the artist's point of view on this subject matter.

- Encouraged students to offer their opinions on the cartoons and whether they agree or disagree with the artist's point of view.
- Encouraged students to create their own editorial cartoon on one of the current events discussed in their contemporary cartoons.

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

- Students closely examine the painting *The Underground Railroad* by C.T. Webber and learn that art can portray a moment in history.
- Students learn that often works of art are not always truthful depictions of an historical period but points of view about that period.
- Students learn/review late nineteenth century African-American history, specifically the Underground Railroad, through close examination of the painting and historical editorial cartoons.
- Students examine contemporary editorial cartoons and discuss the point of view being expressed by the artist and how that point of view either did or did not sway their opinion about the topic.

POLITICAL CARTOONS RESOURCES

From

<http://www.orange.k12.oh.us/teachers/ohs/TJordan/Pages/historyeducation.html>

[Swann](#)

[Herblock's History](#)

[Herblock Remembered](#)

[Oliphant](#)

[Editorial Cartoons and Humor](#)

[Political Cartoons.com](#)

[America in Caricature 1765-1865](#)

[Daryl Cagle's Professional Cartoonists Index 2000](#)

[Cartoonery](#)

[Doonesbury Electronic Town Hall](#)

[Political Cartoons - Ohio State University](#)

[Political Cartoons.Com](#)

[Teachers' Guide for Cagle's Cartoonists Index](#)

[The World of Thomas Nast](#)

[Genesis of American Political Caricature](#)

[Civil War Cartoons](#)

[The Election of 1896](#)

[Herbert Hoover Presidential Cartoons](#)

[Dr. Suess Went to War](#)

[Political Cartoons of Thomas Nast](#)

[American Political Prints: 1766-1876](#)

[Political Cartoons and Cartoonists](#)

[Theodore Roosevelt and the Image of Empire](#)

[Political Cartoons and Cartoonists](#)

[Edmund Valtman](#)

[Editorial Cartoons and Caricatures](#)

[Mackay Political Cartoons](#)

[The Caricature Store](#)

[Cleveland Plain Dealer Editorial Cartoons](#)

[Political Cartoons and Cartoonists](#)

[America in Caricature: 1765-1865](#)

[American Political Prints: 1766-1876](#)

ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS

NATIONAL STANDARDS: SOCIAL STUDIES

Grades 9-12

United States History

Era 4 - Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)

Standard 12: Understands the sources and character of cultural, religious and social reform movements in the antebellum period.

Benchmark 1: Understands elements of slavery in both the North and South during the antebellum period (e.g., similarities and differences between African American and white abolitionists, defense of chattel slavery by slaveholders, growing hostility toward free blacks in the North, how African-American leaders fought for rights).

Era 5 - Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877)

Standard 13: Understands the causes of the Civil War.

Benchmark 2: Understands events that fueled the political and sectional conflicts over slavery and ultimately polarized the North and the South (e.g., the Missouri Compromise, the Wilmot Proviso, the Kansas-Nebraska Act).

Standard 15: Understands how various reconstruction plans succeeded or failed.

Benchmark 2: Understands the 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution.

Benchmark 4: Understands factors that inhibited and fostered African-American attempts to improve their lives during Reconstruction.

Historical Understanding

Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective.

Benchmark 12: Knows how to evaluate the credibility and authenticity of historical sources.

Benchmark 13: Evaluates the validity and credibility of different historical interpretations.

OHIO STANDARDS: SOCIAL STUDIES

History: Students use materials drawn from the diversity of human experience to analyze and interpret significant events, patterns and themes in the history of Ohio, the United States and the world.

Grades 11-12

Benchmark B: Uses historical interpretations to explain current issues.

People in Societies: Students use knowledge of perspectives, practices and products of cultural, ethnic and social groups to analyze the impact of their commonality and diversity within local, national, regional and global settings.

Grades 9-10:

Benchmark A: Analyzes the influence of different cultural perspectives on the actions of groups.

Benchmark B: Analyzes the consequences of oppression, discrimination and conflict among cultures.

Benchmark C: Analyzes the ways that contacts among people of different cultures result in exchanges of cultural practices.

Grades 11-12:

Benchmark A: Analyzes how issues may be viewed differently by various cultural groups.

Benchmark C: Explains the role of diverse cultural institutions in shaping American society.

Social Studies Skills and Methods: Students collect, organize, evaluate and synthesize information from multiple sources to draw logical conclusions. Students communicate this information using appropriate social studies terminology in oral, written or multimedia form and apply what they have learned to societal issues in simulated or real-world settings.

Grades 9-10

Benchmark A: Evaluates the reliability and credibility of sources.

Grades 11-12:

Benchmark D: Works in groups to analyze an issue and make decisions.