

Discovering the Story: A City and Its Culture

Courage in the Face of Danger

A Language Arts Lesson for
Grades 4-8

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, graphic organizers, and class discussions, and through close inspection of *The Underground Railroad* by C.T. Webber.
- Students will create writings related to courage/bravery.
- Students will be introduced to the meaning/significance of the Underground Railroad and Cincinnati's role in it.

TEACHER PREPARATION

CLASS PERIODS REQUIRED

- 1 to 2 class periods (30-50 mins.) for Pre-Videoconference Lesson Activities
- 1 (50-min.) class period for the Videoconference
- 1 to 2 class periods (30-50 mins.) 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
Civil War
Conductor
Courage
Era
Freedom Seeker
Slavery
Underground Railroad

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is the Underground Railroad?
- What is courage?
- Why do people choose to be courageous/take risks to help others?

MATERIALS

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

PROCEDURE

Teacher will:

- Introduce students to a copy 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.
- Allow students time to study the painting and complete the worksheet.
- Discuss the ideas students have regarding the painting, supplying additional information as needed so that students have accurate information.
- Use the guiding questions to further student knowledge.
- Show video. Discuss with the students what additional information they have learned.
- Based on observation of the painting, background information shared by the teacher 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

- A variety of books and magazine and newspaper articles related to acts of courage
- Pen
- Pencil
- Crayons, colored pencils, markers
- Writing paper

PROCEDURE

Teacher will:

- Ask students to self-select or select from teacher-supplied books or newspaper/magazine articles related to courage/bravery.
- Have students generate original writings for a “Bravery Hall of Fame.” The writings should address the following questions:
 - Who displayed courage/bravery?
 - What danger(s) did the person face?
 - Where did the person live/display bravery?
 - When did the act of bravery occur?
 - Why did the person help?
 - How did the act of bravery change lives?
 - What similarities/differences are there between the people in the story and those depicted in the painting?

Display these writings as a “Bravery Hall of Fame” in the classroom. Students may illustrate the writings as well. The “Bravery Hall of Fame” can be an ongoing activity throughout the year as

students read and respond to future books, magazine/newspaper articles and, of course, personal experiences.

Other Suggested Activities:

- Have students read/listen to stories about courage including *Freedom River* by Doreen Rappaport, *Martin Luther King* by Rosemary Bray, *Lili the Brave* by Jennifer Armstrong, *Brave Martha* by Margot Apple, *The Bravest of Us All* by Marsha Diane Arnold, *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* by Eleanor Coerr, *The Heroine of the Titanic: A Tale Both True and Otherwise of the Life of Molly Brown* by Joan Blos, and *The Story of Amy Johnson: Pioneering Woman Aviator* by Janet Stott-Thornton.
- Have students write a song about the courageous people. Perform the song for family members or the school community.

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

Grades 6–8

Reading

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

Benchmark 1: Establishes and adjusts purposes for reading.

Standard 6: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts.

Benchmark 1: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of literary passages and texts.

Benchmark 11: Makes connections between the motives of characters or the causes for complex events in texts and those in his or her own life.

Writing

Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.

Benchmark 11: Writes compositions that address problems/solutions.

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

Benchmark 1: Uses descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas.

Standard 3: Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions.

Benchmark 1: Uses simple and compound sentences in written compositions.

Benchmark 2: Uses complete sentences in written compositions.

Benchmark 3: Uses nouns in written compositions.

Benchmark 4: Uses verbs in written compositions.

Benchmark 6: Uses adverbs in written compositions.

Benchmark 9: Uses conventions of spelling in written compositions.

Benchmark 10: Uses conventions of capitalization in written compositions.

Benchmark 11: Uses conventions of punctuation in written compositions.

Grades 5–8

Visual Art

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

Benchmark 1: Knows and compares the characteristics of artworks in various eras and cultures.

Benchmark 2: Describes and places a variety of art objects in historical and cultural contexts.

Benchmark 3: Analyzes, describes and demonstrates how factors of time and place influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.

OHIO STANDARDS: LANGUAGE ARTS

Language Arts

Acquisition of Vocabulary: Students acquire vocabulary through exposure to language-rich situations, such as reading books and other texts and conversing with adults and peers. They use context clues, as well as direct explanations provided by others, to gain new words. They learn to apply word analysis skills to build and extend their own vocabulary. As students progress through the grades, they become more proficient in applying their knowledge of words (origins, parts, relationships, meanings) to acquire specialized vocabulary that aids comprehension.

Grades 4-7

Benchmark F: Uses multiple resources to enhance comprehension of vocabulary.

Reading Process: Concepts of Print, Comprehension Strategies and Self-Monitoring Strategies: Students develop and learn to apply strategies that help them to comprehend and interpret informational and literary texts. Reading and learning to read are problem-solving processes that require strategies for the reader to make sense of written language and remain engaged with texts. Beginners develop basic concepts about print and how books work. As strategic readers, students learn to analyze and evaluate texts to demonstrate their understanding of text. Additionally, students learn to self-monitor their own comprehension by asking and answering questions about the text, self-correcting errors and assessing their own understanding. They apply these strategies effectively to assigned and self-selected texts read in and out of the classroom.

Grades 4-7

Benchmark A: Determines a purpose for reading and uses a range of reading comprehension strategies to better understand text.

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.

Grades 4-7

Benchmark A: Uses text features and graphics to organize, analyze and draw inferences from content and to gain additional information.

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.

Grades 5-7

Benchmark A: Generates writing topics and establishes a purpose appropriate for the audience.

Benchmark C: Clarifies ideas for writing assignments by using graphics or other organizers.

Writing Conventions: Students learn to master writing conventions through exposure to good models and opportunities for practice. Writing conventions include spelling, punctuation, grammar and other conventions associated with forms of written text. They learn the purpose of punctuation: to clarify sentence meaning and help readers know how writing might sound aloud. They develop and extend their understanding of the spelling system, using a range of strategies for spelling words correctly and using newly learned vocabulary in their writing. They grow more skillful at using the grammatical structures of English to effectively communicate ideas in writing and to express themselves.

Grades 5-7

Benchmark A: Uses correct spelling conventions.

Benchmark B: Uses conventions of punctuation and capitalization in written work.

Benchmark C: Uses grammatical structures to effectively communicate ideas in writing.

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.

Grades 5-8

Benchmark D: Researches culturally or historically significant works of art and discusses their roles in society, history, culture or politics.

Analyzing and Responding: Students identify and discriminate themes, media, subject matter and formal technical and expressive aspects in works of art. They understand and use the vocabulary of art criticism to describe visual features, analyze relationships and interpret meanings in works of art. Students make judgments about the quality of works of art using the appropriate criteria.

Grades 5-8

Benchmark A: Applies the strategies of art criticism to describe, analyze and interpret selected works of art.