

From the Coastal Zone to the Piedmont on the Underground Railroad

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Overview

This lesson is a part of a larger unit on the Underground Railroad and is based on *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* (Hopkinson, Deborah. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.). The teacher will read the book to the students, a story about a young slave who stitches a quilt with a map pattern that guides her to freedom in the North. Students will discuss the cultural significance of the story and design their own quilt squares, incorporating the concepts of geography and coded messages. A route will be mapped from the coastal regions of South Carolina to the Piedmont.

Connection to the Curriculum

This geography lesson is connected to Social Studies and language arts.

South Carolina Social Studies Academic Standards

- 3-1.1 Identify on a map the location and characteristics of significant physical features of South Carolina, including landforms; river systems such as the Pee Dee River Basin, the Santee River Basin, the Edisto River Basin, and the Savannah River Basin; major cities; and climate regions. (G)
- 3-1.2 Interpret thematic maps of South Carolina places and regions that show how and where people live, work, and use land and transportation. (G, P, E)
- 3-1.3 Categorize the six geographic regions of South Carolina—the Blue Ridge Mountain Region, the Piedmont, the Sand Hills, the Inner Coastal Plain, the Outer Coastal Plain, and the Coastal Zone—according to their different physical and human characteristics. (G)

Social Studies Literacy Elements

- F. Ask geographic questions
- G. Make and record observations about the physical and human characteristics of places
- H. Construct maps, graphs, tables and diagrams to display social studies information

Grade Range

This lesson is appropriate for grades 2 through 5.

Time

Two 40-minute class periods

Materials Needed

Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt (Hopkinson, Deborah. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.)

Scissors

Rulers

Construction paper, for each student, 6 or more pieces cut into 5" x 5" squares; additional for cut-outs and designs

Glue

Markers

Craft paper—large roll

Classroom set of *South Carolina: An Atlas* (Charles F. Kovacic, editor. Columbia, SC: South Carolina Geographic Alliance, 2005.)

Internet access: http://americancivilwar.com/underground_railroad.html
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/map.html>

An outline map of South Carolina for each student. (Page 22)

Objectives

Students will:

1. draw a route from the Coastal Zone to the Piedmont.
2. create a class quilt using symbols to represent landforms, agricultural products of the regions, physical landscape, rivers, lakes, and bays.

Suggested Procedures

1. Read the book *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* aloud. Ask students to recall forms of communication used among slaves (song, dance, coded messages, etc.). Tell students that this story demonstrates another way that slaves communicated the route to freedom. Ask, as you are reading:
 - How did Clara feel about being away from her mother? How do you know she felt this way?
 - If you were Clara, would you try to escape from the plantation?
 - Tell some good reasons for escaping. Tell some bad things that could happen if you tried to escape.
 - Tell about your favorite place. Why is it your favorite place?
 - Do you think that Clara and Jack will be caught?
 - Will Clara's mother come with them? Why or why not?
 - What was Clara's surprise when she saw her mother? Was it good or bad?
2. After reading, discuss the story and have the students answer the following questions:
 - What was the form of communication?
 - How is it similar/different to the codes in spirituals and movement?
3. Have students visit sites with Underground Railroad routes mapped out. These sites should be saved to the desktop to minimize "surfing" time:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/map.html>

http://americancivilwar.com/underground_railroad.html

4. With an outline map, have each student visit the site saved to his desktop. Then draw a route from the Coastal Plain to the Piedmont be marked on their map.
5. Pass out the *South Carolina Atlas*, one to each student. Allow exploration time.
6. Point out the “Physical Landscape” map (pg. 3), explaining that it shows the elevation of the state. Discuss that the dark green area is at the coast and is the lowest elevation, or height of the land, in the state. Explain that the land in South Carolina rises in elevation to the Blue Ridge.
7. Point out the map key with the students and explain that the colors on the key correspond to elevations in the state. The dark brown in the northwest section of the state is the highest elevation.
8. Look at the “Landform Regions” map (pg. 6). Note the names of the different regions. Discuss the different characteristics they would expect to find in each of the regions (sandy and flat in the Coastal Zone; forested and agricultural in the Outer Coastal Plain, beginning to rise a little; sandy and hilly in the Sandhills, with pine forests and some cotton fields; the Piedmont would begin to show some sharper elevations and be more heavily forested). Ask “Why wouldn’t slaves trying to escape on the Underground Railroad go up into the Blue Ridge?” Talk with the students both about the fact that the route for the Underground Railroad didn’t go through the mountains and about how hard it would be to travel through the mountains. Remind them that runaways generally slept in the day and traveled at night. What happens at night in the mountains? Is it cold? Do you need to see really well when you’re sneaking and running in the mountains? Could you do that at night?
9. Look at the “Rivers, Lakes and Bays” map (pg 4). Discuss with the students that a river might be a good landform to follow and ask them why. Could a runaway go in the water for a while to help get away from tracking dogs? Could a large lake or a river be a problem? What if you couldn’t swim?
10. Study the agricultural maps (pp. 13 and 33) and recall with the students earlier lessons on plantation farming and slave-tended crops. Discuss what sorts of fields runaways might pass through to get from the Coastal Zone to the Piedmont.
11. Pass out pre-cut construction paper squares, construction paper and markers for decorating squares, glue and scissors.
12. Student will create quilt squares that show the following on each:
 - a. a landform
 - b. an agricultural product
 - c. a landscape trait
 - d. at least one body of water that they would pass on their journey
13. Each student will show and explain their quilt squares to the class.
14. Tape all quilt squares to a large section of craft paper for a class quilt.

Lesson Extensions

1. Freedom spirituals of the times (*Follow the Drinking Gourd*, *Wade in the Water*, *This Train*, etc.) can be played, sung, and/or taught. Listen to the song "Follow the Drinkin' Gourd". Discuss how each verse gave the slaves clues to help them escape.
2. Invite parents for a quilt showing. Read *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* to the parents; have the students retell the story in their own words.
3. Use vocabulary words for Bingo or Concentration.

VOCABULARY/SPELLING

seamstress	contrary	patterns	knotted
plantation	favorite	stitches	scraps
quarters	shivering	twelve	sew
tomorrow	calico	freedom	clumsy

Suggested Evaluation

Rubric attached.

Resources

Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt (Hopkinson, Deborah. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.)

South Carolina: An Atlas (Charles F. Kovacik, editor. Columbia, SC: South Carolina Geographic Alliance, 2005.)
1-888-895-2023
www.cas.sc.edu/cege

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/map.html>

http://americancivilwar.com/underground_railroad.html

Making A Map : From the Coastal Zone to the Piedmont on the Underground Railroad

Teacher Name: _____

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Neatness of Color and Lines	All straight lines are ruler-drawn, all errors have been neatly corrected and all features are colored completely.	All straight lines are ruler-drawn, most errors have been neatly corrected and most features are colored completely.	Most straight lines are ruler-drawn, most errors have been neatly corrected and most features are colored completely.	Many lines, corrections of errors, and/or features are not neatly done.
Color Choices	Student always uses color appropriate for features (e.g. blue for water, black for labels, etc.) on map.	Student usually uses color appropriate for features (e.g. blue for water, black for labels, etc.).	Student sometimes uses color appropriate for features (e.g. blue for water, black for labels, etc.).	Student does not use color appropriately.
Participation	Student always paid attention to reading, participated in designing and making quilt squares.	Student usually paid attention to reading, participated in designing and making quilt squares.	Student sometimes paid attention to reading, participated in designing and making quilt squares.	Student did not pay attention to reading, or participate in designing and making quilt squares.
Quilt Squares	Student has 4 completed quilt squares, which he can decode. Symbols are recognizable as landmarks as defined by the student.	Student has 3 completed quilt squares, which he can decode. Symbols are recognizable as landmarks as defined by the student.	Student has 2 completed quilt squares, which he can decode. Symbols are recognizable as landmarks as defined by the student.	Student has 1 or no completed quilt squares. Symbols are not recognizable as landmarks as defined by the student.
Atlas Elements	Student used all four of the Atlas maps to design quilt squares.	Student used 3 of the Atlas maps to design quilt squares.	Student used 2 of the Atlas maps to design quilt squares.	Student used 1 or none of the Atlas maps to design quilt squares.