



# Communication on the Underground Railroad

With Emphasis on Core Democratic Values

## Lesson 3: Visual Communications on the Underground Railroad

### Background Information

There were two major types of visual communication used on the Underground Railroad. One was a lantern and the other was a quilt. If a lantern was lit on a pole outside a house, the slave knew it was a safe house where they would be welcomed. If there was a lantern placed on a pole and it was not lit, this indicated danger.

The art of communication through quilts was strongly rooted in African culture. In the book, "Hidden in Plain View; A Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad, Jaquelin Tobin writes about a woman named Ozella from Charleston, South Carolina. Ozella explains the quilt patterns used to communicate on the Underground Railroad. A quilt would be hung on a 'dry line' to indicate safety, danger, clues and landmarks. The stitches could be sewn as a map for a runaway slave to memorize.

READ; "Sweet Clara and The Freedom Quilt" by Deborah Hoplinson

Select objectives appropriate for your grade level.

### Objectives:

**Objective 1.** The student will fill in the Quilt Clue graphic organizer

- 1<sup>st</sup> grade
- Math GLCE: The student will use coordinate systems
- 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade
- Math GLCE: The student will create interpret and solve problems involving a pictograph

**Objective 2.** The student will work with a partner to assemble these clues and then independently write a journal in the first person using the clues. (It can be written from the perspective of the runaway slave or from the slave owner in pursuit.)

- ELA GLEC: The student will apply a variety of drafting strategies for both narrative and informational text.
- ELA GLEC: The student will edit and proofread their writing using appropriate resources (**ELA Standard 8 Benchmark 1, Standard 2, Benchmark 4**)

**Objective 3.** The student will draw a map from his/her house to the school. Create quilt squares for the geographical places you pass.

- Social Studies: I.IP.03.01. Organize social studies information to make simple

maps, graphs, and tables

- Math Extension: The student will use the attached measurement worksheet to measure the area and perimeter of their quilt
- Math GLEC: The student will solve contextual problems about perimeters of rectangles and areas of rectangle regions.

**Objective 4.** The student will read *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*