

Discovering the Story: A City and Its Culture

Courage in the Face of Danger

A Language Arts Lesson for
Grades K-3

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.
- 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
Bravery
Conductor
Courage
Freedom Seeker
Risk
Stations
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
- “Courage” worksheet for appropriate level(s) – Grades K-1 and Grades 2-3
- “Courage” Word Wall “bricks”

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.
- Ask students what they see in the painting including people (age, gender, ethnic group), animals, natural and man-made objects, time of day/year.
- Write the word “courage” on the board. Ask a variety of students for their definitions of courage. List appropriate words/phrases on the board.
- Distribute the “Courage” worksheet(s) appropriate to your grade level(s). Review the various meanings of courage before going over the worksheet instructions. K-1 students will be drawing pictures that depict courage at home, at school, in the community and in our country. Second- and third-grade students will be completing a chart on the same topics but will also explore the risks encountered. (Note: The activities can be done on newsprint or writing paper rather than on the worksheets.)
- Share results of “Courage” worksheets.
- Following the discussion, list words, phrases, people that students associated with courage on “bricks” (made from construction paper or drawing paper). See “Word Wall” master for example. Display the “bricks” in the classroom.
- Show video. Discuss with the students what they 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

- Journal (can be purchased item or student-made)
- Pencil
- Crayons, colored pencils, markers

PROCEDURE

Teacher will:

- Ask students to re-look at the painting *The Underground Railroad* and ask
 - Who are the freedom seekers?
 - How can you tell?
 - Where are they going?
 - What dangers could they face along the way?
 - Why are they willing to make the dangerous trip?
 - When did the Underground Railroad exist?
 - Who are the people helping the freedom seekers?
 - What dangers did they face?
 - Where did they live?
 - Why did they help?
 - How were all the people in the picture courageous?

- Have students begin a “Courage Journal.” Ask them to begin by writing/drawing some of the things they have learned about courage based on their study of *The Underground Railroad* by C.T. Webber. Other topics can be derived from personal experiences, stories they read or have read to them, events reported on in the news, etc. The journal can be an ongoing activity revisited throughout the year.

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 Marthaby* 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, school community.
- Have students locate newspaper and/or magazine articles about people displaying courage. Add them to the “Wall of Courage.”

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

Writing

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

Grades K-2

Benchmark 6: Uses writing and other methods (e.g., drawing pictures, using letters or phonetically spelled words, telling, dictating, making lists) to describe familiar persons, places, objects or experiences.

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

Grades K-2

Benchmark 1: Uses descriptive words to convey basic ideas.

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

Grades K-2

Benchmark 1: Uses conventions of print in writing.

Benchmark 2: Uses complete sentences in written compositions.

Benchmark 3: Uses declarative and interrogative sentences in written compositions.

Benchmark 4: Uses nouns in written compositions.

Benchmark 5: Uses verbs in written compositions.

Benchmark 7: Uses adverbs in written compositions.

Benchmark 8: Uses conventions of spelling in written compositions.

Benchmark 9: Uses conventions of capitalization in written compositions.

Benchmark 10: Uses conventions of punctuation in written compositions.

Visual Art

Grades K-2

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

Grades K-4

Benchmark 1: Knows that the visual arts have both a history and a specific relationship to various cultures.

Benchmark 2: Identifies specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times and places.

Benchmark 3: Knows how history, culture and the visual arts can influence each other.

Language Arts

Phonemic Awareness, Word Recognition and Fluency: Students in the primary grades learn to recognize and decode printed words, developing skills that are the foundations for independent reading. They discover the alphabetic principle (sound-symbol match) and learn to use it in figuring out new words. They build a stock of sight words that helps them to read quickly and accurately with comprehension. By the end of third grade they demonstrate fluent oral reading, varying their intonation and timing as appropriate for the text.

Grades K-3

Benchmark A: Uses letter-sound correspondence knowledge and structural analysis to decode words.

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 K-3

Benchmark D: Knows the meaning of specialized vocabulary by applying knowledge of word parts, relationships and meanings.

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 K-2

Benchmark A: Generates ideas for written compositions.

Benchmark B: Develops audience and purpose for self-selected and assigned writing tasks.

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.

Grades K-2

Benchmark A: Composes writings that convey a clear message and includes well-chosen details.

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 K-2

Benchmark A: Prints legibly using appropriate spacing.

Benchmark B: Spells grade-appropriate words correctly.

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

Benchmark D: Uses grammatical structures in written work.

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 K-4

Benchmark A: Recognizes and describes visual art forms and artworks from various times and places.

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 K-4

Benchmark A: Identifies and describes the visual features and characteristic in works of art.