

The Underground Railroad



The house of American Quaker Levi Coffin, in Cincinnati, Ohio. His home was a stop along the Underground Railroad

During the era of slavery, the Underground Railroad was a network of routes, places, and people that helped enslaved people in the American South escape to the North. The name “Underground Railroad” was used metaphorically, not literally. It was not an actual railroad, but it served the same purpose—it transported people long distances. It also did not run underground, but through homes, barns, churches, and businesses. The people who worked for the Underground Railroad had a passion for justice and a drive to end the practice of slavery—a drive so strong that they risked their lives and risked their own freedom to help enslaved people escape from bondage and keep them safe along the route.

It is believed that between 1810 and 1850, the Underground Railroad helped to guide one hundred thousand enslaved people to freedom. “Conductors” guided runaway enslaved people from place to place along the routes. The places that sheltered the runaways were referred to as “stations,” and the people who hid the enslaved people were called “station masters.” The fugitives travelling along the routes were called “passengers,” and those who had arrived at the safe houses were called “cargo.”

The people who participated in the Underground Railroad largely worked alone, rather than as part of an organized group. There were people from many occupations and income levels, including former enslaved persons. Especially conductors often posed as enslaved people and snuck the runaways out of plantations. Due to the danger, they conducted much of their activity at night. The conductors and passengers travelled from safe-house to safe-house, often with 10-20 miles between each stop. Lanterns in the windows welcomed them and promised safety. Patrols seeking to catch enslaved people were frequently hot on their heels.

The Underground Railroad was at the heart of the abolitionist movement. The Railroad heightened divisions between the North and South, which set the stage for the Civil War.

adapted from: <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/underground-railroad/>

Excerise: Find words in this text meaning more or less the same. Remember: the words found must be made to match the given words. Help: the words are listed in sequence.

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|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. at the time of = | 12. estimate = | 23. refugee = |
| 2. aid = | 13. lead = | 24. farm = |
| 3. ran away = | 14. protect = | 25. because = |
| 4. as a picture = | 15. stow away = | 26. pursue = |
| 5. real = | 16. name = | 27. halt = |
| 6. aim = | 17. journey = | 28. try = |
| 7. liking = | 18. get to = | 29. grab = |
| 8. stop = | 19. mostly = | 30. often = |
| 9. powerful = | 20. contain = | 31. follow sb closely = |
| 10. assist = | 21. pretend to be = | 32. centre = |
| 11. keep safe = protect | 22. smuggle = | 33. prepare = |