

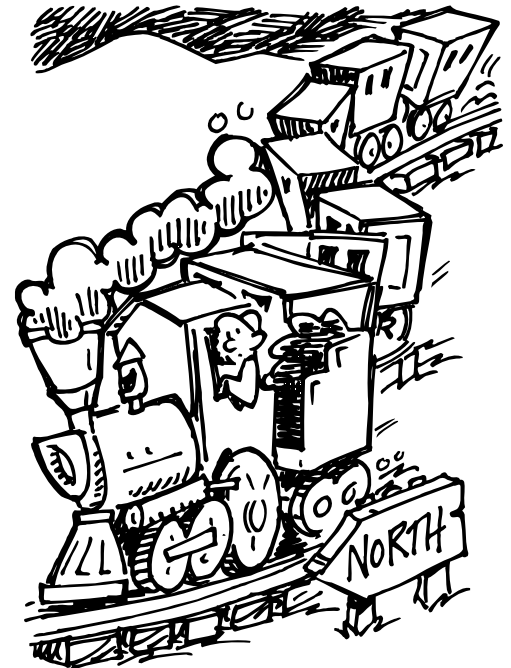
Traveling the Underground Railroad

Thousands of men, women, and children escaped from slavery with the help of the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad wasn't a subway with trains and tracks. It was a secret organization with depots where runaway slaves could rest and hide for a short time: barns, caves, haymounds, root cellars, attics, chimneys, hidden rooms, and sheds.

The Underground Railroad included paths and trails that led from one shelter to the next. The conductors were the people, white and black, who helped lead slaves to freedom.

Slaves and former slaves were the first to become conductors. In spite of the danger of becoming imprisoned, killed, or enslaved again by helping runaways, many former slaves like Harriet Tubman who had fled to freedom returned to help friends and family members escape.

Although the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 made it illegal to help runaway slaves, many people ignored the law. Members of a religious group called Quakers strongly opposed slavery. They were among the first whites to join the illegal operation. Other whites in both the North and South also helped slaves escape. In all, more than 75,000 slaves were able to escape.



Circle T for true or F for false.

1. T F The conductors of the Underground Railroad were committing crimes when they helped slaves escape.
2. T F The Underground Railway included part of the current New York subway system.
3. T F The Underground Railroad wasn't a very accurate term because most slaves escaped by ships.
4. T F Quakers were members of a religious group who opposed slavery.
5. T F The first conductors on the Underground Railroad were mostly slaves and former slaves.
6. T F Harriet Beecher Stowe was one of the conductors of the Underground Railroad mentioned in this article.
7. T F Slaves stayed in fancy hotel rooms as they made their way North to freedom.

A Declaration of War—and of Independence

War or peace? The colonists were divided on the question of whether to go to war with Britain. Debates raged for weeks at the Second Continental Congress. Finally on June 7, 1776, Richard Lee of Virginia proposed this resolution: “The United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states.”

The Congress agreed and appointed a committee of five men to write a declaration based on Lee’s proposal. They included four lawyers—Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston—plus Benjamin Franklin, a printer, inventor, scientist and diplomat.

Each member of the committee expressed ideas of what to include in the document. Thomas Jefferson did the actual writing, a task which took 17 days.

When Jefferson finished, members of the Continental Congress discussed the document for three days. They made changes. One paragraph Jefferson wrote about the abolition of slavery was deleted from the final version. Finally, on July 4, 1776, they voted to adopt the Declaration of Independence.

The Continental Congress decided to have an official copy printed in ornamental script on parchment. The 56 members of the Congress signed this copy on August 2, 1776.

When Benjamin Franklin signed his name, he stated, “We must all hang together, or surely we shall all hang separately.”



1. What do you think Franklin meant by that?

2. Why do you think this document was called the birth certificate of a new nation?

3. When was the Declaration of Independence signed? _____

4. How many men were on the committee? _____

5. What occupation did four of the men have in common? _____

6. The author’s purpose is:

_____ to entertain _____ to inform _____ to persuade

The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere

Before the Revolutionary War began, Paul Revere often journeyed to other colonies carrying news and important messages from patriots in Boston. On the night of April 18, 1775, Paul Revere left Boston for Lexington to warn Samuel Adams and John Hancock that the British were about to arrest them.

His other mission was to alert the militia that British troops planned to seize munitions stored at Concord. Another messenger, William Dawes, also went by a different route with the same warning.

After being rowed across the Charles River to Charlestown, Paul Revere met with members of the Sons of Liberty to confirm they had seen the prearranged signal—two lanterns hung in the bell-tower of Christ Church in Boston to indicate British troops would be coming “by sea”—across the Charles River to Cambridge, rather than marching by land.

At Charlestown, Revere borrowed a horse and rode to Lexington, stopping at houses along the way to alert minutemen about the British arrival. He delivered his warning to Adams and Hancock about midnight.

When Dawes arrived, he and Revere continued on to Concord to alert the militia to prepare for the British attack. On the way, a third man, Dr. Samuel Prescott, joined them.

Before they reached Concord, all three men were arrested by a British patrol. Although Dawes and Prescott escaped, Dawes was thrown from his horse and couldn't continue. The British held Paul Revere for a time and confiscated his horse. He had to walk back to Lexington. Only Prescott arrived in Concord in time to deliver the warning.



1. What were the two warnings Dawes and Revere were to deliver?

2. Why didn't Paul Revere reach Concord to deliver the second message?

3. Why wasn't Dawes able to reach Concord? _____

4. Who did warn the militia at Concord? _____