

SHOW WAY

SHOW WAY

by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by Hudson Talbott

Ages: 4 – 12; Grades: PreK - 8

Themes: Slavery, African-American History, Underground Railroad, Civil Rights

Running Time: 12 minutes

SUMMARY

This beautiful autobiographical story traces the history of the author's family back to her great-great-great-great-grandmother, who was a slave that was sold away from her family at the age of seven. She learned to sew from Big Mama who raised her, and she also learned stories about slave children who followed the secret maps to freedom that were sewn into quilts. She passed this knowledge down to her daughter Mathis May, who was also sold away from her mama at the age of seven. And Mathis May also sewed quilts, or Show Ways, to guide slaves on the path to freedom. So the tradition passed, from mother to daughter, through the abolition of slavery, through the Civil Rights movement, and into the present day. This movie poetically weaves the heartache and cruelty of slavery with hope, bravery, resilience, and a rich family history.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify regions/states that had slavery and those that did not.
- Students will compare and contrast *Show Way* with other stories about slavery and the Underground Railroad.
- Students will investigate their own family histories and create an autobiography.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Use a **KWL** chart (a three-columned chart: What I Know, What I Want to Know, What I Learned) to elicit students' background knowledge about slavery. Encourage students to brainstorm what they know about slavery, the Underground Railroad, and any other background knowledge that they may have. Record all of this information in the "What I Know" column of the KWL chart. Guide students with the following questions:

- What was slavery?
- What did slaves have to do?
- What part of the country had slavery?
- How were slaves treated?
- How did slaves become free?
- Who were important people who helped slaves?
- What was the Underground Railroad?

If students don't know the answers to any of these questions, record them in the W (What I Want to Know) column. Next, have students generate a list of other questions about what they want to know about slavery and the Underground Railroad. Record these ideas in the next column. Tell them that they are about to watch a movie about the history of a slave family that helped other slaves to escape. Encourage students to watch and listen for answers to their questions about slavery. Revisit the KWL chart after viewing the movie to fill in the "What I Learned" column.

Give students an outline map of the United States. Guide them through coloring the southern region where slaves were owned, and the northern region where most people did not own slaves. Briefly discuss some of the reasons that people in the south owned more slaves than people in the north (plantations, cash crops). Have students locate and label Virginia, South Carolina, and the Mason-Dixon Line. Encourage students to watch and listen for these places in the movie. As an extension, demonstrate to students how to calculate the miles between two cities in the South and the North using the map scale, to give them an idea of the distance that slaves had to travel to reach freedom.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Revisit the KWL chart. Students should independently make a list of what they learned from the movie. Then, have students share what they learned and record it on the KWL chart. Ask students if they have any further questions at the end of the movie. Assist students in using the Internet to research answers to these questions. For example, students may want to know more about "jumping the broom." Show students how to use a kid-friendly search engine to explore this topic. Then, share the results and encourage students to search for more information on their own.

Read aloud *Henry's Freedom Box* by Ellen Levine, *Sweet Clara*

and *the Freedom Quilt* by Deborah Hopkinson, and *Follow the Drinking Gourd* by Jeannette Winter. Use a table to compare and contrast these three books with *Show Way*.

Guiding questions:

- Who was running away in each of these stories?
- What was similar about their escapes? What was different?
- Who helped the runaways in each story?
- Did these people have anything in common?
- Where did the runaway slaves go?
- How did they get where they were going?
- Did the characters share any of the same traits? What was different about them?
- Was the main idea or theme of the four stories the same or different? How?
- How were the endings of the stories similar? How were they different?

Culminate this activity by having students write a book review of one of the books that includes elements such as: what they learned from the book, their opinion of the book, and questions for further research that they will do after reading the book.

Have students interview parents, grandparents, and other relatives about their family history. Provide students with guiding questions and a template on which to record their notes. Then, give each student a piece of fabric on which to create a "quilt" square describing something important about his or her family. As an extension, each student can also write a paragraph describing the event on the square. Stitch or glue all squares together to create a class quilt to display.

OTHER RELATED TITLES FROM WESTON WOODS

Henry's Freedom Box, by Ellen Levine, ill. by Kadir Nelson

John Henry, by Julius Lester, ill. by Jerry Pinkney

Lincoln and Douglass, by Nikki Giovanni, ill. by Bryan Collier

March On! The Day My Brother Martin Changed the World, by Dr. Christine King Ferris, ill. by London Ladd

Martin's Big Words, by Doreen Rappaport, ill. by Bryan Collier

The Other Side, by Jacqueline Woodson, ill. by E.B. Lewis

To order other Weston Woods titles visit www.scholastic.com/westonwoods or call 800-243-5020

This guide may be photocopied for free distribution without restriction