Lesson Plan #10 for *Genius of Freedom: William Still & the Underground Railroad* by Liz Taylor

**Grade level:** Middle or High School

**Topics:** Underground Railroad, Vigilance Committee, William Still

**Pennsylvania History Standards:** 8.1.6 B, 8.1.9 B, 8.2.9 A, 8.2.9 B, 8.2.9 D, 8.3.9 A, 8.3.9 B, 8.3.9 D

**Pennsylvania Core Standards:** 8.5.6-8 B, 8.5.9-10 B, 8.5.11-12 B, 8.5.6-8 C, 8.5.9-10 C, 8.5.11-12 F

**African American History, Prentice Hall textbook:** 297-299

**Overview:** Featured within the *Genius of Freedom* exhibit is William Still’s *The Underground Rail Road: A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters &c., Narrating the Hardships, Hair-breadth Escapes, and Death Struggles of the Slaves in Their Efforts for Freedom, as Related by Themselves and Others or Witnessed by the Author: Together with Sketches of Some of the Largest Stockholders and Most Liberal Aiders and Advisers of the Road*. This book, published in 1872, includes Still’s records of his interviews with fugitive slaves or freedom seekers. Still, the chairman of the General Vigilance Committee of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, aided many fugitive slaves who were able to get to Philadelphia to escape farther north, often to Canada. His book is a treasure trove of primary sources that are easily understood by students who cannot help but comprehend the strength of these freedom seekers’ drive for freedom. In this lesson, students read one of the passages in Still’s work and answer a series of questions about it. The following day, students create a nametag and engage in a “meet and greet” in order to find out about more of the people aided by William Still.

**Materials Needed**
- Attached excerpts from Still’s book. These are from the 2007 abridged version. Teachers can select their own excerpts from the original version of Still’s work which is available on the web.
- Attached document analysis sheet
- Index cards with an unlined side
- “Meet and Greet” Invitation
- “Meet and Greet” matrix or Underground Railroad Reunion matrix
- “Thank You Note to William Still” extension activity sheet

**Procedure**
1. Teacher queries class about what they know about the Underground Railroad.
2. Students write answers on sticky notes and post them on the board.
3. Teacher reads some of the answers out, noting what is true and what is myth (or simply incorrect). Teacher should reinforce the fact that freedom seekers largely struck out on their own and did not often receive much help until they got to the North and into the care of “conductors” like William Still. A good teacher resource is http://stillfamily.library.temple.edu/historical-perspective/william-still-significance
4. Place students in groups of three.
5. Students read Still’s record of one freedom seeker.
6. Students work together to analyze the record using the analysis worksheet. (As an alternative, students can work independently on this as a homework assignment.)
7. Each student creates a nametag for using the back of an index card. The card instructions should state the following:

   Please create a nametag for your Freedom Seeker that you will wear. Include the following:
   • Name (prominently and legibly written)
   • Former home
   • Sketch of the Freedom Seeker (optional)
   • Create or bring in a small prop to help in the telling of the story of escape (optional)

8. Students should affix the nametag to their shirt with tape to indicate that they are ready for the next part of the activity.
9. Pass out invitation to the students and read aloud.
10. Pass out matrix (you can choose which format you prefer) to the students. Explain that they will engage in a “meet and greet” in which they will meet other freedom seekers who received help from William Still. Each of the boxes should be filled out. Do not record information about the freedom seeker that you are portraying!
11. Debrief: Students in a whole class discussion will identify some of the patterns that became evident during the meet and greet. Students should also note things that surprised them and things they learned that they did not previously know.
UNDERGROUND RAIL ROAD,

A RECORD

OF

FACTS, AUTHENTIC NARRATIVES, LETTERS, &C.

NARRATING the Harshships, Hairbreadth Escapes, and Death Struggles of the Slaves in their efforts for Freedom.

BY THEMSELVES AND OTHERS, OR WITNESSED BY THE AUTHOR:

1872.

Sold only by Subscribers.

PORTER & COATES,

PHILADELPHIA.

[Image: Portrait of William Still]
The President, August 25, 1865.

My dear Mr. President,

I am induced by the public spirit and deep interest in the cause of freedom and justice to you to express my decided opinion that all the laws of your country are unjust and inhuman, and that the liberty and happiness of your people can only be secured by a complete and permanent abolition of slavery. I cannot conceive how any government can exist which does not uphold and promote the welfare and happiness of all its citizens. I am convinced that the object of the government is to promote the general welfare and happiness of the people. In this conviction I have acted throughout my life and shall continue to act.

I therefore request that you will take the necessary steps to secure the immediate and complete abolition of slavery in your country. I am confident that this will be accomplished, and that the government will then be restored to its proper and happy state.

Yours truly,

C. G. F.,

Chairman of the Committee on Freedmen.

C. G. F.
MR. J. ABBOTT.

Yours respectfully,

from the undersigned, etc., etc.

and all the friends desired to be remembered to you and your family. I shall be pleased to hear

pennant at Alston Banner, the friends desired to be

sently. I would have written before but circumstances would not

freed with more substantial reasons, so they may run over

may continue to you and I hope the weather of the era may be

the curtains would close the eyes of reason. rapidly I hope it

south now if the undersigned Giulio could have the course

cold for me. I fear that the weather here is very bad down

cold. for me. I fear that the weather here is very bad down

I hear of another and that you are in your family. I hear

he will bring that man whose name I can not pronounce. remember my

Williamson was put in prison but I know it is a very bad part of

were I was very sorry to hear that it

very glad to hear from you in the whole case. I was very glad to

recorded the papers I was highly delighted to receive them. I was

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD.
me and him at the window
who did not come in the hour with him but came in the cars and
up in the manner by the head where he found him at the window
which he would have hoisted the box man up at the window.
I saw him.

[Image 0x0 to 613x792]

WILLIAM BOX PEEL JONES

WILLIAM PEEL, J.R.
THE UNDERGROUND RAILWAY
N. L

I
t the present pm remind your brother
not by you when the greatcountryside shall he place No more
press over and you! my brother will say the thing; this will
large the wisdom to hear your plan of my plan will

Dear John

The whole family's heart is glad to hear of your safe return and to
know that you are well. I trust that you will find this letter

ST. LOUIS, May 1, 1859

With love,

Your truly,

Mrs. Smith

Dear Mr. Jones,

I rejoice to hear from you. I hope you are well. I hear that you
have started for the North and I trust that you will reach your
journey safely. I hope to hear from you again soon.

The good friend received the same day the box

with the following letter:—

Under the ground railroad and the

The Underground Railroad.

Underground Hill Road and Liberty were in close

committee and next on the way waiting. The Bill

was defeated. Jones was well cared for by the

The bill in the House passed last evening, yours before victory.
The Governor and his wife were both equally seven winters.

The Governor's residence was at New London, and his wife was a Quaker. Their house was a small, comfortable cottage on a hill overlooking the river. The Governor was a man of education and refinement, and his wife was a woman of strong character and kindly nature.

The Governor was a remarkable man, and his wife was equally remarkable. He was a man of culture and refinement, and his wife was a woman of strong character and kindly nature. The Governor was a man of education and refinement, and his wife was a woman of strong character and kindly nature.

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The Under Ground Railroad

Charles Thompson

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

The Underground Railroad was an organized network of people who helped slaves escape from the southern states to the northern states and Canada. It was a series of safe houses and secret routes where enslaved people could rest and receive aid on their journey to freedom.

Charles Thompson, a prominent figure in the Underground Railroad, was a free African American who used his social status to assist former slaves in their escape. He provided resources and safe havens for those on the run.

The Underground Railroad was a complex operation that involved many brave individuals who risked their lives to help others achieve freedom. It was a vital component of the abolitionist movement, contributing significantly to the eventual end of slavery in the United States.
The liberty of freedom obviously bound with no ordinary resort

The liberty of freedom obviously bound with no ordinary resort

APRIL 1793.

Arrival from Maryland, 1899.

ARRIVAL FROM MARYLAND, 1899.
MOTHER ESCAPING WITH SEVEN CHILDREN

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

YOUR'S,

H.M. WILSON,

but have not yet reunited with the family. Pardn'n and I only

James A. Floy in Denver, I. think, not here from Calcutta,

who gave them all a good supply of clothing before they left us.

we think it best for some of 'em to pass on to other places. My

dear could be at St. Calcutta's. We have so many cousins in

Ymll, thinking that they will be better cared for in Toronto than

Letters of introduction to Thomas E. Coleman, Esq., and Mrs. D.

Trumbo, I got them someway and got them there at last. I sent Mrs.

Trumbel a note and sent them a note, and gave them

train tickets. I wrote them and said, 'I am sending you these,

Santing evening. Tell Thomas E. Coleman I provided for them

irrespective of whether they will be better off in Toronto than

Dean Bros. Stills—I am happy to inform you that Mrs.

NIGERIA, Nov. 30th, 1868.

WILSON's follows:

Walter Herrett, in Canada was announced by Rev. H.

into the right hands. It was a special pleasure to me such a

Hope were soon fully restored, and the well-healed wounds are

but God had provided better things for their bereft friends and

became especially anxious to learn that they were delivered.

On the road last night, mother with her bewildered children

very kind and considerate. He is a widower and is fond

a smooth ride, but feared that they would not come to their

where happened. My master is very kind, he is a kind, loving man

keep me in the dark about where you are, for fear you might

heard to hear of this man in time. My master was willing to

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
No. 153 Broadway, Baltimore

Lewis Kornel

Karen Kornel

The green of the street and the light of the sky created an effect of color and clarity. The door was open, and the view was quite pleasant. The woman, clad in black, stood in the doorway, her hands clasped in front of her. Her presence was felt, but not seen. The atmosphere was charged with anticipation, as if something were about to happen. The woman's eyes gleamed with a wicked look, and her lips curled into a cruel smile. She stepped forward, and the air was thick with tension. The woman's voice was low, but filled with menace. She spoke in a language that was foreign to the speaker, but it was clear that she was not to be trifled with. The speaker was afraid, but also curious. What would happen next? Would the woman strike, or would she simply let the speaker pass? The tension was palpable, and the speaker was frozen in place, unable to move. But then, suddenly, the woman stepped back, and the atmosphere changed. The tension was replaced with a sense of relief, as if something had been resolved. The woman simply turned and walked away, leaving the speaker alone in the street. The speaker was left to wonder what had just happened, and what lay ahead.
The Undergrown Railroad

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three years of age. For the first three years of age, a book of thumb was a treasure for the child. It was a book of thumb because it contained pictures of the world and the people who lived in it. The pictures were not always accurate, but they were the best that could be found in the 1880s. The pictures of the world and the people who lived in it were often crude and simplistic, but they were the best that could be found in the 1880s.

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EX-PRESIDENT TILERS HOUSEHOLD

LOSES AN ARTICLE

EX-PRESIDENT TILERS HOUSEHOLD

The Underground Railroad

1838
tell me why he had sold me. The trader and consibi able was again
my arms around my master's neck. I guessed and prayed him to
the neighbors. I said, 'I don't know, he said,' in a dry way. With
'No,' I answered. 'Why couldn't you sold me to some of
master. Have you sold me?' 'Yes,' was his answer. 'To the trader,
bout run for my master. Coming up to him, I cried out. 'Lord,
as he could call.' C-d-a, etc., but I never stopped running.
head two batches of the runners after me, and cross out. Look
able and the trader both on the chance that soon the trader
nearly, you look off my vest and double my pace. I can-
and run harder, look off my vest and run, look off my pocket
were so near. I hear, I look off my feet, and run, look off my pocket
right up to me amidst on my back, and grabbed me, ne, they
'WILLIAM NOLAND (a consibi able,) and the trader was making

words as follows:

look place will be given as nearly as possible. In which case
near and nearer he began to grow nervous. When nearer
say a trader with a consibi able approaching him. As they drew
those of a chance of others. One day to his utter surprise, he
trader of a chance of others. One day to his utter surprise, he
bought the last, or the best of them. He was convinced that
races, so far as the treatment of him was concerned. This, con-
image things with him. Nor was any whist heard with this mas-
years of age, of dark color, but bright intellectual,

The subject of this sketch was a young man about twenty-

AFIRED S. HARTON

ARRIVAL FROM VIRGINIA, 1859.
The narrow escape

I didn't know where to travel to a free state and go to Canada and make the trip anymore but

my mind in the

preparatory made up

my decision, but I

went to Canada or

went to England in order to return to Scotland before I

were I was only to

myself. I had gone into the

and you made up

had not made up my

then two horses. I

enough large enough. It was the domestic trouble. A heavy travail, and cause

then, resulting in their separation, a heavy travail, and cause

then a very serious disagreement had taken place between

Point Black Church, and both had borne good characters.

So what master and mistress were said to be members of the

He let his father and mother both slaves. Living near

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ARRIVAL FROM VIRGINIA. 1868.
Dear Brother—It is with pleasure I write your plan in hand.

Citation House, Richmond, Va., August 31.

Your letter is, indeed, very welcome. My heart is sad at the prospect of your returning home. I have heard that you are very happy but I am sure that it is not without your father and mother's approval. Your letters have been a source of great comfort to me. I hope that you will continue to write to me often. Your letter has made me feel much better and has filled me with hope.

The following letters are addressed to members of the family:

There is a member of the Second Baptist Church, and sister.

I am moved to tears because I believe that I have a right

Arrival from Richmond. 1859

Stephen Brown
Dear Betty,

I trust this letter finds you in the best of health and spirits. I am writing to convey my recent experiences and thoughts.

Yesterday, while walking in the park, I came across a beautiful flower that reminded me of you. It's a simple yet profound reminder of our connection. I hope we can meet soon to share stories and laughter. Time flies by so quickly, and I cherish every moment spent with you.

I am excited about the upcoming trip to the mountains. It's a perfect opportunity to recharge and enjoy nature. I hope you are planning something similar. Let's arrange a date to discuss our plans over a cup of coffee.

Thinking of you always brings a smile to my face. You are a special person in my life, and I look forward to spending more time with you.

Take care and keep in touch.

Yours sincerely,
[Signature]
made, and intelligible. 1852. I knew he despised a man of民主的 blood, well.

The impression of Samuel Sparrows, such passions as Samual Sparrows, were more so than he looked. Like all a powerful effect on his mind. It was not possible for him to feel convinced as to the Committee. 

The underground railroad. His hands were freed of the shackles of slavery, and he felt a new freedom. The possessed of the Committee. Convincing him of the fact of the underground railroad. His hands were freed of the shackles of slavery, and he felt a new freedom. The possessed of the Committee. Convincing him of the fact of the underground railroad. His hands were freed of the shackles of slavery, and he felt a new freedom. The possessed of the Committee. Convincing him of the fact of the underground railroad. His hands were freed of the shackles of slavery, and he felt a new freedom. The possessed of the Committee. Convincing him of the fact of the underground railroad. His hands were freed of the shackles of slavery, and he felt a new freedom. The possessed of the Committee. Convincing him of the fact of the underground railroad. His hands were freed of the shackles of slavery, and he felt a new freedom. The possessed of the Committee. Convincing him of the fact of the underground railroad. His hands were freed of the shackles of slavery, and he felt a new freedom. The possessed of the Committee. Convincing him of the fact of the underground railroad. His hands were freed of the shackles of slavery, and he felt a new freedom. The possessed of the Committee. Convincing him of the fact of the underground railroad. His hands were freed of the shackles of slavery, and he felt a new freedom. The possessed of the Committee. Convincing him of the fact of the underground railroad.
Document Analysis

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD: AUTHENTIC NARRATIVES AND FIRST-HAND ACCOUNTS
By William Still

1. Name of freedom seeker

2. Complete physical description

3. Name and position of previous master

4. Condition of servitude/Reason for escape, as told to William Still

5. Method/Description of escape

6. Summary of any correspondence received from the freed-person, if applicable.

7. Any other interesting miscellany
Dear Sir or Madam:

I am pleased to invite you to attend a reunion of freed people who requested assistance of the General Vigilance Committee of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery during the 1850s. The reception will be held ______________, 1866 at our headquarters in Philadelphia. Please be sure to wear a nametag and be ready to recount your experiences taking your freedom and living now as freed people. I am so looking forward to this gathering.

Love and respects,

W. Still
# The Great Underground Railroad Reunion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Conditions of enslavement; impetus to flee</th>
<th>Means and outcome of escape</th>
<th>Interesting detail</th>
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NAME_______________________________

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While enjoying the festivities, please circulate and meet other successful Freedom Seekers. Ask them their stories and tell them yours. Enjoy!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Former home/master</th>
<th>Reason for seeking freedom</th>
<th>Method of escape</th>
<th>Details of life as a free person</th>
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Show Some Appreciation!

Yesterday, you attended a party I hosted at Belmont Mansion. Today, it’s time for you gentlemen and gentlewomen to write me, William Still, a gracious thank you note. Using the paper provided, write me a note in which you tell me how much you enjoyed my hospitality and, more importantly, let me know:

♦ Who was the most interesting person you met? Why did you find their story so compelling?
♦ With whom did you find you had the most in common in terms of either background, means of escape, and/or life as a free person?
♦ What are some generalizations you can make about the other party guests? Describe at least two common themes, trends, or characteristics you noticed as you met your fellow beneficiaries of the Underground Railroad.