

## **An Overview of the Underground Railroad in Illinois: Gallery Walk Activity**

- Grade Level: 6-12
- Estimated Time: 1-2 class periods
- Topic: Underground Railroad
- Subtopic: Overview, Beginning Lesson

This lesson addresses the following disciplinary concepts and topics from the [Illinois Learning Standards for English and Language Arts](#) and [Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science](#):

- English/Language Arts
  - Reading Informational Text
  - Vocabulary Interpretation and Use
  - Written Expression
- Social Science
  - Inquiry Skills
    - Recognize Perspectives and Articulate Identities
    - Evaluating Sources and Planning Inquiries
    - Communication Conclusions and Taking Informed Action
  - Disciplinary Concepts
    - Civics
      - Participation and Deliberation: Applying Civic Virtues and Democratic Principles
    - Geography
      - Human-Environment Interaction: Place, Regions, and Culture
    - History
      - Change, Continuity, and Context
      - Perspectives
      - Historical Sources and Evidence
      - Causation and Argumentation

### Essential Questions

- What was the Underground Railroad?
- How is Illinois a part of the Underground Railroad story?

### Objectives

- Identify essential vocabulary such as slavery, enslaved, Underground Railroad, conductor, passenger, depot, etc.
- Examine and analyze primary and secondary sources related to the Underground Railroad in Illinois.
- Examine myths associated with the Underground Railroad.

Lesson #1 – An Overview of the Underground Railroad in Illinois: Gallery Walk Activity

- Evaluate resources and draw conclusions concerning the Underground Railroad experience in Illinois.

### Introduction

- Display the following prompt on the board as students walk in and/or read it at the beginning of the class period.
  - *When you see the term "Underground Railroad," what thoughts or images come to mind?*
  - *In your own words, how would you describe what the term "Underground Railroad" means?*
- Allow students 5-10 minutes to respond to the prompt.
- After students have responded, ask a few students to share their experiences with the class.
  - *Students may break down the term by looking at each part individually.*
    - *Underground – secret, hidden, not talked about.*
    - *Railroad – pathway, route, for traveling.*
  - *Students may also use terms associated with the railroad to describe the term, such as depot, conductor, and passenger.*
- Once a few students have shared their responses, transition into the next portion of the lesson and say that today's lesson will allow students the opportunity to learn more about the Underground Railroad in Illinois.
- Review Essential Questions and Objectives together as a class.

### Introductory Video

- To help illustrate the Underground Railroad and provide an overview, watch the linked video with students.
  - [The Underground Railroad: Crash Course Black American History #15](#)
- Afterwards, ask students to describe one of the myths described in the video.
- After students have shared, let students know that an additional myth of the Underground Railroad is that Illinois was a safe haven for Underground Railroad passengers.

### Gallery Walk Activity

- To further illustrate the Underground Railroad in Illinois and learn more about Illinois' involvement, inform students they will be taking part in a Gallery Walk activity
- Before class, arrange the attached source stations around the classroom. Space them out evenly and paste them onto the classroom wall for the lesson.
  - For students with access to technology, sources may also be shared digitally. However, getting students up and moving around during the Gallery Walk is strongly encouraged.
- Distribute and review the instructions on the attached worksheet, **An Overview of the Underground Railroad in Illinois: Gallery Walk Activity**.
- Separate students into groups and assign them a source station to begin the Gallery Walk.

Lesson #1 – An Overview of the Underground Railroad in Illinois: Gallery Walk Activity

- Allow students 5-7 minutes at each station to answer the corresponding questions related to each source.
- Allow students to rotate until all students have seen all stations.
- Ask students to return to their seats. Using the questions on the worksheet, discuss each resource with students. You may display each resource in front of the class while reviewing them.

Conclusion

- As a summary discussion, review the final two discussion questions with students:
  - *Despite being labeled a free state and having many routes running through the state, did Illinois live up to the idea of a "free" state? Why or why not? Use evidence from today's activity to support your answer.*
  - *In your own words and citing material reviewed today, write a four-to-five-sentence paragraph describing the Underground Railroad experience in Illinois. Who was involved? What took place? Where did people come from? Where did they go? How was Illinois involved? What makes it a significant piece of US history? Etc.*

Extensions Beyond the Lesson

- Have students explore Underground Railroad maps to identify routes that may run through or near their communities. Using local museums, libraries, and archives in the area, students can research their local Underground Railroad history and present their findings.
- Explore resources available through the [National Park Service's Network to Freedom](#), including the [Interactive Map](#) showing sites and stories that are part of the network. Identify Illinois towns where the Underground Railroad passed through and pathways through other states.
- Subscribe to [Looking for Lincoln podcasts](#) to learn many stories of freedom seekers, black leaders, and white allies all present on the Underground Railroad in Illinois.
- Check out the traveling exhibit, *Journey to Freedom: Illinois' Underground Railroad*, in a community near you! Visit the [www.IllinoisUGRR.org](http://www.IllinoisUGRR.org) for more information.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### **An Overview of the Underground Railroad in Illinois: Gallery Walk Activity**

*You will participate in a gallery walk activity as if you were in a museum. Several resources relating to the Underground Railroad experience in Illinois are located around the classroom.*

*Using the corresponding questions on this worksheet, use the resources at each source station to complete the questions. After a few minutes, you will rotate to the next source station until you have seen all the stations.*

*Explore and learn about the Underground Railroad in Illinois.*

#### **Source Station #1 – Underground Railroad Vocabulary**

1. After reading the dictionary definition, define slavery in your own words.
  
2. Why do some historians use “*enslaved person*” rather than “*slave*?”
  
3. Thinking of trains and the railroad, how might you define the following terms as they relate to the Underground Railroad?
  - a. What was a depot? A station?
  
  - b. What did it mean to be a conductor?
  
  - c. Who were the passengers?

#### **Source Station #2 – Artwork**

4. Who is in the artwork? How would you describe them and the scene?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Looking at the colors and imagery, what emotions is the artist trying to convey in your opinion?

### **Source Station #3 – Maps**

6. Was Illinois categorized as a “free” or “slave” state?
7. What southern states were enslaved people escaping from when they came to and through Illinois?
8. If they left Illinois, where did enslaved people head next?

### **Source Station #4 – Illinois Black Codes**

9. Describe two of the codes in your own words.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Which ones in particular stand out to you? Why?

### **Source Station #5 – Newspaper Advertisement**

11. This newspaper advertisement is talking about the Underground Railroad. How can you tell? Cite specific examples.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. Is this advertisement for or against the idea of the Underground Railroad? How can you tell? Cite specific examples.



## **An Overview of the Underground Railroad in Illinois: Gallery Walk Activity-ANSWERS**

*You will participate in a gallery walk activity as if you were in a museum. Several resources relating to the Underground Railroad experience in Illinois are located around the classroom.*

*Using the corresponding questions on this worksheet, use the resources at each source station to complete the questions. After a few minutes, you will rotate to the next source station until you have seen all the stations.*

*Explore and learn about the Underground Railroad in Illinois.*

### **Source Station #1 – Underground Railroad Vocabulary**

1. After reading the dictionary definition, define slavery in your own words.  
The practice or institution of holding people as chattel involuntarily and under threat of violence.
2. Why do some historians use "enslaved person" rather than "slave?"  
For some historians, using "enslaved person" and "enslave" appears to be an act of justice that better conveys the humanity and perspective of the unfree than "slave" and "master."
3. Thinking of trains and the railroad, how might you define the following terms as they relate to the Underground Railroad?
  - a. What was a depot? A station?  
Places for freedom seekers to hide
  - b. What did it mean to be a conductor?  
A person helping freedom seekers
  - c. Who were the passengers?  
Freedom seekers escaping slavery.

### **Source Station #2 – Artwork**

4. Who is in the artwork? How would you describe them and the scene?  
Freedom seekers trying to escape in the night. Adults, children. Night time. Looking at the slanted angle of some figures, they seem to be running or moving quickly.
5. Looking at the colors and imagery, what emotions is the artist trying to convey in your opinion?  
Darkness, sneaking, quiet, alone.

### **Source Station #3 – Maps**

6. Was Illinois categorized as a “free” or “slave” state? Free
7. What southern states were enslaved people escaping from when they came to and through Illinois?  
Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana
8. If they left Illinois, where did enslaved people head next?  
Farther north. Wisconsin, Minnesota territory, Michigan, New York, Canada.

### **Source Station #4 – Illinois Black Codes**

9. Describe two of the codes in your own words.  
Answers will vary
10. Which ones in particular stand out to you? Why?  
Answers will vary

### **Source Station #5 – Newspaper Advertisement**

11. This newspaper advertisement is talking about the Underground Railroad. How can you tell?  
Cite specific examples.  
  
Answers will vary. Image of the train. "...who may wish to improve their health or circumstances, by a northern tour." "Seats free, irrespective of color." "Necessary clothing furnished gratuitously to such as having fallen among thieves."
12. Is this advertisement for or against the idea of the Underground Railroad? How can you tell?  
Cite specific examples.  
  
Answers will vary



Summary Discussion Questions

13. Despite being labeled a free state, many freedom seekers eventually called it their home, and having many routes running through, did Illinois live up to the idea of a fully "free" state in the Underground Railroad era? Why or why not? Use evidence from today's activity to support your answer.

Answers will vary. Mentions of the Fugitive Slave Act and Black Codes should be included.

14. In your own words and citing material reviewed today, write a four-to-five-sentence paragraph describing the Underground Railroad experience in Illinois. Who was involved? What took place? Where did people come from? Where did they go? How was Illinois involved? What makes it a significant piece of United States history? Etc.

Answers will vary.

**Source Station #1 – Underground Railroad Vocabulary**

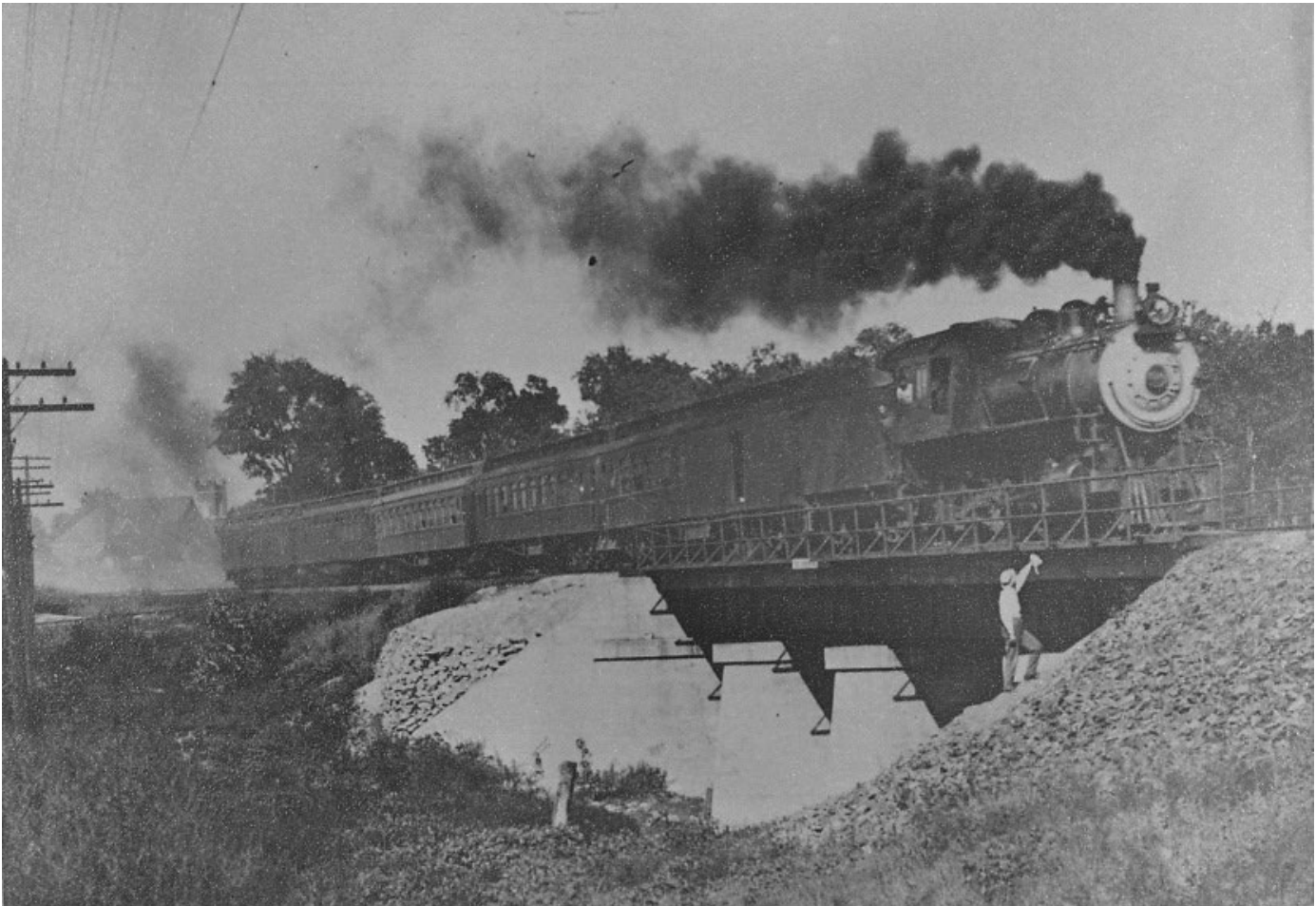
Slavery - the practice or institution of holding people as chattel involuntarily and under threat of violence. For some historians, using “*enslaved person*” and “*enslave*” appears to be an act of justice that better conveys the humanity and perspective of the unfree than “*slave*” and “*master.*”

Depot?

Station?

Passenger?

Conductor?



Sources for slavery definition:

Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. “slavery.” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/slavery>.

James Robert Burns. “‘Slaves’ and ‘Slave Owners’ or ‘Enslaved People’ and ‘Enslavers’?” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 2023, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0080440123000282>.

Image Credit: Champaign County Historical Society Photographs Collection, Image 176b, Champaign County Historical Archives, Urbana, Illinois. <https://flic.kr/p/FRfgFK>

Journey to Freedom Illinois’ Underground Railroad

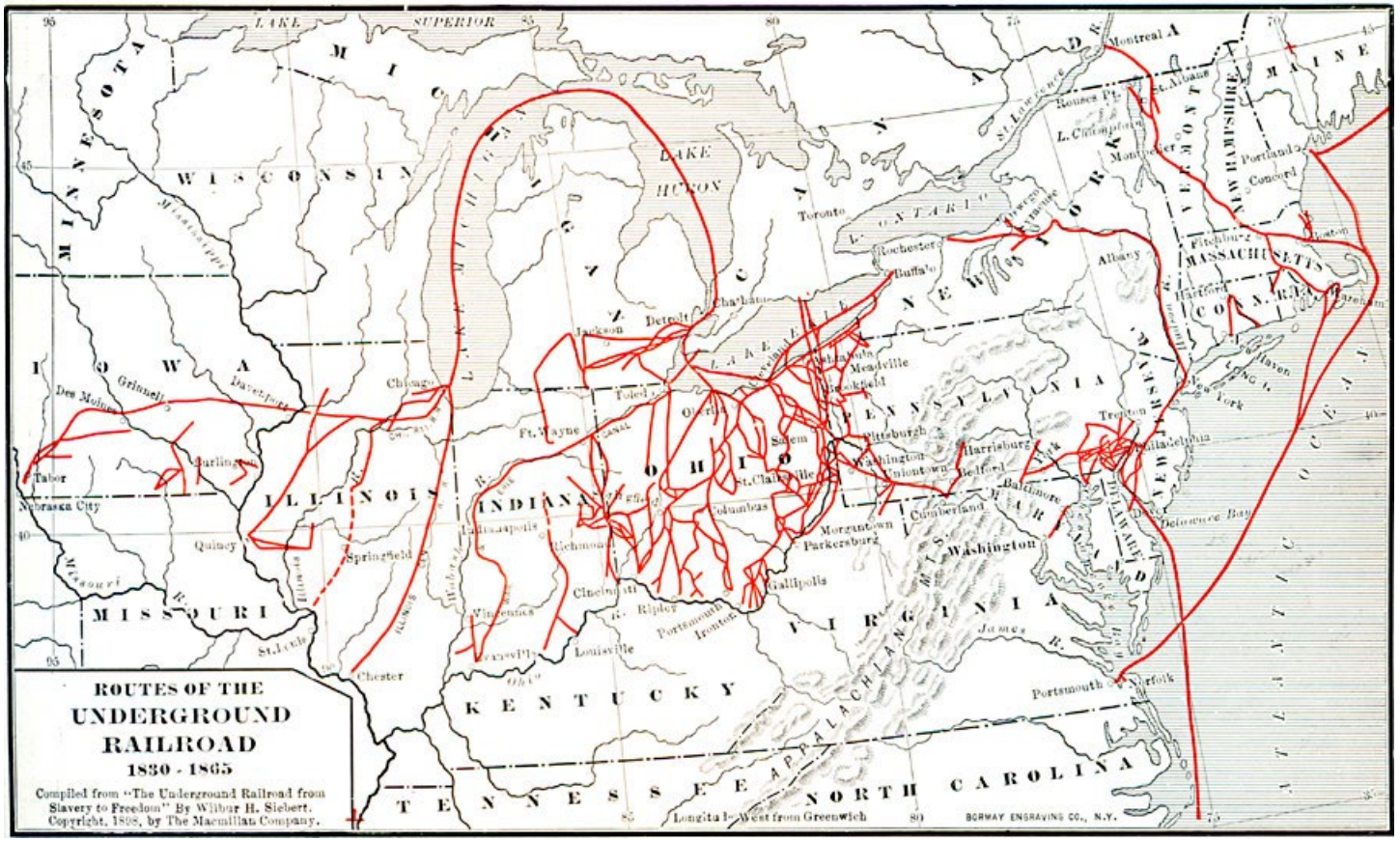
[www.IllinoisUGRR.org](http://www.IllinoisUGRR.org) [www.lookingforlincoln.org](http://www.lookingforlincoln.org)

**Source Station #2 – Artwork**



*Credit: Photo from a mural created by an Underground Railroad Arts project at Oberlin High School. Used by permission of the City Council, Oberlin, Ohio. Photo courtesy of Tanya Rosen-Jones.*  
<https://cityofoberlin.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/escape.jpg>

**Source Station #3 – Map #1**



Credit: Map of Routes of the Underground Railroad, 1830-1865, Florida Center for Instructional Technology. <https://etc.usf.edu/maps/pages/2200/2240/2240z.htm>

**Source Station #3 – Map #2**



Credit: Dr. Phyllis Wade, "Discovery Theater: Signal Songs of the Underground Railroad," 2017.  
<https://discoverytheater.org/forms/guides/2017/feb/Signal%20Songs%20of%20the%20Underground%20Railroad%20Learning%20Guide.pdf>

## **Source Station #4 – Illinois Black Codes**

### SUMMARY OF THE ILLINOIS BLACK CODES, 1818–65

The State of Illinois observed the Illinois Black Codes from 1818 until the passage of Amendment XII in 1867. After 1853, Illinois prohibited all African Americans from entering the state. This law was passed in response to the Fugitive Slave Law. Despite the severe restrictions placed on African Americans living in Illinois at the time, the state became a major center of antislavery activity.

A summary of the Illinois Black Codes:

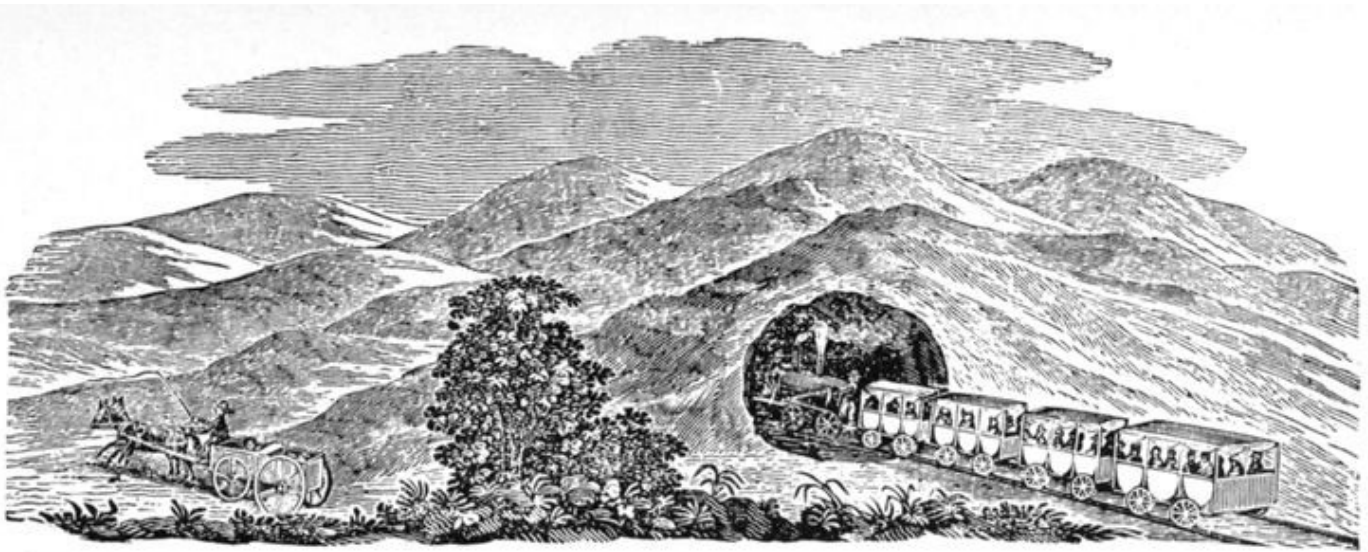
- The right to vote was denied to all African Americans.
- No African American was permitted to reside in Illinois without a Certificate of Freedom.
- Any African American without the necessary certificate was deemed a runaway slave and was subject to be sent back into slavery or sold to the highest bidder.
- All African Americans entering the state were required to post a \$1,000 bond.
- If any slave or indentured servant was found more than ten miles from the home of their master without a pass, they were subject to be taken before a justice of the peace and "punished with stripes [lashes], not exceeding thirty-five, at his discretion."
- All contracts created between a master and his indentured servants during the servant's time of service were void.
- African Americans could be jailed and beaten if they gathered in groups of three or more.
- African Americans and Native Americans were not permitted to testify in court against a white person.
- African Americans were not permitted to serve in the militia.
- Any person that harbored an African American without a bond or a Certificate of Freedom was subject to a fine of \$500.
- Slaveholders could not bring slaves into Illinois in order to free them.
- African Americans from other states could not remain in Illinois for more than ten days. If they did, they could be arrested, jailed, fined, or removed from the state.
- The Illinois Constitution permitted limited slavery at the salt mines in Massac County and allowed slavery introduced by the French to continue; however, the children of these slaves were freed when they reached adulthood

*Credit: David Harris, "Living Under the Illinois Black Codes," History Lab, Chicago Historical Society, 2022. <https://www.chicagohistory.org/app/uploads/2022/03/chm-historylab-jones-2.pdf>*

*Journey to Freedom Illinois' Underground Railroad*

[www.IllinoisUGRR.org](http://www.IllinoisUGRR.org) [www.lookingforlincoln.org](http://www.lookingforlincoln.org)

**Source Station #5 – Newspaper Advertisement**



**LIBERTY LINE.**

**NEW ARRANGEMENT---NIGHT AND DAY.**

The improved and splendid Locomotives, Clarkson and Lundy, with their trains fitted up in the best style of accommodation for passengers, will run their regular trips during the present season, between the borders of the Patriarchal Dominion and Libertyville, Upper Canada. Gentlemen and Ladies, who may wish to improve their health or circumstances, by a northern tour; are respectfully invited to give us their patronage.

**SEATS FREE, irrespective of color.**

Necessary Clothing furnished gratuitously to such as have "fallen among thieves."

"Hide the outcasts—let the oppressed go free."—Bible.  
☞ For seats apply at any of the trap doors, or to the conductor of the train.

**J. CROSS, Proprietor.**

N. B. For the special benefit of Pro-Slavery Police Officers, an extra heavy wagon for Texas, will be furnished, whenever it may be necessary, in which they will be forwarded as dead freight, to the "Valley of Rascals," always at the risk of the owners.

☞ Extra Overcoats provided for such of them as are afflicted with protracted *chilly-phobia*.

*FAC-SIMILE OF UNDERGROUND RAILWAY ADVERTISEMENT*

*(From "The Western Citizen," July 13, 1844)*

Credit: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library. "Liberty line. New arrangement --- night and day." New York Public Library Digital Collections. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dd-f68e-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>