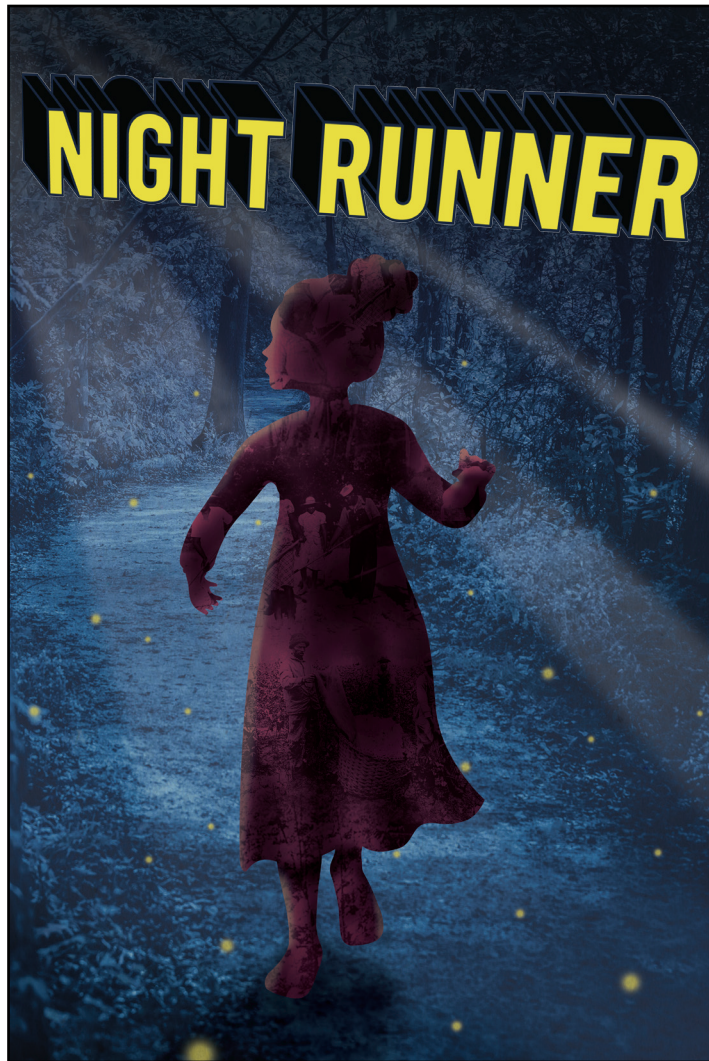


TEACHER GUIDE

THE
**THEATRE
SCHOOL**
AT DePaul University



recommended for ages 9 and up

January 12 - February 18, 2017

by Ike Holter
directed by Lisa Portes

*developed through The Theatre School's
Cunningham Commission for Youth Theatre*

teacher guide prepared by Madison Delk, Mary Kirwan,
Trisha Mahoney, and Rachel Perzynski

**Box Office &
Group Sales:
(312) 922-1999**

at DePaul's Merle Reskin Theatre
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		Chicago Playworks Program Goals:	
		• To provide a live theatre experience for students and teachers in the Chicago metropolitan area.	
Chicago Playworks Artistic Director: Lisa Portes		• To provide theatre for Chicago’s children that reflects their experiences in a contemporary, urban, multi-racial and multi-cultural environment.	
Box Office: (312) 922-1999		• To serve principals, teachers, and students in their pursuit of Illinois State Learning Goals.	
Group Sales Representative: Laura Rice (312) 922-1999		• To integrate performances and teacher guide information/activities into the classroom curriculum.	
Please Note: Some links may have changed since this guide was published.		• To offer our performances within a workable, convenient time frame.	
		• To contact principals and teachers with valuable and solid information that will help them to make choices that fit their students’ needs.	

Welcome, Teachers

Welcome to DePaul University's Merle Reskin Theatre and the world premiere production of *Night Runner*, written by Ike Holter and directed by Lisa Portes. This guide is designed to help unpack what you and your students are about to experience onstage. Inside, you will find the following curriculum connections:



Education Station:

Curriculum connections linking the world of the play to the world of the classroom, featuring science, math, geography, and music academic curriculum and Illinois Learning Standards.



Trail Derail:

Fun activities to enhance the curriculum connections and provide hands-on learning experiences.



Guiding Light:

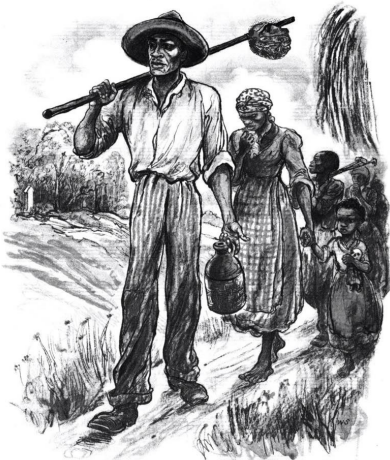
Highlights of the major themes of the play.



Agent Engagement:

Discussion questions to further conversation about the play and its themes.

The Theatre School at DePaul University believes that a trip to the theatre should last more than a day; it should be a memorable learning experience for life.



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Trisha Mahoney, BFA2, Dramaturgy/Criticism
Rachel Perzynski, BFA2, Dramaturgy/Criticism

**Please note: This production contains some explicit and objectable language that may trigger students. Keep an open dialogue with your students about this complexity.*

Welcome, Students

Passengers!

Listen up! Night Runner here. Before we get started, there are a few rules you need to know in order to get North.

Rule #1: It is important to stay quiet. If you talk you could miss out on some important information that might get you to safety, so no talking during the performance. Also, the actors on stage can hear all the words you say.

Rule #2: Don't disturb your neighbors. Keep your hands to yourself, so you don't bother your fellow passengers. They, too, want to get North so let them figure it out themselves.

Rule #3: No pictures or videos or texting. It may be tempting, but it's prohibited during the journey.

Rule #4: No food, no drinks, and no gum. They can have a powerful smell and can be messy. We don't want anyone to pick up our scent or follow crumbs we trail behind us. So keep them wrapped up and put away.

Now, Shhhhh! It's time for our passage to begin.

~Night Runner

Synopsis

In 1851, **Cora** and her brother, **Marcus**, are enslaved on the Davenport plantation. At night, Cora hears stories from Marcus about the **Night Runner**, a mysterious hero who helps the enslaved escape to freedom in the North. One day while the brother and sister are at work, **Mr. Lexington**, another plantation owner, comes and demands to take Marcus as payment for a debt. Heartbroken and alone because of her brother's departure, Cora risks her life to find freedom. On her dangerous journey to the North, she meets the incredible figure from her brother's stories, the Night Runner. Facing amazing obstacles, Cora must consider what freedom is worth.



Captured Fugitive Slaves
from the abolitionist book
The Suppressed Book About Slavery! (1857)

Genre

Night Runner takes place in the southern part of the United States in 1851, when slavery was still a common practice. Though the place and time are true to life, the characters that we see on the stage are **fictional**, which means they are created from the writers' imagination. While Cora, Marcus, Luke, and Mr. Lexington share a lot of similarities with true historical figures, they are characters only in our play.

Since the setting of the play is historical but the characters are created, this play is **historical fiction**. For example, the book *Johnny Tremain* is historical fiction. While characters in the book, such as Paul Revere, may be real people, other elements were written solely for the purpose of the book. Historical fiction allows us to learn about history in a fun and interesting way.



Illinois Learning Standards: Common Core English. Determine central ideas or themes of a text; summarize key supporting ideas; read complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.



Fugitive Slaves
history.com

Raise Your Hand

“Raise Your Hand If” is a game that will get you thinking about the themes in *Night Runner* and what they mean to you. It’s easy to play! All you have to do is listen to the statements that begin with “Raise Your Hand If,” and raise your hand if the statement applies to you. Be ready to share why you raised your hand.

Raise Your Hand If...

- You have ever had to be brave.
- You have ever felt alone.
- You have been treated unfairly.
- You have mistreated someone else.
- You had to make a sacrifice for someone you cared about.
- You were separated from a family member for a long time.
- You have a hero in your life.
- You are part of a community.

Education



Putting the “N” Word in Perspective

Words have the power to harm or heal people. The “N” word carries the weight of a long, violent history against Blacks around the world. In *Night Runner*, Mr. Lexington calls Marcus the “N” word to try to belittle him and make him feel like property.

Originally, Spanish and Portuguese slave traders called the dark skin of the Africans “Negro,” which translates to “black.” As early as the 17th century, “Negro” evolved into the dehumanizing “N” word. With the rise of the U.S. anti-slavery movement in the early 1800s, the “N” word gained popularity as a racist slur among people who opposed the freedom of enslaved Africans.

Today, we hear variations of the “N” word in hip hop songs and sometimes within the Black community. While some African Americans have chosen to disempower the “N” word by creating a new narrative around it, many racists in the U.S. and around the world continue to use the “N” word as a tool of oppression and divisiveness.



Illinois Learning Standards: *Fine Arts 27.B.2.* Identify and describe how the arts communicate the similarities and differences among various people, places and times.

Interview with the Playwright

Night Runner is a **world premiere**, which means that it is a brand new play. You will see the first public performance of the play anywhere in the world. DePaul University **commissioned** the playwright Ike Holter to write *Night Runner*. This means that DePaul funded the playwriting process to create a play especially for you to see!

Ike Holter is a 30-year-old African-American playwright from Minneapolis. He attended The Theatre School at DePaul University in Chicago. After college and a few years of hard work, Ike has become one of Chicago's most promising playwrights. All this hard work paid off when he was named Theatre Chicagoan of 2014 by the *Chicago Tribune*. A couple of his plays, including *Exit Strategy*, have been performed off-Broadway in New York City.

Rachel Perzynski, the **dramaturg** of *Night Runner*, interviewed Ike. As a dramaturg, Rachel's job is to research things about the play and become an expert on the script.

Rachel Perzynski: What drew you to playwrighting?

Ike Holter: I like to write what I'm not seeing.

Rachel: What are the challenges of writing a play?

Ike: It's difficult to find the right chemistry with actors, directors, designers, and story, but when those things come together, it's great to be in the room where it happens.




Playwright Ike Holter
Ross Feighery Photography

Rachel: What inspired you to write *Night Runner*?

Ike: I was always looking for empowering, awesome stories about people taking a stand during slavery. It's important to know that there were unspoken heroes who sacrificed a lot to make sure we got to where we are today.

Rachel: Why tell this story now?

Ike: If we forget what happened, we're doomed to repeat it.

 **Illinois Learning Standards:** *Fine Arts 25.A.2b.* Drama: Understand the elements of acting, scripting, speaking, improvising, physical movement, gesture, and picturization (shape, line, and level); the principles of conflict/resolution and theme.



You Have Lots of Friends You Don't Even Know

There are a lot of people who are willing to help you, who you may not know. These are people who share your same beliefs and share your goals. They are usually willing to give you a hand when you need it. In *Night Runner*, Cora discovered that there was a group of people who believed that slavery was wrong. They were called **abolitionists**, and they were willing to give Cora and the Night Runner a place to stay and food to eat. Because of the people who were willing to help them along the path to freedom, Cora and the Night Runner were able stay safe.

You could have lots of people like this in your life that you don't even know yet! Think about your teachers; before this year they did not even know you, but now they are invested in helping you learn and grow! They are going to help you on this path to knowledge. Just like Cora, you should not be afraid to ask people for help if you need it because there are lots of people who want to see you succeed.



1. Are you a member of a group that shares similar interests and goals?
2. How have these people helped you grow and learn?
3. Do you know any communities that are working towards a common goal? How do these communities help people?



Bravery Requires Practice

Being brave is difficult, and it takes a lot of effort. But being brave only once and then forgetting about it isn't enough. For Cora, if she was only brave once, she would not have escaped. Cora's journey was hard, full of many challenges she had to face, and there were moments when she wanted to give up. But she knew that once she made it North, all of her bravery would be worth it. Bravery helps us because every time we are brave, scary things get a little easier. With lots of practice, they won't seem as scary anymore!



1. What's something scary that you have had to do multiple times?
2. How did you feel after doing something scary?
3. Who else in *Night Runner* was brave and how?
4. Who's the bravest person you know? How is this person brave?

Education



Language of the Underground Railroad

With the help of the **Underground Railroad**, Cora is able to escape slavery. Beginning in the early 19th century, this secret or “underground” movement helped an estimated 100,000 enslaved Africans out of about four million reach freedom in the North.

The Underground Railroad was a loosely organized network of free African Americans and **abolitionists**. The abolitionists who became **agents** of the Underground Railroad disobeyed state and federal laws that required citizens to assist slave owners capture runaways. The abolitionists who operated the route used the vocabulary of the railroad to disguise its illegal activity. Runaway slaves were called **passengers**. **Stationmasters** fed and sheltered runaways in their homes, also called **stations** or **depots**. **Conductors**, like the Night Runner, guided fugitives between stations or provided transportation.



Levi Coffin Safe House in Indiana
nps.gov



1895 portrait of
Harriet Tubman
nps.gov

Harriet Tubman is the most well-known of all the Underground Railroad’s **conductors**. After she escaped from slavery, Ms. Tubman made 19 trips into the South and guided over 300 slaves to freedom. She herself once said, “I never run my train off the track, and I never lost a passenger.”

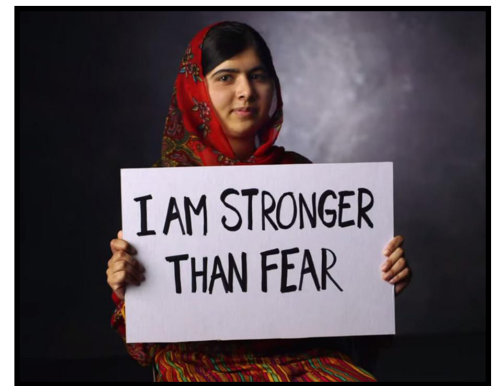


Illinois Learning Standards: *Social Science SS.H.3.5.* Explain probable causes and effects of events and developments in U.S. history.

Taking Your Future Into Your Own Hands

Cora is an important female heroine because she does not sit back and let someone save her. As an enslaved African, she had no rights and no power. She had no control over what happened in her life. As soon as she understood the gravity of this implication, she fought for her liberation. By risking her own life against all odds, Cora created her own opportunity to break free from the cycle of slavery. Of course, she was also open to the help of Night Runner and others who were a part of the Underground Railroad to help her get to the freedom of the North.

A real life example of a young girl who took her future into her own hands is **Malala Yousafzai**. Malala is a Pakistani activist who fights for education rights for girls and for women's equality. At 17-years-old, she is the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. Malala lived in an area of the world where girls were once banned from going to school. Despite being shot three times by the Taliban, Malala survived and has never stopped fighting for what she believes in.



Malala Yousafzai
abclocal.go.com

Malala and Cora are very similar. They both remind us that with hard work and determination you can accomplish anything. If you are faced with a negative situation, you can learn to take control of it and benefit from it. You alone have the power to change your own fate and make your dreams come true. If you persevere, you have the ability to accomplish anything that you set your mind to.



1. What's one of your dreams that you want to accomplish? How are you going to make that dream come true?
2. Do you know someone who has been empowered to take his or her life into his or her own hands?
3. When have you faced an obstacle in accomplishing your goal? How did you overcome these obstacles?



Interview a Hero

To Cora and many fugitive slaves, the Night Runner is a hero. Just like Wonder Woman or Spiderman, the Night Runner works to save people! Even though the Night Runner may not seem like she has superpowers, she is a superhero because of the good deeds that she does for others. Heroes are in our everyday world, and they are all around you!

Name someone in your life who is a hero. It could be anyone that you look up to, who you consider brave, and who you want to be like! Interview this person with these questions and learn how you can be a hero, too!

1. What are some things that you do to help people?

2. How do you overcome obstacles to accomplish your goals?

3. How does a person become a hero like you?

4. Why is it important to become a hero?



Illinois Learning Standards: *Common Core English.* Prepare for and participate in a range of conversations with diverse partners; produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience; conduct research projects based on focused questions.



The Secret's in the Song

Enslaved Africans used **songs** to send messages to each other while they lived on plantations and while traveling on the Underground Railroad. Many slave owners listened when the enslaved talked to each other to make sure they weren't making plans to escape. But if the enslaved Africans were singing, they thought that it was just a song!

Harriet Tubman used songs to send messages to her passengers. When Ms. Tubman went ahead to scout out the area, she would have her entire group hide until she came back. They would know if it was safe to come or not out based on the song that she sang. For example, Harriet Tubman used the song *Wade in the Water* as an instruction to do exactly that, get in the nearest water. It meant that somewhere nearby there were slave-catchers with dogs.

Below is a song, *Follow the Drinking Gourd*, which contained directions for the enslaved on how to escape. On the left of the page are the lyrics to the song and on the right are the secret meanings hidden in the song!

SONG LYRICS	SECRET MEANING
<i>Follow the drinking gourd</i>	The Big Dipper, a constellation of stars that resembles a drinking gourd
<i>When the sun goes down and the first quail calls</i>	Leave in the evening
<i>Follow the drinking gourd</i>	
<i>For the old man is a-waitin' for to carry you to freedom</i>	
<i>Follow the drinking gourd</i>	
<i>The river bank would make a mighty good road</i>	Walk in the river to confuse blood hounds
<i>Dead trees will show you the way</i>	Look for dead trees, moss grows on the north side
<i>Left foot, peg foot traveling on</i>	Follow the footprints of conductor Peg Leg Joe
<i>Following the drinking gourd</i>	
<i>The river ends between two hills</i>	Go to the end of one river, walk between hills
<i>Following the drinking gourd</i>	
<i>There's another river on the other side</i>	And follow the next river
<i>Follow the drinking gourd</i>	

The Secret's in the Song (cont.)

Now, write your own song with a secret meaning! In the left column, write the lyrics to the song and in the right column, write the secret meaning that those lyrics have. Make sure it has a **chorus**, which is the part of a song that is repeated after each verse, typically by more than one singer. In *Follow the Drinking Gourd*, the phrase: "Follow the drinking gourd" is the chorus. You will also need different **verses**, which are the lyrics of the song that are different every time. In *Follow the Drinking Gourd*, every other line is a different verse. Verses typically have similar rhythm and are sung in the same way but contain different words. Once you are done, share your song and tell a friend what it means. Now you have a new secret code!

SONG LYRICS	SECRET MEANING



Illinois Learning Standards: *Common Core English.* Apply knowledge of language to understand how it functions in different contexts; write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events.

Education



Journey to Freedom

Imagine walking the entire distance of Chicago Transit Authority's Red Line train route, from 95th/Dan Ryan to Howard. The 21.3-mile walk would take approximately 7 hours for an average, healthy adult. The passengers of the Underground Railroad would travel this distance every night in order to reach the next station before the morning light.

The journey North was difficult for many more reasons than the length of travel. The **Fugitive Slave Law of 1850** enforced the capture and return of runaway slaves. The law motivated the slave catchers to turn in escaped slaves by offering them \$10 (\$284 in today's dollars) per person. Because bounty hunters wanted as much money as possible, they would capture freed slaves and sell them back into slavery.

To make a safer, stealthier journey, passengers would travel at night. The trail to freedom was often an indirect route, so it would be harder to track – especially when men used bloodhounds to track their scent. Just because a state was “free” did not mean runaway slaves were safe from being sold back into slavery. Sometimes passengers went as far north as Canada to ensure their freedom.

There were two popular ways Cora and the Night Runner might have traveled from the South to the North. One route would have consisted of crossing either the **Mississippi** or the **Ohio River**. The width of the Mississippi River could be as far as seven miles. The other travel route went either through or around the **Appalachian Mountains**. This journey would be physically taxing on a nice day; imagine how difficult travel would be in the wintertime or during a thunderstorm!

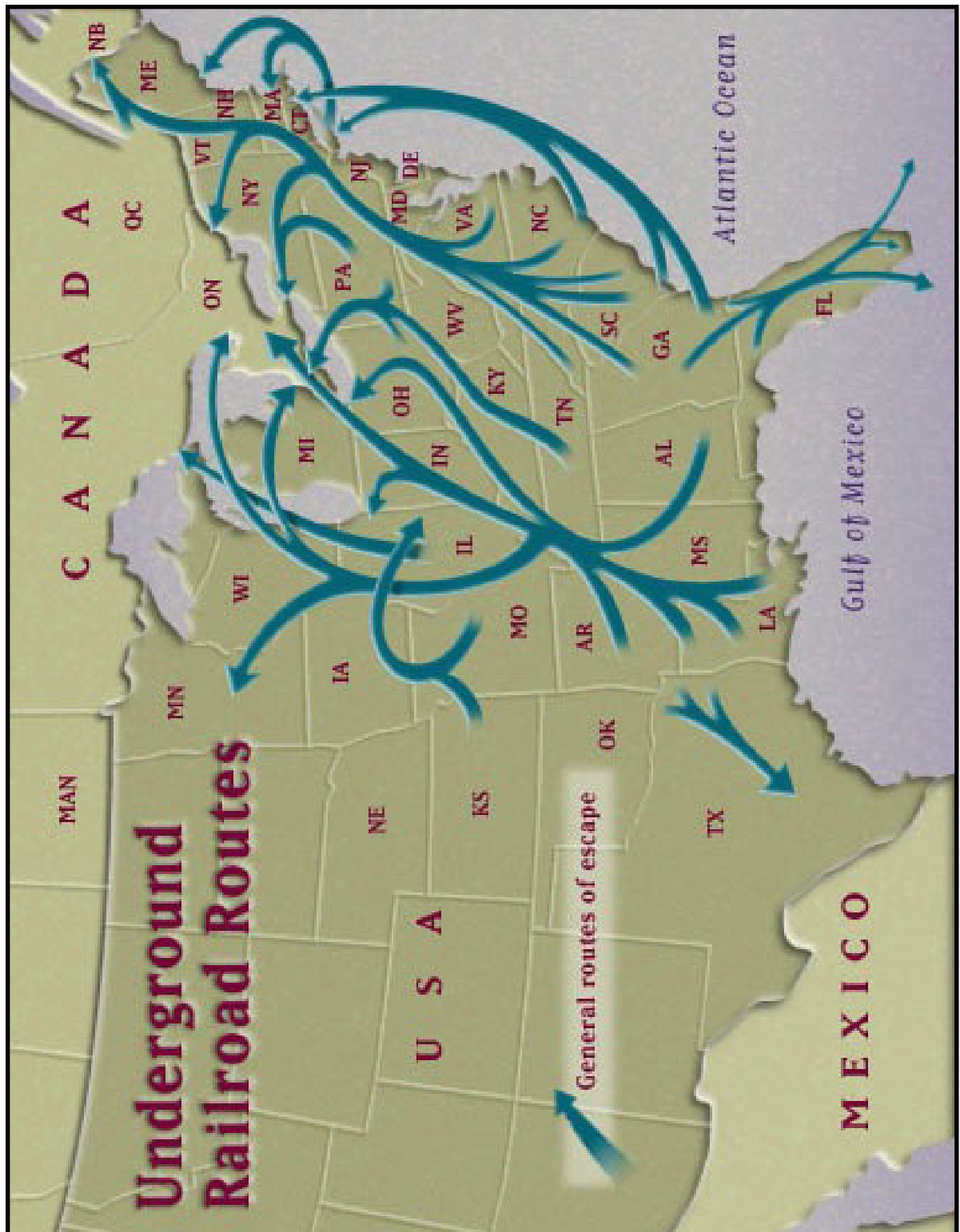


Mapping Cora's Travels

Help track the Night Runner and Cora's route to Freedom!
Use the map on the next page to answer the following questions:

1. Cora and the Night Runner begin their journey in Alabama. They want to travel North to freedom. Following the map, name three states along the arrow that they would pass through.
2. Cora and the Night Runner plan to travel from Tennessee to the Canadian Border. What are two routes that they could take to get there?
3. If Cora and the Night Runner started their journey in Georgia, would they travel North or South to find freedom?
4. Cora and the Night Runner plan on traveling from Virginia to Canada. The distance of the journey is 698 miles. If they traveled 20 miles each night, how many nights would it take to get to freedom?
5. Cora gets a sprained leg and can only travel 10 miles a night. How many days will it take them to go from Virginia to Canada now?

Mapping Cora's Travels (cont.)



Underground Railroad Routes
bu.edu



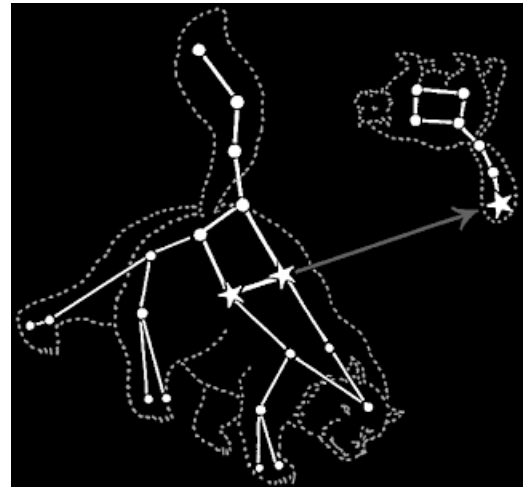
Illinois Learning Standards: *Social Science SS.G.1.4.* Construct and interpret maps of Illinois and the United States using various media.

Education



Constellations and the Northern Star

In *Night Runner*, Cora is told to follow the North Star. The North Star is part of an **asterism**, a group of stars that make a pattern similar to a constellation but is not an official constellation. A **constellation** is also a group of stars that make a pattern and picture in the sky. These constellations would have been important for Cora to know because they were used to help in navigation! Constellations often have stories associated with them, typically from African culture and Greek mythology. Here are some of the constellations that Cora would have known:



A Constellation
danteswardrobe.blogspot.com

The North Star is called **Polaris**. It is the brightest star in the sky and acted as the guiding light to help point enslaved Africans North to freedom. If you travel to the North pole and look up, the North Star will be above you. You can always find the north by first finding Polaris.



dreamstime.com

Ursa Major is a star pattern but it is not a constellation, despite popular belief. It is considered an **asterism**. This particular star pattern can be seen on a clear summer night sky. It is commonly known as "The Drinking Gourd" or "The Big Dipper." It can also be used to find the North Star.



dreamstime.com

Ursa Minor is also known as the "Little Dipper." It is another **asterism** which forms the image of a little bear cub. Ursa Minor helped slaves in the South reach the North.



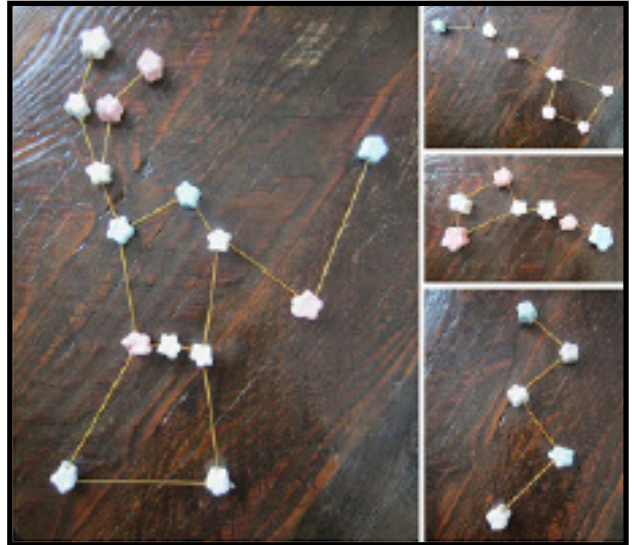
Illinois Learning Standards: *Science 5.Space Systems.* Stars and the Solar System. Apply scientific inquiries or technological designs to introduce concepts that explain planetary, interplanetary and stellar characteristics and cycles.

Create Your Own Constellation

Materials:

- Mini Marshmallows
- Spaghetti
- Black construction paper
- Glue

This activity lets you make your own constellation! First, pick one of the star patterns pictured below. This will be the constellation that you make out of marshmallows and spaghetti. The marshmallows will be the stars of your constellation, and the spaghetti will connect the stars to create a pattern.



Marshmallow Constellation

On the black piece of construction paper, place the mini marshmallows in the formation of the stars. Then connect the stars with the spaghetti pieces. You can break the spaghetti into smaller pieces to get the perfect length between the stars. Once you have finished your constellation, glue the marshmallows down on the black construction paper so they will stay in one piece. If you have extra supplies, you can create your own unique constellation. Make sure to give it a backstory just like all of the other constellations.

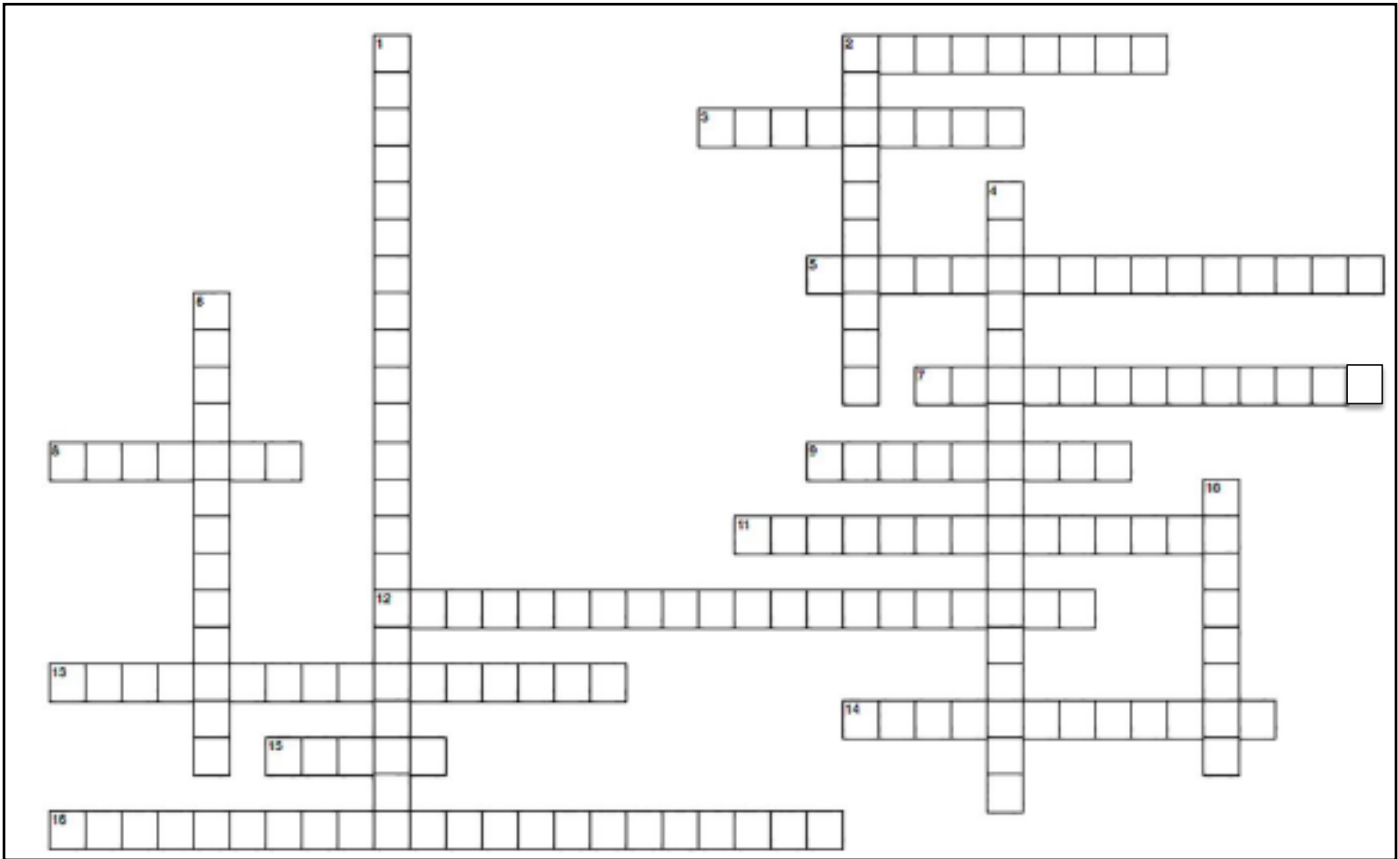


all images from dreamstime.com



Illinois Learning Standards: *Science 5.Space Systems.* Stars and the Solar System. *Fine Arts.* Demonstrate knowledge and skills to create works of visual art using problem solving, observing, designing, sketching and constructing.

Knowledge Crossword



ACROSS

- 2. Cora would be called a _____, the secret code for a runaway slave.
- 3. A person who helps the play process by completing research for the show.
- 5. One of the rivers slaves had to cross to the North.
- 7. The first time a play is ever produced
- 8. A ____ is a place where passengers on the Underground Railroad could sleep for the night.
- 9. Harriet Tubman was a famous _____ of the Underground Railroad.
- 11. Official clusters of stars
- 12. The mountain range that was an obstacle for the runaway slaves
- 13. A law passed in 1850
- 14. An example is William Still, who supported the Anti-Slavery movement
- 15. Another term for “station”
- 16. A fugitive song hidden with secret meaning

DOWN

- 1. The secret movement to help slaves find freedom in the north
- 2. Ike Holter is the _____ of Night Runner
- 4. A story that is made up, but based on historical events
- 6. Someone who provided food and shelter to passengers on their journey
- 10. The type of star pattern the North Star is part of

Webliography

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- http://www.astro.wisc.edu/~dolan/constellations/constellations/Ursa_Minor.html
- <http://maps.seds.org/Const/asterism.html>
- <http://www.dustbunny.com/afk/constellations/bigdipper/>

Underground Railroad

- <http://nationalgeographic.org/activity/underground-railroad-route/>
- <http://quest.arc.nasa.gov/lrc/special/mlk/gourd2.html>
- <http://nationalgeographic.org/activity/underground-railroad-route/>
- <http://www.pbs.org/black-culture/shows/list/underground-railroad/classroom/hidden-messages-spirituals/>
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Answer Key

Mapping Cora's Travels (p. 14-15)

1. a. Wisconsin
b. Illinois
c. Ohio
e. Michigan
f. Wisconsin
g. Wisconsin
h. Minnesota
2. a. Through Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania to Canada
b. Through Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana
c. Through Kentucky, Illinois, Wisconsin
d. Through Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio
3. You could go either North or South
4. 34.9 days
5. 69.8 days
6. 18 miles a night

Knowledge Crossroad (p.18)

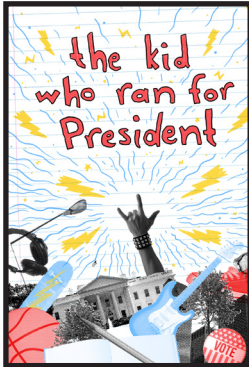
Across:

2. Passenger
3. Dramaturg
5. Mississippi River
7. World Premiere
8. Station
9. Conductor
11. Constellations
12. Appalachian Mountains
13. Fugitive Slave Law
14. Abolitionist
15. Depot
16. Follow the Drinking Gourd

Down:

1. The Underground Railroad
2. Playwright
4. Historical Fiction
6. Stationmaster
10. Asterism

2016-2017 Chicago Playworks Season
at DePaul's Merle Reskin Theatre, 60 E. Balbo Drive, Chicago



The Kid Who Ran for President

by Jeremiah Clay Neal, from the book by Dan Gutman
directed by Ernie Nolan

recommended for ages 6 and up

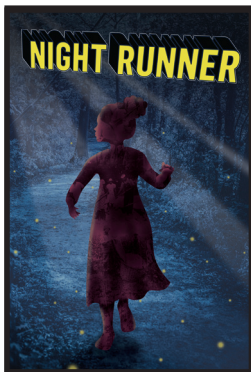
October 6 - November 12, 2016

Tuesdays at 10 a.m.: 10/11, 10/18, 10/25, 11/1, 11/8

Thursdays at 10 a.m.: 10/6, 10/13, 10/20**, 10/27, 11/3^, 11/10

Fridays at 10 a.m.: 10/21, 11/4+

Saturdays at 2 p.m.: 10/8, 10/22, 10/29**, 11/5+, 11/12; Sunday at 2 p.m.: 10/16



Night Runner

by Ike Holter
directed by Lisa Portes

recommended for ages 9 and up

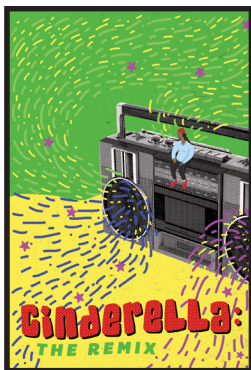
January 12 - February 18, 2017

Tuesdays at 10 a.m.: 1/17, 1/24, 1/31, 2/9, 2/16

Thursdays at 10 a.m.: 1/12, 1/19, 1/26**, 2/2, 2/9^, 2/16

Fridays at 10 a.m.: 2/3, 2/10+

Saturdays at 2 p.m.: 1/14, 1/21, 1/28, 2/11+, 2/18; Sunday at 2 p.m.: 2/5**



Cinderella: the Remix

book and lyrics by Psalmayene 24, music by Nick tha 1Da
directed by Coya Paz

recommended for ages 5 & up

April 20 - May 27, 2017

Tuesdays at 10 a.m.: 4/25, 5/2, 5/9, 5/16, 5/23

Thursdays at 10 a.m.: 4/20, 4/27, 5/4^, 5/18**, 5/25

Fridays at 10 a.m.: 4/28, 5/12

Saturdays at 2 p.m.: 4/22, 4/29, 5/6**, 5/13~, 5/27; Sunday at 2 p.m.: 5/21+

+ASL/American Sign Language Interpreting **Post-Show Discussion

^Audio Described Performance ~ Sensory Friendly Performance

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