

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## Primary Source Document Collection

### MISSION 2: "Flight to Freedom"

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#### **"INFAMOUS!" Kentucky Newspaper Editorial (1847)**

*Only a small number of slaves in Kentucky managed to escape north, and an even smaller number escaped via the Underground Railroad. Yet Kentucky slave owners were furious any time an abolitionist "slave stealer" was found to have provided encouragement or safe haven for fugitive slaves. The following report describes a real incident in which Kentucky slave catchers attempted to recapture fugitive slaves living in Michigan, but instead were arrested on kidnapping charges. The judge in the ensuing trial was a known abolitionist, and found that the Kentuckians did not have the correct paperwork. The slave catchers returned to Kentucky empty-handed, while the fugitives made their way to Canada. This event helped rally southern support for the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law.*

It will, perhaps be remembered, that several weeks ago we announced the elopement of some 20 or 30 Slaves from this county.

A short time since information was received by their owners, that the runaways were colonized in a small town in the southern part of Michigan.

A party of some 12 or 15 gentlemen, composed principally of those who had sustained the loss, immediately repaired to that place, and succeeded in finding and recapturing their slaves without difficulty. But no sooner had they taken them into custody than they were surrounded by a furious mob of several hundred abolitionists who treated them with every indignity which cowardly brutality could invent, rescued the slaves from them by force, and had a mock trial before a Judge who had previously sworn that they should not take the negroes away in any event, the result of which was that the slaves were immediately turned loose and the Kentuckians confined and forced to give bail under charges of kidnapping, rioting &c. We intend to publish next week a full narrative of this most atrocious piece of abolition villainy, the details of which cannot fail to make the blood of every honest man boil in his veins. Things have indeed come to a startling condition when such conduct is not only allowed to pass unpunished, but actually receives the sanction of public approval in the North. The time may come when those cowards and sons of cowards will again, as during the last war, turn their imploring eyes to Kentucky and to Kentuckians for protection from the ravages of a foreign foe; and they may find that Kentucky as no more Shelby's Johnsons Dudleys and Clays, to march to their frontier at the head of her heroic and devoted armies, for the protection of a vile den of Negro thieves and recreants to every principle of honor and common honesty—to say nothing of gratitude.

Source: *Licking Valley Register*, September 3, 1847, p. 2.

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