

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Mission 2: "Flight to Freedom"

Historical Primer

Before you begin playing MISSION US: "Flight to Freedom," here are five important pieces of information to consider. This information may or may not help you as Lucy makes her way through life on a plantation in the 1840s.

1. From the 1820s, when slavery ended in the northern states, until the Civil War broke out in 1861, the United States was divided into "free states" and "slave states." Free states and territories were in the North, and slavery was not permitted there. Slave states and territories were in the South, and slavery was permitted there. If an enslaved African American escaped to a free state, they were still legally enslaved, and could be returned to their master in the South. Enslaved African Americans who ran away, also called "fugitives" or "Freedom seekers," tried to find protection among free African Americans/Blacks and abolitionists in the North, or went to Canada, where slavery was prohibited.
2. Enslaved African Americans who lived in "border states" (slave states next to free states) such as Kentucky had a better chance of escaping than enslaved African Americans who lived further South. As a result, slave owners in border states were especially watchful about preventing or capturing runaways. They sent out nightly patrols, imposed curfews, hired slave catchers with dogs, posted runaway advertisements and rewards, and arrested any suspicious enslaved African Americans.
3. The "Deep South" refers to the area of the United States surrounding the Mississippi River Delta, where cotton was the major crop. Because the harsh working and living conditions on cotton plantations were well-known, masters in border states threatened to sell "troublesome" enslaved African Americans, or enslaved African Americans who ran away, "down river" or "down South." Even enslaved African Americans who worked hard and "obeyed" their masters were sometimes sold South, since that was where the demand for slave labor was highest.
4. Slavery was a system based on cruelty and violence. Enslaved African Americans found ways to resist their masters by working slowly, breaking tools, "stealing" food or clothes, or lying to their masters. All these forms of resistance carried the risk of punishment, which often included whippings. Enslaved African Americans who tried to run away or were openly rebellious risked severe whippings, branding, imprisonment, or were forced to wear iron collars around their neck, hands, or feet.



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Enslaved African Americans that burned property, stole, or committed murder or other serious crimes were killed.

5. Enslaved African Americans found ways to build families and communities that helped them survive their enslavement. Enslaved African Americans got married, raised children, and relied on networks of relatives and friends. Many practiced Christianity, and found strength through faith, spiritual expression, and belief in a better life after death.