



RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN

Talking to Children about Slavery

Collected and reviewed by Jeanette Romkema

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Children need to understand what slavery was in our history as well as what it is in our world today. Children's books are an easy and often powerful way to teach this. Below is a collection of picture books, chapter books and novels for young readers uncovering facts and stories about two types of slavery: slavery in our past – **black slavery in America**; and, slavery in our present – **child labourers**. These books represent current, quality and authentic literature. "Current" excluded well-known and highly recommended books such as: *Free the Children* by Craig Kielburger (1998). An unpublished yet highly recommended 2007 book unavailable for review is *Factory Girl* by Barbara Greenwood.

* = Canadian content

SLAVERY IN AMERICA

Moses (gr.K-6) *

by Carole Weatherford & Kadir Nelson

Jump at the Sun, 2006

Historical fiction picture book; 42pp

"Harriet, I have blessed you with a strong body, a clever mind. You heal the sick and see the future. Use your gifts to break the chains." Believing this to be a direct message from God, Harriet Tubman sets out to make a difference in the world. Relying only on her faith in God, Tubman travels back nineteen times to free more than three hundred slaves, becoming a "Moses figure" and legend. Author Weatherford's lyrical text in combination with illustrator Nelson's spectacular emotion-filled paintings, make this book a true masterpiece.

John Ware (gr.4-up) *

by Ian Hundey

Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2006

Biography chapter book; 64pp

John Ware was born into slavery in 1845 in South Carolina and by 1879 was driving cattle to the new District of Alberta as a free man. This is the story of a legendary cattle rustler: his adventures, triumphs and tragedies. This book is a rare historical look at a slave who became a cowboy. The authentic black and white photographs also make this a unique piece of literature.

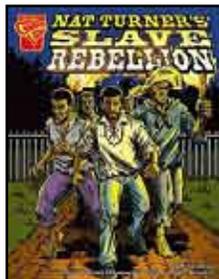
Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion (all ages)

by Michael Burgan

Capstone Press, 2006

Biography graphic novel; 32pp

This graphic novel tells the compelling story of the 1831 Virginia slave rebellion led by Nat Turner. Turner believed he was a prophet, sent by God to rescue slaves from their terrible plight. Spending hours in prayer and contemplation, he leads a mob of slaves on a rampage of killing, destruction and violence. On November 11, 1831 Turner is caught and



hanged. *Nat Turner's Slave Rebellion* is a great book for reluctant readers and those who enjoy graphic novels (cartoon books).

Other graphic novels in the series:

Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad and The Brave Escape of Ellen & William Craft

Harriet Tubman, Secret Agent (gr.6-up)

by Thomas B. Allen

National Geographic, 2006

Biography chapter book; 191pp

This is the book of "how daring slaves and free blacks spied for the Union during the civil war." This is the story of how Harriet Tubman became one of these spies and successfully freed hundreds of slaves as a result. The author's extensive research along with the numerous photographs, drawings, etchings, notes and list of resources, make this an authentic fascinating read.

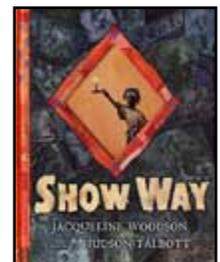
Show Way (gr.K-4)

by Jacqueline Woodson & Hudson Talbott

G.P.Putnam's Sons, 2005

Historical fiction picture book; 42pp

Soonie's great-grandma was only seven when she was sold into slavery. Her journey of survival, courage and creative expression is echoed in the generations of women portrayed in this moving historical picture book. Through brilliant fabric and quilt design, detailed water-colour painting, musically poetic text, as well as variety and creativity in page layout, this book is a masterpiece.



The Patchwork Path (gr.1-4) *

by Bettye Stroud & Erin Susanne Bennett

Candlewick Press, 2005

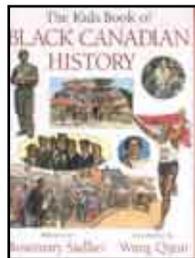
Historical fiction picture book; 32pp

Hannah is a young slave girl on a Georgia plantation. As she grows up her mother demonstrates the art and skill of making quilts. These were not ordinary quilts, and it is only when Hannah and her father escape the clutches of slavery

that she learns the importance of what her mother made. *The Patchwork Path* is based on a story given by an African-American quilter in South Carolina. It is one of many stories about how quilts were used to communicate on the Underground Railroad.

The Kids Book of Black Canadian History (gr. 4-9) *

By Rosemary Sadlier
Kids Can Press, 2003
History picture book; 56pp



This is an exciting and welcome book for any collection of Black history books: a Canadian perspective. Complete with rich information about African cultures, slavery, Black Loyalists, life in Canada West, and brief profiles of Black Canadians, Sadlier summarizes the past 400 years of Black history. Most chapters consist of 2-page spreads and include rich visual and written text.

Freedom River (gr.K-4)

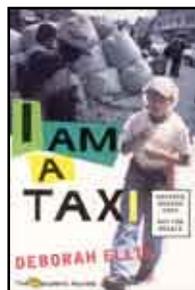
by Doreen Rappaport & Bryan Collier
Jump at the Sun, 2000
Biography picture book; 28pp

“Before the civil war, Kentucky was a slave state and Ohio a free state. In the 1800s the Ohio River was less than 1,000 feet wide at Ripley, Ohio.” This is the story of John Parker, a successful businessman and ex-slave, and how he successfully brought slaves to freedom by crossing the river. The combination of collage with watercolour painting, as well as the visual nature of the written text, make this a remarkable book.

CHILD LABOURERS

I am a Taxi (gr.4-8)

by Deborah Ellis
Groundwood Books, 2006
Contemporary realistic fiction novel;
205pp



After being wrongly incarcerated for cocaine trafficking, Deigo’s parents are sent to prison to serve a seventeen-year sentence. With nowhere else to live, Deigo spends nights with his mother in her cell, while earning money being “a human taxi” during the day. Lured by “a better life and fast money”, one day Diego finds himself the slave of a cocaine manufacture and barely makes it out alive. This is the moving story of the power of the human spirit.

Iqbal (gr.4-8)

by Francesco D’Adamo
Aladdin Paperbacks, 2005
Historical fiction novel; 120pp

This book is based on the life of Pakistani Iqbal Masih, the thirteen-year-old boy murdered for sharing the story of his six years as a bonded child in Lahore carpet factories. Author D’Adamo retells Iqbal’s life of courage, determination and triumph through the eyes of the fictional co-worker Fatima. It is Iqbal who explains to the other children slaves that their master is actually lying about freeing them one day. It is also Iqbal who inspires them to envision a different future for themselves and make it a reality.

Sold (gr.6-up)

by Patricia McCormick
Hyperion, 2006
Contemporary realistic fiction novel; 263pp



Lakshmi is a thirteen-year-old Nepalese girl sold into prostitution by her alcoholic father. Although she is told she can work off her family’s debt by cooperating with “the customers”, she soon realizes this is a hopeless dream. It is only when an American visits the brothel that she is rescued from this physical and emotional slavery. Brutally descriptive, *Sold* is written in the first person using free verse in the form of vignettes: “In between, men come./They crush my bones with their weight./They split me open./Then they disappear. I hurt./I am torn and bleeding where the men have been.”

The Carpet Boy’s Gift (gr.1-4)

by Pegi Deitz Shear & Leane Morin
Tilbury House, 2003
Historical fiction picture book; 40pp

Nadeem and fellow workers are bonded labourers who work day and night in a carpet factory to pay off loans their families have. In reality, these children are slaves and will never be free; that is until one day they hear young Iqbal Masih marching in the streets handing out “Freedom Letters”. It is when Iqbal approaches Nadeem saying, “There is a law here now against child slavery – the law is called the Bonded Labor Abolition Act” that he knows something has changed. It is on this day that a new chapter started for victims of child labourers in Lahore, Pakistan.

Kids On Strike! (gr.6–up)

by Susan Campbell Bartoletti
Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999
Historical chapter book; 208pp

In *Kids on Strike!* Bartoletti works to highlight the role children played in the American labour strikes during the 19th and early 20th centuries. With a wealth of revealing photographs, posters, maps, newspaper clippings and personal interviews, Bartoletti gives readers a fascinating glimpse into the lives of children fighting for their right to go to school. Follow the personal narratives of 11-year-old Harriet Hanson who joins the striking workers, 16-year-old Pauline Newman, leader of the 1907 New York City rent protest, and many other child activists.

Letting Fabric Communicate Messages of Hope and Freedom

(a lesson for children about slavery and the Underground Railroad)

by Jeanette Romkema

Who

- ☞ children between grades K-4
- ☞ Children's worship or any other children's group

When

- ☞ between 60-90 minutes
- ☞ the length of time will vary depending on the book chosen and the size of quilt made

Why

- ☞ Children need to learn how quilts were used to communicate in the Underground Railroad so they can better understand how hundreds of slaves escaped to freedom.
- ☞ Children want to learn different ways to communicate so their understanding of "language" is enlarged and deepened.



http://www.gatheringfabric.com/images/Underground_railroad_quilt.jpg

What materials

- ☞ A variety of construction paper (or fabric pieces)
- ☞ Scissors
- ☞ Glue or needle (or needle and thread)
- ☞ Show Way by Jacqueline Woodson or The Patchwork Path by Bettye Stroud or another picture book about quilts used in the Underground Railroad

The children should be sitting around tables with nothing in front of them. All the materials will be passed out later.

Secret Languages: A warm-up (5 minutes)

Explain that today we will be looking at a secret language that helped slaves escape to freedom. See if the children can guess what type of language this might have been. Without telling them the answer, ask:

What secret languages have you used or heard about that few people could understand?
(Optional: What different ways did God talk to people in the Bible? How does he talk to us today?)

Share the ideas and hear some stories.

* Keep this time short.

Listen to a Story (15 minutes)

Share the name of the book you are going to read and ask the children to try and find the secret language used in the story to help the slaves find freedom.

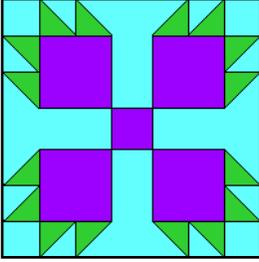
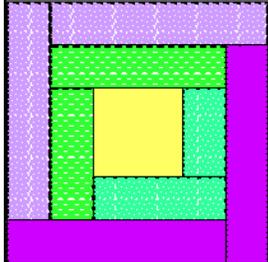
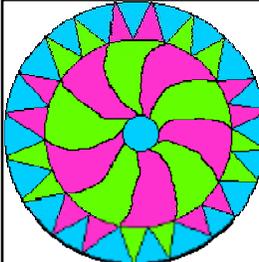
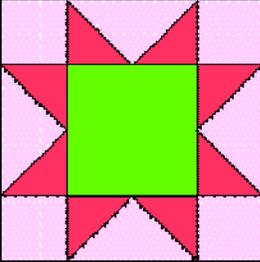
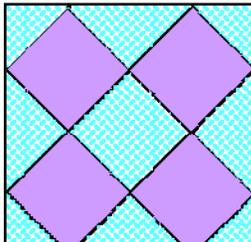
What language was used?
How did people learn to communicate in this way?
Why was this a good way to communicate?

Having a Closer Look (10 minutes)

Show 4-6 examples with construction paper or fabric. To learn more about the language of quilting and to get examples of squares that communicate meaning, go to: http://pathways.thinkport.org/secrets/secret_quilt.cfm
There are also examples on the following page.



Resources for Further Study and Learning

 <p>= bear paw</p>	 <p>= log cabin</p>
 <p>= wagon wheel</p>	 <p>= North star</p>
 <p>= flying geese</p>	 <p>= cross roads</p>

Together, think of two more possible squares that communicate a simple message. i.e. river; bridge; fill; etc.

Make Your Own Quilt (25 minutes)

On your own or with a partner, design a quilt with at least four squares that communicates a message of escape for slaves. Use coloured construction paper (*or* fabric) to make your quilt.

Alternative: make one quilt as a large group or work in few smaller quilts.

Reading Everyone's Quilt (5 minutes)

Take turns guessing all the quilts and celebrating all the creations.



http://static.flickr.com/4/4258265_782b44b0f6_m.jpg

After, the quilts can be hung on the wall with a title such as:

GUESS WHAT MESSAGES ARE BEING COMMUNICATED TO SLAVES ESCAPING?

The answers can be under a flap or posted on an answer sheet.