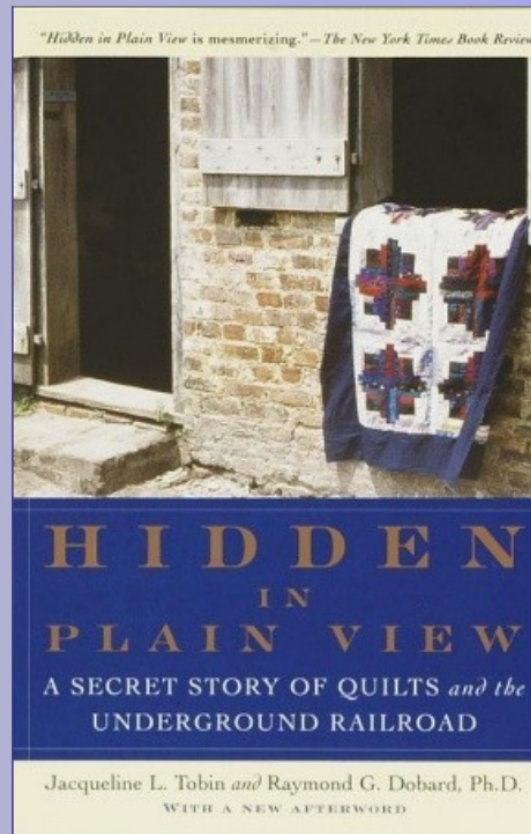


Hidden in Plain View

A Secret Story of Quilts and the Underground Railroad

**Presentation based on the book by
Jacqueline L. Tobin and Raymond G. Dobard, Ph. D. and their interviews with
Ozella McDaniel Williams.**



Presenter: Sharon Steckel, Chicago, IL

Timeline of slavery and the Underground Railroad

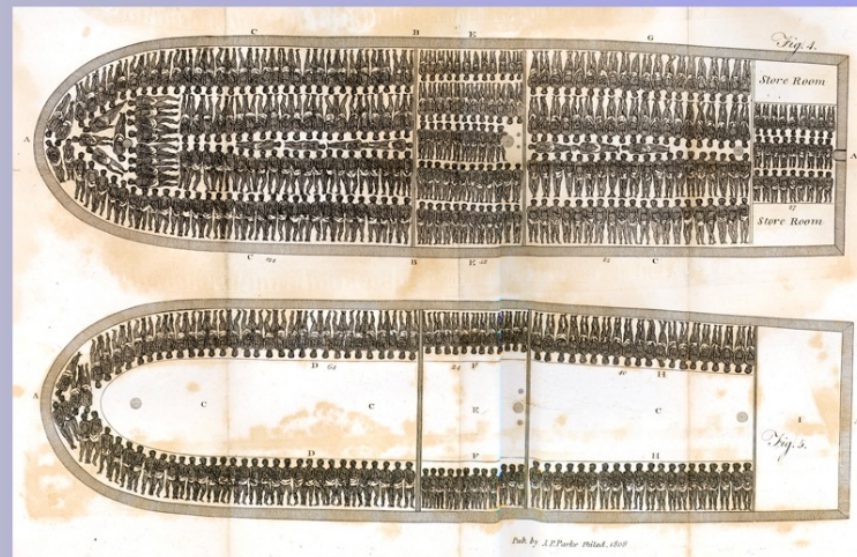
15th Century: Slavery, dating back to antiquity, comes under European control due to economic expansion westward

1440: First large-scale enslavement of African peoples by western Europeans.

1518: Known that the Spanish were bringing slaves from Africa to the Caribbean to mine for gold and for other slave labor. Slavery was common in Africa at the time.

1619: A Spanish ship carrying slaves is seized by the Treasurer (English ship) and a Dutch ship that had been sailing together. The slaves aboard the Spanish ship were divided between the English and Dutch and they set off for Jamestown, Virginia. The Dutch ship, which carried 100 slaves, arrived with only 20 with 80 Africans dying at sea. The Treasurer arrived with 1 African after selling 29 slaves in Bermuda.

Originally they were indentured servants with whites, but the high demand for labor increased the demand for Africans. More Africans were abducted and forced onto ships headed for the New World and those seized at sea never acquired indentured servant status, and were sold at auction.



Timeline:

1641: The Massachusetts colony passed laws that officially sanctioned slavery. This created a distinction of servitude based on race.

1755: All 13 colonies recognized slavery as an institution.

1787: US Constitution signed. It included the **Fugitive Slave Clause** (Article 4, Section 2, Clause 3. Note: Superseded by the 13th Amendment). This guaranteed the slaveowner his right to recover runaway slaves.

\$150 REWARD.
AWAY from the subscriber, on the night of Monday the 11th July, a negro man named
TOM,
30 years of age, 5 feet 6 or 7 inches high; of color; heavy in the chest; several of his jaw out; and upon his body are several old marks of whip, one of them straight down the back. He with him a quantity of clothing, and several
ward of \$150 will be paid for his apprehension security, if taken out of the State of Kentucky; if taken in any county bordering on the Ohio \$50 if taken in any of the interior counties except; or \$20 if taken in the latter county.
12-84-tf B. L. BOSTON.

**100 DOLLARS
REWARD!**
Runaway from the subscriber on the 27th of July, my Black Woman, named
EMILY,
Seventeen years of age, well grown, black color has a whining voice. She took with her one dark calico and one blue and white dress, a red corded gingham bonnet; a white striped shawl and slippers. I will pay the above reward if taken near the Ohio river on the Kentucky side, or **THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS**, if taken in the State of Ohio, and delivered to me near Lewisburg, Mass County, Ky. **THO'S. H. WILLIAMS.**
August 4, 1853.

Timeline:

After the *War of Independance* (Revolutionary War), an antislavery movement began in the North led by the religious influence of the Quakers and economic differences separating the North and South.

Manumission was granted to many slaves who fought in the *War for Independence*. This created a fairly large class of freed blacks in the North and South.

Many freed blacks took the opportunity to free family members still enslaved in the south. Some used their freedom to establish organizations to support the growth of a strong black presence in the Colonies.

- **1775:** Prince Hall Masonic Order organized the first black Masons.
- **1806:** African Meeting House established the first black church in Boston (see below).
- African Union Society (Newport, RI., **1780**) and the African Society (Boston, MA., **1796**) were sympathetic biracial organizations that aided widows, orphans and provided burial and will-writing assistance.



Timeline:

1793: Fugitive Slave Act was passed. This provided the mechanism for slaveowners to recover runaway slaves. Though some northerners were sympathetic to the antislavery movement for ethical and religious reasons, it was also politically advantageous to allow slaves to leave the south. The Constitution allowed slaveholding states to count 5 slaves as 3 people for the purpose of Congressional representation and the assignment of electoral votes.

1793: Cotton Gin invented. Slave labor was in much higher demand to produce rice, sugar, indigo, and especially cotton. Cotton demands to export to Europe increased 921% from 349,000 bales in 1819 to 3.2 million in 1855. Between 1820 and 1860 the slave population increased 257% to nearly 4 million.

1808: U.S. bans the importation of slaves from Africa, but smuggling continued.



Timeline:

When importing slaves ended, slave owners began to support slave marriage even though it was not recognized by the state. Allowing slaves to develop relationships that led to offspring benefited the slave owner since their children became his property and slaves were no longer arriving from Africa.



Five Generations of slaves on Smith's Plantation, Beaufort, SC, 1862

History of the Underground Railroad

How did the Underground Railroad get its name?

See Hidden in Plain View, Pg. 61

Plantation owners deterred communication between slaves, but could not prevent it. It was well known that there were means of communication between plantations. Laws were passed to prevent slaves from communicating. This included not allowing slaves to learn to read or write, drum, or congregate unless supervised by whites.

The Grapevine: Known as an "interregional communication system". Slaves communicated with freed blacks in taverns when accompanying slave owners, black sailors exchanged information with slaves in port cities, slaves hired out to shops were able to gather information, and churches acted as "post offices" for messages regarding escape routes, escape instructions, and means for survival.

Even though the Underground Railroad did not have formal routes, the communication infrastructure that emerged provided enough clues for escaped slaves to find their way to the North. However, it took slaves anywhere from a few months to years to make their way to freedom depending on whether they found a support system or got lost along the way.

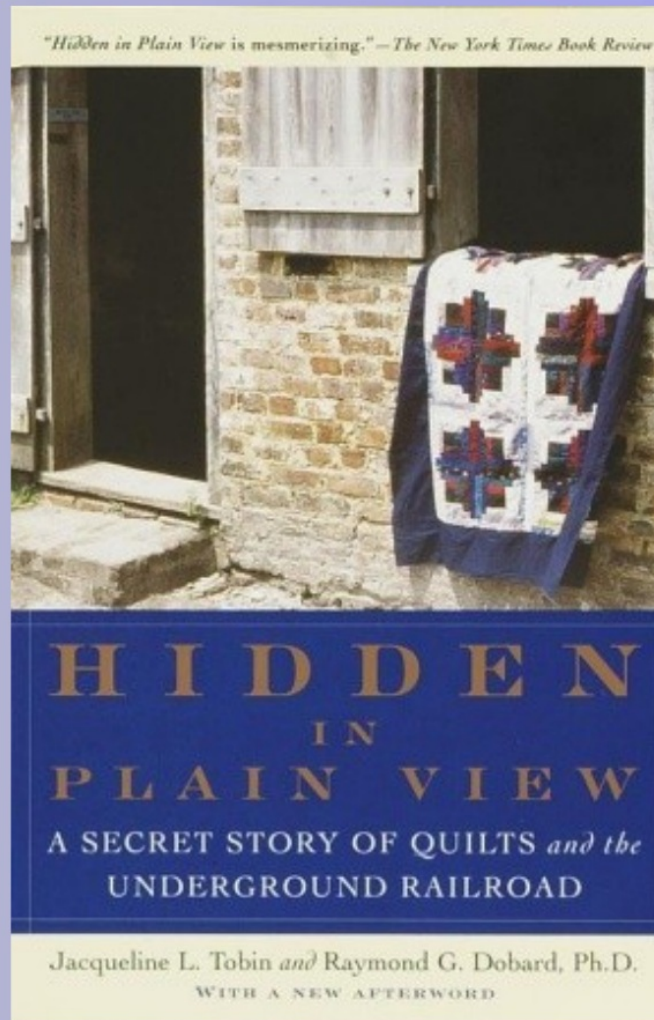
There were many codes that emerged during this time. Slaves used cunning systems of visual and oral communication that were committed to memory. Dances, spirituals, and symbols were amongst the most popular of these systems.

Where did they come up with the idea of visual codes?

Thought to derive from the *Lukasa*, a mnemonic device memory board used by the highest level members of the African Luba people. This board contained secret mythological, historical, genealogical, and medicinal knowledge. A list of kings, proverbs, and praise phrases were portrayed through colored and specifically positioned beads. Geometric patterns cut into the board code secret prohibitions related to kingship.

Hidden in Plain View

Ozella McDaniel Williams; Charleston, South Carolina quilter. Her mother and grandmother passed the quilt stories down to her and Ozella told them to Jacqueline L. Tobin. She partnered with quilt specialist Raymond G. Dobard, Ph. D.



The 3 ways quilts contained codes

Knots: Though the origin of knotting is not known, there are theories on different origins and how they applied to quilts. **Knots=Distance one must travel.** It was believed that each knot (located 2 inches apart from one another) represented 5 miles. This theory applied to safe houses in Ohio located 5 miles apart from one another. Origins include Alexander Ross, a Mason, secret Canadian abolitionist, and ornithologist who frequented the southern states under the guise as bird researcher and gained permission to roam plantations searching for "birds". Secret black Masonic societies had their connection of knots to rank within the Masons, and the *nkisi makolo* in the Kongo; an African charm with knots may have inspired the use of knots in quilts.



Hidden in Plain View

Topographical Stitching: Stitches were believed to be maps of the plantations. Sometimes these stitches would indicate topography.

Detail of 1980 Plantation Quilt made by Elizabeth Talford Scott. Detailed stitching surrounds the star motifs, forming what appears to be a topographical map.

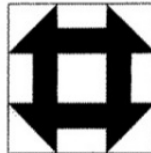


Hidden in Plain View

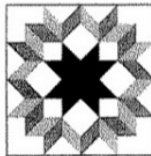
Quilt Squares: Images represented how to prepare for escape, what to do on their journey, and where to go. Some patterns worked in conjunction with spirituals that provided specific information.

Ozella's Underground Railroad Quilt Code Patterns

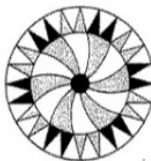
Monkey Wrench



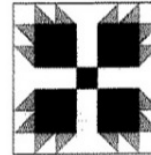
Wagon Wheel/
Carpenter's Wheel



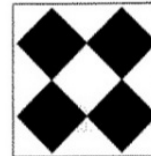
Wagon Wheel Variation



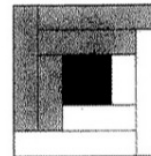
Bear's Paw



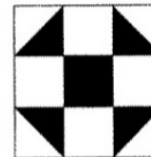
Crossroads



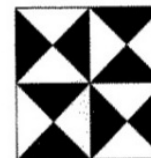
Log Cabin



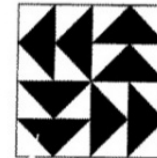
Shoofly



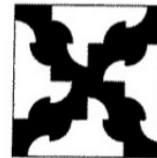
Bow Tie (also known
as Hourglass)



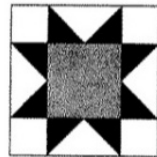
Flying Geese



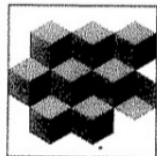
Drunkard's Path



Star/Evening Star/
North Star



Tumbling Blocks
or Boxes

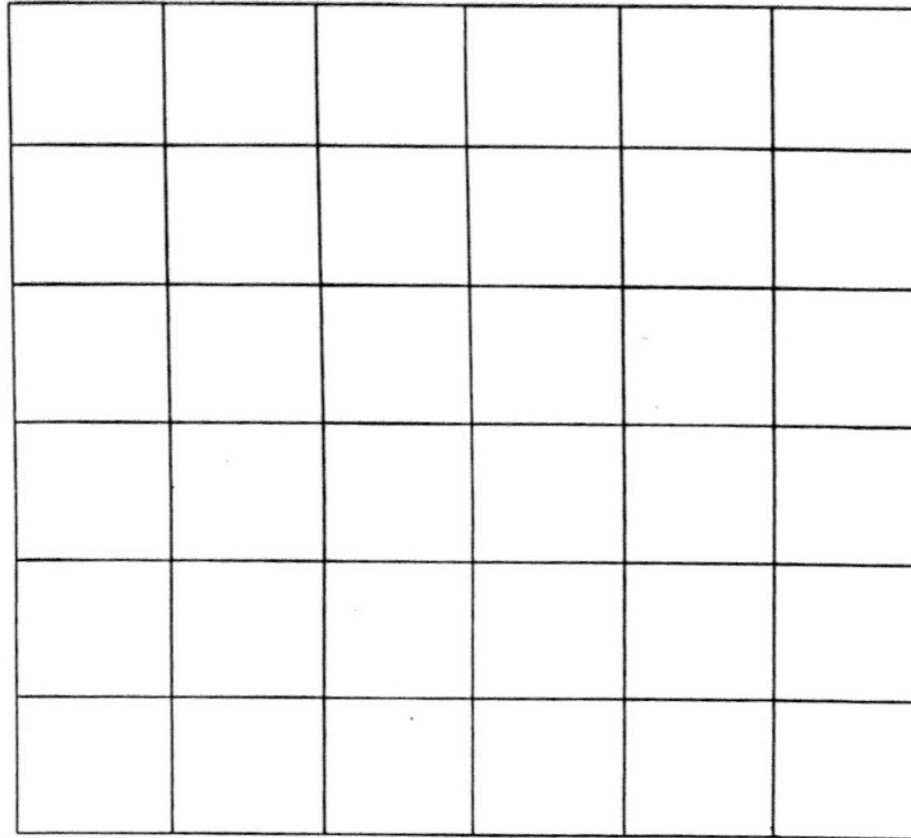


Hidden in Plain View

Squares: Slaves learned all the square patterns before embarking on their escape through the teachings provided by word of mouth and a sampler: a "practice" quilt that included all the square patterns.



A System for Students



Quilt Design

Name: _____

Monkey Wrench: Gather all the tools needed for the journey. "Tools" did not necessarily mean hammers and wrenches. Slaves gathered supplies to construct structures for shelters, a compass for direction, weapons for defense, tools to gather food, coins for purchases, and mental tools to be cunning, alert, knowledgeable and determine if strangers were friends or foe.



2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	1	3	3	1	2		
2	1	3	3	1	2		
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2

Quilt Design

Name: Monkey Wrench

Wagon Wheel: Pack the provisions you need as if packing for a trip. What would you put in your wagon? Take only what would be essential for survival.



Bear's Paw: Follow the trails of bear prints. The bear tracks lead to food and water.

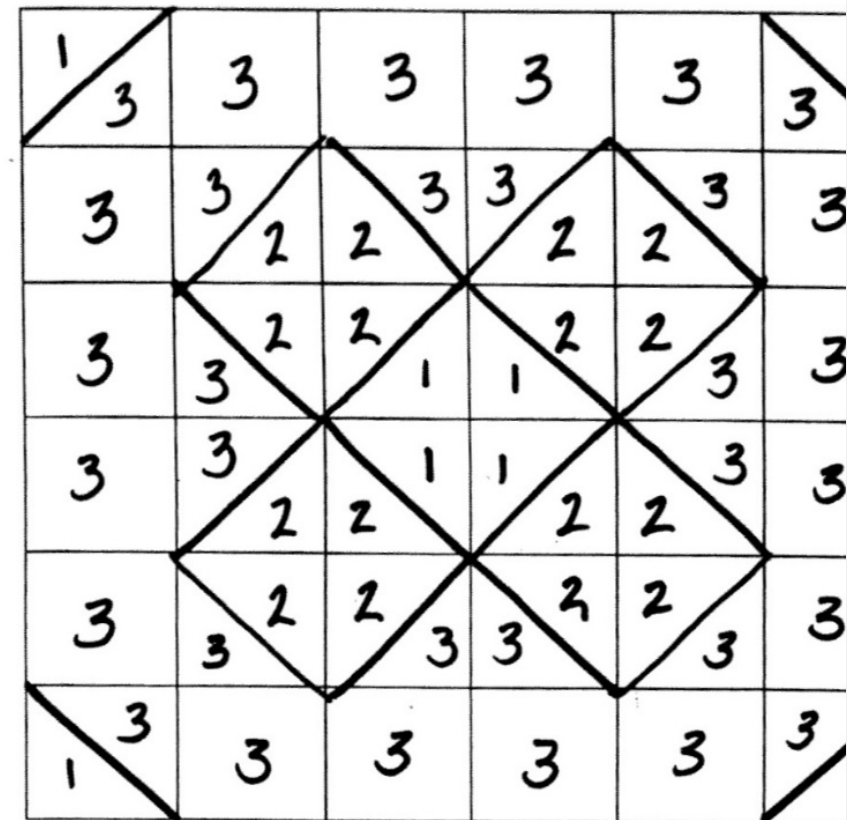


3	1 3	1 3	2 1	2 1	2
3 1	2	2	3	3	1
3 1	2	2	3	3	1
2 1	3	3	2	2	1
2 1	3	3	2	2	1
2	1 2	1 2	3 1	3 1	3

Quilt Design

Name: Bear's Paw

Crossroads: Cleveland, OH.



Quilt Design

Name: Crossroads

Log Cabin: When this quilt hung over clotheslines or fences it indicated a safe house or house to avoid. The pattern usually had a red center to represent fire. Some felt this quilt was hung by resident slaves to indicate to others to avoid the house, as the owners did not help slaves. Yellow centers, like a beacon of light, may have indicated a safe house where slaves could take refuge.



1	1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1	2
1	1	3	3	2	2
1	1	3	3	2	2
1	1	2	2	2	2
2	2	2	2	2	2

Quilt Design

Name: Log Cabin

Shoofly: Shoofly may have represented an actual person that helped steer slaves to safety during their journeys. Shoofly could be either a man or woman, like Harriet Tubman.



1	1	3	2	2	3	1	1
1	3	3	2	2	3	3	
2	2		1	1	2	2	
2	2		1	1	2	2	
	3	3	2	2	3	3	
1	1	3	2	2	3	1	1

Quilt Design

Name: Shoofly

Satin Bow Ties: "Exchange double wedding rings" meant to let go of the bonds of slavery. The rings represented the chains slaves were often forced to endure. Churches provided refuge for slaves, would help them remove chains (if they were still bearing them), give them food and shelter, and donate a clean set of clothes. It was important to blend in with common people, since there were bounty hunters looking for slaves to capture and return to their owners for profit.



1	3	3	3	3	1
3	1 2 2 1	2 1 1 2	1 2 2 1	1 2 2 1	3
3	1 2 2 1	2 1 1 2	2 1 1 2	1 2 2 1	3
3	2 1 1 2	1 2 2 1	1 2 2 1	2 1 1 2	3
3	2 1 1 2	1 2 2 1	1 2 2 1	2 1 1 2	3
1	3	3	3	3	1

Quilt Design

Name: Bow Tie

Flying Geese: The geese represented both slaves and real geese flying North.

When this quilt was hung out to be seen, one set of geese would occasionally be colored a separate color than the rest, indicating true North. It also meant that slaves should start looking to the geese as guides, noting their direction, eating and traveling habits, and their directional timing during different seasons.



2	2	2	2	2	2
2	3	3	3	3	1
2	3	3	3	3	1
2	3	3	2	2	1
2	3	3	2	2	1
1	1	1	1	1	1

Quilt Design

Name: Flying Geese

Drunkard's Path: A warning to slaves to move in a zig-zag fashion and occasionally double back over their steps to trick slave trackers.



Star/Evening Star/North Star: A guiding light for fleeing slaves. The North Star has always been connected to the Underground Railroad. The song, "Follow the Drinking Gourd", is a song of directions and warnings for slaves on the run. It refers to the Little Dipper, where the North Star can be found.



2	2	1	1	2	2
2	3	2 3	3 2	3	2
1	3 2	1	1	2 3	1
1	3 2	1	1	2 3	1
2	3	2 3	3 2	3	2
2	2	1	1	2	2

Quilt Design

Name: Star / Evening Star / North Star

tumbling Blocks or Boxes: Time to escape to Canada.



Music

Spirituals were the audio portion of a sophisticated system of communication for the Underground Railroad. The call and response method was all part of delivering and reinforcing information.

It's believed some spirituals would be partnered with specific quilts. They songs would be hummed or sung while quilts were hung on display, or as slave owners believed, to air out.

Sometimes spirituals were sung in a circle. "Ring rituals" and "Ring shouts" which originated in Africa made their way to America and took form in black churches. Singers would tap their heels on the floor to recreate drum beats since it was forbidden for them to bring drums from their homeland. It's theorized these dances were the origins of tap dancing.

Music

Not all songs were allowed to be sung. Some plantation owners forbid songs that suggested a "better life was coming". Slaveowners would take up issues with black preachers who shared the spirituals. When revolts became commonplace, lawmakers suggested that unless a white person was in attendance during slaves weekday religious meetings, they would be outlawed.

*A few more beatings of the wind and rain,
Ere the winter will be over-
Glory, Hallelujah!*

*Some friends has gone before me
I must try to go and meet them-
Glory, Hallelujah!*

*A few more risings and settings of the sun,
Ere the winter will be over-
Glory, Hallelujah!*

*There is a better day a coming-
There is a better day a coming-
Glory, Hallelujah!*

Follow the Drinkin' Gourd

Chorus:

*Foller the drinkin' gou'd
Foller the drinkin' gou'd
For the ole man say,
"Foller the drinkin' gou'd".*

*When the sun come back,
When the firs' quail call,
Then the time is come
Foller the drinkin' gou'd.*

*The riva's bank am a very good
road,
The dead trees show the way,
Lef' foot, peg foot goin' on,
Foller the drinkin' gou'd.*

*The riva ends a-tween two hills,
Foller the drinkin' gou'd.
'Nuther riva on the other side
Follers the drinkin' gou'd.*

*Wha the little riva
Meet the grea' big un,
The ole man waits-
Foller the drinkin' gou'd*

Wade in the Water

Chorus:

*Wade in the water,
Wade in the water children.
Wade in the water,
God's gonna trouble the water.*

*See dat host all dressed in white,
God's gonna trouble the water.
The leader looks like the Israelite,
God's gonna trouble the water.*

*See dat ban' all dressed in red,
God's gonna trouble the water.
Looks like de ban dat Moses led,
God's gonna trouble the water.*

Steal Away

Chorus:

Steal away, Steal away,

Steal away to Jesus.

Steal away, Steal away,

I ain't got long to stay here.

My Lord calls me, He calls me by the thunder

Green trees are bending, poor sinner stands a trembling

Tombstones are bursting, poor sinner stands a trembling

My Lord calls me, He calls me by the lightning

The trumpet sounds within a my soul,

I ain't got long to stay here.

Harriet Tubman's Song

Tubman composed this song and sung it as an "all clear" message to slaves she was helping as they hid during the day in the woods.

Hail, oh hail ye happy spirits,
Death no more shall make you fear,
No grief nor sorrow, pain nor anger (anguish)
Shall no more distress you there.

Around him are ten thousan' angels
Always ready to 'bey comman'.
Dey are always hobring round you,
Till you reach the hebbenly lan'.

Jesus, Jesus will go wid you;
He will lead you to his throne;
He who died has gone before you,
Trode de wine-press all alone.

He whose thunder shake creation;
He who bids the planets roll;
He who rides above the temple (tempest)
An' his scepter sways the whole.

Dark and thorny is the desert
Through the pilgrim makes his ways,
Yet beyon' dis vale of sorrow,
Lies de fiel's of endless days.

Children's Books

Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky, Faith Ringgold

Follow the Drinking Gourd, by Jeanette Winter

Follow the Drinking Gourd (video), Told by Morgan Freeman, music by Taj Mahal, and illustrated by Yvonne Buchanan

Harriet Tubman; The Road to Freedom, Rae Bains and Joanne Mattern

Henry's Freedom Box, by Ellen Levine, illustrated by Kadir Nelson

...If You Traveled on The Underground Railroad, by Ellen Levine, illustrated by Larry Johnson

...If You Lived When There was Slavery in America, by Anne Kamma, illustrated by Pamela Johnson

Moses; When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom, by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Kadir Nelson

The Patchwork Path; A Quilt Map to Freedom, by Bettye Stroud, illustrated by Erin Susanne Bennett

The Secret to Freedom, by Marcia Vaughan, illustrated by Larry Johnson

Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt, by Deborah Hopkinson, illustrated by James Ransome

The Underground Railroad for Kids, by Mary Kay Carson

Under the Quilt of Night, by Deborah Hopkinson, illustrated by James Ransome

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<http://0.tqn.com/d/quilting/1/0/Y/o/-/-/Rolling-Star-Quilt-Block-2.jpg>

http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_pz8eid7Sg_Q/S3bOfvhfmNI/AAAAAAAAAI8/pDLnRp3xuEE/s400/beige,+tumbling+blocks,+adkmuseum.org.jpg

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<http://www.wttw.com/img/dto/dto1-broadside-slaves-at-auction.jpg>