

Exhibition Teacher Resources for Middle and High School

Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage: Men and Women of the Underground Railroad



About the Exhibition

Brought to life in 2007 by the work of then-director Sally Newkirk, historians Pam and Curt Peters, Cynthia Torp of Solid Light, and many other historians and consultants, Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage has been a mainstay in the Carnegie Center for Art and History since 2007. The research done for this exhibit proves that New Albany, Indiana was an important junction for people secretly fleeing the grips of slavery--across the Ohio River from Kentucky--before the Civil War.

This powerful story is woven through actual newspaper accounts, artifacts, and revealing illustrations and photographs into a rich experience highlighted by a dramatic, interactive feature-length multimedia presentation.

At the heart of the exhibit are the actual New Albany residents--Black and white, young and old, rich and poor--who were able to accomplish so much in the face of such great risk. Explore the lives of real people whose selfless acts of courage helped freedom seekers find hope and freedom. This exhibition, with its frank American narratives of cruelty, bias, bravery, and hope, has been experienced by scores of visitors to our museum for a decade and a half, and more recently by thousands of elementary-aged children through our school programs. It has earned the Carnegie Center membership into the National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, a distinction given to locations that have verifiable connections to the Underground Railroad through educational programs, objects, or exhibitions. We are proud to be members of this Network along with our neighbors The Town Clock Church (Second Baptist Church), who are a vital part of this history.



Questions for Viewing and Discussion

The following questions can be used to guide viewing and discussion of the artifacts and texts in the exhibition.

- What piece of information or artifact did you find most interesting? Why?
- What stands out to you the most in the exhibition?
- How do the information and artifacts presented in the exhibition make you feel?
- How does the title of the exhibition “Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage” relate to the information presented?
- This exhibition is made up of a multitude of primary sources. How are primary sources beneficial when exploring history?
- What do you want to know more about after viewing the exhibition?
- The men and women profiled in the exhibition all impacted the community in some way. How can you impact your community in a positive way?

Activities

Extraordinary Profile (Social Studies)

Choose one of the people that was profiled in the exhibition and do some outside research to create a short report or presentation to compile the information that is found. Students could write a written report or create a PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation to share their findings with their classmates.

Primary Source Analysis (Social Studies)

After viewing the exhibition choose one of the primary sources from the exhibition for analysis. Use the [Library of Congress' Primary Source Analysis Tool](#) to have students dig deep into the information contained in the document. Sources that could be used include the Book of Indenture or the New Albany Ledger newspaper. Check out the teacher guides from the LoC linked in the Additional Resources section below for additional questions to help further guide students in their analysis.

Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 [Carousel Reading](#) (Social Studies)

One major piece of legislation that impacted the abolition movement and the enslaved population in the United States was the [Fugitive Slave Act of 1850](#). Break students into groups and the text of the law into sections. Have the different sections of the law situated around the room that each group will travel to. At each station have a large paper where students will record their thoughts on how this section would impact enslaved people and free abolitionists. Students will move from station to station at your direction until they have read through all of the sections and recorded their thoughts. As a wrap-up have students brainstorm ways that enslaved people and abolitionists could have worked around the challenges presented in the law and then share with the class.

“Drawing with Scissors” (Art-Making)

After viewing the exhibition students will create a [cut-out collage in the style of Henri Matisse](#) using construction paper that reflects a scene that was described in the exhibition or that illustrates their feelings while going through the exhibition. Because silhouettes don't show details like facial expressions, students can focus on the universal languages of color and shapes to express their mood. Silhouettes and cut-outs open the door to the varied interpretations and feelings that may arise when confronted with difficult narratives like slavery. Students will choose a background color and then use other colors of construction paper to “draw with scissors” to make the shapes that will create their chosen scene. They will then glue their shapes to their background paper to create their scene. [The Migration Series by Jacob Lawrence](#) can be used as another source of inspiration for student work.

Illustrated and/or Tactile Map (Art-Making, Geography)

Give students a blank sheet of paper (white construction paper or cardstock would be best for this) or give them a blank political map of the United States and assorted art supplies such as other colors of construction paper, yarn and other string, crayons, markers, colored pencils, glue sticks, tape, etc. Project a map of routes traveled along the Underground Railroad on the board, such as these from [PBS](#) and [National Geographic](#), and have students make a map on their papers with the routes that went through Indiana. Have students get creative with the art supplies to illustrate their maps and give them plenty of texture. Be sure that students include the major parts of maps such as a title and key. While maps are not always seen as art, IU Southeast professor [Susanna Crum's Watershed Globe](#) shows the ways in which one can make art out of maps. See also her recorded online [talk about the subject](#).



Additional Resources

Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage Webpage

<http://carnegiecenter.org/exhibitions/ordinary-people/>

Webpage on the Carnegie Center's website with information about the exhibition

Regarding the Underground Railroad Program

[Regarding the Underground Railroad Today: A Community Conversation With Keynote Jermaine Fowler](#)

[Regarding the Underground Railroad Today: A Community Conversation - Panel](#)

Recorded videos of a program put on by the Carnegie Center with keynote speaker Jermaine Fowler and a panel discussion with community members respectively

The Humanity Archive

<https://www.thehumanityarchive.com/>

Website of local historian Jermaine Fowler focused on amplifying unheard voices that includes links to his podcast series of the same name

LoC, Primary Source Analysis Teacher Guide

<https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/guides/>

Guides for teachers and students for analyzing different types of primary sources created by the Library of Congress which could be used to spark additional discussion about the artwork

PBS: Underground Railroad

<http://www.pbs.org/black-culture/shows/list/underground-railroad/classroom/>

Lesson plans and activities from PBS relating to their video Underground Railroad: The William Still Story

International Underground Railroad Month

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/undergroundrailroad/international-underground-railroad-month.htm>

Information and resources from the National Parks Service about International Underground Railroad Month, recognized in September, as well as programming by members of the Network to Freedom across the country

About Us

The Carnegie Center for Art & History is one of Southern Indiana's cultural cornerstones. Housed in New Albany's original library building, the Carnegie Center has ongoing exhibits about the history of the Underground Railroad in the region and the remarkable life story of celebrated Civil War nurse Lucy Higgs Nichols. The Carnegie also features rotating exhibitions of contemporary local, national, and international art in a wide range of visual mediums, as well as many opportunities for hands-on learning.

As a branch of the Floyd County Library, the Carnegie Center supports the growth and creativity of an engaged, informed, and connected community. Those tenets form the basis of the Carnegie Center's creation of quality programming for both youth and adults. Admission is always free as part of our dedication to community accessibility and inclusivity. Visit or schedule a tour on Mondays through Saturdays, and join us for special programs on Thursday evenings.

201 E. Spring Street, New Albany, IN 47150

812-944-7336 -- www.carnegiecenter.org

Monday-Saturday: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Thursday 10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

