

Synopsis: The Underground Railroad

The Underground Railroad module tells the story of Lucy Crosswhite and her family as they escape from slavery and travel the Underground Railroad. Along the way they stop in Marshall, Michigan but are eventually found by slavecatchers, sent by their master to bring them back to his plantation. The townspeople stick up for the Crosswhite family and arrest the slavecatchers. The Crosswhites then escape to Canada, where they finally live free without the fear about being sent back to slavery.

The story is narrated by Matt, a modern-day boy living in Marshall, and Lucy, who speaks through her journal entries. Matt finds Lucy's journal on a trip to the Marshall Historical Museum. Through reading about Lucy's experience, especially about her love for learning and reading, Matt begins to develop a newfound love for learning and reading himself!

Major Themes:

Slavery- Slavery in this module is featured both as an institution as well as a intellectual and emotional experience. Students learn about slavery from both a contemporary and historical peer. We engage the students through relevant topics to their lives, while also introducing new information that promotes deeper thinking and reflection.

The Underground Railroad- The Underground Railroad is not only discussed, but is also experienced through Lucy's journals, and is seen through the eyes of Matt. The Underground Railroad theme prompts discussion on corresponding concepts, like reading and writing, change, fear, family, and friendships.

Literacy- The role of literacy is discussed in the contemporary setting and is explored in terms of its significance during slavery as well. Literacy is presented as a means of achieving independence, freedom, and autonomy, as well as something that is fun and exciting. Lucy, who wants to read, must keep it a secret, while Matt, who can read freely but does not like to, develops an appreciation for reading through learning about Lucy's experience.

Related 4th Grade GLCE Requirements:

H3.0.7 Use case studies or stories to describe the ideas and actions of individuals involved in the Underground Railroad in Michigan and in the Great Lakes Region.

H3.0.4 Draw upon stories, photos, artifacts, and other primary sources to compare the life of people in towns and cities in Michigan and in the Great Lakes region during a variety of time periods from 1837 to the present.

G1.0.4 Use geographic tools and technologies, stories, songs, and pictures to answer

geographic questions about the United States.

C5.0.2 Describe the relationship between rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

C5.0.3 Explain why rights have limits.

C5.0.4 Describe ways citizens can work together to promote the values and principles of American democracy.

R.CM.04.01 Connect personal knowledge, experiences, and understanding of the world to themes and perspectives in text through oral and written responses.

R.AT.04.01 Be enthusiastic about reading and do substantial reading and writing on their own.

L.RP.04.03 Respond to multiple text types listened to or viewed knowledgeably, by discussing, illustrating, and/or writing in order to clarify meaning, make connections, take a position, and/or show deep understanding.

Characters:

Matt (the only character that communicates directly with the students)

Lucy Crosswhite

Momma

Papa

Mary