EDUCATION WORKSHOP

Show Way The Musical

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Grades 1st-8th
Follow the stitches of a family’s lineage. Soonie’s great-grandma was just seven years old when she was sold to a big plantation without her ma and pa, with only some fabric and needles to call her own. She began to stitch a Show Way, a quilt with secret meanings to show enslaved people the way to freedom. As each generation passes, the Show Way shines a light on the past and paves a road to the future, stitching together possibility and promise.

Kennedy Center Education Artist-in-Residence Jacqueline Woodson’s award-winning story of history, love, and resilience becomes a world premiere stage adaptation directed by Schele Williams, with new music by Tyrone L. Robinson. This moving, lyrical account pays tribute to women in Woodson’s own family whose strength and knowledge illuminate their daughters’ lives over seven generations.

By Jacqueline Woodson
Adapted from her book Show Way, illustrated by Hudson Talbott
Music and lyrics by Tyrone L. Robinson
Choreographed by Tiffany Quinn
Music directed by Tiffany Underwood Holmes
Original direction by Schele Williams
Jacqueline Woodson is an American writer of books for adults, children, and adolescents. She is best known for her National Book Award-Winning memoir *Brown Girl Dreaming*, and her Newbery Honor-winning titles *After Tupac* and *D Foster, Feathers, and Show Way*. Her picture books *The Day You Begin* and *The Year We Learned to Fly* were *New York Times* bestsellers. After serving as the Young People’s Poet Laureate from 2015 to 2017, she was named the National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature by the Library of Congress for 2018–19. She was awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Medal in 2020. Later that same year, she was named a MacArthur Fellow.
In the nineteenth century, a secret network of safehouses, known as the Underground Railroad, led enslaved African Americans to free states. The Railroad aided in the escape of enslavement through the end of the Civil War. According to legend, these safe houses were “often indicated by a quilt hanging from a clothesline or windowsill. These quilts were embedded with a kind of code, so that by reading the shapes and motifs sewn into the design, an enslaved person on the run could know the area’s immediate dangers or even where to head next.”

Common Quilt Code Patterns:
Flying Geese = *Follow the geese flying north*
Drunkard’s Path = *Zig-zag as you go along in case you are being stalked by hounds*
Log Cabin = *Seek shelter now, the people here are safe to speak with*
Bear Paw = *Follow an animal trail through the mountains to find water and food*
Double Wedding Ring = *Now it is safe to remove your chains and shackles*
Bow Tie = *Dress in disguise to appear of a higher status*

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1Marie Claire Bryant, “Underground Railroad Quilt Codes: What We Know, What We Believe, and What Inspires Us,” *Smithsonian Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage Magazine*, May 3, 2019, [https://folklife.si.edu/magazine/underground-railroad-quilt-codes](https://folklife.si.edu/magazine/underground-railroad-quilt-codes).
CONNECT: ABOLITIONISTS OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

The Underground Railroad functioned on the trust and courage of freedom seekers and abolitionists; **abolitionism** refers to the movement to end slavery in the United States. This network of valorous individuals led to the emergence of several key figures in the Underground Railroad’s history of escape from bondage.

![Harriet Tubman](image)

**Harriet Tubman**

Harriet Tubman was an enslaved and escaped African American who helped others gain their freedom through the Underground Railroad. “I was conductor of the Underground Railroad for eight years, and I can say what most conductors can’t say — I never ran my train off the track and I never lost a passenger,” said Tubman. Contrary to popular belief, Tubman did not create the Underground Railroad; however, she likely utilized this network of escape routes to earn her own freedom before going on to help others. “Her success led slaveowners to post a $40,000 reward for her capture or death.” Among her many anti-slavery successes, Tubman is also considered the first African American woman who served in the military.

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Figure 1 Biography.com editors and Tyler Piccotti, “Harriet Tubman,” Biography updated December 11, 2023, [https://www.biography.com/activists/harriet-tubman](https://www.biography.com/activists/harriet-tubman)

CONNECT: ABOLITIONISTS OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Frederick Douglass
Orator, writer, and social activist Frederick Douglass also took an active leadership role in the Underground Railroad. “The Underground Railroad was Douglass’s longest and most sustained form of activism, foundational to all other aspects of his abolitionist thought... He helped hundreds of runaways, unifying slaves’ secret, underground resistance with the public work of anti slavery agitation. Underground work proved crucial to the formation of Douglass as a thinker. He learned to read and write underground. Moreover, he developed his literary style and political philosophy – his ideas about women’s rights, internationalism, and direct action – through praxis in the Underground Railroad.”

Ellen Smith Craft
Ellen Smith Craft “grew up [enslaved] as the daughter of a White slaveholder and an enslaved mother in Clinton, Georgia. Due to this parentage, she appeared ‘almost white,’ according to her husband William Craft.” Using this fact to her advantage, Ellen Smith Craft devised a plan with her husband to disguise herself as a sickly, White slaveholder in order to escape to freedom with her husband on December 25, 1848. “Throughout their journey, the Crafts faced several occasions when they feared discovery; however, Ellen Craft’s disguise as a sickly, young enslaver fooled the people who crossed their path.” Following the end of the Civil War, Ellen Smith Craft and her family returned to the South to help newly emancipated men and women by establishing The Woodville Co-Operative Farm School.

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Figure 2 Bowery Boys, “Fredrick Douglass and the life saver of lispenard Street, a stop on the underground Railroad,” Bowery Boys, February 1, 2018, https://www.boweryboyshistory.com/2018/02/fredrick-douglass-life-saver-lispenard-street.html

Figure 3 “Ellen Craft,” National Park Service, accessed January 26, 2024, https://www.nps.gov/people/ellen-craft.htm


EXPLORE: MORE RESOURCES

The Underground Railroad in Charleston
https://sc.audubon.org/news/3-more-lowcountry-sites-recognized-parks-service-connection-underground-railroad

WATCH & LISTEN
Quilt Codes of the Underground Railroad
The Underground Railroad: On The Road to Freedom
The Breathtaking Courage of Harriet Tubman

INTERACT
The Enduring Significance of Harriet Powers’ Quilts
Women of Color Quilters Network

READ
Show Way
By Jacqueline Woodson
Soonie's great-grandma was just seven years old when she was sold to a big plantation without her ma and pa, and with only some fabric and needles to call her own. She pieced together bright patches with names like North Star and Crossroads, patches with secret meanings made into quilts called Show Ways – maps for slaves to follow to freedom. When she grew up and had a little girl, she passed on this knowledge. And generations later, Soonie – who was born free – taught her own daughter how to sew beautiful quilts to be sold at market and how to read.

From slavery to freedom, through segregation, freedom marches, and the fight for literacy, the tradition they called Show Way has been passed down by the women in Jacqueline Woodson's family as a way to remember the past and celebrate the possibilities of the future. Beautifully rendered in Hudson Talbott's luminous art, this moving, lyrical account pays tribute to women whose strength and knowledge illuminate their daughters’ lives.
EXPLORE: MORE RESOURCES

**Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt**  
*By Deborah Hopkinson*  
An inspiring tale of creativity and determination on the Underground Railroad from Coretta Scott King Award winner James Ransome and acclaimed author Deborah Hopkinson. Clara, a slave and seamstress on Home Plantation, dreams of freedom – not just for herself, but for her family and friends. When she overhears a conversation about the Underground Railroad, she has a flash of inspiration. Using scraps of cloth from her work in the Big House and scraps of information gathered from other slaves, she fashions a map that the master would never even recognize.

From the award-winning author-illustrator team of Deborah Hopkinson and James Ransome, this fictional tale of the Underground Railroad continues to inspire young readers 25 years after its original publication.

**The Patchwork Path: A Quilt Map to Freedom**  
*By Bettye Stroud*  
The images stitched into Hannah’s quilt lead to secret signposts on the Underground Railroad as she and her father take flight from slavery on a perilous path to freedom.

Now that Hannah’s papa has decided to make the run for freedom, her patchwork quilt is not just a precious memento of Mama — it’s a series of hidden clues that will guide them along the Underground Railroad to Canada. A fictionalized account of a fascinating oral history, *The Patchwork Path* tells the story of two of the thousands who escaped a life of slavery and made the dangerous journey to freedom — a story of courage, determination, and hope.

**Henry’s Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad**  
*By Ellen Levine*  
A stirring, dramatic story of a slave who mails himself to freedom by a Jane Addams Peace Award-winning author and a Coretta Scott King Award-winning artist. Henry Brown doesn’t know how old he is. Nobody keeps records of slaves’ birthdays. All the time he dreams about freedom, but that dream seems farther away than ever when he is torn from his family and put to work in a warehouse. Henry grows up and marries, but he is again devastated when his family is sold at the slave market. Then one day, as he lifts a crate at the warehouse, he knows exactly what he must do: He will mail himself to the North. After an arduous journey in the crate, Henry finally has a birthday — his first day of freedom.
EXPLORE: CLASSROOM WORKSHOPS

Memory Mapping
Grades 1st-3rd
In this workshop, students will learn about the use of quilts as maps throughout the Underground Railroad, and translate this knowledge into creating maps of their own communities. Students will label their maps with important landmarks and chart their route from home to school.
Click here for the lesson plan

Quilt Square Collages
Grades 2nd-8th
In this workshop, students will be introduced to the history of Underground Railroad quilt codes and work to apply their knowledge by creating their own inspired secret-message collage pieces.
Click here for the lesson plan

Focused Unity Acting Games
Grades 3rd-8th
Students will use focus and concentration to function as a group and perform synchronized movements in a series of unique acting games. This workshop seeks to help students understand the important traits of concentrated focus, silent teamwork, and diligent leadership that was required of those who escaped to freedom.
Click here for the lesson plan

Click here to access our workshop handout, including visual aids for benefiting students.
ENHANCE: WORKSHOPS WITH LOCAL TEACHING ARTISTS

Book a Quilting Residency with Cookie Washington
All Ages
In this mini-residency, students will learn the history of quilt code patterns from fourth generation needle worker Torreah “Cookie” Washington, then have the opportunity to design and sew their own Afro-inspired quilt squares!
To bring quilting into your school, please contact Cookie Washington at cookiesews1960@gmail.com.

Book a Literacy and Legacy Storytelling Workshop with Julian Gooding
Grades 2nd+
In this workshop, Julian will share the history of storytelling using his quilt, Adinkra symbolism in African language, and world percussion. In his quilt, he uses symbols to explain the importance of reading, finding your voice, and lifelong learning to maintain the power of freedom.
To bring storytelling into your school, please contact Julian Gooding at juliangooding1@yahoo.com.
EXPLORER: HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENTS AROUND THE WORLD

The Stono Rebellion: A Freedom Movement

“In 1739, a group of enslaved Africans were part of a work gang building a public road in South Carolina. The road gang was poorly guarded, and twenty men took this opportunity to rise up against the mistreatment and backbreaking slave labor.” The slaves gathered at the Stono River bridge and began marching to the nearby Hutchinson’s store before continuing down the Edisto River, hoping to make it to Spanish Hill, Florida and obtain their freedom. The men used drums as a “call to action,” and shouted “Liberty” as they traveled, gathering around 100 people on their journey. Unfortunately, the rebellion was halted, with most of those who made their escape captured and killed. The Stono Rebellion was the most violent revolt by enslaved Africans in the United States, and when slaveowners recognized the power of the drum as a means of communication, they drafted the Negro Act of 1740, making use of the drum illegal by African Americans.5

Women’s Suffrage Movement

“Suffrage” is defined as the right to vote, and for centuries, women have not had equal voting rights to men in many parts of the world. In 1893, New Zealand became the first country to give women the right to vote in national elections, sparking controversy across the globe. “In the UK, prominent suffragists like Emmeline Pankhurst led increasingly militant protests as the government refused to budge… When WWI broke out, suffrage organizations began aiding the war effort, which helped sway the public in their favor.” In 1918, the Representation of the People Act in England granted voting rights to all women over the age of 30. War also helped to push the cause of suffrage along in the United States, with the 19th Amendment extending voting rights to women in 1920.6

Figure 5 Claudia Sutherland “Stono Rebellion (1739),” September 18, 2018, https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/stono-rebellion-1739/
EXPLORE: HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENTS AROUND THE WORLD

Anti-Apartheid Movement
Apartheid, meaning “apartness” in Afrikaans, was a systematic legislation upholding racial segregation in South Africa. “Under this system, which began in 1948, non-white South Africans were forced to use separate public facilities, live in isolated areas, and get permission to travel. Non-whites were also forbidden to vote, participate in government, or marry white people.” The anti-apartheid movement was met with violent resistance, resulting in the loss of hundreds of South African lives, and many anti-apartheid leaders such as Nelson Mandela felt that peaceful protest was no longer an option. In 1976, news of anti-apartheid violence spread around the world, causing the United Nations Security Council to impose a mandatory embargo on the sale of weapons to South Africa, forcing the country into an economic recession. In response, a new constitution was passed, formally ending over 50 years of apartheid in 1994. Consequently, activist Nelson Mandela was freed from prison for his protest of apartheid, and went on to serve as the first president of South Africa until 1999.7

Democracy Movement
For 156 years, Hong Kong was a British colony. When control of Hong Kong reverted from Britain to China in 1997, Hong Kong strove to maintain a “one country, two systems” structure, though many citizens began to accuse China of violating their freedoms. “In 2019, the Hong Kong government proposed a bill that would extradite suspected criminal offenders to mainland China. Many saw that as a violation of Hong Kong’s judicial independence. Protesters hit the streets, leading to the bill’s suspension and eventually a formal withdrawal.” However, this sparked immense controversy across the globe. Despite some victories for the Hong Kong democratic movement, it has been silenced for now. Following the passing of several strict national security laws in 2020, 53 pro-democracy politicians were arrested, and now potentially face life in prison “for what supporters call politically-motivated charges.”8

EXPLORE: MORE RESOURCES

WATCH
- Pride Explained for Kids
- What are the Universal Human Rights?
- The Hong Kong Protests Explained
- What Does “Black Lives Matter” Mean?
- Women’s Equality Day for Kids
- The Story of Nelson Mandela

READ
- Equality’s Call: The Story of Voting Rights in America
  By Deborah Diesen
  The founders of the United States declared that consent of the governed was a key part of their plan for the new nation. But for many years, only white men with property were allowed to vote. This unflinching and inspiring history of voting rights looks back at the activists who answered equality’s call, working tirelessly to secure the right for all to vote, and it also looks forward to the future and the work that still needs to be done.

- All Because You Matter
  By Tami Charles
  A lyrical, heart-lifting love letter to Black and brown children everywhere: reminding them how much they matter, that they have always mattered, and they always will, from powerhouse rising star author Tami Charles and esteemed, award-winning illustrator Bryan Collier. Discover this poignant, timely, and emotionally stirring picture book, an ode to Black and brown children everywhere that is full of hope, assurance, and love. This powerful, rhythmic lullaby reassures readers that their matter and their worth is never diminished, no matter the circumstance: through the joy and wonder of their first steps and first laughs, through the hardship of adolescent struggles, and the pain and heartbreak of current events, they always have, and always will, matter. Accompanied by illustrations by renowned artist Bryan Collier, a four-time Caldecott Honor recipient and a nine-time Coretta Scott King Award winner or honoree, All Because You Matter empowers readers with pride, joy, and comfort, reminding them of their roots and strengthening them for the days to come.

Show Way
The Musical
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EXPLORE: MORE RESOURCES

‘Twas The Night Before Pride
By Joanna McClintick
This joyful picture-book homage to a day of community and inclusion – and to the joys of anticipation – is also a comprehensive history. With bright, buoyant illustrations and lyrical, age-appropriate rhyme modeled on “‘Twas the Night Before Christmas,” it tackles difficult content such as the Stonewall Riots and the AIDS marches. On the night before Pride, families everywhere are preparing to partake. As one family packs snacks and makes signs, an older sibling shares the importance of the march with the newest member of the family. Reflecting on the day, the siblings agree that the best thing about Pride is getting to be yourself. Debut author Joanna McClintick and Pura Belpre Award–winning author-illustrator Juana Medina create a new classic that pays homage to the beauty of families of all compositions – and of all-inclusive love.

Hector: A Boy, A Protest, and the Photograph that Changed Apartheid
By Adrienne Wright
On June 16, 1976, Hector Pieterson, an ordinary boy, lost his life after getting caught up in what was supposed to be a peaceful protest. Black South African students were marching against a new law requiring that they be taught half of their subjects in Afrikaans, the language of the White government. The story’s events unfold from the perspectives of Hector, his sister, and the photographer who captured their photo in the chaos. This book can serve as a pertinent tool for adults discussing global history and race relations with children. Its graphic novel style and mixed media art portray the vibrancy and grit of Hector’s daily life and untimely death. Heartbreaking yet relevant, this powerful story gives voice to an ordinary boy and sheds light on events that helped lead to the end of apartheid.

VISIT & EXPLORE
The International African American Museum
The Real Rainbow Row: A Self Guided Walking Tour
HERstory: Women’s History of Charleston Tour
McLeod Plantation Interpretive Tours

Figure 9 “McLeod Plantation” Wikimedia Commons, updated August 2, 2022, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:McCord_Plantation_2022.jpg
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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