



## ***NORTH BY NIGHT* Teacher Guide**

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### **PRE-READING ACTIVITY**

Explain the Underground Railroad system to the students. Display a map of the most commonly used routes. Then divide the class into small groups and ask each group to research one of the following people and their role with the Underground Railroad: Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Levi Coffin. Ask each group to share their information with the class. Have a copy of *Stealing South* available for students to read.

### **THEMATIC CONNECTIONS**

**Freedom and Independence** — Read the following quotation from a poem by Langston Hughes: “Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly.” Engage the class in a discussion about the dreams of the fugitive slaves in the book. Who is the broken winged bird in the novel? Who keeps slaves’ dreams alive? What might Hope be told when she grows up about her mother’s fight for freedom?

**Courage** — What gives the runaways the courage to risk their lives to gain freedom? Engage the class in a discussion about the beliefs of the Quakers and why they risk their lives and property to help on the Underground Railroad. Ask students to discuss the moments in *North by Night* when they feel the characters display the most courage. When does Lucinda’s courage almost falter?

**Loneliness** — Lucinda is only a few miles from home at Miss Aurelia’s house, but she often feels lonely. Ask students to cite passages in the book when loneliness almost overcomes Lucinda. How does her mother’s visit make Lucinda miss her more? How does living with Miss Aurelia for a few months make Lucinda more capable of dealing with loneliness when she arrives in Canada?

**Making Choices** — Miss Aurelia asks Lucinda, “Are these abolitionist beliefs yours, or do they simply belong to your parents?” When does

Lucinda make the choice to accept the abolitionist beliefs as her own? Lucinda is in love with Jeremiah Strong. Why is being in love with a Quaker a difficult situation for Lucinda? What influences Lucinda's decision to leave her family and take Hope to Canada? Of all the choices that Lucinda is faced with in the novel, which decision is the most difficult for her to make?

## **INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS**

**Language Arts** — The only way that Lucinda can communicate with her family is by writing letters using codes. Ask students to review some of the letters that Lucinda writes and identify her codes. Then, ask them to write a letter that Lucinda might have written to her family from Canada to let them know that she and the baby are okay. Instruct the students to use the same codes in their letters that Lucinda uses.

**Social Studies** — The bravery and courage of Harriet Tubman, the most famous black leader of the Underground Railroad, inspired others to speak out against racial inequality. Have students research an African American activist of the 20th century: Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers, Linda Brown, Malcolm X, or Jesse Jackson. Provide a brief biographical sketch of the person, highlighting their contributions to racial equality.

**Science** — Miss Aurelia fakes having the measles to keep people from searching her house. Ask students to research the symptoms and treatment of the disease. What are its serious side effects if not properly treated? What other diseases threatened people in the mid-1800s? Why did Miss Aurelia chose measles as the disease to fake?

**Geography/Math** — Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania were heavily traveled routes on the Underground Railroad. Display a United States map and plot the approximate locations of the stations on the railroad. Divide the class into groups and assign each a slave state. Ask them to locate the center of the state, then calculate the shortest route for the fugitive slaves to follow from that point to a terminal on the railroad that will lead them to freedom.

**Art** — Miss Aurelia is a writer and an artist. Ask students to draw a picture that Miss Aurelia might have drawn to accompany her article (p. 151) for *The Liberator*.

**Drama** — There are several dramatic passages in the novel. Divide the class into small groups and ask each group to select a passage from the book to rewrite it and perform it as short one-act play.

**Music** — The slaves found much comfort in their songs. Have small groups locate spirituals that slaves may have sung and perform one song in class. What do the songs tell us about the slaves' lives and their hopes for freedom?