

## Roadmaps to Freedom: Freedom Quilt Activity

### Objectives:

1. Students will learn how quilts were allegedly used to aid runaways on the Underground Railroad.
2. Students will research and become familiar with symbols and quilt patterns that were used on the Underground Railroad "Freedom Quilts".
3. Students will create quilt tiles in the Underground Railroad "Freedom Quilt" tradition.
4. Students will share their group creations and explain their "quilt maps" to the class.

### Materials:

- Internet Access to research quilt designs, patterns, and symbols
- Construction materials such as: paper, coloured pencils, markers, tape, etc.

### Procedures:

(Activity can be modified to fit your school setting or classroom environment)

1. Students must have a general understanding of the Underground Railroad.
2. Students will have the opportunity to research Underground Railroad "Freedom Quilts" via the internet.
3. Students need to have a general understanding of the symbols used on the "Freedom Quilts".
4. Students need to be divided into small groups
5. Each group is responsible for designing 4-6 quilt tiles that could be used to navigate a "runaway" through your school's grounds to freedom.
  - a. Give groups different locations throughout your school's grounds to start from, but ensure each group is given the same finishing destination (representing "freedom").
  - b. Start and end points can be designed to fit your own school environment.
6. Each group needs to depict landmarks, buildings, or any other clues that any person could use to get from their respective starting points to "freedom".
7. Students are permitted to walk the course that they are required to plan out on their quilts. Students need to take mental notes while on their journey and discuss their group's design. This should take 15-20 minutes.
8. After taking notes on their journey, each group needs to return to class and begin designing their quilts (4-6 tiles per group is recommended).
9. Each tile design should help a "runaway" navigate the road that must be traveled to freedom.
  - a. Each quilt tile must contain color.
  - b. Each quilt tile must be the same size.
  - c. Students are encouraged to stick to traditional geometric quilting designs.
  - d. Students are encouraged to incorporate at least 2 of the traditional quilt codes that would have been used by enslaved persons.
  - e. Students are also encouraged not to make the quilt designs too obvious, after all, traditional "Freedom Quilts" were allegedly secret codes for runaways.

10. After each group has designed their mini-quilt, they should present the finished product to the rest of the class and explain the journey one should take while using their quilt as a roadmap. Alternatively, encourage classmates to guess the meaning behind each other's quilt patterns prior to presentation. If desired, all group mini-quilts can be put together to form one large freedom quilt from the class.

**Assessment:**

1. Student assessment is on-going throughout the quilt design.
2. Students need to adhere to the quilt design requirements.
3. Teacher needs to assess the quality of the quilts and determine if a runaway could genuinely use the quilt to successfully navigate the escape route to freedom, home base.