# The Underground Railroad
from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for U.S. History

| Target audience – U.S. History learner | Time required – 15 minutes |
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| **Activity** | Explore the network of places and routes that made up the Underground Railroad. |
| **Social Studies Standards** | **C3: D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.**<br>**C3: D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.** |
| **Learning Outcomes** | • Students will identify locations that were enslaved and free in the United States in 1850.<br>• Students will explain the role of distance, location, and networks with the Underground Railroad. |

## Map URL: http://esriurl.com/historygeoinquiry5

## ？ Ask

### Where was slavery practiced in the United States in 1850?

→ Click the link above to launch the map.
→ With the Details button underlined, click the button Show Legend.
? Which states allowed slavery? Which did not? *[Southern states allowed slavery; Northern states did not.]*
? Which areas were the most enslaved? *[The Mississippi River counties and coastal South Carolina were the most enslaved.]*
? What factors influenced these areas being mostly enslaved? *[Distance to free states, the Mississippi River, climate, plantations, and coastal lowlands]*

## ⍈ Acquire

### Where did the big river meet the little river?

→ Click the button, Show Contents of Map.
→ Click the button, Bookmarks. Select Underground Railroad.
→ Turn on the layer, Map Notes. Open and read the Map Note located in Northern Michigan
? Why did rivers make good escape routes? *[Easy to follow north, provided hiding areas, and covered scents.]*
? Which rivers do you think are the big river and little river? *[Answers will vary.]*
→ Filter the US Rivers layer so that FOLLOW is set to YES (see ToolTip on page 2).
? Why was this intersection a key destination? *[It bordered slave and free states and had long, wide rivers.]*
→ Remove the filter.

## 🔍 Explore

### Where were the Underground Railroad stations located?

→ Turn on the Notable Underground Railroad Stations layer.
? What patterns do you notice about the station locations? *[They are located in northern cities, along the Ohio River, the Great Lakes, and Canada.]*
? Which stations were located farthest north? *[Towns in Canada were farthest north.]*
→ Click the two purple stations.
? What types of stations were these, and what does this reveal about the Underground Railroad? *[Both were slave jails, illustrating the risk of being captured and returned to slavery.]*

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## 📋 Analyze

### How did runaway slaves travel to freedom?

→ Turn on the layer, Routes.
? What patterns do you notice about these networks? *[Ohio River was a popular starting point; routes were more numerous in Ohio and become dispersed farther west.]*
→ Turn off the layer, Stations.
→ Turn on the layer, Windsor.
→ Use the Measure tool to answer the questions below.
? Most runaway slaves came from border states. Why? *[They came because of distance.]*
? How far is the Ohio River from Windsor? *[It is 220-420 miles.]*
? How far is the Ohio River from the mouth of the Mississippi River? *[It is 580-620 miles.]*
? How far is Windsor from the mouth of the Mississippi River? *[It is 1,100+ miles.]*
? Besides distance, what other factors made escaping the Deep South difficult? *[From your previous studies you may have noted that the area was mostly enslaved, there was a lack of cities, and there were difficult climate conditions.]*

## ☑ Act

### Why was the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 passed?

– The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 made it a crime in the United States to assist runaway slaves.
? How did the Underground Railroad contribute to Southern lawmakers calling for a stricter fugitive slave law? *[Slave owners who were losing "property" wanted a law to deter people from helping fugitive slaves.]*
? What impact did the stricter Fugitive Slave Act have on the Underground Railroad? *[It became more risky to help runaway slaves; the only safe destination was Canada; it rallied abolitionists.]*

| MEASURE | FILTER |
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| • Choose the Line or Area Measure tool.<br>• Set the distance units.<br>• Click and drag your pointer to calculate the distance of a line. | • Filter only available for certain map layers.<br>• With the Details button underlined, hover over a layer name.<br>• Click Filter button.<br>• Set Filter parameters. |

## Next Steps

**DID YOU KNOW?**
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**THEN TRY THIS...**
• Create a hot spot map to show where the highest concentration of Underground Railroad stations and routes was located.
• Use the ArcGIS Story Map Journal template to research and present an Underground Railroad story about a town, a network, or a person.

📇 **TEXT REFERENCES**    This GIS map has been cross-referenced to material in sections of chapters from these texts.

• *The Americans by McDougal Littell — Chapter 10*
• *History Alive! The United States by TCI  — Chapter 19*