

Primary Source

The Underground Railroad and Networks to Freedom



How did the principles of the Declaration of Independence contribute to the quest to end slavery from colonial times to the outbreak of the Civil War?

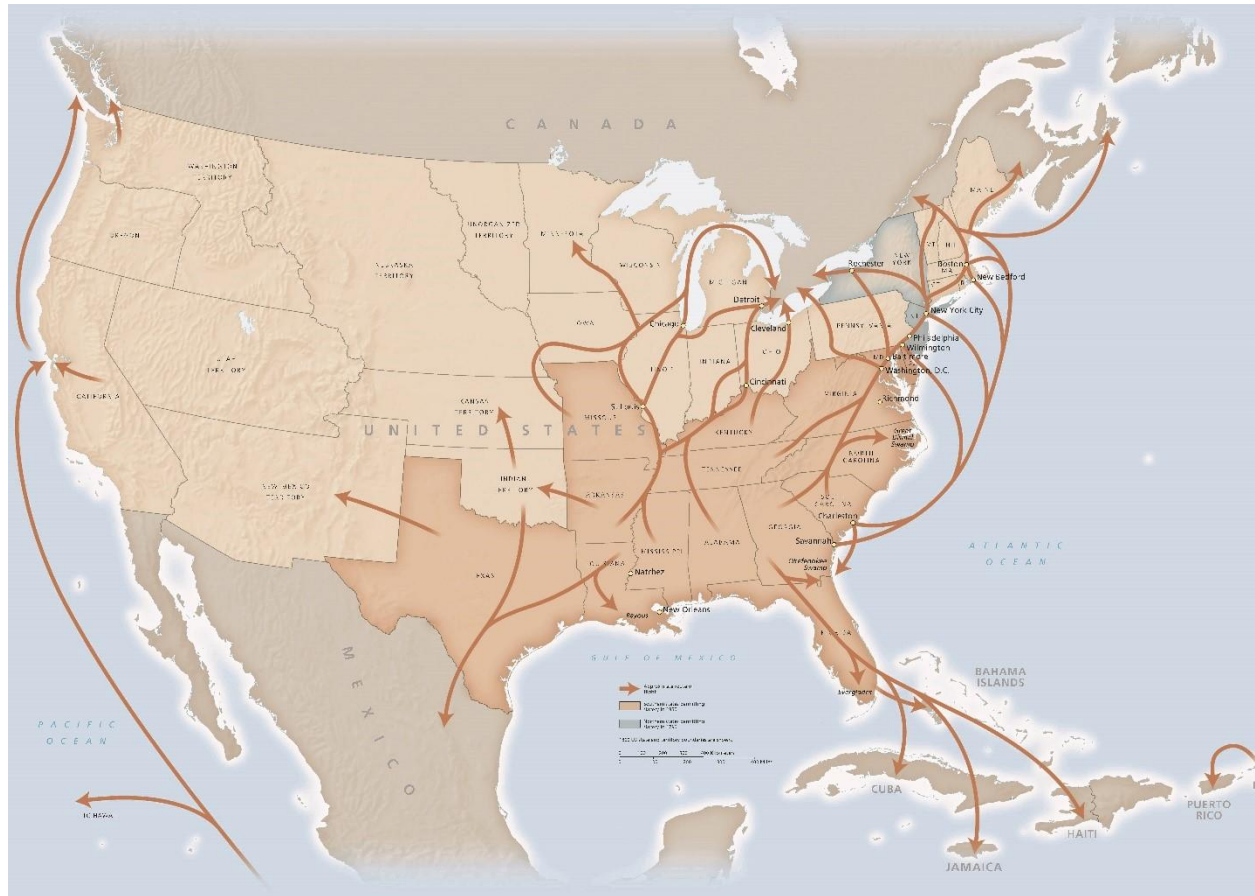
- ☐ I can interpret primary sources related to Founding principles of liberty, equality, and justice from the colonial era to the outbreak of the Civil War.
- ☐ I can explain how laws and policy, courts, and individuals and groups contributed to or pushed back against the quest to end slavery.
- ☐ I can create an argument using evidence from primary sources.
- ☐ I can analyze issues in history to help find solutions to present-day challenges.

Building Context

Many enslaved men and women chose to secure their own freedom by running away to the North via the Underground Railroad, a network of people who helped enslaved people safely escape from slavery. These undertakings were extremely dangerous for many reasons: Often, enslaved people were pursued by bounty hunters, and if recaptured they were whipped and returned to slavery. Those who helped them were subject to criminal prosecution under the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. “Conductors” on the railroad helped fugitive enslaved people reach the North. The most famous was Harriet Tubman. Tubman escaped slavery on the eastern shore of Maryland and returned to the South about 12 times to lead approximately 70 men and women to freedom. She likely used the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church as a stop along her escape route. Churches such as this, schools, and homes were used as hiding places and referred to as “stations” or “depots.” They were run by ordinary people such as farmers, business owners, and ministers who assisted freedom seekers at great personal risk.

Maps of Networks to Freedom

Source: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/the-places-of-the-underground-railroad.htm>



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Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, in Springtown, New Jersey

Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bethel_African_Methodist_Episcopal_Church_\(Springtown,_New_Jersey\)#/media/File:AME_BEthel_Othello.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bethel_African_Methodist_Episcopal_Church_(Springtown,_New_Jersey)#/media/File:AME_BEthel_Othello.JPG)



Comprehension and Analysis Questions

1. What additional information would be helpful to understand the role of the Underground Railroad in the quest to end slavery?

2. Why was Canada the safest destination for enslaved people running away? According to this map, where else did enslaved individuals escape to?