

Underground Railroad – Coded Messages

Using the Code Words and Phrases sheet decode the following messages.

The wind blows from the South today and the shepherds have many bundles of wood to keep them warm.

Have you seen the station master? A load of potatoes need to be taken to the River Jordan and given to the shepherds.

It is cloudy tonight. The baggage should be placed by the river bank for it makes a mighty good road.

The stockholder has arrived. Excess baggage can be forwarded by notifying the station master of its arrival.

Tell the station master that Moses knows of a parcel which must be forwarded. The parcel, which contains bundles of wood, should be delivered to the shepherds that watch the sheep where the river ends between two hills.

Make up some of your own:

Underground Railroad Code Words and Phrases

Baggage	<i>Escaping slaves</i>
Bundles of wood	<i>Fugitives to be expected</i>
Canaan	<i>Canada</i>
Drinking gourd	<i>Big Dipper and the North star</i>
Forwarding	<i>Taking fugitive slaves from station to station</i>
Freedom Train	<i>The Underground Railroad</i>
Gospel Train	<i>The Underground Railroad</i>
Heaven or Promised land	<i>Canada</i>
Load of Potatoes	<i>Escaping slaves hidden under the farm produce in a wagon</i>
Moses	<i>Harriet Tubman</i>
Parcel	<i>Fugitives to be expected</i>
Preachers	<i>Leaders, speakers underground railroad</i>
River Jordan	<i>The Mississippi</i>
Shepherds	<i>People escorting slaves</i>
Station	<i>Place of safety and temporary refuge, safe-house</i>
Station Master	<i>Keeper of safe-house</i>
Stockholder	<i>Donor of money, clothing, or food to the Underground Railroad</i>

"The wind blows from the South today"	<i>A warning to Underground Railroad workers that fugitive slaves were in the area.</i>
"When the sun comes back and the first quail calls"	<i>A particular time of year good for escaping (early spring)</i>
"The river bank makes a mighty good road"	<i>A reminder that the tracking dogs can't follow the scent through the water.</i>
"The dead trees will show you the way"	<i>A reminder that moss grows on the NORTH side of dead trees (just in case the stars aren't visible)</i>
"Left foot, peg foot"	<i>A visual clue for escapees left by an Underground Railroad worker famous because of his wooden leg.</i>
"The river ends between two hills"	<i>A clue for the directions to the Ohio River</i>
"A friend with friends"...	<i>A password used to signal arrival of fugitives with Underground Railroad conductor</i>
"The friend of a friend sent me"	<i>A password used by fugitives travelling alone to indicate they were sent by the Underground Railroad network</i>
"Steal away, steal away, steal away to Jesus"	<i>(Words to a song) - used to alert other slaves that an escape attempt was coming up</i>