

The Underground Railroad

Researched and reported by Lana Zuo



What is the underground railroad?

The underground railroad is not a real underground railroad, but a combination of safe houses, routes, and conductors that help slaves escape to places where they will be free, such as Canada or Mexico.

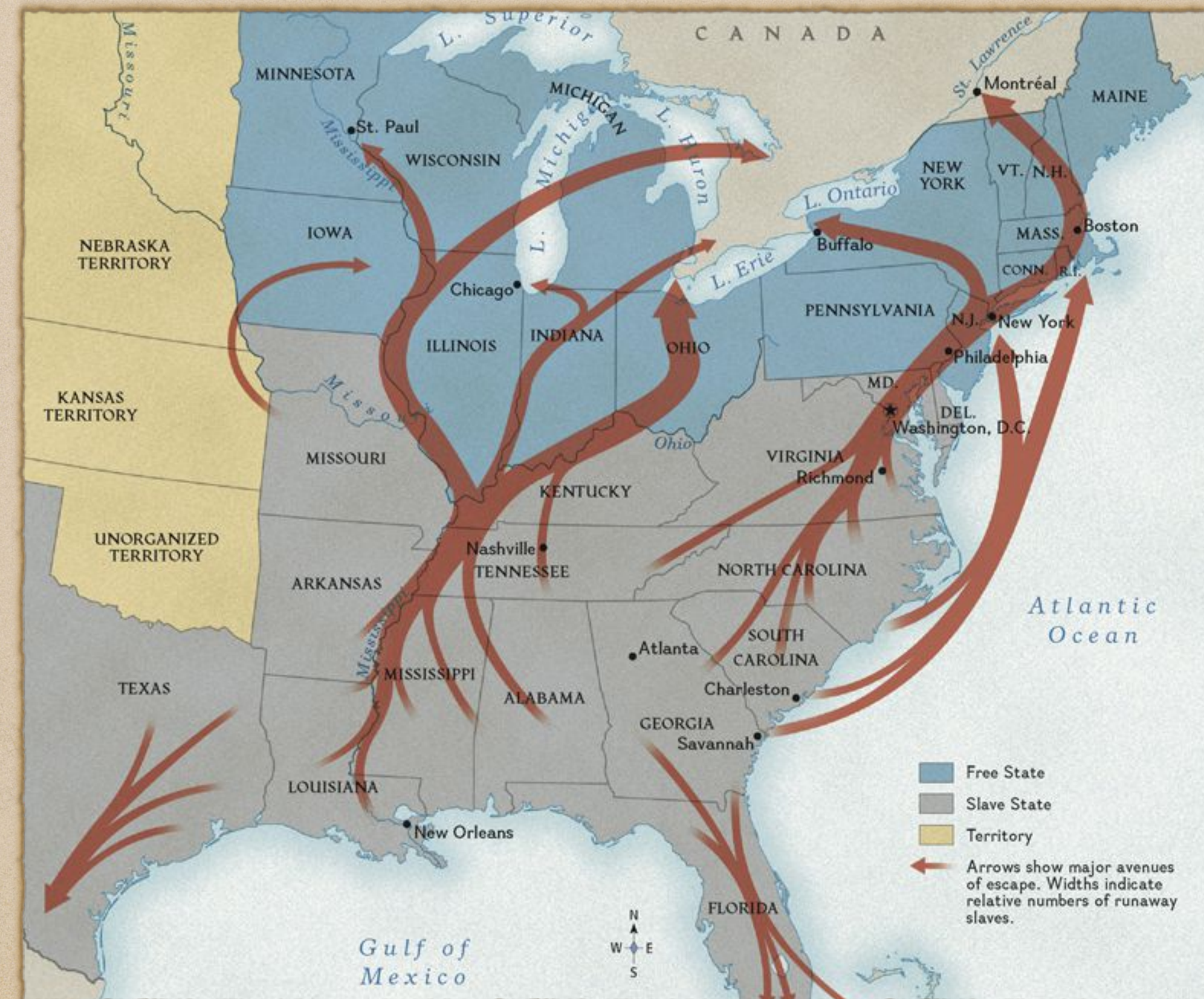


Why do slaves want to escape to the north and not stay in the Southern America?

Because in the South there are mostly plantations, large farms. They need lots of people to do the work. Slaves are cheap labor. After slave owners buy their slaves, they are free to use slaves and their children for the rest of their lives. In North, they have factories and machines to do the work. They need free-willed labor instead of slaves.

How do slaves escape to the North?

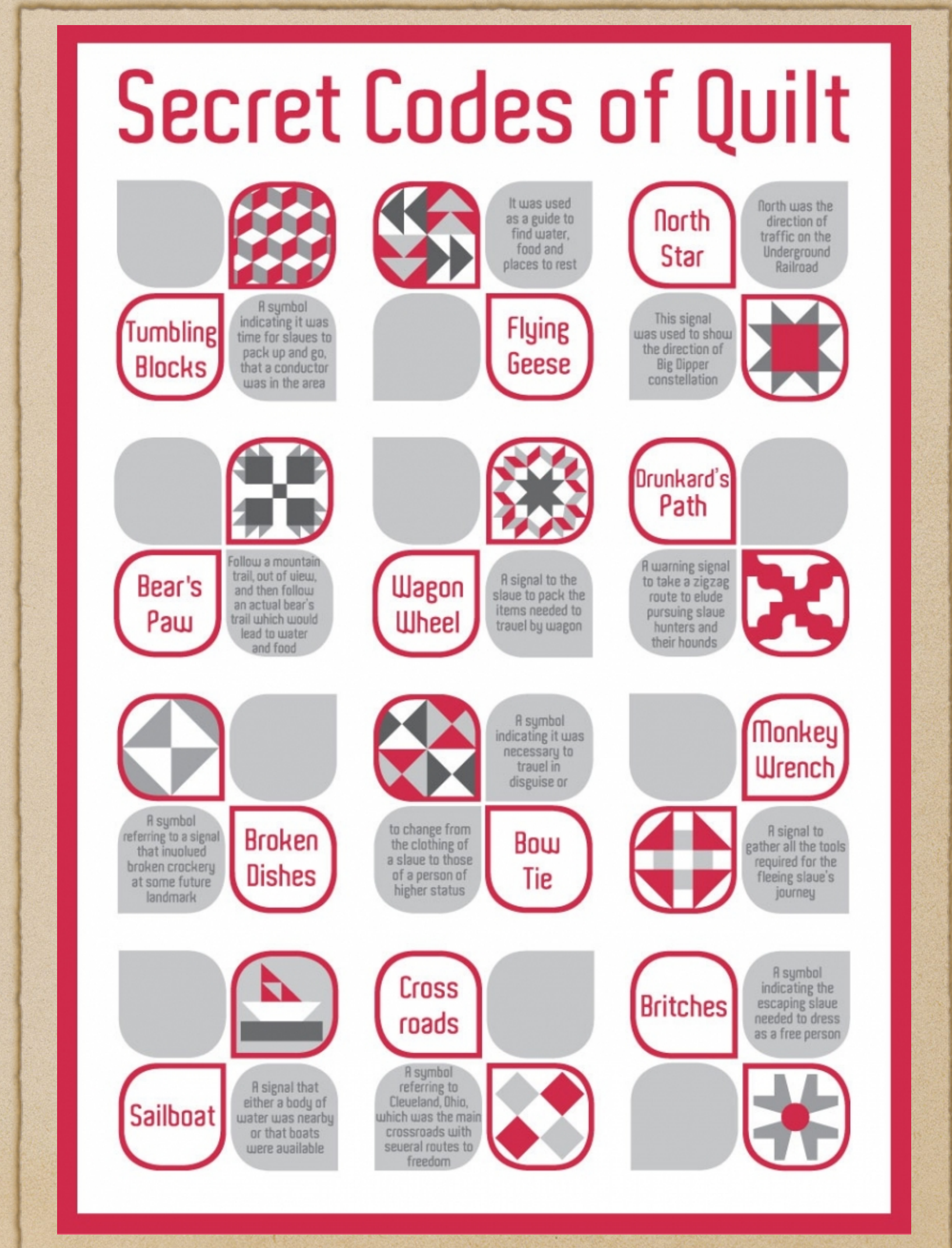
- ◆ The slaves have to first know when and where they can meet a conductor, then escape from the place that they are working at.
- ◆ Next the slaves need to find the conductor, who will lead them to a safe house.



How do slaves escape to the North?

(continued)

- ◆ Most slaves do not know how to read, so they have to follow specific symbols and signs.
- ◆ The symbols and signs are usually displayed on quilts hung outside the safe house. It is customary to hang quilts outside houses in the South.
- ◆ Slaves follow the signs until they reach the north.



Who are conductors and slaves?

- ◆ Conductors are people who help slaves escape to the North.
- ◆ They are often escaped slaves themselves, and usually own safe houses.
- ◆ Slaves are people who are forced to do others' work.
- ◆ The slaves that are involved in the underground railroads are usually African Americans.



Who is Harriet Tubman?

- ◆ Harriet Tubman was born a slave, who escaped to Philadelphia at age 27. She was one of the most famous conductors. She helped more than 300 slaves escape.
- ◆ Being a conductor is often dangerous. Harriet risked her own freedom 19 times going back to the South to guide slaves to the North.
- ◆ Nobody would speak openly about the underground railroad so code words were used. For example, "cargo" meant slaves, "line" meant escape routes, and a "station" is a safe house.



Where do slaves work in the South?

- ◆ Slaves work on plantations, large farms, in Southern America, because that's where they needed the most.
- ◆ These plantations often grow cotton and tobacco.



When did Underground Railroad Happen?

- ◆ The Underground Railroad started in the 1830s.
- ◆ The Fugitive Act Of 1793 allowed slave owners to recapture slaves. The Fugitive Act of 1850 allowed even more harsh measures to bring back the slaves to the South.

Fugitive Slaves

ATTENTION.

The Slave-hunter is among us!

BE ON YOUR GUARD!

AN ARREST IS PLANNED FOR TO-NIGHT.

BE READY TO RECEIVE THEM,

WHENEVER THEY COME!

Resources

- ◆ BrainPop: Underground Railroad
- ◆ Google Image Search: Underground Railroad
- ◆ <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2944.html>