Welcome to Beyond the Stage, a performance guide published by the Education Department of the Lied Center of Kansas. Beyond the Stage is designed to help you prepare for the performance of A Midnight Cry: The Underground Railroad to Freedom.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCES:
Tuesday, April 5, 2006
9:45 a.m.
1:00 p.m.
Lied Center

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Beyond the Stage
A Creative & Theatrical Guide

Play ................................................................. A MIDNIGHT CRY
The Underground Railroad to Freedom

Playwright .......................................................... James De Vita

DALLAS CHILDREN’S THEATER, one of the top five family theaters in the nation, serves over 200,000 young people from 100 zip codes, 40 cities and 12 counties each year through its 11 main stage productions, touring, educational programming and outreach activities. Since its opening in 1984, this award-winning theater has existed to create challenging, inspiring and entertaining theater, which communicates vital messages to our youth and promotes an early appreciation for literature and the performing arts. As the only major organization in Dallas focusing on theater for youth and families, DCT produces literary classics, original scripts, folk tales, myths, fantasies and contemporary dramas that foster multicultural understanding, confront topical issues and celebrate the human spirit.

PLAYING YOUR PART!

By attending this performance, you can help to pass along the spirit of the Underground Railroad. To do that, you will need to watch and listen closely. Being a part of a theatre audience is different than watching a movie or a television show. The performers are in the same room with you and are affected by what you do. Any unexpected noise or movement in the audience can destroy the performer’s concentration. A Midnight Cry is full of action onstage. When you listen and watch carefully, you can hear the words, see what the actors are doing and grasp the full experience of the performance. As an audience member, you play a very important part, too!

Watch closely. Listen carefully. Enjoy the performance!
FOR THE HISTORY DETECTIVE
Can you decode these messages for the Underground Railroad? Use the Code Words and Definitions page to help you translate these messages, and write your decoded message on the lines below each one.

1. I picked up the baggage from the jumping off place. I am forwarding it to the pilot, who will know what to do. In addition, Mrs. Allen has a load of potatoes on your wagon that was given to her by shepherds last week. She informed me that they should be given immediately to the brakeman as a gift.

2. Good morning, Mrs. Douglas. The wind blows from the South today. The station master had a bit of a problem this morning. I suggested that due to the rains he should take French leave and bypass the next town until we have a useful road.

3. I have these travelers who are lost. I need an operator to help them find a way station so they may rest.

On the lines below, try writing your own secret message and see if anybody can decode it!

Decoded message:
Breaking the code

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
CODE WORDS AND DEFINITIONS

AGENT: A person who plotted the course of escape for fugitive slaves
BAGGAGE: Escaping slaves
BLACK GRAPEVINE: A method of communication in the black community
BRAKEMAN: Person in charge of making contacts to fugitive slaves
BYPASS OR RUNAROUND: A diverted escape route
CONDUCTORS: People who directly transported slaves
DRINKING GOURD: The North Star
FLYING BONDSMEN: The number of escaping slaves
FORWARDING: Taking fugitive slaves from station to station
FREEDOM LINE: The route of travel for an escaped slave
FRENCH LEAVE: Secret departure
JUMPING OFF PLACE: A place of shelter for fugitives
LOAD OF POTATOES: A wagon load of fugitive slaves hidden under the farm produce
OPERATOR: A person who aided fugitive slaves as a conductor or agent on the Underground Railroad
PATTER ROLLER: A bounty hunter hired to capture slaves
PILOT: A person serving as a guide for runaways
SANCTUARY: A hiding place
SCATTERED WAY WAGONS: A number of hiding places
SHEPHERDS: People who entice slaves to escape
STATION: A safe place where fugitives could be sheltered
STATION MASTER: A person in charge of a hiding place
STOP AND START: A place of shelter and a course of escape
TRAVELLERS: Runaways
“THE WIND BLOWS FROM THE SOUTH TODAY”: A warning to Underground Railroad workers that fugitive slaves were present in the area
The Drinking Gourd

When the sun comes back and the first quail calls,
Follow the Drinking Gourd.
For the old man is waiting for to carry you to freedom,
If you follow the Drinking Gourd.

“When the sun comes back” means winter and spring when the altitude of the sun at noon is higher each day. Quail are migratory bird wintering in the South. The Drinking Gourd is the Big Dipper. The old man is Peg Leg Joe. The verse tells slaves to leave in the winter and walk towards the Drinking Gourd. Eventually they will meet a guide who will escort them for the remainder of the trip.

Most escapees had to cross the Ohio River which is too wide and too swift to swim. The Railroad struggled with the problem of how to get escapees across, and with experience, came to believe the best crossing time was winter. Then the river was frozen, and escapees could walk across on the ice. Since it took most escapees a year to travel from the South to the Ohio, the Railroad urged slaves to start their trip in winter in order to be at the Ohio the next winter.

The river bank makes a very good road,
The dead trees show you the way;
Left foot, peg foot, traveling on
Follow the Drinking Gourd.

This verse taught slaves to follow the bank of the Tombigbee River north looking for dead trees that were marked with drawings of a left foot and a peg foot. The markings distinguished the Tombigbee from other north-south rivers that flow into it.

The river ends between two hills,
Follow the Drinking Gourd.
There’s another river on the other side,
Follow the Drinking Gourd.

These words told the slaves that when they reached the headwaters of the Tombigbee, they were to continue north over the hills until they met another river. Then they were to travel north along the new river which is the Tennessee River. A number of the southern escape routes converged on the Tennessee.

Where the great big river meets the little river,
Follow the Drinking Gourd.
For the old man is awaiting to carry you to freedom if you follow the Drinking Gourd.

This verse told the slaves the Tennessee joined another river. They were to cross that river (which is the Ohio River), and on the north bank, meet a guide from the Underground Railroad.
You are a slave.
Your body, your time, your very breath belong to a farmer in 1850s Maryland. Six long days a week you tend his fields and make him rich. You have never tasted freedom. You never expect to.

And yet . . . your soul lights up when you hear whispers of attempted escape. But freedom means a hard, dangerous trek.

Will you risk everything and go on this incredible journey? What are some of the dangers of leaving the plantation?

Along the way, you will encounter people who will hide and protect you and learn secrets to help guide you to freedom. But . . . fear and doubt lurk around every corner. To be successful, you must trust your instincts, look to the night sky for guidance, and, above all, have courage.

Not long after you make your decision to leave, you hear that “Moses” is coming! You’ve heard the stories about her. She is Harriet Tubman, and guided by her “visions,” she has never lost a passenger. Even if Moses can’t fit you into her next group, she’ll tell you how to follow the North Star to freedom in Canada.

Even though you have not yet met her, do you choose to seek out and follow Moses? Why do you need a guide for your journey?

Every step seems louder. Twigs snap, leaves crackle. But you walk on, till you see a group of friendly faces. You join them shyly and meet “General Tubman” herself. She tells you how to sneak across the bridge over the Choptank River and where to find friends in a place called Delaware.

Once you crossed the river, you see a large house with a lantern hanging in front of it. Your head says go, your feet say no. Harriet Tubman told you that a lantern on a hitching post means a safe house. But can you really knock on a white family’s door and trust them to help you?

Now you must decide...do you approach the house or hide in the woods?

Your Journey to Freedom continues at: http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/
1. Did the performance teach you new things about the Underground Railroad? What did you not know about the Underground Railroad that you learned in the performance?

2. Who was your favorite character? Why were they your favorite?

3. Did you enjoy the performance? What was your favorite part?

4. Would you recommend this performance to someone else? Why or why not?

5. If you had to sum the story up in 3 sentences, what would you say it was about?

6. Would you like to come see another performance at the Lied Center?

7. What is one thing you still don’t know about the Underground Railroad that you would like to learn?
http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/
Here is the address for National Geographic’s Underground Railroad site, and there are tons of links to explore!

http://education.ucdavis.edu/new/stc/lesson/socstud/railroad/contents.htm
On this site, you can find a listing of some good links to information on underground railroad as well as literature of the time, music and maps.

http://menare.org/Research/Start.htm
Do you want to do some more research on the Underground Railroad? Visit this site for a great guide on how to research the Underground Railroad.

http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~ugrradgckansas/history.htm
Curious about the Underground Railroad right here in Douglas County? Check this site out!

Did you like the online activity included in this guide? If so, then go to this site to play this Headbone Derby game. In it, two present-day teens go back in time and find themselves traveling the Underground Railroad with a family of slaves. Along the way, the teens learn about the realities of slavery in the South, codes used to help slaves escape, legislation that made escape more difficult, and much more. You will need to register to use some features of the site, but registration is free!

http://www.americangirl.com/agcn/addy/escape/
In Meet Addy, Momma and Addy try a daring escape from slavery after Poppa and Sam are sold to another plantation owner. They need courage and faith to travel north to freedom. Can they overcome each challenge and gain that freedom? To find out, travel with them on their dangerous journey.
Adventures in Imagination is the Lied Center’s L.E.A.P. partnership with Lawrence Public Schools and U.S. Bank. Adventures’ programs utilize the arts to enhance reading, writing, critical thinking and creative expression.

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