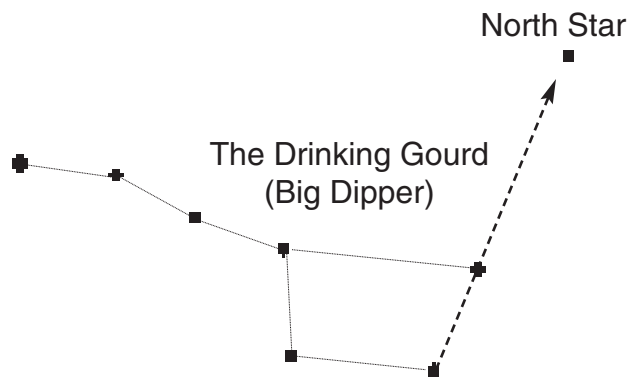


Before-you-read Activities

1. Using some of the books listed in the resource section, read about what life was like during the time period of the Underground Railroad. Discuss how life might be different for whites and blacks living in the North versus those living in the South.
2. Teachers: have your students sit in a circle on the floor as you read aloud *Follow the Drinking Gourd* by Jeanette Winter (see resource section in the back of this guide). Use the following questions for discussion:
 - a. What was the hidden message in the song?
 - b. Why was it important to be secretive?
 - c. Why was a song used to communicate the message?
3. Listen to some folk songs and spirituals from the 1800s. Try learning the “Drinking Gourd” song.
4. Have the children view the night sky and locate the drinking gourd (known to most as “the big dipper”). By imagining a line between the two stars that make up the edge of the cup of the dipper (see diagram below) and following the line up, the next brightest star you come to is the North Star, called Polaris. Explain that when facing the North Star, south is to their backs, east to their right, and west to their left. The North Star was like a compass, helping slaves find their way north to freedom.



Looking at the Story

Chapters 1 and 2:

1. How is the seating arrangement in Tommy's church different from church today? _____

2. How many children are in Tommy's family? (Include Tommy) _____

3. Tommy's father is a deacon in the church. Look up the word "deacon" in the dictionary and write the definition below. _____

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4. Read the following Bible verses about the requirements of a deacon.

Deacons, likewise are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.

1 Timothy 3:8–10, 12

In these verses we read about the kind of person a deacon must be, or the *character* of a deacon. These verses say that a person must first be tested before being allowed to serve as deacon. Think of some ways a person could be tested to see if they can be allowed to be a deacon? List two or three below.

5. Tommy's father is a deacon in the church they attend. What does this tell you about his character? _____

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6. Why did Tommy get into trouble at church? _____

What were the consequences of his actions? _____

7. Look at the pictures on pages 18 and 19. How do you think Tommy's father feels about Tommy's behavior? _____

How do you think Tommy feels? _____

8. What did Tommy do when he arrived at home? Was this the right thing to do? Why or why not? _____

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9. Who did Tommy discover in the hay loft? _____

Why were they there? _____

10. Why did Jeff's family want to go North? _____

11. Look up the words *free* and *freedom* in the dictionary and write their definitions below.

Free: _____

Freedom: _____

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12. What does it mean to you that you have “freedom”? _____

13. Study the stars in the picture below. Can you see the drinking gourd? Draw lines connecting the stars to make the drinking gourd constellation. Find the North Star using the method described in before-you-read exercise #4. Write an “N” next to the North Star.

