

SINGING

This song is an example of one way the slaves communicated so their white masters would not understand. A drinking gourd was a hollowed-out gourd used for drinking. But in this song the slaves used the term to refer to a similar shape made by the stars in the sky. Invite the children to listen and tell you what they think the drinking gourd really was. (The big dipper). Sing the song several times, asking the children to listen for other code words or phrases in the song. Leading questions might include: What time of year was it? Spring--sun comes and first quail calls. When should they travel? Night--when the drinking gourd is out. What did they use for a road? River-bank. How many rivers did they follow? Three (Tombigbee, Tennessee, Ohio). Tell them that there is a story about a man named Peg-leg Joe. He is the "Old Man" in this song. He put marks on trees so the slaves would know which way to go. When they arrived at the last river, he picked them up in a boat and carried them across the river into Canada, where they would be safe. Invite class to keep beat while singing and determine the pattern of strong and weak beats in four. Teach them to conduct while they sing. Let children take turns conducting the class singing.

PLAYING INSTRUMENTS

Play guitar or autoharp while singing this song. Help children become aware that a song has a melody and may have an accompaniment. Tell the children the song is in a minor key which gives it kind of a mysterious feeling. The autoharp plays chords which help create the minor sound. Teach children which chords to use on the autoharp and let them take turns accompanying this song. Notice that some of the chords are major and when they play the song has a major sound. Children might also enjoy creating sound effects for this song. Help them determine what instruments or voice sounds would work at certain places to add to the mood of the words.

CREATING

Invite children to make up a verse to the song using coded directions. Perhaps they could sing about going from the class room to the lunch room, or to a nearby store. Think of things they pass on the way and how they could use those in the song. Dramatize the song and use instruments to make sound effects for the drama.

LISTENING

•Scholastic puts out a magnificent work book and CD recording of this song. "Teaching American History with Favorite Folk Songs." ISBN: 0-439-04387-5. It is wonderful! Play the recording and invite the children to sing along. •Play major and minor chords for children on the autoharp. Help them notice the difference. Ask them to use words to describe the difference in feeling. Play a game where children have to guess which chord you are playing--major or minor. Play like a relay. The winning side can chose one of its members to play the song on autoharp while everyone sings.

INTEGRATING

Read *Follow the Drinking Gourd* by Jeanette Winter. Dragonfly Books. ISBN: 0-679-81997-5. Notice how the story and song work together. Study the history of the Civil War and include stories of the Underground Railroad. Invite children to do research on slavery in America. Put the words of the song on a chart and encourage children to read the words as they sing the song.

Follow the Drinking Gourd