



# STUDY GUIDE



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## About the Company

Mad River Theater Works is a professional touring theater company based in Zanesfield, Ohio. Since 1978 we have collected stories, molded this material into plays, and performed our work at community centers, schools, colleges, and theaters throughout the United States reaching an annual audience of over 100,000 youth.

Mad River Theater Works is one of only a handful of professional theaters in the United States based in rural communities. Our unique mission has attracted the support of the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as foundations, corporations, and individuals.



## Special Support

Mad River Theater Works is particularly grateful for the generous ongoing support of Honda of America, Manufacturing. Honda has been the primary sponsor of the school touring programs of Mad River Theater Works for the past ten years. Their assistance has made this program possible.

## The Artists

**Jeff Hooper** (Playwright) has written over twenty-five original scripts for Mad River Theater Works including *Captive Heart*, *John Henry*, *Freedom Bound*, *Wings of Courage*, and *The Legend of Casey Jones*. He also collaborated with Native American Poet Lance Henson to create *Cry of the Americas* and *Coyote Road* and directed the premiere of John Olive's *Evelyn and the Polka King* at the Humana Festival of New American Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville in 1992. *Coyote Road* has been translated into French and was presented in 2001 at the Theatre Montansier in Versailles, France. He was awarded an Ohio Arts Council Playwriting Fellowship in 1989-90 and has served on numerous panels for the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ohio Arts Council, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and the Florida Arts Commission. He is also a site reporter for the NEA.

**Bob Lucas** (Composer) comes from a singing family tradition. He is a rhythm guitarist, banjo player, old time fiddler and has a rich tenor voice, spanning over three octaves. As a composer and lyricist with Mad River Theater Works, he has collaborated with playwright Jeff Hooper to create *Freedom Bound*, *Black Hats*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Evelyn and the Polka King* and has acted as musical director and performed in those plays and many others. Bob was music director and performed in *Evelyn and the Polka King* at

Actors Theater of Louisville, Steppenwolf Theatre, Chicago, and City Theatre in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Moreover, Bob is a songwriter whose words and tunes have been praised by “Melody Maker” and “Pickin” Magazine, and two of his songs appear on Alison Kraus’ Grammy award winning album *New Favorite*. Bob’s musical expertise encompasses folk, bluegrass, swing, rock, and spiritual music of many genres.

## Synopsis

*Freedom Bound* tells the true story of the escape of Addison White from slavery in Kentucky, his flight north on the Under- ground Railroad, and his rescue by the citizens of Mechanicsburg, Ohio. The characters of Addison White and Udney Hyde serve as narrators as well as characters.



The play begins in August, 1856. Addison is a slave on the farm of Daniel White in Fleming County, Kentucky. We learn about what it was like to be a slave: long hours of work and no human dignity. One day, Addison is grinding cane at a sorghum wheel and he faints from heatstroke. Daniel White finds him and is going to tie him up and beat him. Addison resists, fighting Master White to a draw.

The scene shifts to Ohio. We learn that while Addison is suffering in slavery, Udney Hyde has been moving slaves north on the Underground Railroad for several years. His activities have aroused the suspicion of Federal Marshals. We find out that Hyde has been forced to “retire” from his dangerous mission and bought a small farm just outside of town. His farming is not successful, however. He has broken his leg and is unable to work. Addison makes a plan to run away from Master White. He knows that his life is in danger. He describes his efforts to try to get others to go with him. He heads north alone.

When Addison arrives at the Hyde cabin, Udney and his daughter Amanda are arguing about Udney’s wish to continue to help slaves move north. Amanda has moved in with Udney to help him while he recovers. Amanda feels that his efforts are exposing him to too much danger. Udney is oblivious. Addison interrupts and Udney welcomes him over Amanda’s objections. Addison is anxious to keep moving, but Udney tells Addison that he is as safe in Mechanicsburg as he would be farther North in Ohio. Addison is overjoyed, but Udney continues to explain that because of the Fugitive Slave Act, he isn’t really safe in any Northern state. Udney is disgusted by the hypocritical system of justice that outlaws slavery but allows blacks to be arrested and returned to the South. Udney asks Addison to stay for a short time and help him on the farm. Amanda objects but Addison agrees.

Addison and Amanda are immediately drawn to each other. Amanda learns that Addison left a wife and family in Kentucky. He has said he will write as soon as he is settled. She gets Addison a pen and paper, but discovers he doesn't know how to read or write. She resolves to teach him and gives him a gift, a copy of The Columbian Orator, a book of famous speeches. Addison expresses his appreciation, and explains to the audience how the power of reading has opened up new worlds.

In the meantime, Daniel White has discovered that Addison is in Mechanicsburg. Udney learns of the danger and tells Addison it is time to go, but it is too late.

The cabin is surrounded by Federal Marshals under the direction of Daniel White in the middle of the night and they burst in. Addison is sleeping in an upstairs loft. At first, Udney denies the presence of the slave, but soon he is found out. Addison has a gun and threatens to shoot anyone who climbs up the ladder to try and arrest him. The confrontation becomes a standoff. Amanda runs out of the cabin and while Daniel White tries to decide what to do, she runs to Mechanicsburg and assembles a group of over 100 citizens who gather outside. They make it clear to Daniel White that they are there to rescue Addison and he departs.



Slavery is a dark spot on the face of the nation—L. G. F.

## A Note from the Author

The events portrayed in *Freedom Bound* are based on a true story. We first learned of Addison White and his escape from Federal Marshals when Mad River Theater Works conducted a residency in 1985 in the small town of Mechanicsburg, Ohio. Many people of the town remembered Addison's wife and heard the story of his rescue directly from her.

The factual outline of the story was well documented in the local newspapers of the day and the incident is featured in most books about the Underground Railroad in Ohio. Still, there was much about these people we could not know. The court documents mention that Addison stood up to his master, Daniel White, and fled north in fear for his life, but we do not know specifically what he did to bring on the wrath of his master. The records indicate that after Addison was rescued, Udney transferred the title to his land and went to live in the swamp. He would emerge to see his family "acting like a crazy man, with sticks in his hat and his coat covered with mud." But what does a crazy man of 1856 act like?

My goal was to bring out what I saw as the truth of this historical incident. I have not contradicted any known fact in regard to Addison, or Udney, or the story of the rescue. But the personalities of these individuals have, by necessity, been developed from the few scant facts we know about them. The family of Addison White has seen the play on a number of occasions and they are supportive of the portrayal of their ancestor.

I owe a great debt to the writings of Frederick Douglass which provided the raw material for the events of Addison's life in slavery. An escaped slave himself, Douglas was a powerful and articulate leader of the anti-slavery movement and his book, *My Bondage, My Freedom* is a moving account of his own mistreatment and struggle for freedom. In *Freedom Bound*, the details of Addison's resistance to Master White after fainting closely parallel events Douglas describes. I hope that his association strengthens the play and will inspire audiences to read the original account of Frederick Douglass and find out more about this important chapter of American history.



The custom in Washington, Capital of U. S.

## The Underground Railroad

The Underground Railroad provided many African Americans who lived in the Slave States prior to and during the American Civil War assistance in escaping slavery and finding freedom. As described by Charles Blockson in *Escape from Slavery: The Underground Railroad*, "it was a network of paths through the woods and fields, river crossings, boats and ships, trains and wagons, all haunted by the specter of recapture." The slaves' flight to freedom was made possible and facilitated by the courageous men and women who believed in the right of all humans to be free from human bondage.

One characteristic of the Underground Railroad was its lack of formal organization. No one knows exactly when it started, but there were certainly isolated cases of help given to runaways as early as the 1700s. By the early 19th century, there were organized flights to freedom. Much of the early help was provided by Quaker abolitionists in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Underground operations generally relied heavily on secret codes as railroad jargon alerted “passengers” when travel was safe. Runaways usually moved either alone or in small groups and were frequently assisted by African American and White “conductors” who risked their lives and property to escort refugees to freedom.

Famous conductors of the Underground Railroad include James Fairfield, a White abolitionist who went into the Deep South and rescued enslaved African Americans by posing as a slave trader and Harriet Tubman who made 19 trips to the South and helped deliver at least 300 fellow captives and loved ones to liberation. African American abolitionist John Parker of Ripley, Ohio, frequently went to Kentucky and Virginia to help transport hundreds of runaways across the Ohio River. Perhaps the closest the underground came to being formally organized was during the 1830s when African American abolitionists William Still, Robert Purvis, and David Ruggles organized vigilance committees throughout the North to help bondsmen to freedom. The intention of the vigilance committees was not to lure or personally guide runaways to freedom, but to offer whatever assistance they needed to reach their destinations.

## **The Fugitive Slave Act**

The Fugitive Slave Act was signed by President Millard Fillmore on September 18, 1850. It provided that any Federal Marshal should arrest alleged runaway slaves or face a fine of \$1,000. Fugitive slaves or suspects could be detained without a warrant and turned over to a slave owner on nothing more than the owner’s sworn testimony. A black fugitive or captured free man could not ask for a jury trial or testify in his own behalf. Any person aiding a runaway slave by giving him shelter, food or any sort of assistance was liable to six months’ imprisonment and a \$1,000 fine. Federal Marshals capturing fugitives were entitled to a generous fee and often unscrupulous Marshals became kidnapers of free Negroes. It was easy to find greedy claimants who would falsely swear to ownership.

Despair and panic swept over the colored population of the North when the Fugitive Slave Act was passed. It was estimated that more than 50,000 fugitives had found shelter above the Mason-Dixon Line. Many had married free Negroes. Now, no Negro felt safe. As their leader Frederick Douglass said, “Under this law the oaths of any two villains (the capturer and the claimant) are sufficient to confine a free man to slavery for life.”

Thousands of Negroes in the North fled overnight to Canada. Some of the more active black abolitionists went to England. Armed clashes frequently developed between zealous slave catchers and abolitionists. Northern writers such as Wendell Phillips, Lowell, Whittier, Emerson and Thoreau thundered denunciations of the Fugitive Slave Act while Southerners continually complained that it was not being adequately enforced. Threatening secession and a boycott of Northern industries and trade, the South demanded that both federal and state officers enforce the Fugitive Slave Act but the government never succeeded in enforcing the Act in the North.



## **Addison and Amanda White**

*by his grandchildren*

This is a story about our grandfather and grandmother, Addison and Amanda White. We, their grandchildren, are very proud to be a part of the legacy they left.

Addison was a very large man and had a great impact on all he met. Addison came from Kentucky via the Underground Railroad. Addison reached Mechanicsburg, Ohio with the help of numerous people including Mr. Udney Hyde. Mr. Hyde's daughter taught Addison to read and Addison worked for them on the farm.



Addison White

The town of Mechanicsburg bought Addison for \$950 after his master realized that he was never going to get his property back. Addison served in the Army from 1862-1864 with Co. E, 54th Regiment in Massachusetts, having joined in Canada. Addison then married Amanda after having seen her sitting on a porch in Kentucky and promising to come back for her. Amanda came to Ohio and immediately started cooking for a professor at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio. Later she moved to Mechanicsburg, married Addison, and opened a restaurant.

Amanda would cook "roastin' ears" for the children in the neighborhood and, while they ate on the front porch, she would tell them stories. She never refused anyone a meal. She fed hoboes and tramps. She never seemed to be afraid of anyone who happened along.

Amanda was an avid church-goer and saw to it that all the young children were in church on Sunday. We are still being told stories about these two wonderful people and we do pass them along to our children and grandchildren. It gives us all great feelings and for some wonderful memories of these two. Addison and Amanda had one daughter, our mother, Annie. Annie had eight children of whom five are still alive: Robert, John, Martha, Phyllis, and Charlotte. Of these five, there are sixteen grandchildren.

## Suggested Activities

1. Find out more about the Underground Railroad. Explore why this network of individuals throughout the border states was compared to a railroad.
2. Have the students compare their own childhoods to that of a slave. How would it be to work all day with no time for play? Compare shelter and food conditions and discuss the fear of being sold away from their families.
3. Play some of the spirituals that slaves sang to express their longing for freedom. Help the students understand the words so they will be aware of the reasons these songs were sung.



4. Talk about where slaves were hidden on their journey to freedom, the secret rooms, and signals used, and the wagons with false bottoms or loads of hay to hide slaves. Discuss the courageous people who helped bring the slaves to free states.
5. Look at the Declaration of Independence. What did the authors mean when they wrote, “All men are created equal”? Did they mean to include slaves? Women? What are “inalienable rights?” Discuss why the South needed slaves to work on the plantations.
6. How did the play make the children feel? Talk about how the actors assume different roles (characters) and how a play is different from a movie. Ask the children what they think happened in the lives of the characters after the action of the play.





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