



Title: Follow the Drinking Gourd

Author/Illustrator: Jeanette Winters

Themes: Slavery

Vocabulary: gourd, plantation, negroes, slave auction

See video of this book read aloud here: [Follow the Drinking Gourd](#)

Items Needed for Center: Device to play “Follow the Drinking Gourd” on YouTube; gourd photo; drinking gourd photo; constellation picture

Volunteer readers should review “A Note About the Story” at the beginning of the story beforehand.

★ 3rd Grade Common Core Reading Standard ★

Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

## I. INTRODUCTION (PREP QUESTIONS)

- Discuss with students their ideas about “freedom.” What is it? Who has it? Why is it important? Under what circumstances might people lose their freedom?
- Ask students to share what they already know about slavery, correcting any misconceptions. Tell students that this book is an example of the genre known as historical fiction, which means the story takes place in an historical time period which blends real settings and facts with imaginary characters and plot.
- Discuss what a **gourd** is, having students share what they might already know. Explain that the slaves took dried gourds and sliced off a side of each to create a handled cup that could then be dipped into rivers, streams, buckets, etc., in order to drink.

## II. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

### During Reading:

- P. 1: Read; briefly explain to students about the Civil War:

*In 1861 the American people argued about the problem of slavery. People in the northern states wanted to get rid of slavery, while people in the southern states wanted to keep slavery. The North and the South could not peacefully work out their argument, so they began to fight. They fought for 4 years until the North won and slavery was ended.*

[Taken from [All Different Now](#) , by Angela Johnson, 2014.]

- Pp. 2-3: Read; discuss what a **plantation** is. Ask students to describe the “feeling tone” in the illustration on p. 3 and what evidence they note (fear in man’s eyes, white master with whip).
- Pp. 6-7: Read; ask students what this page tells us about Peg Leg Joe, and why. Remind students that Joe’s actions here are examples of “**showing writing**” which is an author’s way of “showing” the reader information about a character rather than directly telling the reader qualities about a character.

Ask students to share their ideas on the “feeling tone” of the illustration, citing reasons.

- Pp. 8-9: Read; explain to students the terms **negroes** and **slave auction**. Have students imagine how families were broken apart and share their opinions about the practice of selling humans.
- Pp. 10-11: Read; ask students if they have ever heard of the constellation known as the Big Dipper. Discuss the connection to “drinking gourd” mentioned in the song. What did Molly and James suddenly realize?
- Pp. 12-13: Read; point out the quail in the illustration on p. 12 and the slave master’s dogs and their purpose on p. 13.
- Pp. 14-15: Read; have students define **hounds** using context and picture clues.
- Pp. 16-17: Read; ask students to identify the specific clues in the lyrics.
- Pp. 22-23: Read; ask students what we learn about the white boy through “**showing writing**”. Ask students what new clues are in the lyrics.
- Pp. 24-25: Read; ask students to identify the new clues in the lyrics.
- Pp. 28-29: Read; point out the simile and ask students what two things are being compared using like or as (*path of houses/train*). Have students infer what the Underground Railroad was, based on context clues in the text. Discuss how it was not as a conventional railroad with a train on a track, but as a way for slaves to travel from one safe house to another on their way to Canada or to states where slavery was illegal.

### III. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

#### Post Reading:

- Why is it important today for us to read and understand events such as those mentioned in this story?
- In the story it said that Peg Leg Joe would teach the slaves a song to freedom and would move on to another farm and teach the song again to other slaves. Why do you think that Joe thought it was important to teach the song rather than just tell the slaves where to go?
- Have students discuss the various people who were brave in this story, those that took great risks. Have students support their ideas with reasons. (slaves; Peg Leg Joe; white farm boy; safe house owners; road wagon drivers)

### IV. SMALL GROUPS

- Show students the **photos of the gourds and the drinking gourds** (or water dippers).
- Direct students’ attention to the picture on p. 10. Show students the **graphic of the Big Dipper** and the way to find the North Star. Ask why the direction north as indicated by the North Star was critical to the slaves (to get to the northern states and Canada where they had a chance to be free).
- Play the “Follow the Drinking Gourd” song ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pw6N\\_eTZP2U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pw6N_eTZP2U)) 2:28. Show students the printed lyrics of the song at the end of the book. Revisit the various clues of information noted in the song.

Little Bear  
Little Dipper  
Ursa Minor



North Star  
Pole Star  
Polaris



Great Bear  
Big Dipper  
Ursa Major





