

Read the next two selections.

Then choose the best answer to each question.

Liberty's Greatest Heroes

- 1 America's history has many chapters—and many legendary heroes who fought bravely for freedom. Many soldiers and leaders can be celebrated, but in my opinion, some of the most noteworthy heroes were the unsung “passengers,” “conductors,” and “station agents” on the Underground Railroad.
- 2 The Underground Railroad was not a real railroad but a network of routes and safe houses used by enslaved people seeking freedom in the 1800s. The Underground Railroad was run by many people who wanted to abolish slavery and help fugitive, or runaway, slaves escape to freedom. Black and white, these women and men risked their lives and the safety of their families in the name of freedom.
- 3 Thousands of “passengers” or fugitive slaves risked torture and death for liberty and a better future for their children. Fugitives usually traveled by night, relying on the North Star, which is found in the constellation, or group of stars, known as the Little Dipper. During the day they hid in caves, woods, and swamps while they were hunted by the slave catchers' bloodhounds. The escaping slaves were on their own for weeks—sometimes months—until they reached the border of a northern state and the Underground Railroad.
- 4 “Conductors,” “station agents,” and other workers on the Underground Railroad also took huge risks. Probably 3,000 or more people secretly worked on the Underground Railroad. Very few kept written records because they did not want information to fall into the hands of the slave catchers. Conductors helped escaped slaves travel in secret, often hidden in wagons or boats. Agents housed fugitives, hiding them in attics or cellars until it was safe to move on. They gave them food, clothing, and comfort, such as hot meals and soft blankets. It was dangerous work, because angry slaveholders attacked those who harbored fugitives or had them arrested. Some were even killed.
- 5 Despite unjust laws, and the life-threatening penalties for breaking those laws, those who believed in freedom waded through dangerous swamps and crossed great rivers to the North to the free states and to Canada, where slavery was illegal. They did this without an army or laws to protect them. They did this in the name of freedom and equal rights for all. For this reason, I believe the fugitive slaves that sought freedom and the upstanding men and women who helped them realize their dream are the bravest, and greatest, American freedom fighters in our history. The United States outlawed slavery in 1865, but even today, some countries still have enslaved people. I hope that all Americans can remember and honor the freedom seekers of the Underground Railroad by keeping the world full of hope and working together to end slavery in other countries.

Freedom's Star —Anonymous

As I strayed from my cot at the close of the day,
I turned my fond gaze to the sky;
I beheld all the stars as so sweetly they lay,
And but one fixed my heart or my eye.

5 Shine on, northern star, thou'rt beautiful and bright
To the slave on his journey afar;
For he speeds from his foes in the darkness of night,
Guided on by thy light, freedom's star.

On thee he depends when he threads the dark woods
10 Ere the bloodhounds have hunted him back;
Thou leadest him on over mountains and floods,
With thy beams shining full on his track.
Shine on . . .

Unwelcome to him is the bright orb of day,
15 As it glides o'er the earth and the sea;
He seeks then to hide like a wild beast of prey,
But with hope, rests his heart upon thee.
Shine on . . .

May never a cloud overshadow thy face,
20 While the slave flies before his pursuer;
Gleam steadily on to the end of his race,
Till his body and soul are secure.
Shine on . . .

Name _____ Date _____

1 Write a brief summary of the selection.

2 Both the poem and the selection are about —

3 One difference between the poem and the selection is —

4 In the poem, "freedom's star" can be a symbol for —

Name _____ Date _____

- 5 What words help you understand the meaning of the word constellation?
- A Little Dipper
 - B group of stars
 - C travel by night
 - D North Star
-
- 6 The rhyming pattern of the poem can best be described as —
- A ABAB
 - B AABB
 - C ABCB
 - D ABCD
-
- 7 Which word best captures the theme of the poem?
- A Persevere
 - B Surrender
 - C Friendship
 - D Valor
-
- 8 The purpose of the selection is to —
- A explain to readers the Underground Railroad and its importance in history
 - B persuade readers that the Underground Railroad was the most important chapter of American history
 - C persuade readers that the bravest freedom fighters in American history were the Underground Railroad passengers and conductors
 - D persuade people to keep fighting for freedom as the members of the Underground Railroad did

Name _____ Date _____

9 In the selection, which statement best supports the argument?

- A *the most noteworthy heroes were the unsung "passengers," "conductors," and "station agents" on the Underground Railroad*
- B *the escaping slaves were on their own for weeks—sometimes months*
- C *They did this without an army or laws to protect them.*
- D *The United States outlawed slavery in 1865, but today, some countries still have enslaved people.*

10 In line 14 of the poem, "the bright orb of day" refers to —

- A the moon
- B the North Star
- C the sun
- D the sky

11 There are few written records of the Underground Railroad because —

- A most fugitive slaves could not read or write
- B slave catchers and slave holders destroyed most of the written records
- C conductors and agents could not read and kept few written records
- D conductors and agents worked in secret and kept few written records

12 What is one difference between the selection and the poem?

- A The selection is a history of the Underground Railroad, while the poem is about keeping the spirit of the movement alive.
- B The selection persuades people to recognize the importance of the Underground Railroad, while the poem recognizes the symbolic importance of the North Star.
- C The selection persuades people to join the Underground Railroad, while the poem encourages people not to ever give up.
- D The selection is about why and how we should celebrate the Underground Railroad, while the poem is about why we should celebrate the North Star.