

Follow the Drinking Gourd

Jeanette Winter

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Illus. in full color. "Winter's story begins with a peg-leg sailor who aids slaves on their escape on the Underground Railroad. While working for plantation owners, Peg Leg Joe teaches the slaves a song about the drinking gourd (the Big Dipper). A couple, their son, and two others make their escape by following the song's directions. Rich paintings interpret the strong story in a clean, primitive style enhanced by bold colors. The rhythmic compositions have an energetic presence that's compelling. A fine rendering of history in picturebook format."--(starred) *Booklist*.

Follow the Drinking Gourd Details


Date : Published January 15th 1992 by Dragonfly Books (first published 1988)


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Author : Jeanette Winter

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From Reader Review Follow the Drinking Gourd for online ebook

MaryKay says

I loved the book and loved the illustrations! I've heard that Peg Leg Joe the age of song is probably more myth than historical, but the song recalls the brave journeys that many people took seeking freedom.

I enjoyed the chat about this book at: <http://www.justonemorebook.com/2007/0...>

Barbara says

In simple words, Winter tells the story of a sailor named Peg Leg Joe and his involvement in the Underground Railroad. Apparently, this man traveled from plantation to plantation spreading the word about how to escape by following the Big Dipper North. He did so by teaching the slaves a song about the path to freedom. When one family is about to be broken apart by the sale of James to another plantation, they remember the song and escape. The narrative follows them as they hide in the trees, cross streams in order to throw the dogs off their scent, and keep going until they encounter Peg Leg Joe who rows them across the Ohio River and gives them direction to safe houses as they keep moving ever North to safety and a new life. The illustrations show just how difficult the journey was and how many threats the family faced. I would have enjoyed this title even more had Winter provided back matter about Peg Leg Joe since I have never heard of him before.

This is a good introduction to the Underground Railroad for young readers.

Emily Smith says

Follow the Drinking Gourd is a historical fiction book about slavery. An old white sailor named Peg Leg Joe wanted to help free the slaves. He would help the slave owner around the plantation but then at night he would teach the slaves who worked on the plantation a song that would lead them to freedom. Joe went to every plantation that he could and taught every slave on those plantations the same song about following the drinking gourd. One day, a slave named James was going to be sold to another master, tearing his family apart. James, his wife Molly, their son Isiah, old Hattie, and her grandson, George all remembered that song and decided to follow the stars to freedom. They walked all night and by daytime, they hid in trees because slave catchers were trying to find them. When night came again, they walked and remembered Joe's song. They traveled for weeks but only during the night. They finally reached the river's end and they saw the new path leading to the freedom land. Peg Leg Joe was waiting for them so that they could cross the Ohio River together. Peg Leg Joe was taking them on a path known as the Underground Railroad. Along the way, the family would be hidden away in safe houses until it was safe enough to travel again. The families of the safe houses helped the slaves all that they could. The slaves were able to rest and their wounds were healed. They were offered warm beds, hot meals, clothes, baths and the most important thing was protection. Still following the drinking gourd, the slaves ended up on the shores of Lake Erie. The family of five boarded upon a steamship which carried them to Canada. At last, they were safe and earned their freedom because they followed the drinking gourd. This book is for children that are in the intermediate ages because slavery should not be taken lightly and more mature children should read it. All the illustrations in this book have a shape which is a rectangle. Within the picture, there is a definite line where the colors meet. The colors are

more earthy colors like brown, gray, green and blue. There are not really bright colors because the illustrator is trying to keep the mood of the book sad because the topic is sad. Brighter colors are not used until the very ending because they get their freedom and are happy. I would recommend this book because slavery was an important part of our history. Even though it was not fair, it needed to be examined so that America did not do the same thing over again. This book would be great to introduce to students during Black History month so that they can realize the hardship that the slaves had to endure in order to get to the freedom land.

midnightfaerie says

A great educational book for your children of all ages. My 5 yr old loved it as well as my 3 yr old twins. Lots of good information with beautiful pictures that will help keep children engaged. A great lesson addition to any teachings on the underground railroad. We all enjoyed this one. A great addition to any children's library.

Amy Schoon says

My son and I first heard of this book when LaVar Burton was reading it on Reading Rainbow on PBS. It is about a song that the slaves sang that told them the secret way to get to the Underground Railroad -- by following the drinking gourd, or the big dipper, since the north star would guide them to the land of freedom to the north.

It's beautifully written and illustrated, and my son asks us to read it again and again. It offers a great opportunity for educating kids about history, racism, and life in America then and now. My son is completely shocked at the notion of slavery, saying at the same place in the book every single time, "But you can't own a person. That's just not right."

Hallelujah.

Even if you don't have kids, read it. It offers a wonderful message.

Katie says

Follow the Drinking Gourd is a story that tells about a group of slaves that escaped to freedom using the underground railroad. This story tells about an old sailor named Peg Leg Joe who helped slaves to freedom. He worked for different plantation owners where he would become friends with the slaves. Then he would teach them a song that secretly told them the way to freedom. When the slaves knew the song he would move on to the next plantation. He would also wait in a boat to take slaves across the Ohio river and to a safe house on the underground railroad. Many slaves tried to escape their masters and were faced with many dangers. Many of those slaves were caught, sent back and punished. Some, like the family in this story, were lucky and made it all the way to freedom.

This is a great book that portrays many of the hardships slaves had to face as they tried to escape to freedom. Escaping was a huge journey to make and this book showed many scenes.

Dolly says

Beautifully illustrated book with easily understood text that covers a tough, but important subject. The lyrics woven into the narrative help tell the tale and it's nice that the entire song is included at the end. We really enjoyed reading this book together.

La'shae says

Growing up as an African American, I have always been intrigued by books on slavery because they are able to give me a glimpse of the hardships my ancestors had to experience. I liked this book because the family used 'The Drinking Gourd' song to lead them to freedom in Canada. I absolutely recommend this book for reading.

Mary Hohman says

Follow the Drinking Gourd is a book about historical fiction, written and illustrated by Jeanette Winter. The intended age group for this book is primary – intermediate; age's birth – eight years old. This book is about slavery, and the Underground Railroad. This story is about a man named Peg Leg Joe who worked at plantations and taught slaves a song "Follow the Drinking Gourd" better known as the big dipper. This song had a secret message of how to escape to "free" lands. This took place before the Civil War and is about a family who fled in order to stay together, and the experiences they had during their journey to freedom. I rated this book four stars because it gives a heartwarming tale in history of slavery. I also like how this book is intended for young readers because it offers a short story to real adventures. An added bonus to the story is the note the beginning of the book that gives a brief explanation of the history behind this story. The language of the book is rhythmic. The illustrations are bold colors to express the emotions. I think children will like this story because it gives a short history lesson on slavery that is understandable. This book could be used to introduce a lesson on slavery, and the Underground Railroad.

Errin Tucker says

The genre of book is Historical Fiction and picture book and was written for children P-A.

This was a book about the underground railroad and how slaves escaped slavery. They used a song to guide them to safety.

Here was a book that is designed for children to understand that there was a time where African American's were not always free to make their own choices and had to do as they were told. The point of slavery is brought to life in this children's book in a way that any age could understand. The pictures were child friendly but still brought out the text through picture.

This is a good book to use during a time where teachers are discussing slavery. This book will allow children

to really understand. Various extension activities could be made such as asking questions about that they already know about slavery or what they learned. How they would feel if they lived during that time and had to go through life in that way.

Natalie Zagara says

Follow the Drinking Gourd is a heartwarming tale about the risky lives of slaves seeking out freedom through the use of Peg Leg Joe's secret song. The slaves sing the song, which gives the clues to freedom in another place up North. The slaves follow the directions and the moonlit sky where the Big Dipper leads the way from harm to safety. Peg Leg Joe escorts these brave slaves to helpful strangers who can lead them to their goal...and freedom in Canada. As they step foot on their new land, this family sees the light in life and the journey they took to get there. And it all started with a song called, "Follow the Drinking Gourd. The written word outweighs the dull pictures.

Tricia says

An absolute children's classic and must-read for preschool/early elementary on the topic of the Underground Railroad. Partners well with newer title "Underground". Both titles tell the stories of a family's difficult journeys from slavery to freedom and will nicely complement each other with vastly different styles of illustrations and text.

Summer says

Follow the Drinking Gourd is a story about a mother, a father, their son, and two other friends who are on a mission to escape life as slaves. Before their journey to the North, a sailor teaches them a song which will help guide them along the Underground Railroad until they reach safety. All throughout their travels, the group sings the song and eventually reach the boat that will carry them to the North. I would use this book in my classroom to teach my students about the struggles that slaves faced and the courage they had to have in order to survive.

Penelope says

We just finished rowing (Five in a Row homeschool curriculum) and really enjoyed this book. The kids were asking to read it again and again. The book is a fictional telling of a group of slaves escape using the "Follow the Drinking Gourd" song. Slaves most likely did not sing this actual song, nor is it likely that "Peg-leg Joe" was an actual person; even so, this book was a great springboard for conversations about slavery, cotton growing and manufacturing, the Underground Railroad, and constellations (like the big dipper, aka the drinking gourd).

JustOneMoreBook.com says

Saturated with colour and emotion, this beautifully illustrated book — like the song that inspired it — opens young eyes to the value of freedom and the price some pay to achieve it. Fact or fiction, it's an inspiring read.

Listen to our chat about this book on our JustOneMoreBook.com Children's Book Podcast:

<http://www.justonemorebook.com/2007/0...>

“Follow the Drinking Gourd” performed by The Brookfield High School World Voices Choir and Maria Hawkins used with permission of Jeannie Hunter. Learn more about The Brookfield Highschool World Voices Choir on this episode of The Electric Sky Podcast.

Katie says

The story is about a one-legged sailor, Peg Leg Joe, who went from plantation to plantation teaching slaves a simple song while they worked. The words to the song he taught secretly contained directions for following the Underground Railroad. “Follow the Drinking Gourd” was a simple song slaves could use to remember how to finally meet up with Peg Leg Joe in the end to boat over to freedom. The runaway slaves never knew what to expect: they faced many unknown and dangerous events along with kind and generous help from strangers. The illustrations convey the message of urgency and the danger of the unknown through the mainly dark colored images.

Megan Baker says

Follow the Drinking Gourd is a work of historical fiction and is intended for primary readers. It is about the journey slaves had to take to reach freedom. A man named Peg Leg Joe wanted to help free the slaves so he devised a plan. He taught the slaves a song that secretly told the way of freedom. The slaves eventually reached the shores of Lake Erie where they could finally be free.

I gave this book four stars for many reasons, the first reason being that the illustrations were beautifully done. The illustrations are colorful and give the characters great detail. You really don't even need the text in this book because the illustrations are so well done they tell you the story. Another reason I rated this book four stars is because it tell the story of slaves in a few pages and yet that was all you needed to understand it. I believe that children would enjoy this book because it is a good adventure story with a very happy ending!

Jade Wilson says

I really enjoyed this book it contained great illustrations. This book is about a family of slaves who are searching for freedom. A sailor named Peg Leg Joe helps them to freedom by teaching them a song about the drinking gourd. The slave family makes it to safety through the Underground railroad. This story could be utilized in an elementary classroom. It would teach students about the Underground Railroad and the hardships that slaves went through to get to freedom.

Tracey Melcher says

Before the Civil War, an old sailor named Peg Leg Joe made his way from plantation to plantation, working odd jobs and teaching the slaves a simple folk song. Little did the slave owners know that “Follow the Drinking Gourd” actually contained directions for following the Underground Railroad to freedom. The runaway slaves must face many dangers on their journey, but they also meet with the kindness of strangers as they make their way to Canada and freedom. Winter uses rhythmic verses blended with simple text to tell her tale. Her illustrations bring a sense of urgency and secrecy to the tale, giving readers a deeper understanding of the danger that slaves faced on the Underground Railroad. This book would be a good choice to introduce young readers to this troubling aspect of our nation’s history. (Ages 6 and up)

J-Lynn says

This book was highly recommended by Dr. Beverly Tatum in her book about racial identity development, *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*. Tatum argues that in learning about horrible instances of oppression in American history (like slavery), children need to see that Blacks fought against oppression and that some Whites tried to help end the oppression.

Through telling the story of the Underground Railroad, Jeanette Winter does just that. She shows the harrowing journey of a group of slaves on the run who get the idea from Peg Leg Joe a White contractor who hires on at slave plantations during the winter and teaches the slaves the song “Follow the Drinking Gourd,” which secretly has the directions leading them on the path to freedom. Then, during the Spring, Joe would help the slaves escape. The rich pictures show both Whites and freed Blacks helping the slaves along their journey to freedom. The book also has a forward that gives more historical facts about the Underground Railroad and contains the music and lyrics for the song that guided so many slaves to Canada.
