



## Lesson: Spreading a Message by Song

(To follow Amplify CKLA 2, Knowledge 9: The US Civil War, Lesson 3: The Controversy Over Slavery)

### At a Glance

In this lesson, students extend their understanding of how slavery divided Americans in the 19th century by learning about the Hutchinson Family Singers, a musical group from New Hampshire who traveled the United States spreading their message of abolition through their songs.

### Primary Focus Objectives

- Students will discuss favorite songs and musical groups.
- Students will read a non-fiction text about the Hutchinson Family Singers.
- Students will listen to and examine the lyrics of a Hutchinson Family song and identify key words.

### Formative Assessment

- Group discussion
- Key word tally and word list

### Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.2

Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.2.5

Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

### Materials

- Focus Text: [Hutchinson Family Singers](#)
- Image: [Hutchinson Family Singers](#)
- Vocabulary Card: Emancipation
- Recording: ["Get Off the Track" performed by Dutchess Anti-Slavery Singers](#)
- Key Words Spread a Message worksheet

### Time Needed

One to two 30-40 minute class sessions

### Learning Activity

1. **Discuss favorite songs.** Ask students to share about a favorite song or musical group. Encourage students to share specific details about what they like about the song or group. *(5 minutes)*
2. **Read about the Hutchinson family.** Project or distribute the biography page "Hutchinson Family Singers." Support the students as they read the page. Share the image "Hutchinson Family Singers." *(20 minutes)*
3. **Discuss the Vocabulary Card and listen to a song.** Introduce the song by explaining its message. Give students time to listen to it and then discuss what they heard. *(15 minutes)*
4. **Read the lyrics and look for key words.** Distribute the worksheet. After reading the lyrics together, give students time to find and tally the key words. *(15 minutes)*



## Educator Rationale and Answer Guide

### Connection to Amplify

In this lesson, students extend their knowledge about the division among 19th-century American people caused by slavery by learning about the Hutchinson Family Singers, a musical group from New Hampshire who traveled the country spreading social and political messages through song. Students use speaking, listening, and comprehension skills to engage with biographical text, historic images, and song lyrics to learn how this family spread their message about abolishing slavery.

### Discuss songs

Help students make a personal connection to this topic with a brief discussion about the songs and musical groups they know and love. Ask them to share what it is they like about the music. The tune? The message of the lyrics? Did they get to hear the music live, or do they listen to it on a radio? How do they feel when they hear these songs? Guide students to think about what makes a song easy or fun to remember.

### Read about the Hutchinson family

Before reading, explain to students that in the years leading up to the Civil War many people expressed their belief that slavery was wrong. As a traveling musical group, the Hutchinson family was able to sing about many topics that were important to them, especially the idea of freedom for all. People loved their music, and they became the most famous singing group in the country at that time. The illustration that accompanies the biography shows the original four members of the family who performed, siblings Judson, Abby, John, and Asa. After reading the short biography together or in small groups, project the photograph. This shows many more members of the Hutchinson family. Talk about why having popular songs helped the Hutchinsons spread their message.

This is a good place to pause if dividing the lesson across two class sessions.

### Listen to a song

Before listening, tell students they will listen to a group of people from today singing one of the Hutchinson Family Singers' most famous songs, "Get Off the Track." It was not possible to make sound recordings of the Hutchinsons when they were alive, but people can still perform their music by reading the sheet music. In the song, the Hutchinsons describe emancipation as a train that is rolling along a track and that people who are blocking the track should get out of the way of freedom. They set their lyrics to a tune of another song, one that would have been familiar to their audiences. After listening, give students some time to reflect on how the song is similar to or different from songs that are popular today. Ask students what words they heard more than once.

### Read the lyrics and look for key words

This worksheet features three stanzas of the lyrics to "Get Off the Track." Read them as a whole group or in small groups. Remind students that the Hutchinson Family wanted their songs to be enjoyable to listen to while also spreading a message. So, they repeated important words. The chart on the worksheet lists those key words. As students re-read the lyrics, they should put a tally mark in the box next to the word. Emancipation: 4; liberty: 3; freedom: 3; nation: 3. Train words: train, car, track, engine, steam, roll, wheels, station, rail.



## Hutchinson Family Singers Biography



The Hutchinson Family Singers were the most popular American singing group in the 1840s and 1850s. They were a group of siblings from Milford, New Hampshire, who traveled around the country singing together. There were 16 brothers and sisters in the family, but they did not all sing together at the same time. The Hutchinsons wrote a lot of their own songs, including "The Old Granite State," which was about New Hampshire. They also sang songs about religion, the rights of factory workers, and women's rights. They became especially known for songs that protested slavery and called for enslaved people to be set free.

Image source: New Hampshire Historical Society





## Hutchinson Family Singers



Image source: 1845 photograph; Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gilman Collection, Gift of the Howard Gilman Foundation, 2005.



# ***EMANCIPATION***

**Part of speech:** noun

**Definition:** The freeing of someone from slavery

**How to use it:** The Hutchinson Family Singers believed in the **emancipation** of enslaved people in the United States.



## Key Words Spread a Message

### Get Off the Track

(a song for emancipation)

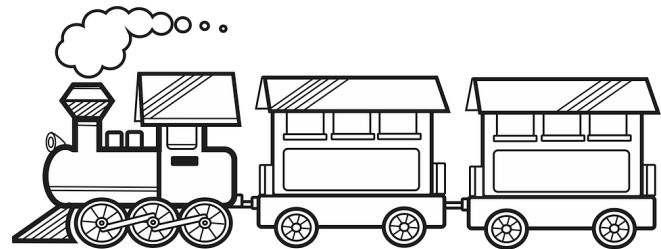
By Jesse Hutchinson Jr.

Ho! the Car Emancipation,  
Rides majestic thro' our nation,  
Bearing on its Train, the story,  
Liberty, A Nation's Glory.  
Roll it along, Roll it along, Roll it  
along thro' the Nation  
Freedom's Car, Emancipation,  
Roll it along, Roll it along,  
Roll it along, thro' the Nation,  
Freedom's Car. Emancipation.

All true friends of Emancipation,  
Haste to Freedom's Rail Road  
Station;  
Quick into the Cars get seated,  
All is ready, and completed.  
Put on the Steam! All are crying.  
And the Liberty Flags are flying.

Hear the mighty car wheels  
humming!  
Now look out! The Engine's Coming!  
Church and Statesmen! Hear the  
thunder!  
Clear the track! or you'll fall under.  
Get off the track! All are singing.  
While the Liberty Bell is ringing.

| Key Word     | Tally |
|--------------|-------|
| emancipation |       |
| liberty      |       |
| freedom      |       |
| nation       |       |



**Bonus!** What words can you find that make you think of trains? Write them below.

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