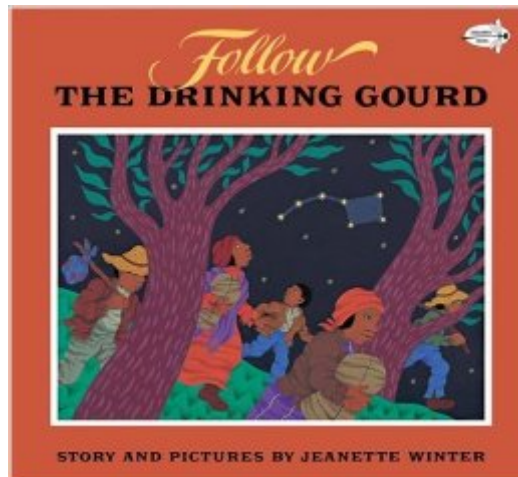


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# Follow The Drinking Gourd (Dragonfly Books)



## Synopsis

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.Â Â

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 630L (What's this?)

Series: Dragonfly Books

Paperback: 48 pages

Publisher: Dragonfly Books; Reprint edition (January 15, 1992)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0679819975

ISBN-13: 978-0679819974

Product Dimensions: 10.9 x 0.1 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ Â (47 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #25,985 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #40 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1800s #76 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > African-American

Age Range: 3 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 2

## Customer Reviews

I used this book to help fulfill a story project requirement for my Children's Literature class at Kent State University. A partner and I read this book to two second-grade classes, who listened attentively. This version of the story has less text than Bernardine Connelly's version (same title), which made it appropriate for reading aloud within a limited time. The students seemed to enjoy the repetition of the song lyrics throughout. The illustrations are striking, with interesting and unusual color choices. The skin tones of the African-American characters are quite lovely, ranging from mahogany to very dark brown. Bright purples and oranges in the illustrations also stand out. The characters are depicted in a wide range of ages, from "Old Hattie" to "Little Isaiah." We used this

book in conjunction with explanations of the Underground Railroad and another book, Barefoot by Pamela Duncan Edwards, as well as poems by African-American poet Langston Hughes. The difficult topics of selling slaves at auction, running away, and the fears the runaways had are sensitively treated. At the end of the book, when freedom is reached and Old Hattie exclaims, "Five more souls are safe!" I heard a collective gasp of emotion from the children. These students really seemed to enjoy learning about the Underground Railroad and how slaves escaped their bondage. The fact that we usually call the Drinking Gourd constellation the Big Dipper did take some repeated explanation on the part of the storytellers.

My daughter read this book in her kindergarten class during Black history month and we loved it so much we bought a copy. It is an inspiring story of courage and triumph over adversity. The story is about a slave named Peg Leg Joe who leads other slaves to freedom by teaching them a song instructing them to "Follow the Drinking Gourd". The drinking gourd he refers to is the Big Dipper. Not only is this a great story about the Underground Railroad, it also inspired my daughter's interest in astronomy. I highly recommend it.

This fine story teaches even the smallest of children about the evil of slavery in pre-Civil War America. It shows a desire for freedom so strong that men, women and children risked their lives to escape on the Underground Railroad, following the largest star in the Drinking Gourd of the title (The Big Dipper). The book introduces the idea of slavery, the separation of families, the sale of human beings at auctions, and the difficulties that people endured to escape--hiding in trees to avoid hounds, sleeping by day, sometimes on empty stomachs, and walking at night, sometimes without stars to guide them. Sometimes people along the way were kind, providing bacon and corn bread to share, helping them across the Ohio River, and hiding them in the attics and barns of safe houses. The story's dramatic simplicity grasps and holds children. They fasten to it, eager to learn about the bonds that once tied African-Americans and the freedom for which they naturally yearned. The book is a song of freedom.---Alyssa A. Lappen

I read this book to my 1st grade students to teach them about Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. The illustrations were nice and my students caught on that they were really following the constellation (the dipper). I would highly recommend this book. It was THE BEST resource I could find to tie into Black History Month.

I have used this book and video in my music classes for years. After retiring, I lost my book and thought to replace it with this one advertised on . Please don't waste your money! The pictures in this booklet are so dark, dim, blurry (almost impressionistic), and faded, that I won't be able to share it with my classes (even small groups). One would guess it to be a "knock-off" of the real book. Perhaps the original publisher should be notified. I will now be looking for the original hardback. Again.....don't waste your time or money.

Fact or fiction aside, Follow the Drinking gourd definitely gives a good, brief overview of what escaping to freedom via the Underground Railroad with the help of coded instructions and agents and conductors might have looked and "felt" like. My reservation with this version is with the introductions and post-story explanations describing Peg Leg Joe as a truly historical figure whom really taught slaves the Follow the Drinking Gourd song and, ultimately, became their link to freedom. I assumed the information to be true as published. Further study, however, showed me that the story behind Follow the Drinking Gourd is most likely not fact, but an American Folk Tale used as a "representation" of how escaping to freedom might have happened. I could not find proof that Peg Leg Joe was a real Underground Railroad agent or conductor, and I also came to find that the lyrics to Follow the Drinking Gourd (as printed in the book) were rewritten by another folk artist to include the chorus, "The old man is a-waitin' for to carry you to freedom if you follow the drinking gourd" some 80+ years after the song was originally written or communicated. All-in-all, great literature, illustrations that capture the intensity of escaping to freedom, and a "secret code." What more can a kid (or big kid, in my case) ask for?

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