

ALL BOY VOICES: Which way is north?

ALL: (clap, clap)

ALL GIRL VOICES: Don't know, DON'T KNOW!

ALL BOY VOICES: Which way is north?

ALL: (clap, clap)

ALL GIRL VOICES: Way to go, WAY TO GO?

ALL: Maybe this way? Maybe that way?
Maybe up, maybe down,
Maybe on the road to town?
We want to know!

ALL: (clap, clap)

ALL BOY VOICES: But master wouldn't tell them,
North, West, East, or South,
No words of instruction
Would be coming from *his* mouth.

ALL GIRL VOICES: For once that information
Was out and brought forth,
It wouldn't take much time
For his slaves to head north.

ALL BOY VOICES: Which way is north?

ALL: (clap, clap)

ALL GIRL VOICES: Ask Joe, ASK JOE!

ALL BOY VOICES: Which way is north?

ALL: (clap, clap)

ALL GIRL VOICES: Will he know? Will he know?

ALL: Is it this way? Is it that way?
Maybe up, maybe down,
Maybe on the road to town?
JOE WILL KNOW!

ALL: (clap, clap)

ALL: And Joe said,
Follow (clap)
The drinking gourd.
Follow (clap)
The drinking gourd.
Listen to the old man
And follow if you can.
Hope will be restored,
By the...

ALL: (clap)

ALL: drinking gourd.

ALL BOY VOICES: Then Joe took his hammer,
Then he took his nails,
Worked at the plantation,
And sang about quails.

ALL GIRL VOICES: Said, when the sun is high
And you see winter birds,
Check the night sky
And remember these words:

(Teacher's note: In winter and early spring, the angle of the sun above the horizon at noon gets higher each day. Quail are the migratory birds that winter in the South)

ALL: Follow (clap)
The drinking gourd.
Follow (clap)
The drinking gourd.
Listen to the old man
And follow if you can.
Hope will be restored,
By the...

ALL: (clap)

ALL: drinking gourd.

ALL BOY VOICES: Follow the signs
 Along the Tombigbee,
 Hike across the hills
 To the Tennessee.

(Teacher's note: The Tombigbee, The Tennessee, and The Ohio all refer to rivers the slaves had to follow and/or cross to find freedom in the north. The slaves were told to look for "signs" or drawings on dead branches along the Tombigbee. Finding and following the signs, meant they were headed in the right direction. These drawings were of a left foot and a peg foot and related directly to Peg Leg Joe).

ALL GIRL VOICES: Left foot, peg foot,
 Can't be ignored
 When you follow, follow follow
 The drinking gourd.

ALL: Follow (clap)
 The drinking gourd.
 Follow (clap)
 The drinking gourd.
 Listen to the old man
 And follow if you can.

Hope will be restored,
By the...

ALL: (clap)

ALL: drinking gourd.

ALL BOY VOICES: Months will pass
And seasons will go
From cold, rain, and sunshine
All the way back to snow.

(Teacher's note: It usually took a year to make the trip north from the Deep South. The Underground Railroad folks knew this and wanted the slaves to reach the Ohio River when it would be frozen and easy to cross. So they would arrive there at the right time, the slaves were told to start their journey in the winter a year earlier).

ALL GIRL VOICES: Cross the frozen Ohio
Like an icy road,
Then you've found your way to freedom
All because of this code.

(Teacher's note: In winter and early spring, the angle of the sun above the horizon at noon