

Follow the drinking gourd,
Follow the drinking gourd,
For the old man is awaiting
for to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.



Follow the Drinking Gourd

“Find the north, and you'll find freedom.”

But which direction was north?

Slaves knew the promise of freedom lay to the north, but they didn't know how to get there. In a desperate effort to keep their slaves from running away, masters tried to prevent them from learning any directions.

“They find out which way is east, then they figure out west. The next thing you know, they figure out which way is north,” went the old saying.

Yet the deliberate attempts to keep slaves ignorant, and therefore enslaved, were destined to fail. Slowly the word spread that to find freedom, one had only to look to the skies. With the north star pointing the way, thousands began the perilous journey to freedom. Those who could not or would not attempt the journey at least wanted to ensure that their children knew how to escape.

So, as soon as slave children were old enough to understand, their parents would take them outside, point out the big dipper -- the “drinking gourd” -- and teach them this song. For at the end of the “drinking gourd” was the north star. And the path of the north star was the path to freedom.

When the sun comes back,
and the first Quail calls,
Follow the drinking gourd,
For the old man is waiting
for to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.

Chorus:

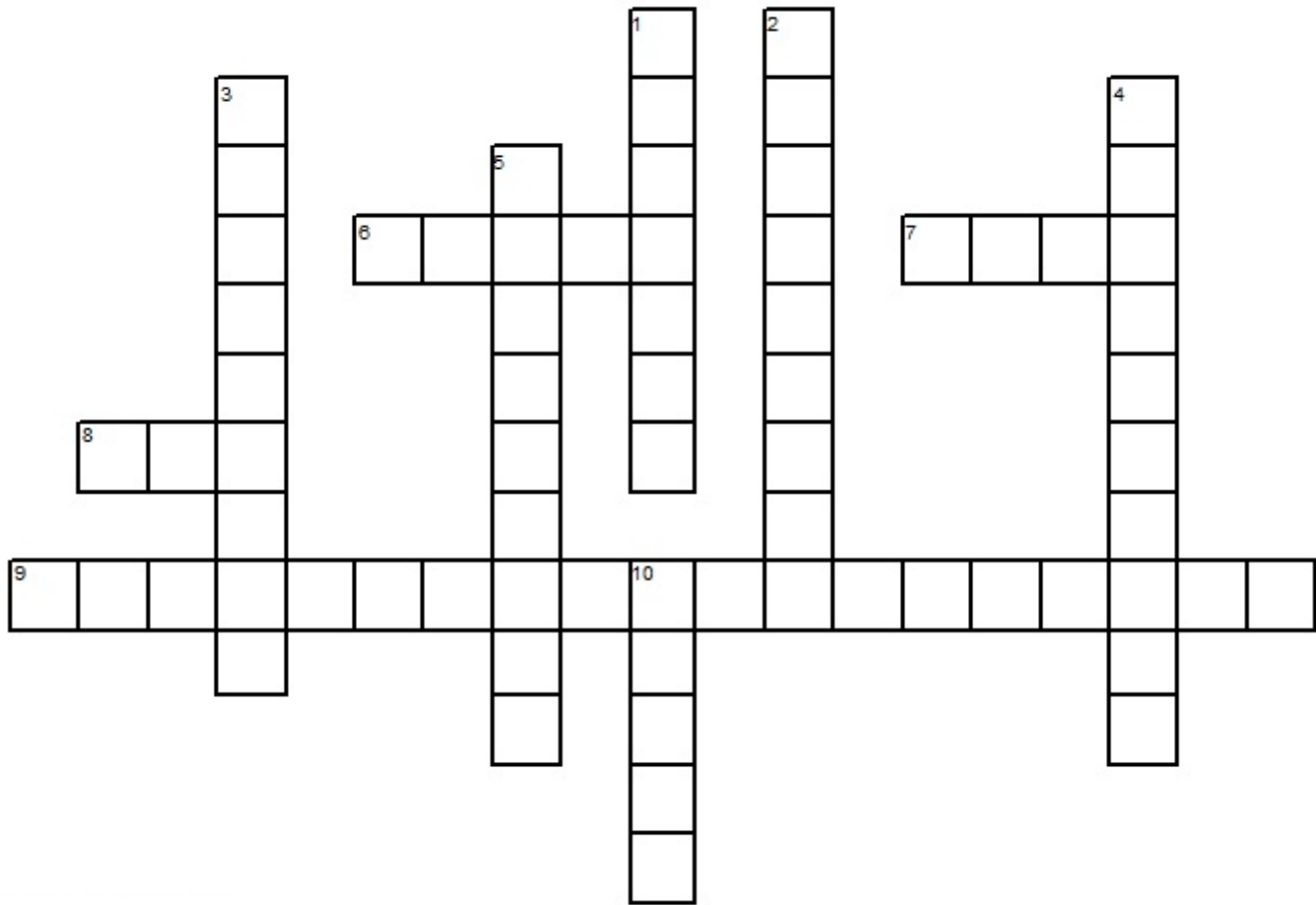
Follow the drinking gourd,
Follow the drinking gourd,
For the old man is waiting
for to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.

The riverbank will make a very good road,
The dead trees show you the way.
Left foot, peg foot traveling on,
Following the drinking gourd.

The river ends between two hills,
Follow the drinking gourd,
There's another river on the other side,
Follow the drinking gourd.

When the great big river meets the little river,
Follow the drinking gourd.
For the old man is waiting
for to carry you to freedom
If you follow the drinking gourd.

Follow the Drinking Gourd



ACROSS

- 6 A person owned by another person
- 7 The trip from the south to the Ohio River (and safety!) took most escapees a full _____.
- 8 The folk song "Follow the Drinking Gourd" was really a _____ to freedom.
- 9 An informal network of secret routes and safe houses to help slaves escape

DOWN

- 1 What runaway slaves sought
- 2 This heavenly body at the end of the Big Dipper has helped people navigate for centuries.
- 3 The "drinking gourd"
- 4 Masters tried to keep their slaves from learning _____ so they could not run away.
- 5 Perilous
- 10 The direction freedom lay

Word Bank: Big Dipper, dangerous, directions, freedom, map, north, North Star, slave, Underground Railroad, year