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# The Quilt Speaks

*Secret Messages  
in  
Songs and Quilts*

*Dr. René Boyer*

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# Secret Messages in Songs and Quilts

## A Journey to Freedom

### Introduction

#### Narrator 1:

Who could ever imagine that being able to read the patterns and symbols of a simple quilt could mean the difference between life and death?

#### Narrator 2:

Who could ever imagine that being able to understand the lyrics of a simple folk song would mean the difference between life and death?

#### Narrator 3:

During the 19th century this was indeed the case. Spiritual songs, along with simple patterns on the squares of quilts, revealed secret codes that sent messages to enslaved people.

## In That Great Git'n Up Mornin'

African American Spiritual  
Arr. by René Boyer

C

SX In that great git-'n up morn-in', fare thee well, fare thee well. In that

AX Come on\_\_ and get go - ing, go - ing. Come on\_\_ and get go - ing, go - ing.

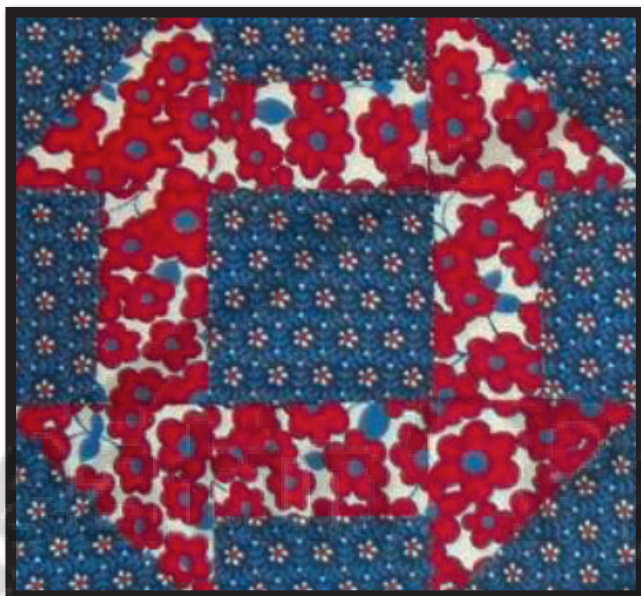
AM

BX

# The Monkey Wrench Speaks

## Narration:

Gather your tools, children! Gather what you need for your journey North. You will be challenged! You will need shelter. You will need a compass for directions. You must gather your tools! They will help you!



## I Want to Be Ready

African American Spiritual

Arr. by René Boyer

Music score for "I Want to Be Ready" (African American Spiritual, Arr. by René Boyer). The score is written for five parts: Voice, SX, AX, Tam, and BM, all in 2/4 time.

**Voice:** I want\_\_ to be read - y. I want\_\_ to be read - y.\_\_\_\_

**SX:** (Musical notation: Treble clef, 2/4 time, notes on G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F#6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F#7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F#8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F#9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F#10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F#11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F#12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F#13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F#14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F#15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F#16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F#17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F#18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F#19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F#20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F#21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F#22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F#23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F#24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F#25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F#26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F#27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F#28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F#29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F#30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F#31, G31, 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# The Wagon Wheel Speaks

## Narration:

Do you see my wagon wheel? My wagon will help you in your escape to freedom. It is made of strong wood and will carry you a long distance. Put your things in the bottom of my wagon so they will not be seen. The bottom of my wagon will be invisible to all who look at me. Come, hide your things and yourself in the bottom of my wagon.



## Movement Instructions:

Have children form circles that resemble wheels. Extend arms toward the center of the circles to form spokes. Proceed in a clockwise manner to portray the movement of a wheel.

# Ezekiel Saw the Wheel

African American Spiritual

Arr. by René Boyer

Music score for "Ezekiel Saw the Wheel" featuring four parts: Voice, SG (Soprano), AM (Alto), and BX (Bass). The score is written in 4/4 time and includes the lyrics: "E - ze - kiel - saw the wheel, 'way up in the".

# The Carpenter's Wheel Speaks

## Narration:

Many of you will know the story of a Carpenter who lived many years ago. The stories about this Carpenter's life have encouraged many generations of people.



## There's a Little Wheel A-Turnin'

African American Spiritual  
Arr. by René Boyer

Music score for "There's a Little Wheel A-Turnin'" in 4/4 time, featuring Voice, SG (Soprano), AG (Alto), AM (Tenor), and BM (Bass).

**Voice:** There's a lit - tle wheel a - turn - in' in my heart. There's a

**SG:** [Musical notation]

**AG:** [Musical notation]

**AM:** [Musical notation]

**BM:** [Musical notation]

### René's Notes:

- ☼ If one plans to present the content of this book in concert, I recommend that you begin with children singing and moving to the spiritual, *In That Great Git'n Up Mornin'*. This song provides a jubilant and exciting beginning to this program.
- ☼ A simple circle dance can be added to *In That Great Git'n Up Mornin'* (p. 12).
  - ☼ A Section: Circle to the right. ("In that great git'n up morning fare thee well, fare thee well.")
  - ☼ B Section: Walk to the center of the circle while raising hands and walk back to the original place in circle while lowering arms.
- ☼ Individual children or pairs of children should be selected, with the classroom teacher's assistance, to read the various narration parts. Each narration part and quilt square reading should be enunciated clearly, read expressively, and spoken audibly.
- ☼ Full scores are provided for those who choose to add Orff instruments to this presentation. All of these parts have been previously performed in concert by children in Grades 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. (I highly recommend the use of these Orff instruments to accompany the spirituals although they are not necessary to the performance. Keyboards, ukeleles, and guitars may be used/added as well.)
- ☼ Children should be encouraged to draw pictures, color, paint, or make quilt blocks/squares that are replicas of the ones in this book, so that they can come together to create an entire *Underground Railroad Sampler Quilt*. When finished, the sampler can be hung on display in the classroom or another bulletin board or wall in the school.
- ☼ Encourage children to think about and discuss other themes on which they might consider creating quilt squares, e.g., school days, family, pets, their country, etc.
- ☼ Children should meet and decide on appropriate movement and costuming for this event.
- ☼ I highly encourage children to perform, *The Ballad of the Underground Railroad*, composed by Dr. René Boyer and published by Hal Leonard, as a part of this presentation.

For a more up-close view of Quilt Collections that have helped us better understand the African American experience, visit

- ☼ The National Museum of African American History and Culture, a Smithsonian Institution Museum located on the National Mall in Washington D.C., in the United States.
- ☼ National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio.
- ☼ Stitches in Time: Historic Quilts" at the DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago, Illinois.
- ☼ A Century of African-American Quilts" at the Art Museum of Colonial Williamsburg. (Exhibit/Video shows African American quilts spanning more than a century after 1875.)

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**Buy the E-Book!**



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