

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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MISSION 2: "Flight to Freedom"

Kentucky Slave Codes (1794-1850)

Beginning in the colonial era, slaveholders frequently passed laws, known as "slave codes" to restrict the movements and activities of the enslaved population. As the selection of laws from Kentucky shows, slave owners were especially concerned with preventing runaways and rebellions.

- 1794 Any slave who is freed by their master must carry a certificate of freedom
- 1798 Slaves cannot leave a plantation without a written note from their master
Slaves cannot carry any type of weapon
Slaves cannot trade goods without the written consent of their master
Slaves are classified as real estate for inheritance matters
- 1811 Conspiracy among enslaved blacks is punishable by death; enslaved or
free blacks guilty of poisoning were also to be put to death.
- 1823 No slave can work on a steamboat.
- 1831 Boats cannot transport slaves across the Ohio River without a note from
their master; ship owners must pay a \$200 violation for breaking this law.
- 1834 No person shall sell or give liquor to slave.
- 1840 There is a 10pm curfew for slaves.
- 1846 The penalty for tempting blacks to run away or rebel is imprisonment.
County patrols must ride through the county on horseback at night to
enforce slave laws.
- 1850 Any slaves freed by their masters had to leave the state. Their owners had to
provide money to pay for their transportation out of Kentucky, and one year's
subsistence.

Source: J. Winston Coleman, *Slavery Times in Kentucky* (1940), Marion B. Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky: From Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891* (2003), and Ivan McDougle, *Slavery in Kentucky, 1792-1865* (1918).