

# Underground Railroad Secret Codes

[harriet-tubman.org/underground-railroad-secret-codes/](http://harriet-tubman.org/underground-railroad-secret-codes/)

[Supporters of the Underground Railroad](#) used words railroad conductors employed everyday to create their own code as secret language in order to help slaves escape. Railroad language was chosen because the railroad was an emerging form of transportation and its communication language was not widespread. Code words would be used in letters to “agents” so that if they were intercepted they could not be caught. Underground Railroad code was also used in [songs sung by slaves](#) to communicate among each other without their masters being aware.

These are the most commonly used code words and their meanings:

Agent	Coordinator, who plotted courses of escape and made contacts.
Baggage	Fugitive slaves carried by Underground Railroad workers.
Bundles of wood	Fugitives that were expected.
Canaan	Canada
Conductor	Person who directly transported slaves
Drinking Gourd	Big Dipper and the North Star
Flying bondsmen	The number of escaping slaves
Forwarding	Taking slaves from station to station
Freedom train	The Underground Railroad
French leave	Sudden departure
Gospel train	The Underground Railroad
Heaven	Canada, freedom
Stockholder	Those who donated money, food, clothing.
Load of potatoes	Escaping slaves hidden under farm produce in a wagon
Moses	Harriet Tubman
Operator	Person who helped freedom seekers as a conductor or agent
Parcel	Fugitives that were expected
Patter roller	Bounty hunter hired to capture slaves
Preachers	Leaders of and spokespersons for the Underground Railroad
Promised Land	Canada
River Jordan	Ohio River
Shepherds	People who encouraged slaves to escape and escorted them
Station	Place of safety and temporary refuge, a safe house

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Station master      Keeper or owner of a safe house

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