Follow the Drinking Gourd

Song Lyrics (Click on picture to access song)
Songs and quilts helped lead slaves to freedom.
Follow the Drinking Gourd!
Follow the Drinking Gourd!

- The Drinking Gourd = the Big Dipper
- Points north
For the old man is awaiting for to carry you to freedom.

► Old Man is slang for a captain.

► Old Man = Peg Leg Joe
Where & When

FOLLOW THE DRINKING GOURD

SLAVE FOLKSONG

"Follow the Drinking Gourd" was first published in 1928 by the Texas Folklife Society. It was discovered by Mrs. Parks. This article claims that an underground railroad operative, known as Peg Leg Joe, moved from plantation to plantation just south of Mobile, Alabama area working as a journeyman laborer. This work was pivotal for Joe's true teaching, slaves the drinking gourd song, and marching an escape route. These directions then enabled fleeing slaves to make their way north to Mobile, Alabama to the Ohio River to F-G-E-D-0-M. The drinking gourd serves as the hollowed out gourd used by slaves as a water dipper. Here it is used as a code name for the big dipper, the head star, formations which points to Polaris, the pole star and north to F-G-E-D-0-M.
When the sun comes back and the first quail calls

- “Sun comes back” = Spring
  - the days get longer
- “the first quail calls” = mid-April
  - quail breeding season
Mobile, Alabama - North
The riverbank makes a very good road,

► “river” = Tombigbee river which is in Alabama
The dead trees will show you the way,

- Charcoal mud markings were put on trees and rocks as a guide.
Left foot, peg foot traveling on

The markings were of a human left foot and a round spot for the right foot
Mississippi - Tennessee

Map Courtesy of the National Park Service
The river ends between two hills.
The Tombigbee River ends at Woodall Mountain.
There’s another river on the other side.

► Cross to the left side of the Tennessee River.

- Why? It had a more direct northern route to Ohio.
End of the Route
Where the great big river meets the little river

► Big river = Ohio River
► Little river = Tennessee River
The old man is awaiting for to carry you to freedom.

► A guide will be waiting where the rivers meet.
The Drinking Gourd
The Big Dipper or Drinking Gourd

The North Star
Tape Art Student Objective:
Create the Big Dipper and the North Star using tape on the wall or your table.