



THEATRE IV Classroom Connections Teacher Resources



In the Classroom For Teachers & Students Grades 3 - 8

Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad and the Classroom Connections Study Guide are produced in support of the teaching of: History and Social Sciences, the Language Arts, Theatre Arts, and Music.



At the Library

Freedom Train: The Story of Harriet Tubman by Dorothy Sterling

Harriet Tubman, Secret Agent: How Daring Slaves and Free Blacks Spied for the Union During the Civil War by Thomas B. Allen

Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom by Carole Boston Weatherford and Kadir Nelson

Who Was Harriet Tubman? by Yona Zeldis McDonough and Nancy Harrison



On the Web

Library of Congress:

America's Story
www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa/tubman

National Geographic:
The Underground Railroad
www.nationalgeographic.com/features/99/railroad/j1.html

Public Broadcast Service: Tubman Biography
www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1535.html

Harriet Tubman & The Underground Railroad

Book and Lyrics by Douglas Jones Music by Ron Barnett



Our drama with music begins as Harriet's friend Sarah Bradford, author of *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, is persuading a publisher to print her book. As the story unfolds we learn of Harriet's early years in slavery, her escape to freedom, and her time as a conductor on the Underground Railroad. During the Civil War, Harriet becomes a spy for the Union Army, and later a nurse and scout. The North wins the war bringing emancipation to the slaves but that does not end Harriet's struggle for freedom. She turns her attention to women's suffrage and continues fighting for everyone who suffers inequality. As Harriet says, "*What we are fighting now is ignorance.*"

Discovering Harriet Tubman



Portrait of Harriet Tubman
Credit: "Portrait of Harriet Tubman." Courtesy of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

Harriet Tubman, an icon of American history, was an illiterate runaway slave who became known as the "Moses of her people."

Born into slavery around 1820 in Dorchester County, Maryland, she was one of eleven children and named Araminta by her parents, Harriet and Benjamin Ross.

In 1844, Araminta Ross married John Tubman, a free Blackman. She took his last name and changed her first name to Harriet.

In 1849, Harriet Tubman, worried that she and the other slaves on the plantation were going to be sold, decided to run away. Tubman believed she had two choices: freedom or death.

Setting out with her two brothers, traveling by night with the North Star in the sky as their guide, Tubman reached Philadelphia alone. Her brothers had become frightened and turned back.

In Philadelphia, Tubman joined the Abolitionist Movement and became a conductor on the Underground Railroad, a secret network of safe houses where runaway slaves could stay on their journey north to freedom. Over the course of 10 years, and at great personal risk, Tubman made 19 trips to Maryland and helped 300 people escape to freedom along the Underground Railroad.

During the Civil War (1860 – 1865), Tubman was a scout, spy, and nurse for the federal forces in South Carolina and, in 1863, became the first woman in American history to originate and lead a combat unit in an armed assault.

After the war, Tubman continued the struggle for freedom as a leader in the suffrage movement. She died on March 10, 1913 in Auburn, New York and was buried with military honors.

Vocabulary

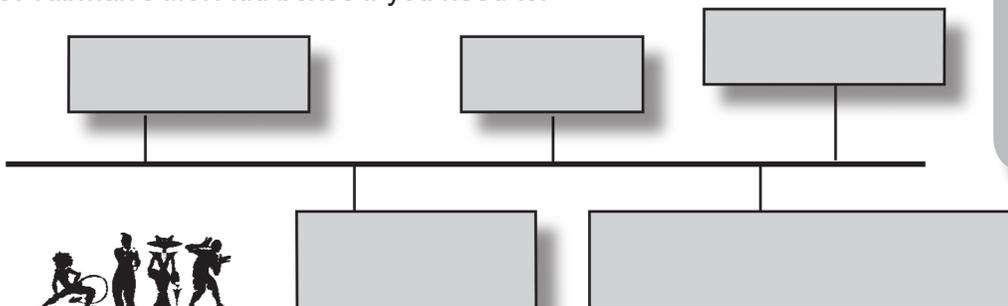
plantation (noun): an agricultural estate (large farm) cared for by laborers.

Underground Railroad (noun): A secret network of cooperation whereby slaves were helped to reach the North or Canada, where they could be free.

abolitionist (noun): A person in favor of abolishing (getting rid of) slavery.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why do you think Harriet's brothers turned back when they decided to escape? Why would choosing to escape have been such a difficult decision for a slave?
2. Harriet Tubman lived from 1820 - 1913, a time of great changes. In what ways do you think this time in history would have been different if she had never lived?
3. Using the information above, create a timeline of important events in Harriet Tubman's life. Add boxes if you need to.



Challenge

Think About It:

Abolitionists who ran the Underground Railroad system were following their personal beliefs instead of their country's laws. Throughout history, people have used passive and nonviolent disobedience to protest laws and enact change. In your opinion, is *civil disobedience* ever justified? Why or why not?

An Acrostic Full of Character!

An acrostic is a type of poem that describes something (in this case a character from the play *Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad*) by using each of the letters in the word as the beginning of a line of poetry. For example, an acrostic about America might read:

Apple Pie from ear to ear!
Majesty in its purple mountains
Easy to love
Revolutionary men set us free.
Independent from any other nation.
Caring people live here
America is a wonderful nation!

Write your own acrostic about Harriet Tubman, based on what you've learned about her.

H _____
A _____
R _____
R _____
I _____
E _____
T _____

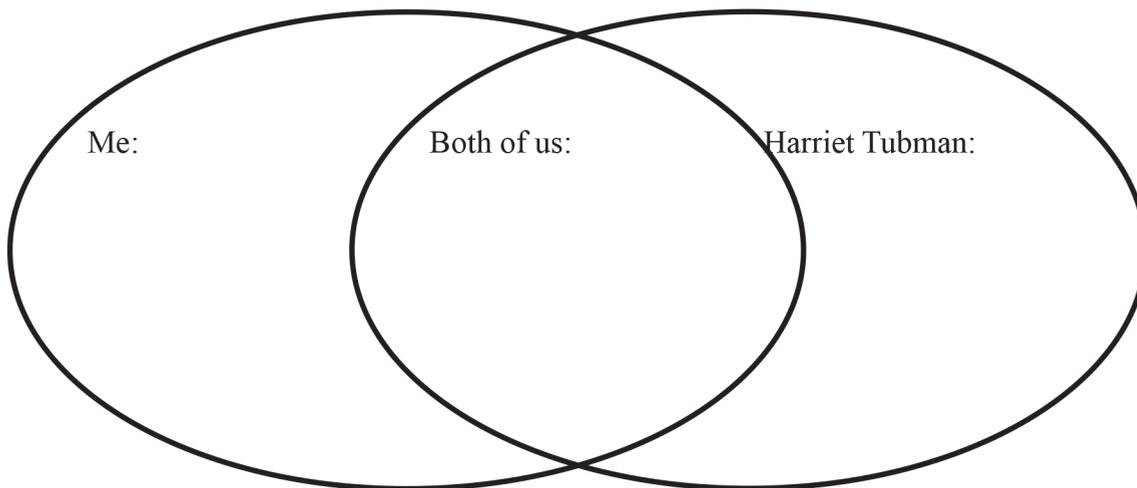
For resources on sharing and creating poetry with children, visit:

www.poetryfoundation.org

With a partner, discuss which of the following statements best characterizes Harriet Tubman. Justify your choice:

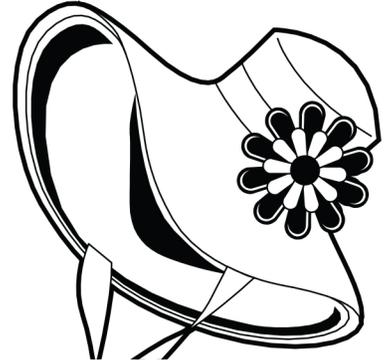
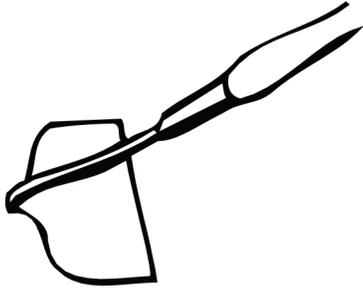
- a. She was a strong leader who was not afraid to face danger to free her people.
- b. She was an avid abolitionist who lived in the North.
- c. She was an obedient servant and loved her masters.
- d. She was in favor of states' rights over freedom for slaves.

What traits did Harriet Tubman possess? Do you have any traits in common with her? Use the venn diagram below to compare your personality and Harriet's personality.



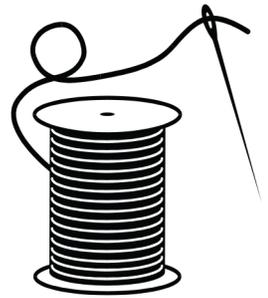
Now and Then

This play was set in the mid-1800's. Everyday life has changed in many ways since then. Classify the objects below in the "T" chart according to whether they'd be found at the time the play was set, or in today's world.



Now

Then



Challenge

Read about life during the 1800's. In what ways was it different than today's world? Write a paragraph describing all the ways your life would be different if you had lived back then.

Extend It!

If you could travel back to the 1800's, what one item from today's world would you take to give to Harriet Tubman to help her? Justify your choice.

Social Studies:

Lyrics as Primary Sources

Easy Activity:

Read (or sing) the lyrics below with your students, and discuss how music played an important role in communication along the Underground Railroad.

Challenge Activity:

Read the lyrics below and discuss. What do you think is meant by “drinking gourd” and “old man” in the song? Think about the imagery in this song and illustrate the scene that comes to mind.

Extra Challenge:

Read the lyrics below. Think about the changes our society has seen since this was written. List some of these changes.

Then, talk to your parents or other adults about changes they have witnessed in their lifetimes. Write a journal entry predicting how life may change during your lifetime.

Follow the Drinking Gourd

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

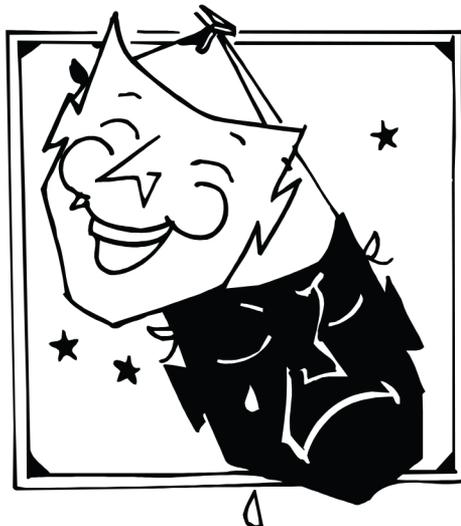
Test Your Harriet Knowledge

- By reading this selection, it is reasonable to assume that slaves used this song to _____.
 - pray
 - tell a nice story
 - send messages and “maps” to one another
- According to the selection, what makes a very good road?
 - the valley
 - the riverbank
 - the big river
- Instead of maps, escaped slaves probably used _____.
 - landmarks and stars to guide them
 - a compass to guide them
 - a GPS system to guide them
- When the selection refers to “freedom,” what did that mean to the slaves who escaped?
 - the Statue of Liberty in New York
 - the Northern states and Canada
 - a “safe house” along the railroad
- Why was Harriet referred to as a “conductor?”
 - She was like a lightning rod.
 - She worked the railway, conducting passengers.
 - She led slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad.





The Theatre Team



It takes a team to put on a play! You see the actors every time you go to a play, but there are a lot of people on the Theatre Team you never get to see. This whole team works hard to get a show ready for you:

Actors learn the play and perform it live on stage in front of you.

The Director tells the actors when and where to move on the stage and oversees the work of everyone involved in the play.

The Stage Manager is responsible for calling lighting and sound cues and for supervising the technical crew.

The Playwright writes the play. What they write tells the actors what to say on stage.

The Prop Master is in charge of the objects used by the actors on stage.

The Costume Designer plans the clothing the actors wear, called costumes. Costumes give clues about when and where a story takes place, and about the characters who wear them.

The Set Designers plan the scenery for the play.

YOU Have an Important Part to Play

It wouldn't be a play without you! Your part is to pretend the play is real. Part of this includes accepting certain theatre ways, or *conventions*:

1. Actors tell the story with words (dialogue), actions (blocking), and songs.
2. Actors may sing songs that tell about the story or their feelings.
3. Actors may speak to the audience.
4. An actor may play several different characters ("doubling") by changing their voice, costume or posture.
5. Places are suggested by panels on the set, and by props.

How to Play Your Part

A play is different from television or a movie. The actors are right in front of you and can see your reactions, feel your attention, and hear your laughter and applause. **Watch** and **listen** carefully to understand the story. The story is told by the actors and comes to life through your imagination.

Our actors like to hear from their audience! Write us a letter or draw us a picture and send it to the address at the top of this page.

Theatre IV Presents
Harriet Tubman
&
The Underground Railroad

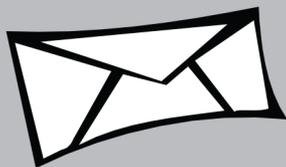
Book and lyrics by
Douglas Jones
Music by Ron Barnett.

Theatre IV
Bruce C. Miller,
Artistic Director

Phil Whiteway,
Managing Director

Classroom Connections
Study Guide written by
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Why we say it:

Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad is a play that Theatre IV has been touring since 1990. While doing the extensive research into the life of Harriet Tubman, the author included many of the scenes in the life of Harriet Tubman; in fact the whole premise of the play are the accounts as set forth in the Sara Bradford's book *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, published by W. J. Moses in 1896 from interviews with Harriet Tubman herself.

The play focuses on the brilliantly dedicated person that Harriet Tubman was in spite of enormous odds.

There is a scene that is a direct quote from Mrs. Tubman and is written in the book as follows:

"The last time Harriet was returning from the war, with her pass as hospital nurse, she bought a half-fare ticket, as she was told she must do; and missing the other train, she got into an emigrant train on the Amboy Railroad. When the conductor looked at her ticket, he said, "Come, hustle out of here! We don't carry niggers for half-fare." Harriet explained to him that she was in the employ of Government, and was entitled to transportation as the soldiers were. But the conductor took her forcibly by the arm, and said, "I'll make you tired of trying to stay here." She resisted, and being very strong, she could probably have got the better of the conductor, had he not called three men to his assistance. The car was filled with emigrants, and no one seemed to take her part. The only word, she heard, accompanied with fearful oaths, were, "Pitch the nagur out!" They nearly wrenched her arm off, and at length threw her, with all their strength, into a baggage-car. She supposed her arm was broken, and in intense suffering she came on to New York."

The scene depicted in the play was historically accurate. That broken arm she suffered plagued her the rest of her life, and clearly the racial slur stayed with her too.

Now, more to the point about why it is in the play in the first place, above and beyond contractual requirements that do not allow for the deletion of scenes. We all know, or can at least appreciate on some level, the atrocities made against slaves before their freedom. Less is portrayed about the treatment of former slaves after the war. The playwright made a conscious decision to include this scene because it is historically exact, and it is an illustration of the degradation and humiliation African Americans endured even after emancipation. It helps bring to light the plight of patriots like Harriet Tubman even after the war. This is a disturbing scene. It depicts the racial slur against Harriet Tubman as she travels north to her home in Auburn, New York, (yes, it happened in the north and is said so in the play) just after the Civil War. As is the case for many historically accurate depictions, it falls as a despicable act on our 2015 sensibilities, as well it should. It is our hope it will inspire an educational and enlightening discussion between students and teachers and parents.

Offence is never an objective for any of our shows; enlightenment is. Overall, this play is one of the best examples of how to overcome adversity and to rise above it. As Harriet Tubman said, "What we are fighting now is ignorance. And that war never ends."

Please know that we constantly look at our shows with sensitive eyes and review the content of all our shows.

I hope that this will give you a better insight into our take on your question.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me, and thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to bring important subjects to your students through live theatre.

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