



# 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 Darling 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](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa/tubman)

National Geographic:  
The Underground Railroad  
[www.nationalgeographic.com/features/99/railroad/j1.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/99/railroad/j1.html)

Public Broadcast Service: Tubman Biography  
[www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1535.html](http://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 Black man. 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.

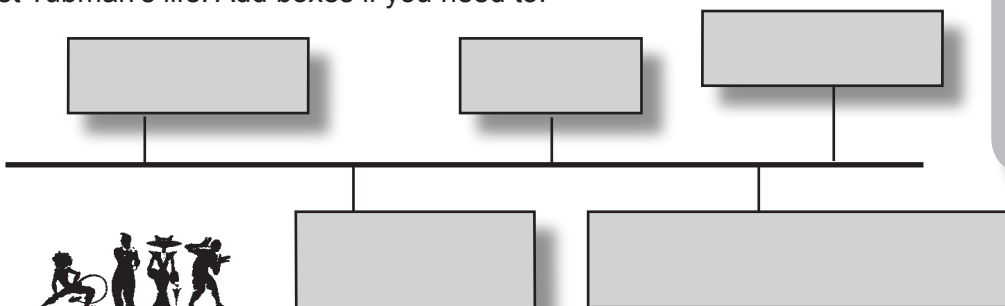
## Questions to Consider:

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 \_\_\_\_\_

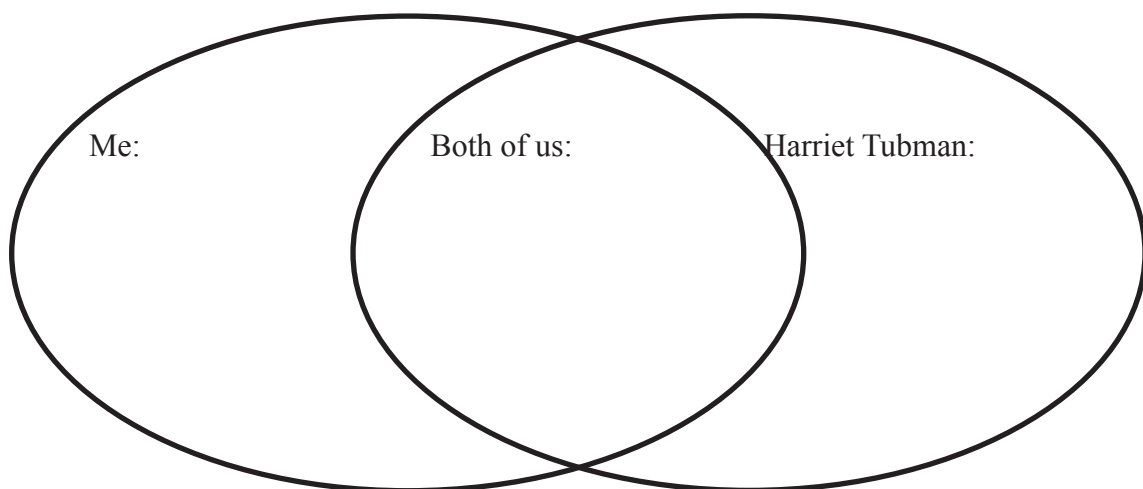
For resources on sharing and creating poetry with children, visit:

[www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org)

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

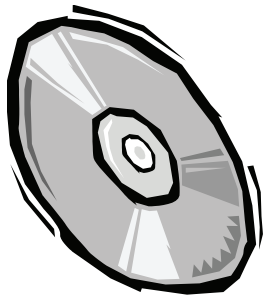
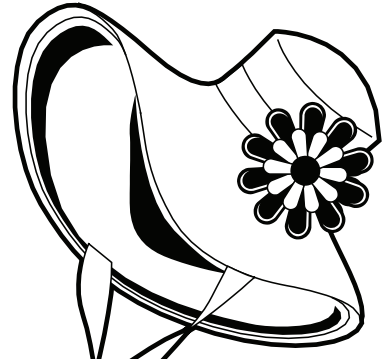
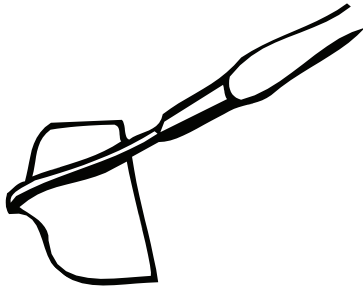
- a. She was a strong leader who was not afraid to face danger to free her people.
- b. She was an avid abolitionist who lived in the North.
- c. She was an obedient servant and loved her masters.
- d. She was in favor of states' rights over freedom for slaves.

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.





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www.TheatreIV.org

Theatre IV Presents  
*Harriet Tubman*  
&

*The Underground Railroad*

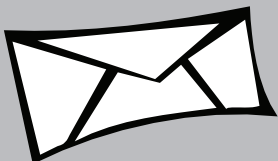
Book and lyrics by  
Douglas Jones  
Music by Ron Barnett.

Theatre IV  
Bruce C. Miller,  
Artistic Director

Phil Whiteway,  
Managing Director

Classroom Connections  
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# 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.*