

Harriet Tubman

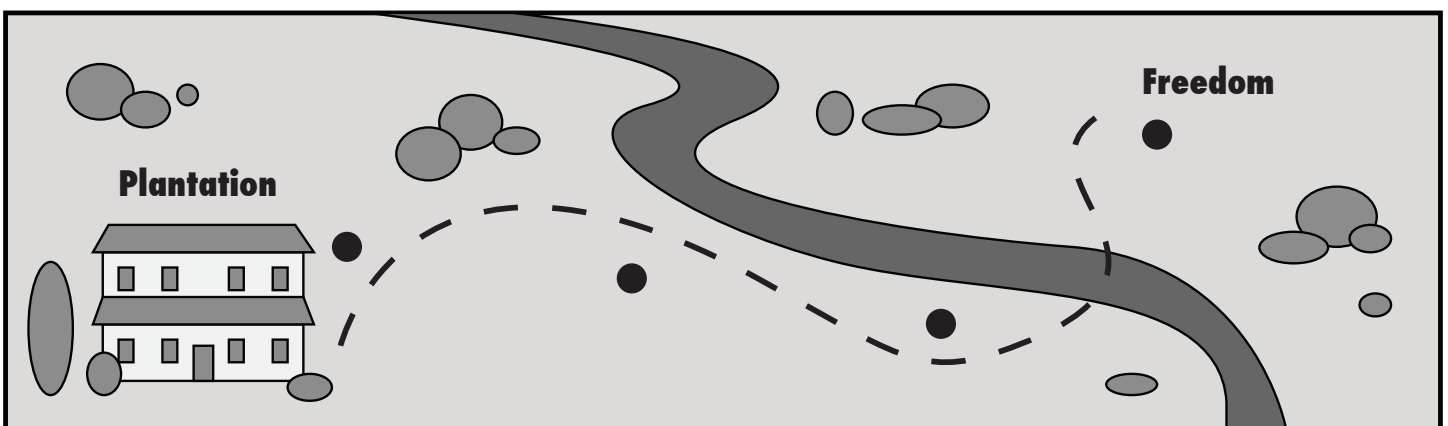
Harriet Tubman was born as a slave on a plantation in Maryland around 1820. No one, not even Harriet, knew what day she was born – slave families often weren't allowed to celebrate birthdays. She worked in her owner's house and in their fields for her entire childhood.

When she was older, she married a man named John Tubman. A few years later, she heard news that the slaves on the plantation she lived on were going to be sold. She did not want to go to another owner, so she decided to run away. Running away was dangerous for slaves in the 1800s. If found, their owners would often hurt them and punish them.

Once she escaped, she met a friendly woman who helped her hide. At night, she went North, toward states where slaves could be free. She made it all the way to Philadelphia, where she was able to find work. Once she had saved up some money, she went back to Maryland to help her family and friends escape, too. Pretty soon, she was taking slaves of all kinds through the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was a network of houses owned by people who did not agree with slavery and had promised to hide slaves and keep them safe as they tried to escape north. Slaves traveling on the railroad hid during the day and traveled to the next house at night, until they reached a free state.



By 1860, she had made 19 trips from the South to the North and had helped over 300 slaves and their families escape slavery. Soon afterward, she worked for the Union army as a cook, a nurse and even a spy. When the war was over, she spoke about injustice toward African-Americans and opened a home for elderly people. She cared for others her entire life.



Following a Hero's Trail

Not every hero has an easy beginning. Harriet Tubman started out her life as a slave. When she finally got the chance to escape, however, she decided mere freedom was not enough. She chose to repeatedly return to the land where she was enslaved to guide her relatives, friends and eventually even strangers to safety. This decision was a dangerous one: she knew that if slave owners ever caught her, she would likely be killed.

After reading Harriet Tubman's biography, fill in the spaces below as if you are a passenger on her Underground Railroad. Pretend each box is a house you have stopped at. How do you feel as the journey goes on? Are you excited or scared?

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