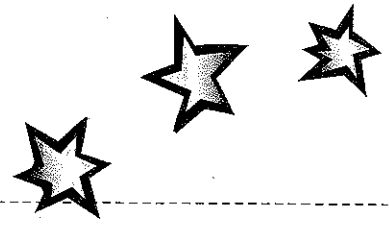


Before You Read

A GLORY OVER EVERYTHING



Make the Connection

What Price Freedom?

This true story takes place during the mid-1800s, when most Southern states still allowed the practice of slavery. The horror of slavery began in the United States in 1619, when the first Africans arrived in the stinking holds of Dutch slave ships. Slavery was not abolished in the United States until 1865.

What would people feel who were held in slavery—owned body and soul by another person? What would they be unable to do? What sorrows would they face? What would they risk if they tried to escape?

Round robin. Share your thoughts with a small group of classmates. Then, choose a group member to summarize for the rest of the class the ideas your group talked about.

Quickwrite

Write about what you felt and learned during your group discussion. What questions do you have about slavery?



Reading Skills and Strategies

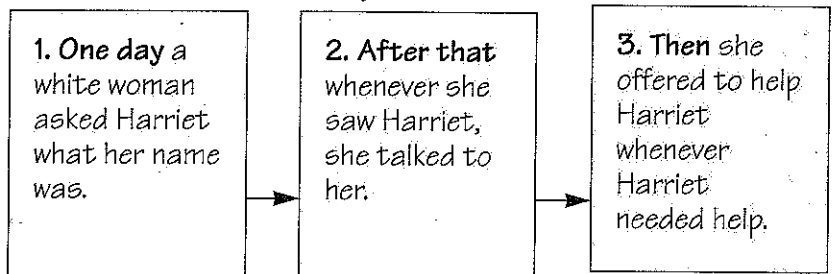
Sequence: It's What Happens When



Sequence is the order of events in a story. Writers often use time-order words or phrases, such as *first*, *next*, *then*, *now*, and *before*, to signal the order of events and the amount of time that has passed.

As you read about Harriet Tubman (or after you've finished reading, if you prefer), keep track of her journey to freedom by completing a sequence chart like the one shown below. Include the time-order words that signal the sequence of events.

Sequence Chart

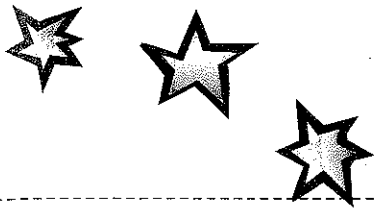


Background

Literature and Social Studies

In 1849, when the following portion of Harriet Tubman's **biography** takes place, a runaway slave who crossed into a free state was considered free. By 1850, however, federal fugitive-slave laws decreed that runaway slaves were not safe until they reached Canada. People who

hated slavery started the Underground Railroad to help runaways make their way to freedom. This was not a railroad, and neither was it underground. The Underground Railroad was made up of people from the North and South who offered shelter, food, and protection to those escaping to freedom in the North. To keep the route secret, the organization used railroad terms, such as



stations for the houses along the way and *conductors* for the people who offered help.

Harriet Tubman, who had escaped from slavery, became one of the most famous conductors on the railroad. She helped more than three hundred men, women, and chil-

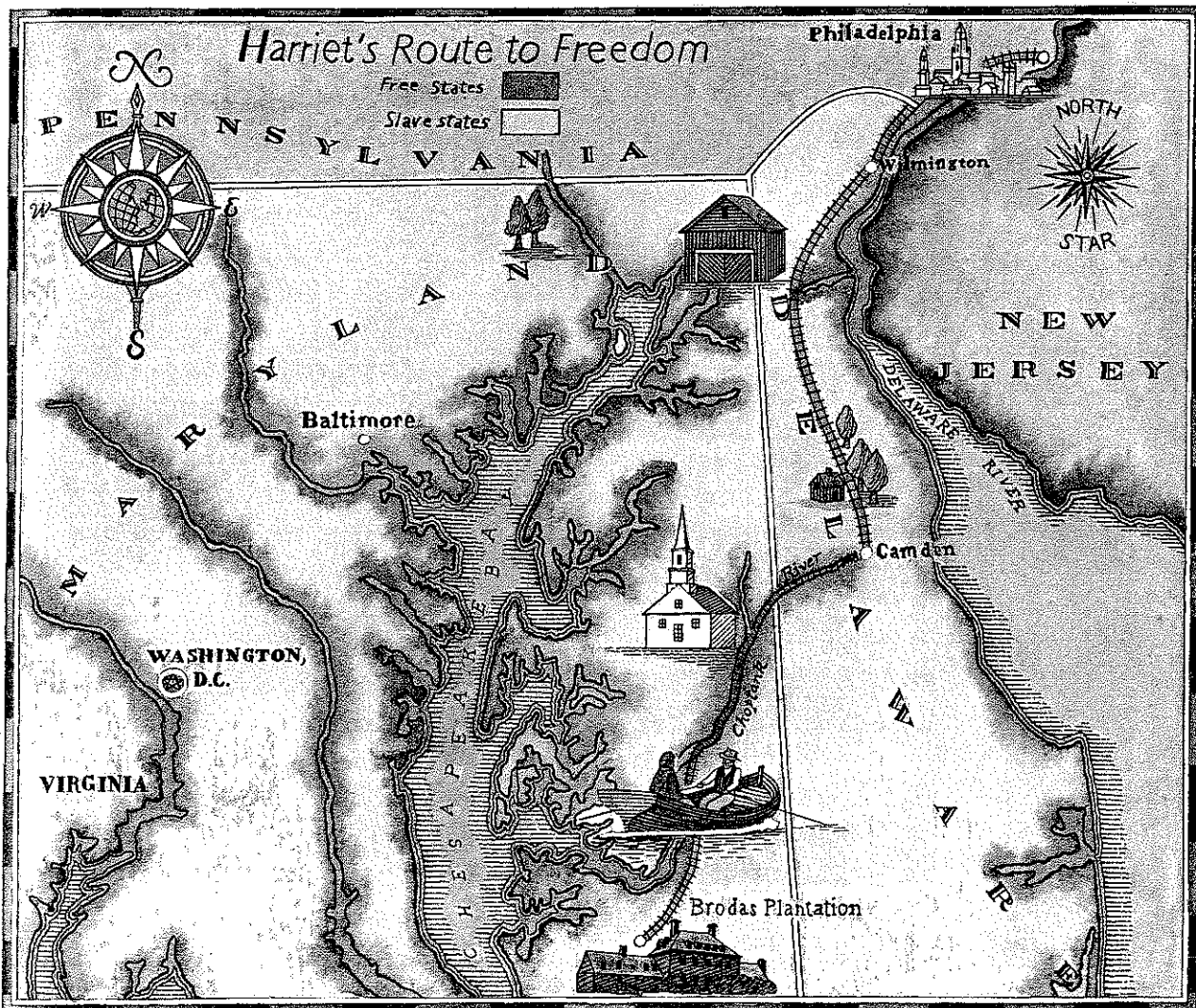
dren along the perilous road to freedom.

In this excerpt from her biography, we meet Harriet Tubman when she is a field hand at the Brodas Plantation in Maryland. As a young girl, Harriet had received a crushing blow when she

refused to help tie up a runaway slave. The injury left a deep scar on her forehead; it also made her fall asleep quite suddenly and uncontrollably.



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*When Harriet heard
of the sale of her
sisters, she knew that
the time had finally
come when she must
leave the plantation.*

A GLORY OVER EVERYTHING

Ann Petry

One day in 1849, when Harriet was working in the fields near the edge of the road, a white woman wearing a faded sunbonnet went past, driving a wagon. She stopped the wagon and watched Harriet for a few minutes. Then she spoke to her, asked her what her name was,

from Harriet Tubman:

and how she had acquired the deep scar on her forehead.

Harriet told her the story of the blow she had received when she was a girl. After that, whenever the woman saw

Conductor on the

her in the fields, she stopped to talk to her. She told Harriet that she lived on a

farm near Bucktown. Then one day she said, not looking at Harriet but looking instead at the overseer¹ far off at the

Underground Railroad

edge of the fields, "If you ever need any help, Harriet, ever need any help,

why, you let me know."

1. overseer: person who supervises workers; in this case, a slave driver.

That same year the young heir to the Brodas estate² died. Harriet mentioned the fact of his death to the white woman in the faded sunbonnet the next time she saw her. She told her of the panic-stricken talk in the quarter, told her that the slaves were afraid that the master, Dr. Thompson, would start selling them. She said that Doc Thompson no longer permitted any of them to hire their time.³ The woman nodded her head, clucked to the horse, and drove off, murmuring, "If you ever need any help——"

The slaves were right about Dr. Thompson's intention. He began selling slaves almost immediately. Among the first ones sold were two of Harriet Tubman's sisters. They went south with the chain gang⁴ on a Saturday.

When Harriet heard of the sale of her sisters, she knew that the time had finally come when she must leave the plantation. She was reluctant to attempt the long trip north alone, not because of John Tubman's threat to betray her⁵ but because she was afraid she might fall asleep somewhere along the way and so would be caught immediately.

She persuaded three of her brothers to go with her. Having made certain that John was

asleep, she left the cabin quietly and met her brothers at the edge of the plantation. They agreed that she was to lead the way, for she was more familiar with the woods than the others.

The three men followed her, crashing through the underbrush, frightening themselves, stopping constantly to say, "What was that?" or "Someone's coming."

She thought of Ben⁶ and how he had said, "Any old body can go through a woods crashing and mashing things down like a cow." She said sharply, "Can't you boys go quieter? Watch where you're going!"

One of them grumbled, "Can't see in the dark. Ain't got cat's eyes like you."

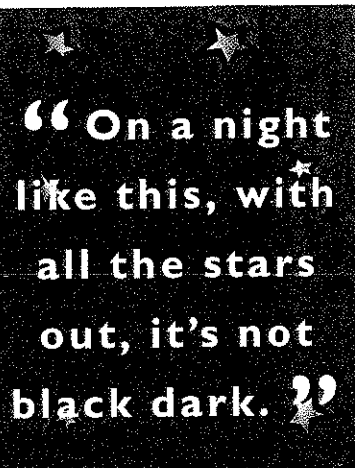
"You don't need cat's eyes," she retorted. "On a night like this, with all the stars out, it's not black dark. Use your own eyes."

She supposed they were doing the best they could, but they moved very slowly. She kept getting so far ahead of them that she

had to stop and wait for them to catch up with her, lest they lose their way. Their progress was slow, uncertain. Their feet got tangled in every vine. They tripped over fallen logs, and once one of them fell flat on his face. They jumped, startled, at the most ordinary sounds: the murmur of the wind in the branches of the trees, the twittering of a bird. They kept turning around, looking back.

They had not gone more than a mile when she became aware that they had stopped.

6. **Ben:** Harriet Tubman's father. Her mother is called Old Rit.



2. **Brodas estate:** Edward Brodas, the previous owner of the plantation, died in 1849 and left his property to his heir, who was not yet old enough to manage it. In the meantime the plantation was placed in the hands of the boy's guardian, Dr. Thompson.

3. **hire their time:** Some slaveholders allowed their slaves to hire themselves out for pay to other plantation owners who needed extra help. In such cases the slaves were permitted to keep their earnings.

4. **chain gang:** literally, a gang of people (slaves or prisoners) chained together.

5. Harriet's husband, John Tubman, was a free man who was content with his life. He violently disapproved of his wife's plan to escape and threatened to tell the master if she carried it out.

She turned and went back to them. She could hear them whispering. One of them called out, "Hat!"

"What's the matter? We haven't got time to keep stopping like this."

"We're going back."

"No," she said firmly. "We've got a good start. If we move fast and move quiet—"

Then all three spoke at once. They said the same thing, over and over, in frantic hurried whispers, all talking at once:

They told her that they had changed their minds. Running away was too dangerous. Someone would surely see them and recognize them. By morning the master would know they had "took off." Then the handbills advertising them would be posted all over Dorchester County. The paterollers⁷ would search for them. Even if they were lucky enough to elude the patrol, they could not possibly hide from the bloodhounds. The hounds would be baying after them, snuffing through the swamps and the underbrush, zigzagging through the deepest woods. The bloodhounds would surely find them. And everyone knew what happened to a runaway who was caught and brought back alive.

She argued with them. Didn't they know that if they went back they would be sold, if not tomorrow, then the next day, or the next? Sold south. They had seen the chain gangs. Was that what they wanted? Were they going to be slaves for the rest of their lives? Didn't freedom mean anything to them?

"You're afraid," she said, trying to shame

7. paterollers: patrollers.

them into action. "Go on back. I'm going north alone."

Instead of being ashamed, they became angry. They shouted at her, telling her that she was a fool and they would make her go back to the plantation with them. Suddenly they surrounded her, three men, her own brothers, jostling her, pushing her along, pinioning⁸ her arms behind her. She fought against them, wasting her strength, exhausting herself in a furious struggle.

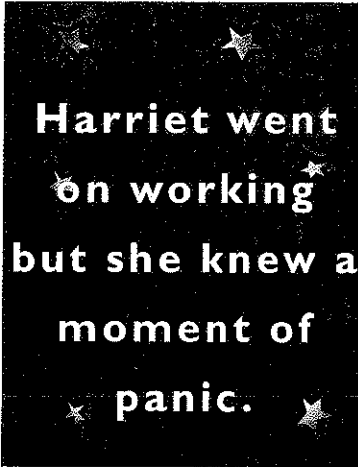
She was no match for three strong men. She said, panting, "All right. We'll go back. I'll go with you."

She led the way, moving slowly. Her thoughts were bitter. Not one of them was willing to take a small risk in order to be free. It had all seemed so perfect, so simple, to have her brothers go with her, sharing the dangers of the trip together, just as a family should.

Now if she ever went north, she would have to go alone.

Two days later, a slave working beside Harriet in the fields motioned to her. She bent toward him, listening. He said the water boy had just brought news to the field hands, and it had been passed from one to the other until it reached him. The news was that Harriet and her brothers had been sold to the Georgia trader and that they were to be sent south with the chain gang that very night.

8. pinioning (pin'yən-in): binding or holding someone to make the person helpless.



Harriet went
on working
but she knew a
moment of
panic.

WORDS TO OWN

elude (ē·lōōd') v.: escape notice of.

Harriet went on working but she knew a moment of panic. She would have to go north alone. She would have to start as soon as it was dark. She could not go with the chain gang. She might die on the way because of those inexplicable sleeping seizures. But then she—how could she run away? She might fall asleep in plain view along the road.

But even if she fell asleep, she thought, the Lord would take care of her. She murmured a prayer, “Lord, I’m going to hold steady on to You, and You’ve got to see me through.”

Afterward, she explained her decision to run the risk of going north alone in these words: “I had reasoned this out in my mind; there was one of two things I had a *right* to, liberty or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other; for no man should take me alive; I should fight for my liberty as long as my strength lasted, and when the time came for me to go, the Lord would let them take me.”

At dusk, when the work in the fields was over, she started toward the Big House.⁹ She had to let someone know that she was going north, someone she could trust. She no

9. Big House: plantation owner’s house.



Hampton University Museum, Hampton, Virginia.

Harriet Tubman Series (1939–1940) No. 7 by Jacob Lawrence.

Harriet Tubman worked as water girl to field hands. She also worked at plowing, carting, and hauling logs.

longer trusted John Tubman and it gave her a lost, lonesome feeling. Her sister Mary worked in the Big House, and she planned to

WORDS TO OWN

inexplicable (in'ek·splik'ə·bəl) *adj.*: not explainable.

tell Mary that she was going to run away, so someone would know.

As she went toward the house, she saw the master, Doc Thompson, riding up the drive on his horse. She turned aside and went toward the quarter. A field hand had no legitimate reason for entering the kitchen of the Big House—and yet—there must be some way she could leave word so that afterward someone would think about it and know that she had left a message.

As she went toward the quarter, she began to sing. Dr. Thompson reined in his horse, turned around, and looked at her. It was not the beauty of her voice that made him turn and watch her, frowning; it was the words of the song that she was singing and something defiant in her manner that disturbed and puzzled him.

*When that old chariot comes,
I'm going to leave you,
I'm bound for the promised land,
Friends, I'm going to leave you.*

*I'm sorry, friends, to leave you,
Farewell! Oh, farewell!
But I'll meet you in the morning,
Farewell! Oh, farewell!*

*I'll meet you in the morning,
When I reach the promised land;
On the other side of Jordan,
For I'm bound for the promised land.*

That night when John Tubman was asleep and the fire had died down in the cabin, she took the ash cake that had been baked for their breakfast and a good-sized piece of salt herring and tied them together in an old bandanna. By hoarding this small stock of food, she could make it last a long time, and with

the berries and edible roots she could find in the woods, she wouldn't starve.

She decided that she would take the quilt¹⁰ with her, too. Her hands lingered over it. It felt soft and warm to her touch. Even in the dark, she thought she could tell one color from another because she knew its pattern and design so well.

Then John stirred in his sleep, and she left the cabin quickly, carrying the quilt carefully folded under her arm.

Once she was off the plantation, she took to the woods, not following the North Star, not even looking for it, going instead toward Bucktown. She needed help. She was going to ask the white woman who had stopped to talk to her so often if she would help her. Perhaps she wouldn't. But she would soon find out.

When she came to the farmhouse where the woman lived, she approached it cautiously, circling around it. It was so quiet. There was no sound at all, not even a dog barking or the sound of voices. Nothing.

She tapped on the door, gently. A voice said, "Who's there?" She answered, "Harriet, from Dr. Thompson's place."

When the woman opened the door, she did not seem at all surprised to see her. She glanced at the little bundle that Harriet was carrying, at the quilt, and invited her in. Then she sat down at the kitchen table and wrote two names on a slip of paper and handed the paper to Harriet.

10. **the quilt:** Tubman had painstakingly stitched together a quilt before her wedding.

WORDS TO OWN

legitimate (lə·jīt'ə·mət) *adj.*: reasonable; logically correct.

defiant (dē·fi'ənt) *adj.*: openly and boldly resisting.

She said that those were the next places where it was safe for Harriet to stop. The first place was a farm where there was a gate with big white posts and round knobs on top of them. The people there would feed her, and when they thought it was safe for her to go on, they would tell her how to get to the next house or take her there. For these were the first two stops on the Underground Railroad—going north, from the eastern shore of Maryland.

Thus Harriet learned that the Underground Railroad that ran straight to the North was not a railroad at all. Neither did it run underground. It was composed of a loosely organized group of people who offered food and shelter, or a place of concealment, to fugitives who had set out on the long road to the North and freedom.

Harriet wanted to pay this woman who had befriended her. But she had no money. She gave her the patchwork quilt, the only beautiful object she had ever owned.

That night she made her way through the woods, crouching in the underbrush whenever she heard the sound of horses' hoofs, staying there until the riders passed. Each time, she wondered if they were already hunting for her. It would be so easy to describe her, the deep scar on her forehead like



Hampton University Museum, Hampton, Virginia.

Harriet Tubman Series (1939–1940) No. 10 by Jacob Lawrence.

Harriet Tubman was between twenty and twenty-five years of age at the time of her escape. She was now alone. She turned her face toward the North, and fixing her eyes on the guiding star, she started on her long, lonely journey.

a dent, the old scars on the back of her neck, the husky speaking voice, the lack of height, scarcely five feet tall. The master would say

she was wearing rough clothes when she ran away, that she had a bandanna on her head, that she was muscular and strong.

She knew how accurately he would describe her. One of the slaves who could read used to tell the others what it said on those handbills that were nailed up on the trees along the edge of the roads. It was easy to recognize the handbills that advertised run-aways because there was always a picture in one corner, a picture of a black man, a little running figure with a stick over his shoulder and a bundle tied on the end of the stick.

Whenever she thought of the handbills, she walked faster. Sometimes she stumbled over old grapevines, gnarled and twisted, thick as a man's wrist, or became entangled in the tough sinewy vine of the honeysuckle. But she kept going.

In the morning she came to the house where her friend had said she was to stop. She showed the slip of paper that she carried to the woman who answered her knock at the back door of the farmhouse. The woman fed her and then handed her a broom and told her to sweep the yard.

Harriet hesitated, suddenly suspicious. Then she decided that with a broom in her hand, working in the yard, she would look as though she belonged on the place; certainly no one would suspect that she was a run-away.

That night the woman's husband, a farmer, loaded a wagon with produce. Harriet climbed in. He threw some blankets over her, and the wagon started.

It was dark under the blankets and not ex-

actly comfortable. But Harriet decided that riding was better than walking. She was surprised at her own lack of fear, wondered how it was that she so readily trusted these strangers who might betray her. For all she knew, the man driving the wagon might be taking her straight back to the master.

She thought of those other rides in wagons, when she was a child, the same clomp of the horses' feet, creak of the wagon, and the feeling of being lost because she did not know where she was going. She did not know her destination this time either, but she

was not alarmed. She thought of John Tubman. By this time he must have told the master that she was gone. Then she thought of the plantation and how the land rolled gently down toward the river, thought of Ben and Old Rit, and that Old Rit would be inconsolable because her favorite daughter was missing. "Lord," she prayed, "I'm going to hold steady onto You. You've got to

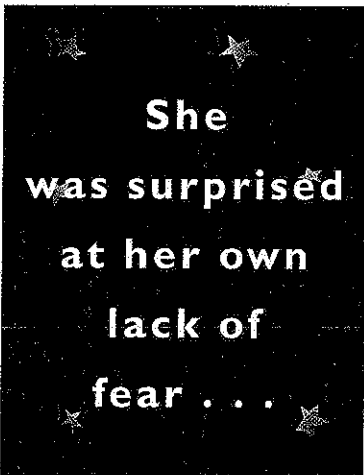
see me through." Then she went to sleep.

The next morning, when the stars were still visible in the sky, the farmer stopped the wagon. Harriet was instantly awake.

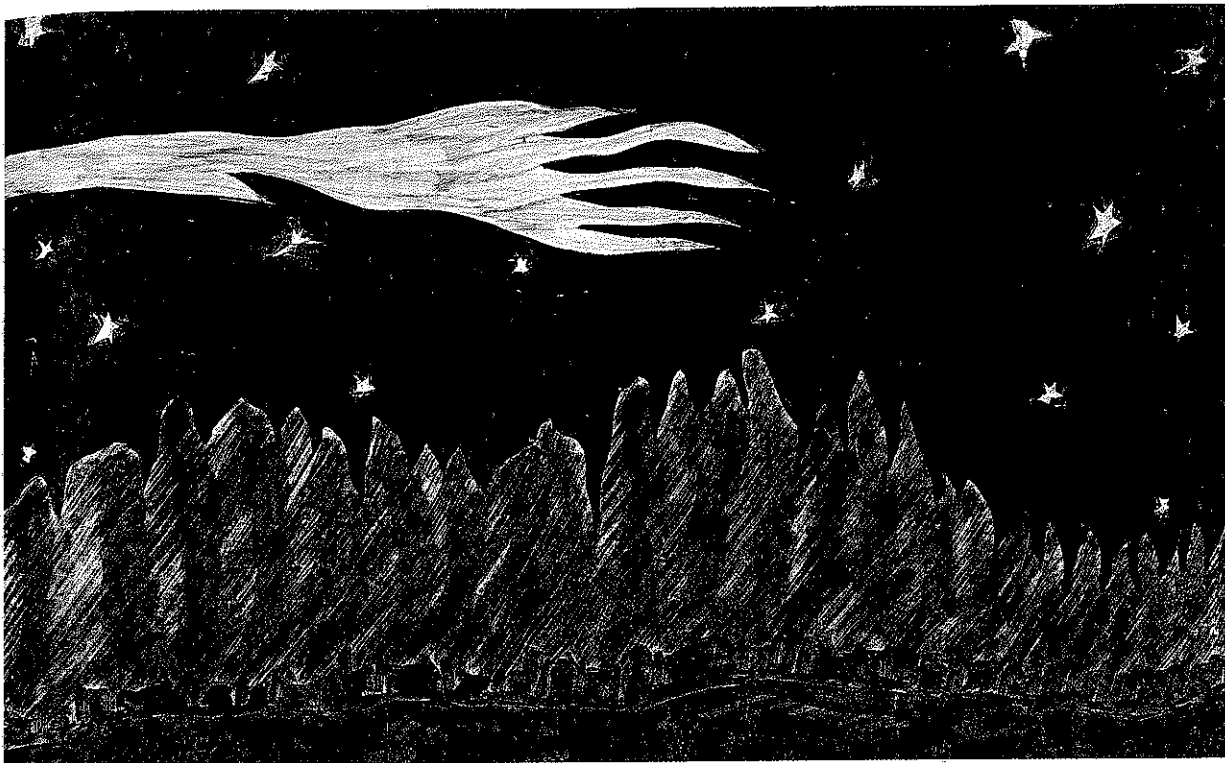
He told her to follow the river, to keep following it to reach the next place where people would take her in and feed her. He said that she must travel only at night and she must stay off the roads because the patrol would be hunting for her. Harriet climbed out of the wagon. "Thank you," she said simply, thinking how amazing it was that there should be

WORDS TO OWN

sinewy (sin'yoo-ē) *adj.*: strong; firm; tough.



She
was surprised
at her own
lack of
fear . . .



Hampton University Museum, Hampton, Virginia.

Harriet Tubman Series (1939–1940) No. 11 by Jacob Lawrence.

"\$500 Reward! Runaway from subscriber of Thursday night, the 4th inst., from the neighborhood of Cambridge, my negro girl, Harriet, sometimes called Minty. Is dark chestnut color, rather stout build, but bright and handsome. Speaks rather deep and has a scar over the left temple. She wore a brown plaid shawl. I will give the

above reward captured outside the county, and \$300 if captured inside the county, in either case to be lodged in the Cambridge, Maryland, jail.
(Signed) George Carter,
Broadacres, near Cambridge, Maryland,
September 24th, 1849"

white people who were willing to go to such lengths to help a slave get to the North.

When she finally arrived in Pennsylvania, she had traveled roughly ninety miles from Dorchester County. She had slept on the ground outdoors at night. She had been rowed for miles up the Choptank River by a man she had never seen before. She had been concealed in a haycock¹¹ and had, at one point, spent a week hidden in a potato hole in a cabin which belonged to a family of free Negroes. She had been hidden in the attic of the home of a Quaker. She had been befriended by stout German farmers,

11. haycock: pile of hay in a field.

whose guttural¹² speech surprised her and whose well-kept farms astonished her. She had never before seen barns and fences, farmhouses and outbuildings, so carefully painted. The cattle and horses were so clean they looked as though they had been scrubbed.

When she crossed the line into the free state of Pennsylvania, the sun was coming up. She said, "I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person now I was free. There was such a glory over everything, the sun came like gold through the trees and over the fields, and I felt like I was in heaven."

12. guttural: harsh, rasping.

MEET THE WRITER

“Remember Them”

Ann Petry (1911–1997) is best known for presenting the tragedy of African slavery in two biographies for young readers: one on Harriet Tubman and the other on Tituba, a young African woman from Barbados who was owned by a Salem family and tried for witchcraft in 1692.

In a speech at the New York Public Library, Petry tells of meeting a young reader who had just read her biography of Harriet Tubman. The meeting made Petry think about what she wanted the book to say to her readers:

“As I was about to leave, a little girl came in to return a book of mine, a book I wrote about Harriet Tubman. She was carrying it hugged close to her chest. She laid it down on the table, and the librarian said to her, ‘You know, this is Mrs. Petry, the author of the book you are returning.’

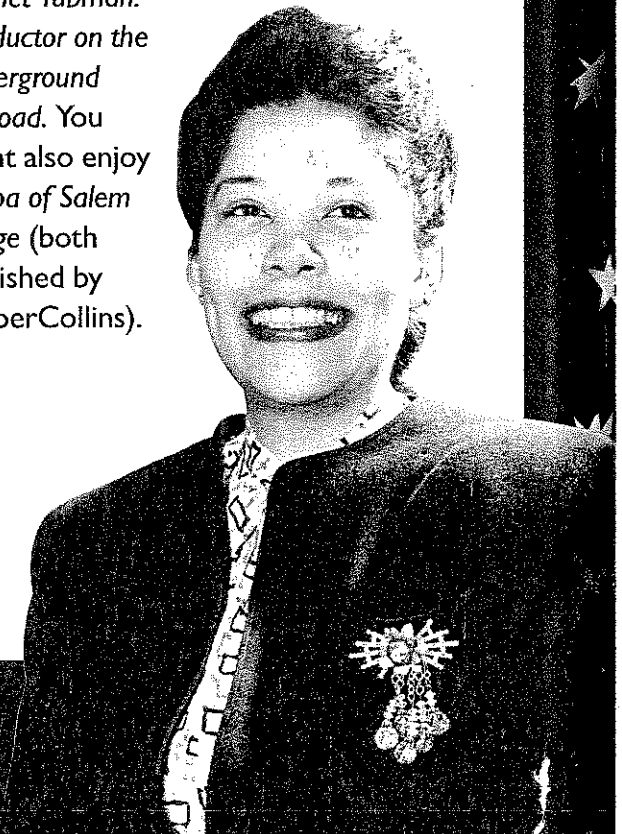
I must confess that I was dismayed; . . . though I have had children tell me they enjoyed something I had written, I had never had a face-to-face encounter with a young reader who was actually holding one of my books. The child looked at me, and I looked at her—and she didn’t say anything and neither did I. I didn’t know what to say. Neither did she. Finally she reached out and touched my arm, ever so gently, and then drew her hand back as though she were embarrassed. I copied her gesture, touching her gently on the arm, because I felt it would serve to indicate that I approved her gesture.

Then I left the library, but I left it thinking to myself: What have I said to this child in this book? . . . Of course, I have been saying: Let’s take a look at slavery. I said it in *Harriet Tubman* and again in *Tituba of Salem Village*.

But what else was I saying? Over and over again, I have said: These are people. Look at them, listen to them, . . . remember them. Remember for what a long, long time black people have been in this country, have been a part of America: a sturdy, indestructible, wonderful part of America, woven into its heart and into its soul.”

More of Ann Petry’s People

To find out what happens to Harriet Tubman on her road to freedom, look for *Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad*. You might also enjoy *Tituba of Salem Village* (both published by HarperCollins).



MAKING MEANINGS

First Thoughts

1. Would you have tried to escape if you had been in Harriet Tubman's situation? Why or why not?

Shaping Interpretations



2. Think about the discussion of slavery you had before you began reading the biography, and think about your notes for the Quick-write on page 136. Did any of your feelings or ideas change after you read this biography? Explain.
3. What **inferences** can you make about the **character traits** that help Tubman find freedom? What makes her an unforgettable personality?
4. Many Africans held in slavery used songs to communicate forbidden messages. When Harriet Tubman sings about leaving on the chariot, what message is she giving to her sister? In the Bible the Israelites escaping slavery in Egypt eventually cross the Jordan River and enter the land they believe was promised to them by God. What is Tubman's Jordan? What is her Promised Land?
5. Think back to "The Mysterious Mr. Lincoln." What did Abraham Lincoln and Harriet Tubman have in common? What did Lincoln have in common with the "conductors" on the Underground Railroad?

Reading Check



Imagine that you're a reporter for a secret newspaper put out by the Underground Railroad. Record information for a news story on Harriet's escape. Refer to your **sequence chart** to order the events. Use details in the story to answer *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *how* questions.

Extending the Text

6. Tubman says that "there was one of two things I had a *right* to, liberty or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other; for no man should take me alive." What other people, in history or living today, risk death in order to be free?

Challenging the Text

7. Ann Petry, the author of this biography, never knew Harriet Tubman personally, yet she describes Tubman's private thoughts and feelings during her escape. Explain why you think it is or isn't right for a biographer to add such details to someone's life story.