

Name _____ Date _____

HARRIET TUBMAN

The Underground Railroad was not a real railroad. It was a way for slaves to escape to freedom in the North. “Conductors” were the people who helped the runaway slaves. They showed them places to hide and gave them food and clothing. Harriet Tubman was one of the most famous “conductors” on the Underground Railroad. Harriet Tubman made many trips into the South and helped over 300 slaves get to freedom in the North. She once said that she "never lost a single passenger."

Harriet Tubman was born a slave around 1820 in Maryland. She helped with chores in the house like cooking and cleaning. When she was about 13, she was sent to work in the fields. Men called “overseers” watched the slaves work to make sure they did a good job. One day, an overseer got mad at another slave. He threw a heavy rock at the slave. Harriet got in front of the slave to protect him. She got hit in the head and was very badly hurt. Even though Harriet got hurt, it was important for her to protect and help others.

After many years as a slave, Harriet decided to run away. Quietly, she left the farm and ran north. Harriet settled in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and worked very hard. She saved her money and enjoyed her life as a free woman. But, Harriet missed her family and worried about them. So, she returned to the farm in Maryland and helped her sister escape to freedom. For the first few trips, Harriet helped her nieces, nephews, and brothers escape to freedom. She even made a trip to help her 70-year-old parents reach freedom. Later, Harriet helped other slaves escape to the North.

Harriet Tubman was a very clever conductor. She knew that the masters would be angry if their slaves ran away. Many slave-owners put ads in the newspaper offering a reward if their slaves were caught. But, the ads wouldn't be in the paper until Monday morning. So, Harriet would leave on a Saturday night! She and the slaves would get a two-day head start on their run to freedom. Sometimes she would head north and then tell the slaves to turn around and head back south. Then, they'd head north again! Why would she do this? There were people looking for the slaves called slave hunters. Harriet would change her directions so that the hunters would get confused. The hunters wanted to capture Harriet so badly that they offered a \$40,000 reward for her capture!

Harriet hated slavery so much that she became friends with other people who hated slavery. These people were called “abolitionists”. Sometimes they had meetings to talk about how terrible slavery was. Harriet gave many speeches about slavery and freedom. She became even more famous. During the Civil War, Harriet Tubman worked as a cook, a nurse, and even a spy. She lived many years helping others and speaking about freedom. Harriet Tubman died in 1913 when she was 93 years old.

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HARRIET TUBMAN QUESTIONS

1. Harriet Tubman was a conductor on the Underground Railroad. What is a conductor?

2. The purpose of the second paragraph is to
 - a. tell you the year Harriet Tubman was born
 - b. help you understand the jobs Harriet Tubman did as a slave
 - c. give you an example of Harriet Tubman’s courage
 - d. none of the above

3. According to the passage, why did Harriet Tubman want to help slaves run away? _____

4. Harriet Tubman tricked the slave hunters by:
 - a. wearing man’s clothing
 - b. changing directions as she walked
 - c. leaving on a Saturday night
 - d. both b and c

5. All of the following are true about Harriet Tubman EXCEPT:
 - a. There was a \$40,000 reward for her capture.
 - b. During the Civil War, she taught slaves to read.
 - c. She helped over 300 slaves escape to freedom.
 - d. She was a conductor on the Underground Railroad.

6. Which of the following COULD have been said by Harriet Tubman?
 - a. “It is more important to help others than protect yourself.”
 - b. “It’s important to do what you’re told, even if it’s wrong.”
 - c. “If I can’t do it alone, I won’t do it.”

7. In number 6, why did you choose that sentence? (Which evidence in the story supports your decision) _____

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HARRIET TUBMAN ANSWERS

1. “Conductors” were the people who helped the runaway slaves. They showed them places to hide and gave them food and clothing. Conductors helped slaves escape to freedom in the North.
2. c. give you an example of Harriet Tubman’s courage
3. Harriet missed her family and worried about them. So, she returned to the farm in Maryland and helped her sister escape to freedom.
4. d. both b and c
5. b. During the Civil War, she taught slaves to read.
6. a. It is more important to help others than to protect yourself
7. evidence: She stepped in front of the slave who was being punished; she risked her life many times to help other slaves escape.