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Among many other standards, this book is aligned with the **COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS** for sixth-grade Informational Text: 6.RH.4, 6.SL.5.

Common
Core State
Standards

HARRIET TUBMAN AND THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

by David A. Adler

illustrated with prints, historical documents,
and photographs

GRADES 5 UP

About the Book

Born a slave, Harriet Tubman was determined not to remain one. She escaped from her owners in Maryland on the Underground Railroad in 1849 and then fearlessly returned thirteen times to help guide family members and others to freedom. This informational text includes a time line, notes, excerpts from primary sources, a bibliography, and an index.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Literature/Language Arts

Biographies—Many people are mentioned in this detailed biography of Harriet Tubman and the times in which she lived. While reading the book, ask students to create a list of these noted historical figures and to do additional biographical research to find out more about each of their lives. Other African-American antislavery figures include Denmark Vesey, Gabriel Prosser, Nat Turner, and Frederick Douglass. Students may also want to read about Lucretia Mott and Sojourner Truth and compare their lives with that of Harriet Tubman.

Character Traits ❶ CCSS 6.RH.4

Many words throughout the book were used to describe Harriet Tubman: *feisty, strong-willed, physically strong, reliable, high-spirited, smart, alert, possessing a splendid memory, determined, fearless, courageous, and shrewd*. Ask students to discuss or write about how each of these traits aided Harriet in achieving her goals. They can also make a list of additional traits that they think she had and explain how they helped her.

Questions for Discussion—

- When Harriet first realized she was free, she felt free but alone. If you were in her place and had the choice of staying with the people you loved or fleeing to freedom, which would you choose? Why?
- Why do you think Harriet was called Moses?
- Why do you think many people continued to treat African Americans unfairly even after slavery had been outlawed? Do you think that has changed over the years? Why or why not?

Informational Books/Back Matter—Students’ attention should be directed toward the back matter of the book: the parallel Timelines of Harriet’s life and historical events; the Author’s Note; the Source Notes; an extensive Selected Bibliography; and Picture Credits. Why are these important in a nonfiction book?

Geography

Students can use various types of maps or atlases (print and online) to locate the places mentioned in the book that were significant in Harriet Tubman’s life. Major ones might be: Baltimore, MD; Richmond, VA; New Orleans, LA; Charleston, SC; Harper’s Ferry, VA; Vicksburg, MS; Gettysburg, PA; and the states of Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Texas, and Wisconsin, along with Canada and Mexico.

Music CCSS 6.SL.5

Spirituals—Old Negro spirituals played a big part in the history of slavery in the United States. The original recordings of two of the most famous ones can be heard here:

www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/1797 “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” and

www.loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/78 “Go Down Moses.” After listening to the recordings, engage the class in a discussion about why spirituals were so important to the slaves.

Additional Research

Many broad topics are mentioned in this biography. Each had some significance in the life of Harriet Tubman. Students may wish to do additional research using print and online resources on any of the following: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe; the Quakers; Amendments XIII, XIV, and XV to the U.S. Constitution; the Women’s Suffrage Movement; and the Civil War.

Online Resources

Harriet Tubman Movie—www.imdb.com/title/tt0078509/ presents information about the 1978 movie about Tubman’s life starring Cicely Tyson. Ask students to view the movie and compare the details with those in the book.

Underground Railroad—www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/ provides a wealth of information about the Underground Railroad, including some interactive elements that allow students to make choices as to what they would do if they were in a similar situation to that of the slaves.

Daguerreotypes—<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/daghtml/> presents 725 photos in the Library of Congress collection, many by renowned Civil War photographer Mathew Brady, as well as an explanation of the form, a glossary of terms, and information about preservation. Students may search for portraits of Tubman, as well as for other people mentioned in the book.

Slave Narratives—

www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/narratives-slavery/history4.html presents the transcripts of interviews done for the Library of Congress in 1936-1938 with people who had been born as slaves. Students can compare their stories with that of Harriet Tubman.

Pamphlet Collection—

www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/slavery/history5.html presents information from 397 pamphlets in the Library of Congress collection that are related to slavery and freedom.

Emancipation Proclamation—

www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/ provides detailed information on this significant five-page American historical document with links to close-up photos of the actual document in Abraham Lincoln’s handwriting along with a complete transcript.

Using Primary Sources—www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/ presents the rationale for using original materials when doing historical research and provides activities for teachers to use with students utilizing primary sources in the Library of Congress’s collection.

Constitutional Amendments XIII, XIV, and XV—Students can read these Amendments in their entirety here: www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_amendments_11-27.html .

Classroom Activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.

About the Author

David A. Adler is the award-winning author of more than 160 books for children, which cover an amazingly wide range of styles and topics. Other biographies of distinguished Americans he has written include *B. Franklin, Printer*; *Frederick Douglass: A Noble Life*; and *George Washington: An Illustrated Biography*. David lives with his family in the New York City metropolitan area. Visit him online at www.davidaadler.com.

The Common Core State Standards

Adaptability Note

The activities suggested within this Educator’s Guide can easily be adapted to conform to the listed Common Core Standards in the entire grade range.

❶ **CCSS 6.RH.4: Craft and Structure**—Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

❷ **CCSS 6.SL.5: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**—Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.

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