AWESOME

The Underground Railroad

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- 1. Harriet's Early Life
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This map image depicts various routes of "The Underground Railroad" which many anti-slavery individuals used to assist escaping slaves during America's time of chattel slavery.

The Underground Railroad was a secret, shifting and informally organized trail to freedom which spread across fourteen states. It was neither "underground" nor a "railroad." There's an interesting story about https://doi.org/10.1007/journal. "railroad" got its name.

More than 3,200 secret and active workers operated the safe transport of slaves along these routes. At the underground's peak, about 1000 slaves per year escaped from slave states using this chain of secret routes and safe houses.

Legally, free states were obliged to send escaped slaves back to their "owners," if they were found. But most people in Northern states ignored this law, causing the Underground Railroad to thrive. Black slaves needed assistance and safe places to rest on their journey North, and this system of sympathizers provided that help.

It was common knowledge, among slaves, that the North Star would guide them to freedom. Now on-the-run, as an escaping slave, Harriet Tubman knew that if cloudy weather prevented her from seeing the stars, she could feel for the moss growing on the North side of the trees in the forest. That moss would help her to know the direction that she needed to travel.

The white woman who helped Harriet that first night gave her a slip of paper with the name of the next "station" or safe house on her route North. Harriet could not read, but followed the woman's oral directions and arrived at the next location before dawn the next morning.

During her journey North, Harriet began to meet person after person who risked everything to help her. She hid in attics, vegetable carts, barns and haystacks. It was only safe to move escaping slaves at night.

Because she was scared and exhausted, Harriet lost track of how many days it actually took her to travel the first 90 miles. The next 40 miles were the hardest for her, but she was determined to make it to Pennsylvania.

Harriet later recalled the joyful moment when she knew that she had reached the free state of Pennsylvania:

I looked down at my hands to see if I was the same person now that I was free. There was such glory over everything: the sun that same shown like gold through the trees and over the fields, and I felt like I was in heaven.

Harriet was free at last.

Footnotes:

1) Wikipedia, The Underground Railroad, Wikipedia, Aug/07/2015, Aug/23/2015, http://en.wikipedia.org

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/The-Underground-Railroad-Harriet-Tubman-Freedom-Fighter

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/The-Underground-Railroad-Harriet-Tubman-Freedom-Fighter

Media Stream



<u>Underground Railroad Routes</u>

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