



0. The Conductor - Story Preface

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After reaching the free state of Pennsylvania, the now-free Harriet Tubman made her way to Philadelphia where got a job as a maid. She visited the Vigilance Committee, an organization which helped newly freed slaves.

From the Vigilance Committee, Harriet learned about a slave woman, and her children, who were about to be sold away from her husband. Members of the Committee were raising money to help rescue those about-to-be-separated slaves and needed a "conductor" to guide them to freedom on the Underground Railroad.

Harriet was stunned when she heard the names of those slaves. They were her sister, her nieces and her nephew!

Harriet immediately volunteered to go back for them. She was warned that she was a wanted woman and if she got caught she would be killed. She replied:

I have vowed to bring my family to freedom and nothing will stop me!

She arrived back in Maryland in the "nick of time." Her family was already in the auction pen—ready to be sold. She helped them escape and led them to Philadelphia. It was the first of 19 trips which Harriet made back to slave states. She eventually led more than 300 people to freedom—never losing even one of them.

Harriet carried a gun with her on these trips. If any of the slaves would lose their nerve and want to turn back, she would tell them: "Move or die." If she ever sensed that her escapees were in danger of being discovered, complete strangers would appear from nowhere to help them.

One night in 1857, Harriet had a dream that her parents needed her. In fact, her father had been accused of helping a slave to escape. His life was now in extreme danger. Harriet knew that she needed to deliver her parents to freedom as well. She went to the Anti-Slavery Office in New York City and asked for \$20 to pay for the trip. (That would be roughly \$600 in 2019.) The man stared at her and said:

Mrs. Tubman—we hardly have \$20 to give away to anyone.

Harriet would not be deterred. She sat down in the office and refused to move. The people came and went around her—whispering "Who is she?" and "What does she want?" During that afternoon she fell into one of her sleeping-sickness spells and awoke several hours later to find coins and crumpled bills in her lap totaling \$60—a huge amount of money for those times.

Harriet knew that her parents were old and could not walk the long distance to freedom. She found a horse and cart and drove them along back roads during the day, then hid them at night.

She drove them all the way to Canada so they would never be hunted down and returned to slavery.

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/The-Conductor-Harriet-Tubman-Freedom-Fighter>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/The-Conductor-Harriet-Tubman-Freedom-Fighter>



Escaping Slavery

<http://www.pbs.org>

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