

Harriet Ross Tubman Biography

Harriet Ross Tubman

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Harriet Ross Tubman Biography.....	1
Contents.....	2
Biography.....	3

Biography

Harriet Ross Tubman (ca. 1820-1913) was a black American who, as an agent for the Underground Railroad, a clandestine escape route used to smuggle slaves to freedom in the North and Canada, helped hundreds flee captivity.

Born in Dorchester County, Md., in the early 1820s, Harriet Ross was a slave child who suffered the usual hardships of black children during the period of Southern slavery. Her wasted youth of hard work, no education, and sometimes harsh punishment led, predictably, to a desire to escape slavery. In 1848, with two brothers (who later became frightened and returned), she ran away, leaving her husband, John Tubman, a free man who had threatened to expose her, behind.

During the next 10 years Harriet Tubman returned to the South 20 times to help approximately 300 slaves, including her own parents, to escape. Using a complicated system of way stations on the route from the South to Canada, she is believed never to have lost a charge. In 1850 the Federal Fugitive Slave Law was reinforced with a clause that promised punishment to anyone who aided an escaping slave. In addition, a price of \$40,000 was set for Tubman's capture. Thus she began transporting some slaves past the North to refuge in Canada.

Tubman supported John Brown's insurrection. Deeply disappointed after it failed, she began an intensive speaking tour in 1860, calling not only for the abolition of slavery, but also for a redefinition of woman's rights. In 1861, when the Civil War began, she served as a nurse, spy, and scout for the Union forces. Well acquainted with the countryside from her days as a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad, she was considered especially valuable as a scout.

After the war, owing to government inefficiency and racial discrimination, Harriet Tubman was denied a pension and had to struggle financially for the rest of her life. To ease this pressure, Sarah Bradford wrote a biography of Miss Tubman (1869), and the profits from its sales were given to her. A friend of many of the great figures of the day, she did finally receive a small pension from the U.S. Army. Meanwhile, she continued lecturing.

In 1857 Harriet Tubman had bought a house in Auburn, N.Y. During her last years she turned it into a home for the aged and needy. She died there on March 10, 1913, leaving the home as a monument to her character and will.