This educational curriculum represents a new programming opportunity for Seward House. In the hopes of expanding the learning activities it offers school-aged visitors, the museum has turned its attention to document-based learning. Document-based learning allows students to interpret historical themes and concepts using primary sources. The extensive collection of original family artifacts at Seward House makes it an ideal tool for students to use in studying the past. Taking dozens of original historic documents and photographs, the museum has created a series of curriculum units. These units are designed to be used individually by teachers or in connection with a visit to Seward House. Students complete the questions and activities in each unit by analyzing the primary sources provided.

The assistance of a number of people was critical in the creation of these curriculum units. Seward House would like to thank consultant Linda Norris for her efforts in developing and writing these units. The museum found the assistance of docents Nancy Murinka and Mary Nellenback invaluable. Their review of original curriculum drafts and suggestions for improvements were extremely beneficial. We also thank Kenney Elementary School Fourth Grade teachers Nancy Labbe, Kam Bullard, and Mary Lee O’Brien for their helpful suggestions and encouragement. Seward House extends its gratitude to the staff of the Rush Rhees Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Rochester and to Dan Barber, curator of the Genesee Country Village and Museum, for providing additional resources. Finally, the museum wishes to thank The John Ben Snow Foundation. Without its generous support, the creation and publication of these educational units would not have been possible.

Peter Wisbey, executive director

Jennifer Haines, curator of education and outreach

All illustrations, not otherwise credited, are from the collection of Seward House.
Seward House
Curriculum Materials

A collection of document-based activities for elementary and middle school students
The Seward household was deeply committed to the cause of anti-slavery. During his long political career, William Henry Seward worked tirelessly to end the spread of slavery in the United States. He made numerous speeches against slavery and quickly became known as a leader in the abolitionist movement. Seward’s wife Frances was equally committed to the cause. She encouraged William’s opposition to slavery and helped raise funds for anti-slavery causes. The Sewards also aided Harriet Tubman. They encouraged Tubman to make Auburn her home and arranged for her to purchase seven acres of their farmland on the outskirts of Auburn in 1859 so she could build a house there. When Tubman served as a nurse and a spy for the Union Army during the Civil War, Frances raised and educated her niece, Margaret Williams, in Auburn. The Sewards tried to instill their abolitionist beliefs in their children. Their daughter Fanny expressed her thoughts on the issue in numerous diary entries and letters.

Other members of the household also participated in the opposition. Nicholas and Harriet Bogart, long-time servants of the Sewards, were active in the anti-slavery movement as well. Unfortunately, less is known about their activities. What is known, however, is that the Seward House served as a stop on the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad came into being, in part, because of the enactment of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. The law provided substantial penalties for anyone who concealed a fugitive slave. As a result, when the Sewards and their household welcomed runaway slaves to their home, they knowingly committed an act of civil disobedience.

In this unit, students will explore the Seward family’s involvement with the Underground Railroad. Using evidence gained through analysis of the documents provided in this packet, students will write a well-organized essay explaining their reasons for or against helping fugitive slaves.
In this unit students will:

■ Evaluate information from documents

■ Learn how to use primary sources in an essay

■ Read timelines

■ Use maps

■ Write creatively and analytically

This unit addresses the following New York State Learning Standards:

■ **Social Studies**

  *Learning Standard 1:* History of the United States and New York

  *Learning Standard 5:* Civics, Citizenship and Government

■ **English Language Arts**

  *Learning Standard 1:* Language for Information and Understanding

  *Learning Standard 3:* Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

  *Learning Standard 4:* Language for Social Interaction

**Note:**

When reproducing these materials for classroom use, Lesson Sheets (those numbered with L) should be photocopied single sided for ease of use, unless otherwise stated.
LESSON 1: Analyzing the Law

Students will read the document in Lesson 1. They should be able to identify the document as an excerpt from the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. Students should also be able to identify that two punishments for someone who helps a fugitive slave were a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars and imprisonment not exceeding six months. Students are finally asked to simply give their opinion on whether they think this law was successful at preventing people from helping fugitive slaves.

LESSON 2: Reading and Dating Documents

Students will read the documents in Lesson 2. They should be able to identify that the passengers William Seward refers to are fugitive slaves. Students can list a number of ways Nicholas Bogart could have helped runaway slaves. Nicholas could have helped hide the slaves when they came to the Sewards’ home. He could have provided food and clothing for them. As a coachman, Nicholas might have also transported them to other Underground stops.

In Fanny’s diary, she refers to “stealers of men.” Students should be able to identify that she is talking about slave traders and that Fanny’s sympathies lie, not with them, but with the slaves. Finally, students determine that Frances Seward feels the freedom of slaves is more important than the preservation of the Union. They then give their opinion on which they think is more important: the Union or freedom for slaves.

LESSON 3: Map Reading

Students should be able to identify that Virginia is the nearest confederate state to Auburn and the states you would pass between the two include Maryland, Pennsylvania and New York. The farthest slaveholding state from Auburn is Texas. Students could list a number of different routes to take between Texas and Auburn. States they could list include Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York (any combination is fine). Virginia, the nearest confederate state, is a little less than 300 miles from Auburn. The final question asks the distance between Auburn and Canada. Students could measure the distance going west, which is approximately 120 miles, or going north, which is approximately 200 miles.

LESSON 4: Role Playing

A fugitive slave has come to the Seward House. Students can act out what might have taken place when this happened. A list of questions to consider is included, which can help teachers prompt the students to think about the concerns and feelings each character would have. Teachers can also choose to do the activity as a class discussion without the role playing component.

LESSON 5: Would You Help?

The final question can be used to tie together all that the students learned in this unit. Using information they’ve gathered from the documents and activities, students will write a well-developed essay explaining their reasons for or against helping fugitive slaves. If students decide to help, they are then to explain what things they would do to help.
Underground Railroad activity increased, in part, because of the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. The law provided punishments for anyone who hid a runaway slave. Read the following excerpt from the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law and answer the questions.

**Excerpt from 1850 Fugitive Slave Law**

[whoever]...shall harbor or conceal such fugitive, so as to prevent the discovery and arrest of such person, after notice or knowledge of the fact that such person was a fugitive from service or labor...shall, for either of said offences, be subject to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars, and imprisonment not exceeding six months...

**Vocabulary Key**

- **such person**: law term, referring to fugitive slave in this document
- **harbor**: hide
- **notice**: being told, informed
- **offences**: wrongs, violations as a result of breaking the law
- **exceeding**: going beyond
1. The document in lesson 1 is from what law?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

2. What are the two punishments for someone who helps a fugitive slave?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

3. Do you think this law stopped people from helping fugitive slaves? Why or why not?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Lesson 2 - Documents

Read the documents by and about members of the Seward household. Place the number of each document in the correct place on the timeline showing events just prior to and during the Civil War. After completing the timeline, answer the questions about each entry.

**DOCUMENT 1:** Excerpt from a letter by William Seward in Auburn to his wife Frances on November 18, 1855

“The underground railroad works wonderfully. Two passengers came here last night.”

**DOCUMENT 2:** Fanny Seward's diary on December 27, 1858

“A cargo of 300 slaves wild from Africa has landed in Georgia by the sloop ‘Wanderer’ and the nation is quite stirred up about it. I hope the ‘stealers of men’ will be justly punished, and the poor Africans be restored to their native land.”

**DOCUMENT 3:** Obituary for Nicholas Bogart from an Auburn newspaper on February 20, 1893

“Nicholas Bogart, one of the oldest and best known colored men in this state and a man of almost national reputation during the slavery agitation, from his connection as coachman with the family of the late Secretary of State William H. Seward, died at his home, 16 Miller Street, last evening, after a few days illness at the advanced age of 91 years.”

**Vocabulary Key**

- **sloop:** a type of boat having only one mast
- **agitation:** to stir up, in document refers to anti-slavery movement
DOCUMENT 4: Excerpt from letter by Frances Seward to William Seward on January 19, 1861

“...Compromises based on the idea that the preservation of the Union is more important than the liberty of nearly 4,000,000 human beings cannot be right.

The alteration of the Constitution to perpetuate slavery—the enforcement of a law to recapture a poor, suffering fugitive—giving half of the Territories of a free Country to the curse of slavery—these compromises cannot be approved by God or supported by good men.”

Vocabulary Key

compromises: a settlement where both sides agree to give up some things they want in order to settle the issue

Union: United States

preservation: the act of saving

alteration: change

perpetuate: to continue
Lesson 2 - Timeline

Reading and Dating Documents

- 1850: Fugitive Slave Law of 1850
- 1852: Uncle Tom's Cabin published, draws new attention to slavery
- 1860: Lincoln elected President; South Carolina secedes from the Union
- 1863: John Brown's Raid at Harper's Ferry
- 1865: Emancipation Proclamation
- 1893: End of Civil War; Lincoln assassinated

NAME: ____________________________
Lesson 2 - Worksheet  

1. Who were the passengers on the Underground Railroad referred to by William Seward?

2. As a servant for the Sewards, how could Nicholas Bogart have helped runaway slaves?

3. In Fanny’s diary, who are “stealers of men?” Who does she feel sorry for?

4. Which does Frances Seward think is more important: the preservation of the Union or the freedom of slaves? Why?

5. Which do you think was more important: making compromises to save the Union or the freedom of slaves?
In 1860, southern states seceded from the United States to form the Confederate States of America. Those states were Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Use a map from your classroom to help locate these states. On the blank map provided, color the states of the Confederacy gray. Use the blank map to answer the questions below.

1. What states would you travel through from the nearest confederate state to Auburn?

2. What states would you travel through from the farthest confederate state to Auburn?

**Using the scale:**

3. How many miles is it from the nearest confederate state to Auburn?

4. How many miles is it from Auburn to Canada?
A fugitive slave has come to the Seward House. Have students act out what might have taken place when this happened. Ask the students to role-play each of the individuals using the biographies provided. Example questions students can consider are listed below.

For the slave character:

Where am I from?

Where am I going next?

How do I feel, as a runaway slave, arriving at the Sewards? Do I feel safe? Or worried? Or frightened?

What will happen to me if I'm discovered?

How will I make a living in Canada?

Am I homesick?

For the Seward household:

What will my friends think?

Do I believe in freedom for everyone?

Which part of the house will the fugitive slave stay in?

Who will fix their meals?

What will happen to me if I'm caught breaking the law?

MATERIALS

Sheets L4-B – L4-H copied double sided to hand out to students
William Henry Seward was born in 1801 in Florida, New York. Slavery was still practiced in the state and many wealthy families owned slaves. Seward's own father kept three slaves. As a boy, Seward saw the unequal living conditions and education of the local slaves and their masters. These observations helped shape his views against slavery. In 1824, Seward married Frances Miller of Auburn, and the two devoted themselves to the anti-slavery movement.

William Henry Seward served as governor of New York from 1839-1843. As governor, he refused to honor the requests from southern states for the return of their fugitive slaves who had escaped to New York to live. From 1849-1861, Seward was a United States senator from New York. He made many speeches against the spread of slavery and quickly became known as a leader in the anti-slavery movement. In 1860, Seward was appointed United States Secretary of State by President Lincoln. He worked with Lincoln on the Emancipation Proclamation, a document that freed all the slaves in states rebelling against the North.

Besides his work in government to end slavery, William Henry Seward used his home in Auburn as a stop on the Underground Railroad. He also aided Harriet Tubman, the fugitive slave who risked her life to lead 300 others to freedom. He encouraged her to return to the United States to live (she and her family were living in Canada). In 1859, he sold her seven acres of his farmland in Auburn so she could build a home there.
Frances Seward was born in 1805 and lived most of her life in Auburn, New York. Raised as a Quaker, her father taught her slavery was wrong. This belief became stronger as she grew up.

In 1824, she married William Henry Seward. Both Frances and William Henry supported the anti-slavery movement. They turned their home in Auburn into a stop on the Underground Railroad. They also became friends with Harriet Tubman, the fugitive slave who risked her life to lead 300 others to freedom. In 1859, the Sewards arranged for Tubman to buy seven acres of their farmland on the outskirts of Auburn so she could build a house there. When Tubman served as a nurse and a spy for the Union Army during the Civil War, Frances raised and educated her niece, Margaret Williams, in Auburn.
Fanny Seward (1844-1866)

Fanny Seward was born in 1844, the fifth child of William Henry and Frances Seward. Both her parents were strong supporters of the anti-slavery movement. From an early age, Fanny was taught about the evils of slavery. She read many books that explained why slavery was bad and what people could do to stop it.

At the age of 14, Fanny started to keep a diary. In her diary, she wrote about what happened to her and her family. She also wrote about her feelings, sometimes expressing her beliefs on why slavery was wrong. During her life, she met many people who were involved in the anti-slavery movement including Frederick Douglass and Lucretia Mott. Fanny's parents helped Harriet Tubman, the fugitive slave who risked her life to lead 300 others to freedom. In 1859, the Sewards arranged for Harriet to purchase seven acres of their farmland on the outskirts of Auburn to build a home. Fanny's parents also turned their home in Auburn, New York into a stop on the Underground Railroad.
Harriet Bogart was a long-time paid servant of the Seward family. The Swards were devoted to the anti-slavery movement and it is believed Harriet and her husband Nicholas, Seward’s the coachman, assisted the family in some of their activities. The Seward House in Auburn was a stop on the Underground Railroad and Harriet probably assisted in the care of fugitive slaves who came through the house.
This image shows an escaped slave making his way to freedom. Slaves followed the routes of the Underground Railroad, a series of safe places, leading from the South to Canada, where runaway slaves could receive food and shelter. Seward House in Auburn, New York was one of the stops. Mr. and Mrs. Seward were strong supporters of the anti-slavery movement and used two rooms in their home as hiding places for escaped slaves.
Seward House in Auburn, New York was the family home of William Henry Seward. He and his wife Frances were strong supporters of the anti-slavery movement. During his long political career, Seward worked tirelessly to end the spread of slavery. The family used their home as a stop on the Underground Railroad.
Seward House in Auburn, New York was the family home of William Henry Seward. He and his wife Frances were strong supporters of the anti-slavery movement. During his long political career, Seward worked tirelessly to end the spread of slavery. The family used their home as a stop on the Underground Railroad. Two rooms were used as hiding places for fugitive slaves in the house. This photograph shows the exterior of one of those rooms, located above the woodshed at the back of the house. The other room used by the family was a basement kitchen at the front of the house.
Would you help escaped slaves?

If you lived in Auburn in 1855, would you help escaped slaves like the Seward family did? Using information from the previous set of documents and activities, write a well-developed essay explaining your reasons for or against helping escaped slaves. If you decide to help, describe what you could do.
**Extension Activities**

The Seward Family & the Underground Railroad

---

**TAKE A TRIP**

Visit the National Geographic web site, [www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad) to take a virtual trip on the Underground Railroad.

**MAKE A POSTER**

Create a poster for an Anti-Slavery rally to be held in your community.

**THE WORK OF MANY**

Research important figures in the Underground Railroad movement.

**IN YOUR OWN COMMUNITY**


**READ ABOUT IT**

Clark, Margaret Goff, *Freedom Crossing* (Scholastic, 1991).

Douglass, Frederick, *Escape from Slavery: The Boyhood of Frederick Douglass in his Own Words* (Knopf, 1994).


Abolition: Words and Images

Information for Teachers:

There was no more passionately debated subject in the nineteenth century than slavery and its expansion into the new territories of the United States. Without mass-media outlets like television, radio and the Internet, the public’s understanding of critical issues was shaped through oratory and speeches, images and the written word. Crafting an oratorical argument and speechmaking skills were part of a young person’s formal education. Speeches were often reprinted verbatim in newspapers or released as pamphlets. During his career, William Henry Seward made numerous speeches against slavery which cemented his national reputation as leader in the abolitionist movement.

In 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, ignited the country’s debate over slavery. Stowe’s depiction of the cruelty of slavery and the humanity of the slaves, Tom and Eliza, stirred her readers. Northerners embraced the novel while Southerners condemned it as inaccurate and offensive. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* sold 10,000 copies in its first week and millions over the course of the decade. For many, it justified the Federal government’s position in the Civil War. President Abraham Lincoln, upon meeting Mrs. Stowe, is said to have remarked “So you are the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war!”

In this unit students will become aware of the importance of words and images in expressing debate on public issues and become aware of how they can participate in today’s civic life. Using evidence gained through analysis of the documents provided in this packet, students will write a well-organized essay explaining how words and images were used to advocate for the end of slavery.
In this unit students will:

- Evaluate written documents and cartoons
- Use analytical skills
- Use persuasive writing skills
- Learn how to use primary sources in an essay
- Work collaboratively and individually

This unit addresses the following New York State Learning Standards:

**Social Studies**

*Learning Standard 1:*
History of the United States and New York

*Learning Standard 5:*
Civics, Citizenship and Government

**English Language Arts**

*Learning Standard 1:*
Language for Information and Understanding

*Learning Standard 3:*
Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

**Note:**
When reproducing these materials for classroom use, Lesson Sheets (those numbered with L) should be photocopied single sided for ease of use, unless otherwise stated.
LESSON 1: Analyzing Documents

Students will read the two speeches and complete the chart provided by listing reasons for and against slavery in the columns. Students should identify that the speaker against slavery sees the system as one of constant danger, distrust, suspicion, and watchfulness. He argues that it is debasing and wastes the energies of all involved. He believes slavery has betrayed the Constitution and its end will allow slave states to shake off aristocratic rule and become democratic. Students should identify that the speaker for slavery sees it as a positive good. He argues that throughout history all wealthy and civilized societies have one portion of the community living on the labor of another. Unlike slavery elsewhere, in the United States laborers receives a greater share for their efforts. Little is exacted from them and their masters take very good care of them, especially during sickness or old age.

LESSON 2: Analyzing Fiction

Students will read the excerpt from Uncle Tom’s Cabin in lesson 2. Students can identify that Stowe was trying to appeal to several different feelings and emotions. She wanted readers to be horrified at the brutality of slavery and angry that it is done in the United States. She wants to appeal to people’s sympathy for the slaves and show the good being done by abolitionists to help slaves. Students next explain what is so special about the story’s characters. Slaves are not depicted as brutes and animals, but as humane individuals. Eliza is extremely brave. She courageously flees across a frozen river, her shoes gone, and blood marking each step she takes. She is willing to risk her life to gain freedom. Students then identify that the brutal depiction of slavery in the novel could have greatly affected popular opinion concerning slavery. Students are asked to explain the type of character that would have evoked sympathies from the South. They are finally asked to think of an example of a novel from the present that would have the same effect today.

continued on next page
Students will look at the two images of slaves and complete the chart provided. Students should be able to identify that image 1 comes from the book Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Image 2 comes from the book A History and Defense of African Slavery by William B. Trotter. Students are next asked to identify the people in each picture. Image 1 shows three slave children and a white gentleman. The children are cowering from the man and trying to get out of his way. Image 2 is also an image of slaves and a white gentleman. Instead of children, the slaves in this image are adult men. The slaves are picking cotton and two of them have stopped to talk to the white man. Students are then asked what the white man in each image is holding. The man in Image 1 is holding a whip while the man in image 2 is holding a walking stick. The fourth question asks students to describe the emotions of one of the people in each image and explain how the artist conveyed these feelings. In image 1, the slaves are frightened. Their fear is conveyed by the looks on their faces and by the presents of a whip in the white man’s hands. The white man in image 1 is angry. The angry expression on his face and whip in hand conveys these feelings. The slaves shown in image 2 have very different feelings from those in image 1. These slaves are not frightened of the white man and feel comfortable looking him right in the eye. They also seem contented picking and carrying the cotton. The white man in image 2 does not appear threatening at all. Instead of a whip, he has a walking stick. He does not appear to be ordering the slaves around, but instead having a civilized discussion with the slaves. The fifth question asks students to determine whether the artist of each image supported or opposed slavery. Students should be able to identify that the artist of image 1 opposed slavery. Slavery is shown to be a brutal practice where men whip small children. Students should be able to identify that the artist of image 2 supports slavery. Slavery is not shown as a brutal practice in this picture. Slaves and their masters can talk freely together. Slaves are contented to pick cotton and work for their masters. The final question asks students to decide if William Seward would have liked the picture or not. Based on their knowledge that Mr. Seward opposed slavery, students should identify that he would found image 1 helpful to the cause and would not like image 2.

The final question can be used to tie together all the students learned in this unit. Taking the information they’ve gathered from the documents and images, students will write a well-developed essay explaining how words and images were used to advocate for the end of slavery. They will describe how ideas were conveyed in speeches, fiction, and images and discuss which might have influenced their opinion about slavery.
DOCUMENT 1: Excerpt from The Irrepressible Conflict, A Speech by William Seward, delivered at Rochester, Monday, October 25, 1858

“...The slave system is one of constant danger, distrust, suspicion and watchfulness. It debases those whose toil alone can produce wealth and resources for defense, to the lowest degree of which human nature is capable, to guard against mutiny and insurrection, and thus wastes energies which might otherwise be employed in national development and aggrandizement.

The free labor system educates all alike, and by opening all the fields of industrial employment, and all the departments of authority, to the unchecked and equal rivalry of all classes of men, at once secures universal contentment, and brings into the highest possible activity all the physical, moral, and social energies of the whole state. In states where the slave system prevails, the masters, director or indirectly, secure all political power and constitute a ruling aristocracy. In States where the free-labor system prevails, universal suffrage necessarily obtains, and the State, inevitably becomes, sooner or later, a republic or democracy.

...the people of the United States have been no less steadily and perseveringly gathering together the forces which to recover back again all the fields and all the castles which have been lost, and to confound and overthrow, by one decisive blow, the betrayers of the Constitution and Freedom forever.”

Vocabulary Key

debases: lowers in status, esteem, quality, or character

mutiny: revolting against civil authority or an established government

aggrandizement: making great or greater

perseveringly: continuing in spite of opposition or discouragement
DOCUMENT 2: Excerpt from South Carolina Senator John C. Calhoun’s Speech to the US Senate, February 6, 1837

“But I take higher ground. I hold that in the present state of civilization, where two races of different origin, and distinguished by color, and other physical differences, as well as intellectual, are brought together, the relation now existing in the slaveholding States between the two, is, instead of an evil, a good — a positive good. I feel myself called upon to speak freely upon the subject where the honor and interests of those I represent are involved. I hold then, that there never has yet existed a wealthy and civilized society in which one portion of the community did not, in point of fact, live on the labor of the other. Broad and general as is this assertion, it is fully borne out by history. This is not the proper occasion, but, if it were, it would not be difficult to trace the various devices by which the wealth of all civilized communities has been so unequally divided, and to show by what means so small a share has been allotted to those by whose labor it was produced, and so large a share given to the non-producing classes. The devices are almost innumerable, from the brute force and gross superstition of ancient times, to the subtle and artful fiscal contrivances of modern. I might well challenge a comparison between them and the more direct, simple, and patriarchal mode by which the labor of the African race is, among us, commanded by the European. I may say with truth, that in few countries so much is left to the share of the laborer, and so little exacted from him, or where there is more kind attention paid to him in sickness or infirmities of age.”

Vocabulary Key

**superstition**: a belief or practice resulting from ignorance or fear of the unknown

**contrivances**: a thing artificially arranged or developed

**patriarchal**: control by men of a disproportionately large share of power
Lesson 1 - Worksheet

Analyzing Speeches

Read the two speeches provided. Using the chart, list as many reasons as you can find in the speeches for and against slavery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REASONS FOR SLAVERY</th>
<th>REASONS AGAINST SLAVERY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Uncle Tom’s Cabin, by Harriet Beecher Stowe is the most famous anti-slavery novel ever written. Abraham Lincoln, when he met the author, referred to her as “the little lady who started this big war.” Read the document below and answer the questions on the worksheet.


“The following excerpt tells the story of Eliza. Her husband has already crossed the Ohio River and escaped to freedom in the north. Eliza, who has stayed behind in Kentucky, has finally decided that she too must cross the Ohio River in early spring and run for freedom. Why has Eliza made this decision? She has just discovered that her master Mr. Shelby has sold her young son Harry to a man named Mister Haley. In Chapter Seven, “The Mother’s Struggle,” Eliza leaves the cabin of Uncle Tom, a devoutly Christian slave who has tried to comfort her, and heads for the Ohio River with young Harry in her arms. She knows that Mr. Haley and two slaves named Sam and Andy are less than an hour behind her and her son on their desperate race north!”

In consequence of all the various delays, it was about three-quarters of an hour after Eliza had laid her child to sleep in the village tavern that Mr. Haley along with the two slaves Sam and Andy came riding into the same place. Eliza was standing by the window, looking out in another direction, when Sam’s quick eye caught a glimpse of her. Haley and Andy were two yards behind. At this crisis, Sam contrived to have his hat blown off, and uttered a loud and characteristic ejaculation, which startled her at once; she drew suddenly back; the whole train swept by the window, round to the front door.

A thousand lives seemed to be concentrated in that one moment to Eliza. Her room opened by a side door to the river. She caught her child, and sprang down the steps towards it. The trader caught a full glimpse of her just as she was disappearing down the bank; and throwing himself from his horse, and calling loudly on Sam and Andy, he was after her like a hound after a deer. In that dizzy moment her feet to her scarce seemed to touch the ground, and a moment brought her to the water’s edge. Right on behind they came; and, nerved with strength such as God gives only to the desperate, with one wild cry and flying leap, she vaulted sheer over the turbid current by the shore, on to the raft of ice beyond. It was a desperate leap -- impossible to anything but madness and despair; and Haley, Sam, and Andy, instinctively cried out, and lifted up their hands, as she did it.

The huge green fragment of ice on which she alighted pitched and creaked as her weight came on it, but she stayed there not a moment. With wild cries and desperate energy, she leaped to another and still another cake; stumbling – leaping – slipping – springing upwards again! Her shoes are gone – her
stockings cut from her feet – while blood marked every step; but she saw nothing, felt nothing, till dimly, as in a dream, she saw the Ohio side, and a man helping her up the bank.

“You’re a brave gal, now, whoever ye are!” said the man, with an oath.

Eliza recognized the voice and face for a man who owned a farm not far from her old home.

“O, Mr. Symmes! – Save me – do save me – do hide me!” said Eliza.

“Why, what’s this?” said the man. “Why, if it isn’t Shelby’s gal!”

“My child! This boy! -- He sold him! There is his master,” said she, pointing to the Kentucky shore. “O, Mr. Symmes, you’ve got a little boy!”

“So I have,” said the man, as he roughly, but kindly, drew her up the steep bank. “Besides, you’re a right brave gal. I like grit, wherever I see it.”

When they had gained the top of the bank, the man paused.

“I’d be glad to do something for ye,” said he; “but then there’s nowhere I could take ye. The best I can do is to tell ye to go there,” said he, pointing to a large white house that stood by itself, off the main street of the village. “Go there; they’re kind folks. There’s no kind o’ danger but they’ll help you, – they’re up to all that sort o’ thing.”

“The Lord bless you!” said Eliza, earnestly.

“No occasion, no occasion in the world,” said the man. “What I’ve done is of no account.”

“And, oh, surely, sir, you won’t tell any one!”

“Go to thunder, gal! What do you take a feller for? Of course not,” said the man. “Come, now, go along like a likely, sensible gal, as you are. You’ve earned your liberty, and you shall have it!”

The woman folded her child to her bosom, and walked firmly and swiftly away.
1. What feelings and emotions is Stowe appealing to?

   
   
   
   
   

2. What is so special about the characters?

   
   
   
   
   

3. How could this novel affect popular opinion?

   
   
   
   
   

4. What type of character would evoke the sympathies of the South?

   
   
   
   
   

5. Can you think of an example of a novel today that has the same effect? Why?
IMAGE 1:
IMAGE 2:
Study the two images of slavery provided. Complete the chart using your observations gained from the images.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>IMAGE 1</th>
<th>IMAGE 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where did this picture come from?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List the people in each picture?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the people doing?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the white man in the picture holding?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe one person’s emotions &amp; how the artist conveyed these emotions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the artist support or oppose slavery? Why?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would William Seward have liked this picture? Why or why not?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How were words and images used to advocate for the end of slavery?

Using evidence from the previous set of documents, write a well-developed essay describing how ideas were conveyed in speeches, fiction, and images. Discuss which examples might have influenced your opinion about slavery.
The web addresses provided were available as of November 2008.

**POLITICAL CARTOONS**

Learn more about political cartoons. Check out the Political Cartoons and Cartoonists website at [www.harpweek.com](http://www.harpweek.com) for a large selection of political cartoons throughout United States history.

**“THE BOOK THAT STARTED THIS GREAT WAR”**

Read all of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* or Visit the website Uncle Tom’s Cabin and American Culture, [www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/](http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/) to learn more about the powerful effect of Stowe’s novel in songs, poems, theater and film.

**TODAY’S POLITICAL ISSUES**

Write letters to local legislators about issues of concern; invite a local political figure to come to your class to discuss a particular issue. Have a classroom debate about an issue of current concern.

**USING WORDS AND IMAGES**

Encourage students to write a poem, draw a picture or cartoon, or write a story about an issue of historical or current concern.
READ ABOUT IT


Douglass, Frederick, Escape from Slavery: The Boyhood of Frederick Douglass in his Own Words (Knopf, 1994).

McKissack, Patricia, A Picture of Freedom: The Diary of Clotee, a Slave Girl, Belmont Plantation, 1859 (Dear America) (Scholastic Press, 1997).


Rappaport, Doreen, A Freedom River (Jump at the Sun, 2000).


True North: A Novel of the Underground Railroad (Scholastic, 1996).

Winter, Jeannette, Follow the Drinking Gourd (Knopf, 1992).