

# Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Harriet Tubman Underground  
Railroad National Historical Park



## 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Lesson

**Compelling Question:** Harriet Tubman: Brave woman or just plain crazy?

**College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards:**

D2.His.1.3-5. Create and use a chronological sequence of related events to compare developments that happened at the same time.

D2.His.1.6-8. Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.

**Background:** Harriet Tubman is best remembered as one of America's most famous conductors on the Underground Railroad. Born into slavery in early 1822 in Dorchester County, Maryland. Tubman gained international acclaim during her lifetime as an Underground Railroad agent, abolitionist, Civil War spy and nurse, suffragist, and humanitarian. Disabled by a near fatal head injury while enslaved, Tubman rose above horrific childhood adversity to emerge with a will of steel. Owing her success to unique survival techniques honed in the forests, fields and marshes of Maryland's Eastern Shore, Tubman transcended victimization to achieve personal and physical freedom from her oppressors.

**Teacher Autonomy:**

This lesson was created by local school teachers and is organized so that teachers can make their own instructional decisions. This lesson offers ideas and resources in a student-centered approach using the C3 standards.

**Resources for Instruction:**

A timeline of Harriet Tubman trips, Harriet Tubman quotes and narratives, maps, images, videos, songs, poems drawings, comic sketch, runaway slave narratives, primary and secondary informational text, read aloud from books, descriptive essay, and access to WGN America's Underground (02.43).

**Technology Integration:**

Do you have access to in-class technology like Internet connection and mobile devices? Consider integrating additional video clips, webpages, E-books, and much more!

**Success Criteria:**

- Question clearly answered
- Multiple pieces of evidence to support conclusion
- Clear explanation of Harriet Tubman's historical impact

**Instructions:**

1. Introduce students to lesson by sharing three resources:
  - a. Image of [Harriet Tubman](#)

- b. Read Aloud – [A Picture Book of Harriet Tubman](#) by David A. Adler illustrated by Samuel Byrd
  - c. Video Clip – WGN America’s [Underground](#) “Full Length Trailer (02:43)”
2. Quick Share to students of all available resources from Resources for Instruction.
3. Explain purpose and task – Students must determine if Harriet Tubman was indeed a brave woman or just plain crazy using evidence to support their assertion. Their task is to take a “deep dive” in the many primary and secondary sources to clearly answer this question by using multiple pieces of evidence by showing her historical impact.
4. Go over Success Criteria
5. Go over worktime (groups, pairs, individual)
6. Do not forget to check-in with students based on the time period allowed for student work.
7. Ideas for Sharing – Gallery Walk with feedback, conference with students, display in a location that is visible by all students, visitors, or guest.

**Additional Resources:**

- Junior Ranger Activity Book – Discovering the Underground Railroad (contact the park to obtain a class set).
- Book List for Young Readers (found on our website)

**Websites**

- Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park [www.nps.gov/hatu](http://www.nps.gov/hatu)
- WGN Underground <http://www.wgnamerica.com/series/underground/>
- TradingCardsNPS Flickr  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/tradingcardsnpsyahoomcom/sets/72157632769467862/with/8474610146/>
- Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 8, Maryland, Brooks-Williams  
<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn080/>

**Books**

*Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad* by Ann Petry

*DK Biography: Harriet Tubman* by Kem Knapp Sawyer

*Harriet Tubman: A Woman of Courage* by the Editors of Time for Kids with Renee Skelton

*Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad* by Susan Dudley Gold