

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Great Minds: Harriet Tubman

by Lydia Lukidis

Some people are courageous trailblazers. They never give up, even in the face of adversity. Somehow, they change the course of history and will never be forgotten. This is the case with Harriet Tubman. Imagine this: she was born into slavery, yet managed to help free hundreds of other slaves.

It all started when she was born in 1820. Her name was Araminta Minty Ross, but she later took the name of her mother, Harriet. She grew up on a plantation in Dorchester County, Maryland. Being a slave wasn't easy. She was mistreated, given scraps for food, and was sometimes beaten by her masters. She lived in a tiny one bedroom cabin with her parents and eleven other children, so life was cramped.

Harriet was forced to work even when she was young. Slaves had no rights back then. She did many different things on the plantation. She plowed the fields, carried heavy things, and loaded food onto wagons. She was also a maid and a cook. The days were long and hard.

When she was thirteen, she had a terrible accident. A slave owner threw a heavy metal weight at one of his slaves. But it missed and hit Harriet in the head instead. It had such a big impact that she almost died. That injury caused her to have seizures and blackouts for the rest of her life.

Her years of slavery went on and on. Harriet grew tired of being mistreated, along with the other slaves. Many of them were escaping at that time. And in 1849, Harriet also escaped her plantation thanks to the Underground Railroad.

This was not an actual railroad. It was a group of people, homes, and secret hiding spots that kept slaves safe. The people involved used railroad terms as code words to keep it secretive. "Conductors" helped people move from place to place. "Passengers" were the slaves who were escaping. They were also sometimes called "cargo." Some people helping the slaves were abolitionists. They wanted to end slavery. They were not only African American but also white people, both men and women. They believed in freedom for all.



**"Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."**  
- Harriet Tubman



**The Harriet Tubman Memorial in  
New York City**

When Harriet escaped, slavery was against the law in some northern states. That is why so many slaves left their plantations in the south. They fled to the north, seeking freedom. After a very long and terrifying journey, Harriet finally made it to Philadelphia and was free.

A year later, the Fugitive Slave Act was passed. That was bad news for the slaves who escaped. It meant they could be taken from the free states in the north and given back to their owners. To be truly free, slaves now had to escape to Canada.

Harriet felt a calling in her heart. She wanted to help other slaves. So she became a conductor in the Underground Railroad. In fact, she became famous for that. She helped over 300 slaves escape, including her family. Each time she helped a slave, she put her own life

at risk. If the conductors and other helpers were discovered, they were put to death by hanging. But that didn't stop Harriet. She believed in standing up for what's right.

Her service continued during the Civil War. She helped nurse injured soldiers. She was also a spy for the north, and even helped the army free more slaves.

After the war, she went to live with her family in New York. She continued being a Civil Rights Activist. She supported equal rights for blacks and women. She eventually died of pneumonia when she was in her nineties, but her legacy continues to live on today.



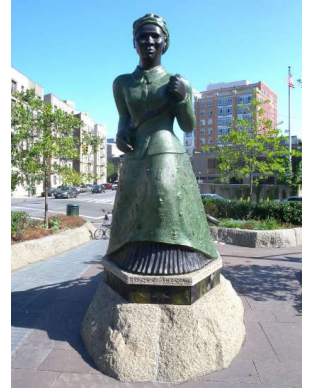
## About the Author

Lydia Lukidis is a children's author with a multi-disciplinary background that spans the fields of literature, science and theater. So far, she has over 40 books and eBooks published, as well as a dozen educational books. Her latest STEM books include [A Real Live Pet!](#) and [The Space Rock Mystery.](#)

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1. Based on the information in the article, how old was Harriet Tubman when she ran away from slavery?

- a. 13
- b. 29
- c. 30
- d. 55

2. Describe the kind of work Harriet Tubman did on the plantation before she ran away.

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3. What was the Underground Railroad? What was Harriet Tubman's role in the Underground Railroad?

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4. According to the information you read in the article, write the number **1**, **2**, **3**, or **4** next to the historical event that happened **first**, **second**, **third**, and **fourth**.

\_\_\_\_\_ Harriet escaped from her plantation through the Underground Railroad.

\_\_\_\_\_ Harriet served the abolitionist cause in the Civil War.

\_\_\_\_\_ Harriet suffered a terrible head injury at the hands of a slave owner.

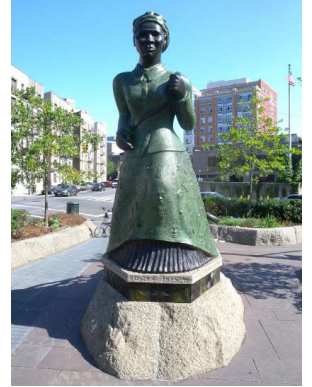
\_\_\_\_\_ The Fugitive Slave Act was passed, and Harriet continued to help hundreds of slaves escape their lives of slavery at the risk of her own life.

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The following terms are vocabulary words from the article.  
Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing the corresponding letter on the line.



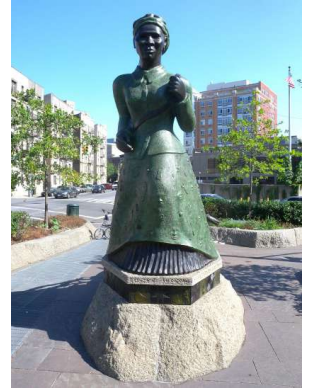
1. \_\_\_\_\_ trailblazers                      a. hard times; difficulties
2. \_\_\_\_\_ abolitionists                      b. something passed down by a predecessor
3. \_\_\_\_\_ adversity                      c. historically, an estate that grew crops like cotton or tobacco, which was farmed by slave labor
4. \_\_\_\_\_ fugitive                      d. people who believed that the practice of slavery should be ended
5. \_\_\_\_\_ plantation                      e. people who operated trains; a code word for people who helped slaves move from place to place on the Underground Railroad
6. \_\_\_\_\_ activist                      f. a bacterial or viral lung infection causing inflammation
7. \_\_\_\_\_ legacy                      g. people who lead the way for others; pioneers
8. \_\_\_\_\_ conductors                      h. the rights of citizens to equality and social and political freedom
9. \_\_\_\_\_ pneumonia                      i. a person who has escaped from somewhere and has to hide to avoid being arrested or persecuted
10. \_\_\_\_\_ civil rights                      j. a person who works for social or political change



# ANSWER KEY

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1. Based on the information in the article, how old was Harriet Tubman when she ran away from slavery? **b**

a. 13

**b. 29**

c. 30

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2. Describe the kind of work Harriet Tubman did on the plantation before she ran away.

**She plowed the fields, carried heavy things, and loaded food onto wagons. She was also a maid and cook.**

3. What was the Underground Railroad? What was Harriet Tubman's role in the Underground Railroad?

**The Underground Railroad was a system of people, homes, and secret hiding spots that helped slaves escape to freedom in the north. Harriet Tubman was a conductor in the Underground Railroad.**

4. According to the information you read in the article, write the number **1**, **2**, **3**, or **4** next to the historical event that happened **first**, **second**, **third**, and **fourth**.

**2** Harriet escaped from her plantation through the Underground Railroad.

**4** Harriet served the abolitionist cause in the Civil War.

**1** Harriet suffered a terrible head injury at the hands of a slave owner.

**3** The Fugitive Slave Act was passed, and Harriet continued to help hundreds of slaves escape their lives of slavery at the risk of her own life.

