

Fact or Fiction?

Name: _____

Below is a biography on Harriet Tubman. On the following page is a chart with ten statements. Indicate whether each statement is fact or fiction.

"Minty" is Injured

Harriet Tubman was one of the most famous women in American history. She was born on March 10, 1821, in Dorchester County, Maryland, the daughter of slaves on a Maryland plantation. Her original name was Araminta Ross and she was nicknamed "Minty." From an early age she worked as a servant at the plantation house. As a teenager, she suffered a vicious head wound as she tried to protect a fellow slave from a beating. According to legend, the woman who was beating the other slave hurled a two- pound weight, hitting Harriet in the head. Her injury would haunt her for the remainder of her life, resulting in periodic fainting spells.

A Path to Freedom

Tubman spent her early life as a slave. In 1844, she married a free Black man named John Tubman, who would prove disloyal. Life as a slave was extremely difficult. They were forced to work in the merciless heat without rest. They were often beaten and forced to live in poor conditions. In the early and mid 1800's, slaves were often sold to southern plantations where they would never have contact with their families again. Harriet was a particularly strong and powerful woman who could be sold for a hefty sum. Fearing that she was about to be sold, Harriet resolved to run away. Despite the brutal punishment that would be inflicted upon her if she was caught, Harriet took off in the middle of the night sometime in 1849 and headed north to freedom. She gained assistance along the way by abolitionist Quaker families who hung specially designed carpets or lights on the outside of their houses as a sign that runaway slaves were welcome and would receive help. She traveled by night through the dense woodlands of Maryland, guided north by the North Star and the moss that grew on the north side of the trees. She eventually made it to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a free city where she landed a job and saved money. After living in Philadelphia for two years, Harriet decided to return to Maryland, in the hopes of freeing her family members. She succeeded in guiding her sister and mother to freedom along the same path that she had taken. This path became known as the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was a network of woodland paths scattered throughout parts of the south that led to freedom in the north. Harriet returned again and guided her father and brother to freedom.

"Wanted Dead or Alive"

Soon, Harriet became known as the "conductor" on the Underground Railroad and made more daring trips to the south to guide more slaves to their freedom. Harriet devised strategies to trick various parties that tried to capture her. If she was traveling with a baby, she would use herbal drugs to ensure it didn't cry. She made sure that she traveled on Saturdays as "runaway notices" in southern newspapers could not be printed until Monday. Harriet's daring "forays" continued to elude slave hunters who were offered huge bounties for returning slaves to their owners. By 1856, a \$40,000 bounty was placed on her capture - dead or alive. She became a serious threat to southern plantation owners who made large investments in their slaves. In one famous story, Harriet was close to being captured at a bus station. To avoid capture, she pulled out a book and pretended to read. Since nearly all slaves were illiterate, the hunters simply ignored her and continued their search.

Legacy

By 1860, Tubman was said to have completed 19 successful journeys on the Underground Railroad, freeing as many as 300 slaves. She was never captured, nor were any of her "passengers." During the Civil War, she served as a cook, nurse, and spy for the Union army. After the war, she settled in Troy, New York, where she would die in 1913.

	FACT	FICTION
Harriet Tubman was nicknamed "Araminta."		
Slaves in Maryland escaped to freedom by travelling north.		
The passage implies that most people of the Quaker faith were against slavery.		
Harriet used the North Star to guide her in the correct direction along the Underground Railroad.		
The Underground Railroad actually had nothing to do with trains.		
Harriet was "free" when she crossed from Pennsylvania into Maryland		
Harriet developed special strategies to help her and other slaves escape detection on the Underground Railroad.		
Harriet often traveled on Mondays as "runaway notices" were printed on weekends.		
Harriet was one of few slaves who could read and write.		
Harriet was believed to have led over 300 slaves to freedom.		
Ironically, Harriet moved back to Maryland after the Civil War. She died there in 1913.		

Answers:

	FACT	FICTION
Harriet Tubman was nicknamed "Araminta."		X
Slaves in Maryland escaped to freedom by travelling north.	X	
The passage implies that most people of the Quaker faith were against slavery.	X	
Harriet used the North Star to guide her in the correct direction along the Underground Railroad.	X	
The Underground Railroad actually had nothing to do with trains.	X	
Harriet was "free" when she crossed from Pennsylvania into Maryland		X
Harriet developed special strategies to help her and other slaves escape detection on the Underground Railroad.	X	
Harriet often traveled on Mondays as "runaway notices" were printed on weekends.		X
Harriet was one of few slaves who could read and write.		X
Harriet was believed to have led over 300 slaves to freedom.	X	
Ironically, Harriet moved back to Maryland after the Civil War. She died there in 1913.		X