

Harriet Tubman, Alias Moses: Joe's Journey (Simplified)

Adapted from Sarah Bradford's book:

Harriet Tubman, The Moses of Her People, published in 1869.

By Carol Montgomery

Readability = grade 3.4 (Flesch–Kincaid)

Performance Time = about 9 1/2 minutes

Cast (8-12)

Reader 1	William
Reader 2	Eliza
Reader 3	Peter
Reader 4	Friend*
Joe	Mr. Johnson
Old Ben*	Harriet

*One person may play both roles. (Readers may also double roles.)

** Suggestion: Have readers wear signs showing names of their characters.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Harriet shared in her book that they all sang a song at one point of the journey. Your students will read (or sing) those words. The words to that song match the verse and the chorus of the traditional folk song, "Oh Susanna!"



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Vocabulary:

anti-slavery

gentlemen

baying

handkerchief

beautiful

Maryland

bricklayers

Niagara

businessman

policemen

conductor

rawhide

Delaware

resolved

description

righteous

disguises

runaways

dominion

scattered

dreary

separated

embarked

slavery

expenses

suspension

extended

underground

flogging

Victoria

forsake

yonder

gathered

'rouse



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Reader 1: Harriet Tubman led at least three hundred slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad. She told Sarah Bradford her life story.

Reader 2: "Joe's Journey" is one story Harriet Tubman told Mrs. Bradford.

Reader 1: On Harriet Tubman's seventh or eighth journey from Maryland to Canada a group of escaped slaves traveled with her.

Reader 2: One strong man was Joe.

Reader 3: Joe had been hired out by his master. Joe did a great job for six years. He was a hard worker.

Reader 4: The man who hired Joe wanted to buy Joe. But, Joe's owner knew Joe's worth. He wanted a thousand dollars right away. And he asked for another thousand dollars over time.

Reader 1: In those days a thousand dollars was a LOT more money!

Reader 2: The morning after the sale the new master came riding down on a big horse with a piece of rawhide in his hand. He stopped in front of Joe's cabin...

Reader 3: ... and required Joe to be whipped on his bare back—to teach Joe to obey. It didn't matter that Joe had been a great hired hand; now Joe belonged to him. A beating was the first lesson that owner gave his slaves.

Reader 4: Joe told the man that he had been a faithful worker.

Reader 3: The man agreed. He had no complaints. But, he always beat a new slave.

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Reader 4: So, Joe silently took his flogging. Next, he pulled his shirt on over his bleeding back and said to himself...

Joe: This is the first (*pause*)...and the last.

Reader 3: That night Joe took a boat and rowed down the river. He went to see Old Ben, Harriet's father.

Joe: Next time Moses comes, let me know.

Old Ben: (*nods*) I sure will.

Reader 4: Joe didn't have to wait long. Neither did the others who were waiting for Harriet Tubman to rescue them from slavery.

Reader 2: Joe's brother, William, also fled slavery with a couple of other slaves: Peter and Eliza.

William: Yes, sir! We hid in potato holes sometimes during the day. We didn't make a sound. We could hear them hunting us like we were animals! It was bad. One time they passed just a few feet away from us!

Eliza: We were passed from friend to friend wearing different disguises. We never knew who could be a friend or who could be an enemy. But, Moses knew!

Peter: Sometimes we scattered and separated. Some traveled by boat, some by wagons, some by cars, and some by foot. Then, we'd meet at the next station house.

Joe: I couldn't wait to get to Canada! I couldn't wait to get to freedom! Some of my favorite times were when we could talk and laugh. And, I loved to sing those hymns when no one could hear us.

Reader 1: Finally, they were at a long bridge that crosses a river in Delaware.

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Friend: Psssst. Moses. I mean, Harriet. Don't cross the bridge; it's guarded by police. They've put up ads for Joe offering BIG rewards. The ad says two thousand dollars and all expenses paid for Joe's body in Easton Jail. And, there are other rewards. Plus, there's a high price on your own head!

Harriet: (*nods*) I see. Lord, what do we do now?

Reader 2: They separated the terrified group. Then, they hid them in houses of friends until something else could be arranged.

William: Thank God for that businessman! He had two wagons filled with bricklayers sent over the bridge for us. It looked just fine because they often crossed that bridge.

Eliza: Those bricklayers went across that bridge singing and shouting on their way to get us. Then they waited until dark—just like they had been working all day. But, there was a secret when those two wagons of bricklayers crossed that bridge again.

Peter: All of us runaways were lying close in the bottom of those wagons. And the bricklayers drove us across that bridge while they sang and shouted to one another again!

Joe: I was truly scared. But, we made it.

Reader 1: They made it across that guarded bridge. And, they made it to New York to the anti-slavery office of Oliver Johnson.

Mr. Johnson: Well, Joe, I'm happy to see the man who is worth \$2000 to his master!

Joe: Oh, how did you know me?

Mr. Johnson: Come see this ad. The description is so close no one could miss you!

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Joe: And how far off is Canada?

Mr. Johnson: Here, look at this map. See the railroad tracks? It's more than three hundred miles to Niagara where you can cross the river and be free.

Joe: Oh, no! How can we ever make it that far?

Harriet: Come on, Joe! You can't give up now! The Lord has been with us in six troubles. He won't desert us in the seventh!

Reader 3: But, Joe felt hopeless.

Harriet: I remember from that time on, Joe was silent. He talked no more. He sang no more. He sat with this head on his hand. Nobody could 'rouse him nor make him take any interest in anything.

Joe: (*nods*)

William: Praise God we passed along in safety in all of New York State!

Eliza: And, I'll never forget the look of that big bridge over the river!

Peter: Neither will I. I knew when we made it half way across that bridge we'd be safe!

Joe: But, what if they had more policemen on that bridge? Or what if those hunters would stop us with the power of the law? They could drag us all back to slavery.

William: It was a good thing the other people on our train car were on our side. That way we could all sing. We were so excited.

Reader 1: And they sang the following words...

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William: I'm on the way to Canada, that cold and dreary land.
The sad effects of slavery I can no longer stand.

Peter: I've served my Master all my days, without a dime reward.
And now I'm forced to run away to flee the lash abroad.

William & Peter: Farewell, old Master; don't think hard of me.

Eliza & Harriet: I'm traveling on to Canada where all the slaves are free.

Eliza: The hounds are baying on my track. Old Master comes behind,
resolved that he will bring me back before I cross the line.

Harriet: I'm now embarked for yonder shore where a man's a man by law.
The iron hose will bear me o'er to shake the lion's paw.

Eliza & Harriet: Oh, righteous Father, wilt thou not pity me?

William & Peter: And help me on to Canada, where all the slaves are
free.

William: Oh I heard Queen Victoria say, that if we would forsake,
our native land of slavery and come across the lake...

Peter: That she was standing on the shore with arms extended wide
to give us all a peaceful home beyond the rolling tide.

William, Peter, & Eliza: Farewell, ole Master, don't think hard of me.

Harriet: I'm traveling on to Canada...

William, Peter, Eliza, & Harriet: Where all the slaves are free.

Harriet: You hear the roar of that mighty waterfall in the distance? Sounds
like the roar of a lion! Now, watch out these windows and you'll see a
beautiful sight!

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Reader 1: So, they all crowded up to the windows.

Reader 4: All except Joe.

Harriet: Joe, now aren't you even going to look? We're almost there! Look at the rise of the center of the bridge! That's the halfway point. Wait... *(pause)* Wait...

Reader 2: As they crossed the suspension bridge Harriet knew the line of danger was past. She leaped across to Joe's side of the car, nearly shook him out of his seat, and shouted.

Harriet: Joe! You've shook the lion's paw!

Joe: *(shakes head)*

Harriet: Joe, you're in Queen Victoria's dominion! You're a free man!

Reader 3: Then Joe raised his head and his hands on high, his eyes streaming with tears. And according to Harriet Tubman he began to sing and shout the following song...

Joe: Glory to God and Jesus, too, one more soul got safe.
Oh go and carry the news, one more soul got safe.

Harriet: Joe, come and look at the falls!

Joe: Glory to God and Jesus, too one more soul got safe!

Harriet: Joe! It's your last chance. Come and see the falls!

Joe: Glory to God and Jesus, too; one more soul got safe.

William: And guess who had the first feet to touch the free British soil of Canada after the conductor?

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Eliza & Peter: Joe!

Harriet: The white ladies and gentlemen gathered around him 'til I couldn't see Joe for the crowd. I only heard his voice singing louder than ever.

Joe: Glory to God and Jesus, too!

Reader 2: A sweet young lady took out her handkerchief. She handed it to Joe. Joe wiped the rivers of tears off his face.

Joe: Thank the Lord! There's only one more journey for me now and that's to heaven!

Readers 1, 2, 3: The End.

Reader 4: Or...the beginning of a new life.



Curriculum Links for “Harriet Tubman, Alias Moses: Joe’s Journey”

(Links valid January, 2018.)

Harriet Tubman

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/bradford/bradford.html>

Link to the **original story of Harriet Tubman as told by Sarah Bradford, published in 1869**. Scroll down to see the text. (Note: The story of Joe starts on page 27.)

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/tubman/>

Library of Congress list of online resources related to Harriet Tubman. Includes a **black and white digital portrait of her that can be printed or downloaded**. (Program cover?)

<http://myhero.com/go/hero.asp?hero=harriettubman>

Information and links on Harriet Tubman from The My Hero Project, celebrating “the best of humanity” and empowering young people to recognize their potential “to effect positive change in the world.”

<http://www.harriettubmanbiography.com/TubmansUGRR.html>

“Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero—Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad” includes “a list of **names of the people Tubman rescued personally**, and those to whom she gave detailed instructions so they could find their way to freedom on their own, and the associated dates.” Joe, William Eliza, and Peter are listed under November 1856.

http://www.ducksters.com/biography/women_leaders/harriet_tubman.php

Ducksters Education Site on Harriet Tubman. One page with fairly large print and a photo shares brief paragraphs of information and “fun facts” about Harriet Tubman.

https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/history/harriet-tubman/#harriet_lg.jpg

National Geographic’s Kids’ page on Harriet Tubman. They promote their book, “Harriet Tubman, Secret Agent” that tells the story of how Tubman helped the Union Army in the Civil War. She was instrumental in helping free 750 about slaves (men, women, and children) with the soldiers.

<https://www.biography.com/people/harriet-tubman-9511430>

Biography.com’s updated page on Harriet Tubman with large print and three large photos. In addition to telling her story, they include the 2016 information that Harriet Tubman will be on the new \$20 bill. (Ads on the page.)

<https://www.dkfindout.com/us/history/american-civil-war/harriet-tubman/>

DKfindout! page on Harriet Tubman includes one paragraph with large print, a full page photo of her, and two interactive spots to click for more information (i.e., “The Underground Railroad,” “Escaping slavery”).

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<https://www.kidsdiscover.com/quick-reads/harriet-tubman-freed-hundreds-slaves-underground-railroad/>

Kids Discover shares a **short, printable article “Harriet Tubman Freed Hundreds of Slaves on the Underground Railroad” with large print and one photo.**

<http://seethefruits.com/page8.htm>

“Harriet Tubman–The Chosen One” is a “dynamic one-woman show that takes its audience on one of the many journeys Ms. Tubman took on the Underground Railroad.” I saw this powerful show live. The actress does performances in schools, universities, businesses, military bases, and churches. **This page has an introductory video to explain the performance with a brief excerpt from the performance. “Harriet” welcoming you as part of her band of “runaways.” 5 minutes total.** The Preview video shows “Harriet” telling part of her story—including singing part of the spiritual “Wade in the Water” (secretly telling the runaways to wade in the water so their tracks could not be followed). I haven’t seen the Dvd; however, having seen the live performance I felt like knew Harriet better. I spoke “Harriet” after the performance and the actress (Ms. Briley-Strand) was cordial, humble, and genuine. She sings beautifully, with full resonance and power.

Oh, Susanna! Song (probably the tune they sang)

http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/ah/1997/5/1997_5_105.shtml

American Heritage Magazine, Sept.1997, vol.48, issue 5 an article in the magazine’s Time Machine series highlights 1847 “One Hundred and Fifty Years Ago” with “Oh Susanna!”:

“...Despite its remoteness from authentic African-American music, Harriet Tubman adapted the song for passengers on her Underground Railroad (“Farewell, old master, don’t think hard of me / I’m on my way to Canada, where all the slaves are free”). The antislavery activist Sojourner Truth wrote her own version, that began, “I’m on my way to Canada, that cold but happy land / The dire effects of slavery I can no longer stand.”

<http://www.pdmusic.org/foster/scf48d.mid>

Stephen Foster’s song, “Oh Susanna!” was published in 1848 and became quite popular. Apparently, this is the tune that the slaves sang to the words about Canada. This site has information on Foster, plus an instrumental audio of the song.

YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQ_gRFYgXMo

“Harriet Tubman Story” is a student’s English/History project, but it’s so well done that it has over 966, 552 views (in six years). The most recent comments are from students who LOVE the music—a woman singing about Harriet Tubman. The video is a combination of a slide show of historical photos of Harriet, plus excerpts from a half-

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hour animated Discovery video (Animated Hero Classics & NestLearning) on Harriet. (Link to that video is below.) No narration. 4:02

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94gFvWowPDE>

“**American Hero Classics: Harriet Tubman**” animated video on Harriet Tubman’s life. (Contains ads). 27:37

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQ85z9vggYM>

“**What You Never Knew About Harriet Tubman**” is a short video from the Smithsonian Channel. There are two brief interviews and a host narrator. (One shares Harriet’s hymnal that she took on trips and her tiny shawl.) Some of it is reenactment. Part of the reenactment shows how Harriet was used by the Union military to help set slaves free from three plantations. 2:50

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmsNGrkbHm4>

“**Harriet Tubman–Mini Bio**” from Biography (2010) shares Harriet’s story with historical photos, videos, and interviews. It explains a little of the Underground Railroad. Biography comments: “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 7:26

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YAPVs233Hc>

“**Harriet Tubman–A Kid Explains History, Episode 13**” shows a cute boy explaining a little about Harriet Tubman and some of the code names on the Underground Railroad. Great video with lots of graphics, information, and fun. (Since this video has over 95,382 views in less than two years, I assume some teachers are using it.) 4:20

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lizsbKwZPBc>

“**Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad**” is a video apparently from a group of students for **National History Day**. It’s filled with historical photos and drawings, plus some video excerpts from the History channels video. The student narrates the story. The narrator explains some of the secret codes of the Underground Railroad as she shares about Harriet Tubman’s life. According to the comments, teachers have shared this one with their class, too. 9:53

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqctGHVKSxc>

In “**The Legacy of Harriet Tubman**” Gwendolyn Briley-Strand shares the legacy of Harriet Tubman.” Ms. Briley-Strand has performed a one-woman show, “Harriet Tubman: The Chosen One” for over twenty years. The video shows photos from the shows while briefly telling Harriet Tubman’s story. 3:22

“...The Chosen One”: <http://seethefruits.com/page8.htm>

