

Muse: Underground Railroad Personal Narratives



MIDDLE SCHOOL

ANN FIGHTS FOR FREEDOM: AN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD SURVIVAL STORY by Nikki Smith

Historical Fiction. The story of twelve-year-old Ann as she learns that her owner has fallen on hard times and is planning to sell her and her younger brother to two different people. Ann fights to keep her family together and tries to convince them that they have to flee using the Underground Railroad.

BOX: HENRY BROWN MAILES HIMSELF TO FREEDOM by Carole Boston Weatherford

Nonfiction. Henry “Box” Brown was born into slavery in Richmond in the 1800s, but he claimed his freedom in 1849, the same year as Harriet Tubman, by shipping himself in a wooden box to the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia. Beautiful mixed-media illustrations, introspective text, bibliography, and end notes all combine to make a descriptive, engaging, and enlightening narrative.

DAY OF TEARS: A NOVEL IN DIALOGUE by Julius Lester

Historical Fiction. Experience the horrors and tragedy of the biggest slave auction in American history through fictionalized first-hand accounts of an all-too-real event. An ensemble cast tells the story of the slave auction in Savannah, Georgia, in 1859 and its painful aftermath for all involved, including the perpetrators, enslaved men, women, and children, and their families.

ESCAPE NORTH: UNDERGROUND RAILROAD by Virginia Lo-Hagan

Nonfiction. In a format that helps struggling readers, this book explores the different lives influenced by the Underground Railroad. Experience how the escaping slave, station master, and even slave owner each experienced the Underground Railroad.

HARRIET TUBMAN: CONDUCTOR ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD by Ann Petry

Nonfiction, Biography. Champion of the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman’s life is a rich tapestry of hardships and sacrifices. Follow Harriet’s earliest days growing up in a plantation through to her remarkable achievements in the Underground Railroad, which initially went relatively unnoticed in the Reconstruction Era and beyond. This telling of Harriet’s story is grounded, objective, and all the more poignant for it, reflecting the realities of her life and heroism.

HARRIET TUBMAN: SECRET AGENT: HOW DARING SLAVES AND FREE BLACKS SPIED FOR THE UNION DURING THE CIVIL WAR by Thomas B. Allen

Biography. By 1863 Harriet Tubman had escaped slavery and courageously worked on the Underground Railroad to free others. The Civil War gave Harriet and others, and other African Americans, a new role; being spies for the Union army.

I LAY MY STITCHES DOWN: POEMS OF AMERICAN SLAVERY by Cynthia Grady

Nonfiction, Poetry. Using the image of a quilt as a structure for each poem and the collection as a whole, this volume of poetry reveals the emotions and experiences of those who endured slavery. Each poem includes a biblical, spiritual, and musical reference to reflect the three layers of a quilt and 10 lines of 10 syllable to mirror the square shape of the quilt block. The vivid illustrations and poignant verse combine for a strikingly personal look into the experience of American slavery.

JEFFERSON’S SONS by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

Historical Fiction A fictionalized look at the last twenty years of Thomas Jefferson’s life at Monticello through the eyes of three of his slaves, two of whom were his sons by Sally Hemings, his slave.

LIKE A RIVER: A CIVIL WAR NOVEL by Kathy Cannon Wiechman

Historical Fiction. Two soldiers, Leander and Polly, join the Union army, but each has a secret. Leander lied in order to join, hiding the fact that he is too young to enlist. Polly, disguised herself as a boy in order to follow her father into the army. Both of these young soldiers must find their own courage as they face love, grief, and war.

MARTHA AND THE SLAVE CATCHERS by Harriet Hyman Alonso

Thirteen-year-old Martha Bartlett insists on being a part of the Underground Railroad rescue to bring her brother Jake back home to their abolitionist community in Connecticut. It's 1854 and though African-Americans and mixed-race peoples in the north are supposed to be free, seven-year-old Jake, the orphan of a fugitive slave, is kidnapped by his "owner" and taken south to Maryland.

PASSENGER ON THE PEARL: THE TRUE STORY OF EMILY EDMONSON'S FIGHT FROM SLAVERY by Winifred Conkling

Documents the events of the 1848 escape attempt by Emily Edmonson, her siblings and dozens of other enslaved people on board the Pearl, discussing the contributions made by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Emily's subsequent education and her history-changing teaching career.

THE RIVER BETWEEN US by Richard Peck

Historical Fiction. Tilly Pruitt must say goodbye to her brother who is off to join the Union leaving behind Tilly, her sister, and their mother. With her brother gone the family struggling to get by. Things change when two mysterious girls, Delphine and her silent traveling companion, arrive from New Orleans. The Pruitt family agrees to take them in as rumors and mystery surround two girls.

RIVER RUNS DEEP by Jennifer A. Bradbury

Twelve-year-old Elias is sent to Mammoth Cave in Kentucky to fight a case of consumption--and ends up fighting for the lives of a secret community of escaped slaves traveling along the Underground Railroad.

RUNNING OUT OF NIGHT by Sharon Lovejoy

Historical Fiction. Raised in the south by her cruel father and brothers, a nameless girl's life changes when she meets Zenobia, a runaway slave who asks for the girl's help. Seeking freedom, the two girls run away together, but slave catchers and the girl's family are close behind.

STOLEN INTO SLAVERY: THE TRUE STORY OF SOLOMON NORTHUP, FREE BLACK MAN by Judith Bloom Fradin

Follows the story of Solomon Northup--a free black man who was kidnapped and forced into slavery--through his twelve years of bondage in Louisiana until friends from New York rescued him from a cotton plantation.

UNDERGROUND by Jean Ferris

In 1839, Charlotte Brown is sold north to Kentucky, where she becomes a maid at Mammoth Cave Hotel, falls in love with one of the tour guides there, and gets involved in the Underground Railroad.

THE UNDERGROUND ABDUCTOR: AN ABOLITIONIST TALE by Nathan Hale

Historical Fiction. The story of a courageous bid for freedom. Before she was Harriet Tubman, she was Araminta Ross. Before she could lead others to freedom, she first had to find her own way.

VOICES FROM THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD by Kay Rivers

Nonfiction. The story of a brother and a sister fleeing slavery. Jeb and Mattie make the dangerous choice to follow the Underground Railroad in an effort to gain their freedom. It is risky for adults, but even more so for these two children.

HIGH SCHOOL

47 by Walter Mosley

Historical Fiction/Afrofantasy Number 47, a fourteen-year-old slave boy growing up under the watchful eye of a brutal master in 1832, meets the mysterious Tall John, who teaches him the meaning of freedom. 47 then finds himself swept up in his struggle for liberation.

ANGEL THIEVES by Kathy Appelt

Historical Fiction. In this time-traveling tale, follow a myriad cast of characters, including a father and son who steal angels from a cemetery, an ocelot, and a woman and her two daughters fleeing slave hunters. With unique perspective and wonderfully interlacing stories, the characters illustrate the connecting power of hope, even when they are the most oppressed.

BE FREE OR DIE: THE AMAZING STORY OF ROBERT SMALLS' ESCAPE FROM SLAVERY TO UNION HERO by Cate Lineberry

Nonfiction. The story of Robert Small from his daring escape from slavery to his time serving as a United States Congressman. At the age of 23, Robert Small bodily seized a Confederate Steamer and delivered the vessel and his family to the Union. This challenged the country's view on what African Americans would do for freedom.

BLACK RADICAL: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF WILLIAM MONROE TROTTER by Kerri Greenridge

Nonfiction. The story of William Monroe Trotter and his unwavering fearlessness as he starts an all African American newspaper. Neither the gradualist politics of Booker T. Washington nor the elitism of W. E. B. Du Bois fit with what William Monroe Trotter believes is right. He uses his area of expertise, newspapers, as a platform for change.

COPPER SUN by Sharon M. Draper

Historical Fiction. Follow the heart-rending story of Amari, a 15-year-old African girl stolen away from her Ashanti village to be launched into the horrors of American slavery. Amari's narrative juxtaposes with Polly's, an indentured white servant on the same plantation. Brutally specific, Amari's experiences with rape, murder, and uninhibited cruelty reveal both the inhumanity of American slavery and the persistence and spirit required to survive it.

CROSSING EBENEZER CREEK by Tonya Bolden

Historical Fiction. The story of Mariah as she flees slavery when Sherman's march through Georgia passes near her plantation. Mariah meets a young man and dares to have a little hope. The journey is difficult and it turns treacherous as it approaches Ebenezer Creek. Mariah discovers that the harsh realities of her people will always be with them.

FACING FREDERICK: THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS, A MONUMENTAL AMERICAN MAN by Tonya Bolden

Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) is best known for the telling of his own emancipation. But there is much more to Douglass's story than his time spent enslaved and his famous autobiography. Facing Frederick captures the whole complicated, and at times perplexing, person that he was. Statesman, suffragist, writer, and newspaperman, this book focuses on Douglass the man rather than the historical icon.

HIS PROMISED LAND: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JOHN P. PARKER, FORMER SLAVE AND CONDUCTOR ON THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD by John P. Parker

In the words of an African American conductor on the Underground Railroad, an unusual and stirring account of how the war against slavery was fought—and sometimes won. John P. Parker (1827–1900) told this dramatic story to a newspaperman after the Civil War. He recounts his years of slavery, his harrowing runaway attempt, and how he finally bought his freedom. Eventually moving to Ripley, Ohio, a stronghold of the abolitionist movement, Parker became an integral part of the Underground Railroad, helping fugitive slaves cross the Ohio River from Kentucky and go north to freedom. Parker risked his life—hiding in coffins, diving off a steamboat into the river with bounty hunters on his trail—and his own freedom to fight for the freedom of his people.

IN THE SHADOW OF LIBERTY: THE HIDDEN STORY OF SLAVERY, FOUR PRESIDENTS, AND FIVE BLACK LIVES by Kenneth Davis

Nonfiction. The true story of five slaves owned by some of the most famous United States presidents as they laid the foundation for American liberty, and equality, and justice.

THE LIGHT ACROSS THE RIVER by Stephanie Reed

In 1830s Ohio, Johnny Rankin's father and brother Lowry think he is too young and hotheaded to work on the Underground Railroad, but Johnny finds a way to help Eliza, a runaway slave from Kentucky, try to convey her entire family to freedom. Includes historical notes about the Rankin family, their friend Harriet Beecher Stowe, and her use of Eliza's story in her novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin.

MY NAME IS NOT FRIDAY by John Walter

Historical Fiction. Two free black boys- Samuel and Joshua, live in an orphanage during the Civil War. But when Samuel takes responsibility for his younger brother's prank the consequences are more than he imagined. Samuel is sent to the south where he is sold into slavery and given a new name- Friday. Samuel is determined to gain his freedom back and be reunited with his brother.

THE SEEDS OF AMERICA TRILOGY (CHAINS, FORGE, ASHES) by Laurie Halse Anderson

Historical Fiction, Series. The Seeds of America follows Isabel from when she is sold to a couple in New York City to her daring escape and search for her sister enslaved in the South. In her time as a slave and throughout her journey to escape, Isabel spies for the rebels. She also meets Curzon who escapes with her and eventually serves in the Continental Army. Isabel's and Curzon's stories reflect the compelling and often tragic history of early America and the role slavery and slaves played in its conception.

SHE CAME TO SLAY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HARRIET TUBMAN by Erica Armstrong Dunbar

Nonfiction. The story of Harriet Tubman's life and many, varied accomplishments. There is rarely only one defining feature of a person. Harriet Tubman is an excellent example of this. She was an abolitionist, suffragette, and advocated fiercely for the aged. Using a variety of primary sources, Harriet Tubman's life is pieced together to show the whole individual and not just the abolitionist.

A SOLDIER'S SECRET by Marissa Moss

Nineteen-year-old Sarah masquerades as a man during the Civil War, serving as a nurse on the battlefield and a spy for the Union Army, escaping from the Confederates, and falling in love with one of her fellow soldiers. Based on the life of Sarah Emma Edmonds.

UNDER A PAINTED SKY by Stacey Lee

Historical Fiction. In 1849, Chinese American, Samantha, finds an ally in runaway slave, Annamae, as they attempt to traverse the Oregon Trail. Samantha, who is wanted for murder after killing the man who tried to rape her, and Annamae disguise themselves as boys to try and avoid detection. Their Wild West journey chronicles the trials of immigrant and slave life in mid-19th Century America.

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD by Colson Whitehead

After Cora, a pre-Civil War Georgia slave, escapes with another slave, Caesar, they seek the help of the Underground Railroad as they flee from state to state and try to evade a slave catcher, Ridgeway, who is determined to return them to the South.

A VOLCANO BENEATH THE SNOW: JOHN BROWN'S WAR AGAINST SLAVERY by Albert Marrin

Considers the character and influence of the abolitionist, discussing the religious beliefs that prompted his use of terrorism to combat slavery while assessing his role in the Harper's Ferry raid that helped trigger the Civil War.

WILLOW by Tonya Hegamin

Taught to read and write by a master whom she believes is good to her, teenager Willow lives on one side of the Mason-Dixon Line fearing "rebel slave" runaways before her life intersects with freeborn Cato, who has dedicated his life to sneaking fugitive slaves to freedom.