



Unit: Slavery

Lesson 2.2: Harriet Tubman in the News

Aim: To learn about Harriet Tubman and to observe how public opinion about her has changed since 1865.

Objective: Students read and compare newspaper accounts of Harriet Tubman from 1865 and 2003 and record fact and opinion.

Materials:

1. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article, “Mrs. Harriet Tubman, the Colored Nurse and Scout—The Bridge Street African M. E. Church Last Evening,” October 23, 1865, p. 2
<http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/civilwar/cwdoc085.html>
2. Shared reading based on *New York Times* article, “In Search of Back Pay for Heroine of Civil War,” November 1, 2003
3. Chart paper, markers

Procedure:

1. Write the name “Harriet Tubman” on the board and ask students to brainstorm facts and ideas about her to create a character web.
2. Give the class the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article to read in small groups. Explain that it is a primary source document, reflecting sentiments of the time.
3. Students fold a piece of chart paper in half with the central heading “Harriet Tubman, 1865.” Label the left column “fact” and the right column “opinion.”
4. In addition, ask the groups to discuss the purpose of Harriet’s appearance at the church. Groups display chart paper in plain view.
5. Now do shared reading on overhead based on the *New York Times* article, “In Search of Back Pay for Heroine of Civil War,” November 1, 2003 (excerpt below). How does the article’s description of Tubman differ from the treatment in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, almost 140 years earlier?

A note about shared reading: During a shared reading session, the whole class is on the same “page”—everyone’s attention is focused on the same overhead transparency. The teacher models the initial reading in several ways. In addition to simply reading the passage aloud, slowly and clearly, he or she reveals thoughts and

reading strategies for the group. Be it visualizing, making connections, or noticing new or interesting vocabulary, these thoughts are shared so that students see and understand what goes on in the mind of a good reader.

6. In the 2003 article, it should be noted that a group of 7th and 8th graders initiated the effort with their outraged letters. As a follow-up, students can write their own letters to Senator Clinton on Tubman's behalf.

Excerpt from *New York Times* article:

METROPOLITAN DESK | November 1, 2003, Saturday

In Search of Back Pay for Heroine of Civil War

By MICHAEL SLACKMAN (NYT) 770 words

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DISPLAYING FIRST 50 OF 770 WORDS - Harriet Tubman earned her spot in American history. Born into slavery, she freed herself, then helped free hundreds of others through the Underground ... But even though she served in the Civil War as a spy and a scout in the Union Army, neither she nor her descendants ever received...

Shared Reading

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery in Maryland around 1819. At the age of 25, she escaped to Philadelphia and became a leader on the Underground Railroad, helping hundreds of others to find freedom. This is why 7th and 8th graders from the Albany Free School were outraged to learn that this renowned heroine who served as a spy, soldier, scout, and nurse during the Civil War never received a military pension for her service. The students first heard of the injustice during a class trip to Ms. Tubman's former home in Auburn, New York. They wrote to Senator Clinton about it, and she met with them. So far, she has succeeded in getting \$11,750 in back pay for the Tubman House museum and library, but this is only a fraction of what is owed. The \$20/month pension Tubman should have received for 48 years until her death would be equal to \$210,000 today.