Core Knowledge VOICES IN HISTORY™

Harriet Tubman

The Day of Jubilee

by Glenda Armand

illustrated by Adam Gustavson

We are pleased that our materials in the Core Knowledge Curriculum Series™, Core Classics® Series, Voices in History™ Series, Collection of Tales™ Series, and Adventures in History™ Series available on our **website**, are made available through a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Through the license, the user is free:

- To share: to copy, distribute, and transmit the work
- To remix: to adapt the work

Under the following conditions:

- You must attribute the work in the following manner:

  This work is based on an original work of the Core Knowledge® Foundation made available through licensing under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial- ShareAlike 4.0 International License. This does not in any way imply that the Core Knoweldge Foundation endorses this work.

- You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

- If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same or similar license to this one.

With the understanding that for reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work. The best way to do that is with a link to this web page:
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/

Harriet Tubman

The Day of Jubilee

by

Glenda Armand

illustrated by *Adam Gustavson*

Voices in History: Biography Series™

ISBN 979-8-88970-327-3

PRINTED IN CANADA

Editorial Director:
Rosie McCormick

Managing Editor:
Sophie Nunnally

Design:
Ivan Pesic

CORE KNOWLEDGE FOUNDATION
801 EAST HIGH STREET
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22902

www.coreknowledge.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION
Slavery in the United States

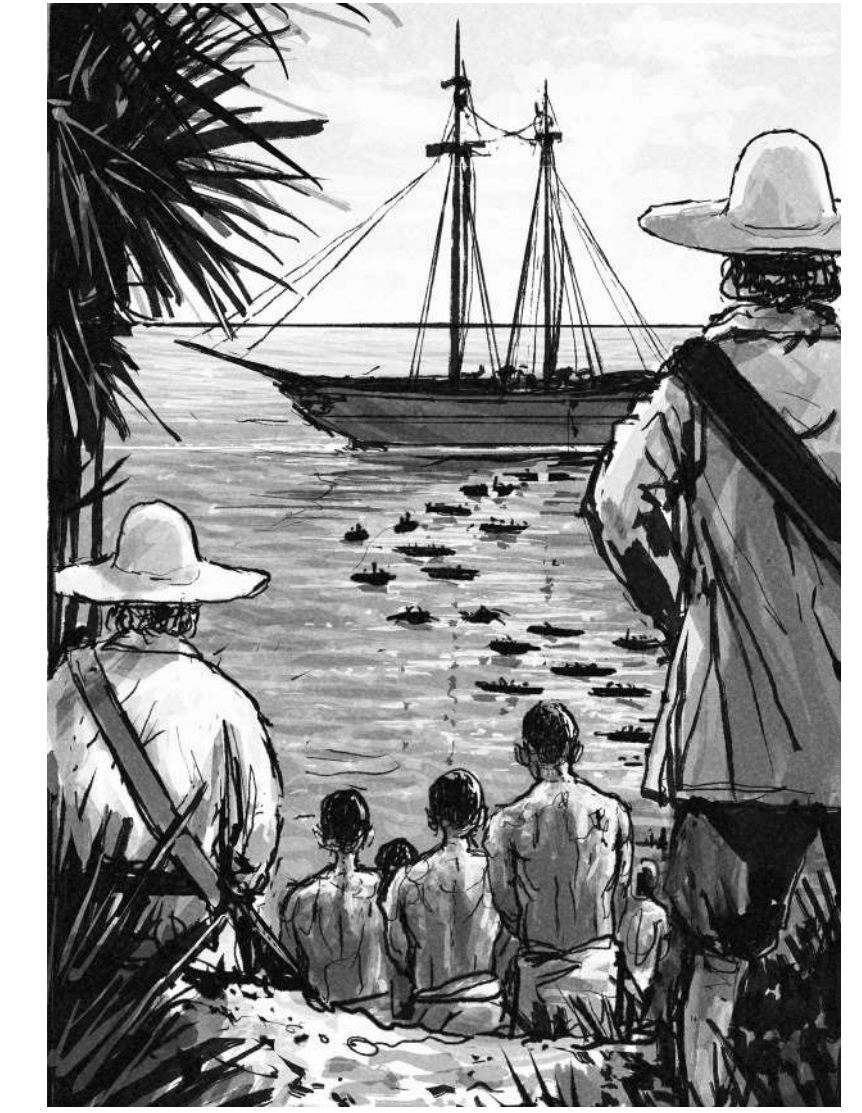
When Harriet Tubman was born, slavery had been a cruel part of American life for many decades. Slavery allowed some people to "own" other people. Most enslaved people in America were Africans or the descendants of Africans who had been brought to America as part of the transatlantic slave trade.

The transatlantic slave trade was a triangle-shaped voyage that was repeated over and over for more than 350 years. On the first leg of the journey, slave dealers from Europe sailed ships loaded with cargo such as guns, metals, and cloth to the west coast of Africa. Once they arrived in Africa, the slave dealers exchanged their goods for West African people. These people were from different tribes, including the Ashanti from present-day Ghana. Most had been kidnapped or captured in war and held in prisons until they could be traded for the goods that the Europeans brought.

After the trades were made, the Europeans forced the people who were now their "property" onto the ships. Hundreds of adults and children were packed onto each vessel. Once on board, they were chained together and crammed into dark, unsanitary compartments below deck.

transatlantic: crossing the Atlantic Ocean

Then the Africans were subjected to a horrific trip across the Atlantic Ocean to America, which Europeans referred to as the "New World." This was the second leg of the triangular journey. It was called the Middle Passage.



Many Africans did not survive the Middle Passage. The bodies of the sick and the dead were thrown overboard. The Africans who did survive the three-month, five-thousand-mile journey were met with more misery when they reached the New World: they were sold into slavery.

In the American colonies—and later, the United States—farmers and business owners paid money or traded goods for the Africans. The buyers took their "purchases" home without caring that they were separating families and causing unimaginable heartache. To the buyers, the Africans were not people but property—just like horses, wagons, and plows.

The Europeans loaded the now-empty ships with the goods they had received—sugar, tobacco, and cotton—in exchange for the African people. The ships returned to Europe, completing the final leg of the transatlantic slave trade. Soon the journey would be repeated.

In the meantime, the Africans began their new lives. Their enslavers put them to work on their farms, in their businesses, and in their homes. All the Africans received for their labor was a meager allowance of food, clothing, and shelter. They could not do anything or go anywhere without permission from their enslavers, who were called "slave owners" or "masters."

In 1808, thirty-two years after its founding, the United States made it illegal for people to be brought to the United States to be sold into slavery. However, slavery did not go away. The nearly one million Africans who were already enslaved remained in bondage. Their children and grandchildren became enslaved at birth. So even though the slave trade had officially ended, the number of enslaved people in the United States continued to grow.

The Africans were strangers in a strange world. They could not return home. They had no weapons to fight their enslavers. Trying to run away was perilous. Where could they go? Many who did try to escape into their unfamiliar surroundings were pursued by people with guns and bloodhounds. If the runaways were caught, they were returned to their "masters" and severely punished. An example was made of them so that others would not try to escape. And yet the Africans' desire to survive and to be free would not die.

This is the world into which Harriet Tubman was born. From the moment she understood she was enslaved, she longed for freedom. While still young, she put that longing into action. With words and deeds, this brave woman dedicated her life to freeing herself, then

bondage: enslavement

her family and friends, and finally all African Americans from the bonds of slavery.

Though many of her fellow freedom fighters were skeptical, Harriet Tubman believed with all her heart that her generation would live to see the day when every African American would be free. She believed that she would live to see the Day of Jubilee.

skeptical: doubtful

1

A Member of the Ashanti Tribe

Araminta Ross, who later changed her name to Harriet Tubman, was born in Dorchester County, Maryland, in 1822. She was one of nine children—five girls and four boys—born to Benjamin Ross and Harriet "Rit" Green Ross.

Benjamin and Rit were enslaved by different plantation owners. Plantations were large pieces of land divided into smaller farms. One farm might grow tobacco, while another grew corn or cotton. Rit and the children lived on the plantation of Edward Brodess, who was Rit's enslaver. Benjamin lived nearby on the plantation of Anthony Thompson, his enslaver and Edward Brodess's stepfather.

It is believed that at least two of Araminta's great-grandparents were born in Africa and were members of the Ashanti tribe. They came to the New World by way of the Middle Passage. That made Araminta Ross part of the fourth generation of her family to be enslaved. Even so, from an early age, she believed that she and her people were not meant to live in bondage.

The Ashanti people are known for crafting items of gold and brass, making beautiful wood carvings, and

weaving brightly colored kente cloth. The Ashanti are also known for their devotion to family and their respect for the women in the family. A child is said to inherit their father's soul or spirit and their mother's bloodline. The extended family usually lives with or near each other. All generations of the family are honored, protected, and loved.

Perhaps her Ashanti heritage was the source of Araminta's strong devotion to family. To her, the worst thing about being enslaved was the ever-present threat of a family member being snatched away. She saw how hard her parents fought to keep their large family together.

Sadly, they were not always successful. One day, Minty, as Araminta was called, watched in horror as two of her sisters were taken away to be sold. Minty would never forget the screams and tears of her sisters and of the family they were leaving behind forever.

Fortunately, Minty's mother was able to keep one of her children from meeting the same fate. Rit found out that Edward Brodess was planning to sell one of her sons. She defiantly hid her son in the woods for more than a month. Finally, Brodess gave up and did not sell the boy.

For Minty, the memory of her mother's resistance was as powerful as that of her sisters being dragged away. Keeping the Ross family together would become her most important goal in life. But long before she could reach that goal, little Minty was given her first job.

One day, a neighbor named Miss Susan told Edward Brodess that she needed a young girl to be a nanny for her newborn. Brodess immediately called for Minty. Miss Susan agreed to pay Brodess for Minty to come live with her and take care of her baby. Minty's parents had no say in the matter. So Minty went to work. She was only about five years old.

From the start, Minty was miserable. She was homesick and frightened by the strange people she was now living with. Most of all, Minty did not know how to be a nanny. She was practically a baby herself. When she held the infant, Minty had to sit on the floor to keep the baby from falling off her lap.

At night, if the baby cried, Minty received a whipping from Miss Susan. When the baby did sleep, Minty—exhausted, lonely, and afraid—slept too.

Besides caring for the baby, Minty was given other chores, such as sweeping and dusting. The five-year-old was not good at those jobs either. No matter how hard she tried, Minty could not please the cruel Miss Susan. Finally, unhappy with Minty's skills, Miss Susan returned her to her "owner" and her family. Rit nursed her bruised and malnourished little girl back to health.

Unfortunately, as soon as Minty was well enough, Edward Brodess hired her out again. And again. Most of

malnourished: not having enough food for health and growth

the assignments did not work out because Minty was too small and too young.

Harriet Tubman later described an incident that happened when, as a seven-year-old, she was tempted by a lump of sugar: "Now, you know, I never had anything good, no sweet, no sugar; and that sugar, right by me, did look so nice, and my mistress's back was turned . . . so I just put my fingers in the sugar bowl to take one lump and maybe she heard me for she turned and saw me."

When Minty saw her mistress reach for her whip, she ran out the door. She kept running until she was too tired to go on. She ended up hiding in a pigpen, where she stayed "from Friday until the next Tuesday, fighting with

those little pigs for the potato peelings and other scraps that came down in the trough." But the scraps could not satisfy Minty's hunger. Tired and hungry, she returned to her mistress and received her punishment.

Minty continued to be hired out to do housework. She was never able to satisfy her mistresses. Finally, when she was nine years old, Minty was given outdoor work to do. That suited her just fine.

2

A Taste of Freedom

As Minty grew up, she loved being outdoors where she could breathe the fresh air. There was no one looking over her shoulder, waiting to punish her for making a mistake. She felt like she was almost free.

Minty became a valuable field hand. She hoed and harvested. She lifted barrels of flour into carts. She waded waist-deep into nearby swamps to tend to muskrat traps. She found that she enjoyed physical labor. She often worked side by side with one of her brothers. She may not have grown tall, but she grew confident, healthy, and strong.

hoed: used a long tool with a thin, flat blade to weed or loosen earth

When Minty did come down with a serious illness, such as measles or pneumonia, her mother used plants and herbs to help her daughter heal. As she treated Minty, Rit taught her daughter valuable lessons.

Like most enslaved people, Minty was illiterate. But in an important way, Minty did learn to "read." Her mother taught her to "read" plants—to know which were poisonous or edible or had healing properties. Her time outdoors taught Minty to "read" animals, too, to tell apart those she could hunt from those that were dangerous. These lessons would come in handy later in her life.

Besides breathing the fresh air and tasting freedom, Minty had another reason for preferring the outdoors: she came in contact with other enslaved people. Some of them had traveled to the North and back with their enslavers. Minty listened intently to the travelers as they told tales of the place they called "the promised land."

In this faraway place lived many black people who were free. They worked for themselves and their families, not for cruel slaveholders. Some had escaped slavery or bought their freedom. Others had been born free.

---

measles: a disease caused by a virus that leads to fever and red spots on the skin

pneumonia: an illness in which the lungs are inflamed, causing fever, cough, chest pain, and difficulty breathing

illiterate: unable to read or write

Free States and Slave States

At the founding of the United States, slavery was allowed in all states. However, it was much more common in the South. By 1777, northern states had begun to abolish slavery. Southern states remained "slave states." The boundary between slave states and "free states" was called the Mason-Dixon Line. This line divided Pennsylvania from Maryland and, together with the Ohio River, divided the North from the South in pre–Civil War America.

It was about this time that Minty first heard about the Underground Railroad—a network of abolitionists who aided those who were escaping slavery.

Minty also learned about bounty hunters. They searched for people who had run away from their enslavers. The bounty hunters received generous rewards, or bounties, for returning the runaways to their "masters." They hunted with keen-nosed bloodhounds that could follow the scent of a person for miles. Although she found these stories of bounty hunters troubling, they did not deter Minty from dreaming of freedom.

Abolitionist

An abolitionist was a person who worked to abolish, or end, the legal practice of slavery. Many abolitionists, black and white, risked their own safety and even their lives to help free black people from bondage. They gave money, shelter, and food to runaways. Some spoke out in public about the evils of slavery. Many were active participants in the Underground Railroad.

3

A Heavy Weight

One day, when Minty was about thirteen years old, an angry overseer almost put an end to her dream—and to her life. She was working out in the fields when she saw a fellow worker stop working and make an escape. Minty realized that the overseer had also witnessed the man's attempted escape. She ran after him to warn him that the overseer was coming after him.

The overseer chased after the man and Minty. The man dashed into the Bucktown General Store. Minty followed. Soon, their pursuer burst into the store and cornered the man. The overseer ordered Minty to help tie the man up. She refused.

Suddenly, the man broke away and bolted out the door. The overseer threw a lead weight at him just as Minty stepped in front of the doorway. The heavy object hit her on her head.

---

overseer: a person who supervises others

Later, Harriet Tubman would often recount that terrible event for sympathetic audiences: "They carried me to the house all bleeding and fainting. I had no bed, no place to lie down on at all, and they lay me on the seat of the loom, and I stayed there all that day and the next."

Minty lay sick for weeks. Her family feared she would die. During that time, she would suddenly fall into deep sleeps. When she had a "sleeping spell," no one could awaken her.

Several months later, Minty had recovered enough to go back to work in the fields. Nevertheless, she continued to fall into deep sleeps without warning. These spells

might last for three or four minutes. Sometimes, while asleep, she had vivid dreams and heard voices saying, "Arise, flee for your life!"

By this time, she was working with her father, Benjamin. He would make sure his daughter was safe while she slept. Benjamin Ross now supervised workers as they cut and hauled timber. Alongside the other workers, Minty plowed, cut wood, drove oxen, split rails, and hauled logs.

When Minty was about eighteen years old, her forty-five-year-old father was manumitted, or released from slavery, by his enslaver. The enslaver of Minty, her mother, and her siblings refused to free them.

Even though he was now free, Benjamin Ross's life did not change much. He chose to stay with his family and continue doing the work he knew well in the place where he had lived all his life. However, he now earned a salary for his labor.

Now that her father was free, Minty's desire for liberty for herself and the rest of her family burned stronger than ever. She was determined to escape to the North somehow.

In the meantime, Minty worked hard and grew stronger. She began hiring herself out—that is, she paid

her enslaver, Edward Brodess, a yearly sum of money so that he would allow her to work for other plantation owners for pay. Any money she earned beyond what she owed Brodess, she was allowed to keep.

As a hired hand, Minty was able to move about more freely than people who worked on a single farm. This mobility would be important when she decided to make her escape.

In 1844, at the age of twenty-two, Minty married a free black man named John Tubman. She took his last name as hers. When a free person married an enslaved person, the enslaved person—and by extension the couple—was usually required to live on the enslaver's plantation. However, because Minty often hired herself out, she and her husband were allowed to live away from the Brodess plantation.

Like Minty's father, John Tubman worked as a free man alongside enslaved laborers. Minty shared her dream of being free with her husband. She asked him to run away with her up north, where they could both live without fear of Minty being sold away.

But John was content to stay in Maryland. He did not want to take the risk of running away. How would they know which way was north? How would they find food

to eat along the way? John even threatened to tell her enslaver if Minty tried to escape. But even her husband's fears and threats could not dampen her desire to be free. It burned like a flame inside Minty's heart.

4

Escape

In 1849, the death of Edward Brodess forced Minty to make a quick decision. Edward Brodess's widow planned to sell some of her late husband's property—land and people. Although Minty was now living and working on a plantation owned by Dr. Anthony Thompson—the son of the Anthony Thompson who had enslaved her father—she still "belonged" to the Brodess family.

There were rumors that Minty and two of her brothers, Ben and Henry, would be among the workers sold "down the river." Minty knew that being sold down the river meant being taken by way of the Mississippi River to a state deeper in the South, such as Louisiana or South Carolina. Life there was even harsher for enslaved people. Minty made up her mind to escape. She convinced her brothers to join her.

However, shortly into their journey north, Ben and Henry became fearful of being captured and punished. They persuaded their sister to turn back. Fortunately, they had not yet been missed.

Although she returned to the Thompson property, Minty had no intention of giving up her dream. She loved her brothers and her husband, but they did not share her vision, her bravery, or her determination. "I had reasoned this out in my mind," she recalled. "There was one of two things I had a right to, liberty or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other."

It was unusual for a woman to escape on her own. The typical runaway was a young man who was a field hand. The journey north was physically demanding and required outdoor survival skills. However, Minty Tubman was not typical. At twenty-seven years old, she had no children. She had grown physically strong while working in the fields, and she felt at home in nature.

A few days after the failed attempt to escape with her brothers, Minty tried again. This time she set out alone on what would be a 130-mile journey.

One night in early October 1849, Minty simply walked away. As she walked, she sang a song that she hoped would be a clue to her family that she was leaving:

I'm sorry I'm going to leave you,

Farewell, oh farewell;

Bul I'll meet you in the morning,

Farewell, oh farewell.

Minty walked right past Dr. Thompson, the plantation owner. She greeted him calmly and kept on walking and singing. Dr. Thompson assumed that Minty was out for an evening stroll.

The day after she left, Minty made her way to the home of a friendly Quaker woman who had promised to help her if she ever attempted to escape.

Minty gave the woman a quilt she had made. The woman handed Minty a note and gave her directions to another house. The Quaker woman instructed Minty to give the note to the lady of the house. Minty could not read the note, but she held onto it tight.

Quakers

The Religious Society of Friends, better known as the Quakers, played a major role in the fight against slavery in the United States. Quakers were among the first white people to denounce slavery in the American colonies. They were active participants in the Underground Railroad.

She found the house and gave the note to the woman who answered the door. When the woman read the note, she immediately gave Minty a broom and ordered her to sweep the yard until the woman's husband came home. Minty did what she was told. She quickly figured out why the woman had put her to work. Both she and the woman were in danger. Minty was now a fugitive. According to the law, anyone who captured her and returned her to her enslaver could receive a reward. Anyone who helped her could be punished. Minty kept sweeping. Curious neighbors or passersby would believe that she was the woman's servant.

When night fell, the woman's husband hid Minty in a wagon. Then he drove her to the home of a friend who would help her. From there, Minty was on her own. And she was still a long way from her destination—Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the "promised land."

Remembering what she had been told long ago, Minty walked along the banks of the Choptank River. Traveling mostly by night, she waded through swamps and marshes. Bloodhounds could not follow her scent through water. "Running water," she reminded herself, "never tells no tales." She stayed off the roads as much as she could. She often slept in cemeteries.

fugitive: a person who has run away and may be pursued by authorities
cemeteries: places where dead people are buried

Minty was grateful to receive rides, food, money, and shelter from abolitionists and other kind people who were willing to risk going to jail to help her. Often one helper would lead Minty to the next person who would offer her aid.

Minty followed the Choptank River, day after day, until she reached the town of Camden, Delaware. However, she still had a long way to go. With the river no longer in sight, she looked to the North Star to make sure she was on the right path. When clouds hid the star, she searched for moss, knowing that moss usually grew on the north side of trees.

Finally, after a lengthy journey, tired and aching from head to toe, Minty reached the free state of Pennsylvania.

How she loved to relive that magical moment:

> I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person now I was free. There was such a glory over everything, the sun came like gold through the trees and over the fields, and I felt like I was in heaven. . . . I had crossed the line of which I had so long been dreaming. I was free.

Minty was ready to begin her new life, and she would do so with a new name. No one is sure when—perhaps when she married John, or perhaps later—but what we do know is that by the time she arrived in Philadelphia, she was no longer Araminta or "Minty," but Harriet Tubman, a free woman.

5

The Underground Railroad

Some of the people who had helped Harriet get to Philadelphia were members of the Underground Railroad. However, it was not a railroad, and it was not underground. It was a network of people, black and white, who worked in secret to help African Americans escape from slavery. The group used secret codes, hideaways, and routes as they went about their dangerous mission.

The network used actual railroad terms to describe their operation: depot, station, station master, passenger. The person who led the fugitives on their journey to freedom was called a conductor—a role Harriet herself would one day play.

For now, though, twenty-seven-year-old Harriet had to learn how to live as a free person. Harriet soon found a job as a cook in a hotel. She was paid a good salary: one dollar a day. How wonderful to know that every penny she earned belonged to her!

Harriet was amazed at the way black people lived

in Philadelphia. They enjoyed public gardens, attended church, patronized museums, and listened to speeches by abolitionists and politicians. There were jobs for anyone who wanted to work. Now Harriet knew why enslaved people called the North "Canaan," the biblical land promised to the Israelites who had been enslaved in Egypt.

Yes, it was good to be free, but even with her new friends and newfound liberties, Harriet felt like "a stranger in a strange land." She missed her parents and her brothers and sisters. And so, as she later recalled, she made a vow: "I was free, and they should be free also; I would make a home for them in the North, and the Lord helping me, I would bring them all there."

Harriet started thinking more and more about ways to free her family members. And while she came up with a plan, she earned as much as she could. She worked as a cook, a seamstress, and a maid in hotels and homes. She would use the money to carry out her plan to rescue her family.

To bring her family north, Harriet wanted to learn more about the Underground Railroad. So she paid a visit to the person in charge of the network in Philadelphia, William Still.

William Still

William Still was an African American who was born free in Burlington County, New Jersey, in 1819. His father had bought his own freedom, and William's mother had fled slavery. William was the youngest of their eighteen children.

After moving to Philadelphia in 1844, William started working for the Pennsylvania Anti-slavery Society as a janitor and clerk. Around this time, he began assisting African Americans who were fleeing slavery. His "station" became one of the most successful stations of the Underground Railroad. His detailed records helped reunite many fugitive families. In the fourteen years that his station was in operation, he helped guide about eight hundred people to freedom.

William told Harriet all about the network: how they assisted fugitives from slavery, day and night, and provided food, clothing, and shelter to the runaways. The Underground Railroad helped them find jobs and community. They helped people who had only known slavery learn to live free.

William kept detailed records of the people who had passed through the Philadelphia station so that he could help them communicate with loved ones left behind—and, most importantly, reunite them with those who made it north.

Harriet was happy to learn about all the wonderful deeds of the brave people who operated the Underground Railroad. She was eager to become a conductor. And she wanted her first passengers to be her family.

While Harriet was learning the inner workings of the Underground Railroad, she received troubling news about one of her family members. Her beloved niece Kizzy had been enslaved on a plantation in Maryland. But Kizzy and her two children were soon going to be sold down the river, far from Kizzy's husband, a free black man named John Bowley. Kizzy and her children had already been taken from their plantation and put in a "slave pen," which resembled a small warehouse, in Cambridge, Maryland. There, they waited to be sold at auction to the highest bidder. Harriet sprang into action.

She devised a clever plan, which she dictated to a member of the Underground Railroad. The member wrote the plan in a letter that was then sent to Kizzy's husband, John.

Following Harriet's instructions, John went to the courthouse where the auction would take place. He placed a bid on his wife and children. Since his bid was the highest, his wife and children were "sold" to him. The auctioneer went to dinner before he was to receive pay from the man who won the auction. However, when he came back from his meal, the auctioneer found that Kizzy and the children were gone. John Bowley had whisked them away.

auctioneer: a person who runs an auction

He brought his family to a safehouse. That night, a wagon spirited the Bowley family away to the Choptank River. At the river, the four climbed into a boat that Harriet had hired, and John sailed them into and across the Chesapeake Bay. Waiting for them on the opposite shore was a wagon filled with vegetables.

The family climbed in and hid among the onions and potatoes. The driver took his passengers to a safehouse in Baltimore, where they stayed in hiding. A few days later, Harriet came for them in a six-horse wagon. She took them from safehouse to safehouse until they reached Philadelphia.

William Still was impressed by the bravery, skill, and knowledge Harriet displayed in rescuing Kizzy and her family. He made Harriet an official conductor of the Underground Railroad. She took an oath promising that she would never tell anyone the secret routes, methods, and codes they used.

6

The Conductor

Harriet set about conducting escapes in her official new role. In spring 1851, she rescued her brother Moses and two other men. And in the autumn of that year, she made the daring decision to return to her home in Dorchester County, Maryland.

Harriet knew that she was at risk of being captured as a runaway—and a well-known one at that. And yet she was determined to return to her home county, where she hoped to convince her husband, John Tubman, to return to the North with her.

Harriet saved her wages until she had enough to make the trip home. She had not seen her husband in two years. Before she left, she bought him a suit that she planned to give to him at what she thought would be a happy reunion.

Traveling mostly by night and wearing disguises by day, Harriet finally reached Dorchester County. Sadly, before she arrived at John's house, Harriet was met by friends who had shocking news: John had taken a new wife. Harriet was heartbroken. She sent John a message

saying that she wanted to see him one more time, but he refused. So Harriet set aside her grief and anger. Although she kept his name, Harriet never saw John Tubman again.

She became even more committed to freeing her people from slavery. She would not allow herself to be distracted from her mission. However, because of a new law called the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Harriet's mission was now more dangerous than ever.

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850

On September 18, 1850, President Millard Fillmore signed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 into law. This law made it illegal to help an enslaved person flee from their "rightful owner." Any person aiding a runaway could be fined $1,000 or sentenced to six months in jail. Further, any white person could accuse any black person of being a fugitive slave and have them arrested by claiming to be their "owner." The black person would not be allowed to testify in their own defense. Federal commissioners were appointed to decide whether those accused were fugitives. However, they received more money for ruling that a black person was indeed an escaped slave, whether or not that was true. It was therefore more profitable for the commissioner to rule against the black person—a dangerous temptation.

Abolitionists called the act the "Bloodhound Law." Now it was no longer enough for Harriet to simply conduct her passengers to Philadelphia. Black people were not safe anywhere in the country, whether they were in a free state or a slave state. Harriet would have

to lead her passengers all the way to Canada, the country just across the northern border of the United States.

In 1851, Harriet visited the town of St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, for the first time. She wanted to become familiar with the land, the people, and the route she would take to bring her people there. At that time, there were only ten thousand black people living in Canada. All were free. Slavery had been abolished in that country in 1834.

In Canada, there were opportunities for black people to make a living without fear of being forced into or returned to slavery. The only drawback was Canada's bitterly cold winters.

To twenty-nine-year-old Harriet, Canada was the new Canaan—and, like Moses in the Bible, she would lead her people to the promised land.

The first group that Harriet led into Canada had eleven members. Harriet used all of her skills, knowledge, and experience to lead her passengers on the long journey. She had to help them overcome their fears, their fatigue, their hunger and pain.

Once they reached New York, they stayed at the home of Frederick Douglass, a famous author, orator, and abolitionist who had himself escaped slavery.

orator: public speaker

The group stayed with the Douglass family until Frederick and Harriet collected enough money for the fugitives to continue their journey.

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass was born into slavery in February 1818 in Talbot County, Maryland. Although most enslaved people were not allowed to learn to read, young Frederick was taught to read by the wife of his enslaver. He escaped from slavery when he was about twenty years old.

Frederick read as much as he could. This helped him become a great storyteller. Soon he was speaking at meetings of abolitionists. People were fascinated to hear a former slave tell his own story. Frederick wrote an autobiography that brought him fame and drew more people to the antislavery movement.

Frederick Douglass became a prominent figure and was an active participant in the Underground Railroad. His three sons all served the Union Army during the Civil War, two as soldiers and one as a recruiter. Frederick became a friend and adviser to President Abraham Lincoln. Frederick, like Harriet Tubman, was also active in the women's suffrage movement.

The freedom seekers left knowing they had to make one more harrowing passage before they would be free. They had to walk across a handmade suspension bridge that was nearly eight hundred feet long. Two hundred and twenty feet below rushed the thunderous rapids and whirling waters of the great Niagara River. The bridge swayed as the determined group walked across, holding on to each other.

"You've shook the lion's paw!" Harriet shouted as they made it across. They all cried, laughed, and shouted with joy as they set foot on free Canadian soil. It was December 1851. Her first rescue mission to Canada had been a huge success.

suspension bridge: a bridge hung from two or more cables that are held up by towers and anchored at the ends

7

"I Never Lost a Passenger"

Harriet made about a dozen trips from Maryland to Canada. She and her passengers rested by day and traveled by night, when they were less likely to be spotted. For that reason, Harriet usually made the trips in the winter, when the nights were longer.

The dangers, close calls, hardships, and amazing events that happened on these journeys became legendary as they were told and retold by grateful passengers and by Harriet herself. Harriet became famous.

She was beloved by abolitionists and by black people both enslaved and free. She was despised and feared by slaveholders. Bounty hunters would go to any length to capture her and receive their reward. Because of bounty hunters, Harriet started carrying a gun for her safety and the protection of the passengers who had entrusted her with their lives. Fortunately, she never had to use it.

Even though her passengers had great faith in Harriet, that faith sometimes wavered. They were frightened when Harriet suddenly fell into a deep sleep in the midst of

their journey. But Harriet always woke up and continued to lead them safely to their destination.

When her passengers were resting in a safehouse, Harriet was often out and about, making arrangements for food, shelter, transportation, clothing, and especially shoes, to replace those worn out during their three-hundred-mile journey. Although they sometimes traveled by boat or wagon, the fugitives made most of the journey on foot.

During her supply outings, Harriet, who was now in her thirties, wore disguises, appearing to be an old woman or an old man. Often, she fooled would-be captors by pretending to read the newspaper because it was well-known that Harriet was illiterate.

In 1854, she made a daring rescue of her brothers Ben, Robert, and Henry on Christmas Day. However, Harriet's most personal mission came in 1857. She set out to bring her parents from Maryland to Canada.

Both of Harriet's parents were free. Her father had been manumitted years before, and he had later bought his wife's freedom. However, the couple still lived on a former enslaver's plantation, far away from any of their children. Most importantly, Harriet's father had been unlawfully helping runaway slaves. In fact, Benjamin

Ross had been warned that the authorities were planning to arrest him on charges of harboring fugitives. If found guilty, he could go to jail. So even though the journey would be perilous for her frail parents, Harriet decided to take the risk.

Harriet bought an old horse and a pair of wheels, made a makeshift wagon, and went to retrieve her parents. Her father insisted on bringing his tools, and her mother wouldn't leave without her quilt.

They began their journey in the middle of the night, bumping along in Harriet's wagon. When they were far enough away from home to go unrecognized, Harriet put her parents on a train to Wilmington, Delaware. It would be a much smoother ride for the elderly couple. She gave them forged passes. At that time, black people, enslaved or free, had to carry identification that said they were free or that they had permission from their enslavers to be where they were.

Harriet continued on alone to Wilmington and met her parents at the home of Quaker abolitionist Thomas Garrett and his wife, Rachel. The travelers enjoyed the Garretts' hospitality but soon had to continue on their way. Several weeks later, Harriet and her parents arrived safely in St. Catharines, Canada, which Harriet now called home.

It was the middle of winter, and Harriet's parents suffered greatly from the terrible cold. All their lives they had lived in the American South, where the winters were mild. Harriet realized that her parents could not survive another winter in Canada. But what could she do?

Thomas Garrett

Thomas Garrett was born into a Quaker family in 1789 in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania. From an early age, he devoted his life to the abolition of slavery and to helping people escape slavery.

In 1830, Thomas and his wife, Rachel, lived in Quaker Hill in Wilmington, Delaware, when Harriet was active in the Underground Railroad. Wilmington was the dividing line between the North and the South. Thomas continued to aid runaways and soon became known as the station master of the eastern route of the Underground Railroad, for which he worked for the next forty years. Thomas Garrett is said to have helped about 2,700 people reach freedom.

Luckily, by now Harriet had many friends and admirers. One of them was abolitionist William Seward, the governor of New York. When he heard of Harriet's dilemma, he offered to help her buy a house in Auburn, New York. The winters in Auburn were not as mild as the ones in the South, but they were certainly not as harsh as the ones in Canada.

Auburn was a town that welcomed African Americans. It was the center of the antislavery movement. Harriet bought the house, and she and her parents returned to the United States and happily moved into their new home.

With her parents safe and settled, Harriet continued to conduct African Americans to freedom via the Underground Railroad. Between trips, she began attending abolitionist meetings. Soon Harriet became a speaker at these gatherings. She told stories of the Underground Railroad that fascinated and inspired her antislavery audiences. She told how a wagon would appear just when she and her passengers could not walk anymore, or a person would show up with the exact amount of money she needed.

After hearing her stories, people were eager to donate money to the cause of freedom. Other well-known abolitionists spoke at these meetings, too. They possessed Harriet's passion and bravery. But even they did not share Harriet's belief that slavery would end in the near

governor: an elected official in charge of a state

future. One of the abolitionists who did not believe was the Reverend Henry Highland Garnet.

One night in 1857, while staying at Henry's home, Harriet had a dream. In that dream, all African Americans had been emancipated. "My people are free! My people are free!" she sang as she came down to breakfast the next morning.

Henry told Harriet that she was wrong: "Oh, Harriet! . . . My grandchildren may see the day of the emancipation of our people, but you and I will never see it."

But Harriet was convinced the Day of Jubilee was not far away. "I tell you, sir, you'll see it, and you'll see it soon."

Henry Highland Garnet

Henry Highland Garnet was an African American minister, educator, orator, and abolitionist. He was born into slavery in 1815, in New Market (now Chesterville), Maryland. Henry and his family escaped to New York when he was about nine years old.

Henry believed that enslaved people had to free themselves. He was seen as a radical because he encouraged enslaved people to rise up against their enslavers, using violent means if necessary. In 1865, Henry Highland Garnet delivered a sermon in the House of Representatives, becoming the first black person to speak in that chamber.

In 1881, he was appointed United States ambassador to Liberia. He died there two months after arriving, on February 13, 1882.

emancipated: freed from enslavement

Harriet also knew that although she and the other members of the Underground Railroad had freed many, their efforts alone could not bring about the Day of Jubilee. There would have to be a great change—political or social. Something big would have to happen to emancipate the millions of her people who were still enslaved.

In the meantime, Harriet began to hear talk of a war over slavery. Abolitionists mostly lived in the northern states, where the economy did not depend on slavery. People who were proslavery generally lived in the southern states, where farms and plantations depended on slave labor in order to make money. The free states and the slave states were becoming more and more hostile toward each other. Slavery was tearing the United States of America apart.

As talk of war grew louder, Harriet's career as a conductor was coming to an end. It would be too dangerous to try to lead people out of slavery with a war going on. Southern soldiers would be everywhere. In December 1860, at the age of thirty-eight, Harriet made her last trip on the Underground Railroad. She conducted a family of five safely to Canada.

By the end of her career, Harriet had freed more than seventy people and instructed dozens of others

on how to escape on their own. Harriet was justifiably proud of her career as a conductor on the Underground Railroad. "I never ran my train off the track," she would tell audiences, "and I never lost a passenger."

On April 12, 1861, the Civil War began. The citizens of the United States were at war against each other—the North against the South. The war marked a new phase of Harriet's life. It turned out that being a conductor on the Underground Railroad was only the beginning of Harriet's heroic service to the cause of freedom.

The Civil War

The Civil War was fought between the southern and northern states. By 1860, most northern states had outlawed slavery. Southerners feared that the United States would outlaw slavery in the South too. Therefore, the southern states decided to form their own country, which they called the Confederate States of America, or the Confederacy. However, the northern states wanted to remain one country. The North called itself the Union.

What had been one country, the United States of America, was now two countries at war with each other. One of the countless tragedies of the Civil War was that many families who lived in the North were now the enemies of their relatives who lived in the South.

The Civil War, which began in 1861, was the deadliest war in American history. More than six hundred thousand soldiers died. The war ended in 1865 with a victory for the Union.

8

Nurse, Scout, Spy

Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States and commander in chief of the Union Army, sent soldiers to the South to put down the rebellion and reunite the country. The Confederacy, however, chose its own president, Jefferson Davis, and raised its own army to defeat the Union soldiers.

Harriet wondered if the Civil War was the "big change" she had imagined. Would this war cause President Lincoln to set all her people free?

From her home in Auburn, Harriet learned that enslaved people in the South were suffering greatly as a result of the war. As Union troops marched through the South, they took over farms and plantations. When the Union soldiers appeared, owners abandoned their properties in fear for their lives. Their enslaved workers were left to fend for themselves. Hungry, homeless, and sick, they wandered the countryside.

The Union soldiers called these displaced African Americans "contraband" when they came to Union camps seeking refuge.

Contraband of War

During the Civil War, enslaved people continued to escape slavery. However, because they were still viewed as property, any who escaped into Union territory were designated as contraband, or illegally obtained property, that would not be returned to the Confederate enemy. Today, we would refer to these people as refugees rather than property. These refugees set up temporary camps near Union forces, which provided support and education for adults and children. Many became unpaid and paid laborers for the Union forces and, starting in 1863, even soldiers in the United States Colored Troops.

Harriet decided to volunteer her services down south. She traveled to South Carolina to help the displaced African Americans.

She had never been to the dreaded "Deep South." Many of the African Americans she encountered spoke a dialect that Harriet did not understand. While they did not recognize Harriet Tubman, many of the Union soldiers did and, according to abolitionist and author William Wells Brown, "never failed to tip their caps when meeting her."

Harriet was quickly assigned to work with the contraband, or refugees. Hundreds of African American adults and children lay suffering from diseases such as dysentery from contaminated food and water and malaria from infected mosquitoes.

dialect: a distinct regional variety of a language

Relying on the lessons her mother had taught her many years before, Harriet used local plants and herbs to create remedies for these dreaded ailments. She also treated Union soldiers who suffered from disease. Contagious diseases spread through the camps like wildfire. Yet Harriet never fell ill. "The Lord will take care of me until my time comes," she proclaimed.

Although soldiers received pay for their service, Harriet did not get paid for her lifesaving work. She cooked, sewed, and did laundry to earn money. The army gave Harriet two hundred dollars to build a washhouse in which to do laundry. Harriet trained the refugee women to wash the soldiers' clothes. When the soldiers paid the women for doing their laundry, it was the first time that most of them had ever received pay for their labor. From the very beginning of her service in the war, Harriet was beloved and trusted by the local African Americans.

Harriet nursed, washed, and cooked while all around her was shooting, death, and dying. In 1863, she witnessed the gruesome Second Battle of Fort Wagner at Charleston Harbor in South Carolina. It was a battle that Frederick Douglass's son Lewis fought in and, fortunately, survived. Harriet gave a somber yet poetic description of the battle:

> And then we saw the lightning, and that was the guns; and then we heard the thunder, and that was the big guns; and then we heard the rain falling, and that was the drops of blood falling; and when we came to get in the crops, it was dead men that we reaped.

Harriet's participation in the war did not stop at nursing and cooking. She put her skills from the Underground Railroad to work and became a scout and a spy, and she even led a group of soldiers on an important mission.

As a scout, Harriet needed to learn about the enemy's territory. The refugees and those African Americans still living on farms and plantations knew the lay of the land. They had watched the activities of the Confederate soldiers, so Harriet sought their help. They knew where food was stored and where the Confederate soldiers hid their ammunition. They told her which routes were the best and which areas were good for making camp. Harriet passed this information on to the Union officers. They, in turn, made important decisions based on that information.

Harriet made a perfect spy. She could walk into a Confederate camp and not raise any suspicion. As far as the southern soldiers were concerned, she was just a slave trying to survive by selling root beer, gingerbread, and pies. They talked freely of their plans around her. Harriet listened intently and reported back to the Union officers.

Part of Harriet's greatness was her ability to adapt to whatever situation she found herself in. On June 1, 1863, she became the only woman to help lead an armed expedition during the Civil War. Colonel James Montgomery, the expedition commander, allowed Harriet to give orders to the soldiers. Harriet stood in the lead, dressed in Union blue, as she and three hundred troops made their way down the murky waters of the Combahee River in South Carolina.

Their expedition served several purposes. One was to locate food and supplies stockpiled by the Confederates. Another goal was to find weapons, including torpedoes that had been hidden in the water in order to blow up Union gunboats. Once these supplies and weapons were

found, they were retrieved, and what could not be carried away was destroyed. The expedition also destroyed bridges and railroads so that the Confederate Army would be unable to receive new supplies.

However, the most rewarding part of the mission for Harriet was not blowing things up. It was freeing people. Harriet and her troops were able to convince the enslaved people who lived along the river to leave their plantations and board the Union ships. According to Harriet, they were reluctant at first but soon realized that "Lincoln's gun-boats [had] come to set them free."

The Combahee River expedition was a great success! The soldiers had destroyed millions of dollars' worth of supplies and recovered dangerous torpedoes. And to Harriet's great joy, they had freed eight hundred people from slavery.

Harriet gave everything she had to help the Union win the war. Still, she believed that the Union could not win unless President Lincoln did "the right thing": free all enslaved people and let them fight for their country.

On September 22, 1862, President Lincoln took a big step toward doing the right thing. In the midst of the Civil War, he signed a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. This document stated that if the southern states did not cease their rebellion by January 1, 1863, all enslaved people within the rebellious states would be emancipated.

9

The Day of Jubilee

It was clear that the Confederacy would continue to rebel. On December 28, 1862, Frederick Douglass addressed an audience in Rochester, New York, in anticipation of New Year's Day 1863:

> It is difficult for us who have toiled so long and hard, to believe that this event, so stupendous, so far reaching and glorious is even now at the door. It surpasses our most enthusiastic hopes that we live at such a time and are likely to witness the downfall . . . of slavery in America. It is a moment for joy thanksgiving and Praise.

New Year's Day came, and President Lincoln issued the permanent Emancipation Proclamation, which proclaimed that all enslaved people within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free."

Even though enslaved people in the Union were not freed by the Proclamation, all African Americans celebrated, believing that general emancipation would come soon.

On Emancipation Day, Harriet was still in the South

serving her country. She witnessed a grand celebration held by one of the Union generals. Harriet was among four thousand African Americans who gathered at a former South Carolina plantation for a daylong festival that included a reading of the Emancipation Proclamation as well as prayers, speeches, singing, and feasting. The feast included twelve roasted oxen.

Even in the midst of the celebration, Harriet knew that there was more to do. The war had yet to be won. All of her people were not yet free.

The devastating conflict continued for two and a half more years. After much destruction of property and loss of life on both sides, the Civil War ended in victory for the North in 1865. The Union was preserved. However, all enslaved people were not officially freed until the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, or approved, on December 6, 1865.

Thirteenth Amendment

Section 1

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

After the war, Harriet left the South for the last time. She went home to New York, where her parents and other family members awaited her.

Harriet freed herself when she was twenty-seven. Then she freed most of her family, many friends, and strangers. She served as nurse, spy, and soldier during the Civil War. Only five feet tall, illiterate, and subject

involuntary servitude: the condition of being forced to work against one's will
jurisdiction: the power to apply the law
legislation: the act of making laws, or the laws themselves

to sleeping spells, Harriet Tubman was an indispensable person in the fight to help the United States become "a more perfect union."

Now, at age forty-three, she could rejoice that all of her people were free. Her family had endured four generations of bondage. Hers would be the last generation to be born into slavery. The remarkable Harriet Tubman had not only lived to see but helped bring about the end of enslavement in the United States.

indispensable: absolutely necessary

10

Legacy

Harriet Tubman lived a long life after the abolition of slavery. Although she had accomplished so much, she did not retire from public service when she returned to New York. After all, she now had war stories to add to her tales of the Underground Railroad. She remained a much-sought-after public speaker for most of her life. She also went on to establish a retirement home for elderly African Americans, and she fought for women's suffrage—the right to vote.

Harriet Tubman's name was known throughout the English-speaking world. Even Queen Victoria of England was a great admirer of hers. In 1897, the Queen gifted Harriet with a silk shawl and a silver medal.

Harriet Tubman lived a life that was unimaginable for a black woman of her era. Her place in history secure, Harriet passed away on March 10, 1913, at the age of ninety-one. Fittingly, she had lived most of her life as a free woman.

In the more than a century that has passed since her death, appreciation for Harriet Tubman's contributions to African Americans and to the United States has continued to grow. Many books have been written about her. In 1978, a first-class stamp with her image was issued. An Oscar-nominated movie about her, *Harriet*, was released in theaters in 2019. Schools, highways, and a United States ship have been named after her. The U.S. Department of the Treasury has even announced that Harriet Tubman's image will be featured on the twenty-dollar bill beginning in 2030.

Harriet lived by the Ashanti saying "If I go forward, I die. If I go backward, I die. Better go forward and die." Harriet always went forward, without fear, toward freedom. As she received visitors near the end of her life, she proclaimed joyfully, "I can hear the bells a'ringing. I can hear the angels singing."

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the transatlantic slave trade and the Middle Passage. In what ways did slavery treat people as if they were "property?"

2. What African tribe is Harriet believed to be descended from, and what are some things that tribe is known for? What trait is Harriet said to have inherited from her ancestors? What do you know about your own ancestry?

3. Why did Minty enjoy working outdoors? Do you prefer to be indoors or outdoors? Why?

4. Although it was more common for men to escape slavery, Minty's husband and two of her brothers did not choose to escape with her. Why do you think it was more common for men to escape? What do you think kept people from trying to escape?

5. Describe Minty's successful escape, including some of her tactics for staying hidden. What are some things she might have felt during her escape?

6. Consider the new name Minty chose. Why do you think she changed her name? Would you be happy or sad to change your name?

7. What was the Underground Railroad, and what do you think made Harriet such a successful conductor?

8. Harriet met many people on her journeys. Describe some of the ways these people helped and supported her. What are some ways you help and support others?

9. Harriet strongly believed that slavery would end in her lifetime. Some people agreed with her, but many did not. Why do you think it was difficult for people of the time to believe that slavery could end soon? Do you think it is important to discuss serious topics with both people you agree with as well as people you disagree with?

10. What was the Civil War? How did Harriet serve in the war, and what unique skills did she have that helped her serve?

11. What do you think was Harriet's most important achievement, and why? Is there someone, famous or not, whose achievements you admire? Who and why?

Meet the Author

Glenda Armand was a teacher and school librarian for many years. Now she fulfills her love of reading, learning, writing, and teaching by devoting most of her time to writing while teaching part-time. She enjoys writing stories that inspire children to dream big.

For the Voices in History Biography Series, Ms. Armand has written about Maya Angelou, James Lafayette, and Harriet Tubman.

Ms. Armand is also the author of a number of picture book biographies, including *All Aboard the Schooltrain*:

A Little Story from the Great Migration and *Black-Eyed Peas and Hoghead Cheese: A Story of Food, Family, and Freedom*. Her latest releases include *Ice Cream Man: How Augustus Jackson Made a Sweet Treat Better* and *The Night Before Freedom: A Juneteenth Story*.

When not writing or practicing the piano, Ms. Armand tends a garden full of roses and succulents.

Drop by her website at glenda-armand.com.

Meet the Illustrator

Adam Gustavson is the illustrator of over thirty books for children, as well as the author/illustrator of *The Froggies Do NOT Want to Sleep* and *The Aliens Do NOT Want to Go Home*. Adam holds a master's degree from the School of Visual Arts in New York and serves on the faculty of Rowan University. He is the lead instructor at Renaissance Art Studio in Millburn, NJ, which he co-owns with his wife, Denise. He lives in New Jersey with his charming family and two peculiar little dogs.

Credits

Cover Illustration by
Adam Gustavson & Ivan Pesic

Title Page Illustration by
Adam Gustavson

Text Illustrations by
Adam Gustavson / 2, 9, 11, 15, 21, 23, 29, 34, 36, 39, 49, 50, 53, 57
In Courtesy of Adam Gustavson / 63
In Courtesy of Glenda Armand / 61

Voices in History is a Core Knowledge Biography Series that encourages young readers to learn about real superheroes in history. As a result of acts of extraordinary bravery, ingenuity, strength, and determination, these people made a difference and changed the world. Perhaps their remarkable stories will inspire young readers to become the superheroes of the future.

Core Knowledge Voices in History™

These books are suitable for readers aged 8 and up.

ISBN: 979-8-88970-327-3