

# Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman was an American woman who escaped slavery and risked her life to help others become free. She was born in Maryland around 1822 and was first named Araminta Ross. She later became known as Harriet Tubman.

Harriet was born enslaved. This meant she was treated as someone's property, forced to work and denied freedom. As a child, she had to do difficult jobs. Members of her family were sold and separated from one another. These experiences helped shape her determination to fight slavery.

In 1849, Harriet escaped from Maryland and reached Philadelphia, where she could live freely. However, she wanted her family and others to have freedom too. Over the following years, she returned to Maryland about thirteen times and guided around seventy people to safety.

Harriet worked with a network called the Underground Railroad. It was not a railway beneath the ground. It was a secret network of people, routes and safe places that helped enslaved people escape. Guides like Harriet were called "conductors".

The journeys were dangerous. Harriet could have been captured and forced back into slavery. She used her knowledge of woods, waterways and the stars to help find her way. Some of the people she helped travelled to Canada, where American slave-catchers could not legally force them to return.

During the American Civil War, Harriet worked for the Union army as a nurse, cook, scout and spy. In 1863, she helped guide an operation along the Combahee River that freed more than seven hundred enslaved people.

Later, Harriet supported women's right to vote and helped care for older people. She died in 1913. Her courage, careful planning and determination helped many people become free from slavery.



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## Questions

1. Where and approximately when was Harriet Tubman born?
2. What was Harriet's first name at birth?
3. What did being enslaved mean?
4. In which year did Harriet escape, and where did she reach freedom?
5. Why did Harriet return to Maryland after escaping?
6. Around how many people did she personally guide to safety?
7. What was the Underground Railroad?
8. What knowledge helped Harriet find her way during dangerous journeys?
9. What happened during the operation along the Combahee River in 1863?
10. What cause did Harriet fight for later in her life?



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## Answers

1. She was born in Maryland around 1822.
2. She was first named Araminta Ross.
3. It meant being treated as property, forced to work and denied freedom.
4. She escaped in 1849 and reached Philadelphia.
5. She wanted to help her family and others become free.
6. She guided around seventy people to safety.
7. It was a secret network of people, routes and safe places that helped enslaved people escape.
8. Her knowledge of woods, waterways and the stars helped her find her way.
9. The operation freed more than seven hundred enslaved people.
10. She fought for women's right to vote.



|              |           |         |               |          |          |                      |
|--------------|-----------|---------|---------------|----------|----------|----------------------|
| abolitionist | conductor | courage | determination | enslaved | escape   | freedom              |
| guide        | network   | route   | scout         | spy      | suffrage | Underground Railroad |

1. Forced to work and treated as someone's property, without freedom.
2. The ability to make choices about your own life without being enslaved.
3. The act of getting away from danger or from a place where someone is being held.
4. A person who worked to end slavery.
5. A secret system of people, routes and safe places that helped enslaved people reach freedom.
6. A name given to someone who led people to safety through the Underground Railroad.
7. A person who shows others the way to a place.

8. A path or way taken to travel from one place to another.
9. A group of connected people or places that work together.
10. The strength to face fear, danger or difficulty, even when you feel afraid.
11. The firm decision to keep working towards a goal, even when it is difficult.
12. A person who goes ahead to gather information about an area or possible dangers.
13. A person who secretly gathers information about an opposing side.
14. The right to vote in elections.



## Harriet Tubman

## Timeline Challenge

Harriet Tubman escaped from a life in slavery and then helped many other enslaved people escape to freedom. She made dangerous journeys to guide people to safe places. She also helped during the American Civil War and spent her life standing up for freedom and equal rights.



**Can you put these key events from Harriet's life into chronological order?**

|                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Harriet helps the Union Army during the American Civil War. She works as a nurse, scout and spy, and helps free hundreds of enslaved people. | Harriet is born into slavery in Maryland, USA. As a child, she has to work and is treated very badly. | Harriet helps open a home for older Black people who need care. She continues helping others as she grows older.                    | Harriet escapes from slavery and reaches Pennsylvania, where she is free. She decides to help other enslaved people escape too. |
| Harriet dies at around the age of 91. She is remembered for her courage and for helping people become free.                                  | Harriet marries John Tubman. Around this time, she changes her first name from Araminta to Harriet.   | Harriet becomes a guide on the Underground Railroad. She returns to the South many times to help enslaved people escape to freedom. | Harriet buys a home in Auburn, New York. She lives there with members of her family and continues to help people in need.       |

**Link each event with one of the dates below. Use the information to make a timeline.**

|        |      |      |       |      |      |      |      |
|--------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|
| c.1822 | 1844 | 1849 | 1850s | 1859 | 1863 | 1908 | 1913 |
|--------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|

**Underground Railroad:** This was not a real railway. It was a secret network of people, routes and safe places that helped enslaved people escape to freedom.

**c.1822:** The exact year is not known. The letter c. means "around".

