



Harriet Beecher Stowe
Uncle Tom's Cabin

Objectives:

1. To better understand the plight of slaves and the need to abolish slavery
2. To gain a contemporary view of slavery and appreciate one of the moving forces behind the abolitionist movement
3. To more fully realize the importance of practicing what we preach as Christians
4. To understand the power of persuasive writing under the guise of story

Process:

1. Read the biography of Harriet Beecher Stowe
2. Read the Introduction to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
3. Read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
4. Complete the Discussion and Activity worksheets
5. After reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, complete the worksheet regarding the basics of the book
6. Complete a creative project regarding *Uncle Tom's Cabin*





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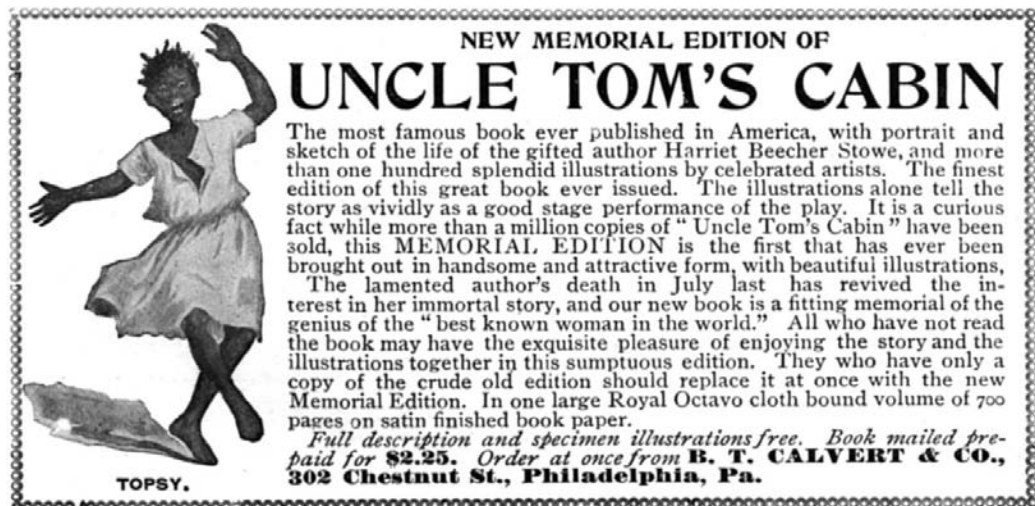
Background

Uncle Tom's Cabin was the first major American novel with a Black as a major character, a hero. Written initially in installments, the book was instrumental in enlightening the country about the key issues of slavery, persuading many to support the abolitionist cause. Harriet Beecher Stowe asked family and friends to help her find resources, and they sent her stories and newspaper clippings providing her with first-person accounts that helped make her writing all the more effective. She, too, searched freedom narratives and anti-slavery newspapers for information. Stowe also drew on her own personal observation and experience to provide a realistic emotional component.

Harriet knew about slavery personally as her grandmother had African American servants who had once been slaves.

Her father preached in favor of the creation of a colony for freed slaves in Liberia. Her husband and brother helped their servant to escape to Canada when they

learned she was a runaway slave in danger of being captured and sent back into slavery. And, while living in Cincinnati, located just across the Ohio River from the slave-state Kentucky, Harriet met and interviewed former and fugitive slaves. By the time she was ready to write, she had plenty of material from which to draw.



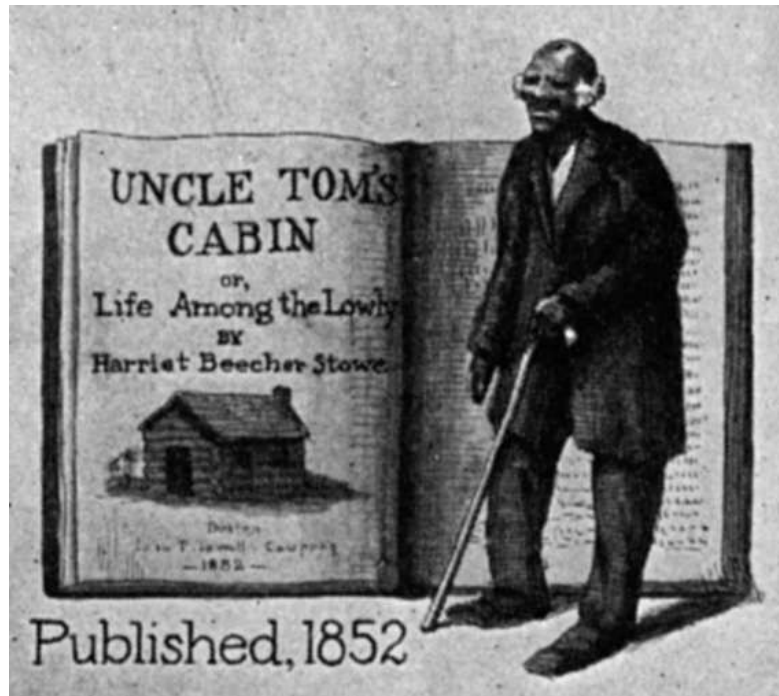
Discussion and Activities

1. Describe the physical, political, and emotional setting at the opening of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
2. Who are the main characters of the book? How does Stowe characterize each of them? What words does she use to guide the reader's emotional response to each?



3. What has already happened, prior to the opening of the novel, to set things in motion? What are the initial conflicts? What does Stowe do to dramatize the plot complications and heighten the reader's response to the situation?
4. What are the two plot lines that Stowe follows throughout the book? How does each find its way to the other by the end of the book?
5. How do you feel about Simon Legree? Do you think Stowe paints him realistically or does she over-exaggerate his evilness?

6. Do you think Tom's faith is realistic? Consider that Stowe comes from a family of preachers and religion teachers. Do you think the book is too **didactic** (preachy)? Why or why not?



7. In the end, both Tom and Eliza attain freedom, albeit dramatically different kinds. Describe both.
8. Does the story have a happy ending? Why do you think Stowe chose to end the book this way? Could she have gained her purpose by ending it otherwise?
9. Who is the hero in this story? What makes him/her a hero? Be specific.
10. If you had read this story in your local newspaper, what would have been your reaction to it? Would it have driven you to action? If so, what action would you have taken?
11. Describe the **paradox** of Christians being slave owners and/or hunters.
12. Compare and contrast the three slave owners. How does their portrayal contribute to the overall picture of slavery that Stowe wants to create?



13. What is Eva's role in the story? What do you think Stowe's feminist side is wanting to say through Eva's character?
14. Compare and contrast Stowe's portrayal of the men and women in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
15. What is the overall message of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*? Who was the intended audience? How can you tell? How effectively does Stowe accomplish her purpose? Cite examples to support your thinking.

Information drawn from the following sources:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/Nr/travel/underground/me1.htm>

<http://www.uncletomscabin.org/>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2958.html>

<http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/uncletom/utchp.html>

Pictures were taken by Rondi Aastrup or from <http://schools.clipart.com/>





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After reading the book, complete the following:

1. What kind of book is *Uncle Tom's Cabin*? Fiction? Nonfiction? History? A combination? Tell what makes it so.
2. Describe the setting for *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Be specific in your description.
3. Who is the **protagonist** of the book (there may be more than one)?
4. Who is the **antagonist** of the book (there may be more than one)?
5. Discuss the major **conflict(s)** of the book.
6. Describe the **rising action** of the book.
7. What is the **climax** of the story? What makes it thus?
8. Describe the **falling action** of the story.
9. What are the major **themes** of the book.
10. When *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published, Southerners denounced it as an unfair attack on their region? Do you agree? Why or why not? Support your opinion with evidence from the book.
11. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has been criticized for creating **stereotypes** of blacks. Do you agree? Why or why not? Give evidence from the book to support your opinion.
12. Who is the **hero** of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*? Defend your choice.
13. Is *Uncle Tom's Cabin* a realistic story? Explain.
14. The term "Uncle Tom" has come to mean a black person (or anyone in a reform movement) who is too subservient. Is this an accurate use of the character of Uncle Tom? Give evidence to support your views.





Harriet Beecher Stowe *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Creative Projects:

Choose a project to complete and share with your classmates.

1. Write a series of Facebook-like "status" entries summarizing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Write one for each chapter.

2. Create a Facebook profile for each of the main characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that presents as complete a picture of each as possible.

3. Research the role the Underground Railroad played in the abolitionist movement. Create a Power Point Presentation to share your findings. Make sure to include a Source page.



4. Create a storyboard of the major scenes in the book.



portrayal of landmarks.

5. Write a short story of your own designed to inform and persuade the public about an issue you feel passionately about.
6. Create a "signal quilt" depicting an escape route for one of the slaves in the story. Do enough geographical research to be generally accurate with your

7. Make a podcast of a lecture that Harriet Beecher Stowe might have given about the abolition of slavery.