

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

<p>Learning Objectives Students will learn about Harriet Beecher Stowe and the influence of her Cincinnati years on the writing of her famous novel, <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>.</p>	<p>Lesson Overview Students will read information on Harriet Beecher Stowe, and an abstract from <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>, Chapter 31</p>
<p>Teacher Background Harriet Beecher Stowe and her novel <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> are inextricably tied to the American Civil War. When meeting Stowe for the first time, Abraham Lincoln reportedly said, "So you're the little lady who started this Great War." Harriet's sentimental novel put a human face on slavery and attracted thousands of readers to the abolitionist cause. Reportedly written as a response to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> struck a chord with the American public that no previous slave narrative or abolitionist newspaper had been able to do.</p> <p><i>Harriet Beecher Stowe</i> (1811-1896), a teacher and writer, was born in Connecticut. Her father, Lyman Beecher, was a well-known Presbyterian minister and held strong beliefs about education, making sure that his daughters as well as his sons received an education. Lyman Beecher preached against the evils of slavery and alcohol. In 1832, Lyman Beecher was named president of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio. Harriet, now a young woman in her twenties, moved with her father and lived in Cincinnati for the next eighteen years. During this time, Harriet contributed to various periodicals and helped supplement her family's income through her earnings made as a writer.</p> <p>While living in Cincinnati, Harriet</p>	<p>abolitionist newspapers were published in Cincinnati and numerous contemporary abolitionists attended Lane Theological Seminary notable for its anti-slavery activism. Calvin Stowe, Harriet's husband, was a professor at Lane Theological Seminary. Many believe that the Beechers also had strong connections to Ripley, Ohio, and the Rankin family of abolitionists who helped lead thousands of slaves to freedom. In fact, Harriet's character Eliza is modeled after a woman who made a winter escape across the Ohio River and was helped to freedom by the Rankins.</p> <p><i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> did not begin as a novel. It was first published as a serial in the anti-slavery newspaper <i>The National Era</i> in 1851. Its popularity inspired the publishers to ask Harriet to turn the series into a book. The book was published in 1852, selling 10,000 copies in the first week alone; 300,000 copies were sold within the first year of its publication. Indeed, it was a bestseller in its time. The book drew immediate criticism and controversy. Slaveholders violently protested the book, and even created their own counter responses, while abolitionists praised the work for exposing the cruelties of slavery.</p> <p>Today, <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> still elicits controversy but for different reasons than those during its 1852 publication.</p>

witnessed firsthand the effects of slavery and met many well-known abolitionists as well as people involved in the Underground Railroad. While Harriet wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* after she left Cincinnati, the lasting impact of her Ohio experiences can be found throughout the book. Cincinnati, across the Ohio River from the slave state Kentucky, was a hotbed of activity in the abolitionist movement. Several

Modern critics claim the book portrays African-Americans stereotypically and that it is a weak example of literary greatness. Contemporary scholars are still grappling with the implications of the book. But, Harriet Beecher Stowe's legacy resides not simply in the pages of her novel, but in its ability to fan the fires of pro and antislavery passions dividing our nation on the brink of Civil War.

Stopping opposite to Tom, who had been attired for sale in his best broadcloth suit, with well-starched linen and shining boots, he briefly expressed himself as follows:

"Stand up."

Tom stood up.

"Take off that stock!" and, as Tom encumbered by his fetters, proceeded to do it, he assisted him, by pulling it, with no gentle hand, from his neck, and putting it in his pocket. Legree now turned to Tom's trunk, which, previous to this, he had been ransacking, and, taking from it a pair of old pantaloons and dilapidated coat, which Tom had been wont to put on about his stable-work, he said, liberating Tom's hands from the handcuffs, and pointing to recess in among the boxes,

"You go there, and put these on."

Tom obeyed, and in a few moments returned.

"Take off your boots," said Mr Legree.

Tom did so.

"There," said the former, throwing him a pair of coarse, stout shoes, such as were common among the slaves, "put these on."

In Tom's hurried exchange, he had not forgotten to transfer his cherished Bible to his pocket. It was well he did so; for Mr. Legree, having refitted Tom's handcuffs, proceeded deliberately to investigate the contents of his pockets. He drew out a silk handkerchief, and put it into his own pocket. Several little trifles, which Tom had treasured, chiefly because they had amused Eva, he looked upon with a contemptuous grunt, and tossed them over his shoulder into the river. Tom's

Methodist hymn-book, which, in his hurry, he had forgotten, he now held up and turned over.

Humph! pious, to be sure. So, what's yer name, - you belong to the church, eh?"

"Yes, Mas'r," said Tom, firmly.

"Well, I'll soon have that out of you. I have none o' yer bawling, praying, singing niggers on my place; so remember. Now, mind yourself," he said, with a stamp and a fierce glance of his gray eye, directed at Tom, "I'm your church

now! You understand. – you've got to be as I say."...

He took Tom's trunk, which contained a very neat and abundant wardrobe, to the fore-castle, where it was soon surrounded by various hands of the boat. With much laughing, at the expense of niggers, who tried to be gentlemen, the articles very readily were sold to one and another, and the empty trunk finally put up at auction. It was a good joke, the all thought, especially to see how Tom looked after his things, as they were going this way and that; and then the auction of the trunk, that was funnier than all, and occasioned abundant witticisms. This little affair being

over, Simon sauntered up again to his property.

"Now, Tom, I've relieved you of any extra baggage, you see. Take mighty good care of them clothes. It'll be long enough 'fore you get more. I go in for making niggers careful; one suit has to do for one year; on my place."

From Uncle Tom's Cabin, Chapter 31

Post-Reading Tasks

Task 1 Choose the correct option

1. **Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin is primarily about what?**

- a) The subjection of women in 19th century America
- b) Slavery in the US just prior to the Civil War
- c) The plight of the poor during the Great Depression
- d) The oppression of the mentally ill in the 19th century

2. **In Uncle Tom's Cabin, who is Tom?**

- a) A kindly slave owner
- b) An escaped slave
- c) A middle-aged slave
- d) A cruel slave trader

3. **Who were Tom's first owners?**

- a) The St.Clair's
- b) Simon Legree
- c) The quakers
- d) The Shelby's

4. **In Uncle Tom's Cabin, what does the character of Eva represent?**

- a) Faith and Purity
- b) Cynicism and Despair
- c) Cruelty and Inhumanity
- d) Desperation and Recklessness

5. **Cruel slave owner of Uncle Tom**

- a) Tom Loker
- b) George Shelby

- c) Miss Ophelia
 - d) Simon Legree
- 6. How slaves who were illiterate wrote their signatures**
- a) They did not write any signature
 - b) Signed with an X
 - c) Signed with an Z
 - d) Wrote only the first letter of their name

Task 2 Define whether the statements true or false are:

	True	False
1. Harriet Stowe's maiden name; last name of a famous reformer family -Beecher		
2. The breakup of the family was one of the reasons why Harriet Beecher Stowe hated slavery.		
3. Simon Legree transports his newly purchased slaves by ferry. They head up the Ohio River.		
4. Legree told Tom to stand up and change into different shoes.		
5. Legree stole some of Tom's personal items and threw others into the river.		
6. Legree wanted his slaves to be religious and they had to pray every day.		