



Who Was Harriet Tubman?

By Yona Zeldis McDonough

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Born a slave in Maryland, Harriet Tubman knew first-hand what it meant to be someone's property; she was whipped by owners and almost killed by an overseer. It was from other field hands that she first heard about the Underground Railroad which she travelled by herself north to Philadelphia. Throughout her long life (she died at the age of ninety-two) and long after the Civil War brought an end to slavery, this amazing woman was proof of what just one person can do.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Yona Zeldis McDonough is a longtime doll lover and collector. She is also an award-winning author who has published numerous books for children and adults. She presently lives in Brooklyn with her husband and two children.

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For my mother, Malcah Zeldis—Y.Z.M.

To Christopher, a Nan's best friend—N.H.

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Who Was Harriet Tubman?

No one knows the exact year in which Harriet Tubman was born. It may have been 1820 or 1821. Almost everyone thought the birth of a slave baby wasn't worth remembering. Born a slave, Harriet Tubman grew into a brave and daring young woman. She was brave enough to escape from slavery. She was daring enough to help others escape, too. Because she led so many to freedom, she was called "Moses." Like Moses in the Bible, Harriet Tubman believed that her people should be free. And she risked her life many times to help them become free. Even after she had escaped safely from the South, she went back to take other slaves north to freedom. Here is her story.

Chapter 1

Life in Maryland

Sometime around 1820 in Maryland, a slave named Harriet Ross had a baby girl. Neither Harriet, who was called Old Rit, nor her husband, Ben, could read or write, so they couldn't record the year of the baby's birth. No one else thought it was worth doing. But Old Rit loved her tiny child and wanted to protect her. She hoped her little girl, whose nickname was Minty, would learn to sew, cook, or weave. Then she could be a house slave and avoid the backbreaking work picking crops like tobacco, corn, or wheat in the fields.

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