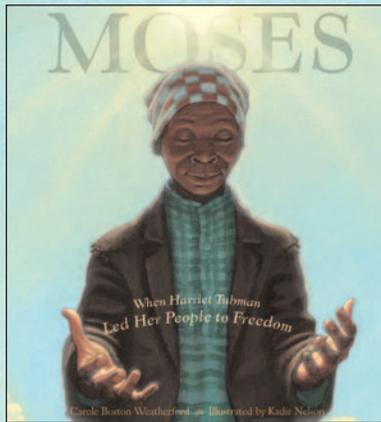


This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and author of *Reaching for Sun*. Visit her Web site, www.tracievaughnzimmer.com, to find many other guides to children's literature.



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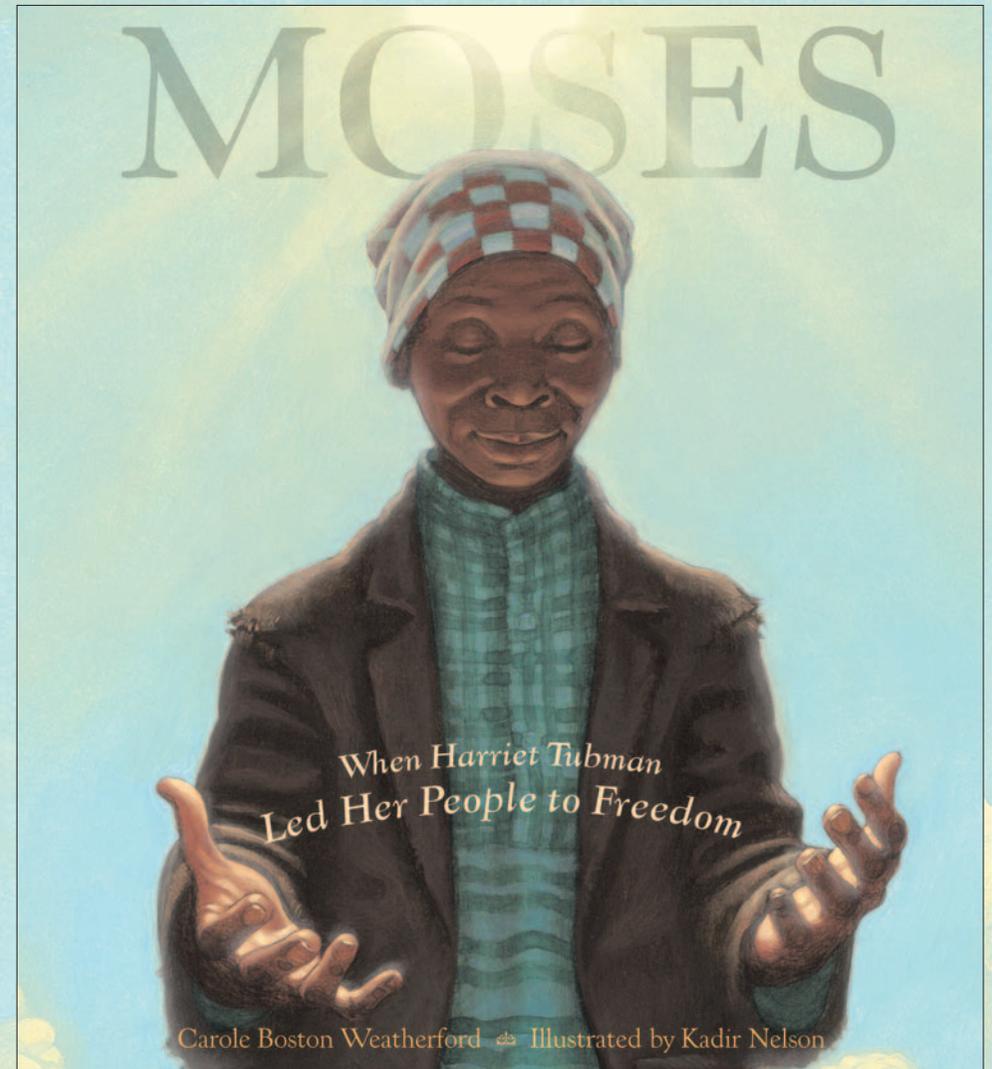


JUMP AT THE SUN

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

JUMP AT THE SUN

ABOUT THE BOOK

“I set the North Star in the heavens and I mean for you to be free.”

Born into slavery, Harriet Tubman hears these words from God one summer night and decides to leave her husband and family behind and escape. Taking only her faith, she must creep through woods with hounds at her feet, sleep for days in a potato hole, and trust people who could easily turn her in.

But she was never alone.

In lyrical text, Carole Boston Weatherford describes Tubman’s spiritual journey as she hears the voice of God guiding her north to freedom on that very first trip to escape the brutal practice of forced servitude. Tubman would make nineteen subsequent trips back south, never getting caught, but none as profound as this first one. Courageous, compassionate, and deeply religious, Harriet Tubman and her relentless pursuit of freedom are a testament to the resilience of the human spirit.

This is a unique and moving portrait of one of the most inspiring figures of the Underground Railroad. Kadir Nelson’s emotionally charged paintings embody strength, healing, and hope.

ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide includes discussion questions intended to provoke thought and insight into the themes of the book, which include freedom, justice, family, risk, and hope.



PRE-READING

Read the forward aloud to students. What do you think Harriet Tubman will do for the slaves? Why?

DISCUSSION GUIDE

- 1 Harriet Tubman heard God’s voice. Why do you think some people can hear their god, while others cannot? Can anyone learn to listen, or is it a special gift?
- 2 Why doesn’t Harriet tell anyone her plans? Would you be able to keep this secret?
- 3 Describe what Harriet must do to stay safe on her journey.
- 4 Which part would have scared you the most? Why?
- 5 How does Harriet know who to trust along the way? How do strangers help her?
- 6 How does she escape the dogs on her trail? What other dangers does she face?
- 7 What do you think the phrase “Your faith has wings” means? How does Harriet prove her faith?
- 8 Where does Harriet escape to? Why is this a safe place for her?
- 9 What was the Underground Railroad? How did it work?
- 10 Why is Harriet Tubman called Moses? Who was the biblical Moses? What did he do for his people? What did Harriet do for hers?



PROJECTS

LANGUAGE ARTS

Read the author's note at the end of the story. Write about five facts in it that you found most interesting. Then write five questions that you would ask Harriet Tubman herself, if you could.

MATH

Brainteasers:

- 1 How many miles did Harriet Tubman walk to gain her freedom (in the author's note)?
- 2 If there are 2,000 steps in every mile, then how many steps did Harriet take?
- 3 How many miles did Harriet travel if she made nineteen trips back to the South?
- 4 If the runaways need to make it in five days, how many miles must they travel each day?
- 5 Harriet is thought to have freed nearly 300 slaves. On average, how many slaves went with her each time?

MUSIC

Visit <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/singers/sfeature/songs.html> and hear many of the slave spirituals that were popular during Harriet Tubman's life.

ART

Create a collage about freedom. Use any materials you like, but explain your piece in a brief artist's statement or journal. Why did you use the pictures, colors, and textures that you did? What do you think Harriet Tubman would say about your piece? How does art help people understand one another?

SCIENCE

Harriet Tubman and other runaway slaves used the North Star as their compass. Visit <http://pathways.thinkport.org/secrets/gourd1.cfm> to learn how to find the North Star in the sky.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jeffery Weatherford

Carole Boston Weatherford has authored well over a dozen children's books, including *The Sound That Jazz Makes*, illustrated by Eric Velasquez, which was an NAACP Image Award finalist and winner of the Carter G. Woodson Award from the National Council for the Social Studies, and *Remember the Bridge: Poems of a People*, which was the winner of the Juvenile Literature Award from the American Association of University Women, North Carolina. A minister's wife, Ms. Weatherford makes her home in North Carolina and has roots in the same Maryland county where Harriet Tubman was born.

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

1 What inspired you to tell this particular part of Harriet Tubman's story?

Harriet Tubman's treks on the Underground Railroad have been recounted before. I wanted to show how her faith journey gave her the courage to risk her own life to free others. I am the wife and granddaughter of ministers, so spiritual callings intrigue me.

2 Even your prose reads like poetry. How do you manage it?

Actually, the text is a prose poem in three voices: the narrator's, Harriet's, and God's. The conversations between Harriet and God—based on Tubman's accounts in her narrative—are a key element of *Moses*. I wanted the text to echo the poetic books of the Bible and the call-and-response tradition of the black church.

3 What advice do you have for young writers?

Write often. Practice your craft. Keep a journal of thoughts, ideas, and observations. Read a lot. Use strong verbs. Verbs are the engines of language. Use adjectives and

adverbs sparingly. Adjectives describe nouns and adverbs qualify verbs. Instead of using an adverb or adjective, choose a better verb. Avoid empty words, such as *very*, *quite*, *rather*, *nice*, *seem*, etc. Also avoid abstract nouns, words that name feelings or intellectual ideas, such as *love*, *hate*, *fear*, etc. Instead, use concrete images that describe what is seen, heard, smelled, touched, or tasted. Use your images to paint scenes that unfold like a movie or television show. Show; don't tell. Give your writing the hearing test. As you write, read your work aloud; listen to how the words sound. Rewrite again and again.

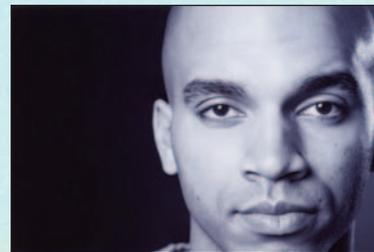
4 What kind of research did you do for the book? What was the most interesting fact that you learned?

I read Tubman's narrative as well as biographies of her. I researched the Underground Railroad. In addition, I have roots in the Maryland county, where Harriet was born. I visit Maryland's Eastern Shore every summer.

5 What can your fans look forward to next?

More books on slavery, freedom, segregation, civil rights, and jazz. My upcoming titles (in order of release) include: *Dear Mr. Rosenwald*; *Champions on the Bench: The Cannon Street YMCA All-Stars*; *Jesse Owens: Fastest Man Alive*; *Before John Was a Jazz Giant*; and *Birmingham: 1963*.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



David Harrison

Kadir Nelson began drawing at the age of three, displaying an artistic talent before he could write or spell. His children's books include *Ellington Was Not a Street*, a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award winner by Ntozake Shange, as well as *Big Jabe*; *Hewitt Anderson's Great Big Life*, winner of the Gold Medal from the Society of Illustrators

Original Art show; and the Coretta Scott King Honor Book *Thunder Rose* (all by Jerdine Nolen). Mr. Nelson makes his home in California with his family.