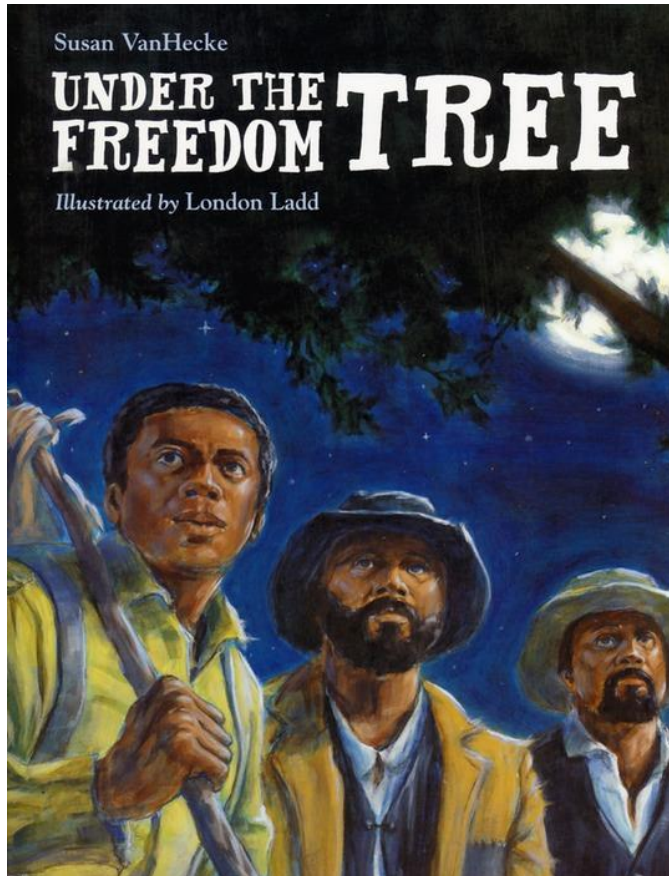


UNDER THE FREEDOM TREE

By Susan VanHecke

READING GUIDE

GRADES 1-4



Taut free verse tells the little-known story of one of the first contraband camp of the Civil War- seen by some historians as the “beginning of the end of slavery in America.”

One night in 1861, three escaped slaves made their way from the Confederate line to a Union-held fort. The runaways were declared “contraband of war” and granted protection. As word spread, thousands of runaway slaves poured into the fort, seeking their freedom.

These “contrabands” made a home for themselves, building the first African American community in the country. In 1863, they bore witness to one of the first readings of the Emancipation Proclamation in the South—beneath the sheltering branches of the tree now known as Emancipation Oak.

OBJECTIVE

In reading this story and engaging in a fun learning activity young readers will build reading skills, develop critical thinking skills and make connections between characters in stories and real people.

CHALLENGE WORDS

- Chattel: item of property.
- Contraband: illegal or prohibited goods.
- Secede: to break away.
- Slavery: institution of owning people as property.

BEFORE READING

Talk about the book and the main Characters Frank, James and Shepard. Describe the front cover of the book? What do we know about slavery in the United States? What do the men want? Define Freedom? Can you tell from the cover picture what the story will be about?

DURING READING

While reading, the book think about the journey the three men take to freedom. Do you think they were brave to escape? Why or Why not?

AFTER READING

Describe what happened in the story in your own words? Describe how the men might have felt during the story both physically and emotionally. How So? How do you think the people felt building Slabtown? Are they happy? How can you tell? Are the people free? What does being free mean to them? What does being free mean to you?

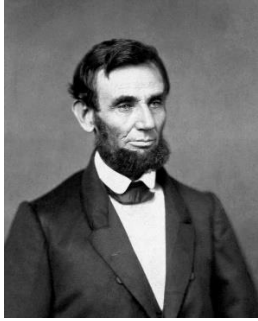
ACTIVITIES

1. Use the cards on page three of this reading guide to play a matching game with students.
2. Review the chronology of emancipation detailed by the Freedom and Southern Society Project. Pick a minimum of 8 key events to create a timeline. Have student illustrate the timeline.

RESEARCHING Fort Monroe

Chronology of Emancipation: <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/chronol.htm>

Library of Congress: www.loc.gov



President Abraham Lincoln



Mary Smith Peake
-Began conducting classes under an oak tree named the Freedom Tree in Virginia. This site is now were Hampton University stands.



General Benjamin Butler



Illustration of Shepard Mallory, Frank Baker and James Townsend



Freedom Tree