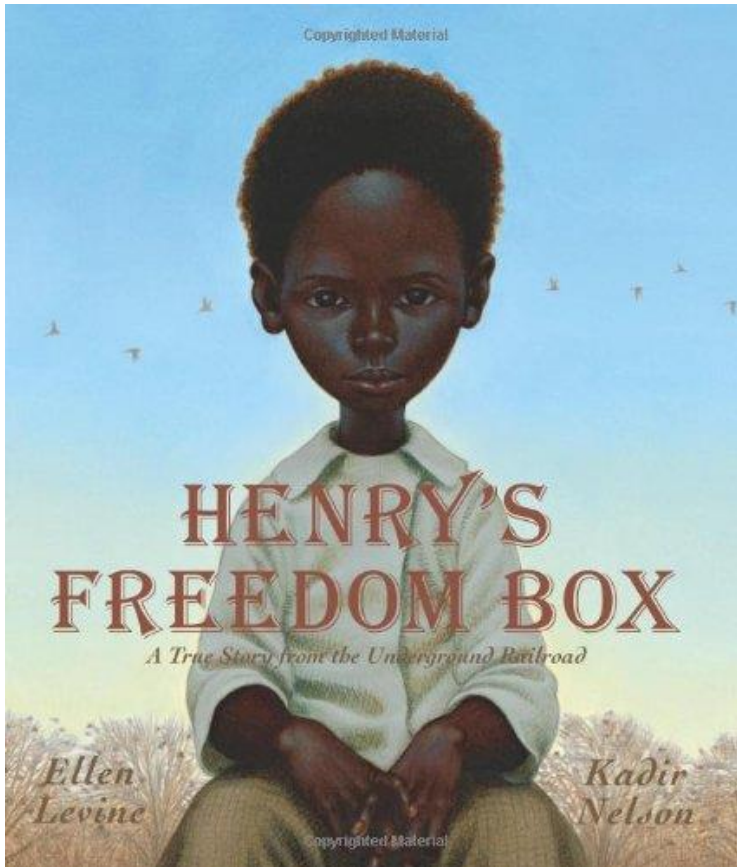


HENRY'S FREEDOM BOX

By Ellen Levine

READING GUIDE

GRADES PREK-3RD



On March 23, 1849, Henry Brown began one of the most dramatic escapes from slavery in American history. A friend named Samuel A. Smith helped Brown hide himself in a box that was shipped from Richmond to Philadelphia. In just over 24 hours with hardly any food and water and partly upside-down, Henry Brown traveled by wagon, train, and boat until his box was opened by leaders of the Underground Railroad in Philadelphia.

James Miller McKim and William Still, the son of former slaves, helped free Henry "Box" Brown and set him on a course to become one of antebellum America's most famous escaped slaves.

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

- Slavery: the practice of owning people as property.
- Slave Market: a place where slaves were sold.
- Underground Railroad: secret routes and methods that slaves took to escape to freedom.

BEFORE READING

Talk about the book and the main character Henry Brown. What do we already know about Henry Brown? What do we know about slavery in the United States? Talk about the Underground Railroad and railroad terminology. Can anyone name another famous escape slave who used the Underground Railroad to gain freedom?

DURING READING

While reading the book think about the experiences of Henry Brown. Henry constantly thought about freedom. What does freedom mean to you?

AFTER READING

Describe the story in your own words. What is the sequence of events? How did Henry come to be free? What do you think would have happened to Henry if he was caught? Was it dangerous for the Dr. Smith to help Henry? What do you think would have happened to Dr. Smith if he was caught helping him escape? Would you have run away like Henry? Why or why not? How would you plan your escape? How was the Underground Railroad different and or similar to a real railroad?

ACTIVITIES

1. Henry chose to go to Philadelphia because it was a place where he could be free. Think about a place that represents freedom to you. Where would you go if you were Henry “Box” Brown. Use the attached activity sheet to write your destination.

RESEARCHING Henry Brown

Narrative of Henry Brown: <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/brownbox/brownbox.html>

Library of Congress Henry Brown: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004665363/>

Henry’s Box Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.06501600/>

Underground Railroad Maps: <https://www.loc.gov/item/75696204/>
<https://www.loc.gov/item/75696205/>

Name: _____

Date: _____

Destination Freedom:

Where would you ship yourself to find freedom? Write the address or name of the location on the outside of the box. Then write a note explaining why you feel free in this place.

