



Social Studies Exemplary Text Student Handout

By the time Harriet Ross was six years old, she had unconsciously absorbed many kinds of knowledge, almost with the air she breathed. She could not, for example, have said how or at what moment she knew that she was a slave.

She knew that her brothers and sisters, her father and mother, and all the other people who lived in the quarter, men, women and children were slaves.

She had been taught to say, "Yes, Missus," "No, Missus," to white women, "Yes, Mas'r," "No, Mas'r" to white men. Or, "Yes, sah," "No, sah."

At the same time someone had taught her where to look for the North Star, the star that stayed constant, not rising in the east and setting in the west as the other stars appeared to do; and told her that anyone walking toward the North could use that star as a guide.

She knew about fear, too. Sometimes at night, or during the day, she heard the furious galloping of horses, not just one horse, several horses, thud of the hoofbeats along the road, jingle of harness. She saw the grown folks freeze into stillness, not moving, scarcely breathing, while they listened. She could not remember who first told her that those furious hoofbeats meant that patrollers were going in pursuit of a runaway. Only the slaves said paterollers, whispering the word.

Petry, A. (1955) *Six Years Old. Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad*. New York: HarperCollins, 1983.

This is an example of exemplary text found in *Common Core Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: Appendix B Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks*. Retrieved from http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf

Social Studies Exemplary Text Teacher Resource

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EFL 4
Word Count 227

Teacher introduces the text with minimal commentary and students read it independently. Teacher then reads passage aloud. Give a brief definition to words students would likely not be able to define from context (underlined in text). Teacher guides the students through a series of text-dependent questions. Complete the performance task as a cumulative evaluation of the close-reading.

Text-Dependent Questions

1. Who is Harriet Ross?
2. In the first paragraph, the author says that by the age of 6, Harriet “had unconsciously absorbed many kinds of knowledge, almost with the air she breathed.” What does this phrase mean in the context of the excerpt?
3. Explain how Harriet comes to the realization that she is a slave. Cite evidence from the text to support your explanation.
4. Besides that she was a slave, what else had Harriet learned? Why was knowing this important?
5. What was Harriet taught to say to white women and white men? Why was she taught to use this language?
6. Why was Harriet taught to look for the North Star?
7. What two lessons were Harriet was taught? How are the lessons connected? Give evidence from the text to support your answer.
8. What words and phrases does the author use to illustrate the slaves’ reactions to the sound of galloping horses? What mood do the words create?

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9. Who were the patrollers and why did the slaves whisper the word?
10. How do you think Harriet Tubman's early life experiences led to her later involvement in the Underground Railroad?

Performance Tasks for Informational Texts

Students analyze in detail how the early years of Harriet Tubman (as related by author Ann Petry) contributed to her later becoming a conductor on the Underground Railroad, attending to how the author introduces, illustrates, and elaborates upon the events in Tubman's life. [RI.6.3]

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