

Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad and Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself (Excerpts)

Excerpt 1

From *Harriet Tubman: Conductor
on the Underground Railroad*,
Chapter 3: "Six Years Old"

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 learned 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 the patrollers were going past, in pursuit of a runaway. Only the slaves said patterollers, whispering the word.

Source: Petry, Ann. *Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad*. New York: HarperCollins, 1983. (1955)

(Continued)

**[FOR TEACHER
REFERENCE ONLY]**

SAMPLE THINK-ALOUD

Lesson 3. Noticing Key Details:
Practice in Miniature

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Excerpt 1

From *Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad*,
Chapter 3: "Six Years Old"

By the time Harriet Ross was six years old, she had unconsciously absorbed many kinds of knowledge, almost with the air she breathed.

That's a direct statement of generalization that she had unconsciously done lots of learning.

She could not, for example,

The word example is a call to attention.

have said how or at what moment she learned 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.

This is another direct statement of generalization that everyone she was related to was a slave.

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."

Calls to attention here include the emotional charge of positionality and relationship in regard to others—in this case, an inferior position to oppressors or slaveholders.

(Continued)



SAMPLE THINK-ALLOUD

(CONT.)

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.

That was a rupture: Contrast, surprise, and resistance are introduced with “at the same time” to show the shift. And as for a reader’s response, I must activate my background knowledge about the Underground Railroad and how slaves would navigate northward.

She knew about fear, too.

That’s a direct statement. And its emotional charge is a call to attention.

Sometimes at night, or during the day, she heard the furious

An emotional word!

galloping of horses, not just one horse, several horses, thud of the hoofbeats along the road, jingle of harness.

More calls to attention: visual and sensory.

She saw the grown folks freeze into stillness, not moving, scarcely breathing, while they listened.

The emotion and intensity here are both a rupture and a call to attention.

She could not remember who first told her that those furious hoofbeats

Another call to attention: repetition.

meant the patrollers were going past, in pursuit of a runaway. Only the slaves said paterollers,

That’s a rupture in dialect; slaves use different terms than others.

whispering the word.

And a final rupture here: whispering instead of talking to show how fearsome the patrollers were.

Source: Petry, Ann. *Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad*. New York: HarperCollins, 1983. (1955)

(Continued)



SAMPLE THINK-ALLOUD
(CONT.)

Excerpt 2

From *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*

I preferred the condition of the meanest reptile to my own.

This is a direct statement of the author's condition and feelings.

Any thing, no matter what, to get rid of thinking!

Calls to attention here are emotional charge and exclamation.

It was this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me.

Here's a direct statement of generalization—knowing he was a slave tormented him.

There was no getting rid of it.

This direct statement has finality: He absolutely could not get away from it; the repetition and emotional charge are calls to attention.

It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate.

The repetition, relentlessness, and parallelism are calls to attention.

The silver trumpet of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness.

This sentence is visual and sensory, and the metaphor serves as a call to attention.

Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever.

Calls to attention also include the varied repetition and contrast of appear and disappear. Finality of "no more forever" is intense and another call to attention.

It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing.

More calls to attention: repetition and parallelism.

It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition.

(Continued)



SAMPLE THINK-ALLOUD (CONT.)

The continued repetitions—for example, “torment”—and these emotionally charged words are also calls to attention.

I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it.

Repetition and parallelism, again, are calls to attention.

It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.

This emphasizes those calls to attention: visual and sensory text, repetition, and parallelism.

Source: *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave, written by himself.* Boston, MA: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845. (1845)
