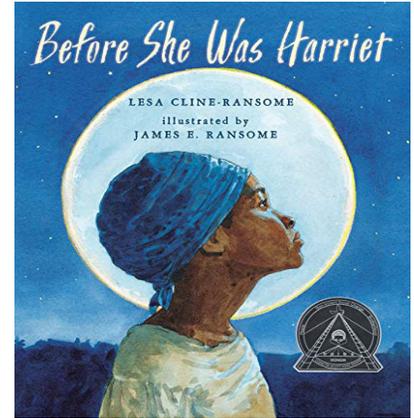


Before She Was Harriet by Leas Clibe-Ransom

Book Synopsis: In the lyrical biography *Before She Was Harriet* by Leas Clibe-Ransom, readers are invited to learn about Harriet Tubman and uncover the various roles she played throughout her amazing life. This story introduces readers to follow her life journey and learn about the many different accomplishments of the woman we know as Harriet.

A recorded reading of this book is [available here](#).



Connection to Iowa History

Although Harriet Tubman never traveled through Iowa, the Underground Railroad had several locations throughout the state. By the time Iowa became a state in 1846, the anti-slavery movement was gaining momentum in the state. The majority of Underground Railroad activity in Iowa took place in Fremont and Mills counties, where freedom seekers traveled from western Missouri. By the 1850s, major Underground Railroad stations also popped up in Iowa in Tabor, Civil Bend and the area now known as West Des Moines. There are more than 100 Iowans known to help on the Underground Railroad, including William Maxson, State Senator James Jordan, and Reverend George Hitchcock.

Goldie's Kids Club Storytime Activity

After reading the story about Harriet's life journey, speak to your family members about their life journeys by conducting an oral history interview.

Instructions ([Video Instructions Available](#))

- 1 Select.** Choose the person you would like to interview. It could be a family member, neighbor, teacher – anyone you might be interested to talk with.
- 2 Research.** Prior to the start of the interview, do some research about the person or the topic you would like to focus on. This will help guide questions.
- 3 Prepare and outline.** Using the provided [Oral History Interview Guide](#), prepare a general outline of the interview including questions you would like to ask the person. This does not need to be followed exactly, but it will be helpful to ensure you stay on topic.
- 4 Reach out.** Set up a time with your chosen interviewee for the interview. It is helpful to send your outline to the interviewee beforehand so they can be prepared. This is also a good time to explain why you are requesting an interview and what you plan to do with the material following the interview.
- 5 Interview.** During your time with the interviewee, be prepared to follow the outline but allow the interviewee to speak openly and freely. Be respectful of their time.

Materials

- Oral History Interview Guide
- Pencil or Pen
- Optional: Recording Device

Instructions continued on next page

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Instructions continued

- 6 **Thank them.** Following the interview, send a thank you note to the individual you talked with.
- 7 **Compile notes.** Go over your notes and transcripts from the interview. If you would like, send a copy to the interviewee.
- 8 **Write.** Mold your interview into a biographical sketch about the person. Consider conducting interviews with other people and compiling the interviews together to create a combined oral history from various perspectives.
- 9 **Share!** After you complete your interviews, share your work with the State Historical Museum of Iowa. Email a photo to museum.education@iowa.gov. We want to share your creation with others!
- 10 **Questions to Spark Learning**
 - As a suffragist, how did Harriet continue to fight for the rights of others?
 - During the Civil War, how did Harriet continue to fight for the freedom of those still enslaved?
 - Why might Harriet have changed her name from Araminta when she escaped slavery?
 - Why is it important to learn about history and historical events from people with different backgrounds and life experiences?

Tips for Oral History Interviews

- Choose how you want to record the interview. Will you digitally record with a cell phone or take notes?
- Start the interview with a specific topic in mind such as their childhood or a specific historical event they may have experienced during their lifetime.
- To begin asking about a topic, consider opening with a large question such as “Tell me about...” This encourages a more open-ended answer, so you can ask follow-up questions.
- Try to avoid yes or no questions. Ask questions that allow the interviewee space to elaborate.
- Allow the person time to talk. Do not interrupt. Wait until they are finished, and then ask follow-up questions.
- Having an outline of questions is helpful, but listen to the person and follow their train of thought. Build upon what they are saying. Follow-up questions are great to continue the conversation.

Oral History Interview Guide

Date of Interview _____

Who is the interviewer? _____

Who is being interviewed? _____

What topic are you covering? _____

Question Section

Use this space to write your prepared questions for the interview. Consider starting with broad questions such as "where were you born" or "what was your childhood like" and moving into more direct questions.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____
