



Harriet Tubman, an iconic figure in American history, played a crucial role in securing freedom not only for her family but also for countless others. Born into slavery in Maryland around 1820, Tubman's determination and courage led her to become one of the most prominent figures of the Underground Railroad. This network of secret routes and safe houses helped enslaved individuals escape to free states or Canada during the mid-19th century. Tubman's personal experiences as a slave fueled her passion for liberation, propelling her to risk her life time and again by guiding others on perilous journeys to freedom.

As an African American woman living under oppressive conditions, Tubman faced unimaginable hardships from an early age. Separated from her family at a young age due to forced labor practices, she experienced firsthand the pain and suffering inflicted upon enslaved families torn apart by the institution of slavery. Determined to liberate herself and those she loved, Tubman made several attempts at escaping bondage before successfully reaching Philadelphia in 1849.

Tubman's remarkable journey did not end with achieving freedom for herself; instead, it marked the beginning of a new chapter dedicated to helping others break free from slavery's grip. With unparalleled bravery and resourcefulness, she embarked on numerous missions back into slave-holding states over the course of nearly a decade—despite constant danger—to guide scores of men, women, and children towards liberty along what became known as "the railroad." By doing so, Harriet Tubman secured freedom not just for her own family but also acted as a beacon of hope for countless other enslaved individuals yearning for their chance at emancipation.

In this essay, we will explore Harriet Tubman's pivotal role in securing freedom through the Underground Railroad while examining how she defied societal norms as an African American woman during that era. By delving into both historical accounts and personal anecdotes surrounding her extraordinary actions and sacrifices, we can gain a deeper understanding of Tubman's immense impact on the lives of enslaved people and her lasting legacy as an American hero.

## **Harriet Tubman's early life and experiences as a slave**

From an early age, Tubman witnessed the pain of separation as family members were sold off to different plantations, leaving lasting scars on her psyche. She was herself hired out to various households where she endured physical abuse and backbreaking labor. These experiences fueled her determination to escape from bondage and secure freedom not only for herself but also for those she loved.

One particularly traumatic event occurred when Tubman suffered a severe head injury at the hands of an overseer who struck her with a metal weight. This injury caused lifelong health issues, including seizures and vivid dreams or visions which she attributed to divine intervention.

Despite these hardships, Tubman showed remarkable resilience and resourcefulness. She learned survival skills from her father who taught her how to navigate through dense forests using natural landmarks like moss on trees or streams as guides. This knowledge would prove invaluable later in her life as she guided

others towards freedom along treacherous paths.

In this section of the essay, we have examined Harriet Tubman's early life and experiences as a slave which shaped her understanding of oppression and fueled her determination for liberation. Her personal encounters with violence, family separations, and physical injuries contributed to shaping her character as a fearless leader willing to risk everything for freedom.

## **Tubman's escape from slavery and decision to help others**

After enduring years of slavery, Tubman finally seized an opportunity to escape in 1849. With the help of a network of abolitionists and sympathetic individuals along the way, she made her way to Philadelphia, a free city. The taste of freedom was bittersweet for Tubman as she realized that her family and friends were still trapped in the clutches of slavery.

Driven by a deep sense of responsibility and compassion, Tubman made the courageous decision to return to Maryland multiple times to guide others on their path to freedom. Despite knowing that capture could mean torture or death, she believed that no one should endure the horrors of enslavement and was determined to lead as many people as possible towards liberty.

Tubman's efforts became even more organized with time; she connected with other abolitionists and conductors on the Underground Railroad, expanding her reach and increasing her effectiveness in facilitating escapes. Her knowledge of survival skills coupled with her determination allowed her to successfully navigate dangerous territories while evading slave catchers.

In this section, we have explored Tubman's escape from slavery and her unwavering commitment to helping others break free from bondage. Her selflessness in risking personal safety showcased not only her immense courage but also exemplified her belief in human dignity and equality.