

Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Overview:

Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was one of the most widely read and influential examples of 19th c. antislavery literature. Written in response to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, it ignited opposition by personalizing slavery for northern and even international audiences. The impact on popular culture at the time has continued to the present. Therefore, it is worth spending time with this novel and exploring its depictions of slavery, enslaved peoples, southern and northern whites, and the values and world view of northern antislavery activists. In what ways does Stowe's representations of race and race relations speak to subsequent generations, including our own?

Objectives:

- Students will understand the historical context of Stowe's novel, both its reaction to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law and its role in the coming of the Civil War
- Students will identify the plot, iconic characters, depiction of slavery in its different geographic manifestations, and the major themes of the novel
- Students will read several reviews of the novel from both a northern and southern perspective to understand reactions and sectional tensions
- Students will explore the role the novel has played in popular culture from the 19th c. to the present.

Resources:

Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, <http://www.nationalcenter.org/FugitiveSlaveAct.html>

"Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture" <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/sitemap.html>

Student textbooks that will offer background information on the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and the events leading to the Civil War.

Optional GIS activity if schools participate in President Obama's tech initiative.

Procedure:

1. Assign students the section in their textbooks on the Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Act to establish the historical context for Stowe's novel. Students at this point in the course will have studied slavery and the antislavery movement. Prior to assigning sections from the novel, address the following questions with students: Why was the Fugitive Slave Act passed? What were the provisions of the Act? What were the northern reactions to the Act? What impact would it have on northern free blacks and fugitives from slavery?
2. Most textbooks have a section on Harriet Beecher Stowe and the novel. Assign students to read the section and go over the basic facts of the author and the novel. Then pass out or project the handout below. Students will read individual chapters in the novel and prepare to report on them in class.
3. Students will report back to the class on their individual chapters in a round-robin fashion. One suggestion for recording the individual reports would be for the teacher to record the basic information (place, character, key events) either with a basic map projected on a marker board and markers or using whatever technology is available. The

teacher may initiate discussion as the brief reports proceed on the following points: characteristics of slavery in the different geographic regions, how black and white characters are represented, Stowe's weaving of Christian values throughout the novel, the impact of slavery on both whites and blacks in the U.S., and her arguments against slavery as an institution.

4. Assign students different reviews of the novel <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/reviews/rehp.html> Be sure to assign a mix of northern, southern, admiring, critical, and African American reviews. If interested, a few students could look for international reviews. What were the reactions to the novel, both praise and criticism? Do you see a sectional difference? What impact would the differences have on the coming of the Civil War? In what ways does Stowe represent race and race relations? In what ways does she represent gender and relations between the sexes?
5. Allow students to explore the impacts of the novel on popular culture. The sections under "Other Media" provide a wide array of representations in games, toys, memorabilia, song, literature, film, etc. What are the makers of the various cultural representations taking away from the novel? In what ways is the novel being used as a cultural representation and why? In what ways are race and gender represented in popular culture over time? Some students may be aware of the term being an "Uncle Tom" and a discussion of what this means and why it arose may be an interesting discussion and a point of reference later in the Modern Civil Rights Movement.
6. Optional GIS project. See handout, but instead of having students report out in a round robin fashion, schools with ArcGIS could have students contribute to a Story Map and place their chapter at the appropriate geographic location and add brief information and visuals. Discussion could proceed as the story map is projected or brought up on individual devices.

Reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Assign students ONE of the following chapters from the novel to read and report on either in class or on a Story Map. The chapters that are starred are vitally important, but any from the novel can be used. The chapters are of different lengths so be aware that struggling readers should be assigned the shorter selections.

First Edition of the Novel: <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/uncletom/uthp.html>

Chapters:

Chapter 1	In Which the Reader Is Introduced to a Man of Humanity	*
Chapter 2	The Mother	
Chapter 3	The Husband and Father	
Chapter 4	An Evening in Uncle Tom's Cabin	*
Chapter 5	Showing the Feelings of Living Property on Changing Owner	*
Chapter 6	Discovery	
Chapter 7	The Mother's Struggle	*
Chapter 8	Eliza's Escape	*
Chapter 9	In Which It Appears That a Senator Is But a Man	
Chapter 10	The Property Is Carried Off	
Chapter 11	In Which Property Gets into an Improper State of Mind	
Chapter 12	Select Incident of Lawful Trade	*
Chapter 13	The Quaker Settlement	
Chapter 14	Evangeline	*
Chapter 15	Of Tom's New Master, and Various Other Matters	*
Chapter 16	Tom's Mistress and Her Opinions	*
Chapter 17	The Freeman's Defence	
Chapter 18	Miss Ophelia's Experiences and Opinions	
Chapter 19	Miss Ophelia's Experiences and Opinions Continued	
Chapter 20	Topsy	*
Chapter 21	Kentuck	
Chapter 22	"The Grass Withereth--the Flower Fadeth"	
Chapter 23	Henrique	
Chapter 24	Foreshadowings	
Chapter 25	The Little Evangelist	*
Chapter 26	Death	*
Chapter 27	"This Is the Last of Earth"	
Chapter 28	Reunion	
Chapter 29	The Unprotected	*
Chapter 30	The Slave Warehouse	*
Chapter 31	The Middle Passage	*
Chapter 32	Dark Places	*
Chapter 33	Cassy	*
Chapter 34	The Quadroon's Story	*
Chapter 35	The Tokens	
Chapter 36	Emmeline and Cassy	*

Chapter 37	Liberty	
Chapter 38	The Victory	*
Chapter 39	The Stratagem	
Chapter 40	The Martyr	*
Chapter 41	The Young Master	*
Chapter 42	An Authentic Ghost Story	
Chapter 43	Results	
Chapter 44	The Liberator	*
Chapter 45	Concluding Remarks	

Recording the Information from the Chapter:

Write brief notes in response to the following questions. Do not print out your chapter! You will not be allowed to read from it in class. Your notes will be the basis for your brief report.

Where is the location of the chapter? Be specific about the geographical setting.

What is the action that occurs? Be brief! No blow by blows.

Who are the characters? Describe them: appearance, age, personal characteristics, role in the novel, or other aspect you find significant.

Some topics you may find in your selection: how race and gender are represented, Christian themes, melodramatic elements of good and evil or suffering and redemption.

Optional GIS Activity

Before you begin, follow the link to the story map tutorial. Go to the overview, gallery of examples (see the history category in particular), and then the step-by-step process.

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/app-list/map-tour/tutorial/>

You will want to set up the map ahead of time using ArcGIS and have students individually make a note of where their chapter is geographically. Students will be able to add a visual and short description to the story map.

If you do not use one of the map options within the program, there is the possibility of using a historical map, but it must be manipulated to be imported into the story map.

An example of a map from the Library of Congress is:

Philadelphia, Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1851.

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3700.rr000180/>