



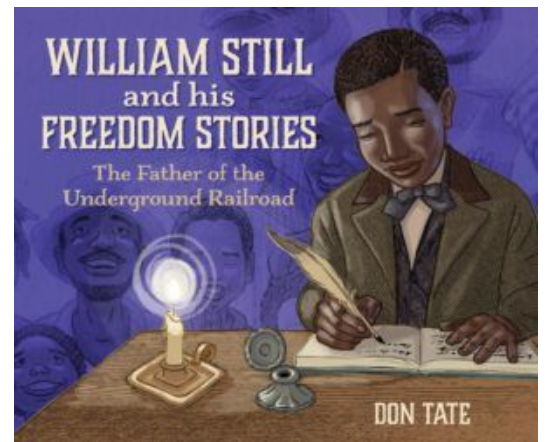
***William and His Freedom Stories: The Father of the Underground Railroad* by Don Tate**



Don Tate is an award-winning author, and the illustrator of numerous critically acclaimed books for children. He is also one of the founding hosts of the blog The Brown Bookshelf – a blog designed to push awareness of the myriad of African American voices writing for young readers, with book reviews, author and illustrator interviews. Don frequently speaks at schools, public libraries and writing conferences, and participates in book festivals.

William Still’s parents escaped slavery but had to leave two of their children behind, a tragedy that haunted the family. As a young man, William went to work for the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, where he raised money, planned rescues, and helped freedom seekers who had traveled north. And then one day, a strangely familiar man came into William’s office, searching for information about his long-lost family. Could it be?

Motivated by his own family’s experience, William began collecting the stories of thousands of other freedom seekers. As a result, he was able to reunite other families and build a remarkable source of information, including encounters with Harriet Tubman, Henry “Box” Brown, and William and Ellen Craft.



RRS connection to TEKS: Please refer to TEKS for English Language Arts and Reading

- *Comprehension skills*
- *Response skills*
- *Author's purpose and craft*
- *Composition I (Writing)*
- *Composition II (Genres)*
- *Inquiry and research*

Relevant Vocabulary:

- Persistence
- Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society
- Underground Railroad
- Resistance
- Harriet Tubman
- Henry “Box” Brown
- Willian and Ellen Craft
- Civil War & slavery
- Freedom
- Fugitive Slave Act
- *The Colored American*
- Abraham Lincoln

Pre-reading engagement:

- What does an author do? What does an illustrator do?
- Think about the title of this book and its cover illustration. How does it make you feel? What does it make you think about?
- Based on the clues and details on the cover illustration, when do you think this story might be taking place?
- Analyze the faces in the background of the cover illustration. How would you describe them?
- Look for information about the author. What did you learn about the kind of things that inspire him?
- Do background research on the underground railroad!
- How do you define the word “freedom”? Have a class discussion!

While/post reading engagement:

- What does Levin’s acts of resistance tell you about the type of person he is?
- Use a map of the United States to see the path that Levin and Sidney Steel took from the South to the North.
- What conditions were Black Americans living in during this time? What feelings and concerns do you imagine they are feeling during this time?
- Why is education important to you personally? What opportunities become available to those who are able to read and write?

- How did *The Colored American* impact William and his dreams? Share with one another what types of books/writing have inspired you?
- Learn about the word “persistence”. Free write about how William represents that word.
- Make a list of William’s strengths. Now, make a prediction about how he might use these strengths to help others.
- The work that William is doing with the Underground Railroad is an example of community cultural wealth! What does that look like in your own community?
- Why is it powerful to keep records and write about ordinary people (specifically, slaves) like William does for the Freedom Seekers?
- Use your critical thinking skills! What should you do when the laws of the land are unjust?
- What impact do you think electing a leader who chooses freedom has on the well-being of its citizens?
- Reflect on this quote: “Because that’s what stories can do. Protest injustice. Soothe. Teach. Inspire. Connect. Stories save lives.” Talk about how stories (such as William’s freedom stories) can save lives.
- Create a timeline of the important events that happen in the book!
- Read the author’s note. What pieces of history are you interested in learning more about? Ask your librarian to help you find books about these topics!

Useful links:

- Author’s website: <https://dontate.com/>
- Book Q&A with author: <https://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/don-tate-interview/>
- Knowledge Quest Interview: <https://knowledgequest.aasl.org/picture-books-and-primary-sources-an-interview-with-don-tate-a-uthor-and-illustrator-of-william-still-and-his-freedom-stories/>
- Kirkus Reviews: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/don-tate/william-still-and-his-freedom-stories/>
- Teacher’s Guide from Peachtree: <https://peachtree-online.com/pdfs/TeachersGuides/WilliamStillandHisFreedomStoriesTG.pdf>
- Publisher's website: <https://peachtree-online.com/portfolio-items/william-still-and-his-freedom-stories/>