

Underground Railroad

The year is 1850, and you are a 27-year-old woman named Harriet. You were born into slavery on a plantation in Maryland. Last year, you and your two brothers decided to escape from the plantation and travel 90 miles north to Philadelphia, where slavery has been abolished and Black people live free.

The night of your escape, you and your brothers walked along the Choptank River, using the North Star for guidance. After a few hours of walking, your brothers decided they did not want to risk their lives on this journey, because they would likely be killed if they were caught. Your brothers returned home, and you continued alone to Philadelphia.

Along the way, you received help from the Underground Railroad, which is a network of people that provide safe housing. You slept in their houses during the day, and traveled at night, alone and silent, hoping to avoid the slave catchers that patrolled the border between Maryland and Pennsylvania.

After three weeks, you finally made it to Philadelphia unharmed. Free at last! There are many other freed Black men and women living in the city, and you have started earning money by cleaning houses. While you enjoy your newfound freedom, you also worry about your family back in Maryland.

Last week, you received troubling news. A letter arrived from Maryland, explaining that your niece and her children were going to be sold to a plantation in Georgia. You have heard that the plantation owners in Georgia are more violent towards their enslaved men and women, and this news immediately puts your stomach into a knot. You want to help your niece and her children escape before they are sold, but you must consider your options and the risks involved.

One option is to write letters to your friends from the Underground Railroad, and ask them to help. You could send money in exchange for food and supplies that will help your niece and her children during the journey. You could also try to send a map to your niece, with coded information that could guide her to Philadelphia. You would have to find someone willing to sneak into the plantation at night to deliver the message, because you can't use the normal mail service. This option relies on the goodwill of many people to help with the escape.

Another option is for you to take matters into your own hands. You could travel back to Maryland and escort your niece and her children to Philadelphia. You were lucky enough to survive the journey once, but if you are caught this time you will either be sold back into slavery or killed. Now that you have tasted freedom, is it worth the risk?

Underground Railroad Response

Will you write letters and send money to help your niece and her children escape? Or will you take the ultimate risk and travel back to Maryland to guide your family to freedom?

Write your response to the dilemma in the space below.
What will you do? Why will you do it?
