

BOOK STATS

Grade Level Equivalent: 3–5

Ages: 8+

Lexile Measure®: 380L

Pages: 40

Genre: Biography, Narrative

Subject/Theme: Underground Railroad, Slavery, and Perseverance

Common Core State Standards	Reading	Writing	Listening & Speaking	Language
Grade 3	RI.3.1, RI.3.4, RI.3.7	W.3.3	SL.3.1	L.3.6
Grade 4	RI.4.1, RI.4.4, RI.4.7	W.4.3	SL.4.1	L.4.6
Grade 5	RI.5.1, RI.5.4, RI.5.7	W.5.3	SL.5.1	L.5.6

OVERVIEW

Book Summary

Henry Brown doesn't know how old he is. Nobody keeps records of slaves' birthdays. All the time he dreams about freedom, but that dream seems farther away than ever when he is torn from his family and put to work in a warehouse. Henry grows up and marries, but he is again devastated when his family is sold at the slave market.

Then one day, as he lifts a crate at the warehouse, he knows exactly what he must do: he will mail himself to the North. After an arduous journey in the crate, Henry finally has a birthday — his first day of freedom. Henry "Box" Brown became one of the most famous runaway slaves on the Underground Railroad. His true story is retold with poetic grace by Ellen Levine, a Jane Addams Peace Award-winning author, and illustrated by Kadir Nelson, a Coretta Scott King Award-winning artist.

Teaching the Book

Henry dreams of freedom from slavery and injustice. When his family is sold away from him, he risks everything to do what he knows is right. He mails himself to freedom! This Caldecott Honor Book gives students the opportunity to make connections between the text and the illustrations in this powerful true story. Activities engage students in writing a short play based on the book, tracing Henry's route on Google Earth, and learning how to follow the Drinking Gourd.

Subject Focus: Underground Railroad

Comprehension Focus: Make Connections Between Text and Illustrations

Language Focus: Academic and Domain-Specific Vocabulary

This book is not paginated. The first page of the story in the eBook is considered page 1 for page reference purposes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ellen Levine was the author of fiction and nonfiction for children, young readers, and adults that focused on important social issues and historical periods. Her rigorous research and devotion to accuracy made her stories compelling. *Henry's Freedom Box* (a Caldecott Honor) is the true story of a slave who mailed himself to freedom; *Darkness Over Denmark* details the rescue of Jews by the Danes in World War II; *A Fence Away from Freedom* details the internment of Japanese Americans in the 1940s.

"I first read about Henry 'Box' Brown in William Still's 1872 book, *The Underground Railroad*. An 800-page volume, it con-

tained the stories of all the runaway slaves who came through Still's Anti-Slavery Society office in Philadelphia," says Ellen. "I was awed by Henry's ingenious plan and his courage in undertaking it. That he built a box not even three feet square and mailed himself to freedom, seemed to me a remarkable idea; that he traveled in that box for some 27 hours with only a little water and a few biscuits, equally astonishing; that he survived to tell the tale, our great fortune."

Ellen Levine died on May 26, 2012. Listen to the author read from *Henry's Freedom Box* and then watch an interview with Ellen Levine by visiting the Scholastic website at <http://bit.ly/WATV8Z> and <http://bit.ly/WxzYTE>.

Get Ready to Read

Pre-Reading Activities

The Underground Railroad Tell students that they will read a story about a real man named Henry Brown who lived in the United States in the mid-1800s—when many African Americans were slaves in the South. Henry was born a slave and, like other brave African Americans, escaped to freedom in the North. How did they do it? They traveled on the Underground Railroad. Ask students to volunteer what they know about the Underground Railroad. Then play the following slideshow from the Scholastic website at <http://bit.ly/Wf5qGH>.

Preview and Predict Ask students to look at the cover of *Henry's Freedom Box*. Have them predict how Henry might escape to freedom.

Vocabulary

Domain-Specific Vocabulary Introduce readers to the vocabulary words, explaining that they all relate to the Underground Railroad and slavery. Use **Resource #1: Vocabulary Cards** on page 7 and distribute copies to students. Ask students to watch for the words as they read, using context clues to figure out their meanings. Also use the words as often as possible when discussing the book with students, encouraging them to use the words in their own oral and written language.

Underground Railroad	slave
master	freed
market	station
baggage	conductor

STORIA ENRICHMENTS

To assess and enhance students' comprehension, this Storia eBook contains a Reading Challenge Quiz, as well as the following enrichments:

- Picture Starter
- Word Match
- Touch the Page
- Sequencing
- Scratch & See
- Jigsaw Puzzle
- Multiple Choice With Text
- Multiple Choice With Pictures



BIG QUESTION

Critical Thinking Ask students to think about this question as they read and be ready to answer it when they have finished the book. Write the question on chart paper or have students write it in their reading journals.

Why does Henry decide to risk his life for freedom?

As You Read

Reading the Book

Read-Aloud Read the book aloud with fluency and expression. If possible, project the book on a whiteboard or screen. Pause every few pages and have students predict what might happen next to Henry. Later, stop to ask if their predictions were correct.

Shared Reading Reread the book and ask students follow along. Pause on each page and ask students to study the illustrations. Encourage them to make connections between the words in the text and the pictures and colors in the illustrations.

Comprehension Focus

Make Connections Between Text and Illustrations The text and the illustrations in *Henry's Freedom Box* complement each other and tell not just Henry's story but the story of all slaves. Help students understand how to read an illustration for its mood and meaning and how to integrate it with the text. Project pages 4–5 on a whiteboard or screen and model for students how to connect the story detail with the illustrations.

Model: First, I'm going to read the text of the story on pages 4–5 again. Henry's mother says that slave children are torn from their families just like leaves are torn from trees by the wind. In the picture, I see the leaves flying in the wind. Henry and his mother look sad. They are painted in dark, shadowy colors that create a mood of sadness even though the sky is bright. The text and pictures both make me realize how sad it must have been to be a slave and worry about losing people you love. I'll write that in the column to the right.

Continue to discuss the relationship between the illustrations and the text with students. Use the organizer on **Resource #2: Make Connections Between Text and Illustrations** to record the words in the text and connect them to what is happening in the illustration.

After You Read

Questions to Discuss

Lead students in a discussion of these focus story elements.

1. Underground Railroad How was the Underground Railroad similar to a real railroad? How was it different? (*Sample answers: The Underground Railroad had stations, conductors, and passengers, just like a real railroad. But the Underground Railroad did not have any trains or cars.*)

2. Make Connections Between Text and Illustrations Look at the last two-page illustration in the book on pages 40–41. Make connections between the words on the pages and the illustration of Henry and the people in Philadelphia. (*Sample answers: The men are saying, "Welcome to Philadelphia!" They all have happy smiles on their faces and Henry looks happy, too. The colors of the picture are brighter and the mood is happy.*)

3. Domain-Specific Vocabulary Use the word *freed* in a sentence about your own life. (*Sample answer: We are freed from school during summer vacation.*)

Questions to Share

Encourage students to share their responses with a partner or small group.

1. Text-to-Self Would you be able to stay quiet in a small crate for 27 hours like Henry did? (*Answers will vary.*)

2. Text-to-World Do you know of places in today's world where people are enslaved or treated unequally? (*Answers will vary.*)

3. Text-to-Text What is another book that you have read about the Underground Railroad? Compare how slaves escaped in that book with how Henry escaped. (*Answers will vary.*)

WORDS TO KNOW

Domain-Specific Vocabulary

Explain to students that you will read them a sentence that is missing a word. Ask them to hold up the vocabulary card that correctly finishes each sentence.

1. Many slaves escaped from the South to the North by way of the _____. (*Underground Railroad*)
2. Families were broken apart when children were sold at the slave _____. (*market*)
3. Henry did not know his birthday because he was a _____. (*slave*)
4. Henry was given to the son of his _____. (*master*)
5. Henry hoped that he might be _____ by his master. (*freed*)
6. A person who helped slaves escape on the Underground Railroad was called a _____. (*conductor*)
7. His friends put Henry in the box and took him to the railroad _____. (*station*)
8. No one knew that Henry was hiding in the box with the rest of the _____. (*baggage*)

Extension Activities

Reading/Writing Connection

Write a Play Script Challenge students to turn the story of Henry's Freedom Box into a short play. Pair students with a partner to write a script. Suggest that students choose five or six scenes from the book that tell Henry's story. Then ask them to write



several lines of narration and/or dialogue for each of the scenes. Remind them to first make a list of the scenes and the characters in each scene and then write the dialogue. Ask students to work together to produce one version of the play.

Don't forget the



BIG QUESTION

Critical Thinking Give each student an opportunity to answer the big question. Encourage students to support their answers with details and evidence from the text. Tell students there is more than one right answer.

Why does Henry decide to risk his life for freedom?

Content Area Connections

Science The North Star The goal of escaping slaves was to go North where they could be free. Challenge students to learn more about the North Star that guided slaves on their journey to freedom. Suggest that they research the group of stars that helped people find the North Star and report on what the constellation looks like and what it was called by the slaves.

Geography Henry's Journey Show students how to trace Henry "Box" Brown's journey on Google Earth by going to the House Divided website of Dickinson University at <http://bit.ly/VnsIGC>. Help them load the file and then trace Henry's journey from Richmond, VA to Philadelphia, PA on Google Earth.

History The Journey For an interactive role-playing game about the Underground Railroad, guide students to the National Geographic website at <http://bit.ly/VAwQmJ>. Click Enter to begin playing "The Journey." Guide students to make choices as they work their way north on the Underground Railroad. Suggest that they play the game with a partner and discuss the choices as they play.

Language Arts Compare Texts Make available to students a copy of Ellen Levine's *If You Traveled on the Underground Railroad*. The book, by the same author as *Henry's Freedom Box*, is a nonfiction text written in an engaging question-and-answer format. Encourage students to read the book and compare how information is presented in the two books.

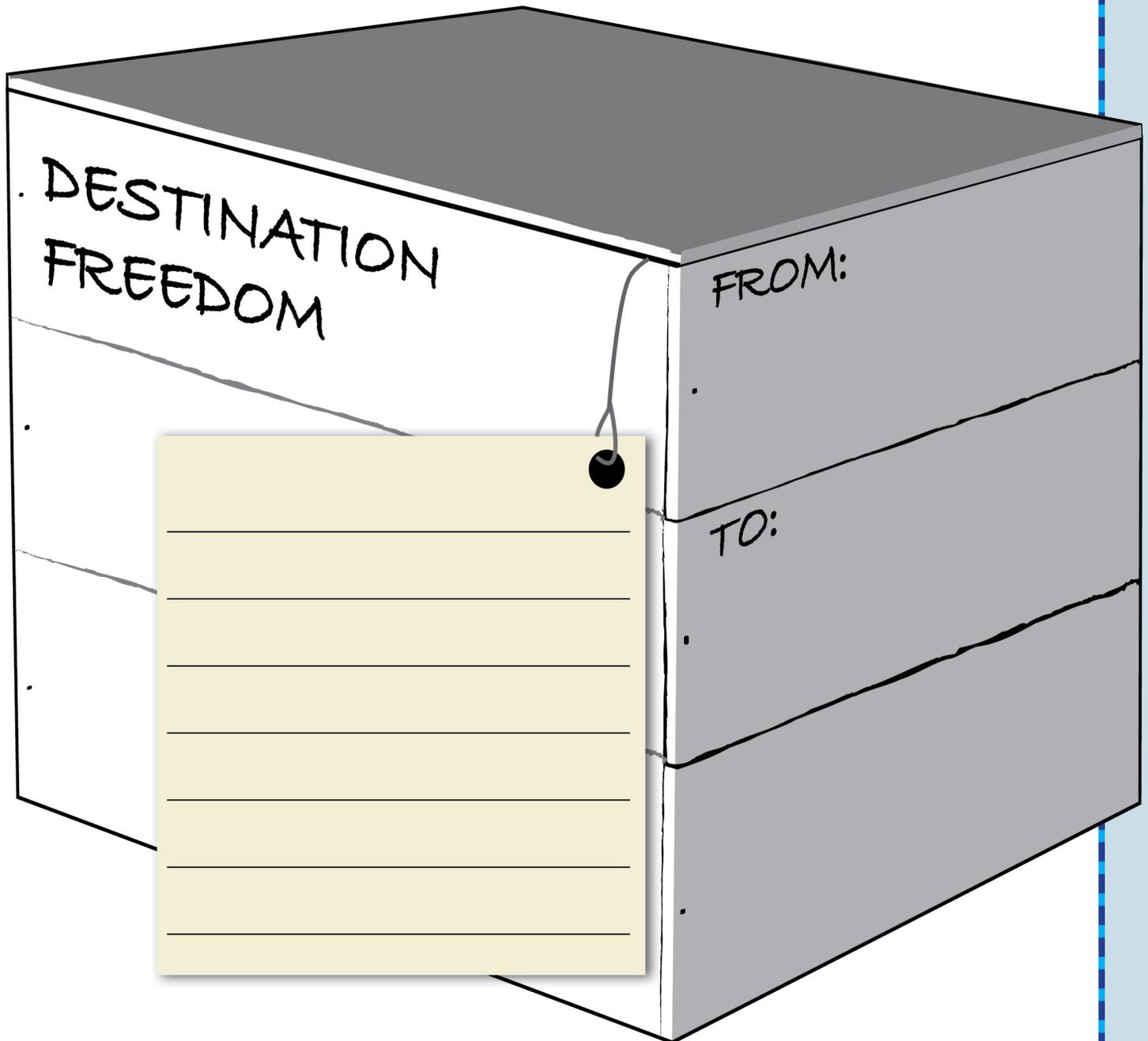
BIG ACTIVITY

My Freedom Box For Henry, freedom meant escaping slavery by going to the North. Ask students what place represents freedom for them. Why is this the place where they feel most free? Distribute copies of the **Big Activity: My Freedom Box** to students. Ask them to choose a place that represents freedom and then write the address or name of the location on the picture of the box. Then have them describe why they would go there on the note attached to the box.

Name: _____ Date: _____

BIG ACTIVITY: My Freedom Box

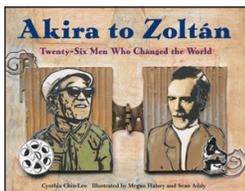
Where would you ship yourself to find freedom? Write the address or name of the location on the outside of the box. Then write a note explaining why you feel free in this place.



READ MORE AND LEARN MORE

Use these books and other resources to expand your students' study of the book or theme.

Theme Connections



Twenty-Six Men Who Changed the World
Cynthia Chin-Lee
Ages: 8–11 **Grades:** 3–5
Lexile Measure: 1060L **Pages:** 32
Guided Reading Level: W

This extraordinary book showcases positive role models for kids from diverse ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds. Each mini-biography offers a childhood anecdote, a few notable accomplishments, and an inspiring quote. Kids can discover how Jacques Cousteau overcame injuries by swimming and fell in love with the ocean, how Ellison Onizuka became the first Buddhist in space, and what Gandhi had to say about forgiveness and justice.

Available as a **Storia eBook**



America at War: Civil War
Ages: 9–12 **Grades:** 4–7 **Pages:** 32

This riveting book covers the most important details of a war that pitted brothers against brothers. It contains little-known quotes and trivia about specific leaders and battles. Filled with graphics and amazing images, it's an excellent overview of a war that almost ripped the country apart forever.

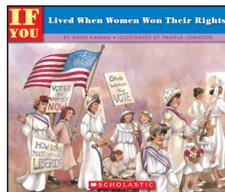
Available as a **Storia eBook**



Esperanza Rising
Pam Muñoz Ryan
Ages: 10–13 **Grades:** 5–8
Lexile Measure: 750L **Pages:** 308
Guided Reading Level: V

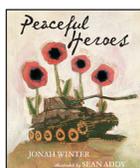
When Esperanza and Mama are forced to flee from their bountiful home in Mexico to a farm labor camp in California, they must adjust to a new life. They must confront the challenges of hard work and the Great Depression. When Mama falls ill and a strike for better working conditions threatens to uproot their new life, Esperanza must relinquish her hold on the past and learn to embrace a future ripe with the riches of family and community.

Available as a **Storia eBook**



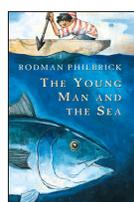
If You Lived When Women Won Their Rights
Anne Kamma
Ages: 7–10 **Grades:** 2–4
Lexile Measure: 750L **Pages:** 64
Guided Reading Level: Q

This exciting read begins with the first English settlers and goes all the way to when women finally won their right to vote. Filled with illustrations and stories of brave women like Abigail Adams, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony, this inspiring book shows how courageous women had to be and how far they have come since those troubled days. **Available as a Storia eBook**



Peaceful Heroes
Jonah Winter
Ages: 8–12 **Grades:** 3–6
Lexile Measure: 1050L **Pages:** 64

There have been all kinds of amazing individuals over the years who have managed to bring about tremendous change simply through kindness and by standing up for their beliefs. Featuring people such as Clara Barton, Sojourner Truth, and Martin Luther King, this book celebrates these brave men and women in their quests for justice and what is right. **Available as a Storia eBook**



The Young Man and the Sea
Rodman Philbrick
Ages: 9–12 **Grades:** 4–7
Lexile Measure: 800L **Pages:** 208

After Skiff's mother dies, his fisherman father seems to have given up on life. To solve their money problems, Skiff takes matters into his own hands and heads 30 miles out to sea, alone, to catch a mighty bluefin tuna. This terrific adventure story is written with a nod to Ernest Hemmingway's classic novel *The Old Man and the Sea*, but with a story all its own.

Available as a **Storia eBook**

To find PDF versions of the Storia teacher guides and links to purchase the related books, visit <http://teacher.scholastic.com/ereading-resources/>.

Underground Railroad

slave

master

freed

market

station

baggage

conductor

Name: _____ Date: _____

RESOURCE #2: Make Connections Between Text and Illustrations

Read the excerpts from *Henry's Freedom Box* and then explain how the illustrations connect to the text.

Pages	What the Text Says	What the Illustration Shows
4–5	"Do you see those leaves blowing in the wind? They are torn fro the trees like slave children are torn from their families."	
10–11	If you made a mistake the boss would beat you.	
20–21	Henry watches his children disappear down the road.	
22–23	Henry no longer sang. He couldn't hum.	