



Text Version of Audio Story: Tubman

Bounty hunters — and some of the best in the business, too — would chase after her all over the eastern United States.

The elite of the South wanted her dead. The price on her head in the 1850s was \$40,000. By today's standards, that's over a million bucks.

She had no education, or — as she would say — book-learnin'. And yet, she is remembered as the most cunning woman in American history. Her courage and bravery are without equal.

In the late 1840s, she escaped into the dark of the night, slipping the bonds of slavery. She would go on to become the most legendary conductor on the *Underground Railroad*. Harriet Tubman would go on to be called *The Moses of her people*.

On her first daring return to the southern plantation, she liberated her parents and siblings, relocating them to the safety of the North.

As a young girl, Harriet had been struck in the head with a heavy metal weight, by an angry white man. She often experienced what she was told were hallucinations. Harriet didn't see them as hallucinations, though. She referred to them as *visions from her Maker*. These *visions* were what she said compelled her to continue returning to southern plantations on her exploits to liberate slaves.

With each daring raid, the legend of the black *Moses* would grow — and as well, would the bounty on her head.

As she led the slaves over the mountains and through the forests and swamps, nothing was left to chance. She planned every meticulous detail of the escape route.

Her rules were tough. It was her way — or death, to any escapee who didn't obey her orders. She knew that if even one person turned back, they would all be captured. And although she never had to shoot anyone, she said she once came very close.

One of the escapees had complained of aches and pains and that his feet were sore and he wanted to go back. Talking did little to convince the man otherwise.

Harriet knew that she would have to shoot him. But when the gun barrel was leveled at his head, "*It was amazing!*" she said. "*He had a full recovery, he hopped up and continued walking as well as anyone else could,*" she said.

When the Civil War broke out, Harriet immediately made herself available to the Union Army. She was a nurse and a cook — but she is best remembered for her work in the intelligence field. Harriet was a master of disguise. She was the ultimate spy. There are also very reliable accounts of Harriet leading black troops in battle in the Carolinas.

Prior to the Civil War, when Harriet first gained fame, she had made approximately 20 trips into the South to liberate slaves. In all, she guided more than 300 people through the Underground Railroad and to freedom. And for all those trips, and all those escaped slaves, no one was ever captured.

She never lost even one.

She said the *visions from her Maker* told her exactly what to do every step of the way. While many people discount those visions, simply as the effects from the serious head injury she received as a girl, I have to wonder ... I'm not a very religious man, I searched for answers as to how anyone could have possibly pulled off such a remarkable feat even once, let alone 20 times.

The only thing that makes any of it seem possible to me ... the only thing that makes it seem to fit in my head ... is that she truly was the *Moses of her people*.

I'm the American Storyteller.