

**“The Book that Started this Great War”:
Opening Eyes to Oppression One Page at a Time**

Haley Miller
Individual Performance
Senior Division

Process Paper

Last year in my U.S. History class, I learned about *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a major event in the Abolitionist Movement. It shocked me that Lincoln described its author as "the little lady who wrote the book that started this great war!" I decided to read the novel over the summer to understand its impact on slavery. It truly touched me the same way it touched earlier readers upon its initial release. I was excited to begin further research, but for additional scholarly opinions, I emailed several professors from various universities to confirm that this topic was on target in relation to the theme.

While researching, I found myself more and more intrigued by Harriet Beecher Stowe's passion and determination to convey her message and give rights to slaves. To begin my in-depth study of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, I went to primary books like *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, a biography compiled of her personal letters, and Stowe's *A Key to 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'*, which clarified her intentions for the original novel. Antebellum reviews of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in several newspapers in the North and South showed different public reactions. My contact with Dr. David Reynolds of City University of New York and Dr. Jim Stewart of MacAlester College provided me with understanding of Stowe's impact over the Abolition Movement.

I chose the individual performance category because I have enjoyed my past experiences in living history. The book's author seemed to me the best person to tell its story. As I created my script, I decided to emphasize Stowe's events that urged her to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the reaction of the public to the bestselling novel of the nineteenth century. My performance is set in the parlor of Stowe's home on the 40th anniversary of the book's publishing, as if Stowe were responding to questions from reporters. Many of the statements I incorporated are from her

letters. Since Stowe's actions were motivated by her Christian beliefs, I used many biblical references to explain her thoughts.

The publishing of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* fits the theme, "Rights and Responsibility in History," because it equated slaves with whites and spoke out against the Southern system of labor. Stowe explained that, as the Lord's children, blacks deserve to have united families and to be treated as humans. Stowe believed that God was speaking through her with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and that it was her Christian responsibility to expose the cruelty of the South. After reading the novel, many felt an obligation to join the Abolitionist Movement to save "Uncle Toms" throughout the United States and to give slaves the right to avoid oppression. It called Christians to put morals over monetary values because, as Galatians 3:28 states, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reaffirmed what our founding fathers wrote, that all men are created equal.

(495 words)

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Books

Appleton, D. *The American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1868: Embracing Political, Civil, Military, and Social Affairs; Public Documents; Biography, Statistics, Commerce, Finance, Literature, Science, Agriculture, and Mechanical Industry*. New York: D. Appleton, 1869. Print.

This encyclopedia of the important events of 1868 tells of the conflicts after the Civil War. Referred to as the "Rebellion" by the Northerners, this event is the bloodiest war ever to occur on American soil. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is believed by many to be one of its main causes because slavery was such an important issue at the time. Stowe opened the plantations for viewing with her story and exposed the oppression of the South to many. This encyclopedia, written during Reconstruction, explained to me the effects of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on America after the war as a civil rights text.

Beecher, Catharine Esther, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. *The American Woman's Home: Or, Principles of Domestic Science; Being a Guide to the Formation and Maintenance of Economical, Healthful, Beautiful, and Christian Homes*. New York: J.B. Ford and, 1869. Print.

This book by Harriet Beecher Stowe and her sister, Catherine, an early advocate for women's higher education, provides a guide to building and maintaining a Christian home. In this book, Stowe's domestic side is shown which readers occasionally see in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This also gives Stowe's opinion of a perfect godly family, home, and lifestyle, which is also portrayed in the story.

Beecher, Charles. *Autobiography, Correspondence, Etc., of Lyman Beecher, D.D.* Ed. Lyman Beecher. New York: Harper, 1864. Print.

This autobiography of Harriet Beecher Stowe's father, Lyman Beecher, edited by her son, Charles Edward Stowe, gives information on the Beecher family and their influence. Being the patriarch of this clan of reformers, Lyman Beecher was the core to the Beecher's revolution in abolition, moral reform, education, and temperance. Following Beecher's death, his son, Charles Beecher, had this autobiography published. This book explained to me how Stowe's foundation as a Beecher sparked her antislavery spirit.

Carolinian, and Edward J. Pringle. *Slavery in the Southern States*. Cambridge, Mass.: J. Bartlett, 1852. Print.

This book explained how, in the Civil War, virtually every action taken, word said, and stroke of the pen on both sides of the conflict was defended by the Bible. The slave owners invoked God to say that slaves were to obey their masters. Most of the

abolitionists were ministers or devout Christians, like Harriet Beecher Stowe. This book showed me the Southern Christian view of slavery and how reformers like Stowe shot down their beliefs.

Chesnut, Mary Boykin Miller, Isabella D. Martin, and Myrta Lockett Avary. *A Diary from Dixie*. New York: D. Appleton and, 1905. Print.

This book is the diary of Mary Boykin Chesnut, the wife of a signatory of the Constitution of the Confederate States of America and a Confederate States Army general. She documented in this book everything that happened to her in the Civil War. In her diary, she admits that she read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and that the book personally touched her since she was raised on a plantation and often empathized with slaves. She appreciated that, through Cassie, Harriet Beecher Stowe showed how slave owners, like Legree, exploited many female slaves creating mulatto children. Mary Chesnut's diary showed me a Southern woman's opinion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Henson, Josiah, and John Lobb. *Uncle Tom's Story of His Life: An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson (from Harriet Beecher Stowe's 'Uncle Tom') from 1789 to 1876*. London: 'Christian Age' Office, 1877. Print.

This book is an autobiography of an ex-slave named Josiah Henson, on whom many believe Harriet Beecher Stowe based her character, Uncle Tom. He was a loyal slave like Tom who led his fellow slaves to the plantation of his master's brother when his master was in debt to avoid them being auctioned off. Henson eventually ran away, learned how to read and write, and became a minister. Stowe succeeded in showing his life to the public.

Nicolay, John G. *The Outbreak of Rebellion*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1881. Print.

This explanation of the division of the United States in the Civil War by a Northerner explains the various causes that urged the South to rebel against the "tyranny" of the North. It also shows the impact of the Civil War on America from Reconstruction to the publishing of the book in 1881.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher, Charles Edward Stowe, and Lyman Beecher Stowe. *Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Teddington: Echo Library, 1889. Print.

This biography of Harriet Beecher Stowe was written by her son and grandson under her supervision. All of the information was confirmed by Stowe herself. The book is compiled from her letters, so it provides several primary sources written not only by, but also to Stowe.

_____. *A Key to 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'; Presenting the Original Facts and Documents upon Which the Story Is Founded.* London: Sampson, Low, Son, 1853. Print.

This book is Harriet Beecher Stowe's explanation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and her motivation for creating the story. *A Key to 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'* argues that people living in the South were so numbed to the routine human brutalities involved in maintaining a slave plantation that they no longer regarded acts of cruelty as anything out of the ordinary. It also conveys the idea that ministers who stayed silent in order to avoid confrontation were encouraging the continuance of the sick institution.

_____. *Men of Our Times: Or, Leading Patriots of the Day. Being Narratives of the Lives and Deeds of Statesmen, Generals, and Orators. Including Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes of Lincoln, Grant, Garrison, Sumner, Chase, Wilson, Greeley, Farragut, Andrew, Colfax, Stanton, Douglass, Buckingham, Sherman, Sheridan, Howard, Phillips and Beecher.* Hartford, CT: Hartford Publishing Co., 1868. Print.

This book by Harriet Beecher Stowe gives her outlook of several important men of the Civil War, including Abraham Lincoln and Charles Sumner. It helped me speak on Stowe's behalf for these men in my script and unintentionally gave me her political opinion of these men. These biographies provide insight of her beliefs through her non-fictional writing.

_____. *Uncle Tom's Cabin or Life Among the Lowly.* Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1852. Print.

This book is the subject of my performance. It was the best-selling book of the nineteenth century. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote it in reaction to the Fugitive Slave Law to show the public that slaves are humans with human feelings.

_____. *A Reply to "The Affectionate and Christian Address of Many Thousands of Women of Great Britain and Ireland, to Their Sisters, the Women of the United States of America"* London: S. Low, Son, and, 1863. Print.

This is a response by Harriet Beecher Stowe to the antislavery words of several British women she had met on her first trip to Europe when she campaigned against slavery. It explains her beliefs and motives that were incorporated in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the outcome of the war that Stowe foresaw. This book focuses on the Christian ethics against slavery and the assistance that England offered the Confederacy prior to the Emancipation Proclamation.

Letter

Beecher, Isabella Jones. "Our Reaction to Lovejoy's Murder and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." Letter to Charles Edward Stowe. 10 May 1877. *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Teddington: Echo Library, 1889. 73. Print.

This is a letter from Harriet Beecher Stowe's sister-in-law written to Stowe's son. In this letter, Isabella Beecher is explaining her town's reaction to the murder of the abolitionist minister and newspaper editor, Elijah Lovejoy. She also tells her nephew of the abolitionist response to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in a time period that he was too young to remember.

. "The Unjust Use of Our Nation." Letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe. 12 Dec. 1850. *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Teddington: Echo Library, 1889. 73. Print.

This letter, found in the book *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, was the inspiration for the writing of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stowe's sister-in-law, a fellow abolitionist, wrote her, "If I could use a pen as you can, I would write something that would make the whole nation feel what an accursed thing slavery is." In this book, Harriet Beecher Stowe's son, Charles, claims that she read this letter aloud to her family and said, "I will write something. I will if I live."

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. "Success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." Letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe. 8 Oct. 1853. *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Teddington: Echo Library, 2006. 76. Print.

This letter from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, a well-known poet famous for "Paul Revere's Ride," shows how literary geniuses respected Stowe's book as "one of the greatest triumphs in literary history." This shows how writers at the time he book was published viewed the book as a literary masterpiece.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. "Aiding a Colored Girl." Letter to Georgiana May. 15 Aug. 1839. *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Teddington: Echo Library, 1889. 47. Print.

This is a letter from Harriet Beecher Stowe to one of her closest friends regarding an ex-slave she helped escape to the North. This shows how the Fugitive Slave Law was personal to Stowe because it made her past actions illegal.

. "Charley Has Been Taken Ill." Letter to Calvin Edward Stowe. 10 July 1849. *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Teddington: Echo Library, 1889. 62. Print.

I refer to this letter in my script since it is the first time we hear of Harriet Beecher Stowe's son being ill. This was a major event in her life and the creation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It was at his dying bed that Stowe learned what a slave mother would feel having her son ripped away.

. "In Response to Your Last Letter." Letter to Alanson Fisher. 11 May 1874. *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture*. University of Virginia, n.d. Web. 4 Jan. 2014.

This letter from Harriet Beecher Stowe to the man who painted a famous portrait, Alanson Fisher, tells of the lack of documents that she saved when writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In this letter, Stowe is reluctantly telling Fisher that she has lost most of the

manuscript involved in the production of the book. This lack of saved artifacts shows the unexpected success that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* received. Stowe didn't keep these papers because she was unaware of their value.

. "Letter from Harriet Beecher Stowe to Frederick Douglass." Letter to Frederick Douglass. 9 July 1851. *Harriet Beecher Stowe Center*. Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, 2008. Web. 15 Aug. 2013.
<http://www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org/stowedocuments/Letter_from_Harriet_Beecher_Stowe_to_Frederick_Douglass.pdf>.

This is the letter in which Harriet Beecher Stowe asked for a description of a Southern cotton plantation from free men. She also argues with Frederick Douglass that the church is on the black man's side and that it doesn't support oppression.

. "Letter to Garrison from Harriet Beecher Stowe." Letter to William Lloyd Garrison. 9 Dec. 1853. *PBS*. Public Broadcasting Service, n.d. Web. 15 Aug. 2013.

This letter from Harriet Beecher Stowe to William Lloyd Garrison about Frederick Douglass shows how Stowe networked through the abolitionists to gain influence. This letter shows three of the strongest abolitionists setting their differences aside to achieve a common goal of freeing blacks.

. "My Hectic Summer." Letter to Isabella Beecher. 17 Dec. 1850. *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Teddington: Echo Library, 2006. N. pag. Print.

In this letter to her sister-in-law, Harriet Beecher Stowe describes her busy life as a mother at the time that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was written. She tells of how every time she sat to write, she was called off by someone for something. This shows one of the difficulties that Stowe encountered with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. After the Fugitive Slave Act, she was raising 6 children on her own since her husband traveled for his ministry.

. "Our Charley among the Blessed." Letter to Calvin Edward Stowe. 26 July 1849. *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe*. Teggington: Echo Library, 1889. 64. Print.

This is the letter that Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote to her husband to inform him that the cholera of Cincinnati had killed their son. This event in her life put Stowe on the same level as the slave mothers whose sons were sold away from them.

"A Woman's Reaction to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." Letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe. 10 Jan. 1852. *A Disease in the Public Mind: A New Understanding of Why We Fought the Civil War*. Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo, 2013. 189-90. Print.

This letter from a friend of Harriet Beecher Stowe shows the emotion evoked from the book and how it portrays the horrors of oppression. This letter gives an example of an abolitionist's reaction to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It made the North far more open to abolition by pulling on the hearts of its readers.

Newspaper Articles

Bailey, Gamaliel. "New Story by Mrs. Stowe." *National Era* [Washington., D.C.] 8 May 1851: n. pag. Print.

This article advertises *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which would soon be published in *The National Era*. Readers of this abolitionist newspaper yearned for the next chapter as a soldier at war yearned for his family. Since it was originally published in this newspaper, Harriet Beecher Stowe didn't have to publicize the story as she would have for a normal book.

"New Publications *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." *New York Daily Tribune* [New York, NY] 9 Apr. 1852, Col. 3 sec.: 6. Print.

This newspaper article announcing the book publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was released to let the future readers know that they wouldn't have to find all forty of the newspaper articles to read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It would soon be released as a book

"A New Way to Preserve the Union." *Lewisburg Chronicle* [Lewisburg, PA] 28 May 1852, Vol. IX ed., Col. 7 sec.: n. pag. Print.

This newspaper article tells about a new weapon of revolution, the pen. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* created an innovative way of influence through writing. It also was one of the most effective peaceful revolutions in American history. This article told me how Harriet Beecher Stowe's changed the United States with every stroke of her pen.

"Sam Green Imprisoned for Owning UTC." *Democrat* [Cambridge, MD] 29 Apr. 1857: n. pag. Print.

This newspaper article tells of an event in which an ex-slave was arrested for having letters from his fugitive son urging his friends to join him in Canada. While authorities weren't able to convict him for these letters and other information about the Underground Railroad, they could convict him for having *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in his possession. This situation explained to me how the book created a revolution among blacks and whites and that its plot showed that escaping oppression was possible.

"The Southern System of Labor." *Charleston Mercury* [Charleston, SC] 17 Jan. 1856: n. pag. Print.

This newspaper article shows the dependence of places like Charleston on slave labor. Taking away the slave market eventually demolished the Confederate economy, but many abolitionists urged Southerners to put morals over monetary value.

"Spirit of the Press." *Nashville Union* [Nashville, TN] 18 Jan. 1853, Col. 6 sec.: n. pag. Print.

This article discusses the rights of Harriet Beecher Stowe to expose slavery to the general public. While the author of this article believes that Stowe has the freedom of the press, he also knew that the more it spreads through the newspapers, the more *Uncle Tom's Cabin* will hurt the South.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. "Chapter XXVI of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." *National Era* [Washington, D.C.] 11 Dec. 1851: n. pag. Print.

This newspaper article of Chapter XXVI of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shows an example of one of the installments of the book. Each chapter was based on one of the storylines, never interfering with another, but still remaining extremely important to the overall plot.

"Uncle Tom: A Chat with the Hero of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." *Tiffin Tribune* [Tiffin, OH] 25 July 1878, Col. 1 sec.: n. pag. Print.

This interview with Josiah Henson, Stowe's inspiration for Tom, discusses the true story behind *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Henson explains how the story of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was really a compilation from many slaves. His autobiography is an example of one of the slave narratives that Stowe studied to get a feeling of life as a slave.

Paintings/ Artwork

Eliza's Escape. 1890. Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, CT. *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture*. University of Virginia. Web. 30 Apr. 2014.

This is a poster of Eliza running over the Ohio River jumping from ice block to ice block with her son Harry in her arms. This scene is one of the most important parts of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. I used this poster when speaking of Eliza's story.

Slave Auction in Virginia. 1861. Pencil on paper. The Maritime Heritage Project, Sausalito, California.

This sketch of a slave family being sold to different masters shows how families were separated very frequently by the slave trade. I used this picture to emphasize the effect oppression had on mothers and children just as Harriet Beecher Stowe lost her son.

Uncle Tom and Eva. 1890. Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, CT. *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture*. University of Virginia. Web. 30 Apr. 2014.

This is a poster of Uncle Tom and Eva reading the Bible. This shows how Harriet Beecher Stowe displayed Tom as a Christian man. I used this when I speak about Tom's story.

Pamphlet

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *An Appeal to the Women of the Free States of America on the Present Crisis in Our Country*. Toronto: n.p., 1854. Print.

This pamphlet written by Harriet Beecher Stowe helps to put blacks on the same level as whites. Paid for by personal funds along with sums given to her by Christian women she met on her first trip to Europe, Stowe used the concept of family to reaffirm that slaves are humans with human feelings. She states that there is no "woman so unchristian as to think it right to inflict on her neighbor's child what she would think worse than death were it inflicted on her own."

Photographs

Charley Among the Blessed. 1849. Photograph. Schlesinger Library, Cambridge, MA. 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' and American Culture. University of Virginia, June 2007. Web. 12 Dec. 2013.

This is a photograph of the body of Harriet Beecher Stowe's son, Charley, lying in state. It is used to emphasize the connection between Stowe's son's death and slaves losing children. It is also used to give the viewers the emotions Stowe felt as a mother. In her loss, she felt equal to slaves because she lost her son to cholera and they lost their children to the slave trade. She didn't want anyone to experience her pain if it could be stopped.

First Installment of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'. 1851. Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, CT. 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' and American Culture. Web. 30 Apr. 2014.

This photograph of the first chapter of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in *The National Era* shows what readers first saw on June 5, 1851. I used this in my performance when I speak of the weekly installments of the book.

Gardner, Alexander. *Abraham Lincoln, the Sixteenth President of the United States*. 1863. Photograph. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc. Web. 12 Dec. 2013.

This is one of the most recent photographs of Abraham Lincoln. I used this picture in my performance when speaking of him to remind the viewers that he called Harriet Beecher Stowe the "little woman who wrote the book that started this great war!"

Lyman Beecher Family. 1859. Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford, CT. *Connecticut History*. Web. 30 Apr. 2014.

This photograph of the Beecher family shows Lyman with all of his children. I used this to show Stowe's roots in my performance since her father and all of her brothers were antislavery ministers. It also helped me with my costume.

Read and Ponder the Fugitive Slave Law. 1850. Gilder Lehrman Collection, New York, New York. *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*. Web. 30 Apr. 2014.

This is a photograph of a poster attacking the Fugitive Slave Law. Papers like this were hung around the North to educate people on the severity of the law. I refer to this in my performance when speaking of the law to reinforce the separation of family.

Poem

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Only a Year*. Charlottesville, VA: Clifton Waller Barrett Collection, 1850. Print.

Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote this poem a year after her son, Charley, died from Cholera. It describes a sweet, innocent child, much like Eva, who was taken from this world. This poem exaggerates a mother's emotion and appears to be the idea behind Eva's story.

Reviews

"American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society." Rev. of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. *Frederick Douglass' Paper* [Rochester, NY] 27 May 1852: n. pag. Print.

This review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* explains the immediate reaction to the story and criticizes the "literary world" for its cruel opinion of the book. It tells the story of the publishing arrangement that Harriet Beecher Stowe had with Gamaliel Bailey, the editor of *The National Era*, and how Stowe's pillow was wet with her tears every night after the Fugitive Slave Law was signed.

Bailey, Gamaliel. "The Story of the Age." Rev. of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. *National Era* [Washington., D.C.] 15 Apr. 1852: n. pag. Print.

This review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published two weeks after the last installment's publishing. While most literary analysts at the time thought it was a terrible work of art, they agree that its principle and moral effect made it one of the best books of all time. The idea of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the peaceful rebellion that it created made it the bestselling novel of the 19th century.