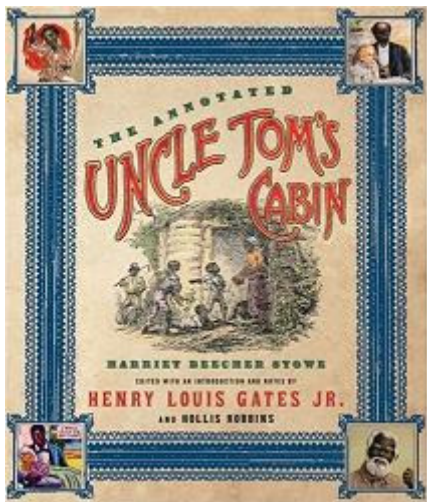


The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe

Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Hollis Robbins
A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit



About the Book

Declared worthless and dehumanizing by the novelist and critic James Baldwin in 1955, **Uncle Tom's Cabin** has lacked literary credibility for over fifty years. In this refutation of Baldwin, co-editors Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Hollis Robbins affirm the literary transcendence of Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 masterpiece. As Gates and Robbins underscore, there has never been a single work of fiction that has had a greater effect on American history than **Uncle Tom's Cabin**.

Along with a variety of historical images and an expanded introductory essay, Gates and Robbins have richly edited the original text with hundreds of annotations which illuminate life in the South during nineteenth-century slavery, the abolitionist movement and the influential role played by devout Christians. They also offer details on the life of Harriet Beecher Stowe, the Underground Railroad, Stowe's literary motives, her writing methods, and the novel's wide-ranging impact on the American public.

About the Author and Editors



Harriet Beecher Stowe is best known for her first book, **Uncle Tom's Cabin** (1852). Begun as a serial for the Washington anti-slavery weekly, the *National Era*, it focused public interest on the issue of slavery, and was deeply controversial. In writing the book, Stowe drew on personal experience. She was familiar with slavery, the antislavery movement, and the Underground Railroad. Kentucky, across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, Ohio, where Stowe had lived, was a slave state. Following publication of the book, Stowe became a celebrity, speaking against slavery both in America and Europe. She was a prodigious writer and many of her novels appeared in serial form in several magazines. Born in Connecticut, Harriet Beecher Stowe is claimed

by Ohio for the 18 years which provided background for this great American novel.



Henry Louis Gates, Jr., is the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and the Director of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University. As a prominent black intellectual, Gates has focused throughout his career not only on research and teaching but on building academic institutions to study black culture. He has worked to bring about social, educational, and intellectual equality for black Americans. His introduction to **The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin** is thorough and intellectually stimulating, and shows many different facets of this classic novel.

Hollis Robbins Ph.D, is the co-editor with Gates of **The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin** and with Paula Garret of **The Works of William Wells Brown**. She is a member of the Humanities Faculty at

The Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University.

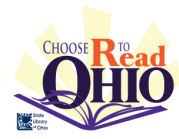


Author Resources:

Biography of Harriet Beecher Stowe from A Celebration of Women Writers
<http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/stowe/StoweHB.html>

Biography of Henry Louis Gates Jr. from Gale Cengage Learning
http://www.gale.cengage.com/free_resources/bhm/bio/gates_h.htm

Biography of Hollis Robbins from the Peabody Institute
<http://www.peabody.jhu.edu/2684>

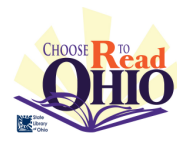


Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the differences between the portrayals of men and women in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Does Tom fit with the rest of the men in the book? Why or why not? How does the portrayal of women reveal Stowe's feminism?
2. Discuss Stowe's use of opposites and the technique of contrast in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.
3. What roles do circumstance and chance play in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*? Does the text use either of them to help explain the existence of slavery?
4. In what ways does Stowe present the incompatibility of slavery with the Christian ethic of love and tolerance? How do the novel's Christ figures underscore its basic Christian messages?
5. Compare and contrast Tom's three owners in the novel—Shelby, St. Clare, and Legree. How are they alike? How are they different? Do they appear in the novel according to any particular sequence, and if so, how does this progression relate to the general themes of the book?
6. Discuss the role of Eva in the novel. In what ways does she contribute to the novel's larger messages?
7. How do Stowe's political objectives affect the style and formal aspects of the novel? In designing her characters to make a point, did she make them too simple? Do the noble politics of the novel justify its literary shortcomings?
8. Discuss the annotations in this version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. How do these additions to the original expand on Stowe's original text?
9. How do the annotations and analysis provided by editors Gates and Robbins amplify your understanding of how Black Culture has developed in our country?
10. How do you think *Uncle Tom's Cabin* relates to you in your community?

Cited Resource:

SparkNotes Editors. SparkNote on Uncle Tom's Cabin: Study Questions & Essay Topics
<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/uncletom/study.html>



Additional Resources

African American Lives 2

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aalives/>

Online companion to the PBS series hosted by Henry Louis Gates Jr.

Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Matter of Influence by Hollis Robbins

http://www.gilderlehrman.org/historynow/06_2008/historian2.php

Article from *History Now: American History Online*, Issue 16, June 2008.

Gates Takes a New Look at 'Uncle Tom'

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7488550>

NPR interview with Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Hollis Robbins on *The Annotated Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Race: The Power of an Illusion

http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm

Online companion to the PBS program.

Uncle Tom's Cabin Reconsidered: A Conversation with Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Margo Jefferson

<http://www.nypl.org/audiovideo/uncle-toms-cabin-reconsidered-conversation-henry-louis-gates-margo-jefferson>

Audio and transcript from 11/29/06 "Live from the NYPL" event.

Harris, Michael D. ***Colored Pictures: Race and Visual Representation***, University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Harris speaks of how black memorabilia complicates history in the U.S., and the ways in which it has been reappropriated by black Americans. He introduces racial caricatures, including the "Sambo" image, and discusses "the imposition by whites of stereotypical expectations and the complicated, layered, often painful, reality that characters experienced".

Hedrick, Joan D. ***Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life***. Oxford University Press, 1994.

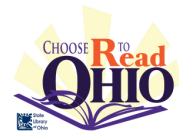
Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of the author by a Trinity College professor; meticulously researched and highly readable.

Hedrick, Joan D., ed. ***The Oxford Harriet Beecher Stowe Reader***. Oxford University Press, 1999.

A focused selection of Stowe's writing from the 1830's through the 1860's. Particularly suited for courses in 19th century American literature, women's literature and American history, the book highlights selections best suited for classroom use and is divided into three sections: (1) Early Sketches; (2) Anti-slavery Writings; and (3) Domestic Culture and Politics.

Lott, Eric. ***Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class***, Oxford University Press, 1993.

A historical analysis of the development of blackface minstrelsy through the lenses of class systems and social locations.



Patterson, Orlando. ***Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries***, Basic Civitas Books, 1998.

Patterson looks at aspects of African American social life and uses slavery and colonialism as starting points from which to begin the discussion.

Color Adjustment (motion picture). Marlon Riggs, Director (1989).

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/ColorAdjustment.html>

This study of prejudice and perception traces over forty years of race relations in America through the lens of prime time TV entertainment. Revisiting such popular hits as *Amos and Andy*, *Beulah*, *The Nat King Cole Show*, *Julia*, *I Spy*, *Good Times*, and *Roots*, viewers see how bitter racial conflict was absorbed into the non-controversial formats of the prime time series.

Book details:

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About Choose to Read Ohio

Choose to Read Ohio (CTRO) spotlights Ohio authors and promotes reading across Ohio. The State Library of Ohio, in partnership with Ohioana Library Association, developed this initiative to encourage Ohioans of all ages to share literature by authors native to, residing in, or associated with Ohio. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits: <http://oh.webjunction.org/ohctrointro>.