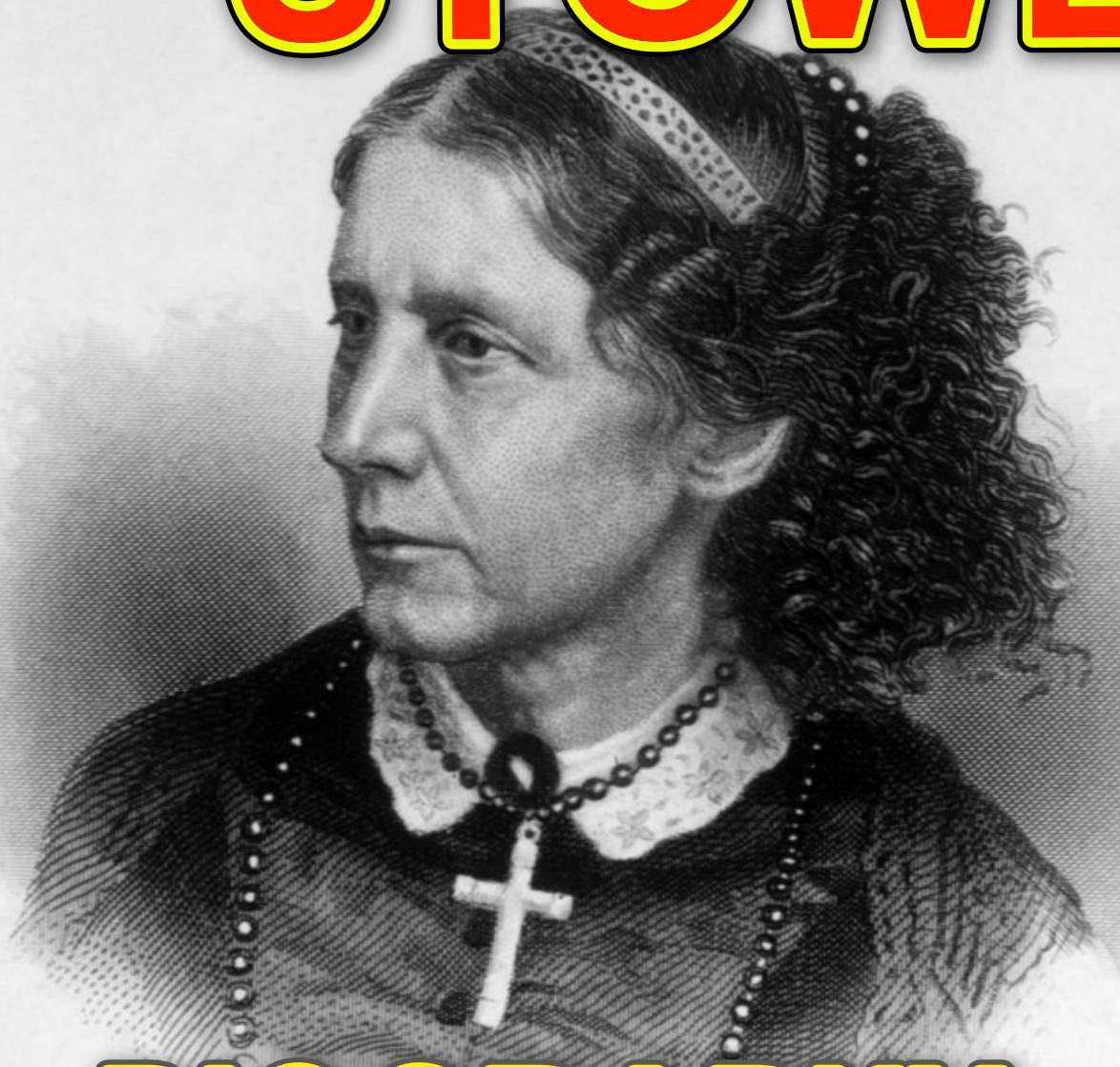


HARRIET BEECHER STOWE



BIOGRAPHY

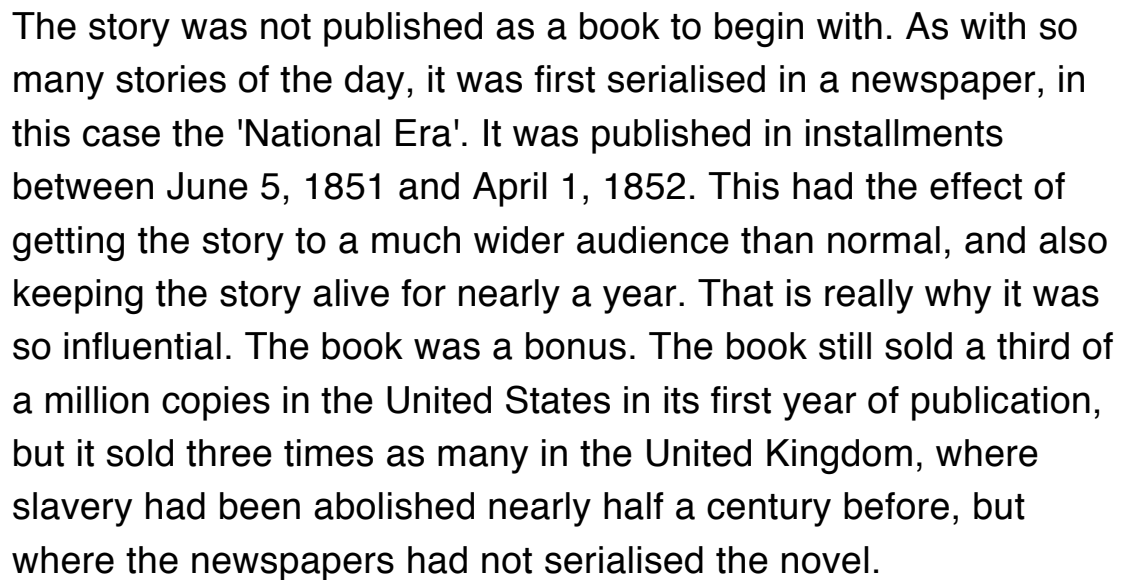
HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

Harriet Beecher Stowe's most famous novel is called Uncle Tom's Cabin, also known as Life Among the Lowly. She wrote it to describe what she saw as the horrors of slavery, but in a way that made accessible reading to all. It was published in 1852, and it was very widely read. In fact, only the Bible was more widely read in America in the 19th century. It encouraged anti-slavery forces in the American North, but caused anger in the American South. Some people think it was so influential, it was even partly responsible for the American Civil War.

Harriet Beecher Stowe was born in Lichfield, Connecticut. She was a school teacher, and had several reasons for writing the book. She was actively against slavery, but she was also an activist for Christian love and women's rights, and in effect behaved something like a missionary. Some people would now see the Uncle Tom's Cabin novel as very sentimental, but you have to remember that this style of writing was commonplace in the 19th century.

There is an unconfirmed story that, when President Abraham Lincoln met Harriet Beecher Stowe at the beginning of the Civil War he said "So this is the little lady who started this great war."

When Harriet Beecher Stowe was 21 she moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. But this was already a place in turmoil. Irish immigrants had arrived to work on the canals and to profit from the canal barge trade. But this was also where many free blacks or escaped black slaves had moved, in order to get the same jobs. As a result the Irish attacked the blacks because they saw them as taking away their jobs. So part of what Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote in Uncle Tom's Cabin was a result of the attacks and her speaking to blacks in the city. She did not go to the South herself until five years after the Civil War had ended. She and her family spent time in Florida, although Harriet wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin while staying in Brunswick, Maine.



The story was not published as a book to begin with. As with so many stories of the day, it was first serialised in a newspaper, in this case the 'National Era'. It was published in installments between June 5, 1851 and April 1, 1852. This had the effect of getting the story to a much wider audience than normal, and also keeping the story alive for nearly a year. That is really why it was so influential. The book was a bonus. The book still sold a third of a million copies in the United States in its first year of publication, but it sold three times as many in the United Kingdom, where slavery had been abolished nearly half a century before, but where the newspapers had not serialised the novel.

Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'horrors'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'horrors' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'horrors'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'horrors'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'horrors' means.

Try this for other words, too. 

Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: abolished	banned

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

Here Stowe saw attacks on black people because there was a job shortage.

Aged 21, Stowe moved to Ohio.

The book was popular and influential.

Harriet Beecher Stowe was born in Lichfield, Connecticut.

Uncle Tom's Cabin was published in installments between 1851 and 1852.

Stowe became a school teacher and activist.

These attacks prompted Stowe to write Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Get to the facts

1 Where was Harriet Beecher Stowe born?

2 How old was Stowe when she moved to Ohio?

3 Which famous story did Stowe write?

4 How was Uncle Tom's Cabin first published?

5 How many copies did the book sell in the US?

Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

Reading Uncle Tom's Cabin

I was hooked on the story of Uncle Tom's Cabin after the first two installments. I couldn't wait for the next one in the newspaper. Finally the newspaper came out... (now complete the story)

Below is a plain text version for printing:

Understanding words:

- a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'horrors'.
- b From that sentence, suggest what 'horrors' means.
- c Write a new sentence using the word 'horrors'.
- d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'horrors'.
- e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'horrors' means.

Finding key words:

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym).

For example:

Key word – abolished

Synonym – banned

Sequencing:

Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense:

Here Stowe saw attacks on black people because there was a job shortage.

Aged 21, Stowe moved to Ohio.

The book was popular and influential.

Harriet Beecher Stowe was born in Lichfield, Connecticut.

Uncle Tom's Cabin was published in installments between 1851 and 1852.

Stowe became a school teacher and activist.

These attacks prompted Stowe to write Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Get to the facts:

- 1 Where was Harriet Beecher Stowe born?
- 2 How old was Stowe when she moved to Ohio?
- 3 Which famous story did Stowe write?
- 4 How was Uncle Tom's Cabin first published?
- 5 How many copies did the book sell in the US?

Make a story...

Reading Uncle Tom's Cabin

I was hooked on the story of Uncle Tom's Cabin after the first two installments. I couldn't wait for the next one in the newspaper. Finally, the next newspaper came out... (now complete the story)

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Beecher Stowe's most famous novel is called *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, also known as *Life Among the Lowly*. She wrote it to describe what she saw as the horrors of slavery, but in a way that made accessible reading to all. It was published in 1852, and it was very widely read. In fact, only the Bible was more widely read in America in the 19th century. It encouraged anti-slavery forces in the American North, but caused anger in the American South. Some people think it was so influential, it was even partly responsible for the American Civil War.

Harriet Beecher Stowe was born in Litchfield, Connecticut. She was a school teacher, and had several reasons for writing the book. She was actively against slavery, but she was also an activist for Christian love and women's rights, and in effect behaved something like a missionary. Some people would now see the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* novel as very sentimental, but you have to remember that this style of writing was commonplace in the 19th century.

There is an unconfirmed story that, when President Abraham Lincoln met Harriet Beecher Stowe at the beginning of the Civil War he said "So this is the little lady who started this great war."

When Harriet Beecher Stowe was 21 she moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. But this was already a place in turmoil. Irish immigrants had arrived to work on the canals and to profit from the canal barge trade. But this was also where many free blacks or escaped black slaves had moved, in order to get the same jobs. As a result the Irish attacked the blacks because they saw them as taking away their jobs. So part of what Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a result of the attacks and her speaking to blacks in the city. She did not go to the South herself until five years after the Civil War had ended. She and her family spent time in Florida, although Harriet wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* while staying in Brunswick, Maine.

The story was not published as a book to begin with. As with so many stories of the day, it was first serialised in a newspaper, in this case the 'National Era'. It was published in installments between June 5, 1851 and April 1, 1852. This had the effect of getting the story to a much wider audience than normal, and also keeping the story alive for nearly a year. That is really why it was so influential. The book was a bonus. The book still sold a third of a million copies in the United States in its first year of publication, but it sold three times as many in the United Kingdom, where slavery had been abolished nearly half a century before, but where the newspapers had not serialised the novel.