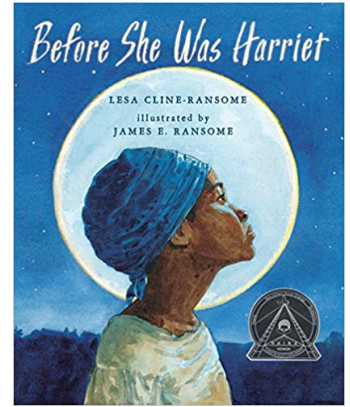


## *Before She Was Harriet*

Written by Lesa Cline-Ransome

Illustrated by James E. Ransome

This is poetic, beautiful, moving, and filled with messages of hope and resilience. Interest is brought by introducing us to the different facets of Harriet Tubman, such as spy, liberator, nurse, and suffragist, taking us through time and back again in a satisfying, circular way.



### **Possible strategies for instruction**

#### *Comprehension*

##### **Use prior knowledge to predict and connect with text.**

- Before reading, ask students, “What do you already know about Harriett Tubman? What do you think we’ll learn after reading the title *Before She Was Harriet*?”

##### **Check for understanding; monitor and self-correct.**

- P. 3—“. . . before she reached her twilight years . . .” Hmm, twilight happens at the end of the day, right when the sun is below the horizon, so I think the author is telling us, in a poetic way, what happened before Harriet reached the end of her life.
- P. 7—“. . . rising out of the fog armed with courage strong in the face of rebels . . .” Armed with courage. Wow. I am thinking about how brave you would have to be to escape when people want to own you, catch you, and hurt you, and you don’t have any weapons. What if my only weapon was bravery?
- P. 15—“. . . under the cover of night . . .” When something is under a cover, it is harder to see, so I am thinking they traveled at night when it would be harder for the slave catchers to find them. Their covering was darkness.

##### **Ask questions throughout the reading process.**

- P. 7 The author says she ferried 700 slaves to freedom. Is that really the number? How did she do it?
- P. 9 What was in the messages she took across the battlefields?
- P. 23 Out of all the names in the world, why did she choose Harriet for herself?

#### *Accuracy*

##### **Flip the sound.**

- P. 1—*Achy*. Students may try reading this with a *ch* sound. It is a perfect time to cross check and flip the sound to a *k*, where the word (meaning “continuous, dull pain”) makes sense.

- P. 21—The words *read* and *readying* are both on this page, providing a perfect opportunity to visit how those vowel sounds change.

## *Fluency*

### **Adjust and apply different reading rates to match text.**

- This is one continuous poem with no periods or commas in sight. It is a perfect opportunity to model exquisite fluency based solely on the phrasing.
  - P. 3—“But before wrinkles formed [half-second pause] and her eyes failed [half-second pause] before she reached her twilight years she could walk for miles and see clearly under a sky lit only with stars”
  - P. 11—“Before she was a Union spy she was a nurse [breath] caring for those hit with bullets [half-second pause] and hatred [half-second pause] and fear [half-second pause] tending to them with bandages and words in the bloodied dirt of southern soil”

## *Expand Vocabulary*

### **Tune In to Interesting Words**

- There are several wonderful words to learn in this book. You may want to just tell students what they mean and continue with the reading. For example, “‘Before she was an old woman she was a suffragist.’ A suffragist was a person trying to make it so more people could vote, especially women. When Harriet was a suffragist, women could not vote yet. ‘Before she was an old woman she was a suffragist, a voice for women who had none.’”
  - Other possible words to briefly explain before moving on are *overseers* (p. 7) *flee* (p. 14), and *lashes* (p. 19).
- You may want to add some to a word collector so students can begin using them in their own speaking and writing.
  - Possible choices are *raspy* (p. 5), *injustice* (p. 5), and *courage* (p. 7, 18).

*This text can be used with nearly any strategy on the CAFE Menu. The above strategies are a highlighted collection to use as a springboard for further instruction. (Pick and choose discerningly, based on the students you have right now.)*