

**Library of Congress and University of Maryland  
Difficult History Project  
Examining the Narrative of Harriet Tubman  
OUT Lesson**

*Note: This lesson was developed by Justine Lee at the University of Maryland and Magdalena Gross at Stanford University as well as Alison Jovanovic at University of Maryland.*

**Common Core Standards:**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6  
Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9  
Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

**C3-The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies  
State Standards:Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics,  
Economics, Geography, and History:**

- D2.His.10.6-8. Detect possible limitations in the historical record based on evidence collected from different kinds of historical sources.
- D2.His.12.6-8. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to identify further areas of inquiry and additional sources.
- D3.1.9-12. Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.
- D3.2.9-12. Evaluate the credibility of a source by examining how experts value the source.
- D3.3.9-12. Identify evidence that draws information directly and substantively from multiple sources to detect inconsistencies in evidence in order to revise or strengthen claims.

**Driving Inquiry Question:**

How does Harriet Tubman’s potential involvement in the Combahee River Raid (CRR) expand what mainstream textbooks reveal about her life?

**Content Objectives: Students will be able to...**

- Evaluate the existing narrative of Harriet Tubman’s life, as well as her historical and societal impact.
- Analyze the Combahee River Raid as a means of resistance to slavery during the Civil War.
- Assess the role of Harriet Tubman in the Combahee River Raid.

**Disciplinary Objectives: Students will be able to...**

- Gather relevant information from varied sources in order to complete an inquiry in the form of an Opening Up the Textbook (OUT).
- Analyze the relationship between historical sources and the contemporary interpretations.
- Revise the dominant narrative of Harriet Tubman’s life.

**Lesson Context:**

Harriet Tubman is best known for leading enslaved people to freedom through the creation of the Underground Railroad. However, little is included in textbook narratives about her role in the Civil War. It has been suggested that Harriet Tubman had a role in the Combahee River Raid (CRR) that occurred during the Civil War. In this lesson, students will examine primary and secondary documents about a raid that occurred during the Civil War and consider how this might change her legacy.

**Lesson Format: Inquiry/Opening Up the Textbook (OUT)**

Developed by the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG), the OUT is an activity that is designed to help students question the “one truth” narratives of textbooks by corroborating using primary source documents. It is meant to push students to critically evaluate the textbook. The teacher chooses a short excerpt from a textbook or dominant narrative (such as a Disney movie), and juxtaposes this with sources. Students read and compare, contrast. Typically there is a summative assessment about explaining the differences or comparing the textbook to primary source accounts. Most often OUTs are meant to do one or two of the following: *Comparison*: Comparing two textbook accounts—e.g. U.S. to non-U.S, old to new.

1. *Direct Challenge*: Using primary documents to challenge textbook facts or interpretation.
2. ***Narrativization*: Where does a textbook begin to tell the story, where does it end?**

3. *Articulating Silences*: Who is left out of the textbook's narrative? Try bringing in voices of the silenced or moving issues of narrative choice to the surface.
4. *Vivification*: Breathing life into a text that only mentions, or omits.
5. *Close Reading*: Careful, attentive focus on word choice, including adjectives, titles, and the like.

For this lesson, we will be working #3: Narrativization, rounding out the textbook dominant picture of Harriet Tubman, not only as a heroic leader of the Underground railroad, but also as a civil war spy and strategic mastermind.

**Time:** 120 Minutes

**Assessments:**

- **Formative:**
  - Opening warm-up question
  - Teacher circulates and observes student interaction with texts
  - Organizing the Evidence OUT Handout (could be collected and feedback provided prior to the writing assignment if time allows)
- **Summative:**
  - End of class discussion
  - Written response to the inquiry question using evidence from the lecture and documents

**Materials:**

- Mean of projecting
- Highlighter and/or sticky notes for students to use when Close Reading documents
- Computer/Tablet Access
- Earbuds for students to listen to the podcast
- PPT Presentation for short lecture.
  1. Who was Harriet Tubman?
  2. What is she most known for?
  3. What was the Combahee River Raid?
  4. OUT Steps
  5. Closure
- Handout 1: KWL and Lecture Burst Notes
- Handout 2: Organizing the Evidence OUT Graphic Organizer
- Handout 3: Document Packet:
  - A: Two Textbook Narratives of Harriet Tubman
  - B: History Channel Overview
  - C: New York Times Article
  - D: *Harper's Weekly* Etching
  - E: Historical Marker for Combahee River

F: Col. Montgomery Telegraph  
G: *The Commonwealth* Dispatch  
H: UnCivil Podcast

- Handout 4: Written Response Prompt

## **Lesson Procedures:**

### **1. Warm-Up: Engage Students in the Topic**

*(independent and whole class) Time: 8 Minutes*

- a. On the board, pose the following question to your students to tap prior knowledge and cultivate interest: *What do you know about Harriet Tubman?*
- b. Pass out Handout 1: KWL Chart and Lecture Burst Notes. Students should independently write down everything they can recall in the K(now) portion on the KWL Chart.
- c. After students have a few minutes to brainstorm independently, ask for students to share out, in pairs and then whole group, recording answers on the board. Student responses can then be used to help drive the lecture.

### **2. Opening Up the Textbook and Eliciting Students' Initial Ideas About the Narrative of Harriet Tubman's Life**

*(small group and share out whole group) Time: 10-12 mins*

- a. Assign students into partners or groups of three.
- b. Give students the two textbook versions (Document A). Have the students read in small groups, annotating as they go.
  - i. Strategy Tip: Teacher could also model reading one textbook narrative out loud providing commentary as they go along (Cognitive Modeling) and give students the other to do in groups.
- c. After the initial setting of the question, have students discuss their findings from the reading and use Handout 2: Organizing the Evidence OUT Graphic Organizer to record their answers.
- d. If not redundant: Have groups share some ideas out in regards what they learned from Document A in regards to the question and list the ideas on the board.

### **3. Pose the Focus Question**

*(whole class) Time: 5 minutes*

- a. Present and clarify the question that students will be discussing.
- b. Students will be add to the W(hat we want to know) in the KWL Chart, noting what more they want to know to respond to the question in the form of questions (i.e. What is the Combahee River

Raid?, Is there evidence that Harriet Tubman was at the Combahee River Raid?, etc.)

#### **4. Lecture Burst on the Combahee Raid**

*(whole class) Time: 12 minutes*

- a. What do we know about Harriet Tubman and the Combahee River Raid?
- b. Students should take notes in the Handout 1, under the lecture burst notes.
- c. Summary of key points for the teacher:
  - i. Most areas in the south were Confederate, but there were a few Union strongholds. Port Royal was one during the Civil War. Show Map.
  - ii. Radical Abolitionist Colonel Montgomery. Was known for his wild hair and being an outside of the box thinker.
  - iii. 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment was a black regiment. This was revolutionary-but critical for the Union's efforts to win the war. They needed more soldiers (Montgomery wanted black soldiers in particular, so they decided to hatch a plan-possibly with HT and certainly with local spies) that liberated the rice plantations. Rice plantations made up most of the plantations on the river banks in those areas.
  - iv. Montgomery needed good intelligence-he needed a spy! Someone nearby would be perfect, already in Port Royal. And who was a locally renowned spy? Harriet Tubman!
  - v. Tubman was already free working as a nurse or a teacher, but she was also a spy for the Union against the Confederacy. She knew the land/region really well from her work as the leader of the Underground Railroad (UR).
  - vi. Montgomery and Tubman hatched a plan: to take boats up the Combahee river, into Confederate territory, and raid 8 plantations.
  - vii. Outcome: 700- 800 enslaved people were freed. They chased out enslavers and they burned down plantations (forced labor camps).
- d. At the end, the students should add any additional questions that came up as a result of the background information (in the W section of the KWL Chart).

#### **5. Expanding on the Textbook**

*(small group and whole class) Time: 75 minutes total for this section*

##### **a. Step 1-Elicit Students' Thoughts on the Narrative**

*(both in small groups and in whole class) Time: 15 mins*

- i. Give students Documents B and C. Have the students read documents B and C independently or in their group, annotating as they go.

- ii. After reading the Documents B and C, students should share with their small group what they learned from the documents in regards to the inquiry question and how it compares to what they read from the textbook. Students should record their thoughts in Handout 2: Organizing the Evidence for the OUT Graphic Organizer
- iii. Come back as a whole class and have student groups share their thoughts on if the documents are reshaping the textbook narrative, noting specific references to evidence that support their thinking.

**b. Step 2 -Elicit Students' Thoughts on the Narrative**

*(small group & whole class) Time: 10 minutes for each document minimum, 50 minutes Total*

- i. Repeat the process with Document D, E, F, G and H, as time allows.
- ii. Teacher Tip: It may be redundant to come back whole class after each subsequent document but better to wait until the end. A teacher may also opt to reduce the number of sources based on the needs of the class.

**c. Step 3: Debrief**

*(whole class) Time: 10 minutes*

- i. Engage in a final whole class discussion to share their thoughts in response the Inquiry Question:

**How does Harriet Tubman's potential involvement in the Combahee River Raid (CRR) expand what mainstream textbooks reveal about her life?**

- ii. Ask students to provide supporting evidence from the document.
- iii. Questions to consider:
  1. What is the whole picture of Harriet Tubman?
  2. How does this change how we might think of her today?
  3. What do the sources tell us? How do they corroborate one another?
  4. Which documents were most influential in the development of a new narrative? Why?
  5. What does this tell us about dominant narratives?

**6. Closure and Assessment**

*(individual) Time: 10 minutes*

- a. As a pre-write, have the students reflect/summarize what they learned in the lesson about Harriet Tubman and the CRR in the final section of the KWL chart (What did we LEARN about Harriet Tubman and the CRR?). ( 2mins)
- b. Using the KWL chart, the sources, the note-taking tools, etc.. have the students complete the summative assessment considering the inquiry question.
  - i. **Inquiry Question:** How does Harriet Tubman’s potential involvement in the Combahee River Raid (CRR) expand what mainstream textbooks reveal about her life?
  - ii. **Prompt:** You have been asked to be on the advisory committee tasked with developing a new US History Textbook. How would you write a two paragraph passage on Harriet Tubman’s life (considering the inquiry question above)? Include evidence from at least two of the primary and/or second sources that you just read in your passage.

Handout 1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Period:\_\_\_\_\_

## Harriet Tubman KWL Chart and Lecture Burst Notes

**Directions:** Starting in the warm-up, please complete the first section of the KWL Chart: What do we Know about Harriet Tubman? This activation of prior knowledge helps to identify Tubman’s dominant historical narrative before we build upon on it with new evidence. We will come back this chart at different points in the lesson.

What do we <b>KNOW</b> about Harriet Tubman?	What do we <b>WANT</b> to know about Harriet Tubman and the CRR?	What did we <b>LEARN</b> about Harriet Tubman and the CRR?

**Notes from the Harriet Tubman/Combahee River Raid Lecture Burst:**

Handout 2

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_

**ORGANIZING THE EVIDENCE for the OUT**

Directions: Using the spaces below, take notes as you read the documents. Please use the Questions to Consider to guide your notes. Be specific!



1) Document \_\_\_\_ says that:

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How do these narratives align with what you already KNOW about Harriet Tubman? What questions do you still have?

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**Inquiry Question:** How does Harriet Tubman’s potential involvement in the Combahee River Raid (CRR) expand what mainstream textbooks reveal about her life?

*Note: Please keep this inquiry question in mind as you move forward.*

2) Document \_\_\_\_ says that:

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Potential revisions to the narrative might include:

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3) Document \_\_\_\_ says that:

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Potential revisions to the narrative might include:

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4) Document \_\_\_\_ says that:

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Potential revisions to the narrative might include:

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5) Document \_\_\_\_ says that:

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Potential revisions to the narrative might include:

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6) Document \_\_\_\_\_ says that:

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Potential revisions to the narrative might include:

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7) Document \_\_\_\_\_ says that:

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Potential revisions to the narrative might include:

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8) Document \_\_\_\_\_ says that:

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Potential revisions to the narrative might include:

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Handout 3

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Harriet Tubman Source Packet**

### **Document A** (2 textbook narratives abridged)

#### **Passage from The Americans**

##### **Underground Railroad**

One of the most famous *conductors* {of the Underground Railroad} was Harriet Tubman, born a slave in Maryland in 1820 or 1821. In 1849 after Tubman's owner died, she heard rumors that she was about to be sold. Fearing this possibility, Tubman decided to make a break for freedom and succeeded in reaching Philadelphia. Shortly after the passage of the *Fugitive Slave Act*, Tubman resolved to become a conductor on the Underground Railroad. In all she made 19 trips back to the South and is said to have helped 300 slaves - including her parents - flee to freedom.

##### **Passage from A New Nation:**

The Underground Railroad. Of about 3,200 conductors, the best known was Harriet Tubman. She had escaped to the North as a "passenger" on the Underground Railroad. She then helped others as a conductor. Tubman later recalled how she felt when she planned to escape slavery: "no man should take me alive. I should fight for my liberty as long as my strength lasts." After safely making her way to the North, Tubman risked great danger returning to the South 19 times, guiding more than 300 fugitives to freedom.

#### **Questions to Consider:**

1. According to these texts, what are Harriet Tubman's main contributions to American History?
2. How do these narratives align with what you already KNOW about Harriet Tubman?
3. What questions do you still have?

#### **Document B:**

**Source:** History Channel short article published by Barbara Maranzani, a researcher and archivist for History.com, on May 31, 2013.  
<http://www.history.com/news/harriet-tubmans-daring-raid-150-years-ago>

One of the most complicated myths about Tubman is the claim (first mentioned in a 19th century biography) that she escorted more than 300 slaves to freedom over the course of 19 missions. Tubman herself never used this number, instead estimating that she had rescued around 50 people by 1860 - mostly family members. Historians now believe that it's likely that she was personally responsible for ushering around 70 people to freedom along the Underground Railroad in the decade before the Civil War... Shortly after war broke out in 1861...Working in a series of camps in Union-held portions of South Carolina, Tubman quickly learned the lay of the land and offered her services to the army as a spy, leading a group of scouts who mapped out much of the region. Tubman's reconnaissance work laid the foundation for one of the more daring raids of the Civil War, when she personally accompanied Union soldiers in their nighttime raid at Combahee Ferry in June 1863. After guiding Union boats along the mine-filled waters and coming ashore, Tubman and her group successfully rescued more than 700 slaves working on nearby plantations.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What did you learn from this text about the number of slaves rescued by Tubman?
2. Does this corroborate or contradict the existing narrative you and/or the textbooks have about Tubman? Describe why or why not.
3. What new information would you add to her narrative from this text? Provide a quote from the text to support your answer:

**Document C:**

**Source:** Paul Donnelly (biographical note provided by the NYTimes): “*Paul Donnelly is an advocate for legal immigration*) for the [New York Times, June 7, 2013](#):

### **Harriet Tubman’s Great Raid**

It is arguably the most beautiful scene ever recorded in war. Two Union gunboats, the Harriet A. Weed and the John Adams, converted ferryboats, churning up the Combahee River... Steam whistles signal, while in the bow of the Adams, a small, powerful woman is... singing. From all around, hundreds hear Harriet Tubman’s call and run for the boats, for freedom. At least 727 men, women and children escape, mothers carrying babies, including one pair of twins: the largest liberation of slaves in American history.

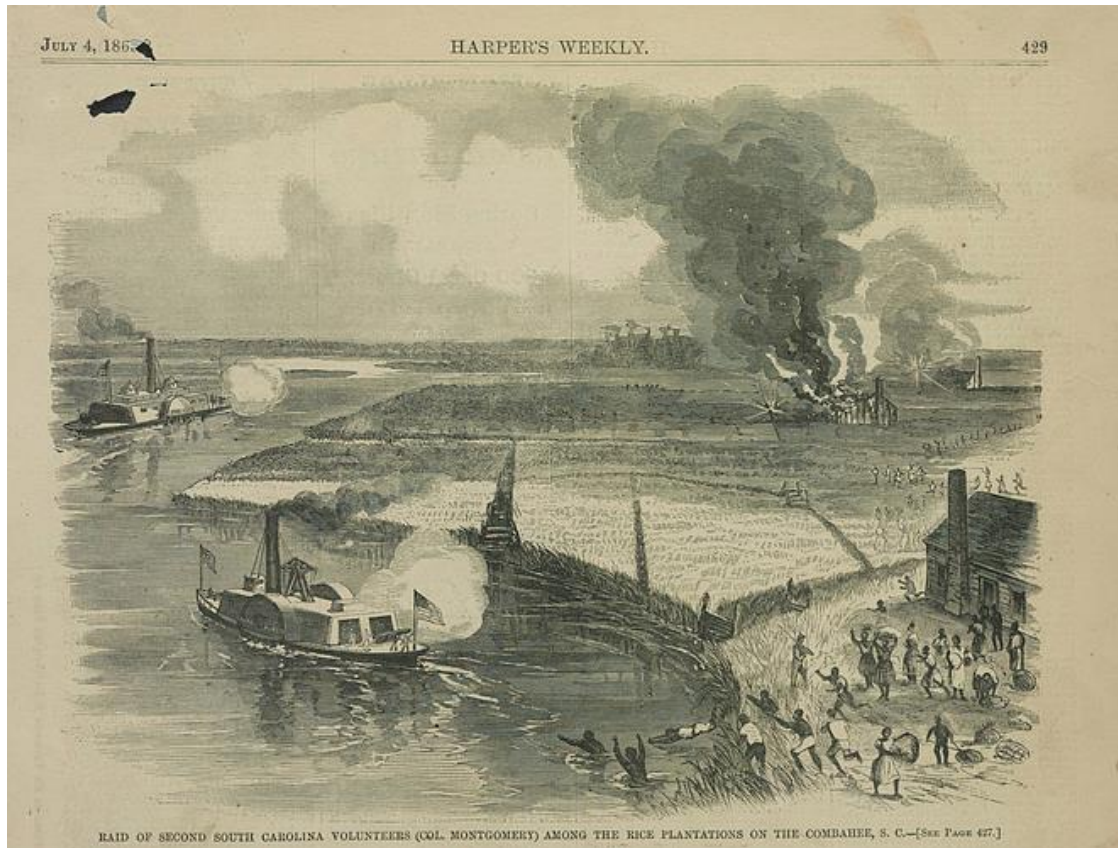
### **Questions to Consider:**

1. What is the Combahee River Raid according to this document and what was Tubman’s role?
2. Does this corroborate or contradict the existing narrative you and/or the textbooks have about Tubman? Describe why or why not.
3. What new information would you add to her narrative from this text? Provide a quote from the text to support your answer:

### **Document D:**

**Source:** New York : Harper's Weekly, July 4, 1863. Title "Raid of 2nd South Carolina Volunteers (Col. Montgomery) among the rice plantations on the Combahee." Retrieved from *Library of Congress*.

**Headnote:** Harper's Weekly (at the time) was a partisan paper, on the side of Abraham Lincoln and the Union. It was published mostly in the North East United States and distributed. Circulation was about 200,000 people by 1860 (for the time this is a large number).



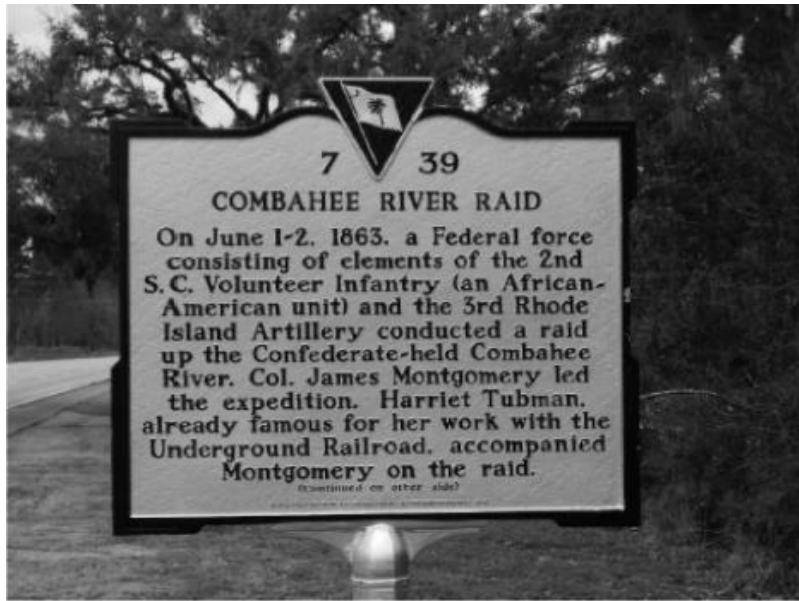
**Questions to Consider:**

1. Interpret this illustration (describe what you see and analyze).
2. How does this image fit into what you know about the raid?
3. What information is left out? Why might the illustrator have left some information out?

**Document E:**



**Source:** Historical Marker at the Combahee River in South Carolina. Photo taken by Jeff Grigg.



Historical marker at Combahee River. Photo by Jeff W. Grigg.

### Questions to Consider:

1. What new information do you learn through this plaque?
2. What might a plaque like this leave out?
3. Who created this plaque? And why might that matter?
4. How does this add to your initial narrative of Harriet Tubman and her life?

### Document F:

**Source:** Colonel Montgomery wrote a telegraph on June 8, 1863 describing the raid. Retrieved from *Library of Congress*.

I have the honor to report that, in obedience to your orders, I proceeded up the Combahee River, on the steamers **(gun boats)** John Adams and Harriet A. Weed, with a detachment of three hundred (300) men of the Second South Carolina Volunteer Regiment and a section of the Third Rhode Island Battery, commanded by Captain Brayton. We ascended the river some twenty-five (25) miles, destroyed a pontoon bridge, together with a large amount of cotton, rice, and other property, and brought away seven hundred and twenty-seven slaves, and some fine horses. We had some sharp skirmishes, in all of which the men behaved splendidly. I hope to report more fully in a day or two.

Doc. 1.  
**EXPEDITION UP THE COMBAHEE.**  
COLONEL MONTGOMERY'S OFFICIAL REPORT.  
BY TELEGRAPH FROM BEAUFORT, S. C.,  
Dated June 8, 1863.  
To Major-General D. Hunter, Commanding  
Tenth Army Corps, Department of the South:  
GENERAL: I have the honor to report that, in  
obedience to your orders, I proceeded up the  
Combahee River, on the steamers John Adams  
and Harriet A. Weed, with a detachment of three  
hundred (300) men of the Second South-Carolina  
volunteer regiment, and a section of the Third  
Rhode Island battery, commanded by Captain  
Brayton. We ascended the river some twenty-  
five (25) miles, destroyed a ponton bridge, to-  
gether with a vast amount of cotton, rice, and  
other property, and brought away seven hundred  
and twenty-seven slaves, and some fine horses.  
We had some sharp skirmishes, in all of which,  
the men behaved splendidly. I hope to report  
more fully in a day or two.  
I have the honor to be, General,  
Your most obedient servant,  
JAMES MONTGOMERY,  
Colonel Commanding S. C. V.  
A NATIONAL ACCOUNT.

### Questions to Consider:

1. What information is left out here and why might he have left it out?
2. What new information do you learn with this document?
3. How does this change your narrative of the life of Harriet Tubman?

### Document G:

**Source:** The following dispatch, quoted in part, appeared on the front page of *The Commonwealth*, a pro-Union, Boston newspaper, on Friday, July 10, 1863: Retrieved from *Library of Congress*.

Col. Montgomery and his gallant band of 300 black soldiers, *under the guidance of a black woman*, dashed into the enemy's country, struck a bold and effective blow, destroying millions of dollars worth of commissary stores, cotton and lordly dwellings, and striking terror into the heart of rebeldom, brought off near 800 slaves and thousands of dollars worth of property, without losing a man or receiving a scratch. It was ...glorious ...

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What information is left out here and why might he have left it out?
2. What new information do you learn with this document?
3. How does this change your narrative of the life of Harriet Tubman?

**Document H:**

**Source:** UnCivil Podcast

“A group of ex-farmers, a terrorist from Kansas, and a schoolteacher attempt the greatest covert operation of the Civil War.”

LINK: [https://www.gimletmedia.com/uncivil/the-raid?utm\\_source=gimletPlayer&utm\\_medium=copyShare&utm\\_campaign=gimletPlayer](https://www.gimletmedia.com/uncivil/the-raid?utm_source=gimletPlayer&utm_medium=copyShare&utm_campaign=gimletPlayer)

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What new information do you learn with this podcast?
2. How does this change your narrative of the life of Harriet Tubman?
3. What questions do you still have?

Handout 4

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## Harriet Tubman Writing Response Prompt

**Inquiry Question:** How does Harriet Tubman's potential involvement in the Combahee River Raid (CRR) expand what mainstream textbooks reveal about her life?

**Directions:** You have been asked to be on the advisory committee tasked with developing a new U.S. History Textbook. How would you write a two paragraph passage on Harriet Tubman's life (considering the inquiry question above)? Include evidence from **at least two** of the primary and/or second sources that you just read in your passage.

