

Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad



The Underground Railroad was a network of secret routes and safe places used by black slaves in the southern states of the United States to escape to the free states in the north of the country or to Canada. White “abolitionists” helped them and between 1810 and 1850 the Underground Railroad helped almost 100,000 black people to escape. Harriet Tubman was an Afro-American abolitionist. Born as a slave, she escaped and began various missions to rescue slaves using the Underground Railroad.

When the American Civil War began, Tubman worked for the Union Army, first as a cook and nurse, and then as a spy.

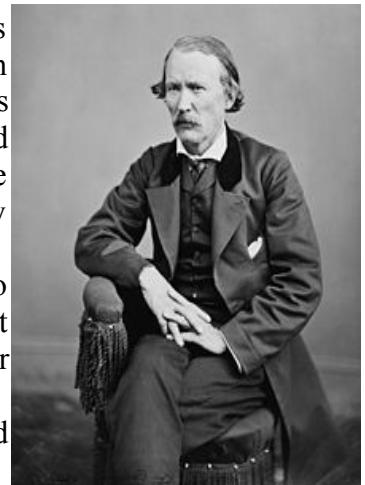
After the war she was active in the women’s suffrage movement (to obtain the vote for women in political elections) and when she died she became an icon of courage and freedom for Americans.

Kit Carson and the Wild West

Kit Carson is known to many children as a comic character in a famous Italian cartoon strip, but Christopher “Kit” Carson was a real person, born in Kentucky in December 1809. At that time Kentucky was still a wilderness populated by animals like wild geese, ducks, turkeys, quails and pigeons and with very few settlers. Deer, antelopes, moose, wolves, and even bears were also common, there was very little agriculture and most people lived by hunting and trapping animals for their meat and fur.

There were no schools to attend in this area, so young Kit Carson had no education. By the age of 15 he was an excellent horseman and could shoot very well. He was friendly with some of the Native Americans who lived near him and eventually became a trapper, an Indian guide and interpreter.

He lived with the Native American Indians in their villages and later married a Cheyenne girl of unusual intelligence and beauty, with whom he had a daughter. Because of his love for the Native American way of life and for the state of Kentucky, Carson became one of the most famous men in American history and many stories were told about him. He died on May 23rd, 1868 at a time when the Native Americans’ traditional way of life was ending because of the politics of the White Man. Soon his beloved Indians had to give up their nomadic lifestyle and started to weave blankets to sell to tourists as souvenirs to make money. The Golden Era of the Wild West was over.



Now answer these questions:

1. What was the Underground Railroad?
2. Who was Harriet Tubman?
3. What did Harriet do at the end of the American Civil War?
4. Describe Kentucky by the time of Kit Carson’s childhood.
5. What did Kit become when he grew up?
6. How did he feel about Native Americans?
7. Why did he become famous?
8. Which of these two American icons is your favourite and why? Explain.