**Harriet Tubman**

**Memoir 1**

**Question:** What led you to become such an integral part of the Underground Railroad?

My experience as a slave was harsh. Like many other slaves, I experienced brutality, insensitivity and inhumane behavior. No person should ever have to endure the treatment that I, and so many others, did.

When I was eight years old, I was hired out to a weaver’s family. I was so young, so alone and so scared but nobody cared. They didn’t care when I cried and they didn’t care when I got sick. A few years later, I was sent to work as a house servant but nobody had ever taught me how to keep house so I was whipped by the mistress for not doing a proper job.

Once, I was caught stealing a lump of sugar. I was just a child and I had never tasted sugar before! When I was caught I couldn’t bare another whipping so instead I ran. I slept and ate with the pigs for five days before I decided that I had to go back or I would starve to death. When I returned the master beat me so bad he broke my ribs and gave me scars that I had for the rest of my life as a reminder of my experiences.

After enduring this brutal treatment, I had one experience that was a turning point in my life. A moment that made me realize that I had to do something to help others. While on a shopping trip with a cook to buy supplies for the house, we ran into a slave who was in town without permission. When the overseer of the plantation arrived he ordered me to help tie the slave down for a beating. I don’t know what came over me but I said, “NO!” I knew the trouble that would come to me but I didn’t think, I just spoke from my heart. While the overseer stood there in shock, the slave got away. He threw a weight at the door and it hit me in the head. I was knocked out and bleeding and suffered from this injury for the rest of my life. But I knew I did the right thing. I would not be a part of violence against another human being even if it meant sacrificing my own well-being.

In 1849, my longtime master died, leaving me to be sold upon a moments notice. I lived in fear of being separated from my husband and family so instead of waiting for this to happen, I ran, even though my husband refused to come with me. After a long and arduous journey on the Underground Railroad, I reached Pennsylvania for the first time. I knew that I wanted other people to experience the joy of being free. I decided that it would be my life’s work to help as many slaves as possible.