**Harriet Tubman**

**Memoir 2**

**Question**: **What exactly was the Underground Railroad?**

The Underground Railroad was a metaphor for a super secret passageway to freedom. It did not have tracks or trains and the “conductors” were the people who helped the slaves get to the north where they could be free.

The name came from an incident with an escaped slave named Tice Davids. While running away from Kentucky, he swam across the Ohio River. His master, while chasing him, was mystified that Tice seemed to disappear when he got to the other side. He said that Tice had found some sort of “an underground railroad.” The real Underground Railroad was made up of thousands people, both white and black, known as “conductors,” who were against slavery. The conductors provided “stations”, or safe places for runaway slaves to hide along their hundred-mile journey to the north. The hiding places could be attics, hidden crawl spaces under floors or behind shelves. Each conductor would then offer the name of the next conductor and the next station. The runaway slaves were known as “packages,” and they traveled at night usually by foot, but sometimes by boat or wagon. Slave hunters were constantly on the lookout for escaped slaves. Both the slaves and the conductors faced severe consequences if they were caught. Because slaves could not read or write, many secret messages were passed along the railroad hidden in quilts and songs.

My first experience on the Underground Railroad was scary. At the first station, I was shocked to find the conductor to be a white woman! I didn’t realize that white people would put their lives on the line to help slaves. The only whites I had known in my life were cruel towards black people. My journey was long; I was exhausted and hungry and was constantly afraid of getting caught by a slave hunter. I used the North Star to guide me and keep moving forward. When I finally reached the end of my journey and crossed into Pennsylvania, I felt like I was in Heaven and knew I had to help more people experience a life of freedom.