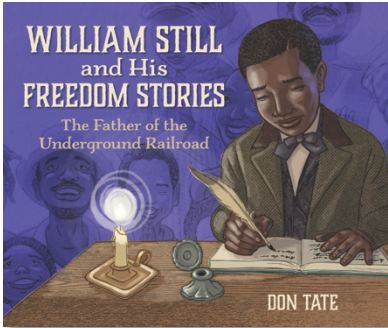




PEACHTREE

# TEACHER'S GUIDE



## William Still and His Freedom Stories: The Father of the Underground Railroad

Written and illustrated by Don Tate

HC: 978-1-56145-935-3

Ages 6–10

Lexile • F&P • GRL T; Gr 4

### ABOUT THE BOOK

William Still's parents escaped slavery but had to leave two of their children behind, a tragedy that haunted the family. As a young man, William went to work for the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, where he raised money, planned rescues, and helped freedom seekers who had traveled north. And then one day, a strangely familiar man came into William's office, searching for information about his long-lost family. Could it be?

Motivated by his own family's experience, William began collecting the stories of thousands of other freedom seekers. As a result, he was able to reunite other families and build a remarkable source of information, including encounters with Harriet Tubman, Henry "Box" Brown, and William and Ellen Craft.

Don Tate brings to life the incredible true story of William Still's life and work as a record keeper of enslaved people who had fled to freedom. Tate's powerful words and artwork are sure to inspire readers in this first-ever picture book biography of the Father of the Underground Railroad.

### BEFORE YOU READ

#### Meet the author and illustrator

- Don Tate has written and illustrated many picture books for children. The majority of his books are about historical people who have *persisted* during hard times. The word "persist" means to carry on, despite difficulty or opposition. He likes to write about people who change the world through their persistence. Why do you think Don finds this type of story to be inspiring? Do you think by writing and

illustrating stories such as these, that Don might be changing the world too? Explain your answer.

- Don's grandmother gave him a suitcase when he was a child. It was filled with found objects and she encouraged him to use the objects to create toys, objects, and art. Why do you think she supported Don's artistic abilities in this way? Do you think his grandmother might have known that Don would become an accomplished illustrator some day? Explain your answer.
- Don says that "storytelling informs us and entertains us." He believes that drawing is a form of communication, just like reading or writing. How about you? Do you agree? Do pictures tell stories? How so?
- If drawing is a form of communication, what story is the illustration on the book cover communicating?

#### Discuss the illustration on the front cover

- Describe the action taking place on the cover. What is the young man doing?
- Notice that his desk is lit by candlelight. Explain why this is so. What does this detail in the illustration suggest about the time in history this story is being told?
- Notice that he is using what is known as a feather quill pen as a writing tool. What tools do you use to write? Describe the similarities and differences between his quill and your tools.
- Notice that there are a number of faces depicted in the background. How do you think these people feel? How do you know? Why do you think the artist chose a different style to depict these people

than the one he used for the main figure? What does this technique suggest about their role in the story?

- Read the title of the book. Define the word “freedom.” What does freedom mean to you?
- Predict what this book is going to be about.

### AFTER YOU READ

Use the following excerpts from the book as post-reading discussion questions.

***“Torn and tormented, she whispered a parting prayer for her two boys, who were big and strong enough to fend for themselves. Then she escaped with her two girls.”***

- Levin did a remarkable thing by working hard, earning money, and purchasing his freedom. Why do you think that he, being a newly-freed man, was concerned that he might be enslaved again?
- Discuss the depths of sadness Levin and Sydney must have felt to have to leave family members behind in search of safety.

***“The neighbors called on William. The young boy knew every nook and cranny of the woods.”***

***William led the man to safety, some twenty miles away. The experience defined the rest of his life.”***

- List ways that William demonstrated kindness and dependability at a very young age.
- What did William have to do in order to learn to read or write? How does this reflect his personality? How did those qualities influence his actions later in life?
- Leadership means being in charge of people or actions. People use their skills to help them lead. What skills do you think William Still had? How did he use them to help him lead?

***“William’s employers were doing the work he hoped to do. They were abolitionists who spoke loudly against slavery. They sponsored meetings. Signed petitions. Published newspapers.”***

- An abolitionist is a person who wants to stop the practice of slavery. Why would William want to join this effort?
- List the sacrifices and dangers William and others made to help abolish slavery.

***“One evening an unexpected passenger arrived at his office.”***

- Consider William’s experiences that the author has chosen to depict, such as struggling to become educated, guiding freedom seekers, and working for abolitionists. What qualities do these experiences share? How do you think they prepared him for the moment when he finally met his “long-lost but never forgotten” older brother?
- How do you think William felt when he met Peter? Make a list of the emotions he might have experienced.

***“From that point forward, William recorded every detail about each freedom seeker who passed through his home or office.”***

- Why do you think William documented the stories of people who escaped slavery? Why was this important to do? Not only did his work help to reunite families, but without his records the experience of escaping to Freedom’s Land would not exist. Discuss the huge impact Still’s records had on history.
- Examine the stories of William and Ellen Craft and Henry “Box” Brown. How do their experiences help us understand what it was like to travel on the Underground Railroad?
- Discuss the effect of persistence in *William Still and His Freedom Stories*.

***“William’s work now put him in great danger. His records were evidence of crimes committed.”***

- How did William protect the stories of people who escaped slavery?
- Explain why caring for their stories put him in a risky position.
- Why did William feel their stories were valuable?
- Committing a crime means that you have broken the law. Why was escaping slavery a crime? Why was

collecting the stories of those escaping slavery a crime?

- Was the harsh treatment of people who escaped slavery fair or unjust? Explain your answer.

***“In 1861, a new president was elected.***

***Could Abraham Lincoln reunite the country?***

***Would he choose freedom or slavery?***

***In time, Lincoln did the right thing.***

***He chose freedom.”***

- Early in the story, Levin, William and Peter’s father, earned money to buy his freedom. Though he was considered to be a free man, Levin was fearful that he would be enslaved once again. How is the freedom granted to enslaved people by Lincoln’s executive order different from Levin’s purchased freedom? What changed?
- Identify ways that William continued to serve as a leader during this time in history.

***“Because that’s what stories can do.***

***Protest injustice.***

***Soothe. Teach. Inspire. Connect.***

***Stories save lives.”***

- Explore ways that William’s true stories about the people who traveled the Underground Railroad teach lessons of hope, persistence, and protesting injustice.
- Explain how inspirational stories, such as William’s freedom stories, can save lives.
- Identify ways that William Still and his freedom stories changed the world.

## ACTIVITY SHEETS

- The Active Reading Guide
- Vertical Word Puzzle
- Zig-zag Timeline

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR / ILLUSTRATOR

Don Tate is the illustrator of numerous critically-acclaimed books for children. In 2013, he earned an Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Honor Award for his first picture book text, *It Jes’ Happened: When Bill Traylor Started to Draw*.

[dontate.com](http://dontate.com)

## THE ACTIVITIES ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING STANDARDS:

### English Language Arts – Reading: Informational Text

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1.4; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.1.10; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.2.8; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.6

### English Language Arts – Reading: Foundational Skills

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.1.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.1.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.1.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.1.4; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.2.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.2.4; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.3.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.3.4

### English Language Arts – Writing

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1.8; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2.8; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2

### English Language Arts – Speaking & Listening

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.4; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.5; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.6; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.2; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.4; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3.6

Peachtree Teacher’s Guide  
prepared by Debbie Gonzales

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## THE ACTIVE READING GUIDE

### OBJECTIVE:

Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.

### MATERIALS:

- *William Still and His Freedom Stories: The Father of the Underground Railroad*
- The Active Reading Guide Template (Guide, pg. 5)
- Pencil

### PROCEDURE:

- Distribute copies of the **Active Reading Guide Template** to the students.
- Read *William Still and His Freedom Stories: The Father of the Underground Railroad* to the class.
- First, instruct students to write or illustrate what they knew about William Still before reading the book in the section provided on the template.
- Encourage a discussion about their perceptions of what they thought the story might be about.
- Next, instruct students to write or illustrate topics or concepts that they learned as a result of hearing William Still's story.
- Ask students to record the facts of the story that were new to them. Direct students to discuss the information that they learned.
- Finally, instruct students to write or illustrate a fact or concept that surprised them as a result of hearing William Still's story.
- Lead a discussion during which students discuss aspects of William Still's story that surprised them. Why were they surprised by the events that took place? Ask them to explain their reasoning.
- Encourage students to describe how they have been changed as a result of learning about William Still's story.
- Invite them to write and illustrate a short review about the book. Have them share their work with the class.

## THE ACTIVE READING GUIDE TEMPLATE

### ***Background Knowledge & Prediction***

Before I started reading *William Still and His Freedom Stories: The Father of the Underground Railroad*, I knew that...

### ***New Knowledge***

In the book, I learned that...

### ***Surprising Facts***

I was surprised that...

## VERTICAL WORD PUZZLE CLUES

Use the clues below to solve the vertical puzzle.

1.		W	
2.		I	
3.		L	
4.		L	
5.		I	
6.		A	
7.		M	
8.		S	
9.		T	
10.		I	
11.		L	
12.		L	

### Clues:

1. War known as the “War between the States”
2. Still began working for the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery \_\_\_\_\_
3. The Fugitive \_\_\_\_\_ Act required the return of runaways
4. People on the Underground Railroad traveled to Canada, also known as “\_\_\_\_\_”
5. Acted as President in 1861
6. Freedom-seeking people were drawn to this city in Pennsylvania
7. Harriett “\_\_\_\_\_” Tubman, named for leading freedom seekers through the Underground Railroad
8. Still collected \_\_\_\_\_ about people who escaped on the Underground Railroad
9. William’s long-lost older brother
10. William hid records of runaway slaves, stories that would prove they committed \_\_\_\_\_
11. Eventually, William resigned from the Anti-Slavery Society to start a \_\_\_\_\_ business
12. William’s father

## VERTICAL WORD PUZZLE CLUES ANSWER KEY

Use the clues below to solve the Vertical Puzzle.

1. C I V I L W A R

2. S O C I E T Y

3. S L A V E

4. F R E E D O M ' S L A N D

5. L I N C O L N

6. P H I L A D E L P H I A

7. M O S E S

8. S T O R I E S

9. P E T E R

10. C R I M E S

11. C O A L

12. L E V I N

### Clues:

1. War known as the "War between the States"
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3. The Fugitive \_\_\_\_\_ Act required the return of runaways
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9. William's long-lost older brother
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12. William's father

## ZIG-ZAG TIMELINE

### OBJECTIVE:

Describe the connection and significance between a series of historical events.

### MATERIALS:

- *William Still and His Freedom Stories: The Father of the Underground Railroad*
- The Zig-zag Timeline Event Labels (Guide, pg. 9)
- The Zig-zag Timeline Template (Guide, pg. 10)
- The Zig-zag Timeline Answers (Guide, pg. 11)
- Scissors
- Tape or glue stick
- Pencil & paper

### PROCEDURE:

- Distribute a copy of the **Zig-zag Timeline Template** and a set of the **Zig-zag Timeline Event Labels** to each child. Use scissors to trim around the borders of the **Zig-zag Timeline Event Labels**.
- Using *William Still and His Freedom Stories: The Father of the Underground Railroad* as a reference, instruct students to match each **Zig-zag Timeline Event Labels** to the appropriate time slot on the **Zig-zag Timeline**.
- Instruct students to analyze the content of the timeline. Lead a discussion by asking questions similar to these listed below.
  - Identify moments in William Still's life that seemed hopeless. Explain how he was able to overcome such hopeless situations.
  - Which event do you feel was most monumental in William Still's life? Explain why.
  - Which event had the most impact on African-Americans at that time in history? Explain why.
  - Explain how the historic events recorded on the timeline, the influential people he met, and intriguing personal experiences prepared William Still to write *The Underground Railroad Records*.
- Instruct students to write and illustrate a short reflection about one of the **Zig-zag Timeline Event Labels**. Have them share their work with the class.



## ZIG-ZAG TIMELINE EVENT LABELS

Still goes to work for the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery.

The Civil War begins.  
Still leaves the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery and opens a coal and ice yard.

The Civil War ends.  
Congress passes the Thirteenth Amendment, abolishing slavery throughout the United States.

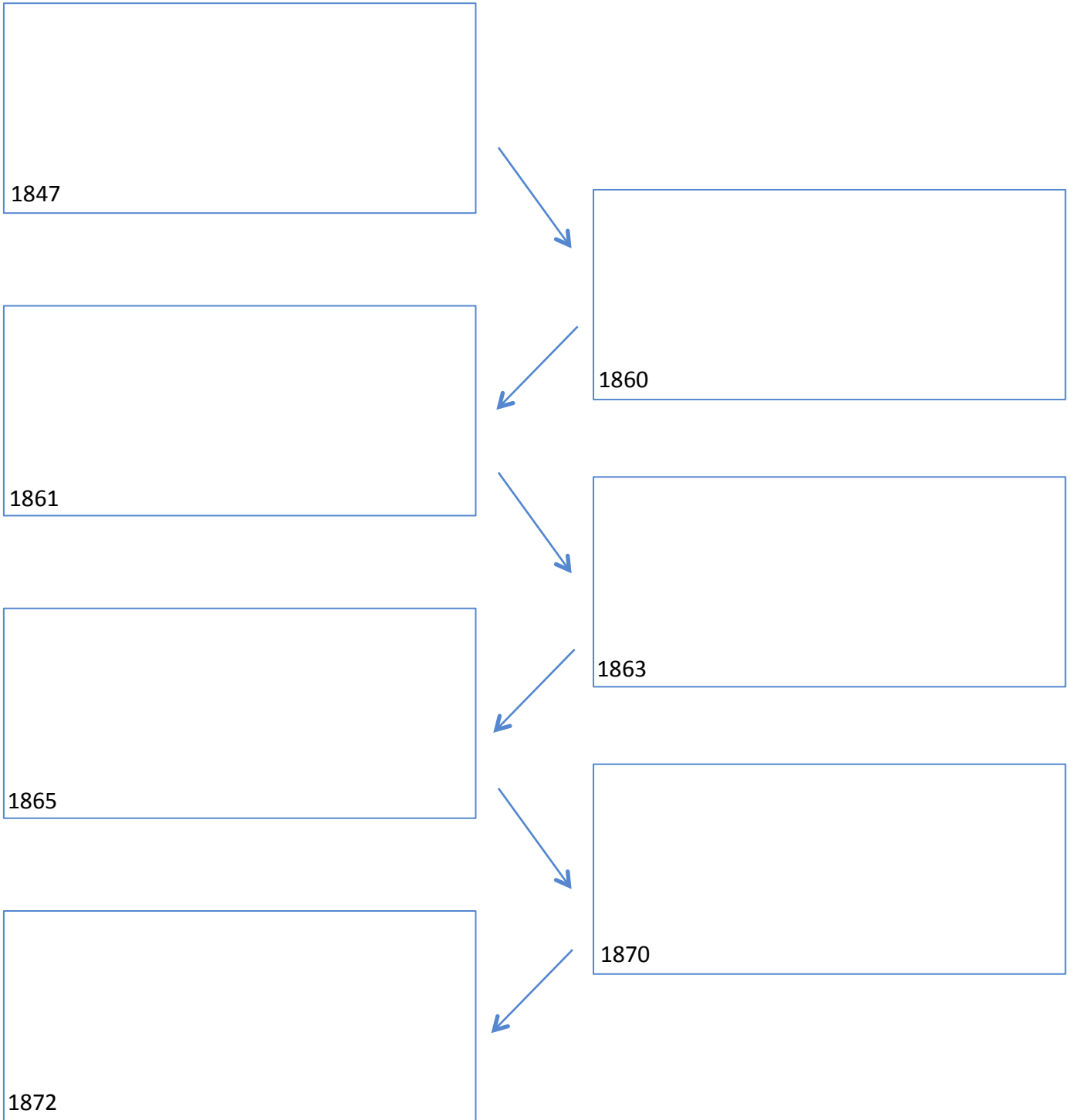
Still publishes his first book, *The Underground Railroad Records*.

The Fugitive Slave Act is passed by the United States Congress.

Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, an executive order ending slavery in the Confederate states.

The Fifteenth Amendment, granting African-American men the right to vote, is ratified.

## ZIG-ZAG TIMELINE TEMPLATE



### ZIG-ZAG TIMELINE ANSWER KEY

