

# What to do today

*IMPORTANT Parent or Carer – Read this page with your child and check that you are happy with what they have to do and any weblinks or use of internet.*

## 1. Listen to the story

- Listen to the author read Henry's Freedom Box.  
<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/videos/teaching-content/henrys-freedom-box-read-aloud-ellen-levine/>
- What did you notice in the story this second time? Which of the two readings do you prefer?

## 2. Answer some questions

- Read *Extract 1* for yourself.
- Challenge yourself to read *Extracts 2* and *3*.
- Read *Henry's Freedom Box Questions* and write your answers.

## 3. Choose three key events

- Choose the three events from the story that you think are most important.
- Make an illustration for each one and write a caption that explains it.

Well done. Share your work with a grown up. Explain your answers to *Henry's Freedom Box Questions*. Together read the *Answers* together.

## Try the Fun-Time Extra

- Practise reading *Extract 1* out loud. Read it to somebody else and then use your *Key Events* to tell them the rest of the story.

## Extract 1

Henry Brown wasn't sure how old he was. He was a slave. And slaves weren't allowed to know their birthdays.

Henry and his brothers and sisters worked in the big house where the master lived. Henry's master had been good to Henry and his family. But Henry's mother knew things could change.

"Do you see those leaves blowing in the wind? They are torn from the trees like slave children are torn from their families."

One morning the master called for Henry and his mother. They climbed the wide staircase. The master lay in bed with only his head above the quilt. He was very ill. He beckoned them to come closer.

Some slaves were freed by their owners. Henry's heart beat fast. Maybe the master would set him free.

But the masters said, "You are a good worker, Henry. I am giving you to my son. You must obey him and never tell a lie."

Henry nodded, but he didn't say thank you. That would have been a lie.

Later that day, Henry watched a bird soar high among the trees. "*Free bird? Happy bird!*" Henry thought.

Henry said goodbye to his family. He looked across the field. The leaves swirled in the wind.

## Extract 2

Henry worked in his new master's factory. He was good at his job.

"Do not tear the tobacco leaf!" the boss yelled at the new boy. He poked the boy with a stick.

If you made a mistake, the boss would beat you.

Henry was lonely. One day he met Nancy, who was shopping for her mistress. They walked and talked and agreed to meet again. Henry felt like singing. But slaves didn't dare sing in the streets. Instead he hummed all the way home.

Months later, Henry asked Nancy to be his wife. When both their master's agreed, Henry and Nancy were married.

Soon there was a little baby. Then another. And another.

Henry knew they were very lucky. They lived together even though they had different masters.

But Nancy was worried. Her master had lost a great deal of money.

"I'm afraid he will sell our children," she said. Henry sat very still.

Henry worked hard all morning. He tried to forget what Nancy had said.

His friend James came into the factory. He whispered to Henry, "Your wife and children were just sold at the slave market."

"No!" cried Henry.

### Extract 3

Henry couldn't move. He couldn't think. He couldn't work.

"Twist that tobacco!" The boss poked Henry. Henry twisted tobacco leaves. His heart twisted in his chest.

At lunchtime, Henry rushed to the centre of town. A large group of slaves was tied together. The owner shouted at them.

Henry looked for his family.

"Father! Father!"

Henry watched his children disappear down the road.

Where was Nancy?

He saw her the same moment she saw him.

When he wiped away his tears, Nancy, too, was gone.

Henry's Freedom Box Questions

What tense is the story written in?  
Find an example.

Which words and phrases stood out when you reread the story?

How is tension built in the story?  
Find an example and explain how it is built.

Find some speech in the story. Write it below.

## Key Events


## ANSWERS

What tense is the story written in?  
Find an example.

Past tense

Henry worked...

The master called...

Henry rushed....

Which words and phrases stood out when you reread the story?

**Possibly...**

Slaves weren't allowed to know their birthdays..

Henry didn't say thank you because that would have been a lie.

"Your wife and children were just sold at the slave market."

When he wiped away his tears, Nancy and the children were gone.

How is tension built in the story?  
Find an example and explain how it is built.

**Sometimes we know something bad will happen.**

Henry said goodbye to his family. He looked across the field. The leaves swirled in the wind.

"I'm afraid he will sell our children"

Henry couldn't move. He couldn't think. He couldn't work.

Find some speech in the story.  
Write it below.

He whispered to Henry, "Your wife and children were just sold at the slave market."

"Do not tear the tobacco leaf!" the boss yelled.

"Twist that tobacco!" The boss poked Henry.