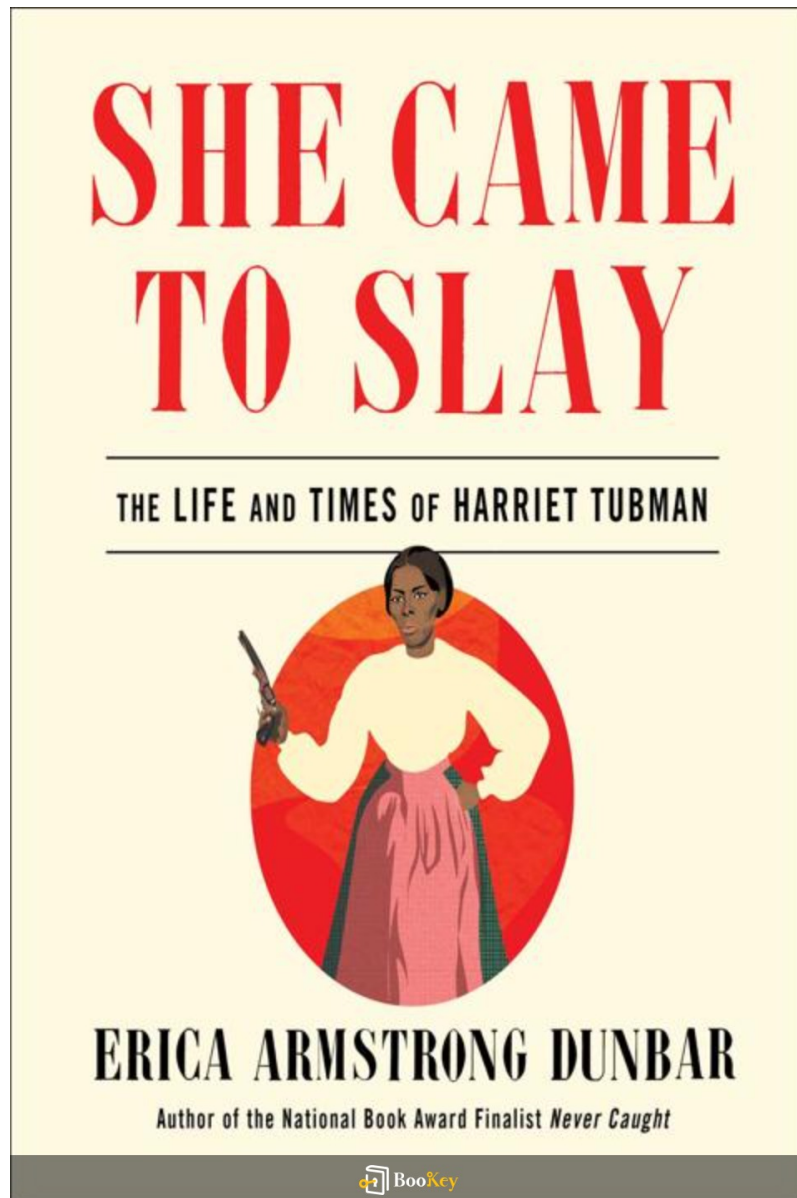


She Came To Slay PDF

Erica Armstrong Dunbar



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About the book

Title: She Came to Slay: The Life and Times of Harriet Tubman

Author: Erica Armstrong Dunbar

Overview:

Erica Armstrong Dunbar's analysis of Harriet Tubman in "She Came to Slay" revitalizes the narrative around this celebrated American figure. While Tubman is often primarily recognized for her role in leading slaves to freedom via the Underground Railroad, Dunbar delves deeper, presenting Tubman as a formidable abolitionist, suffragist, and a skilled spy during the Civil War.

Key Themes:

- 1. Eloquent Storytelling:** Dunbar's captivating writing transforms Tubman's story from a well-trod account into a rich tapestry of determination and courage, emphasizing her many contributions beyond just the Underground Railroad.
- 2. Historical Impact:** The book highlights Tubman's profound effects on American history and social justice movements, illustrating her relentless fight for freedom and equality.
- 3. Reevaluating Legacy:** This biography serves as a call to reexamine not only Tubman's place in history but also the broader implications of her fight

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against oppression.

Call to Action:

Whether you are familiar with Harriet Tubman's legacy or new to her story, "She Came to Slay" invites you to view her as a symbol of resistance and resilience—one whose life inspires ongoing struggles for justice and equality.

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About the author

Profile: Erica Armstrong Dunbar

Title: Distinguished Historian and Author

Affiliation: Charles and Mary Beard Professor of History, Rutgers University

Areas of Expertise: African American history, Women's history, Early American history

About Erica Armstrong Dunbar:

Erica Armstrong Dunbar is a prominent figure in the field of history, honoring the narratives of African American women through her scholarship and advocacy. Recognized for her contributions, Dunbar has received numerous awards and accolades that affirm her influence in public scholarship.

Scholarship Impact:

Her academic work uniquely combines scholarly rigor with engaging storytelling, enabling a broad audience to access and appreciate the rich tapestry of marginalized voices within American history. Dunbar's book, "She Came to Slay," exemplifies her commitment to shining a light on the

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lives and legacies of extraordinary African American women, ensuring their stories are integral to historical discussions.

Mission:

To bridge the gap between academia and the public, making history more inclusive and representative of underrepresented voices.

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She Came To Slay Summary

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She Came To Slay Summary Chapter List

1. The Unyielding Spirit of Harriet Tubman: A Journey Begins
2. The Escape: Defying Odds to Forge Freedom
3. Underground Railroad: Leadership and Legacy of a Conductor
4. Fighting for Equality: Tubman's Role in Civil War and Beyond
5. A Lasting Legacy: Remembering the Impact of Harriet Tubman's Life

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1. The Unyielding Spirit of Harriet Tubman: A Journey Begins

Harriet Tubman's story begins not in freedom but in bondage; her unyielding spirit, however, shone brightly even in the darkest moments of her life. Born into slavery in Dorchester County, Maryland, around 1822, Tubman was given the name Araminta Ross. From a young age, she faced the harsh realities of enslaved life, enduring physical abuse and witnessing the trauma of family separations. Despite these circumstances, Tubman's spirit proved impossible to quench. Her early experiences carved a path of resilience that would define her mission and work throughout her life.

Tubman was known for her fierce will and determination. At the age of twelve, she was the victim of a head injury inflicted by an overseer, which left her with lifelong health issues. Yet this did not deter her; rather it fortified her resolve. Tubman's escape from slavery was driven by an intense longing for freedom—not only for herself but for her family and others still in bondage. In 1849, after learning that she and her brothers were to be sold, Tubman took her life into her own hands. In the dead of night, she fled north, navigating through woods and fields, evading dogs and hunters, and using the North Star to guide her.

Her first escape was a monstrous gamble against immense odds, one that set the stage for the incredible legacy she would later establish. Tubman



traveled over 90 miles to Pennsylvania, a free state, using a network of safe houses known as the Underground Railroad, although this term wouldn't be coined until later. The sheer audacity of her decision to flee from the oppressive grip of slavery underscores her courage. Upon reaching freedom, Tubman did not succumb to complacency; instead, she felt a profound obligation to help others.

Tubman's journey into the unknown was as much about hope as it was about physical escape. The decision to return south—as a conductor on the Underground Railroad—demonstrates her unwavering commitment to freeing others. With each trip back into the dangerous territory, she defied the expectations of a society that deemed African Americans inferior and incapable of leading their own liberation. In total, Tubman made approximately thirteen missions to rescue approximately seventy enslaved people, emphasizing her capacity for leadership and her belief that freedom was a right for everyone, not just herself.

The psychological and emotional aspects of her journeys were equally significant; Tubman operated with the mantra that "I never lost a passenger" while never losing sight of the mission. Her methods included strict discipline and a fierce determination to protect her charges, often employing tactics like carrying a revolver, brandishing it to deter those who might turn back or betray her. In essence, her character was shaped not only by her own



suffering but also by her profound empathy for others who lived in chains.

Tubman's story exemplifies a relentless pursuit of freedom fueled by the strength of her spirit. Her early life experiences, marked by brutality and abandonment, served as a forge for her activism. The strength she displayed in confronting the horrors of slavery and returning to aid others forged her into a symbol of resilience.

In summary, the unyielding spirit of Harriet Tubman can be attributed to the myriad trials she faced in her early life, combined with her commitment to action and advocacy for the freedom of others. Her journey reflects not only her personal bravery and determination but also a broader narrative of hope and resistance against the institution of slavery. As Tubman's legacy began to unfold, it set the foundation for her future influence in the fight for equality and justice, solidifying her place as one of the most iconic figures in American history.

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2. The Escape: Defying Odds to Forge Freedom

Harriet Tubman's journey toward freedom was not merely a personal quest but a courageous defiance against the brutal institution of slavery itself. Born into bondage in Maryland around 1822, Tubman witnessed firsthand the dehumanizing conditions that enslaved people endured. From a young age, she felt the fire of resistance burning within her, fueled by the desire for freedom, not only for herself but for all those who were shackled by the chains of oppression.

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3. Underground Railroad: Leadership and Legacy of a Conductor

Harriet Tubman's involvement in the Underground Railroad represents a crucial chapter in American history, redefining the meaning of leadership and resilience in the face of oppression. From her own harrowing escape from slavery in 1849 to her unwavering commitment to rescuing others, Tubman emerged not merely as a participant, but as a principal conductor who bravely led countless individuals toward freedom.

The Underground Railroad was not a literal railroad but a vast network of secret routes and safe houses established in the United States during the 19th century. This clandestine operation helped enslaved African Americans escape to free states and Canada. Tubman's journey as a conductor began shortly after she escaped slavery, fueled by the same courage that allowed her to break free from the shackles of bondage. Understanding the perilous nature of her mission, she made numerous trips back to the South, utilizing her intimate knowledge of the terrain to navigate through a perilous system of patrols and slave catchers.

One of Tubman's most notable achievements was her ability to lead groups of runaway slaves to freedom. She used her skills in stealth, navigation, and guerrilla tactics to ensure the safe journey of her charges. Tubman famously stated, "I never lost a passenger," highlighting not only her incredible track



record but also her steadfast commitment to each individual she guided. This unwavering dedication transformed her into a symbol of hope for many. From 1850 to 1860, it is estimated that Tubman led approximately 70 enslaved people to freedom across 13 missions.

Her leadership style was characterized by her extraordinary ability to bond with the people she rescued, establishing a relationship of trust that was crucial for the success of their escape. Tubman's empathy allowed her to understand their fears and concerns, often encouraging them with stories of hope and resilience. Furthermore, she instilled a spirit of collective action among her charges; the journey was not simply about individual escape but about achieving freedom as a community.

Tubman was also innovative in her approach. She implemented strategies such as signaling with coded messages, using songs as a means of communication that concealed their intentions from others. For instance, the use of the song "Wade in the Water" served as a reminder to runaway slaves to evade capture by using nearby water routes, thus demonstrating her resourcefulness and ingenuity.

The leadership role that Tubman assumed on the Underground Railroad extended beyond her direct actions of guiding and rescuing. She created a legacy of bravery, motivating others to join the fight against slavery. Her



actions inspired fellow abolitionists and allies to support the Underground Railroad, leading to a broader movement that questioned the morality of slavery nationwide. Tubman's influence helped recruit many new conductors, significantly increasing the Railroad's capacity to assist escapees.

Tubman's legacy as a conductor also had profound implications on the fight for African American rights that continued long after the Civil War. Her actions not only provided immeasurable assistance to countless individuals seeking freedom but also served as a beacon of hope and a call to action for future generations. The narratives of resistance and bravery demonstrated by Tubman laid the groundwork for civil rights actions that would follow.

In summary, Harriet Tubman's role as a conductor of the Underground Railroad was marked by her bravery, intelligence, and unwavering commitment to the freedom of her people. Her leadership shaped the course of her era and has continued to resonate through generations, inspiring movements for justice and equality in America.

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4. Fighting for Equality: Tubman's Role in Civil War and Beyond

During the tumultuous period of the American Civil War, Harriet Tubman emerged not only as a tireless advocate for the abolition of slavery but also as a pivotal figure in the fight for equality. Her efforts were deeply intertwined with the war's struggle, where she combined her remarkable skills in leadership and intelligence to contribute significantly to the Union's war efforts, showcasing her bravery and commitment to the cause of freedom.

Harriet Tubman's involvement in the Civil War is a testament to her unwavering spirit and determination. In 1862, she made a strategic decision to serve as a spy and scout for the Union Army, primarily in South Carolina. Unlike most women of her time, Tubman broke stereotypes, demonstrating that African American women could perform duties typically reserved for men. She utilized her extensive knowledge of the Southern terrain, gained from her experiences as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, to navigate and gather critical intelligence on Confederate movements and strategies.

One of her most notable contributions is linked to the Combahee River Raid in June 1863, where Tubman played a crucial role in orchestrating a military operation that resulted in the liberation of over 700 enslaved people. This



mission highlighted her extraordinary leadership skills, where she not only guided Union troops through perilous waters but also directly participated in the emancipation of enslaved individuals. Tubman's successful raid demonstrated her belief in proactive measures for freedom, emphasizing that liberation must often be fought for rather than simply awaited.

Throughout the Civil War, Tubman was a relentless advocate for equality, pushing against systemic barriers faced by African Americans, especially in the military. She campaigned for the enlistment of Black soldiers, arguing that their participation was essential to both the Union's success and the broader fight for civil rights. Her activism went beyond the battlefield; she worked closely with leaders in the abolitionist movement and was frequently connected with prominent figures, such as Frederick Douglass, who recognized her contributions and advocated for her leadership.

Even after the war, Tubman's commitment to equality did not wane. She became a prominent voice in the women's suffrage movement, understanding that the fight for Black freedom was inextricably linked to the rights of all women. Tubman's activism reflected her belief that true equality encompassed not just the liberation of enslaved individuals but also the elevation of women's rights. Her speeches and public appearances during this period were passionate appeals for justice, urging society to recognize the capabilities and rights of both African Americans and women.



Tubman's legacy during and after the Civil War was significant, as it underscored the interconnection between the fight for freedom and the pursuit of equality. She embodied the courage that challenged societal norms and reinvented the role of women—particularly women of color—at a time when their contributions were often sidelined. Through her experiences as a soldier, spy, and activist, Tubman forged a path that was not just about her liberation but about the liberation of others, ensuring that the fight for equality would continue well beyond her life.

In conclusion, Harriet Tubman's role during the Civil War was one of tremendous impact and resilience. Her unwavering spirit and determination not only furthered the cause of freedom during the war but also laid foundational stones for the ongoing fight for equality. Tubman's legacy is a powerful reminder that the struggle for justice and equal rights is a collective journey, one that requires the courage to act, advocate, and lead.

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5. A Lasting Legacy: Remembering the Impact of Harriet Tubman's Life

Harriet Tubman's life leaves an indelible mark on American history and serves as a powerful reminder of the strength of the human spirit in the face of seemingly insurmountable adversity. While her individual acts of bravery and leadership during the 19th century are well-documented, her larger impact resonates profoundly in contemporary discussions about civil rights, social justice, and equality. Tubman's legacy is not merely one of escaping slavery or guiding others to freedom but is also intricately woven into the ongoing fight for human rights.

One of the most significant aspects of Tubman's legacy is her embodiment of courage and resilience. Throughout her life, she faced not only the physical dangers of the Underground Railroad but also the psychological burdens of having lived as a slave. Despite these challenges, she emerged as a symbol of hope and freedom. Tubman's continuous acts of bravery—traveling back and forth to the South multiple times to rescue enslaved individuals—illustrate an unwavering commitment to liberation. It is this spirit that has inspired countless movements for equality and justice around the world.

Moreover, Tubman's commitment to her community extended beyond the Underground Railroad. She was actively involved in the fight for women's



suffrage, advocating for the rights of women to vote. In addressing these issues, Tubman exemplified the interconnectedness of various forms of struggle; she understood that the fight against slavery was intimately tied to the fight for women's rights. Her participation in suffrage movements alongside notable figures like Susan B. Anthony highlights how her legacy transcends the specific context of her time, continuing to inspire activists today who advocate for both racial and gender equality.

In addition to serving as an iconic figure for civil rights, Tubman's life story is a case study in leadership and moral resolve. Her ability to navigate complex social dynamics and her tactical acumen in outsmarting oppressive systems not only liberated many individuals from servitude but also set a standard for future leaders. Tubman's strategic thinking, especially in her role as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, serves as a lesson in effective leadership amidst crisis and reflects the importance of grassroots organizing in achieving social change. Just as Tubman led individuals to freedom, modern movements, such as Black Lives Matter, today rely on grassroots organizing, community engagement, and the valor to challenge systemic oppression.

Tubman's legacy also highlights the importance of education and historical memory. Recognizing her contributions and the contributions of others during the Civil Rights Movement reminds society of the ongoing struggles

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faced by marginalized communities. Educational initiatives that focus on Tubman's life and the broader context of African American history serve to empower future generations, encouraging them to learn from the past to effect change in the present. The ongoing discussions about honoring Harriet Tubman, such as proposals for new monuments or inclusion on currency (e.g., the \$20 bill), mark ways in which her contributions are being acknowledged and revered in contemporary society.

Furthermore, the legacy of Harriet Tubman serves as a reminder of the power of collective action. Her work through the Underground Railroad was predicated on collaboration among both free and enslaved individuals who defied the odds against a highly oppressive system. This collective spirit persists in current social justice movements where activists unite to confront inequities and fight for systemic change. The lessons learned from Tubman's life continue to inspire individuals to come together, transcending differences in the pursuit of a common goal.

In conclusion, Harriet Tubman's enduring legacy is multi-faceted, representing courage, community, and leadership in the fight against oppression. Her life story serves as both an inspiration and a blueprint for activists and leaders today. As we remember her impact, it is crucial to honor her contributions not just as historical fact but as a lens through which to view today's struggles for equality and justice. Tubman's legacy is a call

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to continue the work she passionately pursued—a reminder that the fight for freedom and justice is ongoing and that each of us holds the power to make a difference.

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