



Text Features in Non-fiction

***When learning about a new or difficult concept, the use of **text features** can be very helpful. Think about them whenever your goal is to simplify an idea or large amount of information for your audience.

Text features are to non-fiction what story elements are to fiction. Text features help the reader make sense of what they are reading and are the building blocks for text structure. Text features go hand-in-hand with comprehension. Without them, comprehension could be very difficult.

For example, if the author wants a reader to understand where a country is in the world, then providing a map helps the reader visualize and understand the importance of that country's location. If the anatomy of an animal is vitally important to understanding a text, a detailed photograph with labels gives the reader the support he needs to comprehend the text.

Shown below is a page where many text features are being used to help the reader:

She Led the Way to Freedom

One of our country's most famous leaders in the fight against slavery was Harriet Tubman. She risked her life to help people escape slavery in the 1850s and 1860s. Now the U.S. is proud to honor her. Two national parks have been named in her honor. The first National Historical Parks to honor an African American woman.

From Slave to Leader

Harriet Tubman was born in Maryland around 1820. At that time, slavery was legal in Maryland and many other states in the South. Tubman and her family were slaves on a cotton plantation. They were forced to pick cotton and do other jobs. Tubman escaped to Pennsylvania in 1849. To get there, she used what's known as the Underground Railroad. It wasn't a real railroad, but a series of secret routes in the Southern states to the Northern states, where slaves could be freed. For slaves, the journey was full of dangers. If they were returned to their owners and often punished. It was a risk Tubman was willing to take. But once Tubman was free, she worried about the people she had left behind—and decided to rescue them. Over the next decade, she guided at least 70 other slaves to freedom, including much of her family. In 1863, Tubman helped lead a **raid** on several plantations in South Carolina, freeing hundreds more.

A Historic Honor

Today, Tubman is remembered as one of the most famous women in the Underground Railroad. Her story is told in Maryland, where she grew up. There, visitors can see the woods where she made her escape. In Auburn, New York, where Tubman lived when she got older. People can visit her home and burial place. For Tubman's **descendants**, the parks are especially exciting news. One of them is 10-year-old Maya Hawkins-Bailey of Maryland. "Harriet got to freedom and she could have stayed safe in Maryland, but she went back for others," says Maya. "I consider her my hero."

The Underground Railroad, 1860

The Underground Railroad was made up of hideouts like houses and churches. They were called "stations." People like Tubman who guided the runaways from one station to another were called "conductors." This map shows some of the routes.

Words to Know

plantation: a large farm
raid: a sudden attack
descendants: people related to someone who lived long ago

Close-Reading Questions