

CeeCee

ACTIVITY KIT

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by Shana Keller, illustrated by Laura Freeman
e-book available

About the Book

In this retelling of the *Cinderella* story, CeeCee is an enslaved girl who longs to read, so she teaches herself. But nobody can know or she'll be punished. CeeCee does chores assigned by the woman of the house and takes care of two taunting young girls. She also spends time with Binty, the cook, who tells CeeCee tales of a prince named Moses who can help people find freedom. As midnight strikes on one fateful night, it's not a prince who CeeCee meets on the edge of the river. Who is it, then?

About the Author

Shana Keller is the author of several picture books. She says the day she got her library card was more exciting than the day she got her driver's license. She has traveled her whole life, and has lived all over the US and in Europe, too. When Shana's not writing, she loves to practice jiu-jitsu, run half-marathons, and read. Shana lives in North Carolina.



About the Illustrator

Laura Freeman has illustrated more than twenty children's books, including *Follow Chester!: A College Football Team Fights Racism and Makes History*; *Hidden Figures: The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race* (a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor book and NAACP Image Award Outstanding Literary Work for Children); the Nikki & Deja series; and *Fancy Party Gowns: The Story of Fashion Designer Ann Cole Lowe*. Laura is originally from New York City and now lives in Atlanta with her husband and two children.





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Discussion Questions

Use these conversation starters to get kids thinking and learning.

Before Reading

1. After looking at the cover of the book and reading the title and subtitle, ask kids what they think *CeeCee* is about. Write their responses on chart paper.
2. Ask if kids are familiar with the *Cinderella* story. What do they think the subtitle "Underground Railroad Cinderella" means? What do they see on the cover of this book that reminds them of *Cinderella*?
3. *Cinderella* is a fairy tale. Ask kids to list other fairy tales they know. Write their suggestions on chart paper and ask kids how they know when a story is a fairy tale.
4. What was the Underground Railroad? Invite kids to share what they know about this period in history.

During and After Reading

1. Revisit the predictions kids made before reading. What predictions (if any) were correct? Did *CeeCee* surprise them?
2. What time period is *CeeCee* set in? What historical details stood out in this book?
3. Why would *CeeCee* have been punished for learning how to read? Why did she teach herself how to read anyway?
4. Binty tells *CeeCee* about a knight named Moses who helps free enslaved people. What is the knight's real identity? Why was Harriet Tubman sometimes called Moses? Are kids familiar with the hymn that Binty sings about Moses? Where does this hymn come from?
5. How does *CeeCee* prepare for her escape? Who helps her on her way to freedom?
5. Distribute copies of the knowledge map on page 7 of this kit and invite kids to spend time in the school library researching the Underground Railroad. Once their knowledge maps are completed, reconvene the class and encourage them to share in small groups how their understanding of *CeeCee* has changed with more historical context.

Language Arts Connection: Cinderella

Learn about plot and retellings using the classic fairy tale "Cinderella."

For younger students (K-2nd):

- Before class, write the phrases "Separated from mother," "Works for mean sisters," "Prepares to escape," "Leaves home," "Meets the prince," "Faces a final test," and "Escapes to safety" on separate pieces of poster paper. Post these signs in order in a big circle around the room.
- Ask students if they are familiar with the story of *Cinderella*. Read *CeeCee* aloud together as a class and reflect on the following questions:
 - Is *CeeCee* the same story as *Cinderella*?
 - What other versions of the *Cinderella* story do you know?
 - What's the difference between copying a story and retelling a classic fairy tale?
- As a class, read at least two other versions of *Cinderella* together. As you read each story, move around the room as a group to stand by the sign that represents the part of the story you're reading.
- Invite students to share their reactions.
 - How were these stories different? How were they the same?
 - What is your favorite of the versions we read?
 - Why do so many authors retell the story of *Cinderella*?

For older students (3rd and up):

- Begin by asking students to help you solve a dilemma. What's the difference between copying a story and retelling it? Invite students to think of specific examples of stories that get retold. Is it copying if someone makes a book into a movie? If someone writes a version of a European fairy tale set in a different place and time?
- As a class, read *CeeCee* aloud together and discuss:
 - Is *CeeCee* the same story as *Cinderella*? What makes it similar or different?
 - Do you know other versions of the *Cinderella* story?
 - Why do you think the author chose to retell this story?
- Distribute copies of the "Cinderella Diagram" on page 4 of this kit. Read through a copy of *Cinderella* by Kinuko Y. Craft (or another traditional version of the story) together and break down the plot into its basic steps (see the first bullet point under "For younger students (K-2nd)" above).
- Reread *CeeCee* together and ask students to keep track using their diagram of where they are in the story, and raise their hand each time the book progresses to the next step.
- Discuss the basic elements of plot with students: beginning, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. Ask them which part they believe each step of *Cinderella* belongs to. Distribute copies of the "Plot Arc" worksheet on page 5 of this kit and invite students to cut out the boxes from their "Cinderella Diagram" and tape them into place along the arc.

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Cinderella Diagram

Name: _____

Date: _____

Use the boxes below to break down the plot of the classic *Cinderella* story.

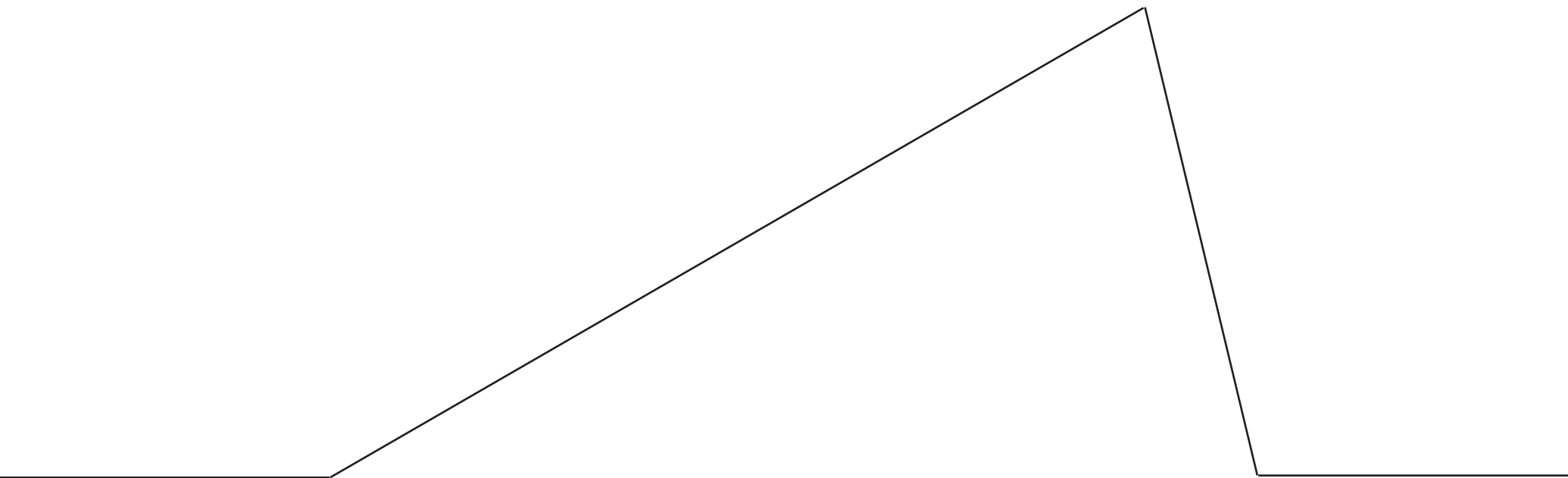


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Plot Arc

Name: _____

Date: _____





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What's In a Name?

Name: _____

Date: _____

CeeCee's name is not actually CeeCee. It's Edea, after her mama! Use the worksheet below to explore the meaning of your name.

My Name Is

My name means: _____

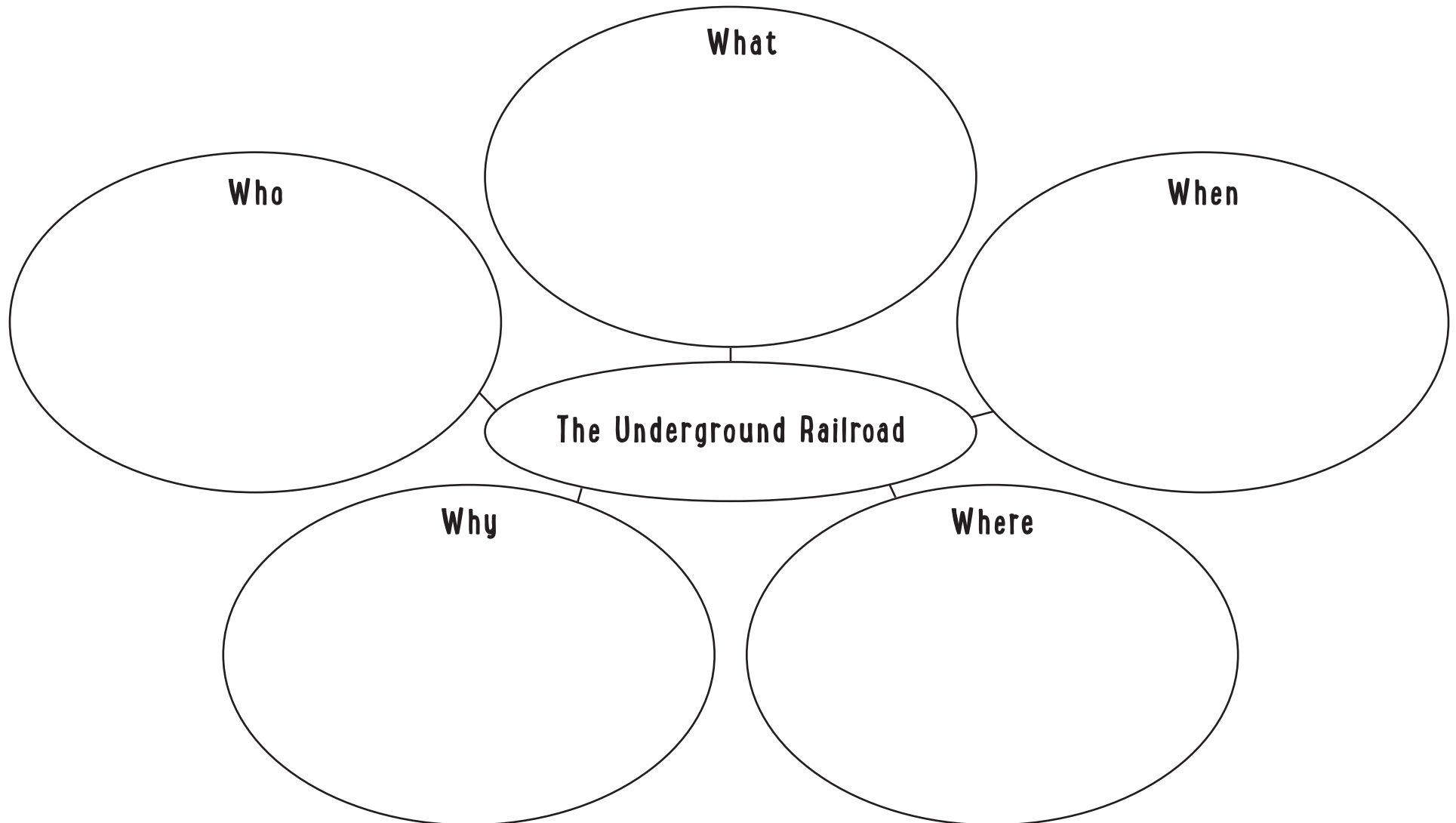
I was given my name because . . .

The Underground Railroad

Name: _____

Date: _____

As you research the Underground Railroad, use the knowledge map below to organize what you learn!



Further Reading

Make connections and enrich the learning experience with these additional resources!

About Slavery and Abolition

Avery, Jaha Nailah, and Steffi Walthall. *I Heard: An American Journey*. Charlesbridge, 2024.

Barretta, Gene, and Frank Morrison. *The Secret Garden of George Washington Carver*. HarperCollins, 2020.

Halfmann, Janet, and Duane Smith. *Seven Miles to Freedom: The Robert Smalls Story*. Lee & Low, 2008.

Hannah-Jones, Nikole, Renée Watson, and Nikkolas Smith. *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water*. Kokila, 2021.

Slade, Suzanne, and Nicole Tadgell. *Friends for Freedom: The Story of Susan B. Anthony & Frederick Douglass*. Charlesbridge, 2014.

VanHecke, Susan, and London Ladd. *Under the Freedom Tree*. Charlesbridge, 2014.

Woodson, Jacqueline, and Hudson Talbott. *Show Way*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2005.

Williams, Schele, and Tonya Engel. *Your Legacy: A Bold Reclaiming of Our Enslaved History*. Harry N. Abrams, 2021.

Fairy Tale Retellings

Brown-Wood, JaNay, and John Joven. *Mahogany: A Little Red Riding Hood Tale*. Charlesbridge, 2024.

Gomez, Rebecca, and Elisa Chavarri. *Federico and the Wolf*. Clarion, 2020.

Himes, Rachel. *Princess and the Peas*. Charlesbridge, 2017.

Maier, Brenda, and Sonia Sanchez. *The Little Red Fort*. Scholastic, 2018.

Matula, Christina, and Pearl Law. *The Shadow in the Moon: A Tale of the Mid-Autumn Festival*. Charlesbridge, 2018.

Perkins, Chloe, and Archana Sreenivasan. *Rapunzel*. Little Simon, 2017.

Underwood, Deborah, and Meg Hunt. *Reading Beauty*. Chronicle, 2019.

Yim, Natasha, and Grace Zong. *Goldy Luck and the Three Pandas*. Charlesbridge, 2014.