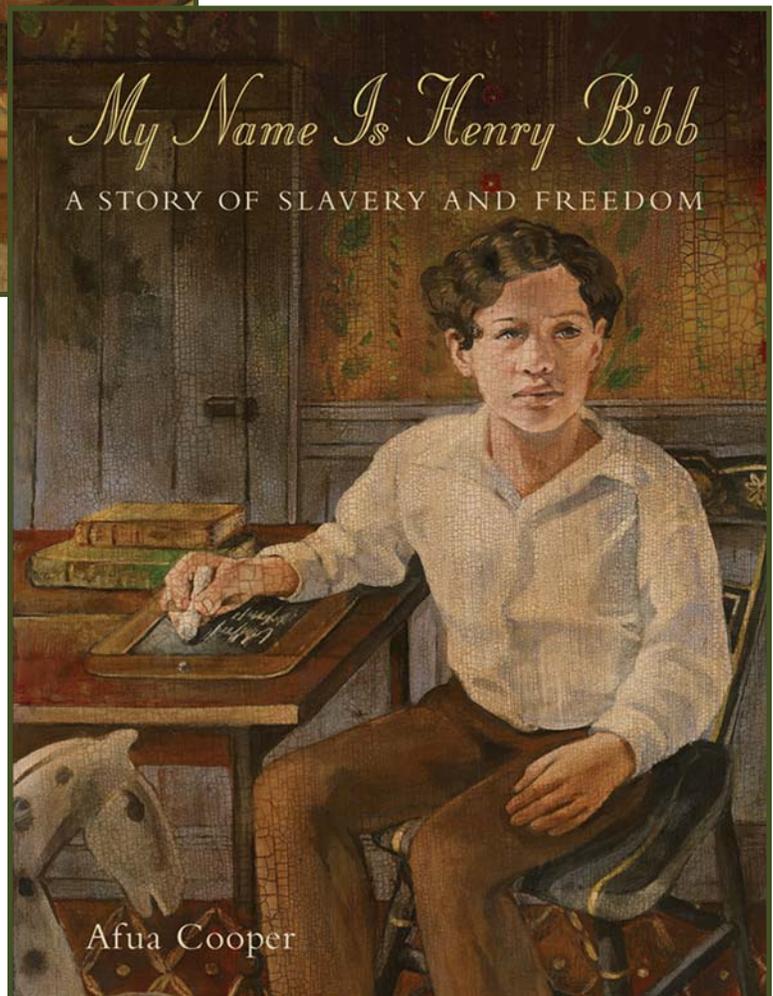
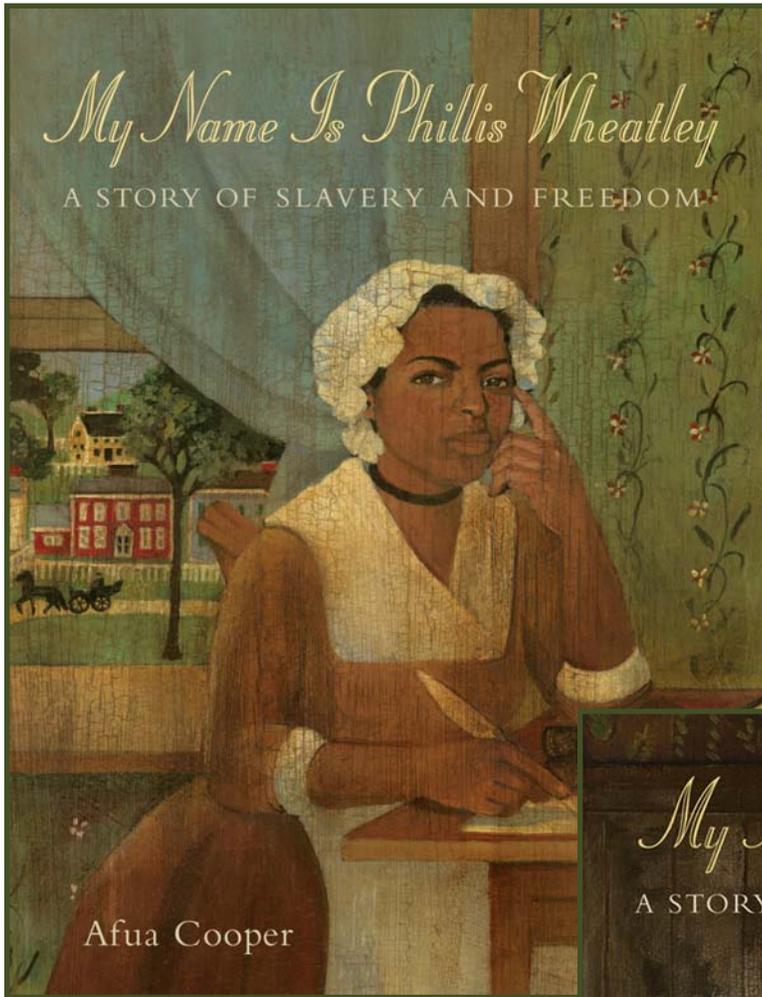


LEARNING RESOURCE MATERIAL



About My Name Is Henry Bibb and My Name Is Phillis Wheatley

These two novels describe the early lives of Henry Bibb and Phillis Wheatley, important figures in African-American history. Henry Bibb was active in the abolitionist movement, while Phillis Wheatley was America's first published female African-American poet. These lyrical novels recreate their times and their voices for young adults.



About Afua Cooper

Dr. Afua Cooper specializes in the history of slavery and abolition, and is the award-winning author of *The Hanging of Angelique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery* and the *Burning of Old Montreal*. She has published five volumes of poetry and is a dub poet and recording artist.



The activities in this learning resource support the following curriculum areas: language arts (novel study and creative writing); social studies (history, African-American experience). They are suitable for students from grade 6 through high school.

Before Reading

1. Using features of the books such as the titles, the cover illustrations and the cover copy, ask students to list the following:

- three predictions about what they think will happen in the novels
- three questions about what they are about to read
- three ways in which they expect to find connections to their lives and/or differences between the world of the novels and their own lives

During Reading

1. Ask your students to write down a minimum of two to three unfamiliar words per chapter. When they finish reading each chapter, they should create their own definitions for each word based only on the context in which they appear. Then they should look the words up in a dictionary and write down the definitions they find there. Students can use the attached vocabulary chart for this assignment.

2. Ask your students to record and analyze character traits of Phillis Wheatley and Henry Bibb. They can record any changes in personality or attitude they identify while reading, and upon completion of the novels, they can write paragraph responses describing what kind of growth each character experienced in the course of the novels.

After Reading

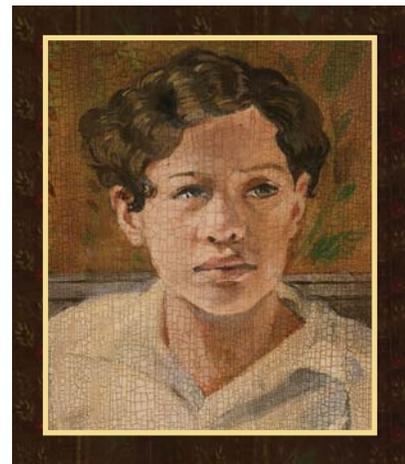
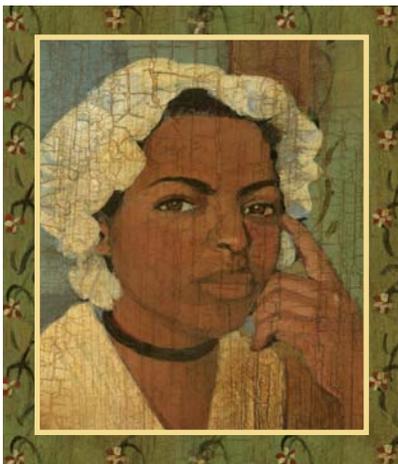
1. Phillis Wheatley lived between 1753 and 1784, a period when many Africans were brought to America as slaves and also the period of the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783). Henry Bibb lived between 1815 and 1854, when the abolitionist movement in the United States began to gather force.

a) Divide your students into groups and ask each group to research one of the following: the Middle Passage; the involvement of African Americans in the American Revolutionary War; Thomas Jefferson’s attitude towards slavery; the Underground Railroad; the abolitionist movement in the early nineteenth century. They can present their findings to the class either orally or through a poster presentation.

b) The end of the American Civil War also brought about the end of slavery. But even before the Civil War was fought, there were states where slavery was not

permitted. Assign each of your students one state that was in the union in the 1850s, and ask them to research the history of slavery in that state from colonial times to the start of the Civil War.

2. Both these novels are told in the first person, which means that the author, Afua Cooper, has imagined herself inside the minds of both Phillis Wheatley and Henry Bibb. Ask your students to think about how the books might change if Afua Cooper had chosen to tell the stories through another character’s perspective. Then ask your students to choose a character from one of the novels, and write a monologue that reflects that person’s point of view. From *My Name Is Phillis Wheatley*, it might be interesting to choose the perspective of Susanna Wheatley, who was Phillis’s mistress and owner, but who also cherished her as best she could. From *My Name Is Henry Bibb*, students can assume the persona of Harriet White, whose grandfather “gave” her both Henry Bibb and his mother when she was just an infant.



Vocabulary Chart

While reading these novels, write down a minimum of two unfamiliar words per chapter on the vocabulary chart below. Fill in each column with the appropriate information.

If you find that you are running out of space before you reach the end of the book, extend the vocabulary list onto another page using the same headings.

Here are a couple examples already listed for you:

Word	Page	Chapter	Student's Definition	Dictionary Definition
mulatto	9	Henry Bibb chapter 1		
philanthropist	10	Phillis Wheatley chapter 2		