**The Underground Railroad (1800s-1900s)**

Almost to Freedom, Micheaux Nelson, Margaret Atwood, Carolrhoda Picture Books, New York 1987.

Fictional characters but with real figures, events, and actions.

The story is told in 1st person by a rag doll named Sally. The story takes place at Mr. Henry’s house, the woods, and the cotton fields where Lindy worked at as a slave until she ran away.

Sally, a rag doll, tells Lindy’s adventure of Lindy working for hours in a cottonfield and her escape to Mr. Henry’s plantation in the south to find freedom from slavery. The doll likes to be cared for by Lindy. She gets dropped by Lindy at Mr. Henry’s house. Lindy drops the doll by accident. Sally was then picked up by another slave named Willa. The theme of the story is that helping others is more rewarding than helping yourself. You see an example of this when Sally the doll helps the new girl named Willa after Lindy had mistakenly left her in Mr. Henry’s house.

Some character traits to describe the main character who is telling the story, Sally, would be that she is very helpful since she helped Lindy at the slave farm and Willa after Lindy accidently left her. Sally is caring since she helped Lindy when she got whipped by an overseer at the slave farm and when Willa found her she cared for her as well since she knew it was the right thing to do. Sally is also very supportive cause she supported Lindy on the way to Mr. Henry’s house.

At the beginning of the story Lindy and Sally were at a bad place because they had to work at a slave farm and Lindy got whipped by an overseer. But at the end of the story Lindy and Sally were at a better place since they escaped to Mr. Henry’s house. But Sally then gets found by another slave girl named Willa and begins a new adventure.

It would be easier to tell the story in another perspective. If Lindy told the story instead of Sally the doll, she would explain how it felt getting whipped and how she felt about running away. Sally explains how it looked but since she didn’t get whipped she couldn’t explain how it felt.

The characters interactions taught the reader that slaves got whipped even at really young ages. It also explains how whites helped runaway slaves by letting slaves stay and sleep in their houses with good care. One final interaction is that white slave owners treated blacks cruelly and unfairly/horribly.

The following are facts from the story we believe are part of history:

1. Slaves running away.
2. Many blacks had scrap rag dolls that they kept.
3. Blacks got whipped by overseers when they did something they were not supposed to do.
4. Young kids who were blacks were expected to work even if they were really young.

The following are facts from the author’s note we believe are part of history:

1. Blacks had rag dolls in the 1800s-1900s. Most dolls were hand made out of scrap cloth. Blacks used the Underground Railroad with their dolls.
2. The Underground Railroad was active between the 1830s and the beginning of the Civil War. Slaves used the Underground Railroad to escape to freedom in Canada.
3. Some slaves were caught trying to escape to freedom. If caught, slaves were taken back to their masters and punished severely. Some punishments include are getting toes cut so they cannot run away anymore, painfully shackled, and getting whipped severely.