



## Almost to Freedom

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Lindy and her doll Sally are best friends - wherever Lindy goes, Sally stays right by her side. They eat together, sleep together, and even pick cotton together. So, on the night Lindy and her mama run away in search of freedom, Sally goes too. This young girl's rag doll vividly narrates her enslaved family's courageous escape through the Underground Railroad. At once heart-wrenching and uplifting, this story about friendship and the strength of the human spirit will touch the lives of all readers long after the journey has ended.

## Almost to Freedom Details

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Author : Vaunda Micheaux Nelson , Colin Bootman (Illustrator)

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# **From Reader Review Almost to Freedom for online ebook**

## **Sarah Taetz says**

This story is about a doll named Sally. Sally belongs to Lindy who is a slave, along with her mother, Miz Rachel. Sally tells the stories of slavery through her eyes, from picking cotton, beatings from the slave owner, to Lindy and Miz Rachel's escape. They escape to a home and stay with a woman who helps hide them, but then one night the slave catchers come after them. Lindy accidentally left Sally behind and Sally was sad and lonely. But then one day, a new family moved into the hiding place and a new little girl, Willa took care of Sally. I thought this book was very sweet yet sad, because it was talking about slavery. It made me think about how lucky I am and my ancestors were that we never had to go through something quite like this, especially not as a child. It also made me think of slavery in a different light, through the eyes of a child. It really makes my heart sad. This book would be good for 1st-4th graders learning about slavery. It makes the harsh reality easier to swallow for young kids and teaches them about it in a way that they can understand. Some themes in this book are slavery, friendship, bravery and comfort.

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## **Jenna Harris says**

### Summary:

This is a story about the path to freedom along the Underground Railroad. The story is told from the perspective of a young girl's rag doll and provides comfort to her during difficult times.

### Characteristics:

This book has beautiful images to support the text. The reader goes on a journey back to what times were like during the difficult time that the young girl experienced. The images allow the reader to connect with the characters during their hard times.

### Mentor Writing Trait:

Voice: This book uses descriptive words to guide the reader from sentence to sentence. The rag doll creates a vivid picture through words that engage the reader to learn more about the Underground Railroad and events that were happening during that time period.

### Classroom Integration:

This would be an ideal book to have in my classroom library. It teaches students about the Underground Railroad and a significant part of America's history. It also allows students to visualize what people were experiencing and consider how difficult it was.

### Reading Level: R

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## **Diana Luna says**

This Coretta Scott King illustration winner is a very heart touching and historical book. This book is told in third person, but it is even more interesting because it is told third person by a doll. The book takes place in the historical period of slavery. The author takes the reader on a journal of a little rag doll who belongs to a

runaway little slave girl and her family. The family is running to freedom and are forced to stop at a little house to seek hide out. The family of the house place the slave family under the floor in the crawlspace. The rag doll tells the story of the family's emotions and thoughts as well as its own during this hide out. While in hideout, something occurs, leaving the rag doll behind in the crawlspace all alone, until another little slave girl comes for hideout to pick up the piece of its broken heart.

This book was one of my favorite books I have read for class yet. I really enjoyed the different point of view in which the story was being told. It gave the reader an inside perspective of the slaves at the time and what it felt and looked like when they tried to seek freedom. The ragdoll is something I was able to relate too because it reminded me of my little sisters who have a little doll that they take everywhere. It gives them a sense of comfort and care, just like the doll did for the little slave girls. This book would be an excellent book to read when approaching the topic of slavery. It can be read and discussed about what the family and ragdoll felt during these tough times. It would even be pretty fun to have the students draw or talk about something they cherish and makes them feel safe and comforted during personal tough times.

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### **Patrick Spencer says**

1. This story comes from the point of view of Sally, the doll of a slave girl in Virginia. Sally shares how terrible slave life is when her owner, Lindy's father is sold to another plantation and when Lindy herself gets whipped just for asking how to spell her name. Lindy and her family reunite and begin to escape using the Underground Railroad, however Sally gets left behind. This event leads to an encounter where Sally will figure out what her roll in life truly is as a doll.

2. The theme for this story would to always be willing to adapt to help out others in a situation, even if you may not get the full benefit you want. Being there for someone and helping them out is more rewarding than just worrying about and looking out for yourself.

3. I have always been fascinated with American history, especially looking at the other side or what the history books really do not mention such as the slaves or Native Americans. I'm a Northerner and I love researching and reading about the South to see what it was like. This book was a good eye opener for me where I could see the perspective of slavery and escaping through a child's perspective where they do not know understand what and why things are happening and how clueless and terrified they are. I cannot imagine going through something like that and being treated that poorly for no reason but this book would give a child a basic enough grasp to understand the situation.

4. I would recommend this book to kids probably 8+ because it is a serious topic and I don't imagine that younger kids would enjoy it too well and would be too scared and not get the point. I have always felt that it is important to teach kids at an early age history, including the bad parts, so that we can learn from it and know what was good and also bad so those events, like slavery, do not reoccur. This story gives kids a brief but a great start to understanding the culture, language and environment of the Southern United States in the 1800s, which will hopefully jump start them into learning about more history about this topic or history in general.

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### **Amy says**

Sally, a beloved rag doll, tells the story of how Lindy's family escapes to freedom from slavery in this award winning book. Lindy loves and cares for Sally like a friend and ties her tight around her as she works next to her mother. In the middle of the night, she is woken by her mother to make a run towards her father and freedom. They spend a night in a station on the Underground Railroad but must quickly flee, leaving Sally

behind. The reader is left feeling sadness for the doll and hope for the family. When another family comes along, Sally finds a new home.

For me, this story shows friendship, hope and endurance in the face of adversity. The author illustrates a child's fears in a way that is not too overwhelming for young readers. The universality of this fear comes together when the doll is found by another young child who is raw with the same emotions. I loved how it is told through the doll's perspective. The afterward of the book explains how the author thought of this idea. While at a museum she came across some of these very dolls and her husband said to her, "there's a story in that".

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## **Stephanie Siren says**

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Format: Picture Book

Awards: Coretta Scott King Award for Illustrator Honor (2004)

### Summary:

This story is about the Underground Railroad told from the eyes of Lindy's doll Sally. Freedom was a word that Lindy and her family dreamed of but Sally didn't know much about it. One night, Lindy's family decides that it is time to go. They cross over the river and stop at a house with a lantern on it. When the slave catchers come, Lindy's family must run and hide, but unfortunately for Sally, she is left behind. After many lonely nights, a new family arrives and Sally becomes Belinda. Belinda is Willa's new doll.

### Critique:

I thought this story was interesting. I enjoyed the story and liked seeing it from a different perspective. I did not enjoy all of the grammatical errors. I think that the background of the story was definitely interesting.

### Teaching prompt:

I would use this story when teaching about the Underground Railroad.

I would ask my students different questions throughout the book. Such as: How would you feel if you were Sally? Do you think Lindy is nice? Does Lindy deserve to get in trouble? How long do you think that they have to run for? Do you think Belinda will be happy with Willa?

### Craft elements:

I would have my students respond to the story in writing. They would need to respond to how they would feel if they were Sally in this story. They would need to discuss how their emotions change throughout the story and they would create their own 'Sally' doll.

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## **Megan Denney says**

Almost to Freedom is a story told from the point of view of a little doll named Sally that was handmade by Miz Rachel whose family were slaves working in a cotton field. Sally was given to Miz Rachel's daughter, Lindy who held on so tightly to Sally in every situation. As Lindy's father had previously been sold, Lindy

and her mother were on a mission to get to freedom along with her father. The two escaped the massa one night along with Sally and found shelter with Lindy's father in the Underground Railroad. Not hours after being at the shelter did they have to get up and run again from slave catchers, but only this time Sally had come loose from Lindy's skirt and was left in the bottom of the cellar. Sally was lonely until another family of slaves came to seek shelter where another little girl called Sally hers.

I rated this book a five because of how insightful the book is from a little girl and her doll trying to make it to freedom. The book would allow a young reader to see more into the Underground Railroad from someone their own age's perspective.

A great teaching idea for this book would be to introduce this book for the time period of Underground Railroad and talking about slaves making to freedom through that. Additionally, there is a glossary in the back for terms the kids may not know so this book would help to also increase vocabulary used during this era.

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### **L12\_danielle says**

Almost to Freedom is a wonderfully written story of a young girl's escape from slavery via the Underground Railroad told from the perspective of her rag doll, Sally. Lindy's mother makes Sally from rags and gives it to her as a gift. Lindy and Sally become best friends. Saly tells us the story of slavery, the cruelty and the love. Lindy's mother manages to escape with Lindy and Sally, and they meet up with Lindy's father, who had been sold "down the river." Lindy shares with her doll Sally all the scariness of running to freedom. Finally in a safe house, the family rests. But when they must flee in the middle of the night, Sally is accidentally left behind. Sally worries about her friend and is sad until another little girl on the Underground Railroad discovers her and re-names Sally, Belinda.

Almost to Freedom would serve as a wonderful read aloud during a unit on the Civil War for grades 2-5. This book received the Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Book Award in 2004 as well as several other notable awards.

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### **Kristine Hansen says**

Told from the point of view of a doll, we see slavery and the difficulty of attaining freedom. It made my heart clench a little bit to read this book, thinking of a child so young so as to cling to a doll being whipped. Reader might want to use discretion reading this to a sensitive child.

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### **Nancy says**

Published: 2003, Carolrhoda Books, Inc.

Age: 6-9

This book is narrated by a ragdoll named Sally owned by a runaway little slave girl. It is through her eyes that we see the hardships of slavery and a family's frightening adventure to freedom.

Throughout the book the author uses the dialect of southern black slaves, such as, "Your name be Sally. We gonna be best friends." Colin Bootman's oil painted illustrations add so much to the text by showing the emotion of the characters. Deep colors like purples and browns are used with dark backgrounds to give the

reader the feeling of the darkness of the night and intensity of the moment. The authors note at the end of the story explains her visit to a museum that inspired the book and a picture of the real doll. Research was done to create authentic characters in their language and dress, and to give the reader background information of the Underground Railroad. The author also provides a glossary of historical words and phrases used in the story. The book can be used to introduce what slavery was like for children and how they many times used the Underground Railroad to escape. It portrays the cruelty of slavery but with a softness for younger readers. The story has a historically accurate plot that centers around love, friendship, separation, and courage.

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### **Mandy Patterson says**

Almost Freedom is a heartbreaking tale of what it was like to live in the South in the mid-19th century. The story is told from the perspective of the Ragdoll, Sally and the tale of a young girl is chronicled. With the very real experiences that the young girl, Lindy, faces it portrays a very realistic portrait of what it must have been like in the south for anyone who was hoping to move to the North to be free. At one point along their journey, they meet a “silver-haired’ lady and her husband who provide Lindy and Sally with small comforts and they dream of the rest of the journey North. They have to flee in the night, and Sally is unexpectedly left behind. What happens to Sally? You have to read to find out!

This book is a historical fiction book that would be beneficial for students who are learning about the Underground Railroad and the events leading up to the Civil War. I loved the personification that was given to Sally throughout the book. Students can learn about showing kindness to others, just like the “silver-haired woman” and her husband did for Sally. I think that this book was very hard to read (one part in particular) but the time of slavery isn’t an easy time to talk about. I would share this book with my students and my own children. I think that the grade level for this book is 5th grade. Civil War is part of the curriculum in 5th Grade and some of the content involves the way the slaves were mistreated.

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### **Lydia Erakare says**

1. This book has received the Coretta Scott King Award for Illustrator Honor (2004).
2. This book is appropriate for K-2nd grade.
3. "Almost to Freedom" is a story about a runaway slave girl and her escape. The story is narrated by the girl's rag doll, Sally. Through the eyes of the rag doll the reader sees the hardships of slavery and a family's scary journey to freedom.
4. This book is absolutely beautiful. Not only is the content important but the way it is written invokes strong emotion and suspense. Bootman's illustrations are oil paintings and add incredible depth to the text. Through his dark images of purple and blue color readers feel the intensity of moments and the ominous feeling during the dark of night.
5. A) This story could be used to introduce to students what slavery was like for children and how they used the underground railroad to escape. It would give students an idea of slavery without being too harsh or

scary.

B) "Almost to Freedom" could also be used during a unit on narrative and point of view. This lesson would be for upper level grades but since the story is not told from the most obvious source it would be a great addition to a unit on point of view and narrative.

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## **Haley Hardwick says**

Personal Reaction: I really loved this book a lot. It is a really interesting story rich in history and suspense with a child like aspect to it. My favorite part of the book was the narrator. The book is told through the point of view of a small rag doll named Sally. It chronicles the events that took place in the South during the 1800s through the rag dolls perspective and her owner/best friend Lindy.

Purpose: Read aloud for children grades 2-4

-the point of view is interesting, and something the children will enjoy because the narration is fresh, new, and different

-dialect: the story uses a lot of southern dialect throughout the story

-language: many of the words used are standard for that time period, and going through the small dictionary of historical words and phrases could be interesting

-illustrations enhance the story incredibly and can provide a lot to discuss such as the mood and tone of that particular page.

-the history of this time is told through a fictional story with historically real elements

-the story is suspenseful and exciting on the family's journey to freedom from the South. It takes a lot of turns and has a few close calls.

Curriculum: Read a loud for children grades 2-4

-introducing the concept of slavery and freedom. Asking questions and discussing things such as What is slavery? What was slavery like in the United States? Why were there slaves?

-introducing the ideas of civil rights and equality- potential discussion on how this book differs from today's society.

-discussion on the status quo, socialization and its impact, influence, and the changing society

-multicultural and diverse perspective. Students can evaluate multiple perspectives on this topic and think critically about the past

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## **Ivy Leach says**

Type: picture book

Genre: multicultural, historical, and fantasy fiction

Awards: Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor

Summary: Almost to Freedom tells about the Underground Railroad through the perspective of a little girl's doll. Sally accidentally gets left behind in a couple's house that hid runaway slaves. She is sad and lonely until a new family comes to hide and Sally is someone's "dollbaby" again.



Critique: The illustrations in this book are beautiful. The reader can imagine what the characters are feeling just by looking at their faces and body language in the illustrations. The story is touching and unique because it tells about the Underground Railroad from the perspective of a doll. In some ways, I think it is more meaningful this way than if it were told through the perspective of an actual person.

Teacher Prompts: The teacher could ask students if they have ever had a special toy or item that they took everywhere. The language this book uses is very different from the way we speak today. The teacher could pause and ask students to use context clues when a word or phrase is read that is uncommon such as “make water” or “privy.”

Craft Elements: This book is an excellent resource when teaching about the Underground Railroad. It is also a helpful example for having students tell a story through the perspective of a different character like a pet or an inanimate object.

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## **Dolly says**

This is a powerful and moving story about the life of a slave and a flight toward freedom, told from the perspective of a handmade ragdoll. I love that the author was inspired to write the story by a doll that she saw in a museum. The way in which the story is told is sensitive enough for younger children, although the content is somewhat mature. The narrative is interesting and helps to tell the story of the Underground Railroad. The oil painted illustrations are colorful and the characters are very expressive. We really enjoyed reading this book together.

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