

harriet movie questions and answers

The powerful story of Harriet Tubman, the brave abolitionist who risked her life to lead enslaved people to freedom via the Underground Railroad, has captivated audiences through the 2019 film "Harriet." This historical drama offers a compelling look at one of America's most courageous figures. For those who have watched the movie or are planning to, understanding the nuances of the narrative, the historical accuracy, and the characters involved can deepen appreciation. This article delves into the most frequently asked Harriet movie questions and answers, exploring plot details, historical context, character motivations, and the film's broader impact. Whether you're a history buff or simply moved by Tubman's incredible journey, you'll find comprehensive insights here to illuminate your understanding of this remarkable film.

- About the Harriet Movie
- Key Plot Points and Frequently Asked Harriet Movie Questions
- Historical Accuracy in the Harriet Movie
- Characters and Their Significance in Harriet
- Themes Explored in the Harriet Movie
- The Impact and Reception of the Harriet Movie
- Further Questions and Answers about Harriet

About the Harriet Movie

The film "Harriet," released in 2019, tells the inspiring and often harrowing story of Harriet Tubman, born Araminta Ross. Directed by Kasi Lemmons, the movie chronicles her escape from slavery and her subsequent work as a conductor on the Underground Railroad. It focuses on her transformation from an enslaved woman to the formidable leader known as "Moses." The film aims to shed light on Tubman's unwavering courage, her deep faith, and her strategic brilliance in freeing hundreds of enslaved people. It's a cinematic tribute to a pivotal figure in American history, bringing her incredible resilience and dedication to freedom to the forefront for a new generation.

Key Plot Points and Frequently Asked Harriet Movie Questions

Understanding the narrative arc of "Harriet" is crucial for appreciating the film's power. The movie follows Araminta's early life, her experiences with the brutality of slavery, and her determination to seek freedom. Key moments include her daring escape, her initial journeys back south to rescue family, and her growing reputation as a fearless abolitionist. Many viewers have specific questions about these pivotal events and the decisions Harriet made.

What was Harriet Tubman's birth name and when was she born?

Harriet Tubman was born Araminta Ross, likely around March 1822, though the exact date is not definitively known. The film depicts her early life under this name, highlighting the loss of her given name as a part of her enslaved identity and her reclaiming of a new name, Harriet, as a symbol of her freedom and new purpose.

How did Harriet Tubman escape slavery in the movie?

In the film "Harriet," her escape is portrayed as a meticulously planned and dangerous journey. After years of enduring harsh conditions and witnessing the continued suffering of her family, she makes a solo escape. Guided by the North Star and aided by those who believed in the cause of freedom, she travels hundreds of miles on foot, facing perilous obstacles and the constant threat of recapture. This initial escape is a critical turning point, setting the stage for her future work.

Who helped Harriet Tubman escape?

The film highlights the network of individuals and communities that formed the Underground Railroad. While her direct escape is shown as a solitary act of courage, the broader network of abolitionists, both Black and white, are depicted as crucial facilitators of her journey and subsequent missions. Specific individuals like William Still, a prominent abolitionist who documented many escapees' stories, play a role in the narrative, illustrating the collaborative nature of the Underground Railroad.

What was the significance of the Underground Railroad?

The Underground Railroad was a clandestine network of secret routes and safe

houses used by enslaved African Americans, primarily to escape into free states and Canada. In the movie, it is depicted as Harriet's primary means of operation, where she courageously led dozens, and later hundreds, of enslaved individuals to freedom. It represents a profound act of resistance against the institution of slavery.

How many times did Harriet Tubman return to the South to free people?

While the exact number is difficult to pinpoint, historical accounts and the film suggest Harriet Tubman made approximately 13 missions back to the South. She personally led around 70 enslaved people to freedom and advised many more on how to escape. The film captures the immense personal risk involved in each of these dangerous journeys.

What is the meaning behind the nickname "Moses"?

Harriet Tubman earned the nickname "Moses" because, much like the biblical figure who led the Israelites out of Egypt, she guided enslaved people out of bondage. This moniker signifies her role as a liberator and a spiritual leader, a beacon of hope for those yearning for freedom. The film emphasizes how this reputation grew and became a symbol of the resistance against slavery.

Did Harriet Tubman fight during the Civil War?

Yes, Harriet Tubman played a significant role during the Civil War. The film briefly touches upon this, but historically, she served the Union Army as a cook, nurse, armed scout, and spy. Her knowledge of the terrain and her bravery made her an invaluable asset. Notably, she was the first woman to lead an armed expedition in the war, the Combahee River Raid, which liberated over 700 enslaved people.

Historical Accuracy in the Harriet Movie

While all historical dramas take some creative liberties for narrative effect, "Harriet" strives for a significant degree of historical accuracy. The film draws from Tubman's own accounts and biographies, aiming to portray her life and actions faithfully. However, certain elements are condensed or dramatized for cinematic impact.

How accurate is the portrayal of Harriet Tubman's early life?

The film provides a glimpse into the brutal realities of slavery that Tubman endured. While specific incidents may be dramatized, the overall depiction of the harsh conditions, the threat of sale, and the constant fear are accurate. Her childhood head injury, caused by an overseer, which led to lifelong seizures and visions, is also depicted, and its role in her spiritual guidance is a key element explored.

Is the character Gideon Brown historically accurate?

Gideon Brown, the antagonist in the film, is a composite character representing the slave owners and overseers who relentlessly pursued escaped slaves. While a specific individual named Gideon Brown may not be historically documented as Harriet Tubman's primary tormentor in the way depicted, the character embodies the real threat and the brutal mindset of those who sought to maintain the system of slavery. The film uses this character to represent the pervasive danger Tubman faced.

Does the film accurately represent the Underground Railroad?

The film portrays the Underground Railroad as a dangerous but vital network of safe houses and individuals committed to aiding enslaved people. It accurately reflects the clandestine nature of these operations, the constant risk of betrayal, and the immense courage of both the conductors and the fugitives. The film emphasizes the decentralized and often anonymous nature of the network.

Were the depicted escape methods historically accurate?

The film shows Tubman using various methods to guide people to freedom, including night travel, using natural landmarks, and relying on coded language and signals. These methods are consistent with historical accounts of Underground Railroad operations. The focus on her strategic planning and her deep understanding of the terrain and the psychological aspects of escape highlights her prowess as a conductor.

What historical inaccuracies are present in the Harriet movie?

While generally well-researched, some historians point out minor inaccuracies

or dramatizations. For instance, the film might compress timelines or alter the sequence of certain events for dramatic flow. The intense, one-on-one cat-and-mouse chase with Gideon, while thrilling, may have been more of a pervasive threat rather than a singular, extended pursuit as depicted. However, these are common in biographical films and do not significantly detract from the film's overall historical message about Tubman's achievements.

Characters and Their Significance in Harriet

"Harriet" features a range of characters, each contributing to the narrative and highlighting different aspects of Tubman's life and the fight for freedom. Understanding their roles provides a deeper insight into the film's themes.

Who is Harriet Tubman and who plays her?

Harriet Tubman, the central figure of the film, was an American abolitionist and political activist. Born into slavery in Maryland, she escaped to freedom in 1849 and subsequently made some 13 missions to rescue approximately 70 enslaved people, including family and friends, using the network of antislavery activists and safe houses known as the Underground Railroad. She was portrayed by Cynthia Erivo, whose performance garnered critical acclaim.

Who is John Tubman in the movie?

In the film, John Tubman is Harriet's husband. He is depicted as a free Black man who is reluctant to leave Maryland and escape with Harriet, creating a significant personal conflict for her. Historically, John Tubman was indeed free, but the details of their relationship and his feelings about escape are subject to dramatic interpretation in the film.

Who is Elizabeth Brodnax in Harriet?

Elizabeth Brodnax, also known as Mistress Bron, is portrayed as the daughter of Harriet's enslaver. She is depicted as a somewhat sympathetic figure who offers Harriet a degree of kindness, but ultimately remains complicit in the system of slavery. Her character highlights the complex social dynamics within the slave-holding society.

Who is Reverend Green in the Harriet movie?

Reverend Green is a spiritual advisor and a supporter of Harriet's mission.

He represents the role of faith and community support in her endeavors, providing her with guidance and encouragement. His character underscores the deep religious conviction that fueled Harriet's fight for liberation.

What is the role of Harriet's father, Ben Ross?

Harriet's father, Ben Ross, is shown as a wise and resilient man who instills in his daughter a strong sense of self-worth and a deep desire for freedom. Although his presence is more in memory and influence in the film, his teachings and the stories he shared about freedom shape Harriet's resolve.

Who is Robert in the Harriet movie?

Robert is a character who is enslaved alongside Harriet. He plays a role in her early life and escape, representing the shared suffering and the bonds formed between enslaved people. His presence underscores the collective desire for freedom.

Themes Explored in the Harriet Movie

Beyond the biographical narrative, "Harriet" delves into several profound themes that resonate with historical significance and contemporary relevance. These themes are central to understanding the film's message.

What are the main themes in Harriet?

The film explores themes of courage, faith, freedom, resilience, and the fight against oppression. It highlights the dehumanizing nature of slavery and the indomitable spirit of those who resisted it. The importance of family and community, the power of spiritual belief, and the personal cost of leadership are also central themes.

How does the movie portray the concept of freedom?

Freedom is depicted not just as the absence of physical chains, but as a state of being, a reclaiming of one's humanity and agency. Harriet's journey from being a chattel slave to a free woman who then dedicates her life to freeing others illustrates the multifaceted nature of freedom and the responsibility that comes with it.

What is the role of faith in Harriet?

Faith is a cornerstone of Harriet Tubman's life and her work, and the film emphasizes this. Her visions, often attributed to a head injury, are portrayed as divine guidance, strengthening her resolve and providing her with the courage to undertake perilous missions. Her deep Christian faith is presented as a source of hope and resilience against overwhelming adversity.

How does the film show resistance against slavery?

Resistance is shown in multiple forms, from Harriet's individual act of escape to her ongoing missions with the Underground Railroad. The film also touches upon the quiet acts of defiance by enslaved people and the organized efforts of abolitionists. Tubman's transformation into a strategic and fearless leader embodies active resistance against an oppressive system.

What does the movie say about legacy and leadership?

"Harriet" underscores how an individual's actions can have a profound and lasting impact. Tubman's leadership is characterized by bravery, strategic thinking, and unwavering commitment. The film positions her as a monumental figure whose legacy continues to inspire, demonstrating how one person's determination can change the course of history.

The Impact and Reception of the Harriet Movie

The release of "Harriet" was met with considerable public interest and critical discussion. Its impact extends beyond its cinematic achievements to its role in historical education and cultural representation.

What was the critical reception of the Harriet movie?

The film received generally positive reviews from critics. Cynthia Erivo's performance as Harriet Tubman was widely praised for its power and nuance, earning her nominations for major awards. Critics often lauded the film's direction, its historical scope, and its emotional resonance, though some noted the dramatic liberties taken with certain historical details.

How did the public react to the Harriet movie?

The public reaction was largely enthusiastic, with many viewers expressing appreciation for a film that focused on such an important Black historical

figure. The movie was seen as an overdue tribute to Harriet Tubman's extraordinary life and a valuable educational tool, particularly for younger audiences.

What is the significance of a Harriet Tubman biopic today?

In contemporary times, a film like "Harriet" holds significant cultural and historical importance. It brings the story of a crucial figure in the fight for civil rights and human dignity to the forefront, offering a powerful reminder of the struggles for equality and the individuals who championed them. It serves to educate and inspire, particularly in discussions about race, justice, and the legacy of slavery in America.

Did Cynthia Erivo win any awards for Harriet?

Cynthia Erivo received significant recognition for her performance. She was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actress and the Golden Globe Award for Best Actress – Motion Picture Drama for her role as Harriet Tubman. Her performance was a standout aspect of the film's critical reception.

Further Questions and Answers about Harriet

To further enrich your understanding of the film and the life of Harriet Tubman, here are some additional commonly asked questions.

What happened to John Tubman historically?

Historically, John Tubman, Harriet's husband, did not escape with her. He reportedly remarried shortly after Harriet's escape, and she never saw him again. The film focuses on Harriet's journey and motivations rather than extensively detailing John's fate.

Did Harriet Tubman have children?

Harriet Tubman did not have any biological children of her own. She cared for her aging parents and, after the Civil War, adopted a young boy named Charles T. Banks. Her dedication to freeing others can be seen as a profound form of motherly care extended to her community.

What was Harriet Tubman's life like after the Civil War?

After the Civil War, Harriet Tubman remained active in public life. She continued to advocate for women's suffrage and cared for her family and community. She established a home for elderly African Americans in Auburn, New York, where she lived for many years. She passed away in 1913, a testament to a life dedicated to service and justice.

What were Harriet Tubman's most famous quotes?

While the film features dialogue, some of Harriet Tubman's most enduring quotes are attributed to her historical legacy. Famous ones include: "I freed a thousand slaves. I could have freed a thousand more if only they had known they were slaves," and "Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world." These quotes encapsulate her spirit and dedication.

Conclusion

The film "Harriet" offers a compelling and essential portrayal of one of America's most heroic figures. Through its detailed narrative and powerful performances, it brings the extraordinary life of Harriet Tubman to the forefront, exploring her journey from enslavement to becoming a fearless leader of the Underground Railroad. This article has addressed numerous Harriet movie questions and answers, covering plot intricacies, historical accuracy, key characters, and the significant themes of courage, faith, and freedom that the film masterfully presents. By understanding the context and impact of "Harriet," audiences gain a deeper appreciation for Tubman's indomitable spirit and her pivotal role in the fight against slavery, solidifying her legacy as a true American icon.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who plays Harriet Tubman in the movie 'Harriet'?

Cynthia Erivo portrays Harriet Tubman in the film 'Harriet'.

What historical period does the movie 'Harriet' primarily cover?

The movie 'Harriet' primarily covers the period of Harriet Tubman's escape

from slavery and her work as a conductor on the Underground Railroad in the mid-19th century.

What is the main focus of the movie 'Harriet'?

The main focus of 'Harriet' is on Harriet Tubman's incredible journey to freedom, her bravery in returning South to rescue family and others, and her pivotal role in the Underground Railroad.

What were some of the challenges Harriet Tubman faced in the movie?

Harriet Tubman faced immense challenges in the movie, including physical danger, the constant threat of recapture, navigating treacherous terrain, dealing with slave catchers, and the emotional toll of leaving loved ones behind.

Does the movie 'Harriet' depict the Fugitive Slave Act?

Yes, the movie 'Harriet' depicts the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which significantly increased the risks for escaped slaves and those who aided them, making Harriet's work even more perilous.

Who directed the movie 'Harriet'?

The movie 'Harriet' was directed by Kasi Lemmons.

What is the significance of the 'Underground Railroad' as depicted in the movie?

The Underground Railroad in the movie is shown as a secret network of routes and safe houses used by enslaved African Americans to escape to free states and Canada. Harriet Tubman was a key 'conductor' on this network.

How did the movie portray Harriet Tubman's faith?

The movie portrays Harriet Tubman's strong faith as a driving force behind her courage and determination, often showing her receiving divine guidance and inspiration.

What historical figures, besides Harriet Tubman, are featured or mentioned in the movie?

While primarily focused on Harriet Tubman, the movie features or mentions figures like her husband John Tubman, her father Ben Ross, abolitionist Thomas Garrett, and the slave catcher Gideon Brown.

What is the overall message or theme of the movie 'Harriet'?

The overarching message of 'Harriet' is one of courage, resilience, leadership, the fight for freedom and justice, and the profound impact one individual can have against overwhelming odds.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to "Harriet Movie Questions and Answers," with descriptions:

1_ Harriet Tubman: The Conductor of the Underground Railroad

This book delves into the life and courageous actions of Harriet Tubman, focusing on her pivotal role in guiding enslaved people to freedom. It explores her daring escapes, her strategic network-building along the Underground Railroad, and the immense personal risks she undertook. Readers will gain a deep understanding of the historical context and the profound impact of her work on the abolitionist movement.

2_ The Underground Railroad: Fact and Fiction

This title examines the historical reality of the Underground Railroad, separating documented facts from popular myths and fictionalized accounts. It provides a comprehensive overview of the routes, the individuals involved, and the challenges faced by both conductors and freedom seekers. The book offers insights into the operational aspects and the sheer bravery required to participate in this clandestine network.

3_ Slavery and the American Civil War: A Comprehensive History

This work provides a broad historical context for Harriet Tubman's life and activism, detailing the institution of slavery and its central role in the American Civil War. It explores the social, economic, and political forces that led to the conflict. Understanding this broader narrative is crucial for appreciating the significance of Tubman's contributions to the fight for liberation.

4_ Women of the Abolitionist Movement

This book highlights the contributions of numerous women to the abolitionist cause, placing Harriet Tubman within a larger sisterhood of activists. It showcases their diverse roles, from writing and organizing to direct action and fundraising. The volume emphasizes the crucial, often overlooked, impact women had in challenging slavery and advocating for human rights.

5_ The Life of Harriet Tubman: From Slavery to Freedom

Focusing specifically on Tubman's personal journey, this biography traces her early life in bondage, her harrowing escape, and her subsequent decades of tireless service. It captures her resilience, her faith, and her unwavering commitment to freeing others. The book offers an intimate look at the woman behind the legend, detailing her motivations and her enduring legacy.

6_ Guided by Faith: The Spiritual Journey of Harriet Tubman

This title explores the profound spiritual beliefs that motivated and sustained Harriet Tubman throughout her life and work. It examines how her faith informed her decisions, gave her courage, and shaped her vision of justice. The book illuminates the deep well of strength she drew upon to face overwhelming odds.

7_ The Railroad of Freedom: The Mechanics of the Underground Railroad

This book offers a more technical and operational perspective on the Underground Railroad, dissecting its methods, its challenges, and its successes. It details the secret codes, safe houses, and the intricate logistics involved in moving people to safety. Readers will learn about the practicalities of this remarkable clandestine operation.

8_ Harriet Tubman's Courageous Missions: Untold Stories

This collection of narratives aims to uncover lesser-known aspects and specific missions undertaken by Harriet Tubman. It delves into particular rescue operations, her involvement in espionage during the Civil War, and her advocacy for civil rights after the war. The book provides a richer, more detailed tapestry of her extraordinary life.

9_ Legacy of a Hero: Harriet Tubman's Enduring Impact

This book examines the lasting influence of Harriet Tubman on American history and the ongoing fight for equality. It analyzes how her story continues to inspire activists and how her contributions shaped the course of civil rights in the United States. The volume reflects on her timeless relevance and her status as a national icon of bravery and perseverance.

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