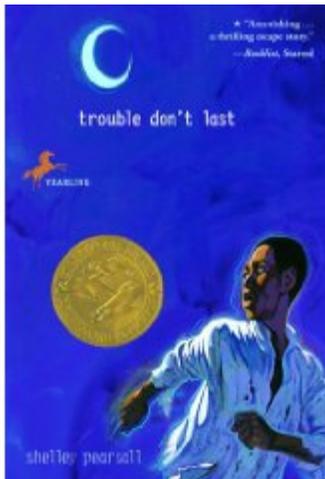


Trouble Don't Last by Shelley Pearsall

A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit



About the Book

Samuel and Harrison, two slaves on a Kentucky farm, are in search of freedom and Samuel's mother when they escape to Canada via the Underground Railroad in this novel set in 1859.

Eleven-year-old Samuel seems content with his life as a slave and his work in Master Hackler's kitchen where he is under the watchful eye of Lilly, a fellow slave and mother figure. He wonders about freedom, but doesn't understand what it really means until Harrison,

an elderly slave, snatches him from his bed and takes him on a long journey to Canada. Together, the young boy and old man run at night and sleep in hiding places during the day. Though constantly on the alert for slave hunters, the two are helped by conductors on the Underground Railroad, including a river man who gets them across the Ohio River. Along the way, Harrison reveals an important secret about Samuel's mother, and the two wonder about Lilly, who is back on Hackler's farm, and what will happen to them when they reach Canada.

The journey north seems much more frightening than Master Hackler ever was, and Samuel is not sure what freedom means aside from running, hiding, and starving. But as they move from one refuge to the next on the Underground Railroad, Samuel discovers the secret of his own past--and future. And old Harrison begins to see beyond a lifetime of hurt to the promise of a new life.



About the Author

A native Ohioan, Shelley Pearsall has enjoyed writing since childhood. *Trouble Don't Last*, her first novel, won the prestigious Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction, and was also named a Booklist Editors' Choice, a Booklist Top Ten Historical Fiction for Youth and a Top Ten First Novel for Youth. Nearly a quarter-million copies of her books have been sold nationwide, and her work has received regional and national recognition, including the 2003 Ohioana Library Book Award. Her first contemporary novel, *All of the Above*, was a 2007 ALA Notable book.

Before writing *Trouble Don't Last*, Shelley Pearsall was a public school teacher and a museum historian. In her spare time, she wrote historical scripts and short stories for Cleveland-area museums. She was the recipient of an Ohio Arts Council Fellowship in Writing in 1999 and was named the 2005 Children's Writer-in-Residence for the James Thurber House.

Shelley Pearsall's work and writing often has been influenced by her love of the past. She has taken part in a Revolutionary War shipwreck archaeology project, worked in an 18th century shoemaker shop in Colonial Williamsburg, and performed Great Lakes stories on a steamship—just to name a few of the unique historical jobs she has held over the years.

She graduated from the College of Wooster (B.A.) in 1989 and holds a master's degree in education from John Carroll University. Although she no longer works as a classroom teacher, Shelley enjoys visiting schools as a guest author!

Shelley Pearsall lives in Silver Lake, Ohio with her husband Mike, stepson Ethan, and rescued barn cat Marbles.

Photograph Used With Permission from Shelley Pearsall

Author Resources:

Shelley Pearsall

<http://www.shelleypearsall.com/index.htm>

Ms. Pearsall's personal website; includes information on workshops and author visits at

<http://www.shelleypearsall.com/workshop.htm>

Ohio Authors and Illustrators Directory

<http://school.ugaschools.org/greensview/ohioauthors/pearsall.shelley.htm>

Ms. Pearsall is interviewed in this directory of Ohio authors and illustrators

WordSwimmer Writing Blog

<http://wordswimmer.blogspot.com/2006/12/one-writers-process-shelley-pearsall.html>

Discusses the writing process that Ms. Pearsall utilizes for her award-winning books

Cynsations Blog Spot

<http://cynthialeitichsmith.blogspot.com/2006/11/author-interview-shelley-pearsall-on.html>

Author interview with Ms. Pearsall

Discussion Questions

Before reading the book

"I had reasoned dis out in my mind; There was one of two things I had a right to, liberty or death; If I could not have one, I would have de oder."—Harriet Tubman

Ask students to research the Underground Railroad and Harriet Tubman's work to make the railroad a success. Then ask them to write a brief essay that interprets the above quote.

After reading: questions to consider

1. If someone asked you to run away with them, how would you react?
2. Was the Underground Railroad a real railroad? Why was it called that?
3. Slaves were often separated from their real families, but they worked to create a traditional family structure. Who is Samuel's family?
4. What is Samuel's idea of freedom? Is Harrison looking for freedom for himself, or more for Samuel?
5. There are people all along the way that help Samuel and Harrison. How does it take courage for these people to serve as guides on the Underground Railroad?
6. How does the river man help Samuel develop survival skills?
7. The Widow Taylor hides Samuel and Harrison in her cellar, but she won't touch the coins their hands had touched. How is this an act of prejudice?



Extension Projects

Language Arts

Shelley Pearsall uses similes to create certain images. For example, "He walked ahead, snapping branches like bones under his feet." (p. 87). Ask students to find other similes in the novel. As an exercise, encourage them to replace Pearsall's similes with their own.

Reverend Pry is writing a brief story about Samuel to tell to his congregation. He begins, "Our forty-fifth visitor was a boy named Samuel, eleven years of age." (p. 122) Have students write out the beginning of Reverend Pry's speech and then continue the story up to the point where Samuel and Harrison reach Canada. They should write the way they think Reverend Pry would have, keeping in mind the congregation audience. Encourage them to add illustrations and read their stories aloud.

Library skills

Encourage students to research the Underground Railroad using the library's catalog and research databases provided through **Libraries Connect Ohio** (<http://www.librariesconnectohio.org/>). The picture file database in EBSCO's *Academic Search Premier* provides particularly poignant and moving photographs depicting the period of American slavery.

Social Studies

Among the people involved in the fight to end slavery were Frederick Douglass, John Brown, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Angelina and Sarah Grimke, William Lloyd Garrison, and Lucretia Mott. Ask each student to research the work of one of these activists, and write a speech that he/she might have given.

The issues of slavery became the central focus of American politics in the 19th century. Ask students to research the major political issues regarding slavery such as the Black Codes, Emancipation Proclamation, Fugitive Slave Acts, Compromise of 1850, and the 13th Amendment. Have them construct a timeline that reveals the growing concerns about slavery during this time. Which politician is credited with ending slavery? How did issues of slavery continue into the 20th century?

Math

Samuel wonders how far he and Harrison have to go to get to freedom. Ask students to study the map of their journey. (p. 231) Then have them use a United States atlas and calculate the miles by today's road system that Samuel and Harrison travel to reach freedom.



Science

Harrison becomes sick on the trip to Canada. At one point, he looks for an ax to put under the straw mattress to keep the chills away. (p. 111) Later, Belle mixes brandy and egg for Harrison's fever and Samuel remembers Lilly remedy of boiling fence-grass and water. Ask students to investigate superstitions and health remedies, such as herbal remedies and folk cures. Make an illustrated booklet that explains these superstitions.

Drama

"Big River" is a musical play based on the friendship between Huckleberry Finn and the slave Jim. Play the soundtrack of Big River in class, and ask students to locate the lyrics to the songs "Muddy Water" and "The Crossin" online. Suppose *Trouble Don't Last* is being staged. Where in the production would Samuel and Harrison sing these two songs?

Music

Ask students to use books in the library or sites on the Internet to locate the popular Negro spiritual "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." Have them perform the song for another class, and explain how the song directly refers to the Underground Railroad. Students may enjoy reading the lyrics of other Negro spirituals found on the [Thomas Wentworth Higginson](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/TWH/Higg.html) site (<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/TWH/Higg.html>).

Visual Arts

Clay marbles were a common toy in the 19th century. Slave children often made their own marbles by rolling the clay and applying colored designs. Samuel had a set of clay marbles until Miz Catherine took them from him. Make a set of six clay marbles that Samuel might have made after he reached Canada. Apply designs that represent freedom.

Book details:

Trouble Don't Last by **Shelley Pearsall**, Yearling, paperback, Ages 9-12, ISBN-10: 0440418119, Copyright 2003

Cited Resource: Random House Books For Children [Discussion Guide](http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375814907&view=tg) for **Trouble Don't Last**.
<http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375814907&view=tg>

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Additional Resources

History Channel

<http://www.history.com/topics/black-history-month>

This site discusses black history in general as well as the Underground Railroad.

Ohio Historical Society Underground Railroad Information Station

<http://www.ohiohistory.org/undergroundrr/>

Links to pages featuring archival and artifact collections, information for kids and teachers, places to visit and exhibits to discover.

Random House Discussion Guide

<http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375814907&view=tg>

Downloadable guide for discussions of *Trouble Don't Last*

Shelley Pearsall

<http://www.shelleypearsall.com/index.htm>

Ms. Pearsall's personal website

Underground Railroad in Southern Ohio

<http://www.angelfire.com/oh/chillicothe/ugrr.html>

Overview of people and events related to Underground Railroad

Nightjohn by Gary Paulsen, Dell Laurel-Leaf / Delacorte Press, Grades 5-9, ISBN:0-385-30838-8

This impeccably researched novel sheds light on cruel truths in American history as it traces the experiences of a 12-year-old slave girl in the 1850s.

North Star to Freedom: The Story of the Underground Railroad

by Gena K. Gorrell, Delacorte Press, Grades 5 and up, ISBN:0-385-32319-0

Gorrell, a Canadian Quaker, combines escape stories with the history of slavery and the social, political, and economic conflicts involved in the struggle for emancipation.

Stealing Freedom by Elisa Carbone, Dell Yearling, Grades 5 up, ISBN: 0-440-41707-4

Ann Maria Weems was a slave who lived in Maryland in the mid-1800s, and in this engaging, suspenseful novel, Elisa Carbone tells her story.

About Choose to Read Ohio

Choose to Read Ohio (CTRO) spotlights Ohio authors and promotes reading across Ohio. The State Library of Ohio, in partnership with Ohioana Library Association, developed this initiative to encourage Ohioans of all ages to share literature by authors native to, residing in, or associated with Ohio. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits: <http://oh.webjunction.org/ohctrointro>.