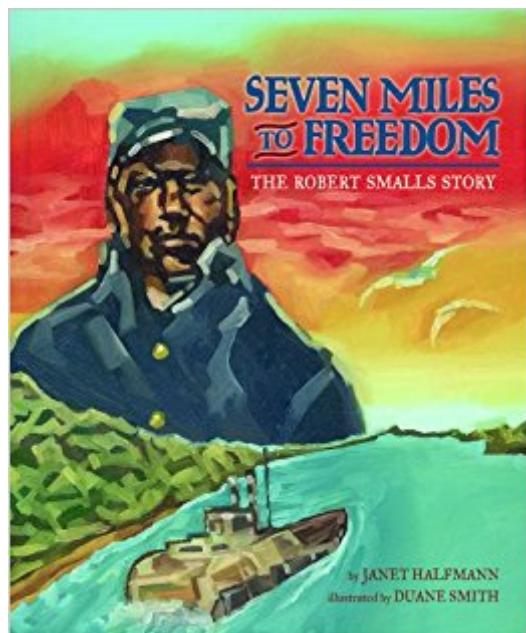


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# Seven Miles To Freedom: The Robert Smalls Story



## **Synopsis**

Best Children's Books of the Year: Bank Street College of Education Honor Book: Society of School Librarians International Growing up a slave in South Carolina, Robert Smalls always dreamed of the moment freedom would be within his grasp. Now that moment was here. Robert stood proudly at the Planter's wheel. Only seven miles of water lay between the ship and the chance of freedom in Union territory. With precision and amazing courage, he navigated past the Confederate forts in the harbor and steered the ship toward the safety of the Union fleet. Just one miscalculation would be deadly, but for Robert, his family, and his crewmates, the risk was worth taking. Seven Miles to Freedom is the compelling account of the daring escape of Robert Smalls, a slave steamboat wheelman who became one of the Civil War's greatest heroes. His steadfast courage in the face of adversity is an inspiring model for all who attempt to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 870 (What's this?)

Paperback: 40 pages

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ISBN-13: 978-1600609862

Product Dimensions: 0.2 x 9 x 10.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 21 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #707,010 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #115 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > Civil War Era #295 in Books > Children's Books > Cars, Trains & Things That Go > Boats & Ships #570 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Prejudice & Racism

Age Range: 6 - 11 years

Grade Level: 1 - 6

## **Customer Reviews**

Grade 3 "Born and raised a slave in coastal South Carolina, Smalls worked on the docks, then learned shipbuilding and piloting. In an amazing feat of daring in 1862, he stole a Confederate ship by impersonating the captain, sent a rowboat to pick up waiting family members, sailed past five Confederate forts, and turned the ship over to Union troops blockading the area. Smalls became the

first African-American captain of a United States vessel; he later served in the South Carolina legislature and the United States Congress. He was featured in Eloise Greenfield's collective biography *How They Got Over* (Amistad, 2003), but this book is an excellent vehicle to bring his story to a wider audience. Although presented in picture-book format, the text is detailed and there is a lot of it; the artistically beautiful but impressionistic images require some visual maturity from the audience. The oil paintings employ thick, bold strokes and deep saturated colors to convey Smalls's strength and determination in successfully delivering his and his crew's family members to freedom.â "Lucinda Snyder Whitehurst, St. Christopher's School, Richmond, VA Copyright Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Halfmann focusesÂ mostly on Smalls as a young slave whose master lets him work on the waterfront, and then on the planning ofÂ his secret escape to freedom. Spacious, impressionistic oil paintingsÂ accompany a text that describes Smalls,Â who, when the Civil War breaks out,Â uses his expert navigational skills and knowledge of the secret steam-whistle signals toÂ guide his ship pastÂ harbor guardsÂ to escape with his family andÂ crew. Suspense mounts as the women and children on the boat hide â œin pindrop quietâ •Â as their boatÂ passes one, two, then three forts. When the boatÂ finally reaches the Union side,Â the passengersÂ must mustÂ prove that they are fugitives, not enemies. TheÂ strongly impressionisticÂ art, largely in shades of brown and blue, will appeal most to older children;Â there areÂ close-up portraits of Smalls studying charts and maps, and thenÂ open views of ocean and sky that speak to freedom.Â An afterword and source notes fill in Smallsâ ™ important political role. . Grades 3-5. --Hazel Rochman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a well written-children's book. It is full of adventure and suspense, and yet it's appropriate for children. It's educational and fascinating since it's based on a true story and gives a sense of the tragedy and horror that was slavery. My one minor issue for me is that one of the book's primary goals is to humanize and make real the story of slaves, and yet the artwork has the effect of dehumanizing its subjects by making them a little more like vague shadows. However, whether one appreciates this particular style of art or not, I would still recommend this book for children and adults.

I recall reading biographies of Jacques Cartier, John Paul Jones, and Davy Crockett when I was in

the 4th grade. These stories took my imagination along great paths of discovery and ignited a love for history for me. I wish I could have read Halfmann's version (Seven Miles to Freedom: The Robert Smalls Story) of the Robert Smalls (1839-1915) story of escaping from the Confederacy during the Civil War when I was 10 or 11. It would have fired my imagination and interest in the American Civil War much earlier. Halfmann's version of the Smalls story is refreshingly accurate and very well written. The text moves along at a good pace. Unlike Kennedy's new book on Smalls (Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.'s American Heroes: Robert Smalls, the Boat Thief), Halfmann is faithful to the true story in what she covers and what she has to omit for a children's audience. A real surprise is the bibliography in the back of Halfmann's book which will serve the curious teacher and student well. I would add one book to the reading list (for the teacher) that Halfmann does not cite as a source for her book: A Yearning to Breathe Free: Robert Smalls of South Carolina and His Families, by Andrew Billingsley. Seven Miles to Freedom: The Robert Smalls Story book should be in every elementary school library in the United States.

Arrived in time and it's excellent for a 5th grade reader! Not too much, too too little. Perfect!

This was a junior reader, I thought it was going to be more in detail about his life. I should have researched it more before buying

Good book. Great history of Smalls. I recommend it.

Excellent !

I am an illustration FANATIC, and I'm raising a family of boys. We are visual people, and this book's illustrations are simple and powerful. I didn't know a thing about Robert Small until I read this book - what a fascinating story about a determined and skilled man. The text details Robert Small's hatred of slavery, his early jobs, and his determination to buy freedom for his family. Studying charts and testing the harbors, he became an expert pilot - one of the best in antebellum Charleston. After Fort Sumter, the Confederacy recognized his expertise and put him to work. He learned the schedules and the signals, and when the opportunity came, he and his crew gathered their families and steamed seven miles past the Confederate cannons to the safety and freedom of the Union lines. I had never heard this story, and now I will never forget it. This is one great biography. Notes and sources at the end. Illustrations so good, you want to touch them.

My definition of a hero ~"A hero is someone who with great courage and strength of heart considers the condition and needs of others. He or She may or may not be recognized for their deeds (and probably doesn't want to be recognized for them) because what they have done is what they believe is the right thing to do."Seven Miles to Freedom is the story of African American Robert Smalls. Born a slave in 1839 to the McKee family in South Carolina this is the story of a slave who made something of himself and also made a difference in the lives of hundreds of slaves and future African Americans.Written for children age 5+ Seven Miles to Freedom begins with the story of Robert Smalls's birth on his mother's master's estate and continues by explaining what slavery is in terms that a young child can understand. We see the type of work Robert Smalls grows up to do and the man he becomes. He is given much responsibility in his work as a wheelman, a position of trust and honor, because of his hard work, his honesty and because he applied himself to a job well done.And finally you see in the story how Robert Smalls has a hope and a determination to find a way to freedom, for himself, his family, the crew and their families. Everyone trusted him to help them get to freedom, even at the risk of being caught.The story doesn't stop with Robert Smalls's run for freedom over 7 Miles on the Charleston Bay but we also learn how he continued to fight for freedom for the newly released slaves long into the future. Robert Smalls truly made a difference in politics, taught himself to read and write and helped teach others how important Freedom truly is.I strongly recommend that all families with children between 5 and 3rd/4th grades read this book. I personally wanted to share this one with you because I believe it's important for children of all ages to have a hero. A hero who stands up for what's right, what's honest and strives to help others. I also wanted to share this book as it's important for children to see that we can all have heroes - and heroes are made up of all races and all kinds of people.

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