

Publishers' Bindings Online, 1815-1930: The Art of Books
bindings.lib.ua.edu

Sample Lesson Plan: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
Grades K-4

Objectives:

Using *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as an example, students will learn that one book can take on a variety of appearances. The lesson will be completed with the aid of the PBO bindings database and includes a creative classroom activity.

Materials:

- 1) A computer with an Internet connection and a large screen or other capability to display the teacher's actions to the entire class.
- 2) Enough blank paper for each student.
- 3) Crayons, markers, or colored pencils (either for each student or to share).
- 4) Chalk board or dry-erase board and appropriate writing implement.
- 5) Corkboard and tacks or other capability to display student artwork (such as spreading it out on a large table or taping it to the wall).

Lesson

Introduction

Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote a series of stories in 1850 because she was angry about some of the things the government had done to allow slavery. Mrs. Stowe believed slavery was cruel, and she thought her stories would make people agree with her. At first, people read these stories in a magazine called *National Era*. In 1852, all of the stories were put together in a book called *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. More than 300,000 people bought the book the first year it was published, and in 1856, two million people bought copies. You can still buy *Uncle Tom's Cabin* today. In fact, some versions have been made especially for children.

Even though all of these books have the same words inside, the outside covers are different. Sometimes they are made of leather, sometimes cloth, and sometimes paper. The covers can be different colors, and they can have different pictures on them. Today we are going to see what some of the covers looked like in the 1800s and early 1900s.

1852 Covers

[Covers from 1852 can be found by going to "Guided Search" (go to <http://bindings.lib.ua.edu/sitesearch.html>, select the "Search by Keyword" link, and click on "Guided Search" at the top of the page) and seeking *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (as a phrase) in the title field AND 1852 in the date field. Specify 50 records to be "Displayed in

Gallery” before clicking on “Search.” Scroll down slowly to allow students to see all of the covers in thumbnail form.]

Let’s look at some of the covers from the very first year *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was published. Even the books made in 1852 look different from each other. *Ask students to name the different colors they see.*

When you look at some of the books in a small picture like this, you might think there was nothing on the cover at all. Actually, that isn’t true. [Click on the third image from the left on the top line (pbw00269). Click on the large box underneath the example to enlarge the image.] *Ask students if they can see the design.* Sometimes people who made book covers would take a stamp without ink on it to make a design on leather or cloth without coloring the material. That is called “blind stamping.” *Ask students: Would you know what book this was just by looking at the front?* In the 1800s, they didn’t put the name of the book on the front. [Click on the image of the spine.] They usually put the name of the book on the spine. A lot of people who made books in the 1800s stamped the words in gold, like they did on this book. They used actual gold leaf, not an ink or dye. [Click on “Results” to return to the gallery view.]

Pictures on the front of books often were gold, too. Even though the material the book cover was made of could be a lot of different colors, they couldn’t put very colorful pictures on them. [From the gallery view of 1852 covers, click on the last image on the third line (pba00019).] A lot of the covers from 1852 have the same gold picture on the front. The picture shows a scene of slave life. You can see a woman standing in the doorway of a cabin, with three children in front of her. There is a man with a hoe in the background. Just like the last book, the name of the book is not on the front. [Click on the image of the spine.] *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Mrs. Stowe’s name are in gold on the spine. [Click on “Results” to return to the gallery view.]

A lot of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* covers have pictures of slave life, because the book was about slavery. Let’s look at another one. [From the gallery view of 1852 covers, click on the last image on the sixth line (pbw00342).] This cover is blue, and it has a picture of a man whipping a slave. That was one of the terrible things that Mrs. Stowe wanted people to know about. [Click on the image of the spine.] There is a picture on the spine, too, along with the name of the book. [Click on “Results” to return to the gallery view.]

Let’s look at one more picture. [Click on the second image on the last line (pbw00355).] The other books we looked at were leather or cloth. This book cover is paper. In 1852, bookmakers could do a lot more with paper than they could with cloth or leather. They could print in black, like they did on this book. This book does have *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Mrs. Stowe’s name on the front. It also has a picture of a slave auction, which was where people bought and sold slaves. [Click on the image of the back.] There are more pictures on the back. You can see the train, boats, buildings, and horse-drawn carriage. This is what a city looked like in the 1850s.

Pictures

[Go to “Guided Search” and seeking Uncle Tom’s Cabin (as a phrase) in the title field AND African Americans (all of these) in the subject field AND girls in the subject field. Specify 50 records to be “Displayed in Gallery.” Scroll down slowly to show all covers.] Pictures changed a lot after 1852. They started using more colors, and a lot of the pictures were of characters from Mrs. Stowe’s stories. Many of them are of Uncle Tom, who was a slave, and a little girl named Eva.

[Click on the last image in the seventh line (pbw00294).] Book makers still used gold a lot, but later in the 1880s, they started using black ink more on cloth covers. This book is from 1889. The picture of Uncle Tom and Eva is all in black. The name of the book and Mrs. Stowe’s name are stamped in black, too.

[Return to the gallery. Click on the second image in the fourth line (pbw00344).] A lot of bookmakers at this time liked to use gold and black together. This book cover also is from the 1880s. *Ask students: What color is the picture?* (Answer: Gold.) *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Mrs. Stowe’s name are in gold, too. The other designs on the book are black.

[Return to the gallery. Click on the last image in the second line (pbw00266).] Pretty soon, bookmakers were able to stamp a lot of different colors of ink on cloth book covers. This book is from 1891. *Ask students: What colors do you see on this cover?* (Answer: Gold, black, red, orange, yellow, green, and brown are stamped on a blue cloth.)

[Return to the gallery and click on the third image in the last full line (pbw00315)] Bookmakers could print a lot of different colors on paper, too. Using paper on covers became more common in the early 1900s. A lot of times, the bookmaker would still use cloth to cover the book, and then he would paste on a picture that was printed on a piece of paper. This is called an onlay. This is a book from 1904 called *Uncle Tom’s Cabin Told to the Children*. The words are printed right on the cover in gold, but the picture of Uncle Tom and Eva is printed on paper and pasted onto the cloth.

[Return to the gallery and click on the third image on the second line (pbw00260).] This book from the early 1900s has a paper cover, and the colorful picture takes up the whole front. *Ask students: What color is the name of the book printed in?* (Answer: Red)

[Click on “Results” to return to the gallery view. Click on the last image in the fourth line (pbw00380).] Another thing bookmakers started doing in the early 1900s was making a paper jacket to put over a book. *Ask students: Do you see a picture on this book?* The cloth cover that is attached to this book, which was published in 1910, is orange with letters stamped in blue. There is no picture printed on the cover. [Click on other part image.] But, the book has a paper dust jacket that goes over the orange cover. [Point out which part of the jacket would be the front: the large panel with the full-color picture and book title.] The jacket has a colorful picture of Uncle Tom and Eva, and it also has *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Mrs. Stowe’s name printed on it.

Classroom Activity 1:

[Find these covers by going to “Guided Search” and seeking Uncle Tom’s Cabin (as a phrase) in the title field AND floral in the subject field NOT people in the subject field. Specify 50 results “Displayed in Gallery.” Scroll slowly so students can see all of the thumbnails.] A lot of book covers don’t have pictures of people on them, but they have designs of flowers, squiggly lines, and other shapes.

Select images at random, or ask students to select thumbnails that look interesting, and enlarge them. Ask them about the images. What colors do they see? What shapes can they identify? Are there any words on the front? Do this with 3-4 pictures.

Classroom Activity 2:

The cover of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* can have at least as many different forms as there are students in the classroom. [Distribute paper and coloring implements.] Tell students to draw their own book cover for Uncle Tom’s Cabin. **Encourage creativity.** [Write “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” and “Harriet Beecher Stowe” on your chalk board or dry-erase board in case students want to incorporate the book title and/or author’s name in their design.]

[After students complete their work, display the covers so students can see all of their classmates’ designs.]

For additional teaching resources on *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, see:

American Writers, Teacher Resources:

http://www.americanwriters.org/classroom/resources/tr_stowe.asp

Harriett Beecher Stowe Center, Teacher & Student Resources:

http://www.harrietbeecherstowecenter.org/teacher_student/

Learning Page, American Memory, Library of Congress:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/collections/slavery/langarts.html>

“On an Underground Railroad,” History Happens, Stories from American History on Music Video:

<http://www.ushistory.com/railr.htm>

Uncle Tom’s Cabin Teacher Guide, University of Virginia:

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA02/harris/utc/index.html>

“Uncle Tom’s Cabin: The Most Important American Novel?”, St. Louis University:

<http://pages.slu.edu/faculty/reitzc/utc.html>