

# Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

## Meet Addy, an American Girl

by  
Connie Porter

### Book Information

Connie Porter, Meet Addy, an American Girl

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Book Level: 4.0

Interest Level: MG

Nine-year-old Addy Walker escapes from a cruel life of slavery to freedom during the Civil War.

**Topics:** People, African American; People, Slaves; Recommended Reading, IRA/CBC Choice; Series, American Girl; Wars, American Civil War

### Main Characters

Addy Walker the central character of the story; she tries to escape slavery

Auntie Lula Uncle Solomon's wife; she does the cooking for Master Stevens and looks after Addy and her family

Ben Walker (Poppa) Addy's father; he is sold to another plantation owner

Esther Walker Addy's baby sister; she is left behind when Addy and Momma run away

Master Stevens the owner of the plantation where Addy and her family are slaves

Miss Caroline a white woman who operates a safe house; she helps Addy and Momma escape

Ruth Walker (Momma) Addy's mother; she runs away from Master Stevens with Addy

Sam Walker Addy's older brother; he wants to fight for the North in the war

Uncle Solomon a slave on Master Stevens's plantation; he helps Addy and Momma run away

### Vocabulary

**Confederate** a soldier fighting for the South during the Civil War

**cornhusk** the rough, outer covering of an ear of corn

**cowrie** a type of snail found in bodies of warm water

**pallet** a mattress filled with straw

**plantation** a large estate that grows trees or crops

**shutters** moveable covers for windows

### Synopsis

Addy and her family are slaves on Master Stevens's tobacco plantation in North Carolina during the Civil War. One summer night, Addy overhears her parents talking about escaping to freedom in Philadelphia. Times are hard, and because of the war, money is short, even for plantation owners. Because of this, Poppa wants to leave right away before Master Stevens considers separating the family by selling any of them to another white man. Momma wants to wait until the war is over, since they will then be free. She fears Master Stevens will split up the family if he catches them trying to escape.

A week after Addy overhears her parents' plan, another plantation owner comes to buy Addy's father and her brother, Sam. Even though Addy is trying to learn how to keep her feelings on the inside, she cannot help but beg the new plantation owner to not take her father and brother. In response to her outburst, Master Stevens whips her. The next day, the plantation overseer forces Addy to eat tobacco worms because she has been careless in her job of removing them from the tobacco plants. Momma decides to follow her husband's plan to escape and run away to Philadelphia immediately even though she must leave her youngest daughter, Esther, behind.

Auntie Lula and Uncle Solomon help Addy and Momma disguise themselves as a boy and a man. They leave the next night and travel as far as they can during the night and sleep under cover during the day. They finally make their way to the train tracks and then to a known safe house. The lady of the safe house, Miss Caroline, brings them into her home, feeds them, and helps them escape from the nearby Confederate soldiers. The story closes with Addy and Momma covered with sacks, riding in the back of Miss Caroline's wagon on their way to freedom in the North.

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### Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

#### Initial Understanding

Momma tells Poppa she does not want to run away because the war is almost over and soon they will be free. After Sam and Poppa are sold to another plantation, why does Momma feel that she and Addy need to escape right away?

*At first, Momma believes that Master Stevens would never sell any of the family because of the hard work they do for him. She also thinks that if they are caught escaping, Master Stevens will definitely split up the family. She wants the family to stay together and feels that they have nothing to lose by waiting. Once Sam and Poppa are sold, though, Momma realizes that Master Stevens is either having financial troubles or does not care about their family. The family is already split up with no hope of Sam and Poppa ever returning to the plantation. Momma knows that the only way they will be together again is to run away now, in hopes of meeting someday in Philadelphia.*

#### Literary Analysis

In the beginning of the story, the author refers to the word "hot" several times. Addy is hot in the cabin; Esther's breath is hot on Addy's face; Poppa says Sam has a hot head and a hot mouth. Why does the author use the word frequently in the beginning of the story? What does "hot" symbolize?

*The word "hot" is used to give the reader a sense of burning in the hearts of Addy's family to escape to freedom. The hot night gives a feeling of discomfort, suggesting that the escape to freedom will not be easy or comfortable. Sam's hot head and hot mouth indicate that he reacts easily with anger and says things without thinking, symbolizing his burning desire to escape from his life as a slave to freedom in the North.*

#### Inferential Comprehension

Why is Poppa trying to teach Addy to keep her feelings hidden?

*Poppa knows that when the slaves show anger or pain, they are often subjected to further punishment. By hiding their feelings from the slave owner, they are showing acceptance of their plight. If any slaves protest or become angry, the owner is likely to consider them out of control and at risk for running away. This will then cause the owner to "train" them, or punish them further.*

#### Constructing Meaning

After Addy finds out that Master Stevens is planning to sell Sam and Poppa, Auntie Lula tells Addy to act like she thinks it is time for the afternoon water. What does Auntie Lula mean?

*Auntie Lula knows that Addy will get in trouble if she goes out to the fields to warn Poppa and Sam. Auntie Lula believes that if Addy acts like it is time for the afternoon water, she may be able to warn Sam and Poppa yet avoid punishment for being in the fields at the wrong time.*

### Teachable Skills

**Recognizing Setting** Addy and her family live in North Carolina. Her parents' plan is to escape and go to freedom in Philadelphia. Have the students locate North Carolina on a map of the United States. Then have them find Philadelphia and its state on the map. Have each student write a report on the role Philadelphia played in the Civil War and why Addy's father wanted his family to go to that particular city. The report should be accompanied by the map showing the two locations stated above.

**Responding to Literature** Addy's mother tells Addy about Addy's great-grandmother's journey from Africa to the United States. She gives the cowrie shell great-grandmother wore on a necklace to Addy as a remembrance. As Addy thinks about the great-grandmother she never met, it gives her the courage to continue on her journey to freedom. Ask the students to think of

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someone whom they have never met that has had an influence on their life. The person can be a family member, a family friend, or a historical figure. Have each student write a story from the third-person point of view describing the person and how the person impacted the student's life. Encourage the students to include a visual aid such as a drawing, picture, or photograph with the story. Each student can read the story to the class, or the stories can be displayed in the room, giving time for students to browse and read through each story.

**Understanding Characterization** Sam and Addy are not allowed to attend school, but Sam tells Addy riddles to help her think and become smart. Have the students work in teams to develop a set of riddles describing the various characters of the story. For example, a riddle about Miss Caroline might ask, "Who was short in size but tall in mercy?" Each team can then ask the riddles of the other team to try to stump them.

**Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors** This story is rich in historical events and references. Many of the people and events of 1864 are well-known to us today. Have the students select a person or event relevant to the historical era. They may use the historical notes after the story for ideas such as slave-trade, Harriet Tubman, Confederate states, Emancipation Proclamation, etc. Have each student prepare a report on the topic in the form of a news article that may have appeared in a newspaper of 1864. The articles can be compiled into a mock newspaper to be displayed in the room or presented to a larger portion of the school.