



theslowdown_20200318_20200318_128

Wed, 9/30 8:13PM 5:00

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

harriet tubman, fact, ben, died, lincoln, jolt, home, north, poem, georgia avenue, war, african cuisine, write, remember, hospital, seventh street, sworn, poet, asks, boys

00:06

I'm Tracy k Smith, and this is the slow down.

00:22

I live close to Philadelphia. out some nights I walk past Independence Hall where the Declaration of Independence was ratified. Recently, the strange shock of being just steps away from those rooms where history happened. Well, it gave me a jolt. I was surprised to remember that the past didn't take place on another planet far away. It happened right here and everywhere, on the very same Earth where you and I walk. Today's poem is the fifth fact by Sarah Browning. For Ben's project, he must research five facts about his African American hero and write them on poster board. He chooses Harriet Tubman, who is five facts are her father's name was Ben. Her mother's name was old RIT. She was born in 1820 and died in 1913. She was born in Maryland, and died in New York. Ben asks for advice about his fifth fact. And I suggest she led more than 300 people to freedom. Ben sighs the way he does now and says, everyone knows that mom. So I try to remember the book we read yesterday, search for the perfect fact, the one that will match his four facts and satisfy his almost seven mind. Remember, I asked she was a spy for the North during the Civil War. It's a hit. He writes it. Harriet Tubman was a spy for the North during the Civil War. It was a war between the North which is where the slaves were trying to get and the South, which is where they were. Before the war, Abraham Lincoln signed a form that said all the slaves everywhere are free, which is one of the reasons they were fighting. on summer mornings, Lincoln rode his horse to work down the Seventh Street Turnpike close to my new home. Down Georgia Avenue past the hunger STOPPER AND payday to go and liquor stores and liquor stores. Past cluck you chicken and fish in the hood, and top twins phase two authentic African cuisine and the newish metro station and all those possibilities gleaming in developers eyes. There goes Lincoln's horse down Georgia Avenue from the soldiers home to the White House, much cooler up here in

the country, in the neighborhood at the hospital. And there's Walt Whitman, the sworn poet of every dauntless rebel, the world over hanging around his street corner every morning to bow to the president at Thomas circle by the homeless guys. It's 100 years now since any president summered at the soldiers home, but I was born only 50 years after Harriet Tubman died all the centuries we drag into the next century, and the next. Riding here in my new neighborhood, the city old and new around me. I see Harriet Tubman and Lincoln and Uncle Walt and the true stories and sometimes our own despair, like Washington summer malaria, her 40 war hospitals, Whitman, moving from bed to bed, stroking the hair of so many dying boys. North up georgia avenue in our own soldiers home, Walter Reed, the boys and now girls to mourn the ghosts of their own legs and arms, and our capacity for love. Where's their sworn poet? Harriet Tubman born so close all these heroes under our feet.

04:43

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