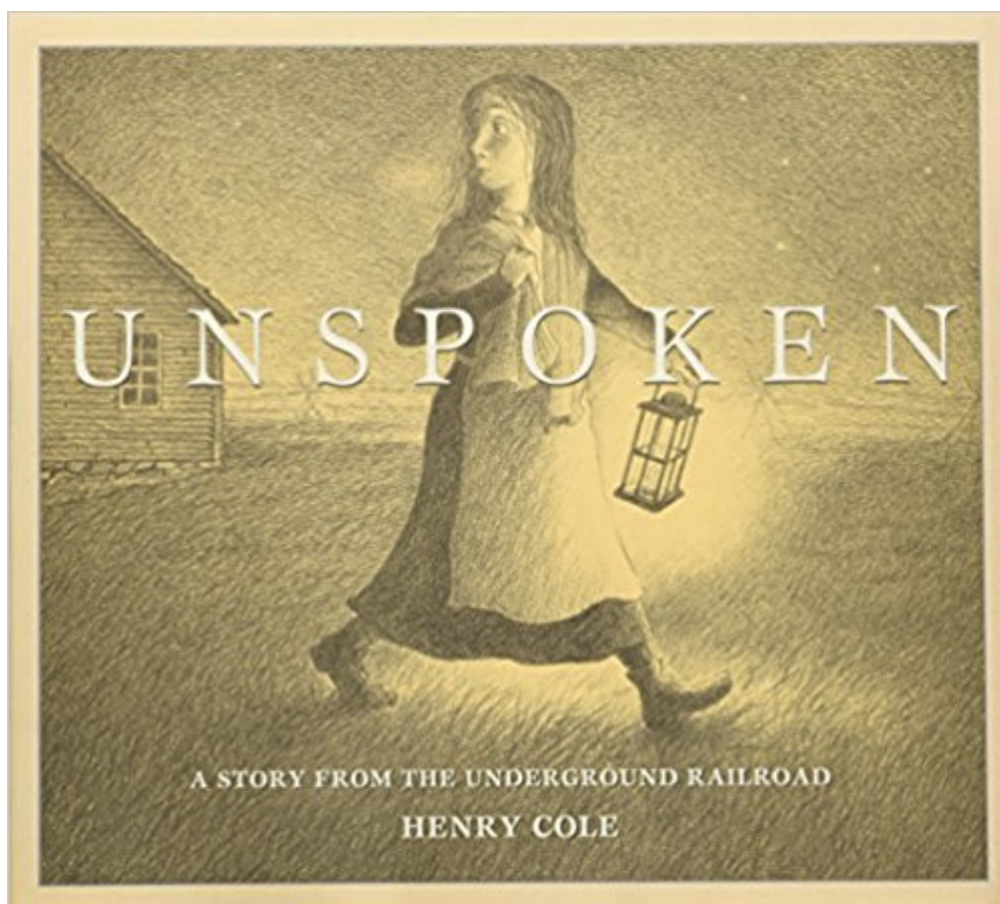


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# Unspoken: A Story From The Underground Railroad



## Synopsis

A young girl's courage is tested in this haunting, wordless story. When a farm girl discovers a runaway slave hiding in the barn, she is at once startled and frightened. But the stranger's fearful eyes weigh upon her conscience, and she must make a difficult choice. Will she have the courage to help him? Unspoken gifts of humanity unite the girl and the runaway as they each face a journey: one following the North Star, the other following her heart. Henry Cole's unusual and original rendering of the Underground Railroad speaks directly to our deepest sense of compassion.

## Book Information

Series: Unspoken

Hardcover: 40 pages

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Product Dimensions: 0.5 x 11 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 51 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #70,092 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #101 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1800s #196 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > African-American #282 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Values

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

From the title on, silence and secrets create stirring drama in this wordless picture book about a child who helps a runaway slave escape. The full-page charcoal-and-pencil drawings in sepia tones show the girl busy with her chores on her family's farm. Then she glimpses someone watching her in the barn. She barely sees the runaway; the pictures show just an eye. She never speaks with the hidden figure, but she leaves food, wrapped in cloth, even as terrifying, armed slave hunters on horseback show her family a poster: "Wanted. Escaped. Reward." Then the fugitive disappears in the night, but the girl finds a doll made from the star-patterned cloth that covered the food she had brought. At the story's end, the girl lies in bed watching the stars in the night sky. A long

afterword adds context to the historical setting, and children will be moved to return to the images many times and fill in their own words. Grades 2-4. --Hazel Rochman

"Gorgeously rendered in soft, dark pencils, this wordless book is reminiscent of the naturalistic pencil artistry of Maurice Sendak and Brian Selznick, but unique in its accurate re-creation of a Civil War-era farm in northwestern Virginia. On the dedication page, readers see a star quilt on a split rail fence, symbolizing the North Star. Confederate soldiers arrive on horseback and a farmer's daughter's lingering gaze betrays her intuition of their visit. She goes about her duties of feeding the animals and gathering harvested vegetables. In the recently harvested cornstalks propped up in the corner of the barn, she hears a rustling and sees an eye. Superb visual storytelling shows her hands time and time again offering a piece of corn bread, apple pie, a leg of chicken, each time on a small checkered kerchief, to the young, hidden runaway. The soldiers return with a poster: "Wanted! Escaped! Reward!" These words call out in the otherwise wordless book, and readers feel their power. Parallels between the fugitive and the farmer's daughter establish themselves visually when the latter gazes from behind a door, terrified at this threat. An author's note details the Civil War stories Cole heard as a young boy and underscores his intention of showing not the division, anger, and violence of the Civil War, but the courage of everyday people who were brave in quiet ways." - Sara Lissa Paulson, American Sign Language and English Lower School PS 347, New York City, Starred review "Cole's (A Nest for Celeste) beautifully detailed pencil drawings on cream-colored paper deftly visualize a family's ruggedly simple lifestyle on a Civil War-era homestead, while facing stark, ethical choices. Beginning with an illustration of a star-patterned quilt hanging over a fence (such quilts, Cole writes in his author's note, signified a safe house for runaway slaves), the wordless story follows a girl who becomes aware of someone hiding in the barn. In one scene, she glances nervously over her shoulder at an unexpected noise; the next shows a closeup of cornhusks, a frightened eye peering through; the girl dashes from the barn in terror in a third illustration. After pondering her discovery, she stealthily delivers food wrapped in a checkered napkin on multiple occasions. Household adults are none the wiser, and following a close call with a pair of bounty hunters, the girl returns to the barn and discovers a cornhusk doll, left behind as thanks. Cole conjures significant tension and emotional heft (his silent storytelling calls to mind Brian Selznick's recent work) in this powerful tale of quiet camaraderie and courage." - Publishers Weekly starred review "[D]esigned to present youngsters with a moral choice" [T]he author, a former teacher, clearly intended "Unspoken" to be a challenging book, its somber sepia tone drawings establish a mood of

## foreboding.â • - New York Times Book Review

I use this book as part of an Underground Railroad study for my 6th graders. They really enjoy it as a whole class "read aloud". I lead them through the illustrations (allowing them to point out visual details they deem important) and as I show each page, the students write their own words for it on a separate sheet of paper. The creative prose or poetry the kids come up with is great!

a work of art. a visual poem. so glad I own it. so glad i took the plunge and bought it. It is a beautiful book. Love owning it.

Although I teach second graders, this book would be a wonderful addition to any teacher's library. It is a wordless picture book which can be used to encourage lots of thinking! We went through the pages, devouring what was happening and talking about what the text would say. Afterward, we wrote text as a class for a couple of pages. Then, kids worked in pairs to write text for remaining pages. We took it through the writing process as a large group. We worked for a chunk of time every day during our literacy block. So much thinking, sharing, writing and reading went into working with this text.

I met the author and won a copy of this book. I gave it to a teacher because she kept saying WOW!! WOW!!! WOW!!! and is sharing it with all of her classes. Fantastic way to tell about an historical event.

An incredibly powerful book. Highly recommend it.

This is a splendid book! I gave it to an 8-year-old as a birthday present, and it turns out to be one of her favorite presents. She is reading two or three years above her grade level (2), and this book allows her to write her own dialogue and narration to fit a story that is both historically accurate and just scary enough.

As a teacher, I use this book for inference practice - GREAT resource and really gets the kids (8th graders) thinking! All that on top of tying into an important historical period..!

Outstanding book. Has quickly become one of my favorites! So many teaching opportunities!

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