

Uncle Tom's Cabin

Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to help people understand the evils of slavery. Read the following short extract and answer the questions that follow. As you read, think about what she hoped Americans would learn.

A little before the sale commenced, a short, broad, muscular man . . . elbowed his way through the crowd, like one who is going actively into a business; and coming up to the group, began to examine them systematically. From the moment that Tom saw him approaching, he felt an immediate and revolting horror at him, that increased as he came near. He was evidently, though short, of gigantic strength. His round, bullet-head, large, light-gray eyes, with their shaggy, sandy eyebrows, and stiff, wiry, sunburned hair, were rather unprepossessing items. . . . This man proceeded to a very free personal examination of the lot. He seized Tom by the jaw, and pulled open his mouth to inspect his teeth; made him strip up his sleeve, to show his muscle; turned him round, made him jump and spring to show his paces.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852

1. What did the short, broad, muscular man do to Tom?
2. Why did Harriet Beecher Stowe describe this scene?
3. What national events made Harriet Beecher Stowe write this paragraph?
4. How well do you think Harriet Beecher Stowe's book helped Americans understand the living conditions of slaves in the South?