



## UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

One book above all others influenced the way that the whites thought about the blacks: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Angered by the Fugitive Slave Act, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote a novel that changed American thinking on slavery. It was hugely popular in the Northern states, selling over 300,000 in its first year of publication. It enjoyed the same success in Europe and was translated into over 60 languages. Already in 1853 it was translated into Danish.

**Uncle Tom, who is a slave, and the lawyer called Marks are listening to Haley, a slave owner who is complaining about his female slave. Also present is a slave hunter, Tom Loker.**

“Well,” said Haley. “Last summer, down on Red River, I bought a gal with a young’un, and his eyes looked as bright as yours; but, come to look, I found him stone blind! Well, I thought there wasn’t no harm in my just selling him on and not sayin’ nothin’. So I got him swapped for a keg o’ whiskey. But when I come to get him away from the gal, she was just like a tiger. She jumps up on a cotton-bale, like a cat, catches a knife from one of the deck hands, and, I tell you, she made all fly for a minute, till she saw it wasn’t no use. Then she just turns round, and jumps head first, young’un and all, into the river, – went down, and never rose.”

“Bah!” said Tom Loker, “my gals don’t cut

up like that!”

“Indeed! how do you help it?” said Marks.

“Help it? why, I buys a gal, and if she’s got a child to be sold, I just walks up and puts my fist to her face, and says, ‘Look here, now, if you give me one word out of your head, I’ll smash your face in. This here young’ un is mine, and not yours, and I’m going to sell it, first chance. Don’t you cut up, or I’ll make you wish you’d never been born.’ ”

***Uncle Tom's Cabin* was heavily criticized in the South, in fact tensions between North and South meant that 7 Southern states withdrew from the Union (the 'United States') and set up their own government, the Confederacy. The President of the Union in the North was Abraham Lincoln. The President of the Confederates in the South was Jefferson Davis. The American Civil War began.**

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# UNCLE TOM'S CABIN



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## 1. ROLE-PLAY – IN PAIRS

One of you is a book seller, the other is a book buyer who knows nothing about the book. Impvise a conversation around *Uncle Tom's Cabin* where the buyer asks questions and the salesman explains about the book.

## 2. HOT SEAT

One of you is the slave owner in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Take the hot seat and answer questions from the class on why you believe in slavery.

Another student is an 'abolitionist'. Take the hot seat and defend your views against slavery.