

ABOUT

the Author

PAT SHERMAN works as a writer, library professional, and writing instructor in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her previous books include *The Sun's Daughter*, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie (Clarion), and several nonfiction books for young people on historical subjects ranging from colonial America to the present day.

the Illustrator

FLOYD COOPER has won many prestigious awards for his illustration, including the 2009 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award for *The Blacker the Berry*, written by Joyce Carol Thomas (Amistad), plus three previous Coretta Scott King Honors, a Da Vinci Award, and an NAACP Image Honor. Among the more than eighty books he has illustrated are *Mississippi Morning* by Ruth Vander Zee (Eerdmans) and *Meet Danitra Brown* by Nikki Grimes (HarperCollins). Floyd lives in Pennsylvania.

PRAISE FOR

Ben and the Emancipation Proclamation

“This is a powerful tale of a bright ray of light in a very dark period in America.”

— *School Library Journal*

“With moving language, Sherman clearly shows the ways that the young Ben both strengthened and hid his literacy skills, and how he put them to use as he dreamed of a better future.”

— *Booklist*

BEN AND THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

Written by Pat Sherman
Illustrated by Floyd Cooper

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8½" x 11¼" ❖ 32 pages ❖ Ages 8-12

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with young readers,
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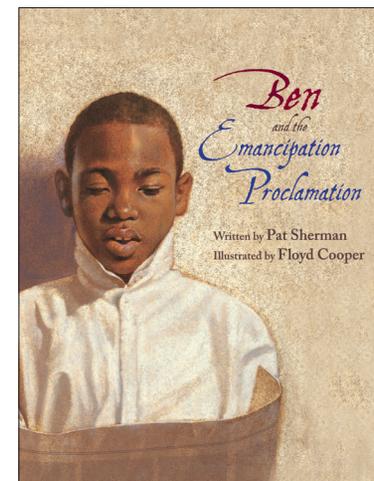
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BEN AND THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

Written by Pat Sherman
Illustrated by Floyd Cooper



“Don’t let them know you can read.”
That’s what his father had told him.
Slaves weren’t allowed to read.

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

- ❖ Education
- ❖ Literacy and reading
- ❖ African American history
- ❖ American slavery and the Civil War
- ❖ Overcoming obstacles
- ❖ Freedom

Eerdmans Books for Young Readers
Discussion Guide

VOCABULARY

Look up the following terms in a reference book: slavery, plantation, apprentice, abolition, rebellion, Emancipation Proclamation, literacy.



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE READING THE BOOK

1. Look at the picture on the cover. What is the boy doing? How is he standing? What does the expression on his face suggest? Do you think he's doing something special? Why?

2. How old do you think the boy on the cover is? Look at the style of his shirt. Does it look like the shirts boys wear today or something worn long ago?

3. Have you ever read anything out loud to a large group of people? How did it make you feel? Was it easy to make your voice heard? If you could choose to read something out loud to your class or community group, what would it be?

4. Read the title of the story. Have you ever heard of the Emancipation Proclamation? What do you think these words mean?



QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON AFTER READING THE BOOK

1. Ben's father warns him that slaves aren't supposed to learn how to read. Why would the

people who owned slaves be afraid to allow them to become educated?

2. Ben uses words on street signs, store windows, and the labels of boxes to practice his reading skills. What kinds of signs and labels do you see around you every day? Can being on the lookout for words help you practice reading?

3. Ben becomes an apprentice to a tailor. Did you ever learn how to do something by helping out an older person? Did you make something? Fix something? Cook something? Can work be a form of education too?

4. When Ben visits his mother, she tells him she wants him to learn how to write. If you didn't have paper or pencils or computers, what would you use to write with? What are some of the ways you practice writing? Do you think reading and writing are important? Why?

5. At the end of the book Ben is curious about what freedom will bring. What do you think freedom meant to Ben and the other slaves? What does the word *freedom* mean to you?



ACTIVITIES

1. Using your library and online resources, see if you can find a timeline for the Civil War. What was the main cause of the war? Why do you think the issue of slavery was so important to Americans at that time? What were some of the things people did to try to abolish slavery?

2. Every year on June 19 many African American communities celebrate Juneteenth in honor of the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of slavery. Can you think of a way to celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation in your school? Drawing pictures, writing poems and stories, or presenting a concert or dramatic play are all possible ways to express your ideas.

3. Ben read the *Charleston Mercury* to his fellow prisoners. Try reading through a copy of your local newspaper — either online or in print — with your teacher and class. What articles interest you the most? What issues are important in your community? Your country? The world? What do you think you can learn from the newspaper?

4. Today, many children in the world still do not have the opportunity to learn how to read and write. Can you find an organization, either online or through your library, that promotes literacy and education worldwide? What are some ways you and your friends can help this organization?

5. Are there ways you and your friends can help promote literacy in your own community? You might collect books to donate to a shelter for homeless families, volunteer to read aloud to younger children, or hold an event to raise funds for your school or public library.