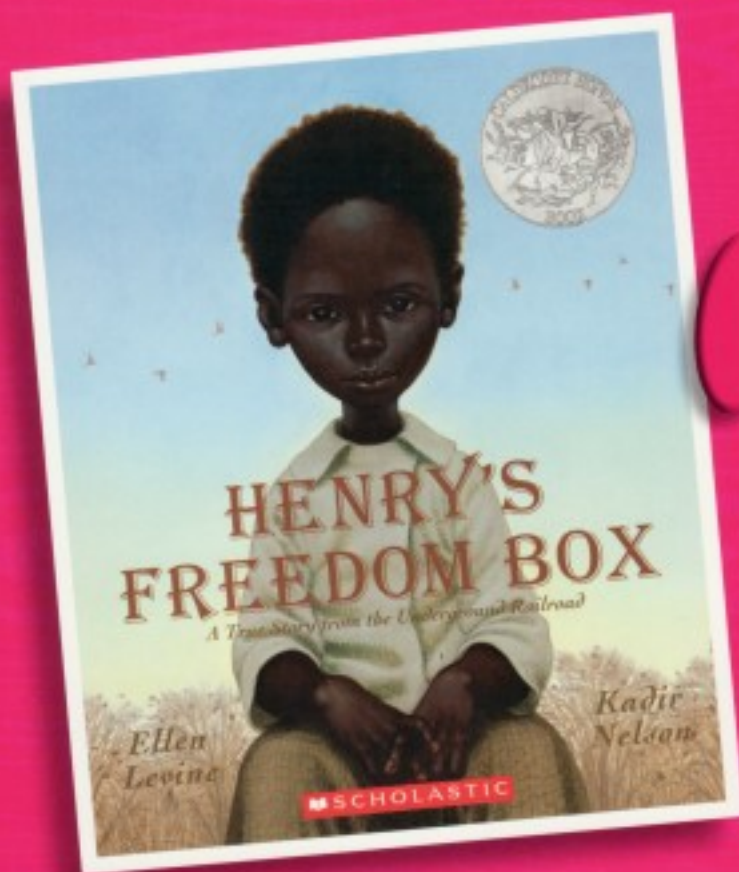


The Trait Crate®

# TEACHING CONVENTIONS

USING *Henry's  
Freedom Box*



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## Materials

Conv\_Passage\_1 from CD to project, or a class set

Student journals, notebooks, or other writing space

## LESSON 1

### Key Quality: Checking Spelling

Homonyms offer spelling challenges but also opportunities for wordplay, as demonstrated in this lesson.

#### Introducing the Passage

This passage from *Henry's Freedom Box* describes Henry being transported to freedom in his crate.

#### Connecting to the Key Quality: Checking Spelling

We'll be looking for homonyms in this passage.

"What do you think is in here?" said the first man.

"Mail, I guess," said the other.

*I am mail, thought Henry. But not the kind they imagine!*

Henry was carried off the steamboat and placed in a railroad car, this time head up. He fell asleep to the rattling song of the train wheels.

Available as Conv\_Passage\_1 on the CD

#### Teaching the Lesson

1. Ask students to define homonyms, providing a student-friendly definition if necessary: homonyms are words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings.
2. Tell students that the passage contains four homonyms. Challenge students to write down the homonyms as they hear them.
3. Read the passage aloud, with expression. Repeat if students ask you to or if they have difficulty identifying the four homonyms: *here, mail, I, to*.
4. Project the passage and invite students to come to the board and highlight the homonyms. Alternatively, distribute copies of the passage to students and have students underline the homonyms. For each one, list the other word in the homonym pair and discuss the spelling and differences (*of course, to/too/two* is a homonym triplet).
5. Ask students to consider the use of the word *mail* in this passage: Henry is human, but must pretend to be inanimate to escape slavery, so he is a *male* who turns himself into *mail* to escape. Point out that homonyms offer writers an opportunity for wordplay (along with spelling challenges).



# Tips for Punctuating Dialogue

## **“Twist that tobacco!”**

- Place quotation marks around the words the speaker says.
- Capitalize the first word of a quotation.
- Place end punctuation inside the closing quotation mark.

## **He whispered to Henry, “Your wife and children were just sold at the slave market.”**

- If a quotation is introduced by some text, put a comma immediately before the quotation mark.
- Capitalize the first word of a quotation; it is a sentence inside a sentence.
- The end punctuation of a quotation goes inside the quotation mark.

## **“No!” cried Henry.**

- If a quotation is followed by the name of the speaker (the speaker tag), put a comma at the end of the quotation, followed by the quotation mark, then the speaker tag.
- A question mark or exclamation point may take the place of a comma, as in the above example.

## **A note about paragraphing . . .**

When writing dialogue, begin a new paragraph each time the speaker changes.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Be Agreeable!

**DIRECTIONS:** Put the scrambled sentences in order so they tell the story of Henry and Nancy's courtship. Number each one and then rewrite in order on another sheet of paper. Pay attention to verb tense; change any verbs that are in the wrong tense and be prepared to discuss.

Henry feels like singing.

If you made a mistake, the boss would beat you.

When she comes outside, Henry says hello.

Henry and Nancy were excited to begin their life together.

Henry worked in his new master's factory.

They would gain their freedom.

Nancy is shopping for her mistress.

They would have four children.

"Do not tear that tobacco leaf!" the boss yelled at the new boy.

Nancy and Henry decided to get married.

Henry sees her through the window.

He was good at his job.

They planned their future.

He poked the boy with a stick.

They walk and talk and agree to meet again.

They would work for themselves.

# Student-Friendly Scoring Guide: Conventions

The mechanical correctness of the piece. Correct use of conventions (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, and grammar and usage) guides the reader through text easily.

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## EXPERT

My piece proves I can use a range of conventions with skill and creativity. It is ready for its intended audience.

- My spelling is strong. I've spelled all or nearly all the words accurately.
- I've used punctuation creatively and correctly and begun new paragraphs in the right places.
- I've used capital letters correctly throughout my piece, even in tricky places.
- I've taken care to apply standard English grammar and usage.

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## WELL DONE

4

## ALMOST THERE

My writing still needs editing to correct problems in one or more conventions. I've stuck to the basics and haven't tried challenging conventions.

- I've misspelled words that I use all the time, as well as complex words that I don't use as often.
- My punctuation is basically strong. I should review it one more time. I indented some of the paragraphs, but not all of them.
- I've correctly used capital letters in obvious places (such as the word *I*), but not in others.
- Even though my grammar and usage are not 100 percent correct, my audience should be able to read my piece.

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## MAKING STRIDES

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## ON MY WAY

The problems I'm having with conventions make this piece challenging to read, even for me! I've got lots of work to do before it's ready for its intended audience.

- Extensive spelling errors make my piece difficult to read and understand.
- I haven't punctuated or paragraphed the piece well, which is necessary to guide the reader.
- My use of capital letters is so inconsistent it's distracting.
- I need to clean up the piece considerably in terms of grammar and usage.

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## GETTING STARTED

HIGH

MIDDLE

LOW