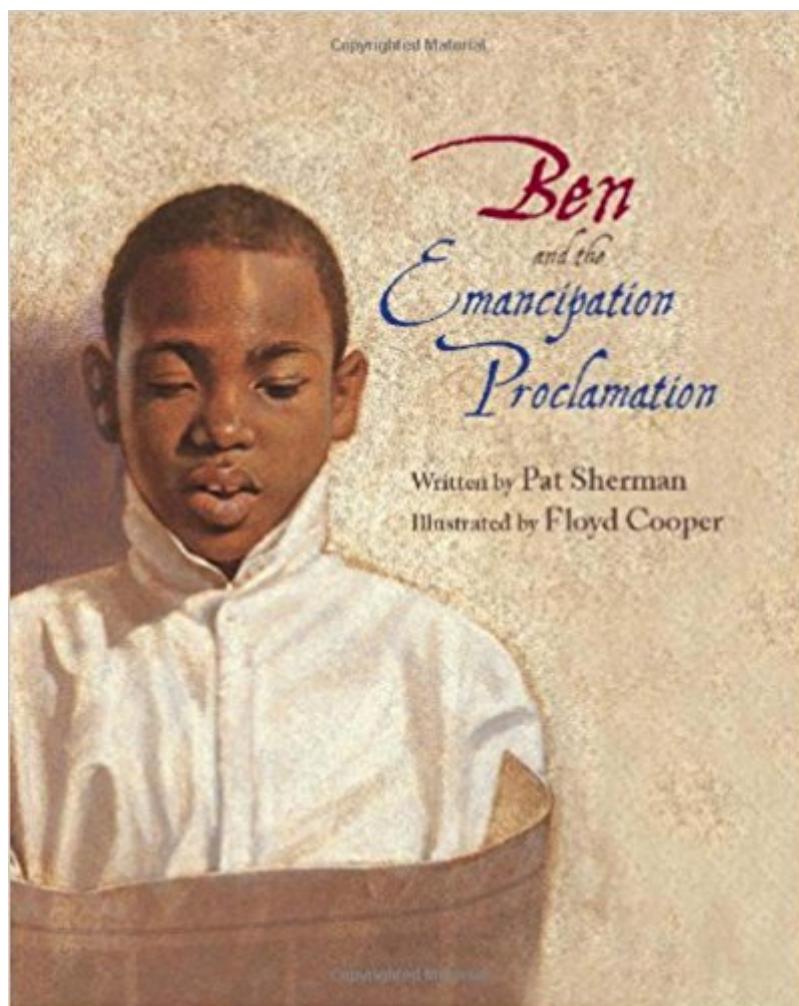


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# Ben And The Emancipation Proclamation



## Synopsis

A self-taught young slave astonishes his fellow prisoners by reading aloud the newspaper account of Lincoln's new emancipation proclamation. Based on actual events.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 670L (What's this?)

Series: AWARDS: Arkansas Diamond Primary Book Award 2012-2013

Hardcover: 32 pages

Publisher: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers (November 13, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0802853196

ISBN-13: 978-0802853196

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 0.3 x 11 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 8 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #643,680 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #104 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > Civil War Era

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

“Don’t let them know you can read” was the mantra of young Ben, a black slave in Charleston during the Civil War. Even though literacy was illegal for African Americans at the time, Ben learned the alphabet from his father and covertly practiced writing and word recognition. One night, after being imprisoned, he read aloud to his fellow inmates from a smuggled newspaper and discovered that Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This fictionalized account is drawn from the early life of Benjamin C. Holmes, who would go on to become a member of the famous Jubilee Singers and a teacher. The inspirational story is well-executed oil-on-board illustrations in sepia tones and rays of gold light, and the close-up depictions of Ben’s face are realistically and nobly rendered. 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. Grades 1-3. --Andrew Medlar

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. 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. Visit his website at [www.floydcooper.com](http://www.floydcooper.com).

We bought this book for our 13 year old grandson prior to visiting the Lincoln Center in Springfield, IL. The main character, Ben, lists the things he can (after) and could not do (before) the Emancipation. He learned to read by sounding out and saying the names of street signs. Good, quick, easy read with a focused synopsis on the essentials of the Emancipation.

This book was a wonderful read so that my afterschool students can have a better understanding of slavery and the things slaves had to endure.

This is a wonderful book. At first I felt it was a little too long for small children but once you get into it its perfect.

This stunning picture book for older readers is a great choice to read aloud in class for African-American history month. Based on the true story of a young slave, Benjamin Holmes, who, despite the odds and the fact that it was against the law, had learned to read. Ben had learned the alphabet from his father, and when Ben was apprenticed by his master to a tailor in Charleston, he discovers plenty of secret ways to figure out words, whether in the ledger, on boxes in the shop, or in store windows in Charleston. He even picks up copies of discarded newspapers to teach himself, learning to read about abolition and freedom. And, encouraged by his mother on a rare trip home to the plantation, Ben teaches himself to write as well. Although he hid his reading and writing from the whites, it was harder to keep his skills secret from the other slaves. When war breaks out, Ben is sent to a slave prison, to stay there until sold, where he decides he'd just forget about reading..."it could only lead to trouble." But one night, the slaves bribe a guard for a copy of the Charleston newspaper, and beg Ben to read it to them. As Ben begins to read, we read along with him the famous words of Lincoln's Emancipation Declaration: "All persons held as slaves within any State or

designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free..." The author ends the story with Ben peering at the golden light of daybreak through the slats of the shed...wondering what this new freedom would look like. This book would not be nearly as effective without the handsome illustrations of illustrator Floyd Cooper, using his signature oil on board technique. His illustrations have an old-fashioned quality that makes use of warm earth tones, reminding the viewer of sepia-toned photographs of the time period. The two-page spread of Ben reading the Emancipation Declaration is particularly striking in its dramatic simplicity, as Ben is presented in a head and shoulders perspective, reading the newspaper, while the other slaves are seen only in shadow. An Author's Note with brief biographical information about Benjamin Holmes follows, in which we learn that after the war he attended Fisk University, where he became a member of their Jubilee Singers, touring throughout America and Europe, as well as becoming a teacher. Additional resources, both books and websites, are also listed.

"Ben and the Emancipation Proclamation" is an illustrated historical fiction work for readers age 8-12 based on the true life story of Benjamin Holmes. Ben is a young slave apprenticed to a tailor in Charleston in the early 1860's when the Emancipation Proclamation was written and the Civil War began. Due to his mother's early help and encouragement and his own determination, Ben manages to teach himself to read even though it is against the law for a slave to read. Ben lives through many hardships including being sent to slave prison in Charleston during the war, but his shining contribution to freedom everywhere comes when he is able to read in the Charleston Mercury a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation to his fellow slave prisoners. "Ben and The Emancipation Proclamation" is a wonderful recreating of a few harsh months and years of experience by a talented young slave who lived to achieve his freedom and further education. With its accurate, detailed, sensitive illustrations, "Ben and the Emancipation Proclamation" provides inspirational reading for older elementary students. Additional sources on Benjamin Holmes and his world are recommended at the end of the book, including several fascinating works on the Jubilee singers, a touring school's chorus from Fisk University with which Ben performed. His contribution as a teacher in Tennessee is also highlighted.

As a young slave in South Carolina during the mid-1800s, Ben quietly rebelled against the widespread practice of depriving slaves of an education by teaching himself to read. Empowered by the small head start he received from his father, who had taught him some of the letters of the

alphabet, Ben studied the words on street signs and shop windows whenever he ran errands for the tailor for whom he worked in Charleston. Months turned into years as Ben slowly but steadily became literate and helped other slaves to read as well. At a particularly bleak time when he was temporarily being held at a slave prison awaiting sale during the Civil War, he garnered a highly charged and emotional round of applause when he read aloud the Emancipation Proclamation from a Charleston newspaper to the other men. Pat Sherman's carefully-researched text and the dramatic oil paintings from acclaimed illustrator Floyd Cooper make this new publication an important addition to children's book collections about slavery and the historical South. With its emphasis on child schooling, teachers and parents can use the book to discuss how education can help to promote empowerment, racial equality, and social justice.

Well-written story tells of a slave boy who must hide his growing literacy and the events immediately following the freeing of the slaves. An interesting slice-of-life biography from the childhood of one of the Jubilee singers, Benjamin Holmes. Based on a true story. Warm, painterly illustrations.

Great!

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