Henry's Freedom Box

Henry Brown wasn't sure how old he was. Henry was a slave, and slaves weren't allowed to know their birthdays.

Henry and his brothers and sisters worked in the big house where the master lived. Henry's master had been good to Henry and his family, but Henry's mother knew things could change. "Do you see those leaves blowing in the wind? They are torn from the trees like slave children are torn from their families."

One morning, the master called for Henry and his mother. They climbed the wide staircase. The master lay in bed with only his head above the quilt. He was very ill. He beckoned them to come closer. Some slaves were freed by their owners. Henry's heart beat fast. Maybe the master would set him free.

But the master said, "You are a good worker Henry. I am going to give you to my son. You must obey him and never tell a lie." Henry nodded, but he didn't say thank you because that would have been a lie.

Later that day, Henry watched a bird soar high above the trees. 'Free bird, Happy bird!' Henry thought. Henry said goodbye to his family. He looked across the field. The leaves swirled in the wind.