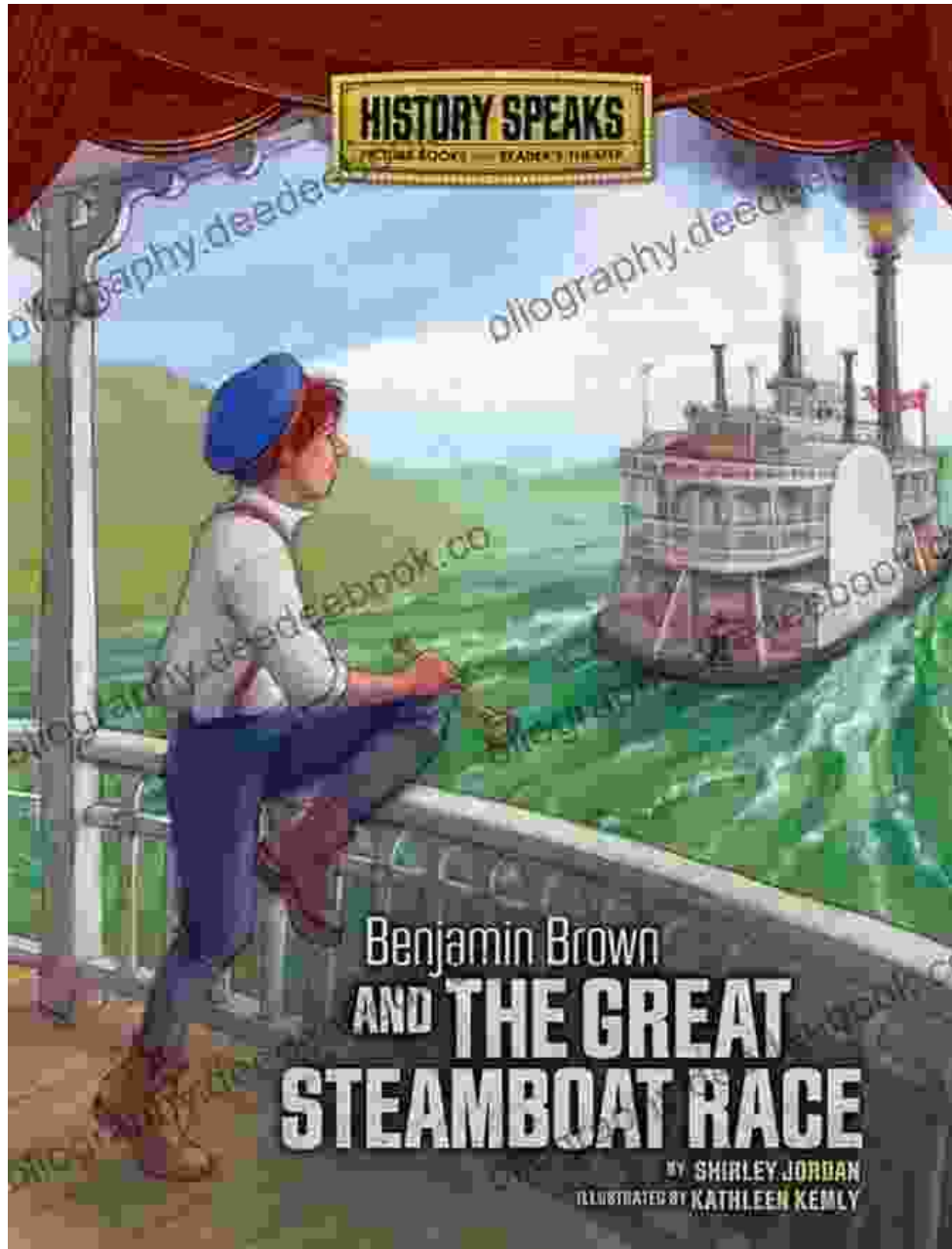


# Benjamin Brown And The Great Steamboat Race: History Speaks



## Benjamin Brown and the Great Steamboat Race (History Speaks: Picture Books Plus Reader's Theater)

by Shirley Jordan

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5



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The Great Steamboat Race of 1870 was a historic event that showcased the technological advancements and fierce competition during the era of steamboat travel. Among the notable participants was Benjamin Brown, an African American inventor and steamboat captain who played a pivotal role in the race.

Brown was born into slavery in 1825 in Lexington, Kentucky. He displayed a natural aptitude for mechanics and engineering from a young age, and after gaining his freedom in 1847, he pursued his passion for innovation.

In 1858, Brown patented a new type of steam engine that was more efficient and powerful than existing designs. He used this engine to build the steamer "St. Louis," which became one of the fastest and most reliable boats on the Mississippi River.

When the Great Steamboat Race was announced in 1870, Brown saw it as an opportunity to showcase his invention and the capabilities of African American engineers. He entered the race with the "St. Louis," and the competition quickly became intense.

The race route spanned 1,200 miles from New Orleans to St. Louis, and the competing steamboats pushed their engines to the limit. Brown's "St.

Louis" proved to be a formidable contender, consistently outperforming its rivals in speed and reliability.

Despite facing prejudice and discrimination along the way, Brown and his crew persevered. They navigated treacherous waters, repaired mechanical issues, and maintained a relentless pace. As the race reached its climax, the "St. Louis" emerged victorious, arriving in St. Louis a full day ahead of its closest competitor.

Brown's victory in the Great Steamboat Race was a significant achievement. It not only demonstrated the capabilities of African American inventors and engineers but also challenged prevailing stereotypes and prejudices.

The legacy of Benjamin Brown and the Great Steamboat Race continues to inspire future generations. Brown's ingenuity, determination, and perseverance serve as a reminder of the transformative power of innovation and the contributions of African Americans to American history.

### **Additional Contributions of Benjamin Brown**

Beyond his role in the Great Steamboat Race, Benjamin Brown made numerous other contributions to the steamboat industry and beyond:

- He patented several inventions related to steamboat design and propulsion, including a new type of boiler and a more efficient paddlewheel.
- He established a successful steamboat company that operated on the Mississippi River and its tributaries.

- He mentored and trained other African American engineers and mechanics, helping to create a skilled workforce in the industry.
- He served as a delegate to the National Black Republican Convention in 1867, demonstrating his commitment to social and political equality.

Benjamin Brown's story is a testament to the resilience, ingenuity, and determination of African Americans in the face of adversity. His contributions to the steamboat industry and his victory in the Great Steamboat Race not only advanced the field of engineering but also challenged societal norms and paved the way for future generations.

As we continue to explore the rich history of innovation and engineering, it is essential to recognize the significant role played by African Americans like Benjamin Brown. Their stories serve as a reminder of the diverse and inclusive nature of human progress and inspire us to embrace the potential of all individuals.



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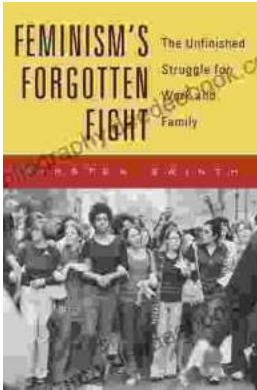
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