

# Nat Turner

1800–1831



**WHY HE MADE HISTORY** Nat Turner was the leader of one of the bloodiest slave rebellions in the history of the United States. Unfortunately his efforts to free African Americans in slavery resulted in stricter regulation of the slaves.



*As you read the biography below, think about how Turner's persuasiveness helped form a rebellion against slaver holders.*

Nat Turner was born a slave in 1800 in Southampton County, Virginia. Beginning in his childhood, Turner was very religious and believed he had visions from God. He often **fasted** and prayed. Other slaves came to realize Turner's deep devotion to God and called him "The Prophet." When he was 21 years old, Turner escaped from his slave owner. He returned the following month after receiving a vision.

It was a natural occurrence that started Turner's talk of rebellion. In February 1831 there was a solar eclipse. Turner saw this as a sign of change and began talking about a rebellion with other slaves. He believed he had been called by God to lead his fellow slaves in a fight for their freedom. The other slaves greatly respected him and they began to make plans.

On August 13, 1831, an atmospheric disturbance caused the sun to appear a blue-green color. Turner told his followers, "As the black spot passed over the sun, so shall the blacks pass over the earth."

On August 21, 1831, Nat Turner's Rebellion began. A group of almost 60 slaves and free African Americans began the resistance by killing the family



North Wind Picture Archives

## VOCABULARY

**fasted** refused to eat

of Turner's slave owner. The men rode on horseback through the Virginia countryside, killing almost 60 people in two days. The rebellion was eventually stopped, but Turner escaped, only to be captured a few months later.

After his trial Turner was hanged and his body was skinned. Hundreds of slaves and free African Americans were beaten, tortured, and murdered following the rebellion. Slave laws were strengthened and the abolitionist movement was dealt a severe setback. Despite this, Turner's rebellion scared the slave owners and made a powerful statement in the slaves' fight for freedom.

### WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

- 1. Draw Conclusions** What do you think Nat Turner's Rebellion accomplished? Explain your answer.

---

---

- 2. Expressing and Supporting a Point of View** Do you think Nat Turner's actions were justified? Provide reasons or examples to support your point of view.

---

---

### ACTIVITY

- 3.** Pretend that you are a newspaper reporter in the 1800s. Write about Nat Turner's Rebellion from either an abolitionist's or a slave owner's point of view.