

# To Be A Slave

by Julius Lester

Teacher's Guide by Regina Abernathy

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## Synopsis

### Prologue

The author, Julius Lester, begins the book by reminding the reader that all African Americans did not come to America in chains. American historians acknowledge that Africans came just as the Europeans came, as explorers. They also accompanied European explorers on every major expedition in the New World.

The European slave trade was over 100 years old before Africans were brought to the Jamestown colony in 1619. Slavery was not introduced immediately to the American colonies. Africans were indeed part of the American colonies, but it was not until Europeans decided they needed unpaid laborers in the New World that the idea of slavery slowly materialized.

First, the colonists tried to enslave the native Americans, but this effort failed. Then they tried sending poor whites from Europe as well as debtors and prisoners. These slaves would just run away and blend into another European colonial community with no fear of being caught. Therefore, the African became the ideal solution. The color of skin made it difficult to run away without detection, plus, they could be purchased and enslaved for life, unlike the Europeans who were held for only seven years.

Therefore, American slave ships set sail for Africa in the quest to enslave a people. European and American slave traders used a variety of methods to capture the Africans. Some paid African chiefs for prisoners of war, others were captured in traps and transported to the coast of Africa where they were placed on huge ships that set sail for the New World.

The conditions on the ships were unbearable and millions died. Ship doctors were present, but they were unable to assist because the ships were packed with human cargo—each being having the space equivalent of a coffin. Some Africans did not die from the unbearable conditions, but from suicide.

It was estimated that nearly fifty million Africans were taken from the continent during the slave trade. The fifty million were the youngest, the strongest and the most capable of bringing profit to the slave traders. The Africans were scattered throughout South America, the West Indies and the United States. Slavery in the various countries was undesirable, but nowhere was it as dehumanizing or cruel as the slavery institution in America. No other country which instituted slavery destroyed the African culture to the extent that it was destroyed in America.

This book is a collection of quotes from African slaves that tell the story of the slave trade in America. They are grouped in a chronological order. There are quotes from men, women and children in all stations of life.

### Chapter One

Slaves explain how it felt to be owned, like property, when indeed they knew they were human. They describe the cruelty of owners. Slaves were not given access to their names or ages. They were boiled, burned, beaten, hung and worked until they could work no more.

The typical slave experience was characterized by much cruelty. Slaves spent their days trying not to be the victim of the whip; nevertheless, whippings were received often—being administered for the smallest incidents.

Slaves understood the two reasons for slavery. They knew the European American wanted free labor, and the profits received from free labor.

### Chapter Two

Slaves describe the feeling of being bought and sold on the auction blocks. The loss of family, not knowing where home was going to be, knowing that a family member was being used to breed more slaves—all these things carried a heavy emotional pain.

The description of the slave traders, the coffles, the trips to and from the auction blocks, the deaths which occurred along the way, the slave jails and the use of the railroads as well as steamships to transport this profitable merchandise is presented in this chapter.

### Chapter Three

This chapter debunks the myths of plantation life in the South. The majority of slave owners held less than twenty slaves. They lived modestly or were considered poor. Seventy-five percent of Southern European Americans owned no slaves; however, if a man owned at least one slave, he had considerably more status in Southern society than a man who owned none. Therefore, the ownership of humans was encouraged if one wanted acceptance in Southern society.

The plantation was divided into sections. One section contained the big house, the owner's home; slaver's row, home for the slaves; and various barns and sheds for animals and tools. Surrounding this was nothing but forest.

Slavers row contained huts with dirt floors and no windows. The edifice did not keep out the wind, rain or snow. An entire family would live in the one-room home. Each slave received one jacket and one pair of pants per year. The women received one dress. The family would receive an amount of food that was most often insufficient.

The principal occupation for the slave was work, and that he did. From sun up until almost midnight each day, the slave worked—mostly in the cotton field. When the order to stop picking in the field was given, slaves feared the weighing-in time. If they had picked more cotton than normal, they must continue to do so on each work day. If they had picked less, then they could expect the whip. After the weighing in, they had to gin the cotton, feed the animals, cut wood, grind corn and make their supper and dinner for the next day. Then they could eat and fall asleep. But sleeping also caused the slave to be afraid. If they overslept for whatever reason, they could also expect the whip.

For the African slave, the life on the plantation was unrelieved horror; yet, for the owner, it was the time during which he and America grew wealthy.

#### Chapter Four

Slaveholders needed to ensure that Africans would not resist being owned; therefore, they used two methods to enslave them. The first method was force: slaves were chained, guarded and punished for the slightest infraction—they lived in constant fear. The second method was the use of psychological enslavement: slaves were taught that their own best interest was served by obeying the wishes of their masters. They were taught also that they were inferior, only through the institution of slavery might they eventually rise to a higher level. This second form of brainwashing encouraged the slave to enslave, police and reduce himself to less than a human being. This lowly status encouraged some slaves to betray Africans who wished to escape the horrors of slavery.

To further ensure little resistance to slavery, slaves were denied a surname. They would carry the surnames of their masters. Thus, whenever they were sold to another owner, their surnames would change. A slave usually acquired three to four surnames in a lifetime. Slaves were never asked their names. They were asked whose slave they were. The answer was always mister so and so's slave. Consequently, they were not allowed to view themselves as people with separate identities.

Religion was used as another form of slavery. They were not allowed to learn to read and write. They were told what was in the Bible by the slave owner. They were not allowed to attend church by themselves because the owners feared they would plan a revolt; therefore, the owner would preach that the Bible said they were to be good to the master, to be obedient and work hard. The preacher would also state that God had made them slaves and when whipped, slaves must not find fault.

From this religion, slaves formed a Christian religion of their own. In the old testament stories of the enslavement of Hebrews by Egyptians they saw themselves. In the figure of Christ, they saw someone who understood persecution and suffering. They found someone who offered them rest from their suffering. They transformed the preaching of the slave preachers. They began to look down upon the white preachers and their white religious services.

Slaves fashioned their own idea of heaven and life after death. They began to create religious songs based upon the biblical stories which expressed their views of slavery.

The invention of the idea that white men were naturally superior to black men was another attempt at halting the resistance to slavery. First, the Portuguese word for Black — Negro — was changed to a curse word, nigger. But the slaves took the curse word like they took the religious services and changed its meaning in the slaves' community. From their mouths it became a word of endearment. From the mouths of European Americans they knew it to be a violent, brutal method of verbal abuse. Next in the quest to teach the superiority of the white man, the color of the black skin, the texture of Africans' hair, the physical makeup of the broad nose and thick lips became regarded as nonattractive attributes given only to creatures. Even the speech patterns of the African slave were ridiculed. Africans were expected to discard their former language and learn English with no formal training. Also, they were expected to do so without maintaining the intonations or accents from their former language. If they could not do this, it was just another indication of their inferiority.

The idea of the natural superiority of the white man and inferiority of the black man encouraged European Americans, slaveowners and nonslaveowners to justify the mistreatment and enslavement of a people. Even those who fought for freedom from England, the leaders of American democracy like Thomas Jefferson, wrote articles supporting the notion of white supremacy.

The idea of the natural superiority of the white man did not influence the thinking of African slaves who could remember their native lands. These slaves were more difficult, revengeful, and easily provoked. They cared not for the fine clothes, furniture or material things of the slave owners. They found no beauty in their women or their lives and dreamed of the day they could return home.

Slaves born in America had more difficulty not accepting the idea that they were inferior; therefore, they were more submissive than their African brothers. Also, those who were most submissive were rewarded with less strenuous work. They became house slaves. The house slaves were taught to believe they were superior to the field slave and that it was an honor to work in the master's house. Such lessons served to further divide the slave community and lessen the chances for unity among African slaves. House slaves were often hated by field slaves because some took their job as protector of the master very seriously. Some house slaves were so psychologically enslaved that they would serve as spies for their masters and reveal the plans of runaways or future revolts. Some were so enslaved that they would not free themselves when opportunities arose.

All house servants were not psychologically imprisoned. Some used their knowledge of the master's plans to assist field slaves.

Some slaves who found it difficult to escape practiced sabotage. They would do as little work as possible. In order to do little work, they would pretend to be physically or mentally ill. Some would destroy crops or do sloppy work. Some would pretend that their brain was indeed inferior and they could not comprehend the job description. The tricks slaves used were so prevalent that the descriptions of such unlikely illnesses, which only affected slaves, appear in various writings by doctors of the time.

Slaves did find time to sneak away from the plantation and celebrate a brief time of freedom. They would plan religious meetings in the woods. They would have to run from the paddyroller, men paid to catch and punish missing slaves, but they would continue.

Slaves would give dances and look forward to gathering together on Saturday nights. It was one of the only times they could gather to themselves and enjoy one another's company. The biggest parties were held around holidays.

Christmas was an important holiday for slaves because husbands were allowed to come home and families would reunite. Also, discipline was eased and the slaves did not have to work for two or three days. Sometimes they did not work for a week.

Slaves found pleasure also in the music they created. Music was not considered an art form in Africa, but a means of communication. Its meaning was the same for African descendants. Songs were used in all aspects of the African slave's life. They were used to ease burdens, for joyous times and for dancing. To accompany these improvised songs, slaves invented musical instruments from whatever was available. Music was used as a tool to resist the inhumanity of slavery.

### Chapter Five

In chapter four, slaves resisted slavery by reshaping their religion, finding new meaning for verbal abuse, and refusing to believe the myth of inferiority. Others sabotaged profits by destroying crops and property or refusal to work. Many stole what they needed and provided for the needs of loved ones in like manner. Some who worked as trusted house servants served as the eyes and the ears of the field slaves and served only to spy on the master.

In chapter five, the slaves' stories speak of a continuing resistance to slavery. However, the methods are strikingly different. Slaves gathered and planned revolts. Many became runaways with the assistance of other slaves. Some slaves escaped to live in the woods. Others ran away and lived with the Indians. So many slaves ran away that slave settlements existed deep within the forest. Some African Americans were born and raised within these hidden settlements. If caught, many would prefer to commit suicide than to return to slavery.

Those who did not escape invented other methods to resist. Some would tell their masters that they had served their time and did not care about their fate, they would work no longer. Others would fight their masters, stories of slaves murdering their masters and overseers in self-defense were not uncommon.

### Chapter Six

Here slaves describe their jubilation at the thought of fighting for freedom. Many slaves, especially those in the Northern slave states, escaped from their owners to serve in the Union army. To their dismay, President Lincoln ordered runaway slaves returned to their owners. So many new runaways would replace those returned that the Union army soon put run-aways to work with pay. Wherever the Union army went, one would see former slaves as cooks and laborers.

Eventually African Americans were employed as fighting men in the Union army. They fought fiercely throughout the war. Not only did some slaves fight for the Union, some African Americans fought for the Confederacy (most were taken along as servants by their masters).

Most slaves, however, remained on the plantations during the Civil War. They were the nation's agricultural workers. It was not until 1865 when freedom came to most slaves.

When the rumors of freedom began to circulate among the slaves, few could be restrained to the plantations. The chapter describes the

unrestrained joy of the first taste of freedom for American slaves.

### Chapter 7

The joys of freedom did not last long for African Americans. The pain of discovering that they were free in the middle of hostility is described. They were free with no land, no money, no job prospects, no home, no clothes, no transportation, no food and a government that would not offer payment for generations of unpaid labor.

Freedom for the former slave turned into a new form of slavery. They were forced into a continual cycle of poverty called sharecropping.

Those slaves who prospered despite the difficulties were terrorized by the KKK. Their property was destroyed and, just as in slavery, men were whipped, hung, boiled and murdered into submission. When the Union army left eleven years after the Emancipation Proclamation, state legislation placed laws on the books to reinstitute slavery in its new form. African Americans were subjected to the Jim Crow Laws, or segregation. African Americans describe their feelings about an army which would not protect them, a president who was only interested in keeping the Union together, a nation who would not give freedom to a people who wished to taste its sweetness. The African American describes freedom as slavery.

### The Epilogue

Few Americans are willing to admit that the institution of slavery has shaped race relations in the United States until this very day. The legacy of slavery is described by those who remember in terms of bitterness caused by unkept promises (the promise of equal protection under the law, the promise that all men are created equal, the promise that the constitution would be preserved and enforced for all people). There is also bitterness that rewards and accolades are given to European Americans for assisting African Americans when in fact little or no assistance was truly given, the bitterness of knowing that European Americans prosper as they report of the suffering of African Americans. The economic condition of African Americans is directly related to the treatment of African Americans since the Civil War.

### About the Author

Award-winning author Julius Lester is a professor of African American studies at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. His book *To Be a Slave* has been acclaimed a Newbery Honor Book, an ALA Notable Children's book, the *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year, a *Horn Book* Fanfare Honor List, the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award and the *New York Times* Outstanding Book of the Year. Lester frequently contributes to *The New Republic* and other journals. Also, he is the author of *This Strange New Feeling*, *Long Journey Home*, *All is Well: An Autobiography* and *Do Lord Remember Me*.

### Critic's Corner

*To Be a Slave* is a book which examines the myriad of emotions African American slaves experienced from their capture in Africa until nearly seventy years after the Civil War. It is the story of a people, an American people, who wore the chains, labored and received no recognition or rewards.

The history of the African American is usually written without acknowledging the individuals who experienced it. *To Be a Slave* does just the opposite. The author, Julius Lester, has collected the personal testimonies of African Americans who describe the fear and horror of

being captured and enslaved. The description of what slaves saw, heard, tasted, thought, smelled, felt and dreamed are all vividly detailed.

This book includes historical and editorial commentary followed by testimonies which serve to illustrate how it felt to be a slave. The book brings history to life for both the teacher and the students.

**Before Reading:** Because students and teacher may not be familiar with the history of the African, they may not comprehend the effects the institution of slavery had on a people and an entire continent. Therefore, lessons on the ancient African civilizations, practices and accomplishments could enhance student understanding of the book *To Be a Slave*.

## Prologue

### Activities

1. Materials needed: a blank map of Europe, Asia and Africa or a map of the world.
  - A. Locate and label the Ivory Coast, the Gold Coast and the other portions of Africa from which Africans were captured and enslaved.
  - B. Locate and label the slave trading countries of Europe (Portugal, Spain, England, France, etc.)
  - C. Use arrows to draw probable passages slave ships traveled as Africans were transported to the slave trading countries of Europe.
2. Research the number of citizens of African descent presently living in the European countries. (Spain, England, Portugal, and France . . .)
3. Materials needed: a blank map of North and South America or a map of the world.
  - A. Locate and label the lands and waterways of the New World which were discovered by European explorers. Students will place the name of the explorer and the year of the discovery next to the location. The words "Africans on exploration team" will be placed next to the location. (see page 17)  
Example: Columbus—America—1492—Africans on exploration team.
4. Draw pictures of the three methods used to capture and enslave Africans.
5. Create a chart showing the different races and groups English colonists enslaved as they attempted to find free labor for the new world. Include methods of capture, length of servitude, advantages and disadvantages each group brought to the slaveholder, etc.
6. Research The Middle Passage and write a report.
7. Pretend to have survived a journey on a slave ship. Write in a secret diary about your experiences. Include what is seen, heard, smelled, touched or tasted as well as felt about the captors, yourself and other slaves.
8. Read a slave narrative and write a book report.
9. Research the number of Jews who lost their lives during the

Holocaust of World War II. Compare that number to the number of Africans who lost their lives in the galley of slave ships.

10. In groups brainstorm answers to the following questions:
  - A. Currently there are approximately 250 million Americans. If 50 million of America's youngest, strongest, and most capable of earning wages and contributing to the economy of the country suddenly disappeared, what would be the consequences for the future of America? How long would such consequences last? (a decade, a score, a century, one or two generations, etc.)
  - B. Between 50 and 100 million Africans were taken from the continent of Africa. These Africans were the youngest, strongest and most capable of earning wages and contributing to the economy of the continent. What do you believe the consequences of their disappearance was for the countries of Africa? How long have such consequences been felt? (a decade, a score, a century, one or two generations, etc.)

### Discussion Questions

1. If the African slave trade was already over one hundred years old when a Dutch man-of-war ship landed at the Jamestown settlement in 1619, in what century did the Europeans begin trading Africans?
2. Name the European countries to which African slaves were transported.
3. The Europeans enslaved a number of groups to solve their labor problems. Name them.
4. Why were Africans "the ideal solution" to the labor problems of the English colonist?
5. "Many African slaves were former prisoners of war who were sold into slavery by their captors." Explain this statement.
6. Describe the methods employed to capture and enslave Africans.
7. Describe the slave galley.
8. Why does a former slave describe a slave ship as a crowded prison?
9. How many Africans were taken from the African continent?
10. Describe those who were "chosen" to be slaves.
11. List the reasons many Africans died en route to the New World.
12. For what purpose was a ship's doctor on board a slave ship? How did captured Africans respond to the ship's doctor?

### Vocabulary Study

Determine the meaning of each italicized word using the context.

1. Africans *accompanied* Spanish explorers on their journeys to the New World.
2. They also proved to be very *susceptible* to the diseases of the colonists.
3. Because they were black, it was often difficult for them to run away and escape *detection*.

- This method soon gave way to an *alliance* between white slave traders and African tribal chiefs.
- They had not so much room as a man in his coffin, either in *length* or *breadth*.
- When this was done, two of the women leaped overboard after the children—the third was already confined by a chain to another woman and could not get into the water, but in struggling to *disengage* herself, she broke her arm and died a few days later after a fever.
- Mild means were used to *divert* him from his *resolution*, as well as promises that he should have anything he wished for, but he still refused to eat.
- What was an overseer? What kind of individual usually worked as an overseer?
- How did an overseer and a driver differ?
- Some slaves were ordered to commit crimes for their owners. If caught committing a crime, what do you believe the consequences would be for the slave? the owner?
- Explain the only reason for the existence of slavery.
- Detail the benefits of slavery to the growth and strengthening of the American economic system.
- For what reasons were slaves punished? What was the usual punishment? Who administered such punishment?
- What is the difference between mental and physical enslavement? Give examples of both from the chapter.

## Chapter 1

### Activities

- List on a sheet of paper your prized possessions. Read this list to the class. Add your name to the list. You have been told that each possession on the list will be sold, including *you*. Write an essay explaining how you would feel if you were to be sold to strangers in a strange land.
- Write your name on a sheet of paper. Write a paragraph stating what you like and dislike about your name. Read this to the class. The teacher will give each student a new name on separate sheets of paper. The name will be negative adjectives (stupid, lazy, moron, idiot, ugly, etc.) Write an essay explaining your reaction to this new name. How would you feel if this is what you were called? Share your essays with the class. Afterwards have a class discussion on verbal abuse. Then write a diary entry on how a slave must have felt about her/himself, the verbal abuse and her/his lack of knowledge about this new place.
- Form groups and brainstorm the purpose of verbal abuse today and during slavery. Then brainstorm the purpose of denying an individual access to his name or age.
- Write a dialogue describing the emotions one slave experienced once he discovered that laws were written to protect all the citizens except slaves (read page 30, the second passage by Alice Johnson). Place the dialogue on a cassette tape with background music and play it for the class.
- Locate pictures (research) of the first few classes graduating from the black colleges. (Howard, Tuskegee, Hampton, Spelman, etc.) Then read the italicized passage on page 31. What conclusion can be made about some of the black college students based upon the pictures and the information on page 31?
- Frank Cooper, a former slave, recalls his mother referring to slavery as “The misery days.” List every incident in Chapter One which can cause a human to experience mental or physical misery.

### Discussion Questions

- Define “perverted.” Why was Charley Williams’ relationship with his owner perverted?
- What other kinds of relationships existed between masters and slaves?
- Describe the typical slave experience.

### Vocabulary

Use the dictionary to find the definitions of the following words.

- condition *pg. 28*
- deprivation *pg. 28*
- humanity *pg. 28*
- servitude *pg. 28*
- conscious *pg. 28 and 29*
- experiences *pg. 30*
- administered *pg. 33*
- reference *pg. 33*
- dexterity *pg. 35*
- precision *pg. 35*
- commence *pg. 36*
- circumstances *pg. 38*

Rewrite the original sentence from the text but use the definition or a synonym to replace the original vocabulary word listed above.

## Chapter 2

### Activities

- Write a play depicting a slave’s experience in a coffin.
- Write a poem or song or illustrate a slave auction from a slave’s viewpoint.
- College students and organizations will often hold fake slave auctions as fund raising activities. Write an essay stating if such individuals are being insensitive to the history of African Americans or if some African Americans and others are being oversensitive in their refusal to join in on the activities.
- Research the experiences of free blacks during slavery. Write a report and share it with the class. Be sure to include how their lives differed from slaves and the similarities they shared.
- Why was it possible to kidnap free blacks and enslave them? (Could be group work. Research the laws as well as brainstorm some of the reasons.)

### Discussion Questions

- During a slave’s lifetime, on how many plantations might he live? How might this change in residence affect a slave’s name?
- For what reasons did slave owners sell their slaves?
- Why did slave owners prefer slave women who could bear

- many children? How do you believe the slave women felt?
- Define the word "breeding." Which animals do Americans presently breed on farms? What connection is there between the breeding of slaves and the breeding of animals? What does this practice reveal about the slave owner? How would you feel if your body was used for breeding? How would you feel if it were the body of your mother, sister, wife, or friend?
  - How did some mothers cheat the auction block?
  - Describe the job of a slave trader. How much money could a slave trader make?
  - How did a slave trader make his merchandise appear more desirable to potential customers?
  - Describe a slave coffle.
  - What event sparked a rash in the selling of slaves? Why?
  - How did the auction block break up families? How would you feel if you lost a family member on the auction block? Describe the variety of emotions you might experience.
  - Describe a slave's journey from one auction block to another as well as his journey to a new plantation via a slave coffle. Be sure to include a time line.
  - How and why did some slaves die in a slave coffle?
  - By what other means were slaves transported to a new plantation?
  - What state had a reputation as a slave breeding state?
  - When was the selling of slaves a good business and when was it not? To what is the business of selling slaves compared?

### Vocabulary

Use a thesaurus to find a synonym for these words.

- institution
- redeeming
- virtues
- stability
- assurance
- unmanageable
- occasion
- inhuman
- vicinity
- merchandise
- maximum
- profit
- synonymous
- alleviated

After locating the synonyms, use the vocabulary word in a sentence. The content of the sentence must pertain to the chapter.

## Chapter 3

### Activities

- Make a three-sided model of a slave quarter. Use clay or cardboard, popsicle sticks, etc.
- Write a newspaper article, a feature story, describing a slave's typical day.
- Research President George Washington's view on slavery.

- Research President Thomas Jefferson's view on slavery. Also research his relationship with Sally Henning, a slave. (For activities 3 and 4 have students note the contradictions in the belief espoused by these leaders and their actual behavior on the question of slavery.)
- Draw a picture of the typical slave plantation.
- Discuss why the media presents the typical plantation as a place with a large white mansion with wealthy gentlemen and beautiful Southern belles served by loyal and loving slaves. What purpose does such a representation serve for European Americans? For African Americans?
- Form groups and brainstorm answers to the following questions.
  - If 75% of the Southern population did not own slaves, nor profit directly from slave ownership, why were a minority allowed to control the South and its policies?
  - If Americans can view and discuss the Holocaust as a time of unrelieved horror for the Jews and a disgraceful period in history, why is American slavery depicted as a time of wonderful Southern plantations with beautiful Southern belles? Should slavery be viewed with the same horror as the Holocaust or not?

After the brainstorming sessions, write an essay on section A or B of question 7; or, write an essay on question 6.

### Discussion Questions

- How many slave owners were there in the South?
- Of the slave owners, how many owned more than one hundred slaves?
- Approximately how many slaves were owned by each slaveholder?
- How did a Southern American gain respect from Southern society?
- If slave owners comprised 25% of the Southern population, how much of the Southern population did not own slaves? Of the two groups, which group gained profits from the institution of slavery? How did the black population profit from slavery?
- How did most slave owners live? Does the reality match the image of plantations one receives from the media (movies, books, etc.)?
- Describe a plantation.
- Why does the author describe freedom as somewhere? Why does such a place as somewhere make it more difficult for slaves to run away and escape the institution of slavery?
- Describe the average dwelling of a slave. How would you feel if this were your dwelling?
- Describe the slave dwellings of President Washington's slaves. What contradictions exist in the actions of George Washington, the slaveholder and George Washington, the general?
- Describe Thomas Jefferson's slaves' dwellings. What contradictions exist between Jefferson, the slaveholder and Jefferson, the freedom fighter?

12. Compare the slave's description of his dwelling with the owner's description. Which is more gripping? Why?
13. Describe the principal food for slaves. What does this imply about the slaveholder?
14. Describe the clothing received by slaves. What does this imply about the slaveholder?
15. Describe a slave's typical day.
16. Why did slaves fear weigh-in time?
17. After it was too late to work in the field and the cotton had been weighed, what was the next task the slave had to perform?
18. After all work in the field was completed why was the work of a slave far from completed?
19. At what time was a slave able to eat supper?
20. What fear overcame a slave as he lay down to sleep for the night?

### Vocabulary

Use the dictionary and its pronunciation key to answer the following questions. Be sure to know the definitions of all the words.

1. Which syllable in **chandelier** receives the primary accent or stress?  
A. first B. second C. third
2. How many syllables are in the word **unobtrusive**?  
A. one B. two C. three D. four
3. The vowel sound which is silent in the word **seize** is  
A. "E" B. "I"
4. The second vowel sound in **precision** rhymes with the vowel sound of what word?  
A. miss B. might C. mien

Use the dictionary to answer the following questions about the structure. Read each clue and then write on your paper the matching word from the list.

**unnecessary      description      inhumanity      monotonous**

5. Which two words contain prefixes which mean "not"?
6. Which word contains a prefix which means "one, single, or same"?
7. Which word contains a root word which means "to write"?
8. Which word contains a root word which means "having the characteristics of man"?

## Chapter 4

### Activities

1. African Americans have always identified with biblical characters and written religious songs to compare circumstances. Read the following stories from the Bible. (divide class into groups - one story per group)
  1. Daniel in the Lion's Den
  2. The Story of Joshua—The Battle at Jericho

3. The Story of Jonah
4. The Story of Meshack, Berack and Abednigo
5. Moses and the Parting of the Red Sea
6. The Story of Samson

Afterwards, each group should discuss the content of the story and the main idea. Then compare the circumstances of the character in the Bible story with the circumstances of African American slaves. Also, in these songs, which elements represent European Americans and which elements or characters represent African Americans? Also, why do so many African Americans identify with or have compassion for the Jewish experience? (Groups should report their finding to the class.)

2. Brainstorm the purpose of the idea of "white suprememacy" and "black inferiority." Then research the birth of racism in America. Afterwards brainstorm answers to the following questions. (This can also be group work)
  - A. Three fourths of the white population of this era did not own slaves or prosper directly from the labor of slaves. How did the initial idea of white superiority encourage nonslaveholders to accept the notion of slavery and the conditions under which slaves lived?
  - B. How did the notion of white superiority serve to justify the behavior of slaveholders?
  - C. What are the effects of the notion of white supremacy?
    - A. During slavery?
    - B. Today?
    - C. On white Americans?
    - D. On black Americans?
    - E. On arriving immigrants?
3. Research the meaning of your last name and the country from which your name originated. (Note that the African American student cannot link his name to the continent of Africa - can any student? If not, why not?) Discuss your findings with the class. How do you feel about your name now that you know its meaning and origin? How would you feel if your name did not match your ancestry? Reread the page which follows the title page. A class discussion should follow. What is the purpose of denying access to one's name and ancestry?
4. List the methods of slaves used in chapter four to resist slavery.
5. Write a rap, spiritual, gospel, pop or blues song about resisting slavery.

### Discussion Questions

1. Explain the two methods men use to enslave others.
2. What methods were successfully used to enslave an individual's mind? Why were these methods successful?
3. How was religion used to further enslave African Americans?
4. Who were the ministers in the churches which served slave congregations and why did they become ministers?
5. How did slaves invent their own understanding of the Bible from the Christianity which was taught to them?
6. How did slaves view the figure of Jesus Christ?

7. On page 79, Nancy Williams' statement implies that religion is of the heart and not just talk. Explain her statement as it relates to slaveholders.
8. Explain how African Americans might have viewed white preachers. Do you believe they were seen as true men of God? Why? Why not?
9. When, according to the religion taught to the slaves, would African Americans receive their reward?
10. Describe a slave's idea of heaven.
11. African Americans created religious songs based upon what in the Bible? How did these songs express their feelings and hopes regarding slavery?
12. Why was the idea of white superiority created?
13. Why was the idea of black inferiority created?
14. What were Thomas Jefferson's views on white supremacy and black inferiority?
15. Why were African American slaves ridiculed for their physical appearance? What are the results of such ridicule?
16. What curse word was used to define African Americans?
17. What is the definition of "Negro" in Portuguese?
18. Why was it more difficult for slaves born in America to combat the notion of black inferiority?
19. Why was it easier for slaves born in Africa to combat the notion of black inferiority?
20. What was the difference between the African-born slave and the American-born slave?
21. Define and describe an "Uncle Tom."
22. What benefits did one receive for being an Uncle Tom? What were the consequences?
23. How did the Uncle Toms destroy slave unity? What were the consequences?
24. How did an Uncle Tom vie for the favor and love of his owner?
25. All house slaves were not Uncle Toms. How did they work to assist the slaves?
26. Describe the mental enslavement of Henson. When he realized that he had been brainwashed, how did he feel?
27. Compare the life of a field slave with that of a house slave.
28. What was the sole purpose or interest of a field slave? What tricks were employed to serve that interest?
29. Explain the slave's view of right and wrong.
30. Is it true that the master never truly owned the minds and bodies of all slaves? Explain.
31. Define a "paddyroller."
32. Why was Saturday night important for slaves?
33. Name the three forms of pleasure African American slaves enjoyed.
34. Describe a slave's Christmas. Why was the holiday important?
35. What purpose did music serve in the lives of African American slaves?
36. What instruments did African Americans bring to America?
37. On the plantations how did slaves create instruments?
38. Read the song on page 114. Explain the slave's view of the American economic system.
39. How did some songs make fun of the owners? Why did this bring joy to the slaves?

## Chapter 5

### Activities

1. Research black Indians and list the tribes to which they belonged. Share information with the class.
2. Research runaway slaves
  - A. William and Ellen Craft
  - B. Henry Box Brown
  - C. Margaret Garner
  - D. Harriet Tubman

Note that their journeys were perilous and relate to the class the dangers entailed.

3. Research famous slave revolts and share information with the class.
  - A. John Brown
  - B. Denmark Vessey
  - C. Toussaint L'Ouverture

Find the reactions throughout the European American society to the revolts and compare them to the reactions to the African American slave communities.

4. Write a poem about a runaway slave, slave revolt or the resistance to slavery.
5. Put on a skit detailing the escape of Henry Box Brown.
6. Write a play of the escape of William and Ellen Craft. (A video tape of the play could be given to the performers.)

### Vocabulary

Define the following words

**resistance insurrections revolts uprisings**

Define the word "synonym." How are the above words related? Use each word in a sentence.

### Discussion Questions

1. Why did slaveholders live in fear?
2. What can be implied about the feelings of slaves from the records of slave revolts?
3. Why were most planned slave revolts uncovered? What form of enslavement lead to the uncovering of slave revolts?
4. What was the European Americans' response to slave uprisings? Did such responses stop slaves from wanting freedom?
5. Who always helped runaway slaves?
6. Where did runaway slaves who did not go North live? For how long? With what group of Americans did some runaway slaves live?



7. Why were swamps important to runaway slaves?
8. For many runaways what was preferable to being re-enslaved?
9. How many African Americans escaped?
10. Why did some slaves fight and murder their owners and overseers? Why did some fight but not murder their owners or overseers?
11. Why did some slaves fail to carry out a planned slave revolt?
12. According to the slave Northup, what was the only reason slaves remained slaves?

## Chapter 6

### Activities

1. Role-play the following scenes.
  - A. Pg. 133 last paragraph
  - B. Pg. 135 last paragraph
  - C. Pg. 137
2. Research the role of African Americans in the Civil War and share the information with the class.
3. Write a short essay on how you would feel and behave if you or members of your family had been freed from a lifetime of slavery. What would be the first four things you would do?

### Discussion Questions

1. When the Civil War began, how did the slaves in the upper Southern states react? What disappointment did they encounter? Why?
2. How did President Lincoln respond to the slave's desire to serve the Union Army? Why?
3. Eventually, what jobs did runaway slaves have in their Union Army and how were they compensated?
4. Did African Americans fight for the Union Army or the Confederate Army during the Civil War? Explain.
5. Where were most slaves during the Civil War?
6. How did the South react to the Emancipation Proclamation? How did President Jefferson Davis react?
7. What was the initial reaction of the slaves to the rumors of freedom?
8. How did some slaveholders resist the end of slavery?

## Chapter 7

### Activities

1. You have been told that you are now free. You can leave your parents' home. You can take nothing with you. Your other relatives are upset with you and will not assist you in any form. The community is upset because they believe you have no right to leave. They will not assist you in any form. You have no money, no home, no land, no transportation and no job opportunities. How do you feel? Write your answer on a sheet of paper. Class discussion should follow. Be informed that this was somewhat the predicament of the newly freed slaves.

2. Research the radical Republicans of the Reconstruction era.
3. Illustrate the cycle of poverty African Americans experienced because of the institution of sharecropping.
4. Write a diary explaining how you would feel once you heard that work was available. Explain how you would feel traveling to a different state to find work, and the feeling you would have after working hard for a long period of time and then receiving no pay. How would you feel about yourself, the individual who would not pay you, the person who told you about the job, the country which would continue to allow such situations to occur? How do you think African Americans felt about such situations which were a regular part of their lives?
5. Research the origin and purpose of the KKK. Then research the definition of "terrorism." Decide if the KKK practiced terrorism in African American communities. Write a letter to a friend explaining your reactions to a group of KKK members who have just visited your home and frightened the entire family.
6. Form groups. Each group should define the word "segregation." Have each group reread page 150, the italicized section, then list the various aspects of American society which are still segregated. How many years has segregation occurred in America and should it be alleviated? If so, how?
7. Use a map of your city and determine which parts of the city are occupied by which groups of people. Is this segregation or choice? Class discussion should follow.

### Discussion Questions

1. How were newly freed slaves rewarded for their years of servitude?
2. For African Americans, how did freedom become a form of slavery?
3. When did the Civil War end? How long after the war did the Union Army remain in the South? Why?
4. How would European Americans entice newly freed slaves to work for no pay?
5. What is sharecropping and how did it benefit the European American? The African American?
6. Why did some ex-slaves change their names?
7. How did the KKK become one of the main elements which kept former slaves from gaining full citizen rights?
8. What did state legislatures do upon the departure of the Union Army?
9. How did African Americans compare the experience of freedom and slavery?

## Epilogue

### Activities

1. Research the American colonization society and explain its purpose to the class.

2. Research President Lincoln's view on slavery, white supremacy, black inferiority and the colonization of African Americans. (Each section can be group work.) Report your findings to the class and a discussion should follow.

### Discussion Questions

1. How many years ago did slavery end?
2. What is a "legacy"? What is bitterness?
3. Reword the following statement.

*The legacy of slavery has been bitter and in the 103 years since the end of the Civil War little has been done to alleviate the bitterness.*

Is this statement true or false? Explain.

4. Where did Abraham Lincoln wish to move the slaves after the war? Did his wish include a desegregated America?
5. What did Rhody Holsell mean when he stated that:
  - A. "White people did not want the 'shade' taken out of the country";
  - B. "Many of the bosses after the freedom couldn't stand it and went in the house and got a gun and blew out his brains";
  - C. "We would not have been slaughtered, burned, hanged, and killed if we had been put to ourselves and had our own laws";
  - D. "God gave us a better principle and we could have had thousands of whites slaughtered, but we didn't after the freedom"?
6. Why did some African Americans express bitterness toward President Abraham Lincoln?
7. Why did African Americans have to depend on the Southern white man for work, food and clothing?
8. Define the words "standard of living." Did the standard of living improve for the freed slave?
9. How are European Americans viewed by the African Americans in the epilogue? If you had lived through slavery, would you be bitter?

### Culminating Activities

1. *To Be A Slave* is a book examining the emotions of individuals who experienced a portion of history that still shapes the actions and reactions of many Americans. Students might then be asked to consider what mistakes Americans have made in their treatment of non-European Americans. (A little history is necessary to include the Chinese, Japanese, Indians, Africans, Mexicans, etc.) Are mistakes still being made? If so, what are they?
2. What can young people do to improve relationships between the various races in America? What organizations should be formed for young people to be exposed to the various ethnic groups in America? (On the elementary and secondary level) How can young people work to alleviate the bitterness some members of races outside the mainstream of the American society experience? (These are brainstorming activities which could be used by upper classmen.) (Teacher must explain that many African Americans believe that race relations improve when both races gravitate toward each other. Programs which remove African American children from their neighborhoods but do not remove European American children from their neighborhoods for whatever reasons send the wrong messages to children.)

Note: This book can be used to supplement the following classes:

- A. Economics (The History of Economics in America) (Comprehending the History of Economics and the African American)
- B. Psychology
- C. Sociology
- D. Social Studies
- E. History

## TEST

### Part I: True/False (20 Points)

Read the following statements. Place the letter "T" next to the statements which are true and the letter "F" next to the statements which are false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Africans who were "chosen" to be slaves were the youngest, strongest, and those most capable of earning wages and contributing to the economy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Only Africans were slaves in the United States.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Slaves were transported to the plantations by steamship only.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Virginia was known as the slave breeding state.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Slaves were able to stop working at five o'clock each day.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Africans were considered superior because of their ability to work long hours.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Africans invented the modern guitar.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The only reason for the existence of slavery was the huge amount of profit made by European Americans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Lincoln wanted to free African slaves and integrate the American society.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Many slaves fought and killed their masters and overseers in self-defense.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. All African Americans loved Abraham Lincoln for freeing the slaves.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Many slaves ran away to join the Union Army.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. African American slaves were able to run their own churches on the plantations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Slaves were happy to hear that they were finally free.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Slaves fought for the Confederate Army.

## Part II: Completion (20 points)

Complete the following phrases with the correct word or words.

1. Native Americans were first used as \_\_\_\_\_ in America.  
**slaves**                      **overseers**                      **drivers**
2. Africans were first transported to the continent of \_\_\_\_\_.  
**Europe**   **Asia**   **South America**
3. Many slaves lost their \_\_\_\_\_ on the voyage from Africa to America.  
**lives**                      **languages**                      **culture**
4. Slaves were sold on the \_\_\_\_\_ in various cities throughout the South.  
**auction block**                      **slave ships**                      **plantations**
5. Many slave settlements existed in America's \_\_\_\_\_.  
**forest or swamps**                      **large cities**                      **north**
6. Slaves traveled from the slave ships to the plantation in \_\_\_\_\_.  
**coffles**                      **slave groups**                      **jails**
7. The myth of white \_\_\_\_\_ and black \_\_\_\_\_ was invented to stop the resistance to slavery.  
**inferiority, superiority**                      **pride, power**                      **superiority, inferiority**
8. The radical Republicans wanted former slaves to receive \_\_\_\_\_.  
**40 acres and a mule**                      **\$100,000**                      **farms**
9. The two methods used to enslave Africans were \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.  
**physical, psychological**                      **physical, chains**                      **religious, food supplies**
10. The typical slave experience consisted of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.  
**work, whippings**                      **work, sleep**                      **rest, pleasure**

**Part III: Vocabulary (15 Points)**

Match the vocabulary word with the correct definition.

- |                  |       |  |
|------------------|-------|--|
| 1. coffle        | _____ | A. State of being subject to a master.   |
| 2. servitude     | _____ | B. A public sale of property to the highest bidder.  |
| 3. resistance    | _____ | C. State of removing or taking something needed away.  |
| 4. deprivation   | _____ | D. A large estate worked by live-in laborers.  |
| 5. auction       | _____ | E. A thorough destruction.   |
| 6. holocaust     | _____ | F. European Americans, usually poor, hired to make sure slaves worked and did not run away.                                |
| 7. paddyroller   | _____ | G. One who frightens by threats or violence in order to receive desired response.  |
| 8. overseer      | _____ | H. One who is above another in rank, office, station, quality and merit.   |
| 9. inferior      | _____ | I. African overseer.   |
| 10. superior     | _____ | J. Of little or less importance, value, or merit.  |
| 11. terrorist    | _____ | K. The act of opposing or working against.   |
| 12. driver       | _____ | L. Slaves chained together and marched to plantations and auction blocks.  |
| 13. slave galley | _____ | M. European Americans hired to patrol the roads and woods surrounding plantation to catch runaways or break up gatherings. |
| 14. plantation   | _____ | N. Below the deck of a slave ship where slaves were kept throughout the journey from Africa to America.                    |
| 15. "Uncle Tom"  | _____ | O. Slaves who were the most obedient, submissive, and dependent. They usually worked in the master's house.                |

**Part IV: Essay Questions (45 points)**

Choose three of the following questions and explain each in detail.

1. Compare and contrast the various groups who were enslaved by Europeans. Be sure to include the method of capture, the length of service, the means of escape, and the advantages and disadvantages each group brought to the slave owner.
2. Describe the journey of a newly captured African slave from his capture in Africa until his arrival on the plantation.
3. Describe the various methods European Americans invented to stop the resistance to slavery.
4. Describe the various methods Africans used to resist slavery.
5. Detail a typical day in the life of a field slave.
6. Compare and contrast the life of a typical slave before the Civil War with his life after the Civil War.

## ANSWER KEY

### Part I: True or False (20 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F  | 11. F |
| 2. F | 7. F  | 12. T |
| 3. F | 8. T  | 13. F |
| 4. F | 9. F  | 14. T |
| 5. F | 10. T | 15. T |

### Part II: Completion (20 points)

1. slaves
2. Europe
3. lives
4. auction block
5. forests or swamps
6. coffles
7. superiority, inferiority
8. 40 acres and a mule
9. physical, psychological
10. work, whippings

### Part II: Vocabulary (15 points)

- |       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|
| A. 2  | F. 8  | K. 3  |
| B. 5  | G. 11 | L. 1  |
| C. 4  | H. 10 | M. 7  |
| D. 14 | I. 12 | N. 13 |
| E. 6  | J. 9  | O. 15 |

### Part IV: Essay Questions (45 points)

Answers will vary.



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