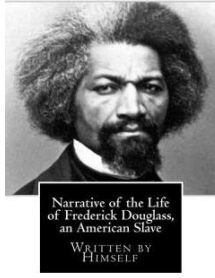


Name _____ Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass

Date _____ "The Slave Trade" Freedom: A History of the United States



"The Slave Trade" Excerpt from *Freedom: A History of the United States*

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Gist section 1:

1. Slavery first came to America with some of the earliest settlers. But they weren't the first people to own human beings. Slavery was an evil found around the world. There were jobs no one wanted to do, and, in the days before machinery, slaves seemed an answer. If you were on the losing side of a war, or were kidnapped by a rival tribe or a thief, you might end up a slave. Some Native Americans owned slaves. It was an ancient practice in Africa. But slavery in Africa was a **domestic institution**. In America it would go way beyond that, developing into a system of enforced labor on vast plantations. And while in Africa blacks were owned by other blacks, in America blacks were always owned by whites. In America it would always be racial slavery.

Gist section 2:

2. By the eighteenth century there had developed a special pattern to the American slave trade. New England Yankees often started it by taking their salted cod to the Caribbean island of Barbados—just north of Venezuela. There they traded the fish for cane sugar. Then they headed back north to Virginia where they loaded tobacco before sailing east across the Atlantic to England. In England the cargo was exchanged for guns and cloth and trinkets—all of which could be used to buy human beings in Africa. Then the slave ships sailed south from England to Africa to fill their holds with African men, women, and children—who were the most valuable cargo of all. Those people sailed west—against their wishes—and were usually taken to a Caribbean island or a southern port where the sea captains sold them for cash or more sugar. Finally, the crisscrossed triangular journey ended in Massachusetts or New York or Annapolis. Robert Walsh was an **eyewitness** of a slave ship in action. He wrote: "The slaves were all enclosed under grated hatchways, between decks. The space was so low they sat between each other's legs ... [and] there was no possibility of lying down, or at all changing their position, by night or day. Over the hatchway stood a ferocious-looking fellow with a **scourge** of many twisted thongs in his hand, who was the slave-driver of the ship.... The last parting sounds we heard from the unhallowed ship were the cries and shrieks of the slaves, suffering under some bodily **affliction**."

Definitions:

Domestic: related to or based in the household

Institution: a system for organizing society that has existed for a long time

Eyewitness: someone who saw something themselves

Scourge: whip

Affliction: something that causes pain or suffering

Gist section 3:

3. In Colonial times, there was slavery in both North and South. But slavery didn't make much sense in the North; farms were small and the farmer could often handle the work himself. The situation was different in the South. The crops that grew well there—tobacco, cotton, rice, and sugar—demanded large numbers of field workers. But there were few workers to be had—until the advent of African slavery.

Gist section 4:

4. By 1700 tens of thousands of African-born blacks are living in the American South, and the numbers are fast increasing. In 1705, in Virginia laws are passed that attempt to take away slaves' humanity. The Virginia Black Code says slaves are property, not people. But property that can think means trouble. So laws are passed to try and prevent thinking. One North Carolina law read this way: "The teaching of slaves has a tendency to **excite** dissatisfaction in their minds. Therefore, any free person who shall teach any slave to read and write shall be **liable to indictment**. If any slave shall teach, or attempt to teach, any other slave, he or she shall receive thirty-nine lashes on his or her bare back."

Gist section 5:

5. When you do something you know is wrong, you usually try to convince yourself that it really is all right. Southerners begin to say that God created some people to be slaves and some to be masters. They say black people aren't as smart as white people. Then, to make that true, they pass laws that say it is a crime to teach blacks to read and write. One white woman in Norfolk, Virginia, who teaches free blacks in her home, is arrested and put in jail. Whites are losing their freedom too.

Definitions:

Excite: create or stir up

Liable to indictment: able to be charged with a crime