

# Five Thousand Years of Slavery

Marjorie Gann and Janet Willen

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

Thousands of years ago, when impoverished Egyptians couldn't repay their debts, they were sold into slavery. Slave women in Ancient Rome faced never-ending household drudgery in their owners' homes. Ninth-century Zanj people were transported from East Africa to work the salt marshes of Iraq. Eighteenth-century cotton pickers sweated under the sun in the American South, trying to meet their daily quotas.

Ancient history? Yes and no. In our time, slavery wears many faces. James Kofi Annan was just six years old when his parents in Ghana leased him to a fisherman because they could not afford to feed him. Julia Gabriel was trafficked from Arizona to the cucumber fields of South Carolina, where she worked under the threat of violence. Amadou, a young boy in Mali, thought he was getting a job, but instead he was brought to Africa's Ivory Coast and forced to collect cocoa pods day after day for five years without pay.

*Five Thousand Years of Slavery* tells the story of these slaves and others, from ancient times to the present day. It brings history to life with the firsthand accounts of slaves, the courageous tales of abolitionists, and the sordid stories of slave owners. And it suggests ways to fight slavery in the world today.

Through the stories, some themes emerge:

- Slavery is universal. It has been practiced by virtually all cultures and persists to this day.
- Some characteristics of slavery are common wherever and whenever people keep other people as property.
- Abolition movements are rare, but the successes of those in the United States, Canada and Britain show that slavery can be stopped.

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[www.fivethousandyearsofslavery.com](http://www.fivethousandyearsofslavery.com)

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## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

*Five Thousand Years of Slavery* is a narrative-driven history whose themes dovetail perfectly with the social studies and history curricula of many Canadian provinces and American states. Here is a sampling of some of these intersections:

### Human Rights

Many states and provinces require students to study violations of human rights, including slavery.

*Five Thousand Years of Slavery* tells the stories of victims and those who fought the abuses. It presents the movement to abolish slavery in the British West Indies as the first human rights campaign in history. It shows how the techniques developed by the first British abolitionists, from petitions to public meetings, from lobbying to boycotts, continue to be used by modern human rights activists.

### Social Reform

Many states and provinces require students to learn about labor laws, such as restrictions on child labor.

*Five Thousand Years of Slavery* shows that laws protecting workers are new. Historically, laws more commonly equated slaves with cattle. The book also describes activists in many countries today who are fighting employers who try to evade labor laws and use slave workers.

### Historical Content

#### Ancient Civilizations

Many states and provinces require students to study the great ancient civilizations, such as Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome, the Indus Valley, China, Mesoamerica, and Africa.

*Five Thousand Years of Slavery* examines the ways slaves were captured, bought, sold, and used in all these cultures, and how many of the great cities of the past were built by slave laborers.

#### Indigenous Peoples of the Americas

Many states and provinces teach the cultures of the indigenous peoples of North America, Mesoamerica, and South America.

*Five Thousand Years of Slavery* explores the economic and social structures of these cultures, and shows how indigenous peoples both used slaves themselves and were enslaved by Europeans, especially from Spain and Portugal.

### U.S. and Canadian History

At various grade levels, U.S. curricula cover the growth of America from the arrival of early pioneers through the Colonial period, the American Revolution, the Civil War, and Reconstruction.

Similarly, all Canadian provinces cover the settlement of New France and British North America through the Loyalist period and the War of 1812, and discuss the impact of the American Revolution and Civil War on Canadian history.

*Five Thousand Years of Slavery* traces slavery in the United States from the arrival of the first African indentured servants and slaves, and their use in both the North and the South, through to the Civil War. It explains the struggles between the nation's Founders who favored slavery and those who opposed it. It outlines how American abolitionists tried to end slavery, and how President Lincoln moved toward an increasingly antislavery position in the course of the Civil War.

*Five Thousand Years of Slavery* also tells how Britain's more northern colony, Canada, permitted slaves but gradually ended the practice. It shows how slaves who fought for the British in the American Revolution and the War of 1812 found freedom in Canada, and how runaways from the United States used the Underground Railroad to make their way to a free country.

## TEACHING ACTIVITIES

The suggested activities for students appear under one of four headings: writing, drama, music, and visual arts. Each activity is followed by its curriculum connection and the pages in *Five Thousand Years of Slavery* to read as background. For some of the activities, a student worksheet or background text is available in a printable PDF, usually following the related activity or group of activities.

## WRITING

### 1. Historical Letter

Until very recently, people wrote many letters to each other, and often kept them as a permanent record of events. Today, historians use these letters to learn about the past.

Step back to an earlier period in history, long before email, texting, and the telephone were invented. Imagine that you're one of the following historical characters and in that person's voice, write the letter as that person would have. To make your letter look old, paint a sheet of white computer paper with strong, cold tea or coffee. When it is dry, write the good copy of your letter on this "antique" paper with a fine-point marker (or a calligraphy pen) in brown or black ink.

Here are some suggested letters:

a. From Thomas Clarkson to his wife, Catherine. Describe what Clarkson learned during one of his extended trips on horseback around England as he collected evidence for the upcoming parliamentary hearings on the slave trade. Detail what he discovered about the slave trade, the dangers he experienced, and the positive events as well.

**Curriculum Connection:** The Abolition Movement in Britain

**Background Reading:** Chapter 8, pages 79 – 85

For further background on Clarkson, check out:

[The Abolition Project](#) website, which describes more about Clarkson's trips around England.

Click on "Sources," then under the year 1787 select "Clarkson's Diary (Travels in the West Country 1787)" for a transcript of his record of his trip to Bristol.

On the same site, "Sources," under 1807, choose "Letter from Thomas Clarkson (expressing joy at the passing for the 1807 Law)", then choose "Manuscript letter p. 1" at the bottom of the page, to see some letters of that period.

b. From C. Z. Pieters, who was captured by the Balangingi while aboard the *Petronella*, to another captain, for help in gaining his freedom. The letter would explain how Pieters came to be captured, why he should be freed, and the actions the captain would have to take to buy his freedom.

**Curriculum Connection:** Human Rights

**Background Reading:** Chapter 11, pages 133 – 136

c. From a young person in the 1830s to the editor of *The Liberator*, William Lloyd Garrison's antislavery newspaper. Give your opinions on slavery, why it is wrong, why it is cruel, and what action people should take. (You can write as a free white person, a free black, a former slave, or a slave.)

As an example of how people wrote to newspapers in the nineteenth century, here is an excerpt from a letter sent to *The Liberator* on February 12, 1831. The writer says being prejudiced against people of a different race is like looking at a person through the fog of the morning, because it gives a distorted picture of what the person is really like:

Prejudice may be compared to a misty morning in October. A man goes forth..., and sees at the summit of a neighboring hill, a figure of apparently gigantic stature, for such the [morning mist] would make him appear; he goes forward a

few steps, and the figure advances towards him; his size lessens as they approach; they draw still nearer and the extraordinary appearance is gradually, but sensibly diminishing; at last they meet and, perhaps, the person he had taken for a monster, proves to be his own brother.

**Curriculum Connection:** The American Abolition Movement

**Background Reading:** Chapter 10, pages 111 – 112

d. From Janet Lim to the English lady who freed her from being a slave, a *mui-tsai*, in Singapore. Tell the story of Janet's life from the time her parents sold her until she was taken to Singapore. Tell how she felt when she and her friend planned their escape, and thank the woman for giving her freedom and an education.

**Curriculum Connection:** Human Rights and Social Reform

**Background Reading:** Chapter 11, pages 141 – 143

Please use **Writing Activity 1, Worksheet A: Planning Sheet for Your Historical Letter.**

## 2. Picture book or Comic on Iqbal Masih

Read a children's biography of Reebok Youth in Action Award winner Iqbal Masih. (One good one is *Iqbal Masih and the Crusaders against Child Slavery*, by Susan Kuklin, published by Henry Holt in 1998.) On a storyboard sheet, list some of the main events in Iqbal's short life and make some sketches to illustrate these events. Then tell his life story in a picture book or a comic strip. Many templates for comics are available online.

**Curriculum Connection:** Human Rights: Child Labor

**Background Reading:** Chapter 12, pages 153 – 156

Please use **Writing Activity 2, Worksheet B: Planning Sheet for Your Picture Book or Comic.**

## 3. Compare-and-Contrast Poster and Report

Make a compare-and-contrast poster to show the similarities and differences between slavery in the past and slavery today. Label the sections "Slavery in History" and "Slavery Is Not History."

Present your comparison to your class by answering two questions: In what ways is slavery today like slavery in the past? In what ways is it different?

**Curriculum Connection:** History and Human Rights

**Background Reading:** The chapters in *Five Thousand Years of Slavery* related to the periods you have selected.

For further background on slavery today, consult the websites of some major antislavery organizations, such as:

Free the Children: [www.freethechildren.com](http://www.freethechildren.com)

Anti-Slavery International: [www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)

Free the Slaves: [www.freetheslaves.net](http://www.freetheslaves.net)

International Justice Mission: [www.ijm.org](http://www.ijm.org)

International Labor Rights Forum: [www.laborrights.org/](http://www.laborrights.org/)

Not for Sale: [www.notforsalecampaign.org](http://www.notforsalecampaign.org)

Please use **Writing Activity 3, Worksheet C: Planning Sheet for Your Compare-and-Contrast Poster and Report.**

## DRAMA

These activities assume that students will research the historical characters, using the references from *Five Thousand Years of Slavery* for historical background for their scripts. Some students may not know how to prepare a script. As a model, you may use **Worksheet D: Time Traveler Reporter.**

## 1. Time Traveler Reporter interview

Imagine that you're a news reporter for the weekly television program *Time Traveler Reporter*. Every week you travel back through time to interview someone from the past. Working with a partner, write an interview. Then perform this interview for your class.

*Five Thousand Years of Slavery* tells the stories of many slaves and slave owners who lived in the past. Choose one of the following as an interview subject, or select another one from the book:

a. A slave who survived Spartacus's uprising

**Curriculum Connection:** History: Ancient Greece

**Background Reading:** Chapter 2, pages 11 – 13

b. John Foss, captured in 1793 by Barbary pirates

**Curriculum Connection:** History: Slavery in the Islamic World

**Background Reading:** Chapter 4, pages 34 – 35

c. Meli, an African girl enslaved in East Central Africa

**Curriculum Connection:** History: Slavery in Africa

**Background Reading:** Chapter 5, pages 50 – 51

d. Bartolomé de Las Casas, the Spanish priest who turned against European enslavement of American natives

**Curriculum Connection:** History: Enslavement of Native Americans by Europeans

**Background Reading:** Chapter 6, pages 59 – 60

e. Explorer John R. Jewitt and Nootka Chief Maquina; interview them together to get their different perspectives on Jewitt's captivity

**Curriculum Connection:** History: Enslavement of Whites by Native Americans

**Background Reading:** Chapter 6, page 56

f. Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, a slave captured in Benin and enslaved in Brazil in the 1800s

**Curriculum Connection:** History: Slavery in South America and the Caribbean

**Background Reading:** Chapter 7, pages 61 – 66

g. Cinqué, leader of the *Amistad* captives

**Curriculum Connection:** History: American Abolitionism

**Background Reading:** Chapter 10, pages 113 – 115

For more information on the *Amistad* trial, click here: [Amistad](#)

Please use [Drama Activities 1 and 2](#), [Worksheet D: Time Traveler Reporter](#).

## 2. Slavery Past and Present: Compare-and-Contrast Interviews

Adapt the interview format in Worksheet D, Time Traveler Reporter, to an interview with two subjects, a slave from the past and a slave from the present. Encourage a conversation between the two. Your questions should draw out how their experiences are similar and how they are different.

a. Two men enslaved as children: Saint Patrick and Francis Bok

**Curriculum Connection:** History: Slavery in the Middle Ages and Today

**Saint Patrick Background Reading:** Chapter 3, pages 21 – 22

**Francis Bok Background Reading:** "To Be a Slave," pages 1 – 2, and "To Be Free," pages 157 – 158.

b. Two women enslaved as children: Kali, the Hindu slave girl, and Janet Lim, enslaved in China in the 1920s

**Curriculum Connection:** History: Slavery in Ancient India and Early Twentieth-Century China

**Kali Background Reading:** Chapter 11, page 130

**Janet Lim Background Reading:** Chapter 11, pages 140 – 143

Click for [Drama Activities 1 and 2](#), [Worksheet D: Time Traveler Reporter](#).

### 3. Slavery Trials

Imagine that you are the judge or a lawyer at one of these trials. Make a speech about the case.

a. You are the defense lawyer for the slave Kapitani, accused of killing his brutal master Achilles Underwood. Give the speech he addresses to the judge and jury, explaining why Kapitani should not be convicted of killing Underwood.

**Curriculum Connection:** History: Blackbirding in the Pacific

**Background Reading:** Chapter 11, pages 138 – 139

b. Imagine that the police in Lahore, Pakistan, have found the man who shot and killed child slavery campaigner Iqbal Masih, and that the jury has convicted the man of murder. Write and deliver the closing speech the trial judge gives in sentencing him to life in prison.

**Curriculum Connection:** Human Rights: Child Labor

**Background Reading:** Chapter 12, pages 153 – 155

### 4. Scenes to Dramatize with a Group

Many incidents in the book lend themselves to dramatization. For an example of one, see [Drama Activity 4, Worksheet E, Frederick Douglass Learns to Read](#).

a. You are Englishwomen living in Manchester, England, in 1788. You've been boycotting West Indian sugar and writing letters to your members of Parliament against the slave trade. Imagine that you're at a tea party, discussing slavery and your antislavery activities with your friends (it can be an all-women party, or a mixed group).

**Curriculum Connection:** History: British Abolition

**Background Reading:** Chapter 8, pages 85 and 87

b. British women did something new in the campaigns against the slave trade in the late eighteenth century, and against slavery itself in the 1820s – 1830s: they lectured in public. Stage an antislavery meeting. As one of the women presents her arguments against slavery, show how various members of the audience react to her ideas, and to a woman who dares to speak in public.

**Curriculum Connection:** History: British Abolition

**Background Reading:** Chapter 8, pages 85 and 87 and 90 – 91

c. Henry Brown escaped from slavery in 1849. He soon published the story of his life and his extraordinary escape, the *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, Written by Himself*. Working with a group, act out the story of Henry Brown's escape in a shipping crate. Include the sale of his wife and child, his idea for escape, his trip from Richmond by wagon, his journey by train steamer, and his arrival and emergence from the box in Philadelphia.

An excerpt from Henry Brown's narrative is on [Worksheet F](#). (For the complete narrative online, go to [Documenting the American South](#).)

**Curriculum Connection:** History: Runaway Slaves

**Background Reading:** Chapter 10, pages 117 – 120

Please use [Drama Activity 4, Worksheet F, Excerpts from Henry Box Brown's Narrative](#)

### MUSIC

Work with a group of students who like to sing. Ask your music teacher or choir director to teach you one or two songs sung by African-American slaves (sometimes called "Negro spirituals"). Many of these songs reflect the slaves' yearning for freedom. Because the slaves were fearful of their masters' reactions, the words did not speak openly about running away. Study their lyrics and tell the class what you believe the words are about.

Here are two songs you can learn:

### **Go Down, Moses**

When Israel was in Egypt land,  
Let my people go,  
Oppressed so hard she could not stand,  
Let my people go.

*Chorus:*

Go down, Moses,  
Way down in Egypt land.  
Tell old Pharaoh,  
To let my people go.  
Thus spoke the Lord, bold Moses said,  
Let my people go,  
If not, I'll smite your firstborn dead,  
Let my people go.

*Chorus*

### **Steal Away**

*Chorus:*

Steal away, steal away,  
Steal away to Jesus.  
Steal away, steal away home,  
I ain't got long to stay here.  
My Lord He calls me,  
He calls me by the thunder;  
The trumpet sounds within-a my soul,  
I ain't got long to stay here.

*Chorus*

Green trees are bending,  
Poor sinner stands atrembling;  
The trumpet sounds within-a my soul,  
I ain't got long to stay here.

*Chorus*

**Curriculum Connection:** History: American Slave Life.

**Background Reading:** Chapter 9, page 109  
(Also see Chapter 1, page 8, for the biblical story of the Exodus.)

You can listen to many of these songs on the ["Negro Spiritual Workshop"](#) website.

## **VISUAL ARTS**

In the nineteenth century, broadsides were a common way to advertise political opinions. They were printed on large sheets of paper, on one side, and distributed freely. Abolitionists used them to popularize their cause.

Some broadsides were mostly text, but this example, "[Illustrations of the American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1840](#)," used pictures showing the ill-treatment of slaves to make their point.

Create a modern antislavery poster with scenes from the lives of present-day slaves, and captions explaining where each is enslaved and the type of work he or she is performing. If you can, tell how this individual became enslaved.

You can learn about modern slavery by visiting the websites of modern antislavery organizations like:

Free the Children: [www.freethechildren.com](http://www.freethechildren.com)  
Anti-Slavery International: [www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)  
Free the Slaves: [www.freetheslaves.net](http://www.freetheslaves.net)  
International Justice Mission: [www.ijm.org](http://www.ijm.org)  
International Labor Rights Forum: [www.laborrights.org/](http://www.laborrights.org/)  
Not for Sale: [www.notforsalecampaign.org](http://www.notforsalecampaign.org)

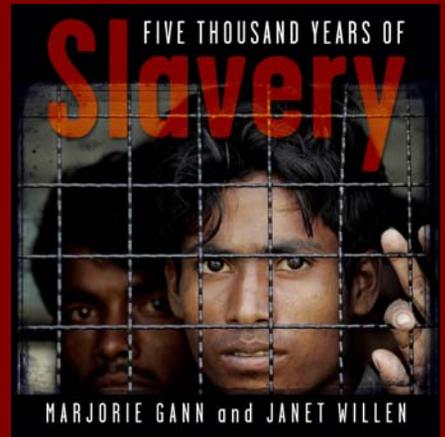
Please use **Visual Arts Activity, Worksheet G: Sketch Sheet for Modern Antislavery Poster**.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Marjorie Gann** moved to Canada from the United States in 1968. For over twenty years she lived in New Brunswick and taught grades four through six next door in Nova Scotia. She reviewed children's books for many publications and wrote *Discover Canada: New Brunswick* which explored the history and geography of her home province. While teaching Maritime history, she realized that students needed to improve their research skills, so she wrote *Report Writing I* and *Report Writing II* to show middle grade students how to write projects using their own words.

**Janet Willen** has been a writer and editor for more than thirty years. She has written many magazine articles, and edited books for elementary school children as well as academic texts and a remedial writing curriculum for postsecondary students. With a master's degree in political science, she has also edited history and political books and articles. For the past fifteen years, she has tutored middle grade students on their history, English, and math homework. She lives in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Marjorie and Janet, who are sisters, grew up in an America where "Whites Only" signs could still be seen. They remember how a powerful civil rights movement fought off the legacy of slavery to gain equality under the law for all Americans. When they learned about slave raids in modern Sudan and about children sold into slavery in modern Ghana, they decided that the story of world slavery had to be told. *Five Thousand Years of Slavery* is the result.



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## Writing Activity 1

### Worksheet A: Planning Sheet for Your Historical Letter

Name \_\_\_\_\_

*Use this page to write the first draft of your historical letter. After you have edited it for spelling, punctuation, grammar, and ideas, you are ready to write your good copy. To make it look old, you can paint a sheet of white computer paper with strong, cold tea or coffee. Let the page dry, and then write on it with a fine-point marker or calligraphy pen in brown or black ink.*

Year of letter: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Introduce yourself: (My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am  
\_\_\_\_\_.)

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Explain why you are writing this letter:

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Main body of letter (your story or opinions):



## Writing Activity 2

### Worksheet B: Planning Sheet for Your Picture Book or Comic

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Read a children's biography of Reebok Human Rights Youth in Action Award winner Iqbal Masih. (One good one is *Iqbal Masih and the Crusaders against Child Slavery*, by Susan Kuklin, published by Henry Holt in 1998.) You can also consult the Internet for information like date and place of birth.

Prepare a picture book or comic on this storyboard sheet. Draw pictures about Iqbal's short life on the spaces to the left and describe them on the lines to the right. Many templates for comics are available online.

Here are some of the events you might want to include:

- Date of birth
- Place of birth
- Members of his family
- Family's poverty
- Why Iqbal was sent to work
- His age when he was sent to work
- Conditions where he worked
- Other hardships
- Children he worked with
- Number of times he escaped
- Punishments he suffered
- Successful escape
- Iqbal's education
- His campaign
- His award
- His murder
- Iqbal's lasting impact

**Iqbal Masih Storyboard**

Put your drawing in the frames and outline the events of Iqbal's life on the lines next to them.



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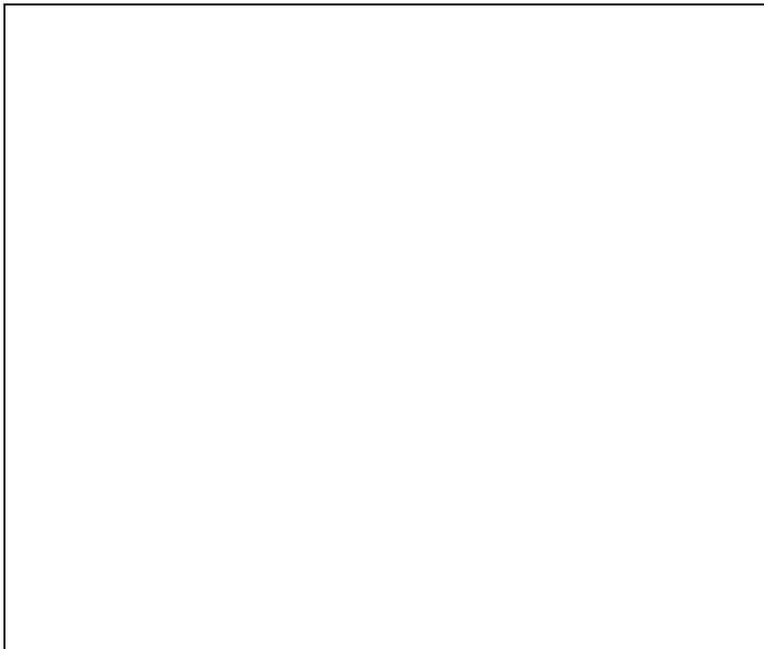
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### Writing Activity 3

#### Worksheet C: Planning Sheet for Compare-and-Contrast Poster/Report

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Antislavery organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Website URL: \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>Slavery in History</b> Place:</p> <p>Time in history:</p> <p>Form (or forms) of slavery:</p>	<p><b>Slavery Is Not History</b> Place:</p> <p>Form (or forms) of slavery:</p>
<p><b>Slavery in History</b> Place:</p> <p>Time in history:</p> <p>Form (or forms) of slavery:</p>	<p><b>Slavery Is Not History</b> Place:</p> <p>Form (or forms) of slavery:</p>

## Drama Activities 1 and 2

### Worksheet D: Time Traveler Reporter

Name \_\_\_\_\_

*Use this interview with Solomon Northup as a model for the other interviews.*

#### **Characters:**

*Host: Anne Ouncer*

*Reporter: Harry Singer*

*Interviewee: Solomon Northup*

#### **The Script:**

*Anne Ouncer:* Good evening, everyone. My name is Anne Ouncer, and I'm host for this evening's edition of *Time Traveler Reporter*. Each week, our intrepid reporter, Harry Singer, steps into our time machine and goes back into history, where he interviews someone important from the past. Where are you taking us this week, Harry?

*Harry Singer:* We're going to New York.

*Anne Ouncer:* And what year are you traveling to?

*Harry Singer:* 1853.

*Anne Ouncer:* And whom are you going to interview?

*Harry Singer:* Solomon Northup, an African-American who was a free man until - well, you'll see what happened to him.

*Anne Ouncer:* So, Harry, just step into this time machine and - away we go!

*[Audience claps. Harry steps out of time machine.]*

*Harry Singer:* Excuse me, sir. [Taps Solomon Northup on the shoulder.] May I speak with you? My name is Harry Singer, and I come from - well, 150 years in the future. People in the future have heard a bit about your story, and we'd like to speak to you in person.

*Solomon Northup:* From the future! You mean, around the year 2000?

*Harry Singer:* Yes.

*Solomon Northup:* What? Are you crazy?

*Harry Singer:* Sorry. I only have a few minutes, so I can't explain that now.

*Solomon Northup:* Well, why me?

*Harry Singer:* People are really interested in the history of slavery in the United States.

*Solomon Northup:* The history? You mean there isn't slavery in the United States anymore?

*Harry Singer:* That's right. It came to an end.

*Solomon Northup:* Glory be! I'm glad to hear that! But there's slavery now, and I know that from personal experience.

*Harry Singer:* That's what we wanted to ask you about. Were you ever a slave?

*Solomon Northup:* Yes, I was, even though I was born a free man in New York State.

*Harry Singer:* How did that happen?

*Solomon Northup:* I was kidnapped. It was 1841, and people could make a lot of money slave trading. I was looking for work in the North, and two men came up to me and promised me a job.

*Harry Singer:* And I guess you trusted them.

*Solomon Northup:* Yes, I did. So I said I'd go with them to Washington, D.C., for a job.

*Harry Singer:* What happened?

*Solomon Northup:* Those two scoundrels sold me off to slave traders, who sent me to be a slave on a plantation in Louisiana.

*Harry Singer:* Oh, no! What kind of work did you do?

*Solomon Northup:* Picked cotton - all day. And that was tough. At the end of the day our baskets of cotton were "toted" - weighed. And no matter how fatigued and weary we were, we were scared when we approached the gin house. If our basket fell short in weight, we knew we'd be whipped.

*Harry Singer:* Were you whipped?

*Solomon Northup:* Yes, plenty of times, and I saw other people whipped, even women.

*Harry Singer:* You're free now, though. How long did it take?

*Solomon Northup:* Twelve years. Twelve years away from my wife and children.

*Harry Singer:* How did you get free?

*Solomon Northup:* A white carpenter from Canada working on the plantation mailed a letter for me - a letter to some friends back home. I wrote that letter in August.

*Harry Singer:* And how long did it take to get an answer?

*Solomon Northup:* I waited through summer and fall, even past Christmas and into the new year.

*Harry Singer:* That must have been awful.

*Solomon Northup:* It was. I didn't know if my friends had got my letter. I didn't even know if they were alive.

*Harry Singer:* But obviously somebody got that letter!

*Solomon Northup:* Yes, and then one day, Mr. Northup arrived at the plantation!

*Harry Singer:* Mr. Northup? A relative of yours?

*Solomon Northup:* No, Henry B. Northup. His father had owned my father - and freed him, which is why I was born free!

*Harry Singer:* And what did Henry Northup do?

*Solomon Northup:* Why, he came up to my owner with the papers that proved that I was a free man. And I went back home, free!

*Harry Singer:* That's a powerful story. But in the meantime, you lost twelve years of your life, didn't you?

*Solomon Northup:* Yes. And my family lost me for twelve years.

*Harry Singer:* Thank you, Solomon Northup, for telling us your amazing story. And thank you, friends, for listening to Solomon's tale. At least we know that slavery did end in the United States, in 1865 - twelve years after our interview with Solomon Northup.

[*Steps back into the machine.*]

*Anne Ouncer:* Please join us for *Time Traveler Reporter* again next week, when Harry Singer will step into our time machine and visit another important person from the past. In the meantime, have a good week. Bye for now!

## Drama Activity 4

### Worksheet E: Frederick Douglass Learns to Read

*Use this script as a model for the other suggested scenes.*

#### **Characters:**

Frederick Douglass as a grown man, the narrator

Young Frederick Douglass

Mrs. Sophia Auld

Mr. Hugh Auld

**Background Information:** The great African-American abolitionist Frederick Douglass wrote three autobiographies, ending with *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. In all three, he told the story of how learning to read was a turning point in his life - the moment when he knew for sure that he wanted to be a free man.

**Setting:** A sitting room in the home of the Aulds in Baltimore. Sophia Auld is seated with a Bible open on her knee. Standing beside her is a young Frederick, looking at the page. She is reading.

#### **The Script:**

*Frederick Douglass (narrator):* My mistress, whom I called "Miss Sopha," often read the Bible aloud when her husband was absent. As I listened, I became curious about the great *mystery* of reading, and finally got up the courage to ask her if she would teach me. She readily consented, and in an incredibly short time, by her kind assistance, I had mastered the alphabet and could spell words of three or four letters. My mistress seemed almost as proud of my progress as if I had been her own child.

*Sophia:* "And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood." Now you read, Freddy!

*Young Frederick:* Really, Miss Sopha?

*Sophia:* Yes, you try this part, Freddy. *[She points to the verse in the Bible.]*  
Read about the animals that went into Noah's ark!

*Young Frederick:* "Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth -"

*[Frederick hears the door and looks up. Hugh Auld comes into the room.]*

*Sophia [jumping up excitedly as her husband walks in]:* Oh, Hugh, you must hear! I've been teaching Freddy to read, and he mastered his alphabet so quickly - and now, just listen! He can read the story of Noah's ark from the Good Book! Go ahead, Freddy, show Master Hugh how well you read!

*Frederick:* "There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female. ..."

*[Hugh interrupts sharply]*

Stop that! Stop this instant, boy.

*[Frederick and Sophia freeze and appear puzzled and frightened.]*

*Hugh:* Sophia, do you realize what you've done? It is against the law to teach a slave to read; didn't you know that? Give a slave an inch and he will take a mile. Learning will spoil the best slave in the world. If he learns to read the Bible, it will forever unfit him to be a slave. He should know nothing but the will of his master, and learn to obey it. As to himself, learning will do him no good, but a great deal of harm, making him disconsolate and unhappy. If you teach him how to read, he'll want to know how to write, and this accomplished, he'll be running away with himself. So promise me - no more lessons for Frederick.

*Sophia:* But, but -

*Hugh:* No "buts" about it.

*Sophia:* Run along, Freddy.

*Frederick:* So I did run along, but I had understood a lot more than Mr. Auld thought I had. "Very well," I thought, "knowledge unfits a child to be a slave." And from that moment, I understood the direct pathway from slavery to freedom.

## Drama Activity 4

### **Worksheet F: An Abridged Version of the Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, Written by Himself**

*Henry Brown made up his mind to escape from slavery after his wife and child were sold south. In 1851 he published an account of his life as a slave in Richmond, Virginia, which told the story of his ingenious escape. The full account is at [Documenting the American South](#). This is an abridged version.*

I was well acquainted with a store-keeper in the city of Richmond, from whom I used to purchase my provisions; and having formed a favourable opinion of his integrity, one day in the course of a little conversation with him, I said to him if I were free I would be able to do business such as he was doing; he then told me that my occupation (a tobacconist) was a money-making one, and if I were free I had no need to change for another. I then told him my circumstances in regard to my master, having to pay him 25 dollars per month, and yet that he refused to assist me in saving my wife from being sold and taken away to the South, where I should never see her again; . . .

The man asked me if I was not afraid to speak that way to him; I said no, for I imagined he believed that every man had a right to liberty. He said I was quite right, and asked me how much money I would give him if he would assist me to get away. I told him that I had 166 dollars and that I would give him the half; so we ultimately agreed that I should have his service in the attempt for 86 dollars. Now I only wanted to fix upon a plan. . . .

One day, while I was at work, and my thoughts were eagerly feasting upon the idea of freedom, I felt my soul called out to heaven to breathe a prayer to Almighty God . . . when the idea suddenly flashed across my mind of shutting myself *up in a box*, and getting myself conveyed as dry goods to a free state. . . .

My next object was to procure a box, and with the assistance of a carpenter that was very soon accomplished, and taken to the place where the packing was to be performed. In the mean time the storekeeper had written to a friend in Philadelphia. . . .

The box which I had procured was three feet one inch [94 cm] long, two feet six inches [76 cm] high, and two feet [61 cm] wide: and on the morning of the 29th day of March, 1849, I went into the box, having previously bored three gimlet holes opposite my face, for air, and provided myself with a bladder of water, both for the purpose of quenching my thirst and for wetting my face, should I feel getting faint. . . . My friends nailed down the lid and had me conveyed to the Express Office. . . . I had no sooner arrived at the office than I was turned heels up . . . I was then put upon a waggon and driven off to the depôt with my head down, and I had no sooner arrived at the depôt, than the man who drove the waggon tumbled me roughly into the baggage car, where, however, I happened to fall on my right side.

The next place we arrived at was Potomac Creek, where the baggage had to be removed from the cars, to be put on board the steamer; where I was again placed with my head down, and in this dreadful position had to remain nearly an hour and a half, which, from the sufferings I had thus to endure, seemed like an age to me. . . . I felt my eyes swelling as if they would burst from their sockets. . . . I felt a cold sweat coming over me which seemed to be a warning that death was about to terminate my earthly miseries, but as I feared even that, less than slavery, I resolved to submit to the will of God. . . . I could hear a man saying to another, that he had travelled a long way and had been standing there two hours, and he would like to get somewhat to sit down; so perceiving my box, standing on end, he threw it down and then the two sat upon it. I was thus relieved from a state of agony. . . .

The next place at which we arrived was the city of Washington, where I was taken from the steam-boat, and again placed upon a waggon and carried to the depôt right side up with care; but when the driver arrived at the depôt I heard him call for some person to help to take the box off the waggon, and some one answered him to the effect that he might throw it off; but, says the driver, it is marked "this side up with care;" so if I throw it off I might break something, the other answered him that it did not matter if he broke all that was in it, the railway company were able enough to pay for it. No sooner were these words spoken than I began to tumble from the waggon, and falling on the end where my head was, I could hear my neck give a crack, as if it had been snapped asunder and I was knocked completely insensible. The first thing I heard after that, was some person saying, "there is no room for the box, it will have to remain and be sent through to-morrow with

the luggage train;" but . . . I now heard a man say that the box had come with the express, and it must be sent on. I was then tumbled into the car with my head downwards again, but the car had not proceeded far before . . . my box got shifted about and so happened to turn upon its right side; and in this position I remained till [I heard] some person say, "We are in port and at Philadelphia." My heart then leaped for joy. . . .

I was then placed on a waggon and conveyed to the house where my friend in Richmond had arranged I should be received. A number of persons soon collected round the box after it was taken in to the house, but as I did not know what was going on I kept myself quiet. I heard a man say, "let us rap upon the box and see if he is alive;" and immediately a rap ensued and a voice said, tremblingly, "Is all right within?" to which I replied -- "all right." The joy of the friends was very great; when they heard that I was alive they soon managed to break open the box, and then came my resurrection from the grave of slavery. I rose a freeman, but I was too weak, by reason of long confinement in that box, to be able to stand, so I immediately swooned away.

**Visual Arts Activity**

**Worksheet G: Sketch Sheet for Modern Antislavery Poster**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Antislavery organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Website URL: \_\_\_\_\_

<p>Country: _____</p> <p>Sketch of one or more enslaved workers:</p>          <p>Comments on lives of slave workers:</p>	<p>Country: _____</p> <p>Sketch of one or more enslaved workers:</p>          <p>Comments on lives of slave workers:</p>
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<p>Country: _____</p> <p>Sketch of one or more enslaved workers:</p>          <p>Comments on lives of slave workers:</p>	<p>Country: _____</p> <p>Sketch of one or more enslaved workers:</p>          <p>Comments on lives of slave workers:</p>
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