

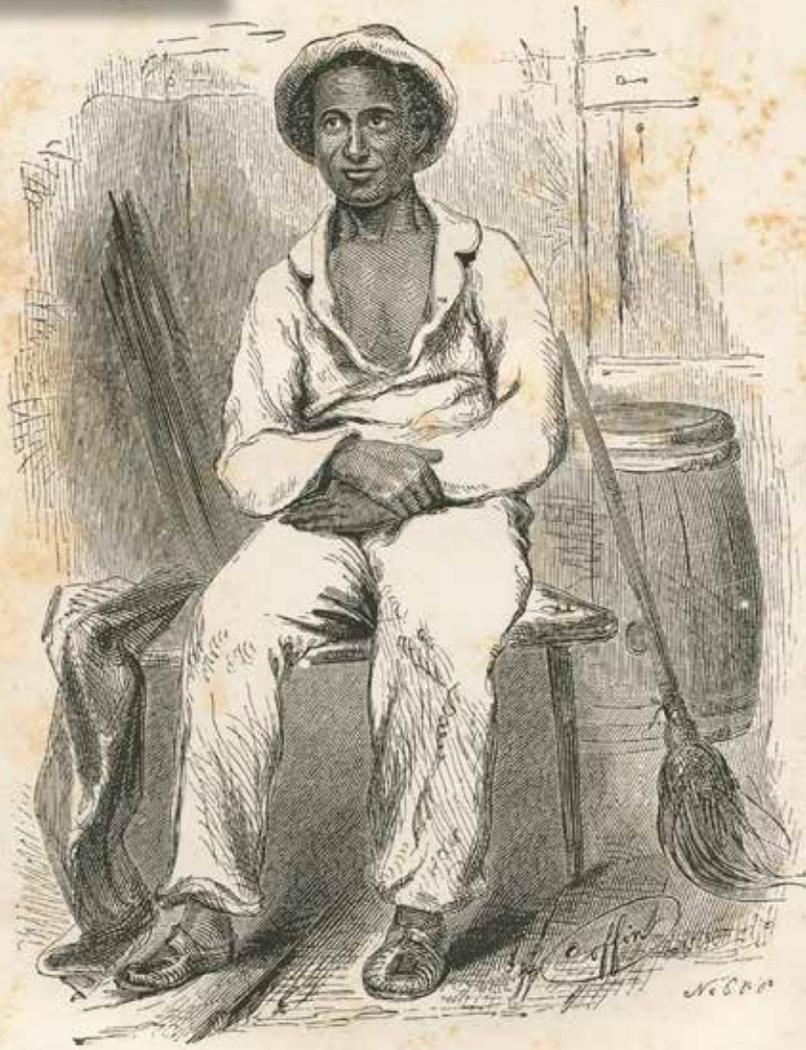


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PURCHASED LIVES:

SOLOMON NORTHUP'S EFFORTS TO PROVE HIS FREEDOM



SOLOMON IN HIS PLANTATION SUIT.

Solomon Northup

Teacher's guide: grade levels 7–9

Number of lesson plans: 5

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Purchased Lives: Solomon Northup's Efforts to Prove His Freedom



Metadata

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What's Inside:

Lesson One....p. 4 Lesson Two....p. 9 Lesson Three....p. 21 Lesson Four....p. 28 Lesson Five....p. 32

Common Core standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.2: Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2.F: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9: Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

The Historic New Orleans Collection, 533 Royal Street, New Orleans, LA 70130-2179

Contact: Daphne L. Derven, curator of education, (504) 598-7154, daphned@hnoc.org

Cover: "Solomon in his Plantation Suit," frontispiece to *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup; London: Miller, Orton, and Mulligan, 1854 (first British edition); *The Historic New Orleans Collection, 72-87-L.8*

CASH FOR 400 NEGROES, including both sexes, from twelve to twenty-five years of age. Persons having servants to dispose of will find it to their interest to give me a call, as I will give higher prices, in cash, than any other purchaser who is now in this market.

I can at all times be found at the **MECHANICS' HALL**, now kept by B. O. Sheckle, and formerly kept by Isaac Beers, on Seventh street, a few doors below Lloyd's Tavern, opposite the Centre market. All communications promptly attended to.

JAMES H. BIRCH,
Washington City.

feb 29— dtf

Advertisement offering "Cash for 400 Negroes" placed by James J. Birch, Washington City, from the Daily Intelligencer (Washington City, DC); June 11, 1836; *The Historic New Orleans Collection*, 79-95-L.13

Overview

Over the course of five lessons, students will analyze both primary and secondary source documents to gain an appreciation and understanding of Solomon Northup's kidnapping and then his relentless efforts to regain his freedom. Much of the content consists of excerpts from Northup's autobiography, *Twelve Years a Slave*, one of the more acclaimed slave narratives in the nation.

Students will be asked to closely analyze sources with the goal of mastering content and inferring more subtle messages. Graphic organizers, class discussion, and several writing activities will promote student understanding.

Essential Questions

Why and how was Solomon Northup's quest for freedom unique during this time period? To what extent was Northup required to go "beyond the law" to regain his freedom?

Lesson One

Objective

Students will read a secondary source text that describes Solomon Northup's life to gain a better understanding of his loss of and then search for freedom. Students also will read an excerpt from chapter 3 of *Twelve Years a Slave* that describes Northup's experience in the slave pen in Washington, DC. Students will create a timeline of the key events in his life and then analyze critical events that impacted his freedom.

Materials

- A Brief Biography of Solomon Northup
- Excerpt, *Twelve Years a Slave*
- Graphic organizer: "Timeline and Key Events in Solomon Northup's Life."

Procedures

Have the students work as partners or in small groups of no more than three members.

1. Distribute "A Brief Biography of Solomon Northup."
2. The teacher should ask students to read the narrative silently and then lead a class discussion to be sure students have a clear understanding of the key events of Northup's life.
3. Distribute the excerpt from *Twelve Years a Slave*.
4. Share read with the students, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Ask the students to join in with the reading after a few sentences, and continue reading.
5. Distribute the graphic organizer "Timeline and Key Events in Northup's Life."
6. Lead the students in completing the first event on the timeline and the first critical analysis question. Make sure the students use and cite evidence from the text.
7. Working in small groups, students should complete the timeline and answer the rest of the critical analysis questions.
8. Lead the whole class in a discussion of the issues addressed by the questions and the various interpretations presented by the student groups.

[Handout](#) [Share Read](#)

A Brief Biography of Solomon Northup

Solomon Northup was born July 1808 in Minerva, New York, the son of a freed slave and a free woman of color. Northup grew up working with his father on a farm and enjoyed reading and playing the violin. He married Anne Hampton, who was multiracial, on Christmas Day in 1829. In 1832 he and his wife established a farm in Kingsbury, and he developed quite a reputation as an excellent fiddler in the community. His wife's cooking skills brought in extra income, and in 1834 they moved to Saratoga Springs, where Solomon made a living working for boarding houses and hotels, constructing a railroad, and playing the violin. The couple had three children.

When Solomon Northup was seeking better employment in 1841, he met two men who claimed to be affiliated with a circus. They expressed an interest in his violin talent and convinced him to travel with them to Washington, DC, to be considered for a more lucrative job. The men drugged him, kidnapped him, and sold him to a slave trader named James Birch.

Birch renamed Northup "Platt Hamilton" and created a fictitious backstory for Platt before shipping him south via the brig *Orleans* to his partner Theophilus Freeman, in New Orleans. One of his fellow passengers was Eliza, a slave with two young children. Later in a New Orleans slave market, Solomon witnessed her inconsolable grief when her son was sold. A planter named William Ford later purchased several slaves from the pen, including Northup and Eliza, who begged Ford to buy her young daughter as well, but Freeman refused to sell her. Ford paid \$1,000 for the talented Northup; in 1843 he was sold for \$1,500 to Edwin Epps in Bayou Beouf. Northup spent twelve years illegally enslaved on central Louisiana sugar and cotton plantations, serving as the slave driver most of those years. As a slave driver, Northup's chief responsibility was to get the maximum productivity from the slaves, many times whipping them harshly to get the desired work completed. Yet there were times that Northup risked losing his favored status as a slave driver when he faked or—at times—refused to whip other slaves.

Through Canadian Samuel Bass, an antislavery carpenter who visited Epps's plantation, Northup got word to friends in New York who helped verify that he had been a free member of the Saratoga Springs community. Governor Washington Hunt helped him regain his freedom, and lawyer Henry Northup, a relative of the family that had owned Solomon's father, traveled south and helped gain Solomon's release in January 1853. He is believed to have died in 1863.

Northup's autobiography, *Twelve Years a Slave*, was published in 1853, just one year after Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and sold more than thirty thousand copies in three years. The narrative, which is substantiated by the historical record, provides an exceptional window on the world of the slave trade and illuminates the efforts of one man to navigate his way back to freedom.

In 2013 a major motion picture, *Twelve Years a Slave*, was made based on his autobiography.

Handout Share Read

Twelve Years a Slave (excerpt, chapter 3)

by Solomon Northup
originally published 1853

The building to which the yard was attached, was two stories high, fronting on one of the public streets of Washington. Its outside presented only the appearance of a quiet private residence. A stranger looking at it, would never have dreamed of its execrable uses. Strange as it may seem, within plain sight of this same house, looking down from its commanding height upon it, was the Capitol. The voices of patriotic representatives boasting of freedom and equality, and the rattling of the poor slave's chains, almost commingled. A slave pen within the very shadow of the Capitol!

Such is a correct description as it was in 1841, of Williams' slave pen in Washington, in one of the cellars of which I found myself so unaccountably confined.

"Well, my boy, how do you feel now?" said Burch, as he entered through the open door. I replied that I was sick, and inquired the cause of my imprisonment. He answered that I was his slave—that he had bought me, and that he was about to send me to New-Orleans. I asserted, aloud and boldly, that I was a free man—a resident of Saratoga, where I had a wife and children, who were also free, and that my name was Northup. I complained bitterly of the strange treatment I had received, and threatened, upon my liberation, to have satisfaction for the wrong. He denied that I was free, and with an emphatic oath, declared that I came from Georgia. Again and again I asserted I was no man's slave, and insisted upon his taking off my chains at once. He endeavored to hush me, as if he feared my voice would be overheard. But I would not be silent, and denounced the authors of my imprisonment, whoever they might be, as unmitigated villains. Finding he could not quiet me, he flew into a towering passion. With blasphemous oaths, he called me a black liar, a runaway from Georgia, and every other profane and vulgar epithet that the most indecent fancy could conceive.

During this time Radburn was standing silently by. His business was, to oversee this human, or rather inhuman stable, receiving slaves, feeding and whipping them, at the rate of two shillings a head per day. Turning to him, Burch ordered the paddle and cat-o'-ninetails to be brought in. He disappeared, and in a few moments returned with these instruments of torture. The paddle, as it is termed in slave-beating parlance, or at least the one with which I first became acquainted, and of which I now speak, was a piece of hard-wood board, eighteen or twenty inches long, moulded to the shape of an old-fashioned pudding stick, or ordinary oar. The flattened portion, which was about the size in circumference of two open hands, was bored with a small auger in numerous places. The cat was a large rope of many strands—the strands unraveled, and a knot tied at the extremity of each.

As soon as these formidable whips appeared, I was seized by both of them, and roughly divested of my clothing. My feet, as has been stated, were fastened to the floor. Drawing me over the bench, face downwards, Radburn placed his heavy foot upon the fetters, between my wrists, holding them painfully to the floor. With the paddle, Burch commenced beating me. Blow after blow was inflicted upon my naked body. When his unrelenting arm grew tired, he stopped and asked if I still insisted I was a free man. I did insist upon it, and then the blows were renewed, faster and more energetically, if possible, than before. When again tired, he would repeat the same question, and receiving the same answer, continued his cruel labor. All this time, the incarnate devil was uttering most fiendish oaths. At length the paddle broke, leaving the useless handle in his hand. Still I would not yield. All his brutal blows could not force from my lips the foul lie that I was a slave. Casting madly on the floor the handle of the broken paddle, he seized the rope. This was far more painful than the other. I struggled with all my power, but it was in vain. I prayed for mercy, but my prayer was only answered with imprecations and with stripes. I thought I must die beneath the lashes of the accursed brute. Even now the flesh crawls upon my bones, as I recall the scene. I was all on fire. My sufferings I can compare to nothing else than the burning agonies of hell!

At last I became silent to his repeated questions. I would make no reply. In fact, I was becoming almost unable to speak. Still he plied the lash without stint upon my poor body, until it seemed that the lacerated flesh was stripped from my bones at every stroke. A man with a particle of mercy in his soul would not have beaten even a dog so cruelly. At length Radburn said that it was useless to whip me any more—that I would be sore enough. Thereupon, Burch desisted, saying, with an admonitory shake of his fist in my face, and hissing the words through his firm-set teeth, that if ever I dared to utter again that I was entitled to my freedom, that I had been kidnapped, or any thing whatever of the kind, the castigation I had just received was nothing in comparison with what would follow. He swore that he would either conquer or kill me. With these consolatory words, the fetters were taken from my wrists, my feet still remaining fastened to the ring; the shutter of the little barred window, which had been opened, was again closed, and going out, locking the great door behind them, I was left in darkness as before.

Graphic Organizer

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS IN SOLOMON NORTHUP'S LIFE

Name _____

Date _____

1. Timeline of key events in Solomon Northup's life. Note key event beside date.

1808 _____

1829 _____

1834 _____

1841 _____

1843 _____

1853 _____

1863 _____

2. What attracted Northup to the men who took him to Washington, DC, and vice versa?

3. Who had the “burden of proof” in order for Solomon Northup to be set free?

4. In the excerpt, how did Burch justify his argument that Northup was not free?

5. What was Northup’s response to Burch?

6. Describe the brutality of the pen and the whipping:

7. To what did Northup compare the suffering?

8. What did Burch say would happen if Northup claimed again that he was free?

Lesson Two

Objective

Students will read excerpts from the book *Twelve Years a Slave* and understand Solomon Northup's unusual battle to be free and the challenges he faced as he sought to regain his freedom.

Materials

Excerpts from *Twelve Years a Slave*

Graphic organizer: *Twelve Years a Slave*

Procedures

Have the students work as partners or in small groups of no more than three members.

1. Distribute the excerpts from *Twelve Years a Slave*.
2. Share read with the students, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Ask the students to join in with the reading after a few sentences, and continue reading.
3. Distribute the graphic organizer.
4. Lead students in analyzing the first excerpt, and then have them complete the exercises for the other excerpts within their small groups.
5. Once the small groups have completed all five excerpts, lead a class discussion on the sequential steps taken to help Solomon Northup regain his freedom. Be sure students understand the injustice of Northup's having to prove that he deserved to be free.
6. Have each student write a brief op-editorial that argues how just or unjust the struggle was. Be sure students provide ample evidences from the excerpts to defend their arguments.

[Handout](#) [Share Read](#)

Twelve Years a Slave (excerpts)

by Solomon Northup
originally published 1853

(A meditation on slavery, chapter 14)

There may be humane masters, as there certainly are inhuman ones—there may be slaves well-clothed, well-fed, and happy as there surely are those half-clad, half-starved and miserable; nevertheless, the institution that tolerates such wrong and inhumanity as I have witnessed, is a cruel, unjust, and barbarous one. Men may write fictions portraying lowly life as it is, or as it is not—may expatiate with owl's gravity upon the bliss of ignorance—discourse flippantly from arm chairs of the pleasures of slave life; but let them toil with him in the field—sleep with him in the cabin—feed with him on husks; let them behold him scourged, hunted, trampled on, and they will come back with another story in their mouths. Let them know the *heart* of the poor slave—learn his secret thoughts—thoughts he dare not utter in the hearing of the white man; let them sit by him in the silent watches of the night—converse with him in trustful confidence, of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” and they will find that ninety-nine out of every hundred are intelligent enough to understand their situation, and to cherish in their bosoms the love of freedom, as passionately as themselves.

(A letter from Louisiana to New York, chapter 19)

Bayou Boeuf, August 15, 1852

Mr. William Perry or Mr. Cephas Parker:

Gentlemen—It having been a long time since I have seen or heard from you, and not knowing that you are living, it is with uncertainty that I write to you, but the necessity of the case must be my excuse.

Having been born free, just across the river from you, I am certain you must know me, and I am here now a slave. I wish you to obtain free papers for me, and forward them to me at Marksville, Louisiana, Parish of Avoyelles, and oblige

Yours, Solomon Northup

The way I came to be a slave, I was taken sick in Washington City, and was insensible for some time. When I recovered my reason, I was robbed of my free-papers, and in irons on my way to this State, and have never been able to get any one to write for me until now; and he that is writing for me runs the risk of his life if detected.

(A conversation about events in New York, chapter 21)

Messrs. Parker and Perry, on receipt of the letter, forwarded it immediately to Anne. On reading it the children were all excitement, and without delay hastened to the neighboring village of Sandy Hill, to consult Henry B. Northup, and obtain his advice and assistance in the matter.

Upon examination, that gentleman found among the statutes of the State an act providing for the recovery of free citizens from slavery. It was passed May 14, 1840, and is entitled "An act more effectually to protect the free citizens of this State from being kidnapped or reduced to slavery." It provides that it shall be the duty of the Governor, upon the receipt of satisfactory information that any free citizen or inhabitant of this State, is wrongfully held in another State or Territory of the United States, upon the allegation or pretence that such person is a slave, or by color of any usage or rule of law is deemed or taken to be a slave, to take such measures to procure the restoration of such person to liberty, as he shall deem necessary. And to that end, he is authorized to appoint and employ an agent, and directed to furnish him with such credentials and instructions as will be likely to accomplish the object of his appointment. It requires the agent so appointed to proceed to collect the proper proof to establish the right of such person to his freedom; to perform such journeys, take such measures, institute such legal proceedings, &c., as may be necessary to return such person to this State, and charges all expenses incurred in carrying the act into effect, upon moneys not otherwise appropriated in the treasury.

It was necessary to establish two facts to the satisfaction of the Governor: First, that I was a free citizen of New-York; and secondly, that I was wrongfully held in bondage. As to the first point, there was no difficulty, all the older inhabitants in the vicinity being ready to testify to it. The second point rested entirely upon the letter to Parker and Perry, written in an unknown hand, and upon the letter penned on board the brig Orleans, which, unfortunately, had been mislaid or lost.

A memorial was prepared, directed to his excellency, Governor Hunt, setting forth her marriage, my departure to Washington city; the receipt of the letters; that I was a free citizen, and such other facts as were deemed important, and was signed and verified by Anne. Accompanying this memorial were several affidavits of prominent citizens of Sandy Hill and Fort Edward, corroborating fully the statements it contained, and also a request of several well known gentlemen to the Governor, that Henry B. Northup be appointed agent under the legislative act.

On reading the memorial and affidavits, his excellency took a lively interest in the matter, and on the 23d day of November, 1852, under the seal of the State, "constituted, appointed, and employed Henry B. Northup, Esq., an agent, with full power to effect" my restoration, and to take such measures as would be most likely to accomplish it, and instructing him to proceed to Louisiana with all convenient dispatch.

(On Epps's plantation in Louisiana, chapter 21)

Walking up to Bob, the sheriff inquired:

"Where's the boy they call Platt?"

"Thar he is, massa," answered Bob, pointing to me, and twitching off his hat.

I wondered to myself what business he could possibly have with me, and turning round, gazed at him until he had approached within a step. During my long residence on the bayou, I had become familiar with the face of every planter within many miles; but this man was an utter stranger—certainly I had never seen him before.

"Your name is Platt, is it?" he asked.

"Yes, master," I responded.

Pointing towards Northup, standing a few rods distant, he demanded—"Do you know that man?"

I looked in the direction indicated, and as my eyes rested on his countenance, a world of images thronged my brain; a multitude of well-known faces—Anne's and the dear children's, and my old dead father's; all the scenes and associations of my childhood and youth; all the friends of other and happier days, appeared and disappeared, flitting and floating like dissolving shadows before the vision of my imagination, until at last the perfect memory of the man recurred to me, and throwing up my hands towards Heaven, I exclaimed in a voice louder than I could utter in a less exciting moment—

"Henry B. Northup! Thank God—Thank God!"

In an instant I comprehended the nature of his business, and felt that the hour of my deliverance was at hand. I started towards him, but the sheriff stepped before me.

"Stop a moment," said he; "have you any other name than Platt?"

"Solomon Northup is my name, Master," I replied.

"Have you a family?" he inquired.

"I *had* a wife and three children."

"What were your children's names?"

"Elizabeth, Margaret, and Alonzo."

"And your wife's name before her marriage?"

"Anne Hampton."

"Who married you?"

"Timothy Eddy, of Fort Edward."

"Where does that gentleman live?" again pointing to Northup, who remained standing in the same place where I had first recognized him.

"He lives in Sandy Hill, Washington county, New York," was the reply.

He was proceeding to ask further questions, but I pushed past him, unable longer to restrain myself. I seized my old acquaintance by both hands. I could not speak. I could not refrain from tears.

"Sol," he said at length, "I'm glad to see you."

I essayed to make some answer, but emotion choked all utterance, and I was silent. The slaves, utterly confounded, stood gazing upon the scene, their open mouths and rolling eyes indicating the utmost wonder and astonishment. For ten years I had dwelt among them, in the field and in the cabin, borne the same hardships, partaken the same fare, mingled my griefs with theirs, participated in the same scanty joys; nevertheless, not until this hour, the last I was to remain among them, had the remotest suspicion of my true name, or the slightest knowledge of my real history, been entertained by any one of them.

Not a word was spoken for several minutes, during which time I clung fast to Northup, looking up into his face, fearful I should awake and find it all a dream.

"Throw down that sack," Northup added, finally, "your cotton-picking days are over. Come with us to the man you live with."

(In Marksville, Louisiana, chapter 21)

Tuesday, the fourth of January, Epps and his counsel, the Hon. E. Taylor, Northup, Waddill, the Judge and sheriff of Avoyelles, and myself, met in a room in the village of Marksville. Mr. Northup stated the facts in regard to me, and presented his commission, and the affidavits accompanying it. The sheriff described the scene in the cotton field. I was also interrogated at great length. Finally, Mr. Taylor assured his client that he was satisfied, and that that litigation would not only be expensive, but utterly useless. In accordance with his advice, a paper was drawn up and signed by the proper parties, wherein Epps acknowledged he was satisfied of my right to freedom, and formally surrendered me to the authorities of New-York. It was also stipulated that it be entered of record in the recorder's office of Avoyelles.

Mr. Northup and myself immediately hastened to the landing, and taking passage on the first steamer that arrived, were soon floating down Red River, up which, with such desponding thoughts, I had been borne twelve years before.

Graphic Organizer***Twelve Years a Slave*****EXCERPT 1**

There may be humane masters, as there certainly are inhuman ones—there may be slaves well-clothed, well-fed, and happy as there surely are those half-clad, half-starved and miserable; nevertheless, the institution that tolerates such wrong and inhumanity as I have witnessed, is a cruel, unjust, and barbarous one. Men may write fictions portraying lowly life as it is, or as it is not—may expatiate with owlsh gravity upon the bliss of ignorance—discourse flippantly from arm chairs of the pleasures of slave life; but let them toil with him in the field—sleep with him in the cabin—feed with him on husks; let them behold him scourged, hunted, trampled on, and they will come back with another story in their mouths. Let them know the *heart* of the poor slave—learn his secret thoughts—thoughts he dare not utter in the hearing of the white man; let them sit by him in the silent watches of the night—converse with him in trustful confidence, of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” and they will find that ninety-nine out of every hundred are intelligent enough to understand their situation, and to cherish in their bosoms the love of freedom, as passionately as themselves.

Key words: _____

Author's words summary: _____

In your own words: _____

Impact of the events on Northup's fight to regain his freedom: _____

How did Northup refute a typical slaveholder's argument of the time: that slaves were better off than free people of color?

EXCERPT 2

Bayou Boeuf, August 15, 1852

Mr. William Perry or Mr. Cephas Parker:

Gentlemen—It having been a long time since I have seen or heard from you, and not knowing that you are living, it is with uncertainty that I write to you, but the necessity of the case must be my excuse.

Having been born free, just across the river from you, I am certain you must know me, and I am here now a slave. I wish you to obtain free papers for me, and forward them to me at Marksville, Louisiana, Parish of Avoyelles, and oblige

Yours, Solomon Northup

The way I came to be a slave, I was taken sick in Washington City, and was insensible for some time. When I recovered my reason, I was robbed of my free-papers, and in irons on my way to this State, and have never been able to get any one to write for me until now; and he that is writing for me runs the risk of his life if detected.

Key words: _____

Author's words summary: _____

In your own words: _____

Impact of the events on Northup's fight to regain his freedom: _____

EXCERPT 3

Messrs. Parker and Perry, on receipt of the letter, forwarded it immediately to Anne. On reading it the children were all excitement, and without delay hastened to the neighboring village of Sandy Hill, to consult Henry B. Northup, and obtain his advice and assistance in the matter.

Upon examination, that gentleman found among the statutes of the State an act providing for the recovery of free citizens from slavery. It was passed May 14, 1840, and is entitled "An act more effectually to protect the free citizens of this State from being kidnapped or reduced to slavery." It provides that it shall be the duty of the Governor, upon the receipt of satisfactory information that any free citizen or inhabitant of this State, is wrongfully held in another State or Territory of the United States, upon the allegation or pretence that such person is a slave, or by color of any usage or rule of law is deemed or taken to be a slave, to take such measures to procure the restoration of such person to liberty, as he shall deem necessary. And to that end, he is authorized to appoint and employ an agent, and directed to furnish him with such credentials and instructions as will be likely to accomplish the object of his appointment. It requires the agent so appointed to proceed to collect the proper proof to establish the right of such person to his freedom; to perform such journeys, take such measures, institute such legal proceedings, &c., as may be necessary to return such person to this State, and charges all expenses incurred in carrying the act into effect, upon moneys not otherwise appropriated in the treasury.

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A memorial was prepared, directed to his excellency, Governor Hunt, setting forth her marriage, my departure to Washington city; the receipt of the letters; that I was a free citizen, and such other facts as were deemed important, and was signed and verified by Anne. Accompanying this memorial were several affidavits of prominent citizens of Sandy Hill and Fort Edward, corroborating fully the statements it contained, and also a request of several well known gentlemen to the Governor, that Henry B. Northup be appointed agent under the legislative act.

On reading the memorial and affidavits, his excellency took a lively interest in the matter, and on the 23d day of November, 1852, under the seal of the State, "constituted, appointed, and employed Henry B. Northup, Esq., an agent, with full power to effect" my restoration, and to take such measures as would be most likely to accomplish it, and instructing him to proceed to Louisiana with all convenient dispatch.

Key words: _____

Author's words summary: _____

In your own words: _____

Impact of the events on Northup's fight to regain his freedom: _____

EXCERPT 4

Walking up to Bob, the sheriff inquired:

“Where’s the boy they call Platt?”

“Thar he is, massa,” answered Bob, pointing to me, and twitching off his hat.

I wondered to myself what business he could possibly have with me, and turning round, gazed at him until he had approached within a step. During my long residence on the bayou, I had become familiar with the face of every planter within many miles; but this man was an utter stranger—certainly I had never seen him before.

“Your name is Platt, is it?” he asked.

“Yes, master,” I responded.

Pointing towards Northup, standing a few rods distant, he demanded—“Do you know that man?”

I looked in the direction indicated, and as my eyes rested on his countenance, a world of images thronged my brain; a multitude of well-known faces—Anne’s and the dear children’s, and my old dead father’s; all the scenes and associations of my childhood and youth; all the friends of other and happier days, appeared and disappeared, flitting and floating like dissolving shadows before the vision of my imagination, until at last the perfect memory of the man recurred to me, and throwing up my hands towards Heaven, I exclaimed in a voice louder than I could utter in a less exciting moment—

“*Henry B. Northup!* Thank God—Thank God!”

In an instant I comprehended the nature of his business, and felt that the hour of my deliverance was at hand. I started towards him, but the sheriff stepped before me.

“Stop a moment,” said he; “have you any other name than Platt?”

“Solomon Northup is my name, Master,” I replied.

“Have you a family?” he inquired.

“I *had* a wife and three children.”

“What were your children’s names?”

“Elizabeth, Margaret, and Alonzo.”

“And your wife’s name before her marriage?”

“Anne Hampton.”

“Who married you?”

“Timothy Eddy, of Fort Edward.”

“Where does that gentleman live?” again pointing to Northup, who remained standing in the same place where I had first recognized him.

“He lives in Sandy Hill, Washington county, New York,” was the reply.

He was proceeding to ask further questions, but I pushed past him, unable longer to restrain myself. I seized my old acquaintance by both hands. I could not speak. I could not refrain from tears.

“Sol,” he said at length, “I’m glad to see you.”

I essayed to make some answer, but emotion choked all utterance, and I was silent. The slaves, utterly confounded, stood gazing upon the scene, their open mouths and rolling eyes indicating the utmost wonder and astonishment. For ten years I had dwelt among them, in the field and in the cabin, borne the same hardships, partaken the same fare, mingled my griefs with theirs, participated in the same scanty joys; nevertheless, not until this hour, the last I was to remain among them, had the remotest suspicion of my true name, or the slightest knowledge of my real history, been entertained by any one of them.

Not a word was spoken for several minutes, during which time I clung fast to Northup, looking up into his face, fearful I should awake and find it all a dream.

“Throw down that sack,” Northup added, finally, “your cotton-picking days are over. Come with us to the man you live with.”

Key words: _____

Author's words summary: _____

In your own words: _____

Impact of the events on Northup's fight to regain his freedom: _____

EXCERPT 5

Tuesday, the fourth of January, Epps and his counsel, the Hon. E. Taylor, Northup, Waddill, the Judge and sheriff of Avoyelles, and myself, met in a room in the village of Marksville. Mr. Northup stated the facts in regard to me, and presented his commission, and the affidavits accompanying it. The sheriff described the scene in the cotton field. I was also interrogated at great length. Finally, Mr. Taylor assured his client that he was satisfied, and that that litigation would not only be expensive, but utterly useless. In accordance with his advice, a paper was drawn up and signed by the proper parties, wherein Epps acknowledged he was satisfied of my right to freedom, and formally surrendered me to the authorities of New-York. It was also stipulated that it be entered of record in the recorder's office of Avoyelles.

Mr. Northup and myself immediately hastened to the landing, and taking passage on the first steamer that arrived, were soon floating down Red River, up which, with such desponding thoughts, I had been borne twelve years before.

Key words: _____

Author's words summary: _____

In your own words: _____

Impact of the events on Northup's fight to regain his freedom: _____

Lesson Three

Objective

Students will read a secondary source and then read excerpts from the diary of John Pamplin Waddill and state statutes regarding the status of kidnapped slaves. These documents will support their learning as they explore the gap between the laws and Solomon Northup's twelve years of enslavement.

Materials

Excerpt from Meredith Melancon, "Avoyelles Parish Courthouse, Marksville"

Excerpts from Waddill Diary, 1853

"An Act More Effectively to Protect the Free Citizens...", May 14, 1840

A letter from the governor of New York, November 1852

A statement from Avoyelles Parish, Louisiana, January 4, 1853

Graphic organizer: "Steps to Freedom for Solomon Northup"

Additional materials from Lesson Two

Procedures

Have the students work as partners or in small groups of no more than three members.

1. Distribute the "Avoyelles Parish Courthouse, Marksville" handout. Students will use this information in the role-play activity.
2. Share read the opening summary with the students, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Ask the students to join in with the reading after a few sentences, and continue reading.
3. Distribute the graphic organizer "Steps to Freedom for Solomon Northup." Students may need to review their materials from Lesson Two.
4. Students will work in small groups to complete the graphic organizer and report their answers in a teacher-led discussion on the sequential steps taken to help Solomon Northup regain his freedom. Be sure students understand the injustice of Northup's having to prove that he deserved to be free.
5. Either in subgroups or as a class, assign groups of students the following roles: Epps (Solomon Northup's owner), Henry Northup, and judge. Let both sides argue their points. Then, as a class, reflect on the injustice of having to prove one's freedom and the many challenges Solomon Northup faced.
6. Have students write an argumentative paragraph that answers the following question: "Explain, citing evidence from the sources, the relationship among the dates of the NY statute, the kidnapping, and the ultimate freedom of Solomon Northup."

[Handout](#) [Share Read](#)

“Avoyelles Parish Courthouse, Marksville” (excerpt)

by Meredith Melancon

Acadiana Historical, <http://acadianahistorical.org/items/show/65>

Before the Civil War, states across the north began passing personal liberty laws to protect their free black citizens from kidnapers. New York was one of those states.* ... Lawyer Henry B. Northup, whose family had owned and later freed Northup's father, was approached by Northup's wife, Anne, with the letter Bass mailed to store owners Cephas Parker and William Perry. Because of the 1840 anti-kidnapping law, the state of New York provided the authority and funds to appoint Northup as the agent in the case of Solomon Northup. He was given a document signed by the governor certifying Solomon's free status as a citizen of the state of New York. Once in Marksville, Henry B. Northup employed John P. Waddill to secure Solomon Northup's freedom. Judge Ralph Cushman issued the order granting Northup's freedom. The documents concerning the legal proceedings freeing Northup are still filed at the Avoyelles Parish Courthouse in Marksville.

*The state laws are not to be confused with the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. One provision of this federal law established that testimony from an “alleged fugitive” could not be admitted as evidence in court.

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John Pamplin Waddill diary, 1853 (excerpts)

The Historic New Orleans Collection, courtesy of Liz Brazelton

Marksville La January 1853

1853 Jan 1st To day I was employed by Henry B Northup, Esq. Of Sandy Hill, Washington County state of New York, to bring suit against Edwin Epps, to reclaim from slavery a free negro named Solomon Northup, who had been kidnapped in the City of Washington in 1841

Jan 4 To day the slave Solomon was released. & I received fifty dollars for my services.

44

Natcheville La January 1853 *

1853
 Jan^y 1st To day I was employed by Henry B Northup Esq of Sandy Hill, Washington County State of New York, to bring suit against Edw^d Epps to reclaim from Edw^d a free negro named Solomon Northup who had been kidnapped in the City of Washington in 1841

Jan^y 11 To day the slave Solomon was released. & I received fifty dollars for my services Paid Louis Luyofft fifty dollars.

Jan^y 11 To day I engaged to defend Antons Murrell in a Criminal action against him for Burgary. Fee fifty dollars

Jan^y 12 To day I received from the estate of J^d B^liller for the succession of W^m Bishop forty five dollars and fifty five cents.

" 12 Rec^d from J. P. Whitborn the note of the estate of Bishop on which the above payment was made

Jan^y 13 To day I paid to J^d Lewis on the Judgment against C. D. Brashear, represented in part by the note of W^m Bishop \$225 thirty dollars - the same to be credited on said Bishop's note.

Journal of John Pamplin Waddill, Louisiana lawyer hired to free Solomon Northup; January 1853; courtesy of Liz Brazelton

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***An act more effectually to protect the free citizens of this State
[New York] from being kidnapped, or reduced to Slavery.
[Passed May 14, 1840]***

included as Appendix A in *Twelve Years a Slave*

by Solomon Northup; edited by Sue Eakin and Joseph Logsdon;
Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968

The people of the State of New-York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1. Whenever the Governor of this State shall receive information satisfactory to him that any free citizen or any inhabitant of this State has been kidnapped or transported away out of this State, into any other State or Territory of the United States, for the purpose of being there held in slavery; or that such free citizen or inhabitant is wrongfully seized; imprisoned or held in slavery in any of the States or Territories of the United States, on the allegation or pretence that such a person is a slave, or by color of any usages or rule of law prevailing in such State or Territory, is deemed or taken to be a slave, or not entitled of right to the personal liberty belonging to a citizen; it shall be the duty of the said Governor to take such measures as he shall deem necessary to procure such person to be restored to his liberty and returned to this State. The Governor is hereby authorized to appoint and employ such agent or agents as he shall deem necessary to effect the restoration and return of such person; and shall furnish the said agent with such credentials and instructions as will be likely to accomplish the object of his appointment. The Governor may determine the compensation to be allowed to such agent for his services besides his necessary expenses.
2. Such agent shall proceed to collect the proper proof to establish the rights of such person to his freedom, and shall perform such journeys, take such measures, institute and procure to be prosecuted such legal proceedings, under the direction of the Governor, as shall be necessary to procure such person to be restored to his liberty and returned to this State.
3. The accounts for all services and expenses incurred in carrying this act into effect shall be audited by the Comptroller, and paid by the Treasurer on his warrant, out of any moneys in the Treasury of this State not otherwise appropriated. The Treasurer may advance, on the Warrant of the Comptroller, to such agent, such sum or sums as the Governor shall certify to be reasonable advances to enable him to accomplish the purposes of his appointment, for which advance such agent shall account, on the final audit of his warrant.
4. This act shall take effect immediately.

Handout	Share Read
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A letter from the governor of New York

included in Appendix B in *Twelve Years a Slave*

by Solomon Northup; edited by Sue Eakin and Joseph Logsdon;
Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968

STATE OF NEW YORK:

Executive Chamber, Albany, Nov. 30, 1852.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a correct copy of certain proofs filed in the Executive Department, upon which I have appointed Henry B. Northup an Agent of this State, to take proper proceedings in behalf of Solomon, Northup, therein mentioned.

(Signed,) WASHINGTON HUNT.

By the Governor.
J. F. R. Private Secretary.

STATE OF NEW-YORK:

Executive Department.

WASHINGTON HUNT, Governor of the State of New-York, to whom it may concern, greeting:

Whereas, I have received information on oath, which is satisfactory to me, that Solomon Northup, who is a free citizen of this State, is wrongfully held in slavery, in the State of Louisiana:

And whereas, it is made my duty, by the laws of this State, to take such measures as I shall deem necessary to procure any citizen so wrongfully held in slavery, to be restored to his liberty and returned to this State:

Be it known, that in pursuance of chapter 375 of the laws of this State, passed in 1840, I have constituted, appointed and employed Henry B. Northup, Esquire, of the county of Washington, in this State, an Agent, with full power to effect the restoration of said Solomon Northup, and the said Agent is hereby authorized and empowered to institute such proper and legal proceedings, to procure such evidence, retain such counsel, and finally to take such measures as will be most likely to accomplish the object of his said appointment.

He is also instructed to proceed to the State of Louisiana with all convenient dispatch, to execute the agency hereby created.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name, and affixed the privy seal of the State, at Albany, this 23d day of November, in the year of our Lord, 1852.

(Signed), WASHINGTON HUNT.

JAMES F. RUGGLES, Private Secretary.

Handout	Share Read
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A statement from Avoyelles Parish, Louisiana

included as Appendix C in *Twelve Years a Slave*

by Solomon Northup; edited by Sue Eakin and Joseph Logsdon;
Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968

STATE OF LOUISIANA:

Parish of Avoyelles.

Before me, Aristide Barbin, Recorder of the parish of Avoyelles, personally came and appeared Henry B. Northup, of the county of Washington, State of New-York, who hath declared that by virtue of a commission to him as agent of the State of New-York, given and granted by his excellency, Washington Hunt, Governor of the said State of New-York, bearing date the 23d day of November, 1852, authorizing and empowering him, the said Northup, to pursue and recover from slavery a free man of color, called Solomon Northup, who is a free citizen of the State of New-York, and who was kidnapped and sold into slavery, in the State of Louisiana, and now in the possession of Edwin Epps, of the State of Louisiana, of the Parish of Avoyelles; he, the said agent, hereto signing, acknowledges that the said Edwin has this day given and surrendered to him as such agent, the said Solomon Northup, free man of color, as aforesaid, in order that he be restored to his freedom, and carried back to the said State of New-York, pursuant to said commission, the said Edwin Epps being satisfied from the proofs produced by said agent, that the said Solomon Northup is entitled to his freedom. The parties consenting that a certified copy of said power of attorney be annexed to this act.

Done and signed at Marksville, parish of Avoyelles, this fourth day of January, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-three, in the presence of the undersigned, legal and competent witnesses, who have also hereto signed.

(Signed), HENRY B. NORTHUP
 EDWIN EPPS
 ADE BARBIN, Recorder.

Witnesses:

H. Taylor
John P. Waddill.

STATE OF LOUISIANA:

Parish of Avoyelles.

I do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of the original on file and of record in my office.

Given under my hand and seal of office as Recorder in and for the parish of Avoyelles, this 4th day of January, A. D., 1853.

(Signed) ADE BARBIN, Recorder

Graphic Organizer

Steps to Freedom for Solomon Northup

Name _____

Date _____

1. What was the purpose of the liberty laws passed in the North?

2. What was Henry Northup's connection to Solomon Northup?

3. Why was Waddill a necessary member of the team?

4. Date of the New York statute:

5. Date of Northup's kidnapping:

6. Date of Northup's freedom:

7. Notes for role play:

Epps _____

H. Northup _____

Judge _____

Lesson Four

Objective

This lesson will expose students to primary sources that Solomon Northup quoted in his autobiography. They will examine a William Cowper poem, which appears as the epigraph to *Twelve Years a Slave*, and a slave song transcribed by Northup. A violinist, Northup was especially attuned to music. Music could offer enslaved individuals a temporary escape from the hardships of daily life and a means to help endure cruelty. Some of the fiddling by enslaved musicians included hints of the music that later would become known as jazz. In Northup's early years in New York, he often was hired to play "Africanized" Christian songs for parties hosted by white families. He later carved the names of his wife and children into his fiddle. Slaves sometimes used their music to send coded messages to other slaves.

Materials

Epigraph from *Twelve Years a Slave*

"Roaring River" from *Twelve Years a Slave*

Graphic organizer for poem

Graphic organizer for song

Procedures

Have the students work as partners or in small groups of no more than three members.

1. Distribute copies of the poem.
2. Share read, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Ask the students to join in with the reading after a few verses, and continue reading.
3. Distribute the graphic organizer for the poem and have students work in small groups to complete it.
4. Lead the class in a discussion of the meaning of the poem. Ask students why they think it serves as the introduction to the autobiography. Teachers may wish to share biographical information about William Cowper, an eighteenth-century British poet, with the class.
5. Distribute copies of the song.
6. Share read, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Ask the students to join in with the reading after a few lines, and continue reading. Have the students focus on the words to the song.
7. Distribute the graphic organizer for the song and have students work in small groups to complete it.
8. Lead the class in a discussion of the meaning of the song and why they think Solomon Northup featured it in the book.
9. Once students have a clear understanding of the poem and the song, lead them in a discussion in which they analyze these primary sources. What did the poem and song teach them about Northup?

Handout	Share Read
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Epigraph from *Twelve Years a Slave*

by William Cowper (1731–1800), excerpt from “The Task”

Such dupes are men to custom, and so prone
 To reverence what is ancient, and can plead
 A course of long observance for its use,
 That even servitude, the worst of ills,
 Because delivered down from sire to son,
 Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing.
 But is it fit or can it bear the shock
 Of rational discussion, that a man
 Compounded and made up, like other men,
 Of elements tumultuous, in whom lust
 And folly in as ample measure meet,
 As in the bosom of the slave he rules,
 Should be a despot absolute, and boast
 Himself the only freeman of his land?

—Cowper

“Roaring River” from *Twelve Years a Slave*

Harper’s creek and roarin’ ribber,
 Thar, my dear, we’ll live forebber;
 Den we’ll go to de Ingin nation,
 All I want in dis creation,
 Is pretty little wife and big plantation.

Chorus. Up dat oak and down dat ribber,
 Two overseers and one little nigger

Graphic Organizer

"EPIGRAPH FROM *TWELVE YEARS A SLAVE*"

Name _____

Date _____

Paraphrase each two lines:

Such dupes are men to custom, and so prone
To reverence what is ancient, and can plead

A course of long observance for its use,
That even servitude, the worst of ills,

Because delivered down from sire to son,
Is kept and guarded as a sacred thing.

But is it fit or can it bear the shock
Of rational discussion, that a man

Compounded and made up, like other men,
Of elements tumultuous, in whom lust

And folly in as ample measure meet,
As in the bosom of the slave he rules,

Should be a despot absolute, and boast
Himself the only freeman of his land?

Overall message of the poem:

Why do you think this poem was included in Solomon Northup's book?

Graphic Organizer

“ROARING RIVER”

Name _____

Date _____

Paraphrase each line:

Harper’s creek and roarin’ ribber,

Thar, my dear, we’ll live forebber;

Den we’ll go to de Ingin nation,

All I want in dis creation,

Is pretty little wife and big plantation.

Chorus. Up dat oak and down dat ribber,

Two overseers and one little nigger

Which aspects of slavery does the song reveal?

Overall message of song:

Why do you think this song was sung by Solomon and was important to him?

Lesson Five

Objective

Students will examine images from *Twelve Years a Slave* as well as other key art from the time period of Northup's enslavement to gain a deeper understanding of his life and the challenges he faced in regaining his freedom.

Materials

Three images from *Twelve Years a Slave*

“Sale of Estates”

Graphic organizer for images

Procedures

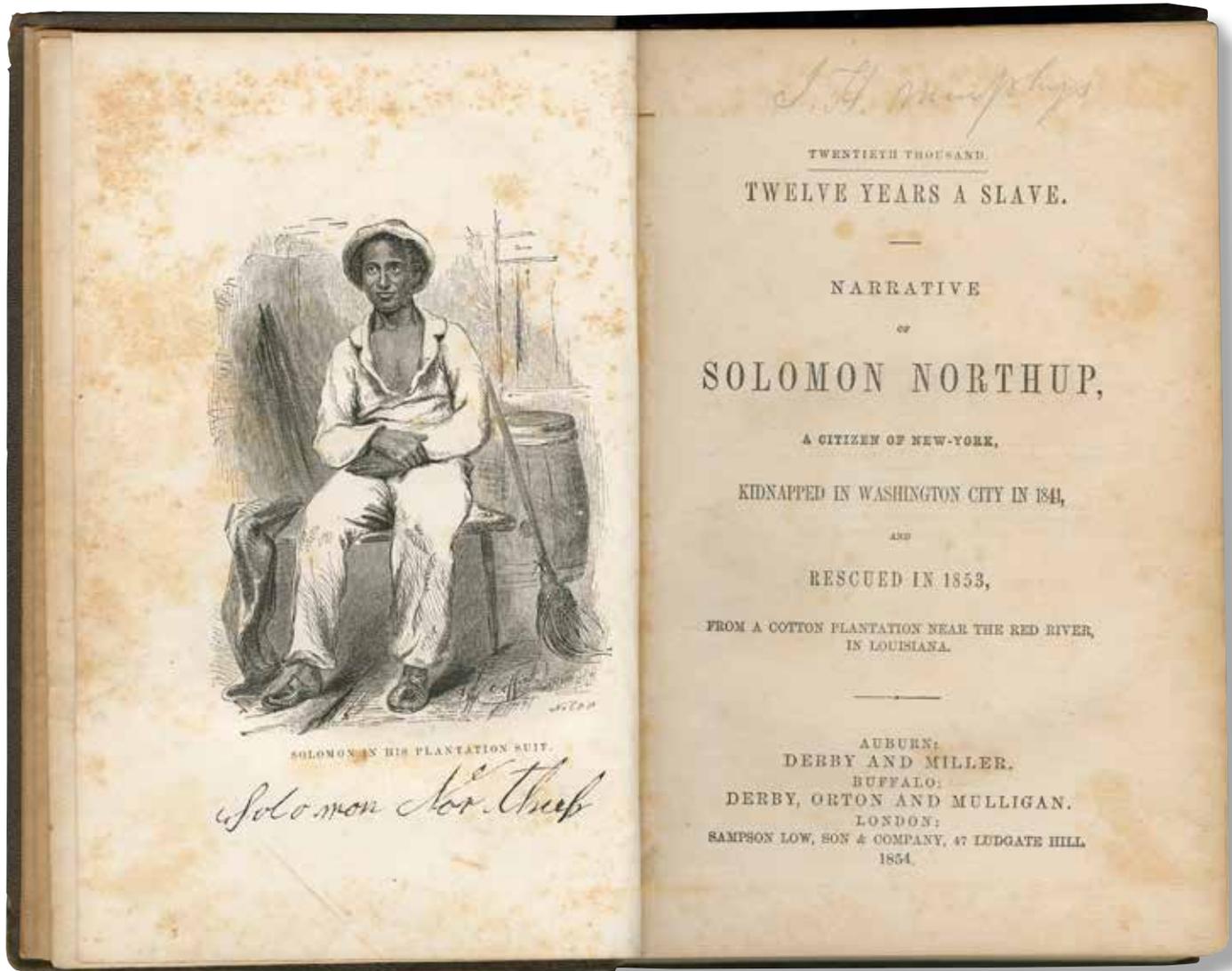
Have the students work as partners or in small groups of no more than three members.

1. Distribute the four images to students along with the graphic organizer for images.
2. Ask the students to discuss each of the pictures within their working groups, using the questions on the graphic organizer as prompts to be certain they explore each image in depth. Once the groups have completed their discussions, lead the whole class in an analysis of each image, encouraging them to think critically.
3. Each student should write an essay that thoroughly addresses one of the two essential questions (provided on page 4 of this lesson plan) while providing evidence to strongly support the essay's argument.

Handout Share Read



Sale of Estates, Pictures, and Slaves in the Rotunda, New Orleans, by William Henry Brooke, engraver; engraving with watercolor from *The Slave States of America*, vol. 1; London: Fisher and Son, 1842; *The Historic New Orleans Collection*, 1974.25.23.4



Above: “Solomon in his Plantation Suit,” frontispiece to *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup; London: Miller, Orton, and Mulligan, 1854 (first British edition); *The Historic New Orleans Collection*, 72-87-L.8

At right top: “Scene in the Slave Pen at Washington,” from *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup; London: Miller, Orton, and Mulligan, 1854 (first British edition); *The Historic New Orleans Collection*, 72-87-L.8

At right bottom: “Scene in the Cotton Field, Solomon Delivered Up,” from *Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup; London: Miller, Orton, and Mulligan, 1854 (first British edition); *The Historic New Orleans Collection*, 72-87-L.8



SCENE IN THE SLAVE PEN AT WASHINGTON.

stopped and asked if I still insisted I was a free man. I did insist upon it, and then the blows were renewed, faster and more energetically, if possible, than before. When again tired, he would repeat the same question, and receiving the same answer, continue his cruel labor. All this time, the incarnate devil was uttering most scoldish oaths. At length the paddle broke, leaving the useless handle in his hand. Still I would not yield. All his brutal blows could not force from my lips the foul lie that I was a slave. Casting madly on the floor the handle of the broken paddle, he seized the rope. This was far more painful than the other. I struggled with all my power, but it was in vain. I prayed for mercy, but my prayer was only answered with imprecations and with stripes. I thought I must die beneath the lashes of the accursed brute. Even now the flesh crawls upon my bones, as I recall the scene. I was all on fire. My sufferings I can compare to nothing else than the burning agonies of hell!

At last I became silent to his repeated questions. I would make no reply. In fact, I was becoming almost unable to speak. Still he plied the lash without stint upon my poor body, until it seemed that the lacerated flesh was stripped from my bones at every stroke. A man with a particle of mercy in his soul would not have beaten even a dog so cruelly. At length Hadsbarn said that it was useless to whip me any more—that I would be sore enough. Thereupon, Burch desisted, saying, with an admonitory



SCENE IN THE COTTAGE FIELD, SOLOMON DELIVERED UP

dence permitted, and was about leaving the room, when Epps inquired,
 "Platt, do you know this gentleman?"
 "Yes, master," I replied, "I have known him as long as I can remember."
 "Where does he live?"
 "He lives in New-York."
 "Did you ever live there?"
 "Yes, master—born and bred there."
 "You was free, then. Now you d—d nigger," he exclaimed, "why did you not tell me that when I bought you!"
 "Master Epps," I answered, in a somewhat different tone than the one in which I had been accustomed to address him—"Master Epps, you did not take the trouble to ask me; besides, I told one of my owners—the man that kidnapped me—that I was free, and was whipped almost to death for it."
 "It seems there has been a letter written for you by somebody. Now, who is it?" he demanded, authoritatively. I made no reply.
 "I say, who wrote that letter!" he demanded again.
 "Perhaps I wrote it myself," I said.
 "You haven't been to Marksville post-office and back before light, I know."
 He insisted upon my informing him, and I insisted I would not. He made many vehement threats against the man, whoever he might be, and intimated the bloody and savage vengeance he would wreak upon

Graphic Organizer

FOR IMAGES

Name _____

Date _____

1. "Sale of Estates, Pictures, and Slaves in the Rotunda, New Orleans"

- a. Name the three key activities you observe in the picture.

- b. Describe the dress of the people in the group and explain how each person's dress might relate to the role they play. _____

- c. How similar are the key activities in the picture?

- d. Why do you think three very different activities are taking place at the same location at the same time?

2. "Solomon in his Plantation Suit"

- a. Analyze the plantation suit Solomon is wearing. Do you believe the suit is appropriate for manual labor? __

- b. Describe Solomon's body language and explain what you believe it indicates.

- c. What message do you get about Solomon's life from the picture?

3. "Scene in the Slave Pen at Washington"

a. Select four key details in the image and explain what each reveals about the cruelty of slavery:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

b. What have you learned from this image, and what details back up your thoughts?

4. "Scene in the Cotton Field, Solomon Delivered Up"

a. Select four key details in the image and explain what each reveals about efforts to free Northup:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

b. What important aspect of Northup's freedom is most reinforced in the image?
