



Excerpt 2 Text and Questions
Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter 2, Paragraphs 2–5 (7–8), 10–11

Text	Second Read Questions	Third Read Questions
<p>1. Colonel Lloyd kept from three to four hundred slaves on his home plantation [called Great House Farm], and owned a large number more on the neighboring farms belonging to him. This [Great House Farm] was the great business place. It was the seat of government for the whole twenty farms....</p>	<p>seat of government—</p>	

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<p>2. Here, too, the slaves of all the other farms received their monthly allowance of food, and their yearly clothing. The men and women slaves received, as their monthly allowance of food, eight pounds of pork, or its equivalent in fish, and one bushel of corn meal. Their yearly clothing consisted of two coarse linen shirts, one pair of linen trousers, like the shirts, one jacket, one pair of trousers for winter, made of coarse negro cloth, one pair of stockings, and one pair of shoes; the whole of which could not have cost more than seven dollars. The allowance of the slave children was given to their mothers, or the old women having the care of them.</p>	<p>allowance—a set amount provided to someone, often of food</p> <p>bushel—a measure of about 8 gallons</p> <p>coarse—rough, not soft</p> <p>1. How many pairs of pants did adult slaves have?</p>	<p>1. Why does Douglass describe the clothing that slaves were given in such detail? What is he trying to show?</p>



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<p>The children unable to work in the field had neither shoes, stockings, jackets, nor trousers, given to them; their clothing consisted of two coarse linen shirts per year. When these failed them, they went naked until the next allowance-day. Children from seven to ten years old, of both sexes, almost naked, might be seen at all seasons of the year.</p>	<p>2. Why were many children naked?</p>	
<p>3. There were no beds given the slaves, unless one coarse blanket be considered such, and none but the men and women had these. This, however, is not considered a very great privation. They find less difficulty from the want of beds, than from the want of time to sleep; for when their day's work in the field is done, the most of them having their washing, mending,</p>	<p>privation—a lack of something necessary for survival</p> <p>want—</p>	<p>2. Why didn't slaves get enough sleep?</p>

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<p>and cooking to do, and having few or none of the ordinary facilities for doing either of these, very many of their sleeping hours are consumed in preparing for the field the coming day; and when this is done, old and young, male and female, married and single, drop down side by side, on one common bed, —the cold, damp floor,—each covering himself or herself with their miserable blankets; and here they sleep till they are summoned to the field by the driver’s horn. At the sound of this, all must rise, and be off to the field.</p>	<p>facilities—spaces, equipment</p> <p>consumed—</p> <p>3. Where do slaves sleep?</p> <p>summoned—</p> <p>driver—a person who supervised slaves as they worked; often, a plantation would have an overseer and then several drivers who reported to the overseers</p>	

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<p>There must be no halting; every one must be at his or her post; and woe betides them who hear not this morning summons to the field; for if they are not awakened by the sense of hearing, they are by the sense of feeling: no age nor sex finds any favor.</p> <p>Mr. Severe, the overseer, used to stand by the door of the quarter, armed with a large hickory stick and heavy cowskin, ready to whip any one who was so unfortunate as not to hear, or, from any other cause, was prevented from being ready to start for the field at the sound of the horn.</p>	<p>post—the place where you do your job</p> <p>woe betides them—</p> <p>summons—</p> <p>quarter—the place where slaves lived</p> <p>4. What happened to slaves who did not get to the field on time?</p>	

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<p>From the rising till the going down of the sun, he was cursing, raving, cutting, and slashing among the slaves of the field, in the most frightful manner. His career was short. He died very soon after I went to Colonel Lloyd’s; and he died as he lived, uttering, with his dying groans, bitter curses and horrid oaths. His death was regarded by the slaves as the result of a merciful providence.</p>	<p>6. What was Mr. Severe like?</p> <p>merciful providence—a force that is meant to protect us</p>	

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<p>5. The home plantation of Colonel Lloyd wore the appearance of a country village.... It was called by the slaves the <i>Great House Farm</i>. The slaves selected to go to the Great House Farm, for the monthly allowance for themselves and their fellow-slaves, were peculiarly enthusiastic. While on their way, they would make the dense old woods, for miles around, reverberate with their wild songs, revealing at once the highest joy and the deepest sadness. They would compose and sing as they went along, consulting neither time nor tune....</p>	<p>wore the appearance of—</p> <p>reverberate—echo</p> <p>7. What do the slaves do as they walk to the Great House Farm?</p>	

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<p>6. I did not, when a slave, understand the deep meaning of those rude and apparently incoherent songs. I was myself within the circle; so that I neither saw nor heard as those without might see and hear. They told a tale of woe which was then altogether beyond my feeble comprehension; they were tones loud, long, and deep; they breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains. The hearing of those wild notes always depressed my spirit, and filled me with ineffable sadness. I have frequently found myself in tears while hearing them. The mere recurrence to those songs, even now, afflicts me;</p>	<p>incoherent—</p> <p>8. To what does “they” in the third sentence refer?</p> <p>woe—sorrow</p> <p>anguish—</p> <p>9. How did Douglass feel when he heard the slaves singing?</p> <p>ineffable—too great to be described in words</p> <p>afflicts—</p>	<p>3. What emotions did Douglass say that the songs sung by slaves conveyed?</p> <p>4. Why does Douglass explain that even thinking about the songs now makes him sad? How does that help convince his audience?</p>



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<p>and while I am writing these lines, an expression of feeling has already found its way down my cheek. To those songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery. I can never get rid of that conception. Those songs still follow me, to deepen my hatred of slavery, and quicken my sympathies for my brethren in bonds. If any one wishes to be impressed with the soul-killing effects of slavery, let him go to Colonel Lloyd’s plantation, and, on allowance-day, place himself in the deep pine woods, and there let him, in silence, analyze the sounds that shall pass through the chambers of his soul,—and if he is not thus impressed, it will only be because “there is no flesh in his obdurate heart.”</p>	<p>conception—</p> <p>dehumanizing—to treat people so badly that they lose their good human qualities</p> <p>quicken—to make grow</p> <p>brethren—member of a group</p> <p>obdurate—stubborn, hard</p> <p>10. If someone listens to the songs and is not moved by them, what does Douglass suggest that person is missing?</p>	

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<p>7. I have often been utterly astonished, since I came to the north, to find persons who could speak of the singing, among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness. It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake. Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears. At least, such is my experience. I have often sung to drown my sorrow, but seldom to express my happiness. Crying for joy, and singing for joy, were alike uncommon to me while in the jaws of slavery. The singing of a man cast away upon a desolate island might be as appropriately</p>	<p>astonished—very surprised</p> <p>conceive—</p> <p>11. What root and prefix is the word <i>desolate</i> made up of? Based on the meanings of those word roots, what do you think the word <i>desolate</i> means?</p> <p>prompted—</p> <p>12. Does happiness or sorrow prompt slaves to sing?</p>	



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<p>considered as evidence of contentment and happiness, as the singing of a slave; the songs of the one and of the other are prompted by the same emotion.</p>		

Whole Excerpt

PURPOSE: How does this excerpt support the two positions Douglass held about slavery that are listed below?

1. Slavery is terrible for slaves.

2. Slavery corrupts slave holders.

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