

Name: _____

Colonial Perspectives: A Slave's Life

As the colonies began to learn how to grow their own crops they realized that people in Europe would pay high prices for some of their goods, such as tobacco. They began to establish large plantations to grow these things and needed people to work their fields. The colonists began buying people from the slave trade to use on their farms. The slave trade started in Africa. Different members of one group would attack another group and sell the people that they could capture. They sold their people to the Dutch, British, and French people who brought slaves to Colonial America. It is said that almost 12 million Africans were brought to America and sold to be slaves. Slaves were brought in to work on plantations, which were large farms that usually planted only one crop, like tobacco, rice, sugar, or corn. Slaves were the cheapest form of labor. Being a slave meant you were owned by another person and had to do what they said until the day you died. If usually meant any children that you had were owned by that same person too!

Slaves were not treated very well in most places. They were made to work from the time the sun came up until the sun went down. The owners did not want to spend much money on them so they were not given all the things that they needed. Slaves could be whipped when they were not working hard enough or disobeyed an order. They could also be placed in stocks for hours at a time. Stocks were a device that held a person's head, feet, and sometimes hands locked up and would force the person to stay in a very uncomfortable position. Slaves could even be branded with a hot iron by owners to label them as their property. Slaves had no hope of a positive future except escape or death. Sometimes slaves would even be sold to other land owners and would be separated from their families.

Even children of slaves would become slaves. Female slaves were expected to have children to replace the older slaves that died or were too old to do hard work. Women had to work in the fields the whole time they were pregnant. As soon as children were born and were big enough to work in the fields, usually around five years old, they had to start working. By the time they were 12 they were supposed to be doing the same work as the adults. They would be slaves for their entire lives.

The awful act of slavery continued in the American Colonies until 1862, during the Civil War when President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. President Lincoln ordered that all of the slaves be freed in America and ended slave labor in America.



Name: _____

Colonial Perspectives: Abram

I didn't want to come here and I sure don't want to stay here. Life is hard for me and my family, I got a wife and a little boy now. He's only three but master already says its time for him to start earning his keep. I saw master talking to old Henry Williamson who owns that farm down the road about me. I think he was talking bout selling me but I ain't going unless master sells my wife and son with me. But I guess I don't got much choice now days. Master tells me when to get up, what to do, and when to quit. Well he even picks out what I'm going to eat every day and what I'm going to wear. I guess he picks it out, all I know is if he don't get it for me then I don't have it so Master figures he can get me what he wants.

I tried to leave one time. Right after my wife Jules had out little boy Moses. See I wasn't going to stick around and let Master separate me and my family. So I waited until it was dark and put Jules and Moses in the back of one of Masters old wagons and hitched it to a horse and we took off. We thought we might be able to get somewhere, don't know where we were going but we just wanted to go somewhere. I guess it really wouldn't have mattered much because wherever we ended up they would've known we belonged to someone. But, as it was, we got about an hour away from the plantation and I heard the dogs. I should've figured master wouldn't just let us get away. They caught us right fast after that and I thought for sure master was going to kill me, or worse, I thought he was going to sell my wife and boy. But he didn't. I got some bad whippings that night, left sores and open places all over my back and legs. I had to stay in the stocks for three days. I couldn't even put clothes back on that night after the stocks and whippings. It hurt so bad but the next morning I had to get up and get in the cotton field. Master would have killed me sure enough if I hadn't worked the next day.

I see that other guy, the white one master made a deal with to get him to come here. He says he only has to work for two more years then master is going to give him his own land and let him go on his way. I don't like talking to that white man much because we do the same work but I will never get to leave this plantation unless master sells me or I die. And now my boy is going to have to work here for master too, for his whole life. It just don't seem fair.

