

### **Homework: *12 Years A Slave* official trailer, Steve McQueen, 2013**

Go to **Youtube** and watch the **official trailer** of the movie *12 Years A Slave* by **Steve McQueen** by entering the following request (“*12 Years A Slave official trailer*”) and clicking on the **first non-commercial link**.

- 1) Where is Solomon Northup from and what is his legal status before 1840?

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- 2) What happens to him in 1841?

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- 3) What are the keywords of this excerpt?

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**Instruction:** Using the excerpts below, find the locations on the map and draw Solomon's journey through the 1840 United States.

**Document 1:** Solomon's birthplace

"Sometime after my father's liberation, he removed to the town of Minerva, Essex County, N.Y., where I was born, in the month of July, 1808".

**Document 2:** slave manifest of the *Brig Orleans* (1841)

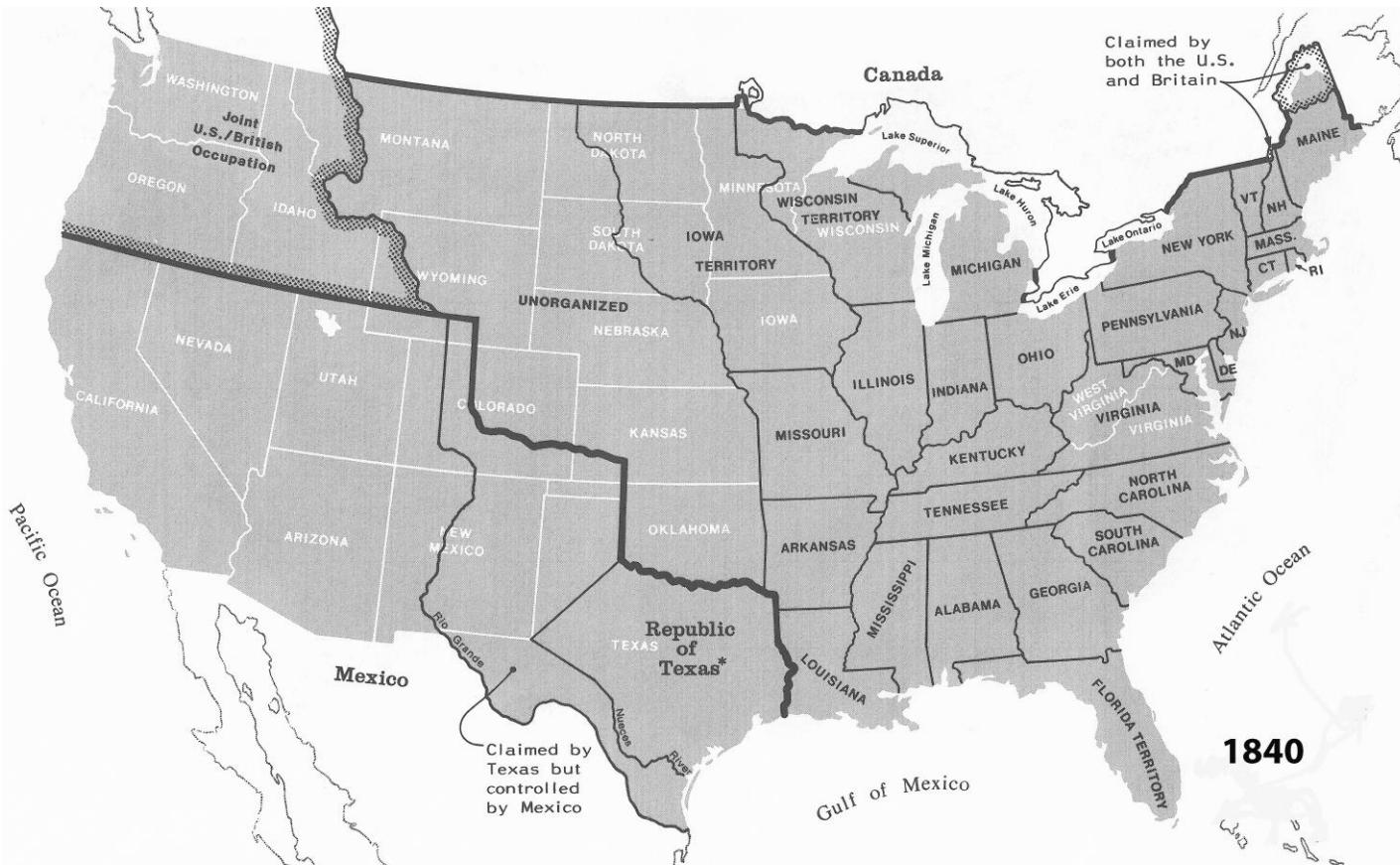
"Manifest of Slaves, intended to be transported on board of the *Brig Orleans of Richmond*, [...] and bound from the port of Richmond, State of Virginia, for the Port of New Orleans, State of Louisiana, this 27<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1841".

**Document 3:** the arrival on the estate (1841)

"Edwin Epps [...] was in possession of a plantation on Bayou Huff Power<sup>1</sup>. [...] His principal business was raising cotton".

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<sup>1</sup> Louisiana, near the frontier with Texas.



### Question

How can one be a free man in the North and a slave in the South? What does it tell us about the differences between North and South in the 1840's U.S.A.?

Source: *Map Guide to the U.S. Federal Censuses, 1790-1940*, by William Thorndale and William Dollarhide, publ. Genealogical Publishing Co., Baltimore, 1987.  
(For educational purposes only)

## **Worksheet: how does the movie portray the inversion of social values caused by slavery?**

### **Excerpt n°1 – Patsey and Solomon’s dialogue**

1. Which of the following sentences summarizes best the excerpt?
  - A. Patsey wants to escape from the estate and asks Solomon to help her.
  - B. Solomon refuses to help Patsey escaping the estate.
  - C. Patsey wants to die and begs Solomon for help, which he accepts.
  - D. Patsey wants to die and begs Solomon for help, which he refuses.

Justify: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Excerpt n°2 – Eliza and Solomon’s dialogue**

1. **EVERYTHING’S TRUE!** All the statements below are true; justify them by quoting the video.

A. Eliza is sad because she has been separated from her children.

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B. Solomon accepts to work as a slave to earn his freedom.

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C. Eliza disagrees with Solomon’s strategy.

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D. Solomon has suffered physical punishment for claiming his freedom.

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### **Excerpt n°3 – Solomon’s work for Master Ford**

1. Read the following sentences and underline the right word.

Solomon proposes to Master Ford to use the (*water/land*) way to transport wood. It would (*reduce/increase*) the distance to the work area and (*diminish/raise*) the costs. The overseer (*agrees/disagrees*) with this proposal: he thinks the passes are too (*tight/large*). However, Solomon succeeds in convincing Master Ford thanks to his experience on the Champlain (*canal/dam*). To express his gratitude, Master Ford offers Solomon a (*violin/guitar*). Nevertheless, Solomon looks (*disappointed/happy*): he probably expected a greater (*reward/punishment*).

### **Going further...**

Connect each value in the first chart below with its opposite. Associate each pair of opposed values to an excerpt.

Reward

Life

Resistance

Death

Obedience

Punishment

Excerpt n°1

Excerpt n°2

Excerpt n°3

### Recap lesson 1: how did slavery turn social values upside down?

In the mid-nineteenth century, the USA was divided into \_\_\_\_\_ parts over the question of slavery: North of the \_\_\_\_\_, slavery was \_\_\_\_\_; South of the line, it was \_\_\_\_\_. Slavery in the South of the United States was very specific: when they arrived on the \_\_\_\_\_, the slaves had to survive in a world where social values were turned \_\_\_\_\_.  
For instance, obedience can be considered as a form of \_\_\_\_\_: by obeying the master, the slaves could escape surveillance and maybe hope to regain their \_\_\_\_\_, as it was the case for Solomon. On the contrary, resisting the Master could cost the slaves physical \_\_\_\_\_. Furthermore, Patsey's request shows us that \_\_\_\_\_ was another strategy to avoid slavery: in order to escape violence and oppression, the slaves could sometimes commit \_\_\_\_\_ to end their suffering. Finally, even the \_\_\_\_\_ given by the Master could be considered as some kind of \_\_\_\_\_: when Solomon receives the violin, it reminds him of his past life as a free man, which makes his slave situation hard to bear.