

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?

2) What happens to him in 1841?

3) What are the keywords of this excerpt?

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Worksheet: what was Solomon Northup's journey through the United States?

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 27th day of *April*, 1841”.

Document 3: the arrival on the estate (1841)

“Edwin Epps [...] was in possession of a plantation on Bayou Huff Power¹. [...] His principal business was raising cotton”.

¹ 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

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

Justify: _____

Excerpt n°2 – Eliza and Solomon's dialogue

- 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.

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

C. Eliza disagrees with Solomon's strategy.

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

Excerpt n°3 – Solomon's work for Master Ford

- 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.