

^Name: _____

Date: _____

Daily lives of slaves

Directions: Read each section and summarize the conditions of slaves in your own words.

Living Conditions on Plantations

Document A: We lived in log huts and on the bare ground. Wooden floors were an unknown luxury. In a single room were huddled, like cattle, ten or a dozen persons, men, women and children. All ideas of class and dignity were, of course, out of the question. There were neither beds, nor furniture of any description. Our beds were collections of straw and old rags, thrown down.

In the corners and boxed in with boards, a single blanket the only covering. Our favorite way of sleeping, however, was on a plank, our heads raised on an old jacket and our feet toasting before the fire. The wind whistled and the rain and snow blew in through the cracks, and the damp earth soaked in the moisture till the floor was miry as a pigsty. Such were our houses.

Source: – Uncle Tom’s Story of His Life, An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson

1) In your own words, describe the living conditions of slaves on plantations.

Working Conditions on Plantations

Document B: When there are no cold rains, the cotton usually makes its appearance in a week. In the course of eight or ten days afterwards the first digging takes place. This is performed in part, also by the aid of the **plough** and **mule**. The plough passes as near as possible to the cotton on both sides, making a hole in the ground. Slaves follow with their tools, cutting up the grass and cotton, leaving hills two and a half feet apart. This is called scraping cotton.

In two weeks the second digging starts. Only one stalk, the largest is now left standing in each hill. This is done two more times. During all these diggings . . . the fastest digger takes the lead row. He is usually about a pole in advance of his companions. If one of them passes him, he is whipped. If one falls behind or is a moment sluggish, he is whipped. In fact, the lash is flying from morning until night, the whole day long. The digging season thus continues from April until July.

Source: Twelve Years a Slave, Solomon Northup

<p>Plough: Tool used to dig up dirt</p> <p>Mule: Animal used to pull heavy objects</p>
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2) In your own words, describe the working conditions for slaves on plantations.

Treatment on Plantations

Introduction: There are two ways in which a man can be enslaved. One is through force. He can be imprisoned behind fences, guarded constantly, punished severely for breaking the slightest rule, and made to live in constant fear. The second is to teach him to think that his own best interests will be served by doing what his master wishes him to do. He can be taught that he is inferior and that only through slavery will he eventually rise to the “level” of his master.

– To Be a Slave, Julius Lester

Document C: The day’s work over in the field, the baskets are carried to the ginhouse where the cotton is weighed. No matter how tired he may be—no matter how much he longs for sleep and rest—a slave never approaches the ginhouse with his basket of cotton but with fear. If it falls short in weight—if he has not performed the full task appointed him—he knows that he must suffer.

It was rare that a day passed by without one or more whippings. This occurred at the time the cotton was weighed. The slave, whose weight had fallen short, was taken out, stripped, made to lie upon the ground, face downwards, where he received a punishment for his offense. It is the literal, truth that the crack of the lash and the crying of the slaves can be heard from dark till bedtime on the plantation.

The number of lashes given is according to the offense. Twenty-five are deemed a mere brush, inflicted, for instance, when a dry leaf is found in the cotton, or when a branch is broken in the field. Fifty is ordinary penalty following all wrongdoings of the next higher grade. One hundred is called severe; it is the punishment inflicted for the serious offense of being lazy in the field.

Source: Twelve Years a Slave, Solomon Northup

3) In your own words, describe the treatment of slaves on plantations.