

Perspectives on Slavery

EQ: What was the life of a slave like according to various perspectives?

Slaves

Using the packet, take notes on the following:

Ashanti

Yoruba

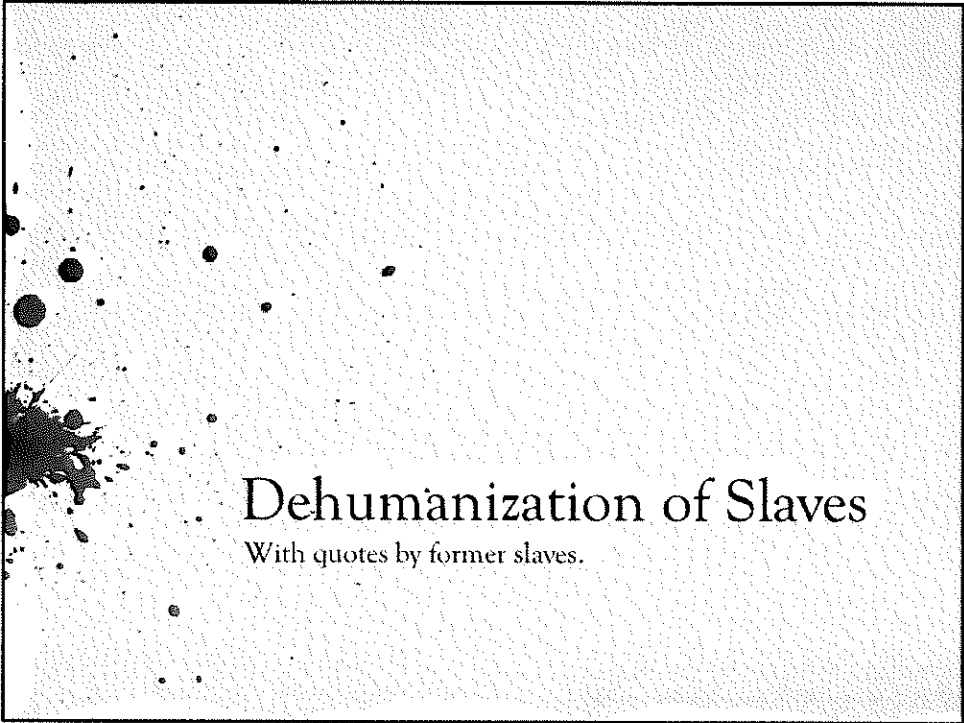
Slave quotes/experiences

Dew & McDuffie

Read the speeches by Thomas Dew and George McDuffie. Take notes that focus on the reasons/evidence they give to support slavery.

Thomas Dew

George McDuffie



Dehumanization of Slaves

With quotes by former slaves.

Ashanti



Matriarchal-
extended family
network through
the women.



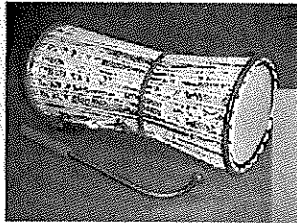
Kente Cloth- bright color and
intricate design symbolizes wealth



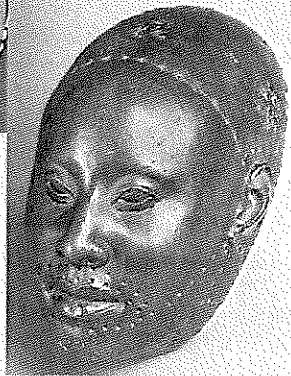
Sacred Stool- given great honor.

The Ashanti are from the modern day country of Ghana about 150 miles inland. Family connections are important in the Ashanti culture and extend through the lines of the women (matriarchal). Kente cloth is unique to the Ashanti people and is worn for special ceremonies. The bright colors and intricate weave indicate wealth and prestige. The Sacred Stool or Golden Stool is a religious symbol for the Ashanti. Believed to be given by the gods, as long as the stool is not “defiled” (does not touch the ground, no one sits on it) and stays in the hands of the Ashanti people, the Ashanti are strong. The Sacred Stool represents the ancestry and the well-being of the people.

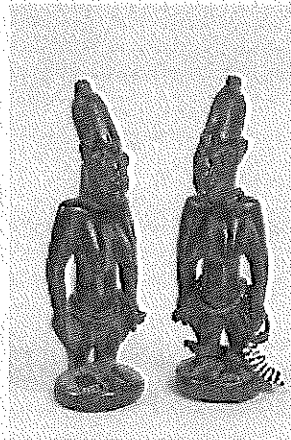
Yoruba



Talking Drums



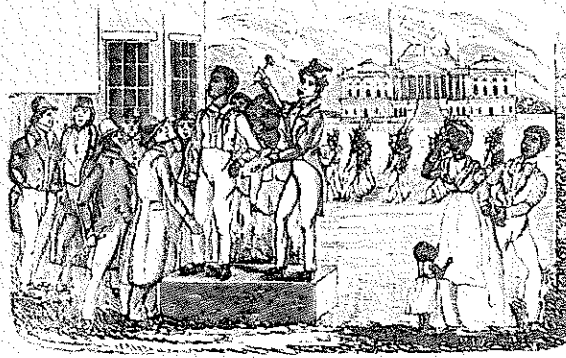
Know for sculptures



High number of twins-naming ceremony is important.

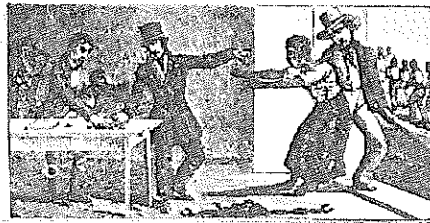
Another ethnic group that was enslaved were the Yorubans. They live in modern day Benin and Nigeria. In Yoruban culture, the naming of children takes place during a special ceremony. The parents take their time to create a name that is unique to the child and captures his or her identity. No two Yorubans have the same name. Talking Drums are unique to the Yorubans and, when played properly, mimic the sounds of speech. The Talking Drums were then used to communicate across distances in a way that only Yorubans would understand. Today, many Americans have a connection to their heritage- Irish, German, French, Spanish. African Americans do not have that because it was stripped from them as part of the dehumanization process.

"They would stand the slaves upon the block and talk about what a fine-looking specimen of black manhood or womanhood they was, tell how healthy they was, look in their mouth and examine their teeth just like they was a horse, and talk about the kind of work they would be fit for and could do." - Morris Hillyer



Part of the process of taking away the humanity of slaves- first experience of being looked at as something other than a human being.

“Frequently, before the child has reached its twelfth month, its mother is taken from it, and hired out on some farm a considerable distance off, and the child is placed under the care of an old woman, too old for field labor. For what this separation is done, I do not know, unless it be to hinder the development of the child’s affection toward its mother, and to blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child. This is the inevitable result” (Fredrick Douglass)



SELLING A MOTHER FROM HER CHILD.
“Do you often buy the wife without the husband?” “Yes, very often,
and frequently, too, they sell me the mother while they keep her children.
I have often known them take away the infant from its mother’s breast,
and keep it a while they sold her.”—*Prof. Andrews, Vice of the University*

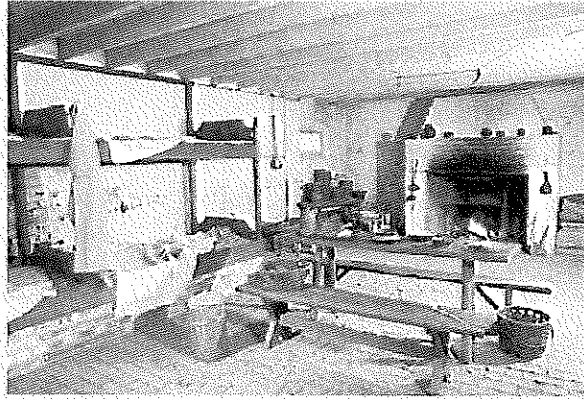
Which culture would this be especially traumatic?

"We hardly knowed our names. We was cussed [at]... We never heard our names scarcely at all." Sallie Crane

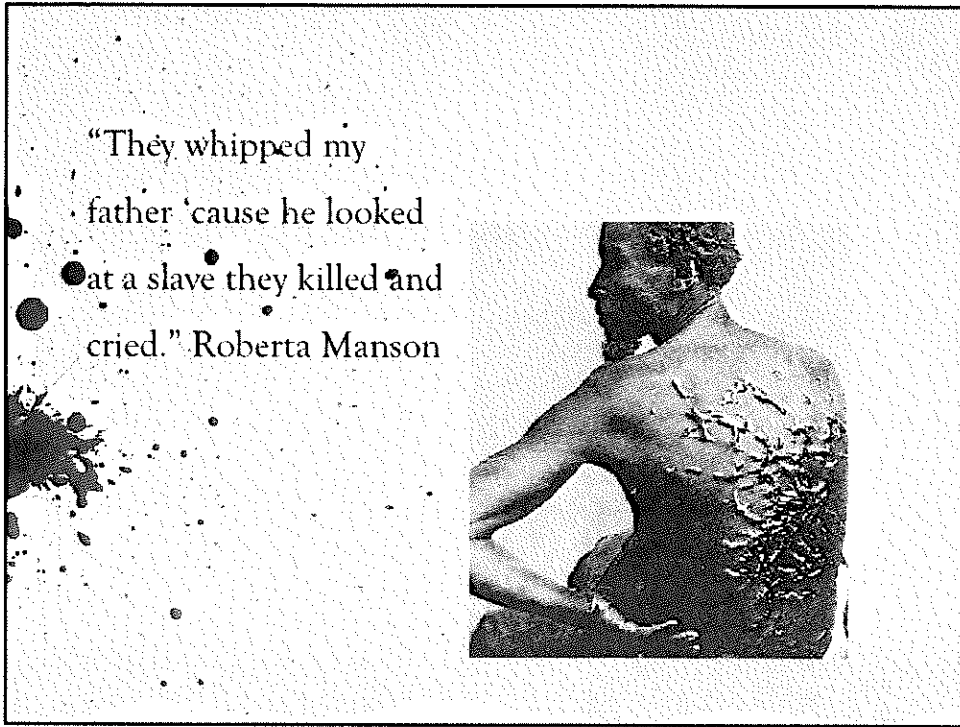


Which culture would this be especially traumatic?

"We lodged 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." Josiah Henson

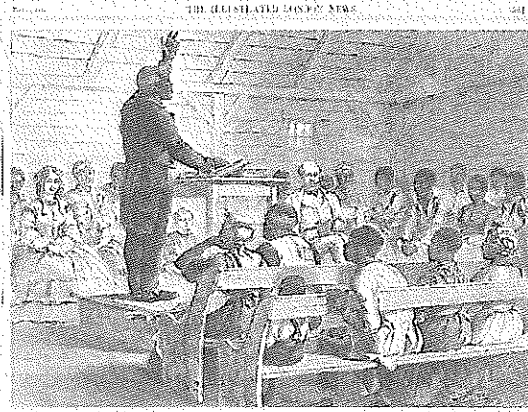


How does this living situation impact those from a culture used to living with relatives?



Instill fear to control.

“The slaves who are natives of this country...believe that those who have tormented them here will most surely be tormented in their turn hereafter... They are ready enough to receive the faith which conducts them to heaven and eternal rest on account of their present sufferings.” Ball



Survival depended on some sense of hope.

“Sing! I say they did sing. Sing about the cooking and about the milking and sing in the field.” Hannah Hancock



Some songs were developed as secret communications. Similar to the Talking Drums, only the slaves understood what the songs meant.

★ 16-2 The Case for Slavery ★

Introduction As the campaign against slavery heated up, more Southerners began to defend the institution. This selection contains two arguments made by Southerners. Thomas Dew was a professor at William and Mary College in Virginia, and George McDuffie was governor of South Carolina.

Vocabulary Before you read the selection, find the meaning of these words in a dictionary: inevitably, conducive, sanction, servile, attributes.

Thomas Dew

Let us now look a moment to the slave, and consider his position. Mr. Jefferson has described him as hating rather than loving his master. We assert again that Mr. Jefferson is not borne out by the fact. We are well convinced that there is nothing but the relations of husband and wife, parent and child, or brother and sister which produces a closer tie than the relation of master and servant. We do not hesitate to affirm that, throughout the whole slave-holding country, the slaves of a good master are his warmest, most constant, and most devoted friends. They have been accustomed to look up to him as their supporter, director, and defender. Everyone acquainted with southern slaves knows that the slave rejoices in the prosperity of his master.

A merrier being does not exist on the face of the globe than the Negro slave of the United States. They are happy and contented, and the master is much less cruel than is generally imagined. Why then, since the slave is happy and happiness is the great object of all animated creation, should we attempt to disturb his contentment by planting in his mind a vain and indefinite desire for liberty—a something which he cannot understand and which must inevitably dry up the very sources of his happiness?

George McDuffie

No human institution, in my opinion, is more clearly consistent with the will of God than slavery. And no one of his laws is written in more legible characters than that which consigns the African race to this condition as more conducive to their own happiness than any other with which they might meet. Whether we consult the sacred Scriptures or the lights of nature and reason, we shall find these truths as abundantly apparent as if written with a sunbeam in the heavens. Under both the Jewish and Christian branches of our religion, slavery existed with the wholehearted sanction of its prophets, its apostles, and finally its great Author. The ancient Hebrew fathers themselves, those chosen men of God, were slaveholders.

That the African Negro is destined by God to occupy this condition of servile dependence is not less clear. They have all the qualities that fit them for slaves and not one of those that would fit them to be freemen. Until the "African can change his skin," it will be in vain to attempt, by any human power, to make freemen of those whom God has doomed to be slaves.

Adapted from Thomas R. Dew, Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature of 1831 and 1832, 1832, and George McDuffie, message to the Legislature of South Carolina, Journal of the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, 1835.

READING REVIEW * * * * *

1. What is the main argument Thomas Dew makes in defense of slavery?
2. George McDuffie argues that it is the will of God that the American institution of slavery exists. What are the two principal reasons he gives for believing this?
3. **Comparing points of view.** Compare the attitudes toward slavery expressed here with the attitude expressed by Solomon Northrup in Reading 15-5.

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Response

- Pretend you are a slave living in Virginia. Write a letter to Thomas Dew and George McDuffie explaining why they are wrong about slavery.
- Use evidence gathered from the slides to counter specific statements made by Dew and McDuffie.