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KIDNAPPED!

Sad and unbelievable as it may seem, the terrible experience described in this book by Solomon Northup was not an isolated case. The things that happened to the author (and main character) of the story that you are about to read concerned a great, yet still unknown, number of free African American citizens, both before and after the American Civil War. We use the term ‘free citizens’ because in the following lines we will refer to free people, and not runaway slaves or fugitives, whose case is an equally interesting but different subject.

Slavery in the US

Although slavery had been gradually abolished in the Northern states long before the Civil War and the drafting of the US Constitution, it continued to prevail in the Southern states. In these states, known as the slave states, it became increasingly deep-rooted, for a number of reasons. The existence of ‘free states’ and ‘slave states’ created great legal and social hostility, which ended in the outbreak of the Civil War.

- **concerned:** (here) involved
- **Constitution:** ideas and laws that define a country
- **deep-rooted:** (here) present
- **drafting:** (here) writing (something that may be changed later)
- **fugitives:** people who run away or escape
- **outbreak:** start (often of violence)
- **prevail:** be the rule

North and South

Even if slavery is now largely viewed as a southern practice, it had many supporters in the Northern states. Many kidnappers were Northerners, sometimes even neighbours of their victims. Even in free states, African Americans did not have full civil rights, stereotypes were common and encouraged racial attitudes toward blacks. This made it easier for kidnappers to commit their crimes. Since most kidnappers were white and most of their victims black, many respectable white people did not find this crime particularly serious. And even when the kidnappers were brought to justice, they were very seldom punished properly.

The word kidnapping suggests the violent capture of a person, but this was not always the case. As you will see in the book, persuasion was sometimes used instead of violence. The criminals took advantage of the natural desire that everybody has of improving their personal state.

CAUTION!!

**COLORED PEOPLE
OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,**
You are hereby respectfully **CAUTIONED** and
advised, to avoid conversing with the
**Watchmen and Police Officers
of Boston,**
For since the recent **ORDER OF THE MAYOR &
ALDERMEN**, they are empowered to act as
KIDNAPPERS
AND
Slave Catchers,
And they have already been actually employed in
**KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING
SLAVES.** Therefore, if you value your **LIBERTY,**
and the *Welfare of the Fugitives* among you, *Shun*
them in every possible manner, as so many **HOUNDS**
on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

**Keep a Sharp Look Out for
KIDNAPPERS, and have
TOP EYE open.**

APRIL 24, 1851.

Poster warning African Americans about kidnapping

TWELVE YEARS A SLAVE

SOLOMON NORTHUP

ANNE



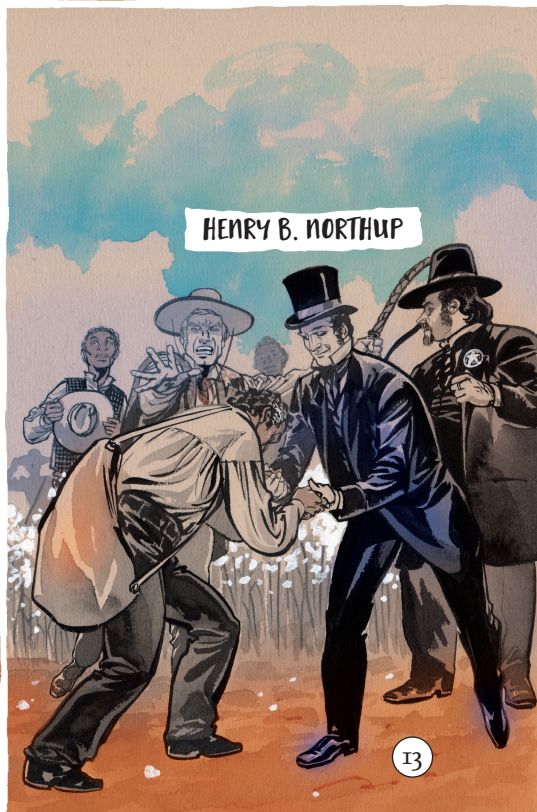
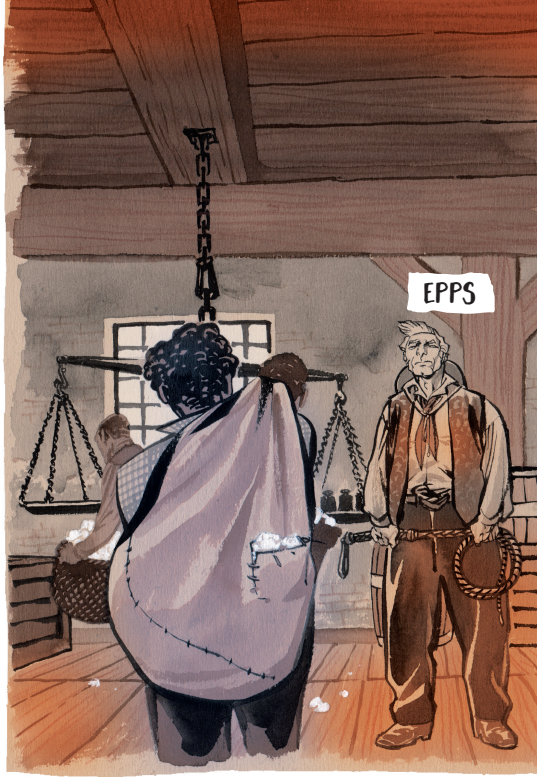
MARGARET



ALONZO



ELIZABETH



BEFORE READING

- 1** This story speaks about slavery in the USA. The first African slaves were brought to the USA in 1619 and slavery was legal in many states until its abolition in 1865. Look at the picture and definition and tick (✓) the words you feel are associated with slavery from the list below. Explain your choices to a friend. Use a dictionary if necessary.



Slavery means that a person becomes the property of another person.

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> abolish | <input type="checkbox"/> chains | <input type="checkbox"/> comfortable | <input type="checkbox"/> freedom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> happy | <input type="checkbox"/> holiday | <input type="checkbox"/> owner | <input type="checkbox"/> work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> punishment | <input type="checkbox"/> rights | <input type="checkbox"/> legal property | <input type="checkbox"/> safety |

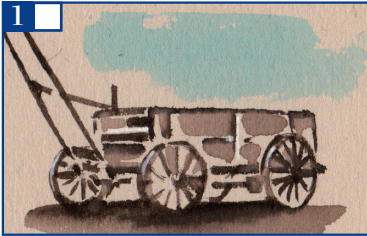
- 2** Use some of the words from Exercise 1 to complete these sentences from the story.

- a He didn't think of the black man as a human being but as a piece of living
- b I was alone, in complete darkness and in
- c He shouted that if I ever said I was a free man again, or that I had been kidnapped, I would receive even worse
- d Some talked of escape but feared the consequences if they were caught and then had to return to their



3 The slaves in the story are transported from Washington to New Orleans. Match the correct means of transport with the pictures.

a steamboat b on foot c sailing ship d wagon



4 Use the words from Exercise 3 to complete the sentences.

- a We started our long journey on a traveling down the Potomac River.
- b We sailed in a large on the open sea, down south to New Orleans.
- c We drove eighteen miles towards Great Pine Woods in a
- d We had to walk the last twelve miles


5 These are some of the places in the story.

Match the word on the left with a definition on the right.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a <input type="checkbox"/> plantation | 1 small simple house |
| b <input type="checkbox"/> swamp | 2 large farm where crops are grown |
| c <input type="checkbox"/> yard | 3 outside area with walls all around |
| d <input type="checkbox"/> cabin | 4 area of water and mud |

CHAPTER 1

MY ORIGINS

 My name is Solomon Northup and I was born a free man. I lived free for thirty years, then I was kidnapped• and sold as a slave. I lived as a slave for twelve years until I was rescued and again became a free man. This is the story of what happened to me.

My father was a slave and worked for the Northup family in the state• of New York. When old Mr Northup died (around 1800), he gave my father his freedom. My father then took his family name and became Mintus Northup. The Northup family always took an interest in us, and it is because of Henry B. Northup, a famous lawyer• and relative of the original Northup family, that I am now free again.

After my father was granted• his freedom, he worked on many different farms in New York State doing agricultural work with my mother and my elder brother. I was born in July 1808. We lived happily together. Because of my father's ideas and teaching, we got a better education than most African Americans. Our father also often talked to us about his earlier life as a slave. He was never treated badly as a slave but he thought it important for us to understand the system of slavery and what it meant for our people.

I started doing farm work with my father from a young age, but in my free time I studied, and also played the violin, which was my greatest passion. My father died in 1820.

- **granted:** given
- **kidnapped:** taken by force
- **lawyer:** person who practises law
- **state:** (here) one of the fifty states of the USA

In 1829 I married Anne Hampton, who was a free woman of mixed origins•. I then took a series of different manual jobs to make extra money. These jobs meant I often traveled, and I even visited Canada once.

We eventually had enough money to take a farm and then I started agricultural work. Anne often worked as a cook, and I was frequently in demand to play my violin at local dances in the evenings, so for a time we lived comfortably but simply on what we both earned•.

In the hope of earning more money, in 1834 we moved to Saratoga Springs, in New York State. I worked as a carriage• driver, and Anne cooked at a nearby hotel. I also earned extra money playing the violin, and doing occasional manual work.

During this time, I often met slaves who had traveled from the south with their masters. They were all well dressed and well provided for and seemed to lead a relatively easy life. But after talking with them about their situation I discovered they all wanted to become free men. Some talked of escape but feared the consequences• if they were caught and then had to return to their owners•. These conversations made me even more certain of what my father had said about the awful nature of slavery and the need for liberty for all men.

Anne and I stayed in Saratoga Springs until early 1841, we were comfortable but not rich, so every opportunity to make more money was important. During this time we had three children – Elizabeth, Margaret and Alonzo – who made us very happy.

- **carriage:** type of transport moved by horses
- **consequences:** results
- **earned:** money made from working

- **origins:** (here) racial descent
- **owners:** (here) masters; people who own them


HOTEL



AFTER READING VOCABULARY

1 For each of the sentences below, write a new sentence as similar as possible in meaning to the original one using the words given in capitals. Do not change these words in any way.

- a I realized that I must have been kidnapped. **CLEAR**
- b I'm sure there are hundreds of free men who have been kidnapped. **MUST**
- c Say no more about being a free man, unless you want to be beaten again. **IF**
- d Ford was in debt to Tibeats for buildings built on the cotton plantation. **OWED**
- e I slept little that night. **SLEEP**

2  Complete the word formation table below with words from the text. Make sentences with a partner.

ADJECTIVE	NOUN
EMPTY	<i>EMPTYNESS</i>
CRUEL
.....	COMFORT
KIND
.....	WOOD
ANGRY
.....	RELIGION
HEARTLESS
.....	DESPAIR
RELIEVING
.....	PAIN
STRONG
.....	WIDTH

P B1 Preliminary English Test Reading Part 5

1 For each of the sentences below, choose the correct answer.

- a** Without a pass, any white man was free to arrest me and take me prisoner until my master came to me.
A require B rescue C buy D take
- b** I was frequently in to play my violin at local dances.
A request B demand C delight D trouble
- c** He said he bought me, that I was his slave and he was sending me to New Orleans.
A did B should C only D had
- d** All slaves were to pick at least eighty-five kilos of cotton a day.
A able B wanted C expected D said
- e** If a slave has picked more, he have to pick that amount the next day, too.
A will B would C must D doesn't
- f** No matter tired after work the slaves were, they had to dance.
A were B if C very D how
- g** We slaves given weekly rations of smoked bacon and corn.
A have B had C were D must
- h** He said that if he ever me with a book or pen, he would give me lashes.
A saw B sees C see D would see
- i** I must go now. Epps will soon get up and I be found here.
A mustn't B shouldn't C can't D won't
- j** If I guilty of trying to trick Burch as he stated, why would I have come back to Washington?
A was B am C were D have