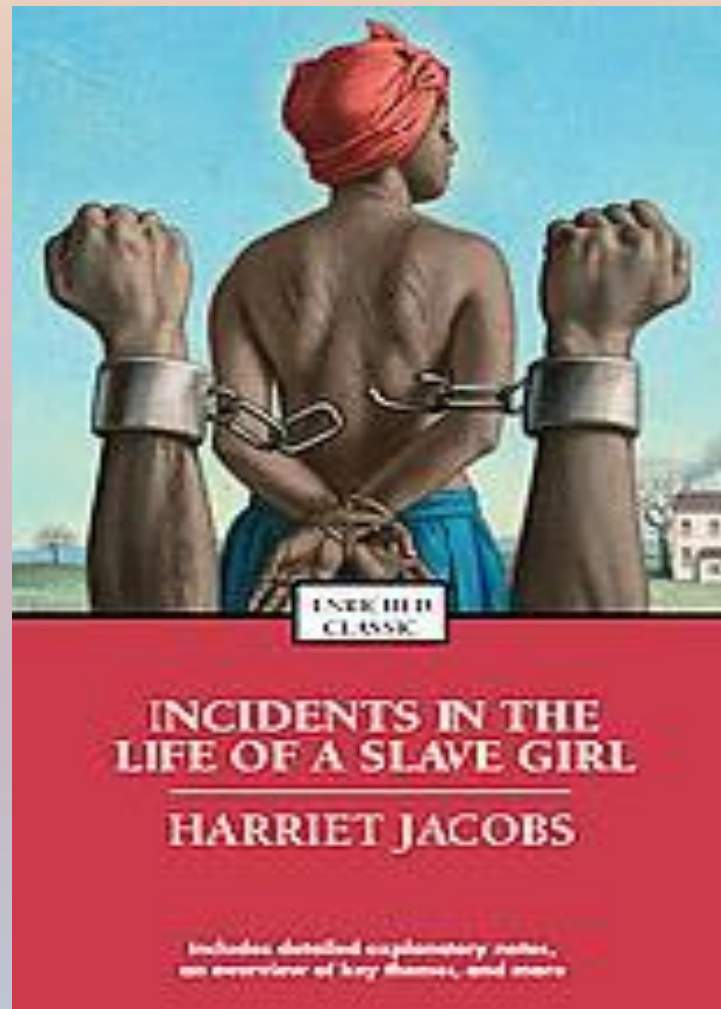


Harriet Jacob's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

Lecture 1: Background



Harriet Jacobs (Linda Brent)



Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, written by Harriet Jacobs (1813-1897) using the pseudonym Linda Brent, is the most widely read female slave narrative in American history.

In her account Jacobs details the sexual harassment and abuse she suffered as a female slave in Edenton, NC and her eventual escape.

Ultimately her story is one of triumph and spirit.

Pseudonyms

The real names of the people described in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*:

Linda Brent—Harriet Ann Jacobs (1813-1897), born a slave in Edenton, NC, she eventually escaped to the North and gained her freedom. She wrote her autobiography using the pseudonym of Linda Brent in 1861; later she worked as a reformer and activist.

Aunt Martha—Molly Horniblow, Harriet's grandmother, made a living selling baked goods to black and white townspeople. She purchased the freedom of her son Phillip and eventually became free at the age of 50 due to the kindness of an elderly white woman.

Mr. Sands—Samuel Treadwell Sawyer was a white, unmarried lawyer and the father of Harriet's two children. He was later elected to the United States House of Representatives.

Pseudonyms



Dr Flint—Dr. James Norcom was Harriet's slave master. She entered his household when Harriet was willed to his step-daughter. g to Harriet he owned a residence in town, in addition to rms, and about 50 slaves. He pursued Harriet, after she escaped, until his death.

Mrs. Flint—Mary Matilda Horniblow Norcom and wife of Dr. James Norcom, was unable to control her husband. Humiliated by his advances towards Harriet, she directed abuse at Harriet.

Young Mr. Flint—James Norcom, Jr.

Miss Emily Flint, later Mrs. Dodge—Dr. Norcom's daughter Mary Matilda Norcom, later Mrs. Daniel Messmore, traveled to New York with her husband, Messmore, to seize Harriet and her daughter, after her father's death.

What Do We Already Know?

History of Slavery in the United States

Why more in South?

Did slaves rebel?

What kind of life?

Abolition Movement

Fugitive Slave Act 1850

What Do We Already Know?

Societal Rules

	YES	NO
A slave's life could be pleasant if he/she had a kindly master.		
For some slaves, living conditions were good, and preferred slavery to living free.		
House slaves had better lives than slaves forced to work in the fields.		
Women slaves had better lives than male slaves.		
White slave holders treated their slaves as servants and respected their dignity.		
A person could have white skin and still be regarded a slave.		
A slave owner could be considered a good Christian and still have children with a slave woman.		
The wives of slave owners accepted that their husbands would have sexual relations with woman slaves, as long as the woman slave's babies were healthy.		

What Do We Already Know?

Societal Rules

	YES	NO
Babies who were the children of a slave and her master were adopted by the master or given the master's last name.		
For a slave it was better to surrender to her master than to resist and fight for her personal dignity.		
Children who were born into slavery were allowed to stay in the same household as their mother.		
Children born into slavery were not sold until after their 13 th year.		
It was impossible to retain one's personal dignity and be be a slave.		
Slaves who escaped to the North were granted freedom.		
Most white Americans supported the institution of slavery until the Civil War.		

Visual Communication: Analysis

Currier & Ives: *The Old Plantation Home*

- What is the mood of the sketch?
- What is the setting in the sketch?
- What is the action in the sketch?
- What is the story of the sketch?
- Look at the details of the painting. Write down five details that support the pro-slavery propaganda.

Currier & Ives: *The Old Plantation Home* 1872



THE OLD PLANTATION HOME.

Discussion on Currier & Ives: *The Old Plantation Home*

Planters romanticized life on the plantation, often representing themselves as stern but loving parents who had to look after their slaves, who were depicted as childlike and in need of disciplined guidance.

The plantation as the perfect extended family was a common theme of pro-slavery prints both before and after the Civil War.

This postwar lithograph by the popular firm of Currier and Ives portrayed the slave quarters as a carefree world, basking in the glow of the planter's benevolence.

In reality, of course, the harsh life of a slave bore little resemblance to this romanticized image.

Visual Communication: Analysis

Eyre Crowe's: *In The Richmond Slave Market*

- What is your first emotional reaction to the painting?
- What is the setting in the painting?
- What are the emotions of the people in the painting?
- What is the story of the painting?
- Look at the details of the painting. Write down five important cultural clues.

Eyre Crowe's: *In The Richmond Slave Market*,
1853(sketch)..1861(painting)



History of Eyre Crowe's: *In The Richmond Slave Market*

On the morning of March 3, 1853, the little-known English painter Eyre Crowe, who traveled America with author William Makepeace Thackeray, saw an advertisement in Richmond, Va., for a slave auction:

"Fifteen likely negroes to be disposed of between half-past nine and twelve—five men, six women, two boys, and two girls."

Although engrossed in his sketching, he attracted attention. No one would bid. The auctioneer finally confronted the artist and asked him how he would like it if someone interrupted his business.

As Crowe recalled: "This was unanswerable; I got up with the intention of leaving quietly, but, feeling this would savour of flight, I turned round to the now evidently angry crowd of dealers, and said "You may turn me away, but I can recollect all I have seen."

Formative Assessment 1

Read chapters 1-9 of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Answer the following questions and hand them in:

1. What were Harriet's feelings about her life before she was six years old and after?
2. What might have motivated Harriet's mistress to bequeathing Harriet as a slave to her five-year-old niece?
3. What might be some of the reasons that Dr. Flint was so attracted to Harriet?
4. What kind of woman is Harriet's grandmother and what effect does she have on the family?
5. What effect does slavery have on the lives of the slave holders and why?