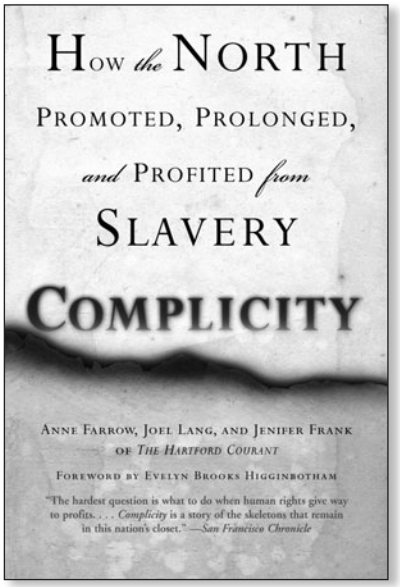
Complicity

How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery

by Anne Farrow, Joel Lang and Jenifer Frank



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READING LEVEL: 11th Grade

about this book

Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery, written by Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jenifer Frank, examines what its authors view as "a shameful and well-kept secret"—the critical role played by the North in supporting and profiting from slavery, from colonial times until, and even after, the Civil War. The authors, all journalists for *The Hartford Courant*, argue that most Americans have learned only about slavery in the South. As a result, the authors argue, many Americans emerge from school believing that the North and its citizens watched innocently as the institution of slavery took root and thrived across the Mason-Dixon line, and finally decided to go to war to hold the nation together and ultimately end the evil institution on which the South depended.

As *Complicity* passionately and powerfully chronicles, that was not what actually happened. Slavery could not have become institutionalized in the South without the active participation of northerners. As the authors argue, their state of Connecticut, and the entire nation, were complicit. This complicity took many forms—ownership of slaves, promotion and funding of the slave trade and active involvement in it, support for fugitive slave laws, use of "science" to defend notions of white supremacy, and even the support for the ivory trade, with its disastrous impact on Africans—an impact that lasted well into the 20th century.

Complicity shows us the villains—the slave traders, the racists, the apologists, and the politicians. But it also teaches us about the heroes. Among them are Prudence Crandall, a Connecticut teacher who opened a school for black female students and, despite her arrest, continued fighting for her students' right to an education, and Elijah Lovejoy, an abolitionist minister and newspaper owner who died protecting his printing press. We are given a new and more sympathetic portrayal of the radical abolitionist John Brown, who, next to slavery itself, was most infuriated at the apathy of Northerners. We learn that it is not always so easy to characterize the players in this real-life drama; there were abolitionists, for example, like George Read and Julius Pratt, who were pioneers in the antislavery movement yet made their fortunes in the ivory trade, where as many as two million Africans were brutalized. Most of all, slaves and former slaves share their voices in this book, as active participants in the struggle against oppression. We meet characters with whom most of us are unfamiliar, such as Venture Smith, whose narrative of his life as a slave survived and speaks to us, and Caesar Vaarck, a slave executed for his role in the New York City slave rebellion—the "Great Negro Plot" of 1741. During the course of the book, we are also reacquainted with figures we have met before: Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, and Nat Turner.

The authors' Afterword restates their purpose, one that the reader should keep in mind. By 1860 there were approximately 4 million slaves, valued at 3 billion dollars in the United States. (215) They wanted to "set the record straight" and prove that even though the North went to war, in part, to end slavery, the Civil War "masked the economy and shared racism that bound the states together."

about this book (continued)

Slavery was not a southern institution; it owed its existence to the nation, specifically the North. And the legacy of slavery is certainly still with us. In their conclusion, the authors quote Philip Graham, a former publisher of *The Washington Post*, who argued that journalism is all about giving a rough draft of history—a "draft that will never be completed about a world we can never understand." Farrow, Lang, and Frank set out to change the original rough draft and instead offer to us a second.

One of *Complicity*'s greatest strengths is its reliance on archival information and research. The text is interspersed with a nearly limitless collection of statistics, photographs, maps, newspaper clippings, slave narratives, speeches, and letters. The pathos of slavery jumps out at every turn of the page, from the powerful silhouette of a slave woman named Flora, included on the bill of her sale, to the poignant photograph of African men with an 11-ton pile of elephant tusks—each weighing as much as 80 pounds—that they were forced to transport perhaps hundreds of miles across Africa.

This guide is designed to assist classroom teachers in using all or part of *Complicity*. It addresses each chapter in turn, with sections entitled "Setting the Stage" and "Chapter Themes and Content". These sections are followed by suggestions for class activities and discussion as well as suggested writing prompts and a section designed to make connections to other times and other topics in American history. The ten chapters are discrete, so the book can be read and examined in its entirety, or teachers can use selected chapters.

the foreword

Professor Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham contributed the foreword to *Complicity*. She reminds us of the dilemmas faced by the nation as it confronted slavery and then reconstruction, and uses the pardon of Jefferson Davis, supported by many Northerners, to focus our attention on the North's role in slavery. As she notes (and the authors confirm), there was much irony in this history, a history of "unlikely alliances and strange bedfellows." (xii) It was Massachusetts Bay Colony that officially sanctioned slavery—before Virginia did. The "city upon a hill" soon became a leading port in the slave trade. Later in the text, Rhode Island, the first colony to promote religious toleration and fairer treatment of Indians, assumes its role as the northern state that most supported the slave trade. As Higginbotham asserts, New England served as the birthplace of abolitionism and the home of William Lloyd Garrison, but there was also present there a "virulent racism." (xiii) As the nation evolved, paradoxes remained. Jacksonian "democracy" was not always so democratic. The abolitionist movement was divided as to just how to achieve its goal. Even characters in Harriet Beecher Stowe's iconic novel Uncle Tom's Cabin seem to equivocate when it comes to deciding what to do with former slaves. Free blacks were chased from public parks on the Fourth of July. And Jim Crow lived not only in the South but throughout the North.

Questions for Discussion

1. Before beginning our study of this book, think about the contradictions noted above. Why do you think they occurred?
2. In what ways do you think the North may have been "complicit" in slavery?

Classroom Activity

1. Set the stage for discussion and analysis of *Complicity* by reading aloud Frederick Douglass's *The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro* and selected segments of *The Declaration of Independence*. Several students should read these segments, alternating the two works. Conclude with a discussion of the paradoxes manifested here.

chapter one: Cotton Comes North

Setting the Stage

The authors conclude their introduction to *Complicity* with a quotation from W.E.B. DuBois' *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America*:

> "If the influence of economic motives on the action of mankind ever had a clearer illustration it was in the modern history of the African race, and particularly in America. I still saw slavery and the (slave) trade as chiefly a result of moral lassitude…. But apparently I did not clearly see that the real difficultly rested in the willingness of a privileged class of Americans to get power and comfort at the expense of degrading a class of black slaves, by not paying them what their labor deserved." (xxvii-xxix)

Students should keep this quotation in mind as they analyze this book, for this suggests an essential question: In what ways were both systemic racism and economic motives at the heart of the North's support for slavery?

Chapter Themes and Content

The introductory quotation for this chapter is a response given by a southern editor who, when asked, "What would New York be without slavery?" replied, "The ships would rot at her docks… and the glory of New York would be numbered with the things of the past." (3) The authors trace the dependence on slavery of the New York economy from the invention of the cotton gin in the 1790's to the outbreak of civil war (a period that saw the number of slaves in the nation increase from around 700,000 to nearly 4 million). Indeed, cotton was more than just another crop; it served as a "national currency." Forty cents of every dollar each planter earned from the sale of his cotton crop went to the North. New York was full of bankers, shippers, merchants, insurers and a multitude of others who made their living, and sometimes their fortunes, from cotton. The business community was therefore reluctant to interfere with the sometimes uneasy alliance between North and South. The authors juxtapose the increasingly close relationship between the North and the plantation South with the rise of the abolitionist movement. *Complicity* comes alive through the authors' focus on the role of individuals and powerfully tells their stories. In this chapter, William Lloyd Garrison plays a central role, and the tension between Garrison's movement and the cotton establishment in the North is palpable.

Classroom Activities and Questions for Discussion

1. Slavery was certainly an issue when the Framers met to write the Constitution. In order to get support from all of the 13 states, these men found it necessary to compromise on the issue of slavery. Examine those compromises and analyze the context in which they were made.
2. Advertisements tell us much about material culture and the role of technology. Read the advertisement on page 22. How does this advertisement differ from advertisements you might see today? Examine some of the statistics in this chapter about the phenomenal growth of the cotton industry in the years following the invention of the cotton gin. What do these statistics tell us about the economic, political, and social effects of technology?
3. Conduct a panel discussion with students assuming these roles: William Lloyd Garrison; Nat Turner; one of the "merchant princes" described in the text; New York City mayor Fernando Wood; one of the "Lowell girls"; and Abraham Lincoln. Each speaker is to describe his view of the cotton industry, slavery, and the relationship between the North and the South.

chapter one: Cotton Comes North (continued)

Suggestions for Writing

1. Read William Lloyd Garrison's *Prospectus* from the first edition of *The Liberator*. Analyze his arguments against slavery, paying particular attention to his use of language and rhetorical devices to strengthen these arguments.
2. This chapter also introduces the political battle that was brewing over slavery: the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, "Bleeding Kansas," and the election of Abraham Lincoln. Read both of Lincoln's inaugural addresses, delivered in 1861 and 1865. Compare and contrast these addresses in terms of three of the following: context, position on slavery, use of religious references, audience, tone. Account for changes in Lincoln's views.

Making Connections

1. It is clear that American consumer culture played a significant role in the North's complicity in slavery. Find a contemporary example of how 21st century American consumerism influences the lives of workers in another country: Discussion could include use of forced labor, role of multi-national corporations, and the effect of the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA).

chapter two: First Fortunes

Setting the Stage

John Winthrop, the leader of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, addressed the Puritan colonists as they were about to arrive at their new home. In this sermon, Winthrop delivered what is perhaps his most famous line, "We shall be as a City upon a Hill. The eyes of all people are upon us." (45) While examining this chapter, students should keep this admonition in mind and analyze to what extent the Puritans proved not always to be the upright and moral folks we generally consider them to be. Students should also keep in mind a quotation from historian Bernard Bailyn that is central to the focus of the chapter: "New England was not a slave society…. But it was slavery nevertheless that made the commercial economy of New England possible." (48)

Chapter Themes and Content

This chapter takes us back to colonial days and examines the development of the New England economy, an economy largely dependent on slavery. It focuses on the first New England colonists and traces the troubling duality of Massachusetts Bay as both a haven for religious freedom with its norms of pious and simple living—America's "moral womb"—and its development as an "entrepreneurial incubator." (45) The key players in this chapter are the Winthrops—John and his son Henry, a Barbados sugar planter. New Englanders and their fellow colonists in the Mid-Atlantic region not only owned slaves themselves, but they produced food and supplies for the West Indian plantations and sugar mills. The chapter examines the famous "triangular trade" and the significance of molasses and rum to the New England economy.

Classroom Activities and Questions for Discussion

1. John Winthrop said, "It pleased the Lord to open us a trade to Barbados and other islands in the West Indies." (55) Why and in what ways did the colonists develop a religious justification for slavery?
2. Examine the map of Colonial Rum Distilleries on page 52. On a sheet of butcher paper, visually demonstrate the connections between the molasses, rum, the New England colonies (and New York) and the slave trade.

Suggestions for Writing

1. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904), Max Weber argues that the tenets of Protestantism—and in this case Puritanism—fostered capitalism and modern capitalist institutions. Keeping Weber in mind, account for the emphasis on and growth of economic prosperity in Puritan New England.

chapter three: A Connecticut Slave

Setting the Stage

In 1760, there were at least 41,000 slaves in the northern colonies. Northerners paternalistically justified slavery in the North as benign and "family-style." However the reality was that slaves were still viewed as property and subject to beatings, the breakup of their families, forced physical labor, and the regulation of their lives by the onerous and restrictive black codes of the North. No statement of the slave's desperate situation is more powerful than the bill of sale shown on page 62 with the silhouette of a "certain Negro Wench named Flora" superimposed on it. This is the image to keep in mind while proceeding through this chapter.

Chapter Themes and Content

Chapter Three begins with the confrontation between a slave, Venture Smith, and his mistress, Elizabeth Stanton. The chapter makes use of a powerful device—the personal narrative—to recount the horrors of slavery in the North, specifically through Venture Smith's lens as a slave in Connecticut. Venture's personal narrative has survived along with only a handful of others. As our text states, these narratives share a "leitmotif of abuse" (66) and demonstrate "a fragile truce frequently interrupted by open warfare." (67) The theme of slave resistance is central to this chapter, as slaves used both active and passive resistance against their masters and tried to gain some control over their lives. We also meet Sojourner Truth who was born about 70 years after Venture Smith and who, in her famous speech *Ain't I a Woman?*, became a symbol of the link between resistance to slavery and the fight for women's rights.

Classroom Activities and Questions for Discussion

1. Read aloud Sojourner Truth's famous 1851 speech to the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio where she so poignantly argues for the rights of both slaves and women. Examine the efforts of women abolitionists in antebellum America. Why is it that women took such an active role in reform movements?
2. Compare a Northern black code from the 18th century to a Reconstruction era black code, such as the Mississippi Black Code of 1865 .

chapter three: A Connecticut Slave (continued)

Suggestions for Writing

1. The personal colonial narrative serves as a valuable medium for conveying the experiences and reflections of individuals—individuals who are not normally considered to be among the famous, rich, and powerful figures whom we often study. Read segments of two slave narratives, those of Venture Smith (available online) and Olaudah Equaino (He is discussed in Chapter Five.) Compare the experiences of the two slaves and their reflections on these experiences.

Making Connections

1. Read and analyze a contemporary personal narrative. Analyze the ways in which personal narratives contribute to the understanding of the society about which the author writes and how these narratives give us a different perspective from that addressed by history texts, novels, or other secondary accounts.
2. On page 71 is a discussion of what we can learn about slaves and the work they did by examining newspaper advertisements for runaway slaves. We can also use advertisements to examine popular culture, work, and leisure in contemporary society. Look closely at the advertisements in a current newspaper or magazine. What do these ads tell us about our society—especially in terms of what they demonstrate about the American economy, consumerism, and work. If you can, find advertisements from magazine of different eras and analyze those.

chapter four: Rebellion in Manhattan

Setting the Stage

Slaves, both in the United States and in the West Indies were not passive in the face of tyranny. Indeed, they often violently resisted their oppressors. The 1791 Toussaint L'Overture rebellion in Haiti, Nat Turner's 1831 revolt in Virginia, and the 1739 Stono uprising in South Carolina serve as powerful examples of violent resistance. Chapter Four chronicles some lesser-known examples, primarily what was to become known as the "Great Negro Plot" of 1741. During the 18th century, New York was "building a contract with slavery," and it is within this context that a conflagration struck.

Chapter Themes and Content

In 1741, Fort George in Lower Manhattan was set afire. Other fires had been set earlier that winter, and more followed. Arrests were made, and trials ensued. Farrow, Lang, and Frank examine the testimony at these trials and consider the theme of tension—in this case the tension felt by New Yorkers as they needed the labor of slaves yet felt some ambivalence toward slavery. This chapter's effectiveness rests with the authors' very detailed narrative of one particular slave revolt, encouraging the reader to make generalizations about other revolts—generalizations about the lack of options for angry slaves, the role whites played in undermining black codes, and the nature of the justice system. Central to the unfolding of this real-life drama are the parts played in this rebellion by Caesar Vaarck, a "slave who refused to behave like one" and Quack Roosevelt, both of whom were executed.

Classroom Activities and Questions for Discussion

1. Two "rebellions" occurred in New York City, both reflecting the tensions between blacks and whites. These make up the "Great Negro Plot" of 1741 described in *Complicity*; the other was the draft riot of 1863. Compare these in terms of context, actions, reactions of city officials, and their impact.
2. Complete a chart outlining the various slave rebellions—those which materialized and those which were planned but aborted—mentioned in this book and in most United States history texts: the revolts of L'Overture, Nat Turner, Denmark Vessey, Gabriel Prosser, and the Stono uprising. Compare them in terms of context, goals, events, and effects. What accounted for the successes or failures of these revolts? Were these revolts "worth it"? Is it appropriate to use violence to combat violence and, if so, in what situations?
3. Mary Burton, a teen-aged indentured servant played a central role in his rebellion. Examine the institution of indentured servitude and compare it to slavery. Why did indentured servitude end in the United States while slavery survived? How, in this case, did the prosecution use Mary Burton and her condition of indenture to convict slaves and sentence them to death?
4. Review the principles contained in the Bill of Rights as they relate to Americans' rights to a fair trial. Examine the trials of the participants in the 1741 rebellion. To what extent was the Bill of Rights applied in these trials?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Read William Styron's compelling novel *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. Analyze the context and the nature of his rebellion. In what ways was religion a double-edged sword for the slave owner? What factors do you take into consideration when forming your judgments about Nat Turner?
2. Read Kevin Baker's recent novel, *Paradise Alley*. How does Baker use the characters' individual narratives to provide different lenses into the events of July 1863 in New York? Examine the tensions between blacks and the Irish and how these tensions resulted in tragedy.

Making Connections

1. In 1991, construction workers discovered a graveyard containing the remains of many of the first slaves brought to New York. These remains showed signs of beatings, malnutrition, and early death. This burial ground is now designated a National Historic Landmark, although the building housing the library and much of the research on these slaves was destroyed on September 11, 2001. Go online and find more details about both this discovery and slavery in New York. Share your findings with your class.
2. Newspaper publisher John Peter Zenger is mentioned on page 83. What was Zenger's contribution was to the American tradition of freedom of the press?

chapter five: Newport Rum, African Slaves

Setting the Stage

When Roger Williams was banished from Massachusetts and settled on Rhode Island in 1636, he founded a colony unique in New England, and indeed in all of the colonies. Williams believed that the state had no right to interfere with one's religious beliefs, and he voiced concerns that the land given to the settlers of Massachusetts was not rightfully purchased from the Indians. Rhode Island appealed to individuals with an independent streak and accepted those often regarded as "riff-raff." Despite its tolerance for diversity, Rhode Island monopolized the western Atlantic slave trade; In the 100 years between 1700 and the end of the legal slave trade in 1808, ships departing from Rhode Island departed on nearly 1,000 voyages to Africa and returned with at least 100,000 slaves. (95) As Senator William Smith of South Carolina reminded his colleague from Rhode Island, "I would show the Senate that those people who most deprecate the evils of slavery and traffic in human flesh, when a profitable market can be found, can sell human flesh with as easy a conscience as they sell other articles." (112)

Chapter Themes and Content

Rum and slaves formed an unholy alliance in Rhode Island, making Rhode Island the unquestioned leader in its participation in the slave trade, both before and after the American Revolution. The theme of contrast is evident here—in the mansions of Newport and the degradation of slavery, in the fact that the leaders of the Rhode Island slave trade did not generally sail the slave ships but instead owned them, and in the presence of slave ship captains in church pews on Sunday and at the Fellowship Club where they could not swear, gamble, or drink excessively. Seventy percent of all colonial slave voyages began in Rhode Island. Most of the wealthy and powerful in Rhode Island profited in some way from slavery, including John Brown who, with his brothers founded Brown University. Some, however spoke out against slavery, such as the Reverend Samuel Hopkins and customs collector William Ellery.

The Rhode Island slave trade was part of a very vicious cycle. Molasses was imported in to Rhode Island. There it was made into rum and used to purchase more slaves for the West Indian sugar plantations—plantations that prospered due to slave labor. The authors, with extensive documentation, explain just how the slave trade operated. They supply us with powerful details, such as the purchase by one slave captain of two slaves, a boy and a girl, for 156 gallons of rum and a barrel of flour. (104) The chapter is replete with the dangers faced by the slave ships, including disease and revolt.

Classroom Activities and Questions for Discussion

1. The book draws a comparison between slave traders and slave masters and suggests that despite the fact that historians have tended to excuse the traders and focus their criticism on the master, that "for better or worse, the lord of the plantation had to coexist with his slaves. The slave trader had only to deliver them." (108) Why did the authors make this point? Do you see these two men—trader and master—as any different? Is one more or less to blame than the other?

Suggestions for Writing

1. The slave trade flourished in the 18th century, in a century called "The Age of Reason, or the "Enlightenment." Using specific references to Enlightenment ideals, explain why this happened.
2. Address the apparent contradiction between Thomas Jefferson's attempt to include a statement against slavery in the Declaration of Independence and his ownership of slaves.

Making Connections

1. One of the nation's most prestigious universities, Brown University, was founded by a family who were among Rhode Island's most notorious slave traders. Should the university's board of directors attempt to change the university's name? Examine some other institutions that bear the name of people who made their fortunes in ways that some would consider wrong. For instance, the Duke family of Duke University fame made its money from the tobacco industry. Enron Corporation paid millions to give its name to a sports stadium in Houston (though that name has been changed.) What do you think?
2. Examine the painting *Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam* (103). What can we learn from this painting? Genre painting was very popular in the 18th century, especially in Holland. Why do you think the grand paintings of the previous centuries, portraying religious events and mythological stories, were often supplanted by genre paintings? Why is it that Holland, a commercial nation, took the lead in this art form?

chapter six: New York's Slave Pirates

Setting the Stage

In February 1862, Nathaniel Gordon, the only American ever put to death for his participation in the slave trade, was executed, and the focus of *Complicity* turns back to New York. Congress had banned the slave trade in 1808, Why was it, nearly 55 years later, that a northern sea captain found his way to the gallows?

Chapter Themes and Content

Just as an animal becomes more dangerous when threatened, as more and more nations abolished slavery, and as the Civil War approached, the illegal slave trade became "more profitable, and, if possible, more horrific." (126) This chapter examines the role New York played in the now illegal slave trade in the years between 1808 and the Civil War. Many were complicit in this trade: shipbuilders, captains, customs agents, lawyers, and the U.S. Navy. American ships were protected by the flag they flew, as foreign nations could not seize American vessels. As the authors acknowledge, this trade was so flagrant, it was "barely clandestine." (122) Most of the illegally traded slaves were sent to Brazil where slavery was still legal.

chapter six: New York's Slave Pirates (continued)

Classroom Activities and Questions for Discussion

1. Slavery was abolished in the United States in 1865. Go online and download a list of the dates on which other nations abolished slavery. Why was the United States, ostensibly the most democratic nation in the world in the 19th century, one of the last to end slavery? Select five major world nations and research the context in which each abolished slavery.
2. Examine the role of the media as presented in *Complicity*. For example, in June 1861, the *New York Daily Tribune* struck a blow against the slave trade, arguing that "it will be necessary to purge the courts and offices of these pimps of piracy, who are well known, and at the proper time will receive their desserts." (126) How and why did the position of the media change from colonial days?
3. Study the photograph of the three survivors of the *Wanderer* (135). Consider what Ward Lee said: "I am bound for my old home if God be with me white or black yellow or the red. I am an old African (135)." Talk with your classmates about this quotation. It says volumes about slavery.
4. Watch the film *Amistad*. Compare the rebellion portrayed in that film with the book's recounting of rebellions on other ships. *Complicity* regards Amistad as "an anomaly." What do the authors mean?

Suggestions for Writing

1. This chapter addresses the question of how those who sanctioned or abetted slavery should be punished. The black scholar W.E.B Du Bois, writing in the "progressive era," offers that "One cannot, to be sure, demand of whole nations exceptional moral foresight and heroism; but a certain hard common sense… must be expected in every progressive people. In some respects we as a nation seem to lack this; we have the somewhat inchoate idea that we are not destined to be harassed with great social questions, and that even if we are, and fail to answer them, the fault is with the question and not with us." (132-133)

   Restate, in your words, Du Bois' statement. How do you think he defined "moral foresight," "heroism," and "common sense?" What are some of the "great social questions" to which Du Bois refers? Do you agree with his characterization of Americans?

chapter seven: The Other Underground Railroad

Setting the Stage

Free blacks were often kidnapped in the North and sent to the South. This became even more frequent after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. As William Parker, an escaped slave noted in his memoir: "Kidnapping… was so common… that we were kept in constant fear. We would hear of slaveholders or kidnappers every two or three weeks/ sometimes a part of white men would break into a house and take a man away; no one knew where; again a whole family might be carried off. There was no power to protect them, nor prevent it." (142)

Chapter Themes and Content

The underground railroad in question here is one that ran in the wrong direction—as blacks in large numbers were kidnapped and taken to the South. The theme of the continuing failure of government to protect blacks is once again central to the text. Heroism is another theme. One of the heroes in this chapter is David Ruggles, the leader of a New York black defense association. Among the blacks he sheltered was Frederick Douglass who wrote in 1855, "New York, seventeen years ago, was less a place of safety for the runaway than now." (140-141) Another hero is William Parker, an escaped slave who fought against enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 in southeastern Pennsylvania, especially against the notorious "Gap Gang." The governments of some northern states did begin to pass laws aimed at preventing abductions. However, the courts entered the battle on the side of slave-owners. Famous cases such as the Dred Scott case and lesser known cases such as Prigg v. Pennsylvania affirmed the "right" of slave-owners to their "property." Chapter Seven also introduces us to the Cannon Gang, led by Patty Cannon; who waged a campaign of terror and death on northern blacks for over 15 years.

Classroom Activities and Questions for Discussion

1. Most high school history students are familiar with the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and assume that prior to 1850, free blacks and former slaves were safe in the North. Why do textbooks not sufficiently address the original fugitive slave legislation signed by George Washington in 1793 and the many, many abductions that occurred prior to 1850?
2. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 did not stand alone. It was part of a number of bills collectively known as "The Compromise of 1850." What else was included in this package? Why do you think the North conceded on the issue of fugitive slaves? What did northern legislators believe they gained in this compromise legislation?
3. Read aloud segments of Ralph Waldo Emerson's response to the Fugitive Slave Law. As Emerson states at the start, "I do not often speak to public questions —they are odious and hurtful, and it seems like meddling or leaving your work… And then I see what havoc it makes with any good mind." Why then does Emerson speak out so passionately against this law? Examine his use of language; how does he use language to make his point? Is it easier for an intellectual, one who is not a politician, to speak out on political issues? What advantages and disadvantages does someone like Emerson—one removed from the political scene—have when addressing a "public issue?"

chapter seven: The Other Underground Railroad (continued)

Suggestions for Writing

1. In 1830, Daniel Webster, one of the three titans in the U.S. Senate in antebellum America, delivered a powerful speech where he seems to understand that a great crisis was ahead. Read the last page of Webster's *Second Speech on Foot's Resolution* where he expresses his concerns for the welfare of the nation and speaks forcefully against the South's claim to the right of nullification. Twenty years after that, Webster voted for the Fugitive Slave Act. How do you reconcile Webster's place in the annals of history as a thoughtful and passionate patriot who tried to do the right thing with his support for the Fugitive Slave Law? In your essay, make specific reference to Webster's speech.
2. With reference to his *Autobiography*, analyze the role of Frederick Douglass in expanding the debate over slavery in antebellum America.

Making Connections

1. When an injustice occurs, individuals are faced with the dilemma of holding firm to their beliefs and refusing to compromise or taking what some would consider a more pragmatic approach and compromising for the sake of making "progress". Which do you believe is the right thing to do? Find some contemporary examples and discuss this dilemma with reference to them. Examples might be President Bill Clinton's support of the "Don't ask, don't tell" policy on gays in the military, or the position of members of Congress who are opposed to the war in Iraq but are willing to compromise on American troop withdrawal.

chapter eight: Hated Heroes

Setting the Stage

The authors introduce Chapter Eight with the statement that radical abolitionists were viewed as, "Amalgamationists, dupes, fanatics, foreign agents, and incendiaries." Even in the North, to say nothing of the South, those who passionately fought for abolition were ridiculed and suppressed.

Chapter Themes and Content

This chapter focuses on three people who, in different ways, fought to ensure the rights of Americans to free blacks and slaves. Two of these, Elijah Lovejoy and John Brown, are generally well known and discussed in history textbooks; the third, Prudence Crandall, is not. This chapter recounts the lives and actions of these three, and causes us to look again at the theme of "compromise": when it is appropriate to compromise and when it is not. Crandall opened a school "for the reception of young ladies and little misses of color" in Connecticut. The hostility of her neighbors, actions of the Connecticut legislature, and her arrest for breaking state law, eventually forced Crandall to shut the doors of her school and leave her home. Elijah Lovejoy was the publisher of the *Observer*, an Illinois newspaper. He was also an abolitionist. On November 7, 1837, Lovejoy and some supporters were guarding the warehouse where his new printing press had just arrived. A mob attacked, and Lovejoy was killed. John Brown, who was so audacious that he invited black people to dine with his family, was at "the epicenter" of the debate over slavery. His final stand against slavery was made at Harper's Ferry Virginia, when he commandeered a federal army and was arrested and executed. Many regard him as a martyr; others consider him a fanatic.

Classroom Activities and Questions for Discussion

1. This chapter uses the term "radical" to describe some abolitionists. Examine the political continuum and develop a working definition of terms that we often use but do not often define well—terms like radical, reactionary, liberal, conservative. What is the relevance of these terms to this chapter and to the text as a whole?
2. The actions of the three Americans at the center of this chapter did not occur in isolation. Evaluate the political, economic, and social factors that played a role in their struggle against oppression.
3. Find two or three textbook accounts of the life and actions of John Brown. Compare those attacks to the discussion of Brown in *Complicity*. Does your opinion of John Brown change as you read different sources?
4. Assign roles to students and conduct a panel discussion between the following players in this chapter: William Lloyd Garrison, Prudence Crandall, a trustee of Crandall's school, a state legislator from Connecticut, Andrew Judson—the attorney who prosecuted Crandall, Elijah Lovejoy, one of Lovejoy's friends, John Brown, Stephen A. Douglass—the author of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Robert E. Lee—the man who captured Brown, an abolitionist who agreed with Brown's goals but questioned his methods, and Henry David Thoreau. Participants should discuss their views on slavery, their background and the reasons they hold those views, and the specific events chronicled in this chapter.
5. The 40 years before the outbreak of the Civil War saw the nation engaged in a debate over the federal government's role in regulating slavery. Develop a chart of the key events in this debate. Examine the leaders, the events, the questions they attempted to answer, the outcomes, and the impacts. Events should include the Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and the Dred Scott decision.
6. How does gender impact the conversation about this chapter? Do you think gender entered into the opposition to Crandall's girls' school?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Read John Brown's 1859 speech to the court as he was sentenced and prepared to go to his death. Analyze Brown's speech in terms of his objectives in making it, his tone, his use of language, and his willingness to go to his death.

Making Connections

1. This chapter focuses on heroes. How do you define a hero? What makes a hero? Describe three of your heroes. Why did you choose them? How have they affected your life?
2. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the two best-known black leaders in America, Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois debated the future of black Americans. This debate centered around access to education and the question of the rights blacks should demand in the new industrial America. Read Booker T. Washington's *Speech at the Atlanta Exposition* and W.E.B. Du Bois' critique of Washington in his *The Souls of Black Folk*. How and why do their views differ? How does the context in which they lived and worked affect their positions?
3. The French essayist Michel de Montaigne wrote an essay, *On Virtue*. According to Montaigne, what makes a person virtuous? Based on Montaigne's criteria, are the men and women in this chapter and those you chose as your heroes virtuous?

chapter nine: Philadelphia's Race Scientist

Setting the Stage

In 1773, Phillis Wheatley, a teenaged slave in Boston, published a book of poetry. White New Englanders were mystified, as they believed that blacks were racially inferior, and Wheatley must be either a "freak" or a "fraud" to have written such elegant poetry. Respected Americans, including Thomas Jefferson, subscribed to the idea that black inferiority might be "an unchangeable law of nature." (181) By the middle of the 19th century, belief in white supremacy in the United States was buttressed by the work of men who used "science" to support their views.

Chapter Themes and Content

Chapter nine traces the development of "race science" in the years between the American Revolution and the Civil War. White Americans searched for a "rational" justification for slavery, and scientists helped them find it. The chapter examines the emergence of this race science through examination of the work of respected scientists, men such as Samuel Morton and Louis Agassiz. Following the Civil War, the United States government even consulted Agassiz for advice on how to deal with freed slaves. He warned, "Beware of any policy which may bring our own race to their level." (183) Morton, Agassiz, and others lived at a time when science was coming into its own as a discipline based on experimentation. They convinced the American public that this experimentation proved that, for instance, the cranial capacity of black people was smaller than that of whites. The chapter closes with a quotation from Abraham Lincoln: "I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race." (191)

Classroom Activities and Questions for Discussion

1. Examine Phillis Wheatley's book of poetry.
   a. Read the notice "To the Publick" at the start of her book. This is the verification by a noted committee that, indeed, the work is her own. "We, whose names are under-written, do assure the World, that the POEMS specified in the following Page, are written by Phillis, a young Negro Girl." Examine and analyze the language in this letter. Note the use of words such as "uncultivated Barbarian." Why was this letter written, and what impact might it have had on the original readers of her works?
   b. Select two or three of Wheatley's poems. Read aloud and discuss her themes, use of language, and references both to slavery and morality. Why, for instance, does she not clearly address the issue of racial equality, but does make inferences about injustice? (Wheatley's poetry can be found online.)
2. As scientists began to develop a racial "justification" for the inferiority of black Americans, a clash between science and religion resulted. Analyze the different interpretations of creation offered by science and religion.

Suggestions for Writing

1. Science is frequently at the heart of controversy. Choose a contemporary controversy that involves the use and interpretation of "scientific" findings. Analyze this controversy, paying particular attention to its implications for public policy.

chapter ten: Plunder for Pianos

Setting the Stage

"This modest little structure suggests that its story is steeped in the blood of perhaps 2 million black people." (193) The structure in question is a "bleach house," a structure used in New England to process ivory tusks into piano keys, billiard balls, and other Victorian consumer items. By the middle of the 19th century, and lasting until the mid 20th century, the piano business thrived, highly dependent on the ivory that was used as a veneer on the instrument's keys. Between 1884 and 1911, for example, almost 10 million pounds of ivory were brought into the United States, with a current value of about $310 million. Though slavery had ended in the United States, the American demand for ivory contributed to the injury, death, and exploitation of at least 2 million Africans.

Chapter Themes and Content

This chapter introduces an aspect of commercial exploitation that is not often explored in the classroom—the development and horror of the ivory trade in the 19th and 20th centuries. Two Connecticut companies pioneered and led the world in turning elephants' teeth into ivory for commercial use. The statistics are astounding. One elephant tusk (the front incisor of an African elephant) weighed around 80 pounds, was carried up to 1,000 miles by African laborers, and produced a thin veneer for 45 piano keyboards. That same tusk could also yield five billiard balls. The demand for these products was fueled by the rapid increase in industrial production, the growing American middle class, its increased prosperity, and its demand for products to use in its expanding leisure time. As the authors note, in the mid 19th century the possession of a piano for the parlor became perhaps the single most widely accepted indicator of status in a "cultured home." (203) In the thirty years between 1870 and 1900, one Connecticut company acquired at least 200,000 ivory tusks.(209) The forced labor used to harvest and transport these tusks was African. A witness to this tragedy, the explorer Henry Stanley estimated that an African died for every pound of ivory taken. By the 1950's American piano makers no longer used ivory, but the damage was done and the centuries-long "complicity" continued to bear fruit, as African nations and their peoples struggled in the post-World War II years to overcome the effects of imperialism and exploitation.

Classroom Activities and Questions for Discussion

1. Once again a paradox deserves attention here, one which a historian has called "the bifurcated mind" of 19th century commerce. (202) What is meant by this? For example, Julius Pratt, a leader in the antebellum Connecticut abolitionist movement, was also a "forward looking" businessman who made a fortune from ivory. How should we judge Pratt and men like him? Did the good they did override the bad? In an age of vast industrial expansion where men were respected for their business skills, was Pratt to blame for the exploitation of Africans?

Suggestions for Writing

1. Study the Julius Pratt & Co. poster on page 212. Contrast the images on this poster with the reality of life in Africa for the laborer forced into the ivory trade.
2. Read Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Examine his portrayal of the ivory trade and its impact on black Africans.

chapter ten: Plunder for Pianos (continued)

Making Connections

1. Today, the Congo is one of the most troubled nations on the planet—wracked by civil war and desperate poverty. Examine the factors that have led the Congo to where it is today. How has the legacy of western imperialism contributed to the situation in the Congo? Keep in mind that when Congo gained its independence, there were only 16 people in the entire country who were college graduates, out of a population of 13 million. (Source for this – *The West: Encounters and Transformations*, Brian Levack. et. al, Pearson Education, Inc. 2004 p. 940) Today there are only 300 miles of paved roads in the nation.

about the guide's writer

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Schick has received three grants from National Endowment for the Humanities, served as the master teacher for a fourth NEH program, Worlds of the Renaissance, was a Fulbright-Hays fellow for summer study and travel in Thailand and Laos, studied in Cambridge, England through a grant from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and participated in a United States Institute of Peace summer program. She has been recognized four times by the White House as a Presidential Scholar Distinguished Teacher, named by her students who were Presidential Scholars as their most influential teacher. She was selected by the Gilder Lehrman Institute as the New Mexico United States History Teacher of the Year and was the 2005 New Mexico Teacher of the Year.