

Day 2

Section 2: Learning to Live as a Slave Chapters 6-9

Vocabulary and Terms:

Loquacious- *talkative*

Bayou- *a body of water, similar to a creek, that flows slowly through marshy land*

Slave Market- *a place or opportunity to gather to buy, sell, or trade slaves*

Verdure- *green vegetation*

Crib- *a slatted bin for storage of grain*

Chattel Mortgage- *the transfer or rights to a movable piece of personal property (a slave in this case) in return for a loan of money with the understanding that the rights end when the loan is paid*

Overseer -*supervisor*

Stocks- *a wooden frame with holes to hold the feet, possibly the feet and hands, or the neck, once used to punish a wrongdoer publicly*

Piazza - *a porch, or a public square or walk*

(It is important to note that the word “piazza” was not and is not used in southern Louisiana. The use of this word instead of “porch” or “gallery” is an effect of the ghostwriter, as Dr. Eakin states in her notes (number 92, p.291) Discuss with the students what other effects ghostwriters might have on a manuscript, this one in particular. Possibilities include vocabulary or terms that the original first-person writer may not have used, as well as differences in grammar, syntax, and spelling of words.)

Matching:

1. Loquacious
 2. Bayou
 3. Slave Market
 4. Verdure
 5. Crib
 6. Chattel Mortgage
 7. Overseer
 8. Stocks
 9. Piazza
- A. *green vegetation*
 - B. *a wooden frame with holes to hold the feet, possibly the feet and hands, or the neck, once used to punish a wrongdoer publicly*
 - C. *supervisor*
 - D. *a body of water, similar to a creek, that flows slowly through marshy land*
 - E. *a porch, or a public square or walk*
 - F. *a slatted bin for storage of grain*
 - G. *a place or opportunity to gather to buy, sell, or trade slaves*
 - H. *the transfer or rights to a movable piece of personal property (a slave in this case) in return for a loan of money with the understanding that the rights end when the loan is paid*
 - I. *talkative*

Detail Questions:

Chapter 6

- 1. What were the slaves required to do to get ready for the arrival of potential purchasers?**
- 2. The slave sales at Freeman's Slave Pen kept some families together, as in the case of David and Caroline, but other families were torn apart. Which slave had to say goodbye to both of her young children, never to see them again?**
- 3. Solomon still held hope for making an escape. At the slave market, one potential purchaser raised those hopes for Solomon. What job was this gentleman wanting to fill? Why did this opportunity seem like a good possibility for Solomon to escape? Did the gentleman return to purchase Solomon?**
- 4. What disease did many of the slaves from the brig Orleans contract?**
- 5. When the purchaser saw how distraught Eliza was at the prospect of leaving her last child, he regretted causing her so much pain. What did he offer Freeman? Why did Freeman refuse to sell Emily?**

Chapter 7

- 6. Who was Solomon's new master, and where did he live?**
- 7. What is the name of the bayou around which Master Ford was widely known?**
- 8. Describe Master Ford. What was Solomon's personal opinion of him?**
- 9. Did Solomon ever tell Ford his true identity and circumstances? Why or why not? How did Solomon feel about keeping his secret from Ford?**
- 10. On the journey from Alexandria to Ford's home in the Great Pine Woods, what act of Ford's showed his compassion for his slaves?**
- 11. What observation did Solomon make concerning the personality of Ford and the labor provided by his slaves? How did Solomon's observation apply to ruthless slave owners as he saw later?**
- 12. The goal of pleasing Ford led Solomon to suggest a project intended to cut Ford's costs. What was the project, and was it successful? Who did not support Solomon's idea and thought it would not work? How did this doubt affect Solomon?**

13. After the mill contract was completed, Solomon used his carpentry skills to build something Mistress Ford requested for the slaves' benefit. What did he build, and why was it desired by Mistress Ford?

14. What was the name of the carpenter hired by Ford, and to whom Solomon was told to assist? Describe him.

Chapter 8

15. Why did Ford sell Solomon (Platt) to John Tibeats?

16. Who did Solomon become reacquainted with upon getting to Bayou Boeuf? What was this person's condition?

17. What kind of a master was Tibeats? Was he likable and conscientious as was Ford, or was he brutal and crass, as was Freeman?

18. What were the circumstances of the fight between Solomon and Tibeats?

What was Solomon's (Platt's) reaction?

Chapin heard Tibeats' screams from the field and came quickly. What was his reaction upon hearing the circumstances of the fight?

What could the sentence for Solomon have been, given Louisiana's laws at that time?

19. Upon Tibeats' return, what did he and his two companions do to Solomon? Did Solomon fight this time?

Was Solomon optimistic about the outcome?

What did Chapin do upon seeing this develop?

Chapter 9

20. Did Chapin unbind Solomon? What are some possible reasons for this? What was Chapin's demeanor regarding Solomon's circumstances?

21. When Ford returned, what did he do?

22. Where was Solomon told to sleep that night? Why?

23. To whom was Solomon subsequently hired? What sort of man was he?

24. When Tanner was preparing to be absent for a short time, what did he tell Solomon (Platt) to do? Did Solomon follow the directions exactly? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions:

- 1. When Tibcats tried to whip Solomon for unsatisfactory work and using nails of a different size that Tibcats wanted, Solomon fought back and would not allow himself to be whipped for following directions as they had been given. In your opinion, why did Solomon acquiesce to Tibcats' wishes of binding and attempted hanging of him upon his (Tibcats') return?**
- 2. Compare and contrast the masters that Solomon has encountered to up to this point. Did the level of education these men had play a role in their demeanor and treatment of slaves? In your opinion, did the fact that Tibcats began as an overseer then became a master have any bearing on his treatment of his slaves?**

Audio Clip for Section 2:

Chapter 6

Page 45-46 Eliza's Little Girl Sold

This clip shows the agony of slave families torn apart, the unfeeling attitude of some slave traders, and the compassion of some slave owners. From this example, it was strictly business to the slave traders, the goal being to make the most money. They were dealing with property, not families.

Matching: Key

- 1.I
- 2.D
- 3.G
- 4.A
- 5.F
- 6.H
- 7.C
- 8.B
- 9.E

Detail Questions: Key

Chapter 6

1. What were the slaves required to do to get ready for the arrival of potential purchasers?

They were required to wash well and the men were required to shave beards. The slaves were provided with cheap but clean clothes (suits for the men, frocks (dresses) for the women) and the women were told to wrap their heads in handkerchiefs. They were then made to line up, tallest to shortest, men in one line and women in another. (p40)

2. The slave sales at Freeman's Slave Pen kept some families together, as in the case of David and Caroline, but other families were torn apart. Which slave had to say goodbye to both of her young children, never to see them again?

Eliza was sold with Solomon and Harry to the same master, but her son Randall was sold to a different purchaser and her daughter Emily (Emmy) was not sold at this time. (p42, p45)

3. Solomon still held hope for making an escape. At the slave market, one potential purchaser raised those hopes for Solomon. What job was this gentleman wanting to fill? Why did this opportunity seem like a good possibility for Solomon to escape?

The gentleman wanted a coachman and was interested in purchasing Solomon, though the purchase price was too high. Solomon saw this as a possible opportunity for escape because the gentleman was from New Orleans, and Solomon saw the potential for escape on a Northern-bound boat. (p41, p43)

Did the gentleman return to purchase Solomon?

No, much to Solomon's disappointment. He kept hoping the gentleman would return. (p43)

4. What disease did many of the slaves from the brig Orleans contract?

Small pox. (p43)

5. When the purchaser saw how distraught Eliza was at the prospect of leaving her last child, he regretted causing her so much pain. What did he offer Freeman?

He told Freeman the young girl was not profitable to him now, but to keep her and her mother together he would purchase both. (p45)

Why did Freeman refuse to sell Emily?

He said he could make a great deal of money selling her in a few years. (p45)

Chapter 7

6. Who was Solomon's new master, and where did he live?

The new master's name was William Ford. He lived in the "Great Pine Woods" next to the Red River, and located in Avoyelles Parish.

7. What is the name of the bayou around which Master Ford was widely known?

Bayou Boeuf.

8. Describe Master Ford. What was Solomon's personal opinion of him?

Ford was at this time a rich man, having his home and plantation in the Great Pine Woods, and a lumber mill not far away. Also, with his wife's right they had a plantation on Bayou Boeuf. Ford did not fit the general idea that many had of slave-owners, that of ruthless, uncaring, potentially violent men such as Burch or Freeman. Ford, by great contrast, was in fact known as a man of God, reading the Scriptures to the slaves. Solomon held him in great regard and affection for his kindness, nobility, and caring demeanor, as is revealed in this quotation from the book: "Were all men such as he, Slavery would be deprived of more than half its bitterness." (p49)

9. Did Solomon ever tell Ford his true identity and circumstances? Why or why not?

No, he was not sure of the nature of the possible ramifications. He considered it on several occasions, believing in Ford's good nature, but never told of his actual circumstances because of the possibility of punishment.

How did Solomon feel about keeping his secret from Ford?

He believed it would have been to his benefit to have been fully honest with Ford. However, after Ford's financial embarrassments and Solomon's eventual transfer to other masters whose manners contrasted heavily with Ford's, he knew he had to keep silent on the matter of his freedom. (p49)

10. On the journey from Alexandria to Ford's home in the Great Pine Woods, what act of Ford's showed his compassion for his slaves?

Much of the journey was on foot, and Ford told his slaves to take their time and rest as needed, an offer which the slaves took him up on frequently. (p50)

11. What observation did Solomon make concerning the personality of Ford and the labor provided by his slaves?

He noticed that the slaves worked harder than had been requested of them,, for surprising Ford with more completed work than expected became a pleasure. (p53)

How did Solomon's observation apply to ruthless slave owners as he saw later?

He saw that the only incentive to work harder than requested was to avoid a whipping or a beating. (p53)

12. The goal of pleasing Ford led Solomon to suggest a project intended to cut Ford's costs. What was the project, and was it successful?

The project was to transport lumber between mills by water, instead of by land as had been done previously. The land transport was very costly, and Solomon thought correctly that transport by water would be less so. Solomon cleared the designated bayous of obstacles and created rafts from the cribs, utilizing his previous experiences of working on a canal before his captivity. The project was very successful, leading Ford to heap praise on Solomon. Ford gave Solomon full control of getting all of the lumber to the destination of the mill at Bayou Lamourie until the contract was completed.

Who did not support Solomon's idea and thought it would not work? How did this doubt affect Solomon?

Adam Taydem, the foreman and superintendent of the mills, called Solomon's idea "visionary," implying it would not actually work. Solomon used this doubt as more incentive to succeed, to show Taydem that the idea would - and did- work. (p54)

13. After the mill contract was completed, Solomon used his carpentry skills to build something Mistress Ford requested for the slaves' benefit. What did he build, and why was it desired by Mistress Ford?

Mistress Ford asked for a loom so Sally (a fellow slave) could create cloth to make winter clothes for the slaves. Buying one would be too costly, and Solomon suggested he build one, with the master's permission. Upon getting permission, he examined a neighbor's loom, then built one for Sally, who proclaimed its perfection. Solomon's loom worked so well that he made more to be taken to the plantation on the bayou. (p56)

14. What was the name of the carpenter hired by Ford, and to whom Solomon was told to assist? Describe him.

John M. Tibeats was a man of stark contrast to Ford. Tibeats was not a resident of anywhere, living wherever his employment of the time was located. He was vengeful, hot-tempered, and malicious. Tibeats was not respected by anyone, white or black. (p56)

Chapter 8

15. Why did Ford sell Solomon (Platt) to John Tibeats?

Ford fell into debt as a result of having served as financial security for his brother, who did not hold up to his financial commitments. In order to fulfill those debts, it was necessary for Ford to sell eighteen of his slaves, Solomon (Platt) being one of them. A "chattel mortgage" of \$400 dollars was placed on Solomon, as the price paid for him exceeded the debt. When the debt was fulfilled, Tibeats' right to Solomon would cease. (p 58)

16. Who did Solomon become reacquainted with upon getting to Bayou Boeuf? What was this person's condition?

He was reacquainted with Eliza, who was still in mourning for her children, Randall and Emily. Her grief weighed so heavily on her that her health was declining and her work had not pleased her mistress (Mistress Ford). (p59)

17. What kind of a master was Tibeats? Was he likable and conscientious as was Ford, or was he brutal and crass, as was Freeman?

Tibeats was impossible to satisfy, regardless of the labor provided. Abuse, both verbal and physical, was common. (p59)

18. What were the circumstances of the fight between Solomon and Tibeats?

Tibeats had told Solomon to work on the clapboards (walls) of the weaving house, and to get nails from the overseer Chapin first thing in the morning. He did as he was asked, and Chapin provided the nails. Chapin told Solomon that if Tibeats wanted a different size nail, he (Chapin) would provide them, but to start with the nails he had provided that morning. Upon seeing the nails and the work, Tibeats was not satisfied and attempted to whip Solomon. (p60-61)

What was Solomon's (Platt's) reaction?

He had done what he had been told, and he had no intention of being whipped. As Tibeats tried to whip him, Solomon grabbed Tibeats' coat and pinned him, upside down, to the ground. Solomon proceeded to use the whip multiple times on Tibeats, who was screaming threats at Solomon, and finally asking God for mercy. (p62)

Chapin heard Tibeats' screams from the field and came quickly. What was his reaction upon hearing the circumstances of the fight?

He told Tibeats that Solomon (Platt) had done as he was told; it was not his fault. (p62)

What could the sentence for Solomon have been, given Louisiana's laws at that time?

His sentence could have been death.(p59)

19. Upon Tibeats' return, what did he and his two companions do to Solomon? Did Solomon fight this time?

Tibeats and the two men with him bound Solomon at the wrists and ankles, making movement impossible. Tibeats made a noose and put it around Solomon's neck as he and his companions discussed which tree branch would be best for the hanging of Solomon. Solomon did not fight; he told Tibeats he could do as he wished. (p63)

Was Solomon optimistic about the outcome?

No, he felt he would die, and none would grieve for him. (p64)

What did Chapin do upon seeing this develop?

He didn't take action at first, but then came towards them with pistols. He told Tibeats in very clear terms that whoever moved Solomon from where he stood would be shot, that Solomon (Platt) was undeserving of such treatment, and that he (Tibeats) was the one at fault. Chapin also told Tibeats exactly what he thought of him. He said that in Ford's absence he (Chapin) was master, it was his job to protect Ford's interests, and if Solomon (Platt) was hung Ford would lose his debt. Chapin told Tibeats he had no right to treat Solomon in such a way. Chapin then sent a slave to get Ford as quickly as possible, with the message that Tibeats and his two companions (overseers from neighboring plantations) were attempting to murder Solomon (Platt). (p64-65)

Chapter 9

20. Did Chapin unbind Solomon? What are some possible reasons for this? What was Chapin's demeanor regarding Solomon's circumstances?

He did not unbind Solomon. Possibly he wanted Ford to see for himself what Tibeats had done, or perhaps he feared a legal penalty upon himself as he had no legal basis for interfering with another man's property. It was evident to Solomon that Chapin was sympathetic to his plight, as Chapin was ready to defend Solomon against Tibeats were (he) Tibeats to return. (p68)

21. When Ford returned, what did he do?

He cut Solomon down, cutting the ropes on his wrists and ankles as well. Ford also provided sympathy by commenting on the poor nature of Solomon's current condition. (p69)

22. Where was Solomon told to sleep that night? Why?

Chapin told Solomon to sleep in the great house on the floor, because he feared Tibeats would return that night and try to kill Solomon again. Chapin was protective of Solomon's safety, telling him that the dog would bark to wake him (Chapin). When the dog did bark, Chapin was already awake before Solomon could wake him. Solomon believed Tibeats did return that night but he never saw him. (p70-71)

23. To whom was Solomon subsequently hired? What sort of man was he?

Peter Tanner, the Mistress Ford's brother, who owned a large plantation and many slaves. Tanner tried to seem more severe a master than Solomon thought him to be. He shared Ford's knowledge and enthusiasm of the Scriptures, reading them to the slaves with emphasis on passages that applied to slaves obeying their masters and the consequences if they did not. (p73)

24. When Tanner was preparing to be absent for a short time, what did he tell Solomon (Platt) to do? Did Solomon follow the directions exactly? Why or why not?

Tanner told Solomon to supervise three slaves - children - in the stocks for punishment. The three pleaded with Solomon to release them, and remembering his binding and the hot sun, Solomon was sympathetic to them. After they promised to return to the stocks as soon as was requested, Solomon released them. They were very grateful and returned to the stocks as they promised just prior to Tanner's return. (p74)

Discussion Questions: Key

Correct answers include the following, and additional correct answers are possible.

1. When Tibeats tried to whip Solomon for unsatisfactory work and using nails of a different size that Tibeats wanted, Solomon fought back and would not allow himself to be whipped for following directions as they had been given. In your opinion, why did Solomon acquiesce to Tibeats' wishes of binding and attempted hanging of him upon his (Tibeats') return?

Solomon likely knew that resisting a second time would be fruitless and would likely end up in his own death, especially since Tibeats had two companions with him to help. He also knew he was seen as a slave and was going to be held to the laws governing the slaves. Slaves who saw Solomon's condition, bound and almost hanging, did not say anything. The reason for this is Tibeats, Solomon, and most likely everyone there knew that a slave could not have given legal evidence against him in court, according to Louisiana state law at that time. (p70)

2. Compare and contrast the masters that Solomon has encountered to up to this point. Did the level of education these men had play a role in their demeanor and treatment of slaves?

There was the purchaser at the slave market who regretted breaking up Eliza's family by only purchasing her and not her daughter, Emily. At the same slave market, Freeman did not care at all about splitting families apart, it was a business of selling property only. Freeman was extremely harsh with the slaves he had at the market. William Ford was a very kind, good master, clearly educated and shared the Scriptures with his slaves, but did believe in slavery. Tibeats was a harsh, uneducated, malicious man, using brutality to compel his slaves to do as he demanded.

In your opinion, did the fact that Tibeats began as an overseer then became a master have any bearing on his treatment of his slaves? If so, how?

The responsibilities of an overseer included compelling the slaves to do their work, and this was not a responsibility of the master. Perhaps, as an overseer Tibeats felt the only way to ensure the slaves would do their work was with force and malice. Then, as a master, this behavior continued.