




*Twelve Years
a Slave*


— — — — —
Solomon Northup

ABOUT THIS BOOK

For the Student

-  Listen to the story and do some activities on your Audio CD.
-  Talk about the story.
-  Prepare for Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET) for schools.

For the Teacher

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For lots of great ideas on using Graded Readers consult [Reading Matters](#), the Teacher's Guide to using Helbling Readers.

Level 5 Structures

Modal verb would	Non-defining relative clauses
I'd love to . . .	Present perfect continuous
Future continuous	Used to / would
Present perfect future	Used to / used to doing
Reported speech / verbs / questions	Second conditional
Past perfect	Expressing wishes and regrets
Defining relative clauses	

Structures from other levels are also included.

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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 is the act of buying and selling people. A person becomes the property of another person.



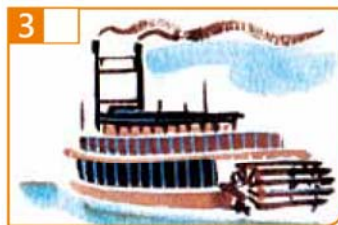
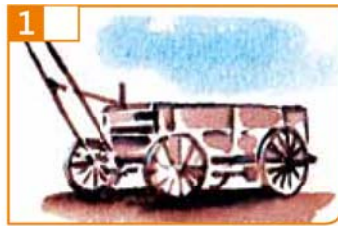
- abolish
- chains
- comfortable
- freedom
- happy
- holiday
- owner
- work
- punishment
- rights
- legal property

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.

- 1** small simple house
- 2** large farm where crops are grown
- 3** outside area with walls all around
- 4** area of water and mud

- _____ **a** plantation
- _____ **b** swamp
- _____ **c** yard
- _____ **d** cabin

- 6 Solomon Northup is the main character and he tells us his own story. Read the extract, look at the picture, then tick (✓) the correct option below.



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.

- a) From this description we understand that Solomon _____.
- was very poor
- lived quite well
- b) We have the impression that he was _____.
- a hard worker
- a lazy person
- c) We also understand that he was _____.
- very ambitious
- a family man



7 Solomon Northup was born a free man but was kidnapped, taken prisoner and sold as a slave. "Kidnapped" is when a person, not an object, is stolen. Listen to what Solomon says and tick (✓) true (T) or false (F).



- T F a) Solomon thought about his family often.
- T F b) Sometimes he cried.
- T F c) He didn't want to escape, it was too dangerous.
- T F d) He was taken to California.
- T F e) He was given a different name.

8 Match the jobs from the story to the correct definitions.

- ① person who works on a farm
- ② person who buys and sells slaves
- ③ person who gathers cotton from the plants
- ④ person who checks people as they work
- ⑤ person who makes things from wood

- _____ a) carpenter
- _____ b) overseer
- _____ c) cotton picker
- _____ d) slave dealer
- _____ e) agricultural worker

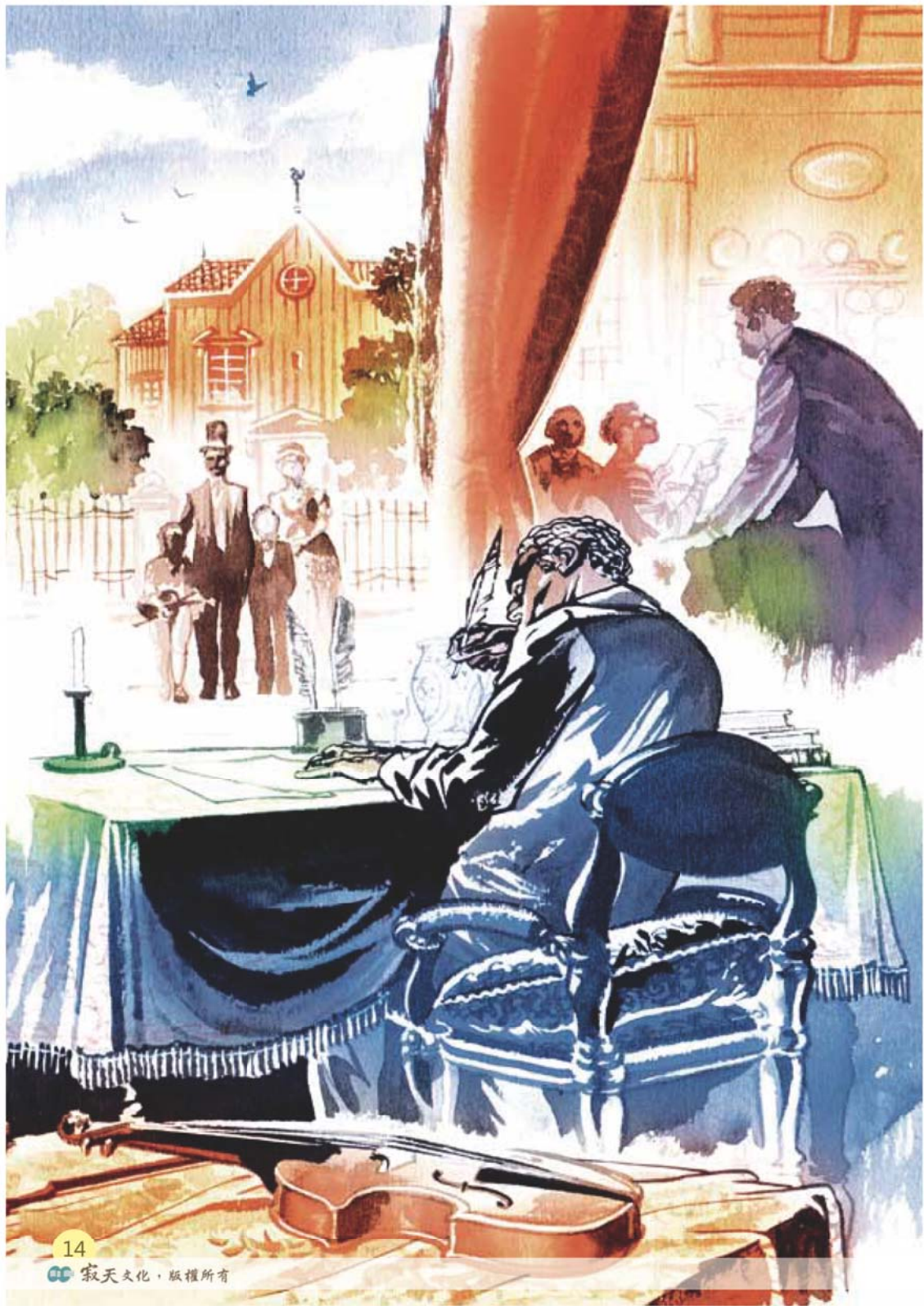
- 3 **9** Solomon had three masters or owners during his twelve years as a slave. Listen to the descriptions of his three masters and tick (✓) if they were "good" or "bad" masters below each name.

- | | | |
|------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a) Ford | <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> bad |
| b) Tibeats | <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> bad |
| c) Epps | <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> bad |

- 4 **10** Now listen again and complete their descriptions with the words from the listening.

bad-tempered master drank opposite spoke
religious manners lucky cunning

- a) William Ford was a very _____ man. He was a good _____ and his slaves were _____ to have him as a master.
- b) John M. Tibeats, a small, _____, ignorant man who was the complete _____ of Master Ford.
- c) Edwin Epps _____ in an uneducated way and his _____ were disgusting. He also _____ a lot. He was quiet and _____.



Chapter 1

My origins

5) *My name is Solomon Northup and I was born a free man. I lived free for thirty years, then I was kidnapped¹ and sold as a slave². 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 state³ 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 lawyer⁴ and relative of the original Northup family, that I am now free again.

After my father was granted⁵ his freedom, he worked on many different farms in New York State doing agricultural work with my mother and my elder brother.


1 kidnapped: taken by force

2 slave: person owned by another and forced to obey them

3 state: (here) one of the fifty states of the USA

4 lawyer: person who practices law

5 granted: given

 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.

In 1829 I married Anne Hampton, who was a free woman of mixed origins¹. 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 earned².

In the hope of earning more money, in 1834 we moved to Saratoga Springs, in New York State. I worked as a carriage³ driver, and Anne cooked at a nearby hotel. I also earned extra money playing the violin, and doing occasional manual work.

- 1 **origins:** (here) racial descent
- 2 **earned:** money made from working
- 3 **carriage:** type of transport moved by horses

