

Example of equianos thoughts and feelings about england essay

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A memoir written by the author himself, Olaudah Equiano reminiscence the vivid incidents that transpired in his life. Right at the beginning of the book, when he writes that, “ when I compare my lot with that of most of my countrymen (he is no more an African), I regard myself as a particular favourite of heaven,” (p. 8), there is a ting of sadness in his tone, nit because he is lucky enough to escape the hardship he faced in his native country, but because they were the lucky ones to escape hardship and settle in a country that accepted them the way they were.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were clouded with bonded slavery, as many Africans were ‘ bought’ to work in their white master’s houses and fields. Great Britain and the U. S were known for their racist and slavery regimes, and Great Britain played a dominant role in the slave trade, as slave labor created much of the profits on which its empire was built and its ships carried more slaves from Africa to the New World than any other nations. However, this was to change as Great Britain became the center of the movement to abolish slavery. In 1807, the slave trade was outlawed by the British Empire and from 1808 on, British naval ships enforced a blockade against slave ships.

Equiano, born in the Eboe province of Africa, was sold to a certain Michael Henry Pascal, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. Pascal’s intention was to gift him to his friends in London, but instead kept Equiano as an aid. Later, Equiano was sold to Captain Doran of the Charming Sally. Doran in turn sold Equiano to Robert King, a wealthy and benevolent Quaker merchant who worked out of Philadelphia. Equiano traveled to America and the West Indies with King, where he witnessed inhumane punishment and treatment being

inflicted upon the Africans who toiled on the plantations there. He traveled widely with Captain Thomas Farmer, King's friend, during many of his voyages. Some of the countries he sailed to include Turkey, Martinico, Georgia, Montserrat, Grenada, and France, to name a few. Later, he sailed out to England and reached Falmouth about the beginning of the spring 1757. Equiano was nearly twelve years of age at that time.

In England, Equiano was struck with awe on seeing the buildings and pavements of the streets in Falmouth. He had never seen such magnificent structures or roads in his life and whatever he saw there, amazed him. The time he saw snow on the deck for the first time made him think that it was salt. He had never seen snow before and it was not until a friend told him what it was did he know that it was snow. He experienced the heavenly sanctity in his visit to the church, a place he had never been before, and the building structure amazed him. He was also fortunate to witness a church service; a prayer to God, he was to know later. He had never known God and this sermon were something that he could hardly image. What struck him at the church sermon was that, the white people behaved very sensibly and they didn't fell one another, as his people would. This was a time when he thought the whites to be much happier than Africans. He was also astonished at the wisdom the white people had. He didn't see the normal sacrifices or offerings, or people eating with unwashed hands, or touching the dead, as his people would do.

Equiano also got to know what the book was and what its purpose was. He witnessed many people reading books and thought them to be a form of a talking machine. As he says, when he often saw his master and Dick reading

books, he had a great curiosity to talk to the books. He was able to finally understand what books stood for and tried to read them. It was during his stay with his master at the house of a gentleman in Falmouth, that Equiano met this “ fine little daughter about six or seven years of age,” and ate with her for the first time in his life. What is so fascinating about this incident is that, for Equiano, it was the first of any kind that he could sit and eat with a white person. In addition to that, he was also cared for by servants to wait on them. This experience, Equiano reminiscence, reminded him of the treatment he received from his African master. Equiano wasn’t prepared for such treatment, for, in his mind, he thought that he would be looked down upon and even killed for meat, as was told to him by a ship Captain. Equiano’s experience made him think that whites were not as bad as he thought they would be. In fact, he found them to be better than his people back home.

Another thing that Equiano noticed was that, he didn’t see people with scarred faces, as people in some of the African nations he visited had. Equiano had begun to understand, speak and read a little bit of English, and his view on Englishmen changed considerably. He felt confident of moving in society and enjoyed being in their company. He found the society and the manners of the whites most cordial. Reflecting on this, he said that he no longer looked upon them as spirits, but as men who were superior to us; and therefore, he had the desire and urge to be like them, “ to imbibe their spirit, and imitate their manners; I therefore embraced every occasion of improvement, and every new thing that I observed I treasured up in my memory” (Page 130). London gave him the opportunity to learn to read and

write, as he was sent me to wait upon a certain Miss Guerins, who treated him with kindness, and sent to school. He was finally baptized in St. Margaret's church, Westminster, in February 1759, as Gustavus Vassa, a name that he used ever since.

London presented him with opportunities to explore new places and people. This was something that young Equiano looked forward to, ever since he left the West Indies. He lived with his master in a house that was at very close to Westminster-bridge. He spent a lot of time playing about the bridge stairs. He spent enough time there to make friends with whom he could also go to watermen's wherries. Life, in short, was fun, and Equiano forgot his past quite quickly. An incident that he recollects involved two white boys. During one of their sorties out at watermen's wherry, two stout boys came in another wherry, and using abusive language, asked him to get into another boat. Just as he was about to enter the boat, they shoved it off, so that he fell into the Thames. Had it not been for a few watermen, he would have drowned.

Another incident that Equiano recalls is of his acquaintance with a person, whom he says, became very much attached to him, and took great pains to instruct and guide him through many unknown things. " He taught me to shave and dress hair a little, and also to read in the Bible, explaining many passages to me, which I did not comprehend" (Page 172). Equiano didn't know much about Christianity, and the Bible was alien to him. Therefore, when the acquaintance read and explained some of the readings to him, he found them difficult to understand. Equiano didn't know there was someone called God, until he was told about him in church, and when he was told

about the Bible, it came as a shock. Another pleasant experience that Equiano felt in England was the laws and rules that he had in his country was almost similar to that is followed here. The bond he developed with this acquaintance (his name was Daniel Queen) was extremely heartening. Daniel even went to the extent of telling Equiano that once their ship was paid off, he would free him, just as any other man on board, instruct him in his business. This association, he says, gave him hope, and he always treated him with the greatest kindness, “ and reposed in me an unbounded confidence” (Page 174).

Bibliography

The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself, Vol. I., Call number MNN: *ZZ-37389, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library