

# Years a slave essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The following analysis will provide some insight to the film and the story and explore why this movie will not only leave you in tears, but cause you to have a new found respect for people that endured a life of slavery. Before I jump into the meat of the discussion and share my thoughts it is important to begin with a clear understanding of the film's story. In the opening scene we are introduced to Solomon Northup as a slave. The film continues with a series of flashbacks between his present slave life and his previous life as a free man. For the sake of clarity I will summarize the film in historical order.

Solomon Northup, played by Chattel Coffey, grew up as a freeman in upstate New York. His skills consisted of reading and writing, and he was also a very talented violinist. Solomon was a well-respected man among his community and was just like another other family man. Wife to Anne Hampton and father of two, Margaret and Alonzo; Solomon had the life most slaves would never experience. One day Solomon runs into two men who offer him a job opportunity to which he accepts. He tells his family goodbye and believes he is on the road to his new job.

Instead they drug Solomon, and sell him to the slave trade. Confused and shocked, Solomon is thrust into the horrors and cruelty of the slave trade. Claiming he was a freeman was not enough to spare his freedom. From the moment he was captured to the scene where he was sold, the film captures the cruel reality of the slave trade and the treatment of people of color. Aside from his journey the film does a great service to exposing the harsh selling methods showing how families were separated; they were put on display, nude, for a potential buyer to see. The whole process is quite disgusting.

Solomon is purchased by Master Ford of a sugar cane plantation. Solomon was highly advised against revealing his knowledge and literacy to the white men, but went against this when he revealed himself to his master. Ford was kind hearted and became fond of Solomon, making Ford's other white overseers angry. They set out to kill Solomon after a few heated encounters, which lead to a good 2-3 minute scene of Solomon dangling from a noose with his toes scraping touching the ground. Close to death, other slaves go about their day in the background as he struggles to breathe.

Master Ford saves Solomon just in time but has to sell him off because he has caused him too much trouble and had to settle his debt. Solomon is sold to Master Peps of a cotton plantation. Here is where Solomon endures the most cruelty and sees how devastating life as a slave truly is. He meets Patsy, a young black woman who is admired by Master Peps. His infatuation with her becomes dangerous when Peps' wife becomes suspicious. Patsy, not wanting anything to do with Peps, plays along to keep her life. Her rape and whip scene are honestly one of the hardest thing to watch.

After years of hell on the plantation, a Canadian contractor is hired to work on the plantation. Solomon finds trust in the man and seeks help through him. Not long after the contractor leaves, help finds its way to Solomon in the form of an old friend, Mr.. Parker, who proves he is a freedman and rescues Solomon from slavery and returns him home to his family after 12 years. Now with a general idea of the plot we can dive deeper into the material. The reason why this film will strike you different from most is because it is all true.

It is a harsh reality that most people in society do not like to face. Most Americans have a preconceived idea about slavery because of intermediate and high school history classes. Yes, we have all heard the lecture that slavery was disgusting and a dark time in America's history, but no matter how in depth your instructor was no one could prepare you for physically seeing those disgusting events. The film not only captured the struggle that was this man's life, but also demonstrated what other slaves suffered through as well.

Seeing the treatment of these human beings really rallies you up, makes you really hate the society of that time. Seeing people being treated as dogs, no, worse than dogs, objects, boils my blood. Actually seeing everything take place makes it that much more real. People did not realize that pain and suffering slavery caused in our nation, at least not until this film. The acting portrayed by Chattel Coffey and Lupine Young as Patsy, was outstanding. I truly believed their emotion and character. Superior's best scene is when he is finally reunited with his family.

You can see the buildup of overwhelming relief and happiness in his eyes and face. It was pure emotion. That emotion is what really helps captivate the audience. It gets the viewers to feel along with the characters, establishing a bond between the audience and the character. When you create such a deep bond with your viewers, you create compassion and self-awareness. This provokes those preconceived notions of the ideas of slavery and causes viewers to be more respectful to those who have suffered and for people who are still being oppressed today.