

Olaudah equiano's the interesting narrative: new approach on slavery and basic hu...

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Literary Analysis Essay

Imagine being a young child, and you hear of men who are raiding and kidnapping members from your tribe and the others surrounding you. Then one day, you wake up and in the blink of an eye your sister is being dragged out of your house, and so are you. You're just a child, and you can't possibly imagine what you have done wrong. As much as a nightmare as this sounds, it was a reality for many African's brought into slavery for countries around the world. This example is specific to Olaudah Equiano, an author and past slave. With plenty of encouragement from the people around him, Equiano published his slave narrative, *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano*. Equiano tells his story with the intent to make a change in the way the world saw slavery, and basic human rights.

In the past, and especially when slavery was a worldwide practice, colored men and women were considered unintelligent and illiterate, leading to their masters to treat them like objects. Equiano tackles these stereotypes with pride and determination. Shortly after his kidnapping, he meets an American boy who becomes his companion and begins to teach him English. After plenty of practice, he soon is fluent and understands the language thoroughly. Due to know knowledge of the white man's objectification of people like him, I believe he worked so hard to learn the language so that he would be perceived as human compared to an animal to the people who had control of him. In his narrative, Equiano expressed that before he had learned English he felt like an object, and not a subject. Equiano didn't want the men above him to completely have the upper hand. Author Henry Louis

Gates, Jr address this aspect of Equiano's life in his essay "The Trope of the Talking Book". More specifically, Gates proclaims, "the very signs through which Equiano represents the differences in subjectivity that separates his now lost African world from the new world of the white folks that has been thrust upon him" (par. 17). Basically, what Gates is saying is that Equiano had to break out of his norm, and adapt to a whole new world that seemed to literally be magic to him. Equiano was forced into physically and mentally breaking situations, making him incredibly seasoned and wise and is told to be, "one of the most traveled people in the world when he decided to write his story of his life" (Gates, par. 4). Equiano traveled the world, learned several different languages, trades and skills, and proceeded to break the distinctive stereotype of a slave, and proved that slaves were not just an object for another's use.

Another issue that Equiano addresses in his life is his time on a ship. I'm sure most of us couldn't imagine being thrown into the slave live, but it was a reality for Equiano. Unlike most slaves, we hear about though, he sailed around the world. In the beginning, this was not something Equiano wanted to do, he was forced into the life. In his book, Equiano address this stating, "I was ready to curse the tide that bore us, the gale that wafted me from my prison, and even the ship that conducted us;" and even go as far as saying, "I called on death to relieve me from the horrors I felt and dreaded" (477). In this statement, Equiano is expressing to us his dissatisfaction for being on that ship. Essentially, Equiano hates the water that is carrying him away from his family, so much he wants to curse it. The ship, that took him from prison to prison was something that he hated, though grew to love. Equiano

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was just a young child, and he was calling upon death. Which means he actually wanted to die! If there was a time that adults were putting young children into a position that they wanted to die, obviously, something is twisted up in there. I believe that Equiano wrote about his feelings of wanting to die, because he wanted to show the world what they had not only done to him, but to hundreds of thousands of women, children and men.