

12 years a slave movie review essay sample



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In the late 1800's, slavery was one of the most popular forms of racism. White men, known to slaves as their masters, owned slaves and treated them as if they were a form of property or livestock. The slave owners tortured and forced African Americans to work for them. The director of the movie, Steve McQueen, directed the film 12 Years a Slave in 2013, along with screenwriter John Ridley. Chiwetel Ejiofor, played the main character, Solomon Northup, who got tricked into leaving his home state of New York and being forced into slavery.

Lupita Nyong'o, played Patsy who was an active member of Epps (Michael Fassbender) plantation. Solomon was stuck being a slave on the farm for twelve years, and Patsy was there longer because she was there before Solomon arrived. They lived long, hard years of being brutally beaten. Solomon first attempted to be free by asking a worker on the farm to write letters to his family. The unknown character who he asked, told Master Epps which resulted in him being punished.

After a while of recovering from the punishment of the first attempt, Northup asked Brad Pitt, who played Bass. Bass generously sent letters to Northup's family to inform them where he was. The letters Bass sent made official authorities come retrieve Solomon from the plantation in Louisiana. When Solomon returned to his home in New York, his two kids were grown up, married, and had a family of their own. One of Northup's kids named their son Solomon after him which was a very sentimental thing to do to carry on his name.

In 1820, the Missouri Compromise was passed to regain the balance of free states and slave states in the United States. Although this was a good compromise, it was only temporary. In August of 1831, a slave named Nat Turner and a large group of slaves rebelled against slavery on multiple plantations in Virginia, killing about 60 white people. Fifty-five slaves were killed for causing and contributing to the event. The Compromise of 1850, stopped slavery from expanding.

Harriet Beecher Stowe published “ Uncle Tom’s Cabin” in 1852 and it was the best selling book after the Bible. The book brought up slavery to people who were unmoved by the issue itself. A big step to abolishing slavery was the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. This was a big turning point to slaves and their masters because it meant the United States was getting closer to ending slavery for all. This caused the slaves to have slight shift in happiness, but made the slave owners very mad.

The owners believed that they should be getting what they paid for, which were the slaves. In *12 Years a Slave*, Solomon was locked up while all this was happening, so there’s nothing that was going to change the act of him being tortured for his race. An unknown girl who was enslaved during the time, stated in her diary, “ From the first time we stepped onto the Great Canoe it had been obvious that they think of us as mortals and as themselves as Gods. ” Throughout all of this time period, slaves weren’t even titled as human beings.

They were described as property or livestock. In the book, “ The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African”,

Olaudah Equiano stated, “ I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life; so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste anything. ” The living conditions of the slaves was horrible and unfair.

These two quotes from diaries helped make people understand what it was like for the enslaved people and it convinced some people to change their opinion on the issue. The film 12 Years a Slave was an exceptionally great movie and did a tremendous job on recreating what slavery actually was like. The slaves went through horrible times and no one should have to go through what they did. Not only was the storyline good, but the acting the actors portrayed was excellent. They really brought emotion and a feeling of sadness into the film.

I really enjoyed how Steve McQueen included the details and specific characteristics of what Solomon Northup and the other characters went through. In order for the movie to be as good as it was, was for these little but important details to be included into the film. These details ranged from the slaves picking cotton while they sang in the field, to the sound of a whip cracking on their backs. One small detail that most people don't find important is the written pass scenes.

Every time a slave left the plantation, they had to have a paper with their masters written consent on it so when white patrolmen saw them, they didn't arrest and take them. Although most of the scenes were very graphic,

it illustrated a very brutal picture which was the only way the audience would remember the movie in an emotional way. 12 Years a Slave is for sure worth seeing, but to watch this movie, you have to be very mature to understand the importance of the issue.

I think anyone younger than me shouldn't be allowed to watch this movie because the audience needs to know at least some historical background before you jump right into it. I don't think people realize what it was like for the slaves. They think they just worked without getting payed, but in reality they were beaten, raped, and were known as property to their masters. Anyone wanting to see this movie, should definitely do so. I give it a ten out of ten. Trigger Events of the Civil War. (n. d.).

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