

Middle passage assignment

[History](#)



The middle passage was the journey between Africa and America, mostly on slave ships. It is more than a journey it was a period of time, which the slaves went through physical, mental, and emotional torture. During slavery, the African Americans were not considered to be human, they were treated like farm animals. The author of Middle Passage, Charles Johnson, wrote this book to show the imagery of what the slaves went through, the rumors that were around during slavery and transformation.

The slaves who were put on the ships going to America had no idea what was going to happen to them. Some of the Africans never made it; they died from disease, illness, starvation, death, dirty living conditions, and suicide.

Charles]monsoon shows imagery, but more than any other author has ever written. The slaves were kept in units that were made of many rows of wooden shelves. They were kept very tightly packed, laying on their left side in a spooning fashion so as not to put stress or pressure on their hearts. The Africans were chained down as well.

Johnson described them trying to commit suicide because they had no idea what the Americans had in store for them. The slaves would jump overboard because they thought their life was horrible. They were starved, lived in filthy living conditions and they knew they might never see freedom again. If you have never been hungry, you cannot know the either/or agony created by a single sorghum biscuit-either your brother gets it or you do. And if you do eat it, you know in your bones you have stolen the food straight from his mouth, there being so little for either of you (Johnson 47).

This comes to show how the slaves felt day after day. Never feeling satisfied could drive a person insane. Today, humans say “ I am starving” but really they have no idea how it feels. Johnson shows the moral dilemma these Africans went through. Just like present day, some things never change. One word comes to mind, rumors. The men of the Republic heard things about a group named the Lemurs. They were the highest rank of slaves. The reason for this was because they did not need much. They were vegetarians and material things were not important. The shipmates thought they were some kind of witches. They’re a whole tribe- men, women, and tykes-of devil worshipping spell- assisting wizards” (43). The Lemurs were cultured people, they did no such thing as witchcraft. The shipmates had no explanation of this tribe. The men did not understand the unity this tribe shared with each other: absences of identity. They were a group of many people but they saw each other as one. The Lemurs also thought the men on the ship were taking them to be eaten. They saw the shipmates as savages and that this was their purgatory. When people are uneducated, false accusations start making its way around to others.

Charles Johnson not only shows negative aspects of slavery, he also lets the reader watch a young troubled man turn into a responsible grown man.

Rutherford Calhoun was an ex-slave, a thief, who lied when ever he could, and had no home. When Calhoun was a boy, his father abandoned him and his brother. He judges his father for leaving them. While Calhoun steals, it makes him feel powerful. This act of defiance makes the people he steals from feel violated, just like his father made him feel. While Calhoun was on ship he became very attached to a little girl named Bleak.

Whenever Bleak is out of my sight I am worried. If she bruises herself, feel bruised. Night and day pray all will go well for her, even after I am gone (195). When her mother died, he took full responsibility for this small girl. Not only being at sea but taking care of another life resulted Calhoun to transform into a man. Just like a parent, he wanted the best for this girl and he wanted to be the one to give her the world. Charles Johnson felt all the torture and agony the slaves went through during the mid 18th and beyond that time.

He wrote this way because he wanted the audience to feel and think about these unbearable people. Johnson came as close as any author could to making the “ experience” real for the reader. The images in the reader’s mind became real, intense and unforgettable. The rumors were passed on through Johnny’s whole book which showed the ignorant aspect of the journey. Rutherford Calhoun transformation showed strength that a colored man should have had during the era of slavery. Charles Johnson went through great lengths to describe the imagery, the rumors, and the transformation during a trip back to America.