

Horrors of a slave ship



Jill Knierim The Horrors of a Slave Ship

The article, *The Horrors of a Slave Ship*, is first person point of view account of the capturing of Olaudah Equiano. He tells the story of how he was captured from his home while his parents were away to be used as a slave. The article starts off with Olaudah and his sister being captured while their parents were away. They were taken into the woods, tied up, and forced to travel bound without food. After many days of traveling, Olaudah and his sister were separated. From that point he was passed around and finally landed in the hands of his first owner.

His first owner was a smith and Olaudah worked in his shop. He was there for about a month before he started trying to figure out how to escape. Toward the end of his time with this master, Olaudah was given the freedom to go with the maidens to get water. With this freedom he figured out which way his father's house was and plotted his escape. All his plotting became unnecessary when he killed a chicken. Olaudah threw a stone at a chicken one day while working with an elderly slave. When she found out what he had done she reported it to her master. Being scared of being beaten, Olaudah ran and hid in the bushes.

The elderly slave and her master began looking for him, but even with the help of other people around them, could not find Olaudah. Finally, he went back to his master's house and was found by the elderly slave. She went to get her master and instead of punishing him like he had expected, the master commanded that he be taken care of. Not long after this happened, Olaudah's master lost his daughter and was so overtaken with grief that he

sold Olaudah to a new master. This was where Olaudah's life made a turn for the better. At his new master's home, a surprise was waiting.

This surprise was his sister, whom he had been separated from shortly after being captured. After a while of being together though, she was sold to a new master and the two were once again separated. From his current home, he was taken to Tinmah, where a few days later he was sold for sugar cane. He was quickly bought again by a wealthy neighbor and her son. Under this master, Olaudah was allowed to dine at the table with them and felt that he was adopted into the family, so much so that the son would not eat until Olaudah had gotten his food because Olaudah was older.

This home was great and allowed him to forget about the hard times of a slave. Then, suddenly Olaudah was taken from this home and transported to the slave ship. Aboard the slave ship he was restrained and beaten for refusing food. All the slaves on the ship were living in very close uncomfortable quarters. Some were tied down and those that weren't were watched very closely so they could not escape. If someone tried to jump off the boat to escape, they were severely punished and beaten. While the ship was at the coast, all the slaves on the ship were forced below deck where the smell of body odor and excrement was breathtaking.

Diseases were spread among the slaves in these tight quarters and many slaves died due to the unfit conditions. Once the ship reached Barbados, everyone aboard the ship was forced ashore and into the merchant yard. Here they were sold once again. The author of this article experienced the ups and downs of being a slave and intends to inform people through this

article. Olaudah told all about his different experiences of being a slave from being taken from his home while his parents were out to living with masters that treated him as part of the family to riding on the slave ship to be taken to Barbados.

He tells all about the pain he felt when he was first separated from his sister, then the joy he felt when they were reunited, then the pain of being separated once again. He tells of how it was even harder to be taken from each other the second time. I cannot even imagine being taken from my home and from my family. I personally find it interesting that the worst part of being a slave presented in the article was being transported on the ship.

I never imagined that being taken from Africa to Barbados would be the worst part of his time as a slave presented in the article. Personally, I never really think about slavery being in Africa, just people being taken from Africa to the New World to act as slaves so I found it interesting to learn about. I also wasn't expecting the treatment of Olaudah to be as good as it was with some of his masters. When I think of slavery I think of the treatment of slaves in the New World that we are mostly taught about so this really opened my eyes.