**THE PECULIAR INSTITUTION**

**Essential Questions:**

1. How did slavery shape social and economic relations in the Old South?
2. What were the legal and material constraints on slaves’ lives and work?
3. How did family, gender, religion, and values combine to create distinct slave cultures in the Old South?
4. What were the major forms of resistance to slavery?

**At the end of this unit I will be able to explain the following:**

1. Explain how important slavery was to the national economy and the emergence of the United States as a great power.
2. Explain why the plain folk (regular Americans – not the planter elite) continued to support slavery.
3. Describe the paternalistic ethos embraced by the planters, also, explain how it both masked and justified the brutal realities of slavery.
4. Identify the basic elements of the proslavery defense and those points aimed specifically at non-southern audiences.
5. Compare slaves in the Old South with those elsewhere in the world focusing on health, diet and opportunities for freedom.
6. Describe aspects of slave culture and how they varied by region.
7. Identify the different types of resistance to slavery.

**Vocabulary:**

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| Peculiar Institution | Lords of the Lash | Proslavery Argument |
| King Cotton | Plain Folk | Slave Religion |
| Lords of the Loom | Southern Paternalism | Silent Sabotage |
| Underground Railroad | Runaways | Harriet Tubman |
| Nat Turner’s Rebellion | Sojourner Truth | Denmark Vesey’s conspiracy |
| Frederick Douglass | Gabriel’s Rebellion | William Lloyd Garrison |
| *The Liberator* | The Amistad Revolt | Gang Labor |

**Readings:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Textbook readings | Primary Source Readings |
| * Foner, *Give Me Liberty*, Chapter 11: The Peculiar Institution * On Slaveholders’ Sexual Abuse of Slaves: *Selections from 19th & 20th century Slave Narratives* | * John C. Calhoun, “Slavery in its True Light” (1838) * Calhoun on the error of “All Men are Created Equal” (1848) * George Fitzhugh, “The Universal Law of Slavery” (1850) * George Fitzhugh, on Sociology of the South * Thomas R. Dew on Emancipation after Nat Turner (1832) * Twelve Years a Slave (1853) * Father Henson’s Story of His Own Life |

**Common Core Standards:**

**11.3 EXPANSION, NATIONALISM, AND SECTIONALISM (1800-1865): As the nation expanded growing sectional tensions, especially over slavery, resulted in political and constitutional crises that culminated in the Civil War.**

11.3b Different perspectives concerning constitutional, political, economic, and social issues contributed to the growth of sectionalism.

* Students will investigate the development of the abolitionist movement, focusing on Nat Turner’s Rebellion, Sojourner Truth, William Lloyd Garrison (*The Liberator*), Frederick Douglass (*The Autobiography of Frederick Douglass* and *The North Star*), and Harriet Beecher Stowe (*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*)
* Students will examine the issues surrounding the expansion of slavery into new territories, by exploring the Missouri Compromise, Manifest Destiny, Texas and the Mexican-American war, the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the *Dred Scott* decisions, and John Brown’s raid.

**Aim:** How did slavery shape the social and economic relations of the Old South?

**Directions:** Define the social and economic relationship slavery had with each group, resource, region, ideology or institution listed below.

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| **Elements Tied to Slavery** | **What was the SOCIAL relationship between this element and slavery?** | **What was the ECONOMIC relationship between this element and slavery?** |
| **King Cotton** |  |  |
| **Second Middle Passage** |  |  |
| **Northern Merchants** |  |  |
| **Southern Industrial Centers** |  |  |
| **Plantation Economy** |  |  |
| **Small Farmers** |  |  |
| **Planter Class** |  |  |
| **Plantation Mistress** |  |  |
| **Paternalism** |  |  |
| **Code of Honor** |  |  |
| **Pro-Slavery Argument** |  |  |

**Aim:** What were the legal and material constraints on slave lives and work?

**Directions:** Using your notes from Section 2, explain with quotes the distinct constraints placed in the live and work of slave through the law.

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| **Legal Constraints on Slaves’ Lives** | **Legal Constraints on Slaves’ Work** |
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| **Material Constraints on Slave’s Lives** | **Material Constraints on Slave’s Work** |
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1. **How did slavery affect the lives and freedom of both free blacks and whites?**

1. **What constraints were there on the rights of free blacks in the antebellum South?**

**Aim:** How did family, gender, religion and values combine to create distinct slave cultures in the Old South?

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| **Element** | **Definition** | **Explain established traditions** |
| **Slave Families** |  |  |
| **Gender Roles** |  |  |
| **Slave Religion** |  |  |
| **Values & Beliefs** |  |  |

**Father Henson’s Story of His Own Life (1858)**

*This excerpt is from the classic autobiography of former slave Josiah Henson, which was published in 1858 with a foreword by the abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe. Henson described the cruel treatment of his father at the hands of the overseer and his master. Like other slave autobiographies, this narrative contributed to a growing revulsion to slavery in the North.*

As you read, consider the following:

1. What does an account like this reveal about the system of slavery?
2. What does it reveal about the culture that developed around slaves and whites involved in the institution?
3. What kept slaves on the plantation?
4. What rights did husbands and wives have over themselves or their children?
5. What effect might such a narrative have on northern and southern readers?

I was born June 15th, 1789, in Charles county, Maryland, on a farm belong to Mr. Francis Newman, about a mile from Port Tobacco. My mother was a slave of Dr. Josiah McPherson, but hired to the Mr. Newman to whom my father belonged. The only incident I can remember which occurred while my mother continued on Mr. Newman’s farm, was the appearance one day of my father with his head bloody and his back lacerated. He was beside himself with mingled rage and suffering. The explanation I picked up from the conversation of others only partially explained the matter to my mind; but as I grew older I understood it all. It seemed the overseer had sent my mother away from the other field hands to a retired place, and after trying persuasion in vain, had resorted to force to accomplish a brutal purpose. Her screams aroused my father at his distant work, and running up, he found his wife struggling with the man. Furious at the sight, he sprung upon him like a tiger. In a moment, the overseer was down, and, mastered by rage, my father would have killed him but for the entreaties of my mother, and the overseer’s own promise that nothing should ever be said of the matter. The promise was kept – like most promises of the cowardly and debased – as long as the danger lasted.

The laws of slave states provide means and opportunities for revenge so ample, the miscreants like him never fail to improve them. “A nigger has struck a white man;” that is enough to set a whole county on fire; no question is asked about the provocation. The authorities were soon in pursuit of my father. The fact of the sacrilegious act of lifting a hand against the sacred temple of a white man’s body – a profanity as blasphemous in the eye of a slave-state tribunal as was among the Jews the entrance of a Gentile dog into the Holy of Holies – this was all it was necessary to establish. And the penalty followed: one hundred lashes on the bare back, and to have the right ear nailed to the whipping-post, and then severed from the body. For a time, my father kept out of the way, hiding in the woods, and at night venturing into some cabin in search of food. But at length the strict watch set baffled all his efforts. His supplies cut off, he was fairly starved out, and compelled by hunger to come back and give himself up.

The day for the execution of the penalty was appointed. The negroes from the neighboring plantation were summoned, for their moral improvement, to witness the scene. A powerful blacksmith named Hewes laid on the stripes. Fifty were given, during which the cries of my father might be heard a mile, and then a pause ensued. True, he had struck a white man, but as valuable property he must not be damaged. Judicious men felt his pulse. Oh! He could stand the whole. Again and again the thong fell on his lacerated back. His cries grew fainter and fainter, till a feeble groan was the only response to the final blows. His head was then thrust against the post, and his right ear fastened to it with a tack; a swift pass of a knife, and the bleeding member was left sticking to the place. Then came a hurrah from the degraded crowd, and the exclamation, “That’s what he’s got for striking a white man”. A few said, “it’s a damned shame;” but the majority regarded it as but a proper tribute to their offended majesty.

It may be difficult for you, reader, to comprehend such brutality, and in the name of humanity you may protest against the truth of these statements. To you, such cruelty inflicted on a man seems fiendish. Ay, on a man; there hinges the whole. In the estimation of the illiterate, besotted poor whites constituted the witnesses of such scenes in Charles County, Maryland, the man who did not feel rage enough at hearing of “a nigger” striking a white to be ready to burn him alive, was only fit to be lynched out of the neighborhood. A blow at one white man is a blow at all; is the muttering and upheaving of volcanic fires, which underlie and threaten to burst forth and utterly consume the whole social fabric. Terror is the fiercest nurse of cruelty. And when, in this our day, you find tender English women and Christian English divines fiercely urging that India should be made one pool of Sepoy blood, pause a moment before you lightly refuse to believe in the existence of such ferocious passions in the breasts of tyrannical and cowardly slave-drivers.

Previous to this affair my father, from all I can learn, had been a good-humored and light-hearted man, the ringleader in all fun at corn-husking and Christmas buffoonery. His banjo was the life of the farm, and all night long at a merry-making would he play on it while the other negroes danced. But from this hour he became utterly changed. Sullen, morose, and dogged, nothing could be done with him. The milk of human kindness in his heart was turned to gall. He brooded over his wrongs. No fear or threats of being sold to the far south – the greatest of all terrors to the Maryland slave would render him tractable. So off he was sent to Alabama. What was his after fate neither my mother nor I have ever learned; the great day will reveal all. This was the first chapter in my history.

**Twelve Years a Slave (1853)**

*In this narrative, the former slave Solomon Northup described the system of supervision on large plantations and the cruelty of overseers.*

As you read this account consider the following:

1. How did slave owners keep control of their slaves?
2. What was the role of the white overseer?
3. What was the role of black “drivers”?
4. According to Northup, what motives have for setting up such an inhumane and potential deadly system?

On larger estates, employing fifty or a hundred, or perhaps two hundred hands, an overseer is deemed indispensable. These gentlemen ride into the field on horseback, without an exception, to my knowledge, armed with pistols, bowie knife, whip, and accompanied by several dogs. They follow, equipped in this fashion, in rear of the slaves, keeping a sharp lookout upon them all. The requisite qualifications in an overseer are utter heartlessness, brutality and cruelty. It is his business to produce large crops, and if that is accomplished, no matter what amount of suffering it may have cost. The presence of the dogs are necessary to overhaul a fugitive who may take to his heels, as is sometimes the case, when faint or sick, he is unable to maintain his row, and unable, also, to endure the whip. The pistols are reserved for any dangerous emergency, there having been instances when such weapons are necessary. Goaded into uncontrollable madness, even the slave will sometimes turn upon his oppressor. The gallows were standing at Marksville last January, upon which one was executed a year ago for killing his overseer. It occurred not many miles from Epps’ plantation on Red River. The slave was given his task at splitting rails. In the course of the day the overseer sent him on an errand, which occupied so much time that it was not possible for him to perform the task. The next day he was called to account, but the loss of time occasioned by the errand was no excuse, and he was ordered to kneel and bare his back for the reception of the lash. They were in the woods alone beyond the reach of sight or hearing. The boy submitted until maddened at such injustice, and insane with pain, he sprang to his feet, and seizing an axe, literally chopped the overseer in pieces. He made no attempt whatever at concealment, but hastening to his master, related the whole affair, and declared himself ready to expiate the wrong by sacrifice of his life. He was led to the scaffold, and while the rope was along his neck, maintained an undismayed and fearless bearing, and with his last words justified the act.

Besides the overseer, there are drivers under him, the number being in proportion to the number of hands in the field. The drivers are black, who, in addition to the performance of their equal share of work, are compelled to do the whipping of their several gangs. Whips hang around their necks, and if they fail to use them thoroughly, are whipped themselves. They have a few privileges, however; for example, in cane-cutting the hands are not allowed to sit down long enough to eat their dinners. Carts filled with corn cake, cooked at the kitchen are driven into the fields at noon. The cake is distributed by the drivers, and must be eaten with the least possible delay.

When the slave ceases to perspire, as he often does when taxed beyond his strength, he falls to the ground and becomes entirely helpless. It is then the duty of the driver to drag him into the shade of the standing cotton or cane or of a neighboring tree, where he ashes buckets of water upon him, and uses other means of bring out perspiration again, when he is ordered to his place, and compelled to continue his labor.

**Aim:** What were major forms of resistance to slavery?

**Instructions:** Write an organized constructed response, which explains all components of slave resistance. Your response should be well organized and supported with primary source evidence from *Father Henson’s Story of His Own Life* and/or *Twelve Years a Slave*.

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**The Pro-Slavery: Slave Owner’s Perspective**

**Directions:** Use quotes from the following historical figures in their defense of slavery. Use Takaki, Foner, and/or the primary sources provided in order to complete the task

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| **Thomas Jefferson** | **John C. Calhoun** | **George Fitzhugh** |
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**John C. Calhoun Sees “Slavery in its true light. . .” (1838)**

In this excerpt from a speech given in 1838, South Carolina’s John C. Calhoun declared that slavery was not a moral evil, as some even in the South [including Thomas Jefferson] had once maintained. He argues that slavery seen in its true light was a blessing to both races [but especially to African-Americans], a haven from the racial warfare that would otherwise break out, and the best and most stable foundation for free society. As you read Calhoun’s defense of slavery, consider how he believed that slavery, the ultimate denial of freedom, could be contributed to American freedom.

He saw (said Mr. Calhoun) in the question before us the fate of the South. It was higher than the mere naked question of master and slave. It involved a great political institution, essential to the peace and existence of one-half of this Union. A mysterious Providence had brought together two races, from different portions of the globe, and placed them together in nearly equal number in the Southern portion of this Union. They were there inseparably united, beyond the possibility of separation. Experience had shown that the existing relation between them secured the peace and happiness of both. Each had improved; the inferior greatly; so much so, that it had attained a degree of civilization never before attained by the black race in any age or country. Under no other relation could they co-exist together. To destroy it was to involve a whole region in slaughter, carnage, and desolation; and, come what will, we must defend and preserve it.

This agitation has produced one happy effect at least; it has compelled us to the South to look into the nature and character of this great institution, and to correct many false impressions that even we had entertained in relation to it. Many in the South once believed that it was a moral and political evil; that follow and delusion are gone; we see it now in its true light, and regard it as the most safe and stable basis for free institutions in the world. It is impossible with us that the conflict can take place between labor and capital, which make[s] it so difficult to establish and maintain free institutions in all wealthy and highly civilized nations where such institutions as ours do not exist. The Southern States are an aggregate, in fact, of communities, not of individuals. Every plantation is a little community, with the master at its head, who concentrates in himself the united interests of capital and labor, of which he is the common representative. These small communities aggregated make the State in all, whose action, labor, and capital is equally represented and perfectly harmonized. Hence the harmony, the union, and stability of that section, which is rarely disturbed except through the action of this Government. The blessing of this state of things extends beyond the limits of the South. It makes that section the balance of the system; the great conservative power, which prevents other portions, less fortunately constituted, from rushing into conflict. In this tendency to conflict in the North between labor and capital, which is constantly on the increase, the weight of the South has and will ever be found on the Conservative side; against the aggression of one or the other side, which ever may tend to disturb the equilibrium of our political system. This is our natural position, the salutary influence of which has thus far preserved, and will long continue to preserve, our free institutions, if we should be left undisturbed. Such are the institutions which these madmen are stirring heaven and earth to destroy, and which we are called on to defend the by highest and most solemn obligations that can be imposed on us as men and patriots.

1. **According to Calhoun, what were the most important attributes of American freedom?**
2. **What alternative system existed in the North, and how did Calhoun deem it to undermine freedom?**
3. **How does Calhoun’s defense of slavery differ from those of the Revolutionary period?**

**John C. Calhoun on the error of “All men are created equal” (1848)**

In this speech, Calhoun, South Carolina’s leading proponent of slavery, asserted that the Declaration of Independence was in error when it stated that “all men are created equal.” Echoing classical republican themes, he argued that liberty was a prize that should be granted only to those sufficiently moral and worthy. Unlike early republicans, Calhoun found these qualities not in rare selfless individuals or even independent propertied classes, but in the white race itself. Calhoun went on to say that liberty is something to be earned.

If [the historian] should possess a philosophical turn of mind, and be disposed to look to more remote and recondite causes, he will trace [the dissolution of the Union] to a proposition which originated in a hypothetical truism, but which, as now expressed and now understood, is the most false and dangerous of all political errors. The proposition to which I allude, has become an axiom in the minds of a vast majority on both sides of the Atlantic, and is repeated daily from tongue to tongue, as an established an incontrovertible truth; it is, that “all men are born free and equal.” It am not afraid to attack error, however deeply it may be entrenched, or however widely extended, whenever it becomes my duty to do so, as I believe it to be on this subject and occasion.

Taking the proposition literally (it is in that sense it is understood), there is not a word of truth in it. It begins will “all men are born,” which is utterly untrue. Men are not born. Infants are born. They grow to be men. And concludes with asserting that they are born “free and equal,” which is not less false. They are not born free. While infants, they are incapable of freedom, being destitute alike of the capacity of thinking and acting, without which there can be no freedom. Besides, they are necessarily born subject to their parents and remain so among all people, savage and civilized, until the development of their intellect and physical capacity enables them to take care of themselves. They grow to all the freedom of which the condition in which they were born permits, by growing to be men. Nor is it less false that they are born “equal”. They are not so in any sense in which it can be regarded; and thus, as I have asserted, there is not a word of truth in the whole proposition, as expressed and generally understood.

If we trace it back, we shall find the proposition different expressed in the Declaration of Independence. That asserts that “all men are created equal.” The form of expression, though, less dangerous, is not less erroneous. All men are not created. According to the Bible, only two, a man and a woman, ever were, and of these one was pronounced subordinate to the other. All others have come into the world by being born, and in no sense, as I have shown either free or equal. But this form of expression being less striking and popular has given way to the present, and under the authority of a document put forth on so great an occasion, and leading to such important consequences, has spread far and wide, and fixed itself deeply in the public mind. It was inserted in our Declaration of Independence without any necessity. It made no necessary part of our justification in separating from the parent country, and declaring ourselves independent. Breach of our chartered privileges, and lawless encroachment on our acknowledge and well-established rights by the parent country, were the real causes, and of themselves sufficient, without resorting to any other, to justify the step. Nor had it any weight in constructing the governments which where substituted in the place of the colonial. They were formed of the old materials and on practical and well-established principles, borrowed for the most part from our own experience and that of the country from which we sprang.

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Such being the case, it follows that any, the worst form of government is better than anarchy; and that individual liberty, or freedom, must be subordinate to whatever power may be necessary to protect society against anarchy within or destruction without; for the safety and well-being of society is as paramount to individual liberty, as the safety and well-being of the race is to that of individuals; and in the same proportion, the power necessary for the safety of society is paramount to individual liberty. On the contrary, government has no right to control individual liberty beyond what is necessary to the safety and well-being of society. Such is the boundary which separates the power of government and the liberty of the citizen or subject in the political state, which, as I have shown, is the natural state of man – the only one in which his race can exist, and the one in which he is born, lives, and dies.

… So, on the contrary, just as people rise in the scale of intelligence, virtue and patriotism, and the more perfectly they become acquainted with the nature of government, the ends for which it was ordered, and how it ought to be administered, and the less the tendency to violence and disorder within, and danger from abroad, the power necessary for government become less and less, and individual liberty greater and greater. Instead, then, of all men having the same right to liberty and equality, as is claimed by those who hold that they are having the same right to liberty and equality, as is claimed by those who hold that they are having the same right to liberty and equality as is claimed by those who hold that they are all born and free and equal, liberty is the noble and highest reward bestowed on mental and moral development, combined with favorable circumstances. Instead, then, of liberty and equality being born with man instead of all men and all classes and descriptions being equally entitled to them, they are high prizes to be won, and are in the most perfect state, not only the highest reward that can bestowed on our race, but the most difficult to be won-and when won, the most difficult to be preserved.

1. **Consider the logic and proof used by Calhoun to disprove the claim “all men are born free and equal.**

1. **How did his racial republicanism reflect larger changes in the national debate of slavery v. free labor?**

**George Fitzhugh, “The Universal Law of Slavery” (1850)**

After 1830, increasingly radical arguments emerged both for and against slavery. In the South, the lawyer and author George Fitzhugh became perhaps the most radical defender of slavery and the hierarchical social order of which it was the lynchpin. He disdained America’s claim to be a “free society” and welcomed the eclipse of that ideal in favor of the “community” of masters and slaves, united in their mutual dependence.

He the Negro is but a grown-up child, and must be governed as a child, not as a lunatic or criminal. The master occupies toward him the place of parent or guardian. We shall not dwell on this view, for no one will differ with us who thinks as we do of the negro’s capacity, and we might argue till doomsday in vain, with those who have a high opinion of the negro’s moral and intellectual capacity.

Secondly. The negro is improvident; will not lay up in summer for the wants of winter; will not accumulate in youth for the exigencies of age. He would become an insufferable burden to society. Society has the right to prevent this, and can only do so by subjecting him to domestic slavery. In the last place, the negro race is inferior to the white race, and living in their midst, they would be far outstripped or outwitted in the chaos of free competition. Gradual but certain extermination would be their fate. We presume the maddest abolitionist does not think the negro’s providence of habits and money-making capacity at all to compare to those of the whites. This defect of character would alone justify enslaving him, if he is to remain here. In Africa or the West Indies, he would become idolatrous, savage and cannibal, or be devoured by savages and cannibals. At the North, he would freeze or starve.

We would remind those who deprecate and sympathize with negro slavery, that his slavery here relieves him for him from a far more cruel slavery in Africa, or from idolatry and cannibalism, and every brutal vice and crime that can disgrace humanity; and that it Christianizes, protects, supports and civilizes him; that it governs him far better than free laborers at the North are governed. There, wife-murder has become a mere holiday pastime; and where so many wives are murdered, almost all must be brutally treated. Nay, more; men who kill their wives or treat them brutally, must be ready for all kinds of crime, and the calendar of crime at the North proves the inference to be correct. Negroes never kill their wives. If it be objected that legally they have no wives, then we reply, that in an experience of more than forty years, we never yet fear of a negro man killing a negro woman. Our negroes are not only better off as to physical comfort than free laborers, but their moral condition is better.

The negro slaves of the South are the happiest, and, in some sense, the freest people in the world. The children and the aged and infirm work not at all, and yet have all the comforts and necessaries of life provided for them. They enjoy liberty, because they are oppressed neither by care nor labor. The women do little hard work, and are protected from the despotism of their husbands by their masters. The negro men and stout boys work, on the average, in good weather, not more than nine hours a day. The balance of their time is spent in perfect abandon. Besides’ they have their Sabbaths and holidays. White men, with so much of license and liberty, would die of ennui; but negroes luxuriate in corporeal and mental repose. With their face upturned to the sun, they can sleep at any hour; and quiet sleep is the greatest of human enjoyments. “Blessed be the man who invented sleep.”

1. **How does Fitzhugh use rising theories of scientific racism in his conclusions?**
2. **What does Fitzhugh say about the “free labor” society that was being celebrated by the more urban and industrial North?**

**George Fitzhugh on the Sociology of the South (1854)**

In this selection, proslavery lawyer George Fitzhugh mounted a radical defense of the slave owner as the “least selfish of men”. According to Fitzhugh, the slave owner stood at the head of a large family of women, children, and slaves and toiled to provide for all of his dependents.

There is no rivalry, no competition to get employment among slaves, as among free laborers. Nor is there a war between master and slave. The master’s interest prevents his reducing the slaves’ allowance or wages in infancy or sickness, for he might lose the slave by so doing. His feeling for his slave never permits him to stint him in old age. The slaves are all well fed, well clad, have plenty of fuel, and are happy. They have no dread of the future – no fear of want. A state of dependence is the only condition in which reciprocal affection can exist among human beings – the only situation in which the war of competition ceases, and peace, amity and good will arise. A state of independence always begets more or less of jealous rivalry and hostility. A man loves his children because they are weak, helped and jealous rivalry and hostility. A man loves his children because they are weak, helpless and dependent. He loves his wife for similar reasons. When his children grow up and assert their independence, he is apt to transfer his affection to his grandchildren. He ceases to love his wife when she becomes masculine or rebellious; but slaves are always dependent, never the rivals of their master. Hence, though men are often found at variance with wife or children, we never saw one who did not like his slaves, and rarely a slave who was not children, we never saw one who did not like his slaves, and rarely a slave who was not devoted to his master. “I am thy servant!” disarms me of the power of master. Every man feels the beauty, force and truth of this sentiment of Sterne. But he who acknowledges its truth, tacitly admits that dependence is a tie of affection, that the relation of master and slave is one of mutual good will. Volumes written on the subject would not prove as much as this single sentiment. It has found its way to the heart of every reader, and carried conviction along with it. The slaveholder is like other men; he will not tread on the worm nor break the bruised reed. The ready submission of the slave, nine times out of then, disarms his wrath even when the slave has offended. The habit of command may make him imperious and fit him for rule, but he is only imperious when thwarted or crossed by his equals; he would scorn to put on airs of command among blacks whether slaves or free; he always speaks to them in a kind and subdued tone. We go farther, and say the slaveholder is better than others – because he has greater occasion for the exercise of the affections. His whole life is pent in providing for the minutest wants of other, in taking care of them in sickness and in health. Hence he is the least selfish of men. Is not the old bachelor who retires to seclusion, always selfish? Is not the head of a large family almost always kind and benevolent? And is not the slave holder the head of the largest family? Nature compels mature and slave to be friends; nature makes employers and free laborers enemies.

1. **Compare this account with the slave autobiographies also presented in this chapter.**

1. **Can you reconcile the two pictures of plantation life?**

1. **How does Fitzhugh justify the subordination of African Americans, even the adult males who, if white, he would have expected to be masters of their own families?**