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GUSTAVUS VASSA.

Published by Isaac Knapp, 25 Cornhill.

THE LIFE

OF

OLAUDAH EQUIANO,

OR

GUSTAVUS VASSA,

THE AFRICAN.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

‘Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.’
‘And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people.’—Isaiah xii. 2, 4.

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY ISAAC KNAPP,
25 CORNHILL.

1837.

Unit 4, Lesson 5: Hidden History - Olaudah Equiano

Essential Question:

- What were some of the experiences of enslaved people and how did they respond?

Warm Up:

SCENARIO:

Billie the bully walks up to Breck who's a wreck and demands Breck's lunch money. Billie is the biggest and strongest person in school.

What are some different ways that Breck might respond to Billie?

Introduction:



Olaudah Equiano

Vocabulary for understanding experiences and reactions to enslavement:

- **Victimization** → being treated cruelly or unkindly
- **Agency** → the actions that people take to achieve a desired goal or produce a good effect.
- **Resistance** → the attempt to prevent something by action or argument.

Introduction

Olaudah Equiano was born around 1745. Olaudah wrote that he was born in the Eboe province, in the area that is now southern Nigeria. He was kidnapped and enslaved, probably in 1756. He was bought and sold several times in Africa then in America. He purchased his own freedom in 1766 and published his autobiography *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Mr. Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vasa, The African*. Written by Himself in 1789.

The book describes how he came to be enslaved. Sections of that account adapted for younger readers appear below.

When I turned the age of eleven, my happiness was brought to an end.

When the adults in our neighborhood went out to work in the field, the children got together on some of the neighbors' property to play. Some of us would climb up a tree to watch for any kidnapers who wanted to kidnap children and sell us into slavery.

One day, when the adults were out working and my sister and I were left to keep an eye on the house, two men and a woman climbed over the walls around our house and grabbed us. They stuffed our mouths, tied our hands, and ran off with us into the woods. They carried us far. At night, we reached a small house.

The next morning, we left the house and traveled all day in the woods. At last, we came to a road. I saw some people and cried for help. The kidnapers grabbed me, put me in a sack, and stopped my sister from speaking.

The next day was the most sorrowful day I had experienced up to that time. They pulled my sister from my arms and separated us. I cried and did not eat anything for several days.

Arrival at the Coast

The first thing I saw when we got to the coast was the sea and a slave ship waiting for its cargo - those of us who were enslaved. When I looked around the ship, I saw many black people chained together. They were very upset. I was so overwhelmed with horror that I fainted.

Later, I asked some of the men who brought me on board the ship if I was going to be eaten by the white men. They told me no.

I knew already that I would never see my home country again.



ut under the deck of the ship. There were the worst smells that had ever entered my nose. id the crying were so bad that I got sick.

white men offered me food. I refused to eat it. They held me down, tied my feet and beat me. as not used to the ocean, I would have jumped overboard but could not. The crew members very closely to stop us from jumping overboard. I have seen some poor Africans whipped or not eating.

hip's cargo [Equiano is referring to the enslaved people here] carried on the ship were kept ether that we could barely turn. And it was very hot. The air was filled with body odor. All of aves sick, and many died.

Barbados Islands

rived on the island of Barbados in America, rs and people who buy and sell goods came e ship. They examined us very closely. They ip to see how healthy we were and pointed to : thought these ugly men were planning to eat e people brought some old slaves from the rd the ship to calm us down by telling us we e eaten. They told us we were brought here to



re taken to a yard and put in a pen like we There were Africans of many languages.

at a drum. The people who wanted to buy us rushed into the yard and chose who they nslave. Families and friends were bought by different people, so they never saw each other mber several brothers were sold to different people. It was very moving to see and hear ; they were separated.

Inge

on board the ship, the man who enslaved me gave me the name Gustavus Vassa. I did not h and did not understand him very much. But I refused to be called by that name and told d my name to be Jacob. But he said no and still called me Gustavus. I refused to answer to re, but I got beat. So, I gave in.

Sources

- https://www.gutenberg.org/files/15399/15399-h/15399-h.htm#CHAP_II
- https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/equiano_olaudah.shtml
- <https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/for-history-reviewing/interactive-timeline>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olaudah_Equiano

Let's Read → Excerpts from Olaudah Equiano's Autobiography

**Students get into groups of three and
assume a number 1, 2, or 3**

Student numbered assignments:

- **Student 1 - highlights examples of individuals being victimized in the account.**
- **Student 2 - highlights examples of agency on the part of individuals in the account.**
- **Student 3 - highlights examples of resistance on the part of individuals in the account.**

Victimization

versus

Agency

Students get into small groups:

Generate examples of

- Victimization
- Agency
- Resistance

that were NOT described in Resource 1

Some more information on Olaudah Equiano

Can you identify any examples of victimization, agency, or resistance in the information that was just provided to you?

Resource 2: Graphic Organizer

Name _____

Olaudah Equiano's account of his own experiences allow us to see how the experience of enslavement involved episodes of victimization, resistance, and agency. Let's see if you can categorize examples of each.

Directions: Read over the list of bulleted actions described in the reading about Equiano. The chart below has 3 columns - one for actions that show how Equiano was a victim, one for actions that show how Equiano resisted mean treatment, and one that shows how Equiano showed agency. Write each bulleted action into the column that best describes Equiano's actions.

- I purchased my freedom
- I refused to answer to my new name
- I was put in a sack
- I refused to eat the food
- I was separated from my sister
- I wrote a book about slavery

An Example of Victimization	An Example of Agency	An Example of Resistance

Now describe an example of how you have or can show agency in your own lives. _____

Complete Resource 2: Graphic Organizer

Complete Resource 3: Create and Analyze a Chronology

Resource 3: Create and Analyze a Chronology

Name _____

1. Read the list below. Then, write each bulleted event in the chart in the order that they occurred.
 - Olaudah wrote his book
 - Olaudah moved to England
 - Olaudah's name was changed
 - Olaudah climbed a tree looking for kidnappers
 - Olaudah was separated from his sister
 - Olaudah purchased his freedom
 - Olaudah was kidnapped

Happened 1st	
Happened 2nd	
Happened 3rd	
Happened 4th	
Happened 5th	
Happened 6th	
Happened Last	

2. Which event on the timeline do you think describes the most important change for Olaudah? *Explain why.*

3. Which is the BEST explanation for why Olaudah moved to England?
 - a. he knew many Africans lived there
 - b. he thought the weather was better there
 - c. he was afraid he might be enslaved again in America
 - d. he was not given the freedom dues he was owed in America

Resource 4: Complete an Account

Name _____

Directions: read the incomplete account of enslavement and Olaudah Equiano below and fill-in the blanks with information that you learned in this lesson.

Words and Phrases to be Used (they can be used more than once).

- agency
- he was enslaved
- my name to be Jacob
- refused to eat
- resistance
- resisted
- victimization

The story of American slavery is not a story just about _____. It is also a story about _____ and _____. The life of Olaudah Equiano supports this conclusion.

Equiano wrote, "When I turned the age of eleven, my happiness was brought to an end." The reason his happiness was brought to an end was because _____.

This is an example of how life as an enslaved person was one of _____.

But enslaved people often exercised their own _____. When the man who enslaved Olaudah tried to change his name, Olaudah told him that he "wanted _____." This is an example of how enslaved people exercised their own _____.

Olaudah's experience as an enslaved person also illustrates how some enslaved people _____ the cruel ways that they were treated. For example, when Olaudah was on the slave ship heading to America, two of the enslavers offered him food. Like others on board the ship, Olaudah _____.

It is important for people to learn that the people who were enslaved did not just sit back and have things done to them. Despite the threats of punishment, they exercised their own _____ as human beings and often _____ having to do things that enslavers wanted them to do.

In the end, we need to recognize that the enslaved people were both victims and heroes.

Complete Resource 4: Complete an Account

Olaudah Equiano

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Olaudah Equiano