

Lives Under Slavery

Examine plantation life, resistance, and spiritual strength.

SS.8.A.4.11 "Examine the aspects of slave culture including plantation life, resistance efforts, and the role of the slaves' spiritual system."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details about plantation life, circle two resistance efforts, and number two details about spiritual life so you can compare how enslaved people faced and challenged slavery.

Community, Resistance, and Faith

- ① On many southern plantations, enslaved people worked from before sunrise until dark in fields, homes, workshops, and docks. Their labor produced crops such as cotton, sugar, rice, and tobacco for owners to sell. Families often lived in small cabins and had little control over work, food, movement, or whether family members could remain together. Overseers used surveillance and punishment to enforce rules. Yet enslaved people built relationships, shared skills, and cared for one another under harsh conditions.
- ② Resistance took many forms, from slowing the pace of work to protecting family ties and preserving African traditions. Some people secretly learned to read or taught others, despite laws and threats meant to prevent education. Others broke tools, hid food, or ran away temporarily or permanently. Escape could be dangerous, so some people used knowledge of roads, woods, waterways, and trusted helpers. These actions challenged a system that claimed to control their bodies, labor, and choices.
- ③ Spiritual life helped enslaved communities sustain hope, identity, and courage. Many people blended Christian beliefs with African religious practices, including song, rhythm, storytelling, and communal worship. At secret or permitted gatherings, spirituals could express faith and also carry messages about freedom, suffering, or deliverance. Biblical stories, especially stories of people seeking liberation, held powerful meaning. Worship was not simply an escape from plantation life. It created community, protected cultural memories, and gave people language to endure and resist oppression.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What are two details from the passage that show how plantation owners controlled enslaved people's daily lives?

2 Describe two resistance efforts from the passage. How did they challenge slavery?

3 Why could knowledge of roads, woods, waterways, and trusted helpers matter to a person trying to escape?

4 How did spirituals and worship support enslaved communities besides expressing religious faith?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a historically plausible five-sentence first-person account from a fictional enslaved person. Include one condition of plantation life, one resistance effort, and one way spiritual life supports the community.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline two details about plantation life, circle two resistance efforts, and number two details about spiritual life so you can compare how enslaved people faced and challenged slavery. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What are two details from the passage that show how plantation owners controlled enslaved people's daily lives?	Enslaved people worked from before sunrise until dark and had little control over work, food, movement, or whether family members stayed together. Overseers also used surveillance and punishment.
2	Describe two resistance efforts from the passage. How did they challenge slavery?	Answers may include slowing work, secretly learning or teaching reading, breaking tools, hiding food, or escaping. These actions resisted owners' control over enslaved people's labor, knowledge, bodies, or choices.
3	Why could knowledge of roads, woods, waterways, and trusted helpers matter to a person trying to escape?	This knowledge could help a person travel more safely and find support while escaping.
4	How did spirituals and worship support enslaved communities besides expressing religious faith?	They could carry messages about freedom, suffering, or deliverance; create community; protect cultural memories; and give people courage and language to endure and resist oppression.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Before dawn, I walk to the rice field because the overseer expects work until dark. My sister and I quietly share news so our family can stay connected. I slow my pace when I can, even though I must be careful. At a gathering, our songs remind us that suffering will not last forever. Singing with others helps me remember our people and find courage.

Accept equivalent passage-based evidence for the short answers. For the open response, look for five sentences that accurately connect a plantation condition, a realistic resistance effort, and a spiritual or community practice.