

LITERARY ANALYSIS: SLAVE NARRATIVE

Few of us can imagine what slavery was really like. **Slave narratives**, the life stories of people who survived slavery, help us understand the grim realities of this experience.

Olaudah Equiano wrote *The Interesting Narrative* at a time when many Africans remembered their lives before enslavement. Like other 18th-century slave narratives, his work

- portrays the culture shock of a newly captured African
- focuses criticism on slave traders, not slave owners
- includes religious and moral appeals against slavery

As you read, note how the author develops these topics.

READING SKILL: ANALYZE DETAILS

Equiano’s readers had little contact with slavery. He chose powerful **descriptive details** to bring the experience to life.

The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us.

To reach his readers, Equiano uses

- **sensory details**, ones that appeal to the five senses
- descriptions of his own reactions
- **anecdotes**, brief stories that support his points

As you read, use a chart like the one shown to record effective examples of each kind of detail.

Sensory Details	Reactions	Anecdotes

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Equiano used the following words in his argument against slavery. Restate each phrase, using a different word or words for the boldfaced term.

1. **copious** amounts of rain, causing a flood
2. the **nominal** boss, but with no real authority
3. her **countenance** betraying her fear
4. cruel rulers acting without worry or **scruple**
5. to our **consternation**, revealed all our plans
6. deadly effects of **pestilential** beetles

*What does it mean
to be a SLAVE?*

KEY IDEA From the 1500s to the 1800s, millions of Africans were enslaved to work in the Americas. Their experiences have been documented in books and portrayed in films. What do you know about the realities of **slavery**?

TEST YOURSELF Decide whether each statement is true or false. Think about the facts or impressions that helped you choose your answer.

SLAVERY: Fact or Fiction

1. Slavery was a common practice in Africa.
 TRUE FALSE
2. No Africans participated willingly in the slave trade.
 TRUE FALSE
3. Most enslaved Africans were brought to North America.
 TRUE FALSE
4. Captured Africans were packed like cargo into slave ships.
 TRUE FALSE
5. Slave traders typically sold families as a single group.
 TRUE FALSE