

have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave¹ in my own country. When I looked round the ship too, and saw a large furnace of copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their **countenances** expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted. When I recovered a little, I found some black people about me, who I believed were some of those who had brought me on board, and had been receiving their pay; they talked to me in order to cheer me, but all in vain. I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces,
20 and long hair. They told me I was not, and one of the crew brought me a small portion of spirituous liquor in a wine glass; but, being afraid of him, I would not take it out of his hand. One of the blacks, therefore, took it from him and gave it to me, and I took a little down my palate, which, instead of reviving me, as they thought it would, threw me into the greatest **consternation** at the strange feeling it produced, having never tasted any such liquor before. Soon after this, the blacks who brought me on board went off, and left me abandoned to despair. **B**

I now saw myself deprived of all chance of returning to my native country, or even the least glimpse of hope of gaining the shore, which I now considered as friendly; and I even wished for my former slavery in preference to my present
30 situation, which was filled with horrors of every kind, still heightened by my ignorance of what I was to undergo. I was not long suffered to indulge my grief; I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life; so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste anything. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables; and, on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands, and laid me across, I think, the windlass,² and tied my feet, while the other flogged³ me severely. I had never experienced anything of this kind before, and, although not
40 being used to the water, I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it, yet, nevertheless, could I have got over the nettings,⁴ I would have jumped over the side, but I could not; and besides, the crew used to watch us very closely who were not chained down to the decks, lest we should leap into the water; and I have seen some of these poor African prisoners most severely cut, for attempting to do so, and hourly whipped for not eating. This indeed was often the case with myself. In a little time after, amongst the poor chained men, I found some of my own nation, which in a small degree gave ease to my mind. I inquired of these what was to be done with us? They gave me to understand, we were to be carried to these
50 white people's country to work for them. I then was a little revived, and thought, if it were no worse than working, my situation was not so desperate; but still I feared

countenance

(koun'tə-nəns) *n.*

appearance, especially the expression of the face

consternation

(kɒn'stər-nā'shən) *n.*

a state of paralyzing dismay; fear

B ANALYZE DETAILS

Reread lines 1–26. What details reinforce Equiano's impression that he has been captured by bad spirits?

1. **the meanest slave:** the poorest or most wretched slave.

2. **windlass** (wɪnd'læs): a device for raising and lowering a ship's anchor.

3. **flogged:** beat with a whip or rod.

4. **nettings:** networks of small ropes on the sides of a ship that were used for various purposes, such as stowing sails. On slave ships, the nettings helped keep the slaves from jumping overboard.