

I should be put to death, the white people looked and acted, as I thought, in so savage a manner; for I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty; and this not only shown towards us blacks, but also to some of the whites themselves. One white man in particular I saw, when we were permitted to be on deck, flogged so unmercifully with a large rope near the foremast,⁵ that he died in consequence of it; and they tossed him over the side as they would have done a brute. This made me fear these people the more; and I expected nothing less **C** than to be treated in the same manner. I could not help expressing my fears and apprehensions to some of my countrymen; I asked them if these people had no coun-
60 try, but lived in this hollow place (the ship)? They told me they did not, but came from a distant one. “Then,” said I, “how comes it in all our country we never heard of them?” They told me because they lived so very far off. I then asked where were their women? had they any like themselves? I was told they had. “And why,” said I, “do we not see them?” They answered, because they were left behind. I asked how the vessel could go? They told me they could not tell; but that there was cloth put upon the masts by the help of the ropes I saw, and then the vessel went on; and the white men had some spell or magic they put in the water when they liked, in order to stop the vessel. I was exceedingly amazed at this account, and really thought they were spirits. I therefore wished much to be from amongst them, for I expected they
70 would sacrifice me; but my wishes were vain—for we were so quartered that it was impossible for any of us to make our escape. . . . **D**

At last, when the ship we were in, had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not see how they managed the vessel. But this disappointment was the least of my sorrow. The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship’s cargo were confined together, it became absolutely **pestilential**. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which
80 was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced **copious** perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died. . . . This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling⁶ of the chains. . . . The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable. Happily perhaps, for myself, I was soon reduced so low here that it was thought necessary to keep me almost always on deck; and from my extreme youth I was not put in fetters. In this situation I expected every hour to share the fate of my companions, some of whom were almost daily brought upon deck at the point of death, which I began
90 to hope would soon put an end to my miseries. . . . **E**

One day they had taken a number of fishes; and when they had killed and satisfied themselves with as many as they thought fit, to our astonishment who

C GRAMMAR AND STYLE

Reread lines 54–57. Note how Equiano uses **adverb clauses**, such as “when we were permitted to be on deck,” to modify verbs and adverbs in the sentence.

D SLAVE NARRATIVE

Look back at lines 48–52. What does Equiano’s reaction reveal about the way he regards slavery?

pestilential

(pěs’tə-lěn’shəl) *adj.*
deadly; poisonous

copious (kō’pē-əs) *adj.* in large amounts; abundant

E ANALYZE DETAILS

What details in lines 75–85 does Equiano use to describe conditions below decks?

5. **foremast** (fôr’məst): the mast (tall pole that supports sails and rigging) nearest the forward end of a sailing ship.

6. **galling**: rubbing or chafing, enough to produce sores.