**“Is It Not Enough that We Are Torn From Our Country and Friends?"**

***Background:*** *Here, former slave Olaudah Equiano describes the horrors of being sold into slavery and traveling along the Middle Passage in the 1700s. Olaudah Equiano was kidnapped from his family when he was 11 years old, taken first to Barbados and then to Virginia. He was later sold to a Quaker merchant from whom he purchased his freedom in 1766.*

The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast, was the sea, and a slave ship. This filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror, when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled, and tossed up to see if I were ***sound*,** by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me.

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 my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and ***anguish***, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted.

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. 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, and tied my feet, while the other ***flogged*** me severely. I had never experienced anything of this kind before. I would have jumped over the side, but I could not; and besides, the crew watched 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.

At last we came in sight of the island of Barbados. Many merchants and planters now came on board. They put us in separate parcels, and examined us attentively. They also made us jump. And sure enough, soon after we were landed, there came to us Africans of all languages.

We were taken immediately to the merchant's yard, where we were all pent up together, like sheep, without regard to sex or age. After a few days we were sold after their usual manner, which is this: On a signal given (as the beat of a drum), the buyers rush at once into the yard where the slaves are confined, and make choice of that parcel they like best. In this manner, without a second thought, are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again.

Are the dearest friends and relations, now rendered more ***dear*** by separation from their kindred, still to be parted from each other, and thus prevented from cheering the gloom of slavery, with the small comfort of being together, and sharing their sufferings and sorrows? Why are parents to lose their children, brothers, sisters, husbands, or wives? Surely, this is a new "improvement" in cruelty, which, as there is no advantage to it, adds fresh horrors even to the wretchedness of slavery.

**Source:** Adapted from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself*. London, 1789.

**Vocabulary: *sound***: healthy or normal; ***countenances:***faces; ***anguish****:* physical or mental pain;   
 ***flogged****:* beat; ***dear***: loved or cherished

Answer the following questions using textual evidence from the passage that you just finished reading.  
Be prepared to share your answers.

1. Who is the author? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ When was this source written? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the author describing in this passage? Underline and annotate evidence from the text to   
 support your answer. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
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3a. When the author realized that he was being sold into slavery, what was his reaction? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
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3b. Circle the **best** three words in lines 2-9 that support your previous answer.

4. What two things happened to the author when he was brought below the decks of the ship? Refer   
 back to the text to provide evidence to support your answer. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
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5. Why did the crew watch the slaves on the top deck of the ship? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
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6. In line 24 and 25, the author states, “we were all pent up together, like sheep,” and “we were sold   
 after their usual manner.” How do these two phrases help you to understand the meaning of the   
 word ***parcel*** on line 27? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
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7. The word ***parcels*** on line 22 has a different meaning than the word ***parcel*** on line 27. How is the   
 word different in its usage on line 22 compared to line 27. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
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 8. On lines 32-33, the author states, “Surely, this is a new “improvement” in cruelty, which, as there is   
 no advantage to it, adds fresh horrors even to the wretchedness of slavery.” What is the author   
 referring to when he says, “this is a new ‘improvement’ in cruelty”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
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 Underline and annotate any evidence in the text that supports your answer.

9. Is Olaudah Equiano a reliable source when speaking about the issue of slavery? Explain either why   
 or why not based on evidence from the text. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
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10. Based on evidence from the reading above, write a thesis statement identifying the experience of a   
 kidnapped African travelling through the middle passage. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
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