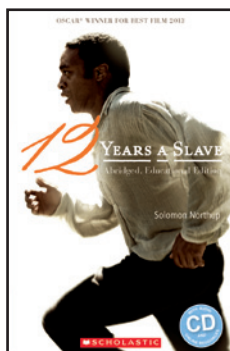


A **FREE** RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS!

# 12 YEARS A SLAVE

## Level 3

This level is suitable for students who have been learning English for at least three years and up to four years. It corresponds with the Common European Framework level B1. Suitable for users of TEAM magazine.

### SYNOPSIS

Solomon Northup was a black man born free in the middle of the nineteenth century in New York State. At that time there were millions of black slaves working on plantations in the South of the USA.

At the story opens, Solomon is happily married with three children. Two friendly white men offer him a job as a musician in a travelling circus. He accepts and travels with them to Washington, where he falls ill and wakes up in a terrible situation – his 'friends' have sold him to a slave dealer. His new 'owner' beats him badly and then transports him with other slaves to the South.

At the slave market in New Orleans, Solomon (whose slave name is 'Platt') is bought by a plantation owner called William Ford. Although Ford does not question the morality of slavery, he treats his slaves well.

Platt's next owner is a cruel and stupid man called Tibeats. Tibeats finds fault with everything Platt does, and eventually they fight. Tibeats tries to kill Platt, but he escapes into the Louisiana swamps, and returns to his first master, Ford. Platt is then sold to a new plantation owner called Epps, who grows cotton.

Epps beats his slaves and gives them very little rest or food. Solomon is there for ten years, and thinks about escape and his family every day.

One day, a white man called Bass comes to work for Epps. He believes that slavery is wrong – and Solomon decides to ask for his help. Putting himself in danger, Bass agrees to write a letter to Solomon's family in the North.

Months later, two strangers appear at the Epps plantation.

They are Solomon's friends and they have come to rescue him. He returns to his family in the North, from where he writes this moving book.

### THE BACK STORY

Published in 1853, just three months after Solomon's dramatic escape from slavery, *Twelve Years a Slave* came out just as America was moving towards the Civil War that ended slavery in 1865.

Solomon's story was largely forgotten for many years, until British film director Steve McQueen made a powerful film version of *Twelve Years a Slave* in 2013. It was a big success around the world, and won three Academy Awards (Oscars), including Best Picture.

### MEDIA LINKS

**DVD:** The photos in this reader come from Steve McQueen's film *Twelve Years a Slave*. It stars Chiwetel Ejiofor as Solomon and Lupita Nyong'o as Patsey. Other stars are Benedict Cumberbatch as William Ford and Michael Fassbender as Edwin Epps. Bass is played by Brad Pitt.

**CD:** An audio recording of *Twelve Years a Slave* is available to accompany the Scholastic Reader.

**Visits/Internet:** Saratoga Springs has a Solomon Northup Day – find out more at [www.saratogaspringsvisitorcenter.com](http://www.saratogaspringsvisitorcenter.com). After his rescue, Solomon helped other slaves escape into the North – this was called the Underground Railroad – find out more at [www.freedomcenter.org](http://www.freedomcenter.org).

## HOW TO USE YOUR SCHOLASTIC READER

### Choosing and motivating

Is this the right story for your class? Have your students heard of *Twelve Years a Slave*? Try to generate interest with background information (see The Back Story above) and by reading aloud the first page of the story with dramatic atmosphere.

### Organising

Plan a class reading schedule. Decide how many pages to set for reading each week. Select exercises from the Self-Study section at the back of the reader and extra activities from this resource sheet to go with each chunk of reading. All answers are on page 4 of this resource sheet.

### Using the CD

Students can listen and follow in their books. They can listen and then read. They can read and then listen. All these activities will improve their reading speeds and skills.

### Using the DVD

Select the English language option on the DVD. The running time is 134 minutes. Select key scenes to show in parallel with the class reading schedule.

### Glossary

Go to 'New Words' at the back of the reader. Translate the words with the class or get students to find meanings at home. The Vocabulary Builder on page 3 of this resource sheet practises the new words in a different context.

### Slavery in the United States

Slavery had a long history in the United States, lasting around 250 years. After the ending of slavery, black Americans still had to wait another hundred years for equal rights. Racism is still a problem in the USA today. Read through the key dates in the history of slavery on page 6 with the class before starting the story.

### Fact File

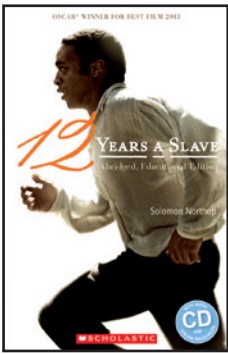
Set this as self-study or use for whole class work. It tells the story of the campaign to end slavery.

### What did they think?

Get everyone to do a written or spoken review of *Twelve Years a Slave*. Compare opinions. Will they read the original in their own language? Did you like it? Let us know at:

[readers@link2English.com](mailto:readers@link2English.com)

RESOURCE SHEET STUDENT ACTIVITIES



**3 Work with a partner. You are Brown and Hamilton. You see Solomon in a park in Saratoga. One of you has an idea. Have a conversation.**

**Chapters 4–8**

**1 Choose the correct name to answer these questions.**

Solomon	<del>Burch</del>	Robert	Emily
---------	------------------	--------	-------

- a) Who sells the slaves to Goodin? ..... Burch .....
- b) Which slave does Goodin especially like? .....
- c) Who says he has been to New York City? .....
- d) Who dies of smallpox? .....

**2 Solomon is at the market. Make sentences that are true.**

- a) An old gentleman from New Orleans ..... i) is separated from both her children.
- b) A planter from Baton Rouge ..... ii) refuses to sell Emily.
- c) William Ford ..... iii) decides not to buy Solomon.
- d) Freeman ..... iv) buys Randall.
- e) Eliza ..... v) buys Platt and Eliza.

**3 Tick the things that happen.**

- a) Tibeats and Platt start building a kitchen house for Ford.
- b) Platt burns the house down.
- c) Tibeats says he is unhappy with Platt's work.
- d) Tibeats whips Platt until he falls down.
- e) Ford arrives to rescue Solomon.
- f) Platt runs away into the swamp.

**4 Platt decides not to tell his new owner William Ford that he is really a free man. Imagine that Platt does tell Ford the truth. How might the story have been different?**

**Chapters 9–13**

**1 Put these events in the order they happen.**

- a) Armsby tells Epps about the letter.
- b) Solomon asks a white man called Armsby to post the letter in Marksville.
- c) Solomon writes a letter to Henry Northup and hides it under his bed.
- d) Solomon burns his letter.
- e) Solomon persuades Epps that Armsby is lying and wants to make trouble.
- f) Solomon steals a piece of paper.  **1**

**2 Tick the things that are true about Patsey.**

- a) She is the quickest cotton picker in the area.
- b) Her family comes from Guinea in Africa.

**People and places**

**1 Make sentences that are true.**

- a) Solomon and Anne ... i) ... are plantation owners.
- b) Brown and Hamilton ... ii) ... are slaves.
- c) Eliza and Patsey ... iii) ... are free black people.
- d) Ford and Epps ... iv) ... are house builders.
- e) Bass and Tibeats ... v) ... say they work in a circus.

**2 Choose the best word(s) to complete the sentences.**

- a) The first African slaves arrived in the state of Louisiana  Washington  Virginia .
- b) Plantations in the late 1700s needed more slaves to grow corn  cotton  sugar .
- c) Slaves were sold at the slave market by an overseer  a dealer  a driver .

**Chapters 1–3**

**1 Circle the mistake in each sentence and write the correct word in the space.**

- a) Solomon didn't go to school. .... went .....
- b) He learnt to play the piano. ....
- c) His mother died when he was 21. ....
- d) He had his own hotel business. ....
- e) He visited Alaska. ....

**2 Choose the correct answer.**

- a) Which of these phrases does Solomon not use to describe James Burch?
  - cruel eyes  well-dressed  strong-looking
- b) Which of these phrases does Burch not use to describe Solomon?
  - a slave  a runaway  a free man
- c) Which of these is not a slave in the pen with Solomon?
  - Elisha  Eliza  Randall
- d) Which of these do the slaves not see as they walk through Washington?
  - the Capitol  dark, empty streets  politicians

**RESOURCE SHEET STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

- c) She can swim like a fish.
- d) Mistress Epps is jealous of her.
- e) She never smiles.

**3 Talk to a partner. Why is it so hard for slaves to escape from the plantations in the South? Make a list.**

**Chapters 14–Epilogue**

**1 Choose the correct pair of words for each sentence and put them in the correct spaces.**

news; Christmas	<del>white; house</del>	wrong; slaves
trust; believes	upset; story	

- a) Epps decides to build a new ~~house~~ and he employs some ~~white~~ builders.
- b) A man called Bass believes that it is ..... to own .....
- c) Solomon ..... that he can ..... Bass.
- d) Bass is very ..... by Solomon's .....
- e) Bass will bring ..... to Platt at .....

**2 Which of these things happen after Solomon's rescue? Tick the boxes.**

- a) Solomon brings Burch before the law in Washington.
- b) He's allowed to speak against Burch.
- c) He brings Brown and Hamilton before the law in New York City.
- d) Brown and Hamilton don't go to prison.
- e) Solomon disappears from history after 1857.

**3 Work with other students. You are the slaves left behind after Solomon leaves. Have a conversation about what has just happened. Talk about the future without Platt.**

**FINAL TASKS**

**1 Look at the chapter titles on page 3. From memory, write a sentence about what happens in each chapter.**

**2 Imagine Solomon is able to write a letter home to Anne. Choose one of these moments and write his letter:**

- when he is in New York City with Brown and Hamilton
- after one year on the Epps plantation
- on the journey home with Henry Northup

**3 How does Solomon's story make you feel? Describe your reactions at these different points in the story:**

- when he is kidnapped
- when he is beaten
- when Tibbeats treats him badly
- when he escapes into the swamp
- when he has to whip Patsey
- when Mr Northup is trying to find him in Marksville

**VOCABULARY BUILDER**

**Look at the 'New Words' at the back of Twelve Years a Slave.**

**1 Use these words to complete these sentences.**

slave   lawyer   captain   runaway
------------------------------------

1. A ..... helps people when they have to face the law.
2. The ..... is the most important person on a ship.
3. A ..... has escaped from somewhere.
4. A ..... has no freedom to do what he or she wants.

**2 Match these adjectives to the definitions.**

drunk   cruel   jealous
-------------------------

1. when you do something unkind to someone .....
2. when you really want something that someone else has .....
3. when you can't act normally because you have had too much wine or beer .....

**3 Find these words in the 'New Words' list.**

1. A small outside area behind a building. ....
2. You can build a house with this. ....
3. A farmer puts his or her animals in here. ....
4. A small room inside a boat. ....
5. A straight, narrow waterway built by people. ....
6. When you go outside on a ship you are standing on this. ....
7. This shows you are allowed to enter a music festival. ....
8. People do amazing tricks here. ....
9. This hurts! It's a hit on the body with a long thin piece of rope. ....
10. Chickens love to eat this. ....

**4 Choose verbs from the 'New Words' list to complete these sentences.**

1. He ..... his horse so hard that it died.
2. I ..... some flowers from the garden for my grandmother.
3. She lied to him once and now he doesn't ..... her.
4. The boy was ..... for stealing apples from the farmer's land.

## FACT FILE FOLLOW-UP

**THE END OF SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES**  
(pages 58–9)**Discussion**

Students read about how slavery ended on pages 58-9. Discuss these questions with the class.

1. Why were the 'Underground Railroad' routes kept secret?
2. Why was Uncle Tom's Cabin an important book in the fight against slavery?
3. There were two ways for President Lincoln to end slavery. What were they, and which did he choose?

**Profile**

These people from history are all important in the story of slavery. Students research one of them. They write about their personal lives, their character, what they did and why they are important.

- Solomon Northup
- Abraham Lincoln
- Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Martin Luther King

**Telling a story**

Students imagine they are journalists in 1860. Their newspaper wants an exciting story from the 'Underground Railroad' and sends them to one of the 'stations' on the 'railroad'. They meet the family of slaves in the picture on page 58 who are trying to escape. They meet the white people who are trying to help them. They write their story.

**Debate: the U.S. Constitution**

The 13th Amendment ended slavery in the United States. Here are four of the other amendments:

- being free to say what you want – 1st Amendment
- the right to carry guns – 2nd Amendment
- the right to remain silent in the face of the law – 5th Amendment
- the right for all people to vote – 15th & 19th Amendment

Put students in groups of four or divide the class into four. Give each student or group one amendment. They have to argue that theirs is the most important. Each student/group speaks about their amendment, and then the rest of the class questions them or challenges their ideas. At the end, take a class vote on which is the most important amendment – students vote according to what they believe not which group they are in!

**DVD/CD FOLLOW-UP****DVD: Choosing scenes**

The Steve McQueen film version of *Twelve Years a Slave* is over two hours long, and contains some material that you will probably feel isn't suitable for the classroom. Watch the film yourself and choose a few key scenes that are appropriate. Students vote for the scenes they would most like to watch. After watching the scene, discuss these questions: *Is the acting good? Is the scene exciting? Is the music good? What emotions do you go through while you are watching it? Do you want to watch the rest of the film?* Examples scenes:

- Solomon's life as a free man in Saratoga Springs
- meeting Eliza and her children in the slave pen
- travelling on the boat to New Orleans
- Solomon's plan for moving Master Ford's timber
- Solomon's escape into the swamp
- Solomon's rescue

**CD: What's happening?**

Select key moments on the CD from chapters students have read. Play a small section of Solomon's story. Students describe the context of the extract: where Solomon is, who he is with, how he and the others are feeling, what has just happened, what is going to happen next.

**ANSWER KEY****Self-Study Activities (pages 60–3)**

- 1 a) canal b) raft c) pen d) yard e) timber f) whip
- 2 a) unkind b) escapes c) lash d) bad
- 3 a) T b) F. More slaves were needed. c) F. Only 10% were free.
- 4 a) go to school, work in the fields b) he has never been there; he needs a job c) a piece of wood; a whip d) She has two children; she has had a comfortable life
- 5 Open answers.
- 6 a) pass b) trust c) nail d) swamp e) captain f) deck g) cabin
- 7 Possible answers:
  - a) Because Robert falls ill with smallpox and dies.
  - b) Because he'll get more money for her in a few years.
  - c) Because he doesn't know if he can trust him.
  - d) Because he needs the money to help his wife's brother.
- 8 The correct order is: e, d, b, f, a, g, c.
- 9 Open answers.
- 10 a) corn b) pick c) jealous
- 11 Open answers.
- 12 a) Ford tells Tibbeats b) He's not very good at it. c) It's running away. d) They have to dance. e) It's because she can pick cotton so quickly. f) She loved her when she was little.
- 13 a) Platt b) Mistress Epps c) Platt d) Armsby e) Platt f) Mistress Epps g) Platt
- 14 Open answers.
- 15 a) (b is a judge)
- 16 Open answers.
- 17 Possible answers:
  - a) Because he is a good man who believes that slavery is wrong.
  - b) Write a letter to Henry Northup in Saratoga Springs.
  - c) There is no news. d) Because he doesn't know his slave name.
  - e) Sail away on the riverboat.
  - f) They don't want to give Epps time to hide Solomon.
  - g) He runs to Mr Northup and starts to cry. h) Losing his money.
  - i) Because the law officers believe that he bought Solomon honestly and had lost the papers. j) Nobody knows.
- 18 Open answers.

**Resource Sheet Activities****People and places**

- 1 b) v c) ii d) i e) iv
- 2 a) Virginia b) cotton c) a dealer

**Chapters 1–3**

- 1 b) piano > violin c) mother > father d) hotel > timber e) Alaska > Canada
- 2 b) a free man c) Elisha d) politicians
- 3 Open answers.

**Chapters 4–8**

- 1 b) Emily c) Solomon d) Robert
- 2 b) iv c) v d) ii e) i
- 3 The things that happen are: a, c, e, f.
- 4 Open answers.

**Chapters 9–13**

- 1 The correct order is: f, c, b, a, e, d.
- 2 The following things are true about Patsey: a, b, d.
- 3 Open answers.

**Chapters 14–Epilogue**

- 1 b) wrong, slaves c) believes, trust d) upset, story e) news, Christmas
- 3 The things that happen are: a, c, d, e.
- 4 Open answers.

**Vocabulary Builder**

- 1 1. lawyer 2. captain 3. runaway 4. slave
- 2 1. cruel 2. jealous 3. drunk
- 3 1. yard 2. timber 3. pen 4. cabin 5. canal 6. deck 7. pass 8. circus 9. lash 10. corn
- 4 1. whipped 2. picked 3. trust 4. punished