

Moriah, 8th grader

Follow the North Star, Reflection Assignment

Eyes down, one foot in front of the other. Your gaze locked fixedly on the pair of feet in front of you, trying to make sure all gaps are closed before the wicked slash and blinding pain of the whip makes contact with your fragile, dark skin. You do your best to block out the angry shouts, the hurtful words, escaping from the pale lips of those “superior” to you, while still listening for direct orders and questions you can answer to avoid the beating that is sure to come. This is the awful, horrible life of the African American slaves.

In our everyday lives, we can't begin to imagine what these people went through daily. While we're complaining about too much homework, they were pursing their lips tight to hold in the involuntary screams from when they put one toe out of line. Today, we joke around and tease our teachers. If they answered something besides “Yes/no, Ma'am/Sir,” or the occasional single word to answer a direct question, they were beaten and sometimes killed. We stomp on the spiders, crawling around our feet. In the past, African American slaves were treated even worse than the innocent spiders. When we kill a spider, we make it quick and easy. When they had to “take care” of a slave, they tortured them either for their enjoyment, or to teach a lesson.

Then there were those who still had souls, hearts, and feelings. The Quakers helped those in need. They stood up for what was right. They saw past the dirt matted, chocolate brown faces of those around them and saw inside. They saw people who were just like them. They took care of them and helped them escape. If not for them, who knows what unimaginable condition we would be in right now, especially if you're an African American. The worst thing is that a majority of us wouldn't object to the slaughter of innocent people in front of our eyes, because we would have grown up thinking that was the way.

“Follow the North Star” puts you in their place. We know at the end of the night we'll be okay and that no one will actually hurt us. The slaves weren't granted with that privilege. They were constantly fighting for their lives. I'm glad I got to experience this (program) and it will stay with me through the rest of my life. I have a new outlook on the world, like I went to sleep and woke up a new person. Thank you for giving me this chance.