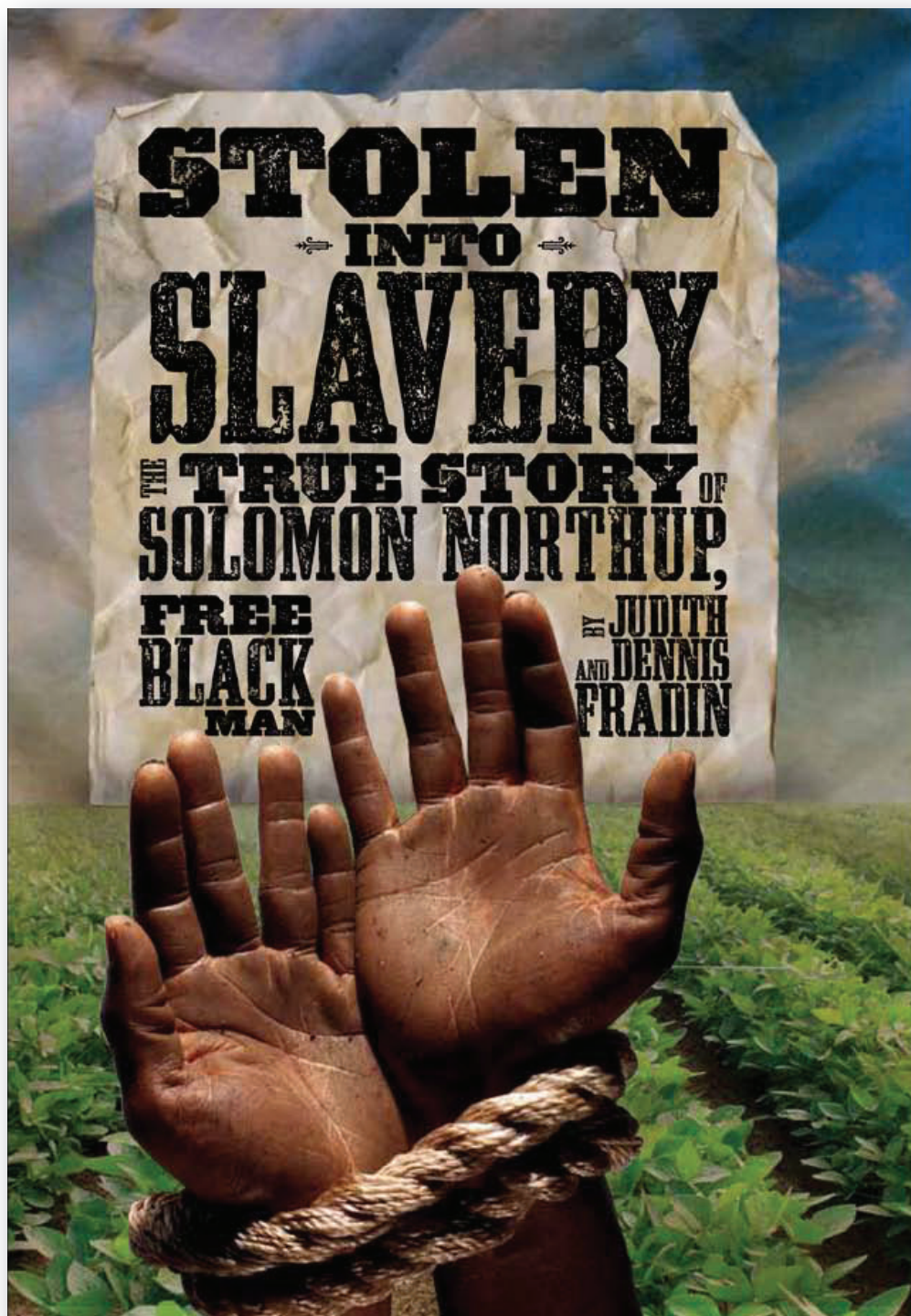


# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

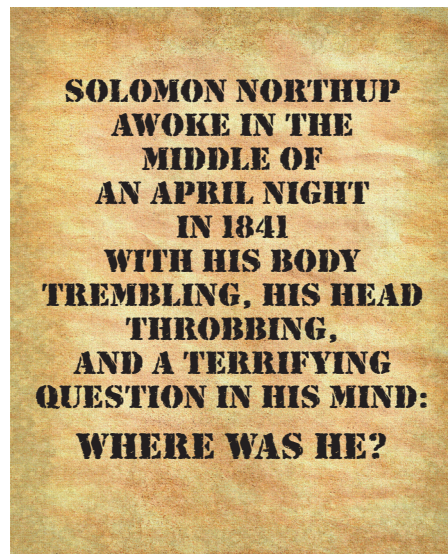
## COMMON CORE ALIGNMENTS AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



## A CLASSROOM GUIDE

Famed African-American leader Frederick Douglass, himself a runaway slave, felt that there was something especially awful about the enslavement of free people like Solomon Northup. In 1853 Douglass wrote about Solomon:

**“Think of it! For thirty years a man, with all a man’s hopes, fears, and aspirations—with a wife and children to call him husband and father —with a home, humble it may be. Then, for twelve years a thing, classed with mules and horses, torn from his home and family, and driven to toil in a cotton field, by the lash of an inhuman master. Oh! It is horrible! It chills the blood.”—from the Afterword**



Reading *Stolen into Slavery* immerses your students in an aspect of American history that is often not taught: the kidnapping of African American free people from states that had abolished slavery and recognized black people as free men and women. As your class reads the harrowing true tale of Solomon Northup, they will learn details of his life that make it absolutely clear what it was to be a slave, for, like your students, Solomon saw the world through the eyes of free citizens.

This guide offers subjects for research, discussion, and for personal consideration. You’ll find opportunities for your students to hold a mock trial, to help to develop escape plans, to truly put themselves in another’s shoes through detailed study of events and people, and to participate in contemporary celebrations of Solomon Northup’s life. The guide extends curriculum studies in history, geography, language arts, and social studies. We begin with several broad questions and projects—things to alert your students to be looking for as they read the book. Then you’ll find questions that will lead readers to more particular examinations of the book.

## INTRODUCTION

**“**Solomon Northup slowly realized that he was in a dark, dank, foul-smelling dungeon in Washington, D.C. Worse yet, he was in handcuffs and his feet were chained to the floor.**”**

## ACTIVITIES AND QUESTIONS

1. As they begin reading *Stolen into Slavery*, ask your students to keep a list of the places to which Solomon travels and in which he resides throughout the years covered by this narrative. Using the maps on pages 19, 25, and 45 as reference, ask students to note the key events that happened in particular places. They should also write down Solomon’s thoughts, perceptions, and descriptions of those places.

**RI 5.3, 6.3; RH 6.1, 6.5, 6.7**

2. Again, as they are reading, have your students keep a log of the various names Solomon is given as he is sold from slave owner to slave owner. For each new name, they should fill in a grid like the following:

Slave Owner	Time	Place	Solomon’s Slave Name	Worst Thing that Happened

**RI 5.3, 6.3; RH 6.1, 6.5, 6.7**

As the log of names grows, have the class discuss the importance of a person’s name. Some questions to get the discussion going:

- The quote that opens chapter 3 is: “I will learn you your name.” The New Orleans slave dealer Theophilus Freeman tells Solomon this when Solomon does not respond to his new name, Platt. Why is it so important to the slave dealer, and later the slave owners, that slaves take on new names?
- In the case of kidnapped free men, why is it particularly important that they use their slave names and never speak their real, given names?
- After he recovers from smallpox, Solomon is purchased by William Ford, and his name becomes Platt Ford. How does losing his own name affect Solomon?
- How do your students feel about their own names – their given names and their family names? How do their names make them a part of

their family, their community and tradition? To what degree does a name define each student?

**RI 5.3, 5.8, 6.3; SL 5.1, 6.1**

3. Not only do we learn about the life of a slave from Solomon's own experiences, but we also meet other slaves.

[Page 34] William Ford was a wealthy cotton planter who owned a number of slaves. One of them was Walton, a house slave who had lived all his life on the Ford plantation, and who spoke of Mr. Ford as a child would of his father.

[Page 55] As a free black man, [Solomon] had always looked down on slaves ... Now he saw how wrong he had been. Although deprived of education, slaves had a native intelligence and good sense that helped them survive.

Your students should gather information about the other slaves Solomon meets during his twelve years as a slave. In Solomon's experience, did the slaves stay to themselves or did they establish communities, even families? Were they able to help each other? What did the different seasons bring to their lives? Were they allowed to celebrate special occasions or holidays?

**RI 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3**

4. Solomon encounters a number of slave owners, overseers, and white workers. Most of them simply accept slavery as part of their way of life. Some have generous natures, but many are cruel, evil, and even violent.

[Page 34] The fact that William Ford owned slaves would be reason enough to despise him ... [but] he also had some redeeming qualities. Every Sunday, Ford gathered his slaves and read a portion of the Bible to them.

[Page 53] Besides punishing his slaves for breaking his rules, Epps whipped them for his personal amusement.

Select one of the slave owners and put him on trial in your classroom. Appoint a judge and jury, a prosecutor (representing the slave) and a defense attorney (representing the slave owner). Decide on the details of the case: What action did the slave owner take that brought the case to court?

**SL 5.1, 5.4, 6.1, 6.3, 6.4**





Remember that African Americans could not even testify in court at this time. But for this activity, you can change the rules. In your mock trial, a slave can bring a suit to trial. Other slaves can testify. But assume that slaves cannot serve on the jury. What kind of evidence and what arguments might persuade such a jury that a slave owner is guilty and a slave is telling the truth and was treated unjustly?

The chapter titles offer an interesting way to focus on specific subjects, events, and ideas in the book.

5. The opening of the first chapter is: “Well, My Boy, How Do You Feel Now?”

- Ask the students who is speaking? What is the circumstance? How is this question anything but well-meaning?
- James Birch is a slave buyer and seller in Washington, DC in 1841. When he purchases Solomon Northup from two men with whom Solomon had traveled from New York State, do your students think that Birch knew Solomon was a free man who had been stolen/kidnapped? Did he know he was breaking the law? Why was it so important to Birch to stop Solomon from saying he is a free man?
- Do your students think the brutal beating will stop Solomon from telling people he is a free man? Deeper than that, do they think it will change the way Solomon thinks of himself?

**RI 5.1, 5.3, 5.8, 6.1, 6.3; SL 5.3, 6.4**

6. In Chapter 2, “I Wished for Wings,” we learn the details of how Solomon is fooled and then kidnapped into slavery. Have your class review these important events with the following questions:

- How did Merrill Brown and Abram Hamilton play on Solomon Northup’s naiveté to get him to travel with them and become a part of their circus? Did Solomon have any reason to distrust them? What did they do to keep his trust? Did your students suspect any foul play? Why or why not?
- Solomon Northup was in the nation’s capital during the funeral of President William Henry Harrison. While people participated in the sadness and ceremony around the funeral, Solomon, so close to it all, is sold and locked up in a slave pen – an inhuman circumstance. Have your students talk about the irony of this happening in the capital of freedom and democracy.

- For a deeper understanding of this moment in Washington, DC, ask your students to do some research on the funeral of President Harrison. Some websites that will be helpful are:

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=67338#axzz1ejA33Csw>

<http://www.congressionalcemetery.org/president-william-henry-harrison>

<http://library24.library.cornell.edu:8280/luna/servlet/detail/CORNELL~9~1~78115~3072:Funeral-Ceremonies-of-William-Henry>

- On the sailing vessel, the *Orleans*, Solomon makes some friends and finds what he hopes are allies. He makes plans to escape. Review the plans in detail, asking students to suggest changes, additions, or alternatives to make the plan stronger. Why does Solomon’s plot fail? What bit of hope does Solomon cling to at the end of this very eventful time?

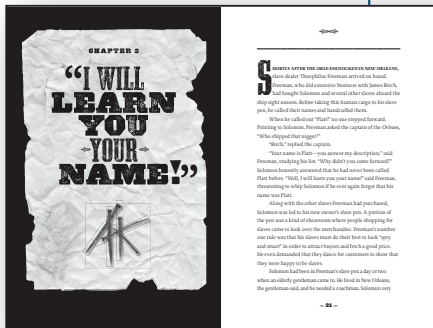
**RI 5.1, 5.3, 5.7, 6.1, 6.3, 6.7**

7. In the third chapter, Solomon is pushed too far. John Tibaut, the carpenter who owns 60% of him, has been cruel to Solomon, continually finding fault with his work. One morning, he screams at Solomon because the nails he used for a project were the wrong size. When Tibaut brings out his whip, Solomon refuses to take his shirt off to be beaten. Instead, he takes the whip and beats Tibaut. The consequences of this action plague Solomon for a long time.

Have your students discuss how much they think a person can endure. Did Solomon have any alternatives to lashing out? The class should talk about the horrible circumstances of slavery. Older students should go beyond that and discuss the treatment of prisoners, captives of war, and political enemies.

**SL 5.1, 5.4, 6.1, 6.3**

8. In chapter five, we learn about a law in New York, “*An Act to Protect the Free Citizens of this State from Being Kidnapped, or Reduced to Slavery.*” Not only did it protect its citizens from the crime of kidnapping, but it also required the Governor to actively find a person who had been illegally enslaved and bring him back to New York.



In part, this act, passed in 1840, states:

*Whenever the Governor of this State shall receive information satisfactory to him that any free citizen or any inhabitant of this State has been kidnapped or transported away out of this State into any other State or Territories of the United States, for the purpose of being there held in slavery, or that such free citizen or inhabitant is wrongfully seized, imprisoned or held in slavery in any of the States or Territories of the United States, on the allegation or pretense that such a person is a slave, or by color of any usage or rule of law prevailing in such State or Territory is deemed or taken to be a slave, or not entitled of right to the personal liberty belonging to a citizen; it shall be the duty of the said Governor to take such measures as he shall deem necessary to procure such person to be restored to his liberty and returned to this State...*

Share the language of this law with your students. Analyze its meaning. This law eventually wins Solomon's freedom. Review the obstructions along the way that have to be overcome before the law can help him.

Another law, this one a Federal law, passed in 1850 and known as The Fugitive Slave law worked in opposition to New York State's anti-kidnapping law. It allowed slave owners or people acting on their behalf, based on their word, to capture runaway slaves in other states or territories, give them an expedient hearing (not before a judge or jury) and then return them to the owner. The following website provides a concise review of what this law provided:

<http://www.nationalcenter.org/FugitiveSlaveAct.html>

The laws of the nation and states play another role in the story of Solomon Northup. When Henry Northup, and later Judge Thaddeus St. John try to bring Birch, Brown and Hamilton to court for their crimes in kidnapping and selling a free man, justice is not served.

Lead your class in a discussion of the young and expanding United States at the time of Solomon's story. The rights of states and those of the federal government were in conflict. The different social structures of regions were at odds with each other. Slavery was at the center of many of these disputes. Eventually they would lead to the Civil War. Look at the Time Line on pages 112-114, and see where Solomon Northup's tale fits in.

**RI 5.2, 5.6, 5.8, 5.9, 6.2, 6.3, 6.7, 6.9; SL 5.1, 5.4, 6.1, 6.2**

9. We learn about another of Solomon's plans to escape or to be freed in chapter six. Have your students lay out the plan – each painstaking step. Was there anything they can think of that would have increased the possibilities of success? What hard lessons does Solomon learn from this experience? Do you think he lost his will to be free at this point?

**RI 5.5, 6.2, 6.3**

10. Things change for Solomon when he meets and begins to trust Samuel Bass. Have each student write an essay on the theme: "one good man can change the world." What qualities does Bass share with their modern-day hero?

**W 5.1, 5.9, 6.1, 6.9**

11. In Chapter 9, "Solomon Northup is My Name," we read about how the pieces of the puzzle fit together and how Solomon is finally freed. Create a classroom time line of these events beginning with the Anne Northup's receipt of Solomon's letter and ending with the two Northup's trip back to New York. Keep track of how many people are involved and the roles each person plays.

**RI 5.3, 5.5, 6.3**

12. Have your students look at the photograph on page 110. Here we learn that on the third Saturday in July, Saratoga Springs, New York, remembers Solomon Northup. Your class should participate by writing a letter, creating a card, or making a proclamation and sending it to the Mayor of Saratoga Springs to be included in the Solomon Northup Day celebration and become part of the archives.

**W 5.1, 5.4, 6.1**





## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Key: RI – Reading Informational Text, W – Writing, SL – Speaking and Listening, RH – Reading History

RI 5.1: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RI 5.2: Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

RI 5.3: Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

RI 5.5: Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

RI 5.6: Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent

RI 5.7: Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

RI 5.8: Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).

RI 5.9: Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

W 5.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

SL 5.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL 5.3: Summarize the points a speaker makes and explain how each claim is supported by reasons and evidence.

SL 5.4: Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas

logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

W 5.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W 5.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

RI.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI 6.2: Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RI.6.3: Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

SL 6.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL 6.2: Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

SL 6.3: Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

SL 6.4: Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

W 6.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

W 6.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.



# STOLEN INTO SLAVERY

*The True Story of Solomon Northup, Free Black Man*

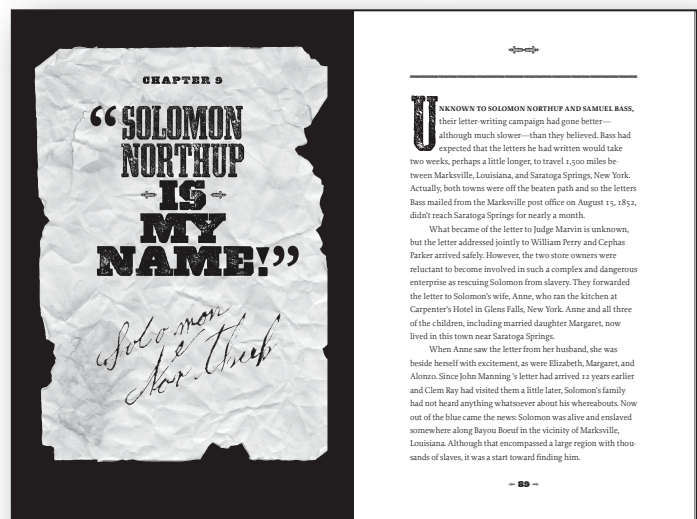
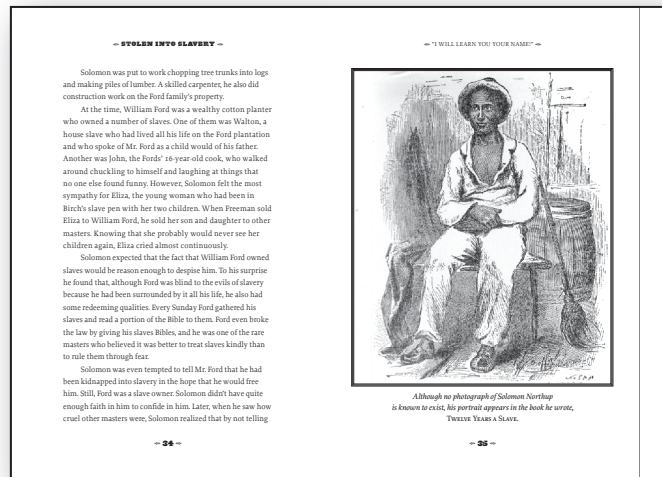
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