



Spirituals helped enslaved people express joy—but also sadness about their suffering here on Earth. Enslaved people also used spirituals as a way to communicate secretly among themselves.

On large plantations, enslaved people might live in small communities such as this.

Slave Codes

The **slave codes**, sometimes called black codes or Negro Laws, were laws in the Southern states that controlled enslaved people. Such laws had existed since colonial times.

One purpose of the codes was to prevent what white Southerners dreaded most—a slave rebellion. For this reason, slave codes prohibited enslaved people from gathering in large groups. The codes also required enslaved people to have written passes before leaving the slaveholder's property.

The slave codes made teaching enslaved people to read or write a crime. White Southerners feared that an educated enslaved person might start a revolt. They thought an enslaved person who could not read and write was less likely to rebel.

Fighting Back

Enslaved African Americans did sometimes rebel openly against their owners. One who did was Nat Turner.

Turner, who had taught himself to read and write, was a popular religious leader among the enslaved people in his area. In 1831 he led a group of followers on a **brief**, violent rampage in Southampton County, Virginia. Turner and his followers killed at least 55 whites.

Copper slave tags identified enslaved workers when they were away from their home plantation.

► CRITICAL THINKING

Drawing Conclusions Why do you think enslaved Africans might need identification tags when they were away from their plantations?



slave codes laws in a Southern state that controlled enslaved people

Academic Vocabulary

brief short

BIOGRAPHY



Harriet Tubman
(c. 1820–1913)

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery in Maryland. She escaped in 1849 and fled to Philadelphia. The following year Tubman returned to free her family. This began a career during which she made 19 trips to the slaveholding South and helped about 300 slaves escape to freedom. During the Civil War, Tubman helped the Union Army. In June 1863, she led a squad of African American soldiers on a South Carolina mission that led to the freeing of 800 enslaved African Americans. After the war, Tubman became an active women's suffragist and created the Home for the Aged in Auburn, New York. She died there in 1913.

► CRITICAL THINKING

Drawing Conclusions Why do you think Tubman was willing to risk her own freedom to help free other enslaved African Americans?

Two months after the uprising began, authorities captured and hanged Turner. Still, his rebellion terrified white Southerners. White mobs killed dozens of African Americans, many of whom had nothing to do with the rebellion. Whites also passed more severe slave codes, making life under slavery even harsher.

Armed revolts such as Turner's were rare because enslaved African Americans realized they had little chance of winning. For the most part, enslaved people resisted slavery by working slowly or by pretending to be ill. Sometimes they might set fire to a plantation building or break tools. Such acts helped enslaved African Americans cope with their lack of freedom. Even if they were not free, they could strike back at the slaveholders.

Escaping Slavery

Enslaved people also resisted by running away from their owners. Often their goal was to find relatives on other plantations. Sometimes they left to escape punishment.

Less often, enslaved African Americans tried to run away to freedom in the North. Getting to the North was very difficult. Among those who succeeded were Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass, two African American leaders.

Most who succeeded escaped from the Upper South. A runaway might receive aid from the **Underground Railroad**, a network of "safe houses" owned by people opposed to slavery.

Moses Grandy, who did escape, spoke about the hardships runaways faced:

PRIMARY SOURCE

“They hide themselves during the day in the woods and swamps; at night they travel. . . . In these dangerous journeys they are guided by the north-star, for they only know that the land of freedom is in the north.”

—from *Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy*

The big danger, of course, was capture. Most runaways were caught and returned to their owners. The owners punished them severely, usually by whipping.

✓ PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining How did the African American spirituals develop?

Reading HELPDISK



Underground Railroad a system of cooperation to aid and house enslaved people who had escaped
literacy the ability to read and write

Southern Cities

GUIDING QUESTION *What changes did urbanization introduce in the South by the mid-1800s?*

Though mostly agricultural, the South had several large cities by the mid-1800s, including Baltimore and New Orleans. The 10 largest cities in the South were either seaports or river ports. Cities located where the region's few railroads crossed paths also began to grow. These included Chattanooga, Montgomery, and Atlanta.

Free African Americans formed their own communities in Southern cities. They practiced trades and founded churches and institutions, yet their rights were limited. Most states did not allow them to move from state to state. Free African Americans did not share equally in economic and political life.

In the early 1800s, there were no statewide public school systems in the South. People who could afford to do so sent their children to private schools. By the mid-1800s, however, education was growing. North Carolina and Kentucky set up and ran public schools.

The South lagged behind other parts of the country in **literacy** (LIH•tuh•ruh•see), the ability to read and write. One reason was that the South was thinly populated. A school would have to serve a wide area, and many families were unwilling or unable to send children great distances to school. Many Southerners also believed education was a private matter.

PROGRESS CHECK

Identifying What factors made possible the growth of the few Southern cities?

Thinking Like a HISTORIAN

Resisting Slavery

For the most part, enslaved workers resisted slavery by working slowly or by pretending to be ill. Occasionally resistance took more active forms, such as setting fire to a plantation building or breaking tools. Some enslaved African Americans tried to run away to the free states. Beginning in the 1800s, rebellion became more common. In 1800, Gabriel Prosser planned a rebellion to capture Richmond, Virginia. Denmark Vesey's 1821 plan for a slave revolt failed when it was betrayed at the last moment by some of his followers. In 1831, Nat Turner's revolt in Virginia failed. However, the rebellion frightened whites and led to more severe slave codes.

LESSON 4 REVIEW



Review Vocabulary

1. Use the following words in a brief paragraph about slavery in the South.
 - a. overseer
 - b. slave codes
 - c. spiritual
 - d. Underground Railroad
2. Explain the significance of the following terms:
 - a. yeoman
 - b. literacy

Answer the Guiding Questions

3. **Discussing** How did the family structure of enslaved African Americans help them survive life under slavery?
4. **Explaining** How did African American culture develop in cities in the South?
5. **NARRATIVE** From the perspective of an enslaved person, write about whether it is worth the risk to seek freedom.