12 Years A Slave- Primary Source Analysis

[Name of the Writer]

[Name of the Institution]

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**Who is Northup’s audience? How might he have geared the lessons of the story to his intended audience?**

Northup's audience seems to be the general audience. The story is for all the people old and young, blacks or white. It is a story told to be known and remembered by everyone. For some, it might be a painful past and for some a reality check. It is a history many have forgotten and should be known. Some parents might not want their children to come across such history as it depicts brutality and unkindness, but overall, it is a story and history lesson for everyone.  
**How did Northup convince his readers that his story was neither fabricated nor embellished but rather a verifiably true account of his experiences as a slave in the South?**  
 Northup assured his readers that he is telling the truth and that everything he said is without any biases and all the facts can be counter checked. Northup lived a life of slave under multiple owners, and he has mentioned all the owners in details and how he was treated by them; such information can be investigated and was investigated by few researchers and documented by some historians as well. Also, how Northup tells his story has a feeling to the truth to it and fact as well if one is knowledgeable about the history of the slaves. Northup, convincingly cited names, dates, events, and places that could be verified, he also declared that he will present a complete and candid account of all the major happenings in the history of his life, and will represent the tradition of Slavery as he had seen and known. It is not just a story by Northup but a story and history with a purpose to it.

**Based on Northup’s account of Theophilus Freeman’s slave auction in New Orleans, what kinds of qualities did it seem buyers were looking for in a slave?**  
 Buyers of slaves looked for numerous qualities, and therefore, slaves would be presented in a manner to be sold easily. The sellers would make slaves open their mouths and examine their teeth just as a jockey inspects a horse before barter. Firstly, slaves were required to take a bath, those with beards have to shave their beards. Afterward, they would be given a new suit clean but cheap. The men would be given coat, a hat, pants, shirt, and shoes; the females were given dresses of calico, handkerchiefs, etc. to fix about their hair. Before presenting the slaves, they would get proper training as to how to act before the buyers.

Moreover, the tallest slaves were placed at the start and then the subsequent heightened slaves respectively. All of them were pressured to appear smart and energetic. Slaves were also stripped for minute inspections and scars on a slave's back were considered a sign of a slave.

**What does Northup’s [Platt’s] prolonged confrontation with his second master, Tibeats, reveal about slave-master relations in the antebellum South?**  
 The confrontation of Northup with his master Tibeats reveals that the masters in the antebellum South were never satisfied with their slaves no matter how good and productive they used to be. Slaves used to earn plenty of money for their masters, but it was never good enough or appreciative for them. There was always continuous complains with no kind words. The masters were allowed by law to exercise any kind of authoritarian control. Overall, the relation was extremely abusive, oppressive, hurting and despising.

**For what reasons did Northup criticize Southern plantations as inefficient?**  
 Northup's perch in the cultivated area grading allowed him to have an extensive look of the plantation both as a monetary enterprise and a communal one. He was disgusted by the exploitation that he suffered as a slave along with his fellow slaves, and too by the twisted, wretched culture that it produced. According to Northup, Slavery dehumanized "the humane and finer feelings" (Solomon, pp. 106) and stimulated even larger extremes among the worst.

**What was an average day’s work like for Northup [Platt] on Master Epps’ plantation, where he spent ten years of his life as a slave?**  
 Every day work in the fields of mater Epps would end at sunset, but then again work would continue even after dusk and beyond. After a working the entire day, each slave had to attend to his or her particular errands, for example, one slave had to feed the mules, another slave had to feed the swine, some had to chop woods, etc. even packing had to be performed by candlelight and every slave might go to sleep.

**What did Northup [Platt] buy with the money he saved, and how did the practice of earning "Sunday money," tips for playing the violin, and even free time during the holidays (e.g., Christmas) give rise to a distinct Southern slave culture?**  
 It was kind of a custom in the slave States to let a slave hold whatever payment he may acquire on Sundays for their services performed. The pretended Sunday money that is also labeled as the slaves' economy by historians was only a tricky set of provisions that permitted the slaves to supplement the inadequate payment that the masters doled out. The money made with Sunday money was usually used to purchase cutlery, clothes, liquor, tobacco, etc. , with his Sunday money bought a violin that helped him endure the extensive donkey's years of slavery. also tried multiple times to buy freedom with his saved money.  
**Discuss the various ways Solomon Northup [Platt] attempted to escape. Why was it nearly impossible for slaves to escape from the Southern interior to freedom in the North?**  
 Throughout the years of slavery, Northup persistently tried to look for a way to escape and reclaim his liberty. According to Northup, “There was not a day throughout the ten years I belonged to Epps that I did not consult with myself upon the prospect of escape” (Solomon, pp. 123). More than a few times Northup thought that he had found a way to independence, but every time he was disappointed and even had disastrous consequences. Northup tells that it was nearly impossible to escape from the Southern interior to freedom in the north as there seems to be no way out. But the hope of liberty never left his attention.  
**Discuss several key ways in which southern whites practiced everyday slights designed to demean slaves and cow them into submission by denying their manhood or womanhood.**  
 Northup reports that the slaves had to learn to take off their caps, lower their eyes, and bare their heads in front of their masters or the white men, it was a language of the slaves in front of the white men. They also had to step back to allow a white female to pass, through these forced acts and by negating the manhood or womanhood of the slaves, they were demeaned and made to cow into obedience.  
**Discuss several key ways in which southern white plantation owners, plantation mistresses, managers, and overseers, psychologically terrorized slaves into complete submission.**

Plantation mistresses' usual affairs with slaves mostly with subjugated females were convoluted by their spouses' flirtations in the quarters. Women slaves were psychologically terrorized by the owners by being raped by their male owners and then being abused the master's wife. Southern white plantation owners, Mistresses, Managers, and overseers also used to whip these slaves for many reasons.  
**How did Northup finally secure his liberty after twelve years in slavery?**

Northup made a connection a Mr. Bass, a carpenter he assisted. Mr. Bass was touched by Solomon’s life story and offered his help. Northup writes multiple letters and requests Bass to send them to the North to Parker and Perry which Bass forwarded. Parker and Perry received the letter in early September, and the men immediately forward it to Anne. Anne then asks Henry B. Northup to help release Northup. The Governor's personal attention made the case stronger. The case is then assessed, and after taking into consideration ground realities and confirming what was previously a free man, he is granted his right back and is released from slavery.

**References**

Northup, S. (1853). *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northrup, a Citizen of New York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853*. Seven Treasures Publication.