SLAVE NARRATIVES

Student/Class Goal

As students continue their study of the Civil War, they become aware of the power of language after hearing a few slave narratives from a previous lesson on *The Underground Railroad* and want to investigate these texts of oral history more closely.

Outcome (lesson objective)

Presentations will showcase students' ability to read and understand dialect and collect information from the narratives.

Time Frame

3-4 hours

Standard Read with Understanding

NRS EFL 5-6

Purpose	Benchmarks	Word Knowledge	Benchmarks	Comprehension	Benchmarks
Purpose for reading	5.1, 6.1	Decoding skills		Fix-up strategies	
Select text	5.2, 6.2	Word parts		Text structural elements	
		Context clues	5.5, 6.5	Literary elements	5.13, 6.13
		Reference materials		Argument	5.14, 6.14
		Word relationships	5.7, 6.7	Main idea	5.15, 6.15
		Vocabulary	5.8, 6.8	Connect prior knowledge	5.16, 6.16
		Figurative language			
		Fluency	5.10, 6.10		

Materials

Reading the Narratives Teacher Background

Selected Slave Narratives from:

Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives

American Slave Narratives: An Online Anthology

Been Here So Long Born in Slavery

Primary & Secondary Sources Teacher Resource
James Green & Sarah Gudger Narrative Overheads
Slave Narrative Dialect Individual & Classroom Charts

Learner Prior Knowledge

From 1936 to 1938, over 2,300 former slaves from across the American South were interviewed by writers and journalists with the support of the Works Progress Administration. These former slaves, most born in the last years of slavery or during the Civil War, provided first-hand accounts of their experiences on plantations, in cities, and on small farms. **Teacher Note** Familiarize yourself with *Reading the Narratives* to help in understanding the background of the interviews. Students may have had little experience with reading dialect; teacher modeling and guidance will be needed.

Instructional Activities

Step 1 – Our nation's history is the compilation of the many stories that evolved from the lives of ordinary people. Students will learn about slavery from hearing first person accounts read to them by famous actors within the film, *Unchained Memories:* Readings from the Slave Narratives or the teacher can model reading one of the selections from online. Provide students with a copy of the narrative.

Discuss the value of using primary sources in investigating the past while also cautioning them regarding the issues involved in using interviews such as these.

TEACHER NOTE The Primary and Secondary Sources Teacher Resource will give you more information about the differences, strengths and weaknesses, and where to find primary sources on the Internet.

Teachers might lead a discussion around these questions:

- How would the factors of how the narratives were collected influence the credibility of the interview?
- Should historians ignore these sources knowing that some of these circumstances may have affected the outcome?
- How do historians make decisions about who to believe and how much to believe?

Step 2 - Prepare students for the uneven nature of the stories and the language they will encounter. The narratives can be quite challenging to read. The dialect can be difficult to understand; the interviewers usually made an effort to transcribe what they heard the narrators saying, but there is little consistency from interview to interview. Introduce the concept of "dialect" and African American English (AAE). *New Year Be Coming!* by Katharine Boling would be an excellent book to read to begin the study.

One solution is to try to imagine what the language might have sounded like, perhaps by reading the narratives out loud. Model reading a selection from the narrative of James Green (could be the same one that introduced the lesson).

I never knowed my age till after de war, when I's set free de second time, and then marster gits out a big book and it shows I's 25 year old. It shows I's 12 when I is bought and \$800 is paid for me. That \$800 was stolen money, 'cause I was kidnapped and dis is how it come:

Using an overhead projector and copy of the narrative, underline or highlight the words (dialect) on the overhead. Transfer words to the *Slave Narrative* Classroom Chart with their translations. Talk about why this narrative is especially challenging or compelling by expressing the individual's perspectives of personal, social, cultural and historical issues. Add your thoughts to the chart.

Dialect	Translation	Narrative Insights
knowed	knew	James grew up not knowing how old he was, but finds out when he is freed.
till	until	He also discovers how much he is worth and even questions why the
de	the	money was spent as he was already free. I wonder how this affected his
l's	l was	perspective of self and worth.
marster	master	
gits	gets	
it shows	shows	
is bought	was bought	
dis	this	

Students can work in pairs reading a selection from the narrative of Sarah Gudger. Have them underline and note examples of dialect the author uses. Using the individual dialect chart, students record their answers; then collect new words on the classroom chart.

TEACHER NOTE To strengthen the reading-writing connection, have students rewrite a portion of their narrative using standard English.

Step 3 - Select four to six of the individual narratives from any of the four collections. Download and photocopy enough so that each student will read one of the selected narratives. Teachers may wish to base their selection of the narratives on some common theme or thread such as first-hand accounts of slavery life that focuses on occupations, education, religion, entertainment, family, daily life, or conditions of their time, etc. Charley Williams on work; Mary Reynolds on family; or Sarah Ashley on abuse might be stories students would enjoy hearing. Students read the narrative, collect information on their charts and then add text and insights to classroom chart collectively.

Step 4 – Students who have read the same narrative should come together to discuss the main points of their reading and develop a profile of that person. They will need to compile their data and determine how to share the overall results. Teachers may wish to provide a framework for this segment of the activity by providing particular questions about how slavery affected each person's life. Illustrate the profile by locating appropriate visuals on the web (search Google Images) and importing them into a multimedia presentation program such as Power Point.

After students have had a chance to create their presentations, ask them to move to another configuration in which students who have read about different individuals will share their subject's stories with one another (jigsaw approach) or presentations can be made to the large group.

Step 5 – To increase fluency, students will use the radio reading strategy. Each student who will read to others needs to practice the selection until it can be read fluently and develop two or three questions about the selection to ask fellow students. Small groups (3-4 students) listen to each other read. After each reading, the questions are asked and answered.

Assessment/Evidence (based on outcome)

Individual and Classroom Charts

Profile presentations

Radio reading selection and questions

Teacher Reflection/Lesson Evaluation

Not yet completed.

Next Steps

Students will want to interview family and friends and write their stories.

Technology Integration

Collection Connections http://memory.loc.gov/learn/collections/born_slavery

Africans in America http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/

American Slaves Narratives: an Online Anthology http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/wpahome.html

American Slave Narratives http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn00.htm

Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938

http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html

Civil War & Slavery Thematic Collection http://literacy.kent.edu/eureka/tradebooks/thematic coll.html

Reading the Narratives

http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/reading.html

The narratives in this online anthology are transcribed verbatim from the interview transcripts collected by writers of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the late 1930s. The narratives can be quite challenging to read. The dialect can be difficult to understand; the interviewers usually made an effort to transcribe what they heard the narrators saying, but there is little consistency from interview to interview. One solution is to try to imagine what the language might have sounded like, perhaps by reading the narratives out loud.

It is worthwhile to read the narratives closely, watching and listening for unexpected details, unspoken feelings, and hidden meanings. Often the full meanings of the narratives will remain unclear, but the ambiguities themselves bear careful consideration. When Emma Crockett spoke about whippings, she said that "All I knowed, 'twas bad times and folks got whupped, but I kain't say who was to blame; some was good and some was bad." We might discern a number of reasons for her inability or unwillingness to name names, to be more specific about brutalities suffered under slavery. She admitted that her memory was failing her, not unreasonable for an eighty-year-old. She also told her interviewer that under slavery she lived on the "plantation right over yander,"and it is likely that the children or grandchildren of her former masters, or her former overseers, still lived nearby; the threat of retribution could have made her hold her tongue. Or, perhaps in her old age she had come to view her life as a slave with equanimity and forgiveness. It is impossible to know why she reserved judgment, but it is worth considering the possibilities.

Readers will notice lapses, inconsistencies, and repetitions in these narratives. The interviewers were assigned to ask a series of questions about labor, diet, marriage, punishment, and relations with masters. Some interviewers followed this list of questions more faithfully than others. Most of those interviewed were in their eighties and nineties; their recollection of childhood is often remarkably detailed, but readers will detect the difficulty of remembering exact chronologies over a period of seventy or eighty years.

Modern readers will also note in some narratives the patronizing tone of the interviewers and the seeming deference of the subjects. While the racial language can be offensive to modern readers, it is important to remember that these narratives were conducted sixty years ago in the Jim Crow South; just as these former slaves had survived into the twentieth century, so had the ideology of white supremacy that underpinned the slave society of the American South.

A Note on the Language of the Narratives

The Slave Narrative Collection in the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress consists of narrative texts derived from oral interviews. The narratives usually involve some attempt by the interviewers to reproduce in writing the spoken language of the people they interviewed, in accordance with instructions from the project's headquarters, the national office of the Federal Writers' Project in Washington, D.C.

The interviewers were writers, not professionals trained in the phonetic transcription of speech. And the instructions they received were not altogether clear. "I recommend that truth to idiom be paramount, and exact truth to pronunciation secondary," wrote the project's editor, John Lomax, in one letter to interviewers in sixteen states. Yet he also urged that "words that definitely have a notably different pronunciation from the usual should be recorded as heard," evidently assuming that "the usual" was self-evident.

In fact, the situation was far more problematic than the instructions from project leaders recognized. All the informants were of course black, most interviewers were white, and by the 1930s, when the interviews took place, white representations of black speech already had an ugly history of entrenched stereotype dating back at least to the early nineteenth century. What most interviewers assumed to be "the usual" patterns of their informants' speech was unavoidably influenced by preconceptions and stereotypes.

The result, as the historian Lawrence W. Levine has written, "is a mélange of accuracy and fantasy, of sensitivity and stereotype, of empathy and racism" that may sometimes be offensive to today's readers. Yet whatever else they may be, the representations of speech in the narratives are a pervasive and forceful reminder that these documents are not only a record of a time that was already history when they were created: they are themselves irreducibly historical, the products of a particular time and particular places in the long and troubled mediation of African-American culture by other Americans.

Ebonics and African American/Southern Dialect

Differences between Ebonics and African American / Southern Dialect in slave narratives are key to understanding slave narratives. There is a major difference between Ebonics and African American English from the Civil War and Antebellum era. Ebonics is rather new and emerged from the African American English dialect. African American English dialect is very similar to the speech of those who lived in Southern America including whites.

First things first, I poppa, freaks all the honeys
Dummies - playboy bunnies, those wantin money
Those the ones I like cause they dont get nathan
But penetration, unless it smells like sanitation
Garbage, I turn like doorknobs
Heart throb, never, black and ugly as ever
However, I stay coochied down to the socks
Rings and watch filled with rocks
The above is a set of lyrics from the song "One More Chance" by Notorious B.I.G.

Notice the words honeys, rocks, and coochied. In Ebonics there are many words that are euphemisms or slang for other words. "Rocks" is slang for diamonds. "Honeys" is slang for woman. The euphemisms and slang are indicative of Ebonics. Now notice the words "wantin" and "nathan." Both of these words are examples of g-dropping. G-dropping is just as its name implies, at the end of the word a g is not pronounced. "Nathan" shows not only dropping the g but also replacing the o with an a. "Nathan" in translation is "nothing." Syllable and vowel dropping show the similarities between Ebonics and African American English.

Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

This is an excerpt from Sojourner Truth's speech "Ain't I a woman"

The speech pattern that Sojourner Truth shows is indicative of not only her background but regional differences in language. Sojourner Truth was born in New York and came from Dutch masters which shows the speech patterns that she had. All of Sojourner Truth's speeches are meant to be read out loud. Reading the speeches silently does not allow the reader to truly appreciate and understand the speeches.

Mr. Severe's place was filled by a Mr. Hopkins. He was a very different man. He was less cruel, less profane, and made less noise, than Mr. Severe. His course was characterized by no extraordinary demonstrations of cruelty. He whipped, but seemed to take no pleasure in it. He was called by the slaves a good overseer.

The above excerpt is from Frederick Douglass' Narratives

Frederick Douglass was a former slave who learned to read and write as well as any other man. Unlike Sojourner Truth, Douglass had many different teachers so his English does not have a specific dialect.

Slave narratives can have strong dialect or no dialect at all. Reading and hearing the speeches is key to understanding the narratives.

Primary and Secondary Sources Teacher Resource

"Primary sources are absolutely fundamental to history." Arthur Marwick, Professor of History

Historians use a wide variety of sources to answer questions about the past. In their research, history scholars use both *primary sources* and *secondary sources*. Primary sources are actual records that have survived from the past, such as letters, photographs, articles of clothing. Secondary sources are accounts of the past created by people writing about events sometime after they happened. Primary sources offer an inside view of a particular event. Examples include:

Original documents: autobiographies, diaries, e-mail, interviews, letters, minutes, by-laws, reports, published materials (newspapers, magazine and journal articles, books), visual and audio records, news film footage, cartoons and advertisements, photographs, research data (field notes, data sets, scientific experiments), speeches, manuscripts, journals, memos, memoirs, public opinion polls, government records (wills, deeds, court cases, official records, census records, licenses)

Creative works: art, drama, films, music, novels, poetry

Relics or artifacts: buildings, clothing, DNA, furniture, jewelry, pottery

To evaluate a primary source document, ask the following questions

- What is the tone of the document?
- What is the document's purpose?
- When and why was the document created?
- Who is the intended audience?
- Who created the document and what assumptions does the author make?
- Does the author agree or disagree with other authors of the subject?
- Does the content agree with what you know or have learned about the issue?

Secondary sources provide interpretation, explanation, analysis, description or restatement of a primary source. Also, some secondary sources offer an argument or point of view in an effort to persuade. These sources are one or more steps removed from the event. Secondary sources may have pictures, quotes or graphics of primary sources in them. Some types of secondary sources include:

Publications: textbooks, magazine articles, histories, criticisms, commentaries, encyclopedias.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Primary Sources

Potential difficulties with primary sources have the result that history is usually taught in schools using secondary sources. Although advisable to use primary sources if possible, writers may proceed to make use of secondary sources. Primary sources avoid the problem of secondary sources, where each new author may distort and put their own spin on the findings. However, a primary source is not necessarily more authoritative or accurate than a secondary source. There can be bias and simplification of events. These errors may be corrected in secondary sources when subjected to peer review.

Historians consider the accuracy and objectiveness of the primary sources they are using. A primary source such as journal entry (or online version, a blog) may only reflect one individual's opinion on events, which may or may not be truthful, accurate or complete. Participants and eyewitnesses may misunderstand

events or distort their reports to enhance their own image or importance. Such effects can increase over time, as people create a narrative that may not be accurate. For any source, primary or secondary, it is important for the researcher to evaluate the amount and direction of bias. As an example, a government report may be an accurate and unbiased description of events, but it can be censored or altered for propaganda or cover-up purposes. The facts can be distorted to present the opposing sides in a negative light.

Finding Primary Sources

Digital primary sources can be retrieved from a number of places. The Library of Congress http://www.loc.gov/index.html maintains several online digital collections. Examples of these are American Memory http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html and Prints & Photographs Online Catalog http://www.loc.gov/pictures. The National Archives http://www.archives.gov also has such a tool called Access to Archival Databases. Using Primary Sources on the Web http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/rusa/sections/history/resources/pubs/usingprimarysources/index.cfm also contains many reputable sites linked to thousands of primary sources.

Citing Web Sites

It is important to provide complete information about your primary source whether found in a printed source or online. The basic elements to include in a citation for a published print source are: author of the document, title of the document, title of the book if different from the document, name of editor or author of the book, place of publication, publisher, year, and page numbers. The basic elements to include in a citation for an online source are: author of the document, title of the document, title of the web site, author or producer of the web site, url, date (if given) and date accessed. Various style formats such as Chicago, MLA and APA put these elements in different order using different conventions.

Additional Resources

Primary Source Village http://www.library.uiuc.edu/village/primarysource/mod1/index.htm
Primary Sources on the Web http://www.eduplace.com/ss/hmss/primary.html
Primary Sources http://www.win.tue.nl/~engels/discovery/primary.html
Primary Source Learning http://www.primarysourcelearning.org/
Primary Source Materials & Document Based Questions
http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/pages/listdocumentpa.html



American Slave Narratives:

An Online Anthology



American Slaves Narratives: an Online Anthology

http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/wpahome.html

From 1936 to 1938, over 2,300 former slaves from across the American South were interviewed by writers and journalists under the aegis of the Works Progress Administration. These former slaves, most born in the last years of the slave regime or during the Civil War, provided first-hand accounts of their experiences on plantations, in cities, and on small farms. Their narratives remain a peerless resource for understanding the lives of America's four million slaves. What makes the WPA narratives so rich is that they capture the very voices of American slavery, revealing the texture of life as it was experienced and remembered. Each narrative taken alone offers a fragmentary, microcosmic representation of slave life. Read together, they offer a sweeping composite view of slavery in North America, allowing us to explore some of the most compelling themes of nineteenth-century slavery, including labor, resistance and flight, family life, relations with masters, and religious belief.

This web site provides an opportunity to read a sample of these narratives, and to see some of the photographs taken at the time of the interviews. The entire collection of narratives can be found in George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972-79).

Index of Narratives



Charity Anderson, 101 years old, lived near Mobile, Alabama at the time she was interviewed. She was born at Belle's Landing, in Monroe County, Alabama. Her master operated a wood yard that supplied fuel to river boats. Anderson was a house slave. She recalls that her master treated all his slaves well, but she also remembered seeing slaves torn up by dogs and whipped unmercifully.



Walter Calloway was born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1848. Calloway and his mother and brother were purchased by John Calloway, who owned a plantation ten miles south of Montgomery, Alabama. By the time he was ten years old, Walter Calloway was doing a grown man's work. The white overseer used a black hand to administer the whippings; Calloway recalls seeing one thirteen-year-old girl whipped almost to death. Calloway also tells of worshipping in a brush arbor, the outbreak of the Civil War, and federal troops ransacking the plantation at war's end. He is pictured sitting on the front steps of his home in Birmingham, Alabama, where he worked for the city street department for twenty-five years.



Emma Crockett, about 79 or 80 years old, is seen here sitting on the porch of her home near Livingston, Alabama, not far from the plantation where she grew up. She was the daughter of Cassie Hawkins and Alfred Jolly, and the slave of Bill and Betty Hawkins. After emancipation, she learned to read a bit of printing, but never learned how to read handwriting. She was a member of the New Prophet Church; despite her headache the day she was interviewed, she sang her favorite hymn for the interviewer.



Lucinda Davis, of Tulsa, Oklahoma, did not know where she was born, but she did manage to reunite with her parents after the end of the Civil War. She was the slave of a Creek Indian named Tuskaya-hiniha and his white wife, Nancy Lott. She was one of about ten slaves on a farm near Honey Springs, about twenty-five miles south of Fort Gibson. Creek was spoken in their home, and Davis recalls Creek funerals, dances, and recipes. In the confusion of the Civil War, one slave after another left her master until only she, too young to leave on her own, remained.



Tempe Herndon Durham, 103 years old, grew up on a large plantation in Chatham County, North Carolina, west of Raleigh. The plantation where she lived, owned by George and Betsy Herndon, raised corn, wheat, cotton, and tobacco. Durham describes in detail how female slaves (and their white mistress) spun, wove, and dyed cloth on the plantation. She married Exter Durham on the front porch of her master's home; her master threw a big party for their wedding, but the following day Exter had to return to his own master's plantation. After the war, the couple settled on Herndon's place, where they rented until they saved enough money to buy their own farm.



Clayton Holbert, 86 years old, was born and raised in Linn County, Tennessee. His master, Pleasant Holbert, owned about 100 slaves, who raised corn, barley, and cotton. The plantation was self-sufficient; slaves on Holbert's farm wove their own clothes, butchered their own meat, and made their own maple sugar. Clayton Holbert's mother and grandmother were both deeded their freedom, but were captured by slave dealers and sold back into slavery. Holbert's father, brother, and uncle joined the Union Army during the Civil War.



Ms. Holmes, whose first name is not known, was interviewed in the 1920s as part of an oral history project at Fisk University. She was born in Morgantown, West Virginia, around the time of the Civil War, and lived with the family of her father's master. Her father was sent to the Confederate Army in his master's place, but left to join the Union Army. Ms. Holmes' husband abandoned her for a light-skinned woman, and a later mate left her after her religious conversion. She was a member of the Santified Church of God on Harding Street in Nashville, Tennessee; the congregation there supported her in her old age.



Joseph Holmes, 81 years old, was born in Henry County, Virginia, near Danville. He was the son of Eliza Rowlets and Joseph Holmes. He left Virginia for Georgia, and eventually made his way to Mobile, Alabama, where he lived at the time of his interview. He recalled that his mistress did not allow her slaves to be mistreated--because she was raising slaves for the market, and she considered it poor business to mistreat them. Holmes told his interviewer that it took ten or twelve years before he fully understood what his mistress meant when she told him he was free.



Ben Horry, 89 years old, lived at Murrells Inlet, on the South Carolina coast about ten miles south of Myrtle Beach. In the characteristic patois of the low country, Horry described his work as a boatman, the federal occupation during the Civil War, the punishment his father received for intemperate drinking, and the diet of the low country.



Fountain Hughes was 101 years old at the time of his interview. Born a slave in 1848 near Charlottesville, Virginia, Fountain Hughes was the grandson of a slave owned by Thomas Jefferson--probably Wormely Hughes, Jefferson's gardener. Fountain Hughes says he and his family were left with nothing after slavery's end; he and his brother found themselves homeless, sneaking into a white family's livery at night in order to escape the cold. He speaks of having to carry a pass as a slave, of slaves being sold at auction at the courthouse, and of Union soldiers coming through his community during the Civil War. This narrative includes sound files, so that readers can listen to Hughes's voice as they read his story.



Maria Jackson, 79 years old, was born in Notasulga, Alabama, the daughter of Jim and Rose Neely. Separated by slavery, the Neely family reunited after the war and settled in Oglethorpe County, Georgia. Maria Jackson worked in the fields with her father until she was married. She became a midwife, first in rural Georgia and later in Athens, where she lived at the time of her interview. She was the mother of fourteen children herself, eight of whom were alive at the time she was interviewed.



Mary Reynolds, blind and over one hundred years old at the time of her interview, was born into slavery in Black River, Louisiana. Her master, a physician and planter, was a shrewd speculator who frequently traded his older slaves for younger, more fit hands. Reynolds witnessed brutal beatings, and tells of working in weather so cold that her hands bled. Her master had a number of children with a mulatto slave, and his wife threatened to leave him. After the war, Mary Reynolds moved to Texas, where she remained for the rest of her life.



Richard Toler was born near Lynchburg in Campbell County, Virginia. He was the son of George Washington Toler and Lucy Toler, and the slave of Henry Toler. As a youngster, Richard Toler tended to the cows and calves on his master's 500-acre farm; later, he hoed in the fields. He learned blacksmithing as a slave, and after emancipation he earned his living as a smith for 36 years. After the Civil War he bought a fiddle, and became an accomplished musician, playing for white dances and at hoe downs. He recalls medical treatment under slavery, as well as details of diet and clothing. He also recalls the brutal whipping of young girls by his master's sons.



"Been Here So Long"



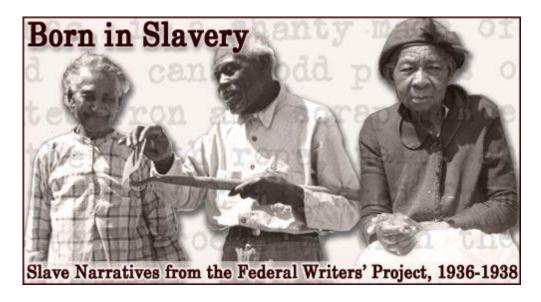
Selections from the WPA American Slave Narratives

American Slave Narratives http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn00.htm

The following are seventeen of the approximately 2,300 American Slave Narratives collected by the Federal Writers Project. These narratives are not the direct transcriptions of the interviews, and the forms they take differ from narrative to narrative. According to Rawick, Scott Bond's narrative appears to have been dictated rather than a simple response to questions. Charles Williams' autobiography is his own work, originally written in pencil in a series of notebooks. Both the Bond and Williams narratives are of much greater length than the rest.

Narrator	State	Sample Quotation	
Alice Alexander	Oklahoma	"We lived in a one room log hut, and slept on homemade rail bed steads wid cotton, an' sum times straw, mos'ly straw summers an' cotton winners." http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn01.htm#4	
Andy J. Anderson	Texas	"De Marster finished his statement asayin', 'All yous niggers can stay wid me'. I's says to myse'f, not loud 'nough fo' anyone to heah, I's thinks, but de Marster heahs me w'en I's says, 'Lak hell I's will'." http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn12.htm#22	
Scott Bond	Arkansas	"I proceeded: 'Ann gave birth to a child while she was your servant. It is said that Mr. Rutledge, who was your nephew and manager of your farm at that time, was the father of this child. It is further said that Mrs. Goodlow dressed the child and called it Scott Winfield.' " http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn13.htm#47	
Betty Foreman Chessier	Oklahoma	"I doesn't remembah any play songs, 'cause I was almost in prison chile. I couldn't play with any of the darkies. I doesn't remembah playin' in my life when I was a little girl en' when I got grown I diden wanta." http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn08.htm#13	
Betty Cofer	North Carolina	"Yes'm, I saw some slaves sold away from the plantation, four men and two women, both of 'em with little babies. The traders got 'em. Sold 'em down to Mobile, Alabama. One was my pappy's sister. We never heard from her again." http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn17.htm#10	
Holt Collier	Mississippi	Having killed 2212 bear, after which he says, "I just quit counting", Holt and the famous pack of dogs, which he had trained, were known by hunters and sportsmen, not only in the Delta but in other states. http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn03.htm#14	
George Fleming	South Carolina	"Slaves started to work by de time dey was old enough to tote water and pick up chips to start fires wid. Some of dem started to work in de fields when dey about ten, but most of 'em was older." http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn09.htm#23	
Hector Godbold	South Carolina	"Wha' yuh gwinna do wid me? I sho' been heah in slavery time. Talk to dem sodjurs when dey wuz 'treatin' dey way back home. My ole Missus wuz Miss Mary Godbold en den she marry uh Haselden. Dey buy my mamma from da ole man Frank Miles right o'er yonner." http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn10.htm#1	
James Green	Texas	"I never knew my age until after de Civil War when I was set free for de second time. Then my marster gets out a great big book and it showed dat I was twenty-five years old. It shows more too: It shows I was twelve when I was bought and \$800 was paid for me. Dat \$800 was stolen money, cose I was kidnapped. Dis is about how it come." http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn04.htm#2	
Lancy Harris	North Carolina	"Ma bed had fo' posts and a cord running from pos' to pos' to make spring. We sleep in a room wid pot racks near the fire place, a barrel of soap up in a corner, but the floors wus white like a bread tray. Everything wus in one room." http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn15.htm#3	
John	Oklahoma	"All of the Nations of the Five Tribes suffered extensively account of the war. The Choctaw, and	

Harrison		Chickasaw Nation suffered because it was in their territory that the Confederate Army was quartered and lived during the life of the War and it was naturally a drain on the citizenship of those tribes." http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn14.htm#18
Matilda Hatchett	Arkansas	"Didn't git no chance to learn nothin' in slavery. Sometimes the children would teach the darkies 'round the house their ABC's. I've heard of folks teachin' their slaves to read the Bible. They didn't teach us to read nothin'. I've heard of it, but I've never seen it, that some folks would cut off the first finger of a nigger that could write." http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn18.htm#28
James Martin	Texas	"I helped bring the first railroad here. The S.P. in them days only ran near Seguin and I was a spiker and worked the whole distance. Then I helped build the old railroad from Indianola to Cuero and then from Cuero to Corpus That was in 1873 and 1874." http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn05.htm#9
Jerry Moore	Texas	"I rec'lect the time the cullud folks registered here after the war. They outnumbered the whites a long way. Davis was governor and all the white folks had to take the Iron Clad oath to vote. Carpetbaggers and Negroes run the government." http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn06.htm#8
Henry Turner	Arkansas	No Negro slave was allowed to go beyond the confines of his owner's plantation without written permission. This was described by "Uncle" Henry Turner as a "pass"; and on this "pass" was written the name of the Negro, the place he was permitted to visit, and the time beyond which he must not fail to return. http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn07.htm#9
Hettie Watkins	Indiana	Miss Watkins, while giving the sketch of her father to this writer, related a story of one of her uncles which I regarded as a reflection of that courage with which the colored ex-slave was called upon, on various occasions, to defend his newly acquired rights as an American citizen. http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn16.htm#5
Charles Williams	Louisiana	"I knows one Beauty thing erbout myself. I cin ackomplush anything I lays my mits apond." http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/asn11.htm#26



Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938

http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html

Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938 contains more than 2,300 first-person accounts of slavery and 500 black-and-white photographs of former slaves. These narratives were collected in the 1930s as part of the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and assembled and microfilmed in 1941 as the seventeen-volume Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves. This online collection is a joint presentation of the Manuscript and Prints and Photographs Divisions of the Library of Congress and includes more than 200 photographs from the Prints and Photographs Division that are now made available to the public for the first time. Born in Slavery was made possible by a major gift from the Citigroup Foundation.

Voices and Faces from the Collection

John W. Fields, Age 89		
Sarah Frances Shaw Graves, Age 87	The narrative excerpts presented here are a small	
Sarah Gudger, Age 121	sample of the wealth of stories available in this online collection. Some narratives contain startl descriptions of cruelty while others convey an almost nostalgic view of plantation life. These	
Charley Williams, Age 94		
James Cape, Age over 100	narratives provide an invaluable first-person account of slavery and the individuals it affected. Although the African Americans who lived under	
Tempie Cummins, Age Unknown	slavery are no longer with us, their experiences remain due to these interviews recorded in the	
William Moore, Age 82	late 1930s by the Federal Writers' Project.	
Walter Rimm, Age 80		

James Green is half American Indian and half Negro. He was born a slave to John Williams, of Petersburg, Virginia, became a "free boy" then was kidnapped and sold in a Virginia slave market to a Texas ranchman. He now lives at 333 N. Olive St., San Antonio, Texas.

—unidentified WPA Interviewer

I never knowed my age till after de war, when I's set free de second time, and then marster gits out a big book and it shows I's 25 year old. It shows I's 12 when I is bought and \$800 is paid for me. That \$800 was stolen money, 'cause I was kidnapped and is how it come:

Sarah Gudger, North Carolina

I sho' has had a ha'd life. Jes wok, an' wok. I nebbah know nothin' but work.

No'm, I nebbah knowed whut it wah t' rest. I jes wok all de time f'om mawnin' till late at night. I had t' do ebbathin' dey wah t' do on de outside. Wok in de field, chop wood, hoe cawn, till sometime I feels lak mah back sholy break.

SLAVE NARRATIVES DIALECT CHART



Author of Narrative	from	
Dialect	Translation	Narrative Insights
Author of Narrative	from	
Dialect	Translation	Narrative Insights
Author of Narrative	from	
Dialect	Translation	Narrative Insights