

Handout 1J
Readings for Jigsaw

Reading 1: Selections from “What Have Women to Do With Slavery? A Dialogue” by Eliza Lee Follen in *The North Star* (1839) (MA Historical Society Call Number Bdses 1839 Oct. 29)

This dialogue, which first appeared in The North Star, a newspaper published for an anti-slavery fair in Boston, a young woman named Harriet and her aunt, Mrs. A., discuss the idea of women being involved in the abolition movement.

Mrs. A: “...if your uncle does not prevent his name from being so disgraced [by Harriet’s involvement in the abolition movement], [your mother] will sign the petitions to Congress with other misguided women,”

Harriet: “...But why is it that you are displeased with what I have done? I thought you told me that you were convinced that slavery is sinful; and you have often said that you felt as much for the poor slaves as I do.”

Mrs. A: “And I dare say I do; but I do not approve of the doings of the abolitionists in the first place; and most of all do I disapprove of women’s meddling with such things...it is evident...that men are appointed by Providence to make and administer the laws; it is a violation of the Divine Order when women interfere in politics. Slavery is the law of the land – it is a political question – and therefore there is a great impropriety in women’s meddling with the subject.”

Harriet responds to her aunt’s objections by stating that the issue of slavery is a moral and religious question. To this, Mrs. A says, “...still, what can women do about it? What, for instance, can an ignorant girl like you do? Mr. A., who has studied the subject faithfully, says that he thinks nothing can be done, especially by northerners, and most especially by women. Doubtless, in the course of Providence, slavery, like many other evils that have passed away, will die out; but what, Harriet, can all these silly women do about it?”

Mrs. A. continues to say that the details of slavery upset her and asks “of what use are my tears and sighs to the poor creatures?” In response, Harriet says sympathy could be meaningful for a slave enduring hardships. She then poses the question of, “Are we not bound to give them our tears, our pity, if we can give no more; may not our prayers meet and unite with their in fervent supplication to the Father of mercies that he would set them free? But we can, O I am sure we can, every woman can, do much.”

Harriet states that an earlier war in Florida was the result of slavery because slaves and natives became allies when the southerners demanded the slaves “...and their children as property, and the Indians defended these, men and women as they thought them, in their natural rights, against the christian [sic] republicans.”

Harriet also states that a good Christian women would also never marry a slaveholder and would hope that a man would see it is a sin through his love for her. "No, never [would I marry a slaveholder], while by these hands I can minister to my necessities; better and happier would it be to be a beggar in the street, a sordid dependant [sic] on a grudging charity, than with my views be the wife of a rich slaveholder."

End of dialogue.

Reading 2: Poems by Eliza Lee Follen

Poem 1 - The Slave Boy's Wish by Eliza Lee Follen in *The North Star* (1839) (MA Historical Society Call Number Bdses 1839 Oct. 29)

I wish I was that little bird,
Up in the bright blue sky;
That sings and flies just where he will,
And no one asks him why.

I wish I was that little brook,
That runs so swift along;
Through pretty flowers and shining stones,
Singing a merry song.

I wish I was that butterfly,
Without a thought or care;
Sporting my pretty, brilliant wings,
Like a flower in the air.

I wish I was that wild, wild deer,
I saw the other day;
Who swifter than an arrow flew,
Through the forest far away.

I wish I was that little cloud,
By the gentle south wind driven;
Floating along, so free and bright
Far, far up into heaven.

I'd rather be a cunning fox,
And hide me in a cave;
I'd rather be a savage wolf,
Than what I am — a slave.

My mother calls me her good boy,
My father calls me brave;
What wicked action have I done,
That I should be a slave.

I saw my little sister sold,
So will they do to me;
My Heavenly Father, let me die,
For then I shall be free.

Poem 2 – “The Slave’s Prayer” to be sung to the tune of to be sung to the tune of “Pleyel’s Hymn” (1859) from “For the Twenty-Fifth National Anti-Slavery Subscription Anniversary, at the Music Hall, Boston, Wednesday Evening, January 26, 1859” (MA Historical Society Call Number Bdses-Sm 1859 Jan. 26)

God of justice! God of Love!
God of mercy! set us free!
From thine awful throne above,
Hear us when we pray to thee!

Crushed and cheated from our birth,
Here upon our bended knee,
Fettered, groaning from our birth,
Listen, Father! Set us free!

Better die than be a slave,
Why in bondage should we be?
There is freedom in the grave –
Father, let us come to thee!

Let us break these fetters then!
Let us say we will be free!
Let us prove that we are men!
Give us death or Liberty!

Poem 3 – “Song for the Friends of Freedom” to be sung to the Tune of “Scots what hae” (1859) from “For the Twenty-Fifth National Anti-Slavery Subscription Anniversary, at the Music Hall, Boston, Wednesday Evening, January 26, 1859” (MA Historical Society Call Number Bdses-Sm 1859 Jan. 26)

I.
Heart to heart, and hand in hand,
Bound together let us stand;
Storms are gathering o’er the land,
Many friends are gone: -
Still we never are alone,
Still the battle must be won;
Still we bravely march right on –
Right on! Right on! Right on!

II.
To the pilgrim spirit tune,
Which nor slave nor master knew,
Onward, faithful, fearless few!
Liberty’s the prize!
Full of hope that never dies,

Lift to heaven your trusting eyes!
Spirits of the free, arise!
Arise! Arise! Arise!

III.
Will you your New England see
Crouching low to Slavery!
Rise and say it shall not be!
More than life's at stake,
Rise, and ever fetter break!
Rise, for Truth and Honor's sake!
Every freeborn soul awake!
Awake! Awake! Awake!

IV.
Listen to our solemn call,
Take no thought what may befall;
Consecrate yourself, your all,
To God and Liberty!
On your spirit's bended knee –
Swear ye death to Slavery –
Swear your country shall be free –
Be free! Be free! Be free!

V.
Soon to bless our longing eyes,
Freedom's glorious sun shall rise;
Now it lights these gloomy skies
Faintly from afar!
Faith and love her heralds are: -
Lo! e'en now her morning star –
Lo! e'en now her morning star!
Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

Reading 3: Excerpts from *Memoir of James Jackson* by Susan Paul (originally published in 1837) (MA Historical Society Call Number: F73.9.N4 P38 2000)

Published in 1837 and little known today, this memoir is the first biography about an African-American and was also the first work of juvenilia (or children's literature) about a real African-American child. The memoir's author, Susan Paul, was notable in her own right. She came from a prominent African-American family in Boston and was a key member of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society. This memoir tells the story of James Jackson, a young African-American boy that Susan Paul had as a student. This memoir was written with children in mind, for Jackson's life serves as an example for other children. Overall, Paul describes Jackson as a kind, thoughtful, prayerful child, who was a dedicated and diligent student and often thought of others before himself. He seemed to leave an impression on all he met due to his wisdom and kindness. (See introduction by Lois Brown for more background on the memoir and on Paul's life).

“Now I think all good children will say that James was a good boy, and they would like to have seen him. Perhaps some one may dislike him because he was coloured. I would ask if James was not *good*; his having a dark skin does not make him *bad*. It is the *conduct* that makes the boys or men or women bad. *God* has made them all, and loves all that are good, and so should *we* always have courage enough to love any body who is good. Would you love your sister or brother less because they had black or brown hair? Or your father or mother because one had black eyes and the other blue eyes? No, I am sure you would not love them any the less. (71)

“I will tell you a reason why children do not like coloured people. The anecdote was related to me the other day by a gentleman who saw and heard what I am going to tell you. He said, ‘As I was passing through one of the most pleasant streets in Boston, my attention was attracted by the crying of a child at some distance before me in the same street. I quickened my pace, and soon came sufficiently near to see that there was a little boy and girl under the charge of a girl considerably older than either of them. When I came near, I saw that the boy trembled and appeared to be much frightened, as I passed them. The large girl said, “Henry, if you don’t be still crying, I will carry you down to Belknap-street, and give you to the *old black man*.” The poor little fellow put his hand on his mouth, and tried with all his might to stop, but he was so much afraid that he could not. So Sally kept repeating, “Now if you don’t stop, I *will certainly* give you to the *old black man*.” Then Henry looked behind him, and all about, as though he thought the hand of some frightful old creature was just about to take hold of him, and carry him away to a dreadful place. ‘Ah!’ said my friend, ‘*there* is the reason of prejudice against colour. That child will *fear* and *hate* a black man for years. Manhood will scarcely efface his hatred.’”(71-72)

“The amiable disposition of James, made his friends much attached to him. They often gave him little presents of toys, or fruits. Whatever he had that he could divide, was always shared among the other children at home, or his companions at school. He appeared very happy when he was making distribution of his little presents. This was benevolence. There

were *other* boys in school who were *selfish*, that is, they did not care about making others happy; so that when they had received any little present from a kind friend, you might hear them saying to some of the children, 'you shall not have any of this,' or 'this is mine, you have not got any, and I will not give you any of mine.' I have heard you that James appeared very happy while he was distributing his little presents, but the selfish boy did not appear to be happy, for he looked ill natured, as if he did not love any body. There is one short verse that the blessed Saviour repeated to those that used to be with him, which James kept in his mind, and acted as it told him to act. Now if you will remember it, I will write it down in large letters. These are the words, *Do unto others as you wish them to do unto you*" (79).

Paul then recounts a story of how James saw boys being mean to an older woman. It greatly distressed him, and it made him think how he would want to be treated if he was in her position. Paul notes that, "Now this was doing unto others as you would wish others to do unto you. If every one would obey this precept as they ought, no person would be despised or abused because they are poor, or because they had a dark skin, nor for any other reasons but because they are bad, and even then, we should pity and not despise them" (80).

"One day while at school, his teacher told the children that there were a great many thousands of their color who were not allowed to read, who had no schools, nor any books. These persons she said were slaves. The fathers and mothers of a *great great* many children could not do as they pleased with them, because other men said that they could sell them or do what they pleased with them; they are called slaves. These men did not want the slaves to know any thing about read in the Bible. So they kept the children from school, and while you are at school they make the slaves work very hard, and because they don't know any thing at all about the word of God they are sometimes very wicked. Then they are cruelly whipped. So they live and die without ever going to school, or being taught by kind Sabbath school teachers. 'And now' said she, 'will these children pray to God for the little slave children and their parents?'

When James went home, he said to his mother, 'Mother, I have heard to-day about the poor slaves,' and 'my teacher said, we might pray for them; now Ma, how shall I pray?' 'O James,' said she, 'your teacher has told you much about them, - ask for them just what you think they need.' After a few moments of reflection James retired, and was heard to offer the following simple prayer with much feeling. 'O Lord, pity the poor slaves, and let them be free, that they may have their liberty, and be happy as I am, - and may they have good teachers to learn them to read, as I have, and make them all very good. Amen.'

...I fear there are many who believe the God must influence men to be willing to give the captive slaves his liberty, and his rights, who do not ask God as constantly as he did, that he would do it. We are taught to pray for men in all conditions.

You will see, if you look back to the short prayer of James, that he prayed that the poor slaves might be as *happy as he was*. This was doing as our blessed Saviour told those who loved him to do, when he said, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Will you remember and offer the same prayer for slaves and all in distress?" (89-90)

One day, James became very ill while at school. He went home and grew worse. He asked for his teacher to visit. When she arrived, he told her he did not want to get better because he wanted to die and be with his Savior, even when she asked him if he was ready to leave school and his mother. Shortly thereafter, James died peacefully, still talking about how much he loved his Savior (98-99).

“Now you have read all I have to say about James: you see how obediently he lived, and how happily he died. What do you remember particularly that you have read about him in this book?

Do you wish to be happy? Then you must be good; and you can't be good without trying, and sometimes trying very hard too. Do you think it was easy for James to be kind to boys who were unkind to him? If it was, then it may be easy for you.”

“Now, do you remember the words written in large letters which he use to think of so often? I will write them again here, so that you can find them easily when you want to look at them. Here they are:

THOU, GOD, SEEST ME!

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES; - AND

DO UNTO OTHERS AS YOU WISH OTHERS TO DO UNTO YOU.

If you remember the first line, which I have written in large letters, you will not be inclined to do what you are forbidden to do by your parents, if they *are* out of your sight.

When you think of the second, you will not be inclined to injure those who have done wrong to you.

And if you always recollect the last, you will not injure any person who is poor, or in distress, or colored.

All who read this book, if they do not love God must have a new heart. Will not all pray to God that their hearts may be changed; so that when they die, they may feel sure that they shall go to be with the blessed Saviour *for ever*, where they may join with James, and sing glory to God and the Lamb, and when a thousand years are needed, then the song will be sweet as ever, and all the good angels will join in singing this song of praise to God and the Lamb:

Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,

But all their joys are one.

Reading 4: Selections from “To Mothers in the Free States” By Mrs. E.L. Follen (1855) (MA Historical Society Call Number: Coal Bin Serials Am Anti-Slavery)

“I speak to mothers. The mothers in the Free States could abolish slavery; American mothers are responsible for American slavery.” (1)

“My countrywomen, let me ask you a few questions...Do you, when you so look at the child and the man, and bring home to your heart the memory of this happy darling boy playing at your feet or laughing in your lap, your heart running over with love and joy, do you sometimes think what would have been your desolation of soul at his being snatched from you and sold for a slave, condemned to life long ignorance, hard labor, and brutal treatment, –bereft, both of childhood and manhood, – and you, left with a breaking heart, forced to submit in silence, or endure the lash should your murmur? And now when you rejoice in the manhood or your grown-up son, and his possible happy future, and find your waning existence brightened by the sunshine of his early days, do you remember the slave that has no childhood, no youth, no manhood, and is poor mother who can never know you joy?” (1)

“The slaveholder has, by law, the same power over his slaves as he has over his cattle. He puts them up on the auction-block to be examined by a butcher. The poor girl whom he owns may not refuse to do his bidding, let the act he commands be what it will; if she disobey him, he may punish her in any way he pleases; if she forcibly resists, he may flog her to death. The law of the land and the customs of society give her to him. She is his slave.” (2)

“Do you not – I address every mother in the land – do you not know that such irresponsible power must be abused? Would you trust your own husbands or sons with such power? Would you dare accept it yourselves?” (2)

“You will, perhaps, say to me ‘these things may be as you state them, but what can women, -- what can we mothers do? why make ourselves miserable at the thought of these terrible facts, when we can do the poor sufferers no good? what can we do?’ I answer, you can do everything; I repeat, you can abolish slavery. Let every mother take the subject to heart, as one in which she has a personal concern. In the silence of night, let her listen to the slave-mothers crying to her for help. Let her prayer for them be her ‘Soul’s sincere desire.’ Let her be faithful to her vow, ‘in season and out of season,’ and watch every opportunity and means of doing, or saying, or suffering anything she can for these poor, dumb and helpless creatures. Let her seek for light how she can best serve their cause. Let the desire to serve them go with her where she goes, and dwell a perpetual presence in her home. Let her heart, her understanding, her thoughts, be ever on the alert in their cause. While she must ask for heavenly wisdom to guide her, she must take no council from her fears; she must call no man master.” (2)

“We are the greater sinners, for we have the baser motives for our share in this iniquity.”
(3)

“Mothers in the Free State, I tell you no idle dream; I present no visionary impracticable idea. I tell you the simple truth, when I say you can, if yfou [sic] will, abolish slavery. The tender heart of the boy is in the hands of the mother. From her he receives his first impressions of right and wrong – impressions which remain to him through life, mingled with the memory of his first and happiest hours. When he is tempted to abandon the highest right, to make a compromise with wrong, to adopt a time-serving policy dignified by the name of prudence and defended on the plea of necessity; then shall the memory of his mother and her faithful words come back to him – the angel of his earl days. IN that presence, the tempter shall stand rebuked, and take his true shape of cowardice and sin. Therefore, O my country-women, I call upon you, I plead with you to take up this cause with a heroic faith, a martyr-like fidelity, an unquenchable courage!” (4)

“But the time has come when woman must come to the rescue in this land. As women, our all is at stake. We have, above every other motive, that especial call for our devotion – our children. They are, at once, the pledges of our sincerity and the tests of our courage. Let us not be found wanting.” (4)

Reading 5: Excerpts from “What have we, as individuals, to do with slavery?” By Susan C. Cabot (1855) (MA Historical Society Call Number: Coal Bin Serials Am. Anti-Slavery)

Susan C. Cabot begins her essay by summarizing the common responses Northerners have to the slavery question, which include the idea that it’s a Southern problem, it’s too distressing to think about, and the attitude that because Northerners can’t do anything about it there’s no use thinking about it. Cabot responds to these ideas by suggesting that speaking out against slavery is a duty that “Christianity lays upon her disciples” (1).

“In reply to the remarks we have cited, we would say that our interest of the slave springs from the same source as our interest for the poor; we cannot say, My heart shall flow out for the white woman, and not for the black, for the free woman, and not for the bond.” (2)

“To bear one another’s burdens came from the lips of Jesus Did not his life show us how to do this? When he called the leper to him, had not his heart overflowed with love and compassion and the thought that this too is a child of God, would he not have felt nervous, and questioned the prudence and propriety of touching him?” (2-3)

“When some delicate woman, brought up in the refinements of life, visits the hovel of the poor drunkard, and sees the object of her charity so disfigured that hardly a trace of humanity is left, she, all the more, longs to bring back the soul to this degraded temple, that it may again assert its origin. Her heart does not grow cold by criticism, but burns with a new desire, at the sight of this ruin, to do something to restore this fallen one. But this poor creature is white; hence her ears are quick to hear any suggestions to break the sinful chains that bind him to the earth. She does not ask herself to what country he belongs; she knows he is a child of God, and that is enough. But the poor negro whose dark skin we are unaccustomed to, whose chains are riveted by the hand of the white man, whose degradation is completed by the avarice of selfishness, must be pleaded for, must be reasoned about, before we can penetrate the prejudice that hardens the heart against him – a prejudice which blinds the eye of justice, and makes us forget that this too is a child of God; and one whom, could the curtain be raised, perhaps we should see nearer the throne of grace than, in our short-sightedness, we imagined. By whose fiat did this dark skin come into the world? Are we to question the wisdom of his existence? Are we to judge the Almighty?” (3)

“Let one sin be mentioned which does not, almost of necessity, spring from the atheistic root of slavery! From the time when Joseph was cast into the pit by his brothers down to the present hour, its poisonous root has sent forth its shoots; and here, in this so called land of freedom, it flourishes in the plantations, and is exhibited on the auction block. We are longing and looking for the hour when the sin that has sold our brother shall, through much sorrowing and many tears, be so repented of that on bended knee and in deep humiliation we shall ask pardon for our great iniquity....let us take all that we have, and make a pilgrimage in the search for what we have lost, till we find ourselves again in the arms of truth and justice. We have done this great sin in the sight of Heaven; let us pray to be

released from its weary bondage that our souls may be refreshed by peace of conscience. Let this slavery become a history to be told to our grandchildren, taking its place with that record of sins of which the floods of heaven were opened to destroy all likeness from the face of the earth. Let us pray for that mercy which shall allow us an ark of safety in the integrity of our determination: that we may rise above these dark waters which threaten to destroy the life of our souls." (6-7)