

Vocabulary

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Chapter One:

1. Drafty: Having cold air moving through in a way that is unpleasant or uncomfortable
Our cabin was very drafty in bad weather.
2. Endure: To experience pain or suffering for a long time
Slaves had to endure more hardship than most people can imagine.
3. Grimace: A facial expression in which your mouth and face are twisted in a way that shows disgust or disapproval
Massa wore a grimace on his face all the time.
4. Imbecile: A very stupid person, an idiot or a fool
Massa thought that I was an imbecile.
5. Muck out: To clean out the place where farm animals live, removing animal waste and dirty hay
Paris and I had to muck out the stall every morning.
6. Overseer: A person who watches and directs the work of other people to be sure that a job is done well
Ben was the nasty overseer on our plantation.

7. Pallet: A wooden platform used to support something, a small, hard bed, a cloth bag that is filled with straw and used as a bed
Papa and I slept on a pallet in our small cabin.
8. Plantation: A large area of land with many acres; located in the South where cotton and tobacco were grown
Master Porter owned a tobacco plantation.
9. Score: A mark or a cut made in a surface with a sharp object or whip
The scores on Paris' back were rippled and hard scars that would be there forever.
10. Scurry: To move quickly, with short steps
The mice scurried underneath our pallets as we tried to sleep.
11. Slatted: Made of thin, narrow strips of wood, like a fence or a wall in a wood cabin
We stuffed moss and straw into the cracks in the slatted wall.
12. Tight-lipped: Not willing to speak about something
Papa was tight-lipped about the conditions of slavery.
12. Unsettled: Feeling nervous, upset, or worried; not comfortable; not calm or stable
Massa was an unsettled man.
14. Varmint: A bad person, compared to rats; today we would use the word 'bum'
"Get away from me, you nasty varmint!"
- 15: Vulgar: Not having good manners, good taste, or politeness
Massa was a vulgar man.

Chapter Two:

1. Biting: Unpleasantly cold
I did not like walking out for firewood on biting winter days.
2. Comprehend: To understand something; such as a difficult subject
I could not comprehend why Ben was so mean.
3. Estate: A large piece of land with a large house on it
Massa was proud of his estate.
4. Gist: The general or basic meaning of something said or written
Rebecca understood the gist of what Massa said.
5. Gracious: Having charm, good taste, and comfort that comes with having a lot of money
Missus sat in the gracious chair at the end of the dining room table.
6. Lumber: To move in a slow or awkward way
Massa lumbered off to his study.
7. Luxury: A situation of great wealth; something that is expensive
The Porter family lives in luxury.

8. Nudge: To touch or push someone or something gently
Mama nudged Adeline from her slumber.
9. Ornate: Covered with decorations, fancy patterns, or shapes
The dining room chairs are very ornate.
10. Phony: Not real or true, not genuine; intended to make someone think something that is not true
Addie wore a phony expression on her face so Massa would think she was happy.
11. Profit: Money that is made in a business
Massa hoped to make more profit than Frederick Adams, his neighbor.
12. Rile: To make someone angry; to irritate or annoy
James decided not to rile up his father any more.
13. Scamper: To run or move quickly
Addie scampered outside to bring in sticks and firewood.
14. Scrumptious: Delicious
My Mama made scrumptious biscuits.
15. Slumber: Sleep
Mama woke me from my slumber.

16. Solemnly: In a very serious manner, behavior, or expression
When Massa spoke to me, I nodded solemnly.
17. Somber: Very sad
The scary story put us in a somber mood.
18. Trek: To walk a long distance
I made the trek each day to the chicken coop.
19. Venture: To do or say something, such as an opinion
James ventured that he disagreed with his father.
20. Whimper: To make a quiet, crying sound
Missus whimpered after Massa slapped her.

Chapter Three:

1. Abolitionist: A person who wants to stop or abolish slavery
Dr. Edmundson was an abolitionist.

2. Absent-mindedly: Paying no attention; not noticing things
Stubby continued down the row absent-mindedly.

3. Berserk: Crazy and violent behavior because of anger
Father will go berserk when he smells the dead fish in his study.

4. Conceal: To hide something or someone from sight
Moses and Paris concealed some food in their 'for later' pot.

5. Crevice: A narrow opening or crack
Paris put the fishing net in the crevice between the two rocks.

6. Culprit: A person who has done something wrong
Won't your father suspect that you are the culprit?

7. Furrow: A long and narrow cut in the ground
We plowed furrows in the field.

8. Mimic: To copy someone's or something's behavior or speech; imitate
He can mimic the way that the birds sing.
9. Muck out: To clean the place where farm animals live
The farmer had to muck out the horse stall every morning.
10. Mysterious: Strange, unknown, difficult to understand, secretive
James had a mysterious twinkle in his eye.
11. Oblige: To do something that someone has asked you to do; to do a favor for someone
If Paris wanted to hold my hand, I was happy to oblige him.
12. Observation: Something you notice by watching and listening
My observation is that mules are stubborn.
13. Plodding: To walk slowly and heavily
Stubby kept plodding down the field.
14. Putrid: Decayed with a disgusting smell
The dead fish would put out a putrid odor.
15. Rampage: An occurrence of wild and destructive behavior

Massa went on a rampage when he smelled the dead fish.

16. Ramshackle: Not very well-made; in bad condition
We lived in a small, ramshackle plantation in the slave quarters.
17. Rhythm: A regular, repeated pattern of sounds or movements
I spoke the words to the rhythm of the drum.
18. Spindly: Long and thin
If I weren't so spindly, Stubby could not have pulled me so easily down the row.
19. Straddling: To sit, stand, or ride with a leg on either side for something
Paris was straddling the rocks when he fished with the net.
20. Wedge: To force something or someone into a very small or narrow space
Paris wedged the net down into the opening.

Chapter Four:

1. Calico: A light, printed cotton cloth
Addie wore a calico apron.
2. Clomp: To walk with loud heavy steps.
Massa clomped back to his study.
3. Confidence: A feeling or belief that you can do something well
Sarah had confidence that I would learn to read.
4. Constant: Happening all the time or very often over a long period
of time
We were in constant fear of being whipped.
5. Earshot: The distance within which someone's voice can be heard
Be careful. Someone might be in earshot.
6. Elaborate: Made with much care and detail; many parts or details
that are carefully arranged
Missus sat at her elaborate desk.
7. Light-hearted: Having a cheerful or happy nature
Missus talked to me in a light-hearted way.

8. Magnificent: Very beautiful or impressive
Missus' bedroom was magnificent.
9. Meandering: To have a lot of curves instead of going in a straight line
Mill Creek was a meandering stream.
10. Mounted: Climbed up
Addie mounted the stairs to join Missus for her reading lesson.
11. Periodically: Happening regularly over a period of time
Periodically Missus would join Lavinia in the quarters.
12. Rasping: To speak in a way that sounds rough
I was so shocked that when I spoke, my voice sounded funny, kind of rasping.
13. Spacious: Having a large amount of space
Missus' bedroom was more spacious than my room in the attic.
14. Stammer: To speak with many pauses because you are nervous or frightened
I was so nervous that I barely stammered my reply to Missus' question.
15. Suspect: To think that someone is guilty of a crime or of doing something wrong

We don't want William to suspect that I am teaching you to read and write.

Chapter Five:

1. Abruptly: Very sudden or not expected; rudely brief
She turned abruptly and walked away.

2. Contentment: The state of being happy or satisfied
There was a look of perfect contentment on Moses' face.

3. Dole: To give something to people
Ben doled out our rations on Saturday night.

4. Fetch: To go after and bring back
The slave catchers went out to fetch Demetry Field.

5. Flimsy: Easily broken or torn; not strong or solid
We tried to knock Addie off of her stilts with a flimsy stick.

6. Hefty: Large and heavy; big and strong
Cuffy, the carpenter, was a hefty man.

7. Materialize: To become real
My father's dreams for me actually materialized.

8. Muffle: To make sound quieter
The wet blankets muffled the sound of their voices.

9. Reassure: To make someone feel less afraid or upset or worried
Mama reassures me that everything will be OK.
10. Sap: To use up the supply of strength, energy, or courage.
The hot sun sapped all of our energy.
11. Scent: A smell that is left by a person or an animal that can be sensed and followed by some animals, usually dogs.
The dogs followed the scent of the runaway slave.
12. Shindig: A big party
On Saturday nights, after receiving our rations for the week, we had a shindig in the slave quarters.
13. Soundly: Deeply and completely
Ben whipped Paris soundly.
14. Sustain: To provide what is needed for a person to exist
Our diet was not enough to sustain us.
15. Unraveled: Unfolded, unwound, or got explained; got told
I was more and more afraid as the story unraveled.

Chapter Six:

1. Altered: Changed
Our work schedule was altered during the Christmas season.

2. Aroma: A very pleasant smell
The aroma of the food being prepared in the kitchen made the house smell wonderful.

3. Astride: With one leg on each side of something
James was astride his horse Thunder.

4. Barge: To move or push in an awkward, rude way
Massa barged into the kitchen to scold me.

5. Charmingly: Very pleasing
The musicians were entertaining the guests very charmingly.

6. Clenched: To set in a tightly closed position
Massa clenched his teeth when he was hissing at me.

7. Dazzling: Very impressive; very beautiful
The house was dazzling after we finished decorating it for Christmas.

8. Draping: Loosely hanging in a pleasant way
The greens were draping the staircase.
9. Extravagant: Very fancy; very expensive but not necessary
With all of the candles lit, the dining room table was extravagant.
10. Fragrant: Having a pleasant and sweet smell
The fragrant evergreen decorations made the house smell very nice.
11. Marvel: To feel great wonder and admiration
The guests marveled at the beautiful decorations.
12. Restrictions: Laws or rules that limit or control something or someone
We got passes at Christmas time, but there were restrictions about how far away we could go or how long we could stay away.
13. Tote: To carry
James toted us all over the plantation so we could gather evergreen branches and pine cones to make Christmas decorations.
14. Unaccustomed: Not used to something
I was unaccustomed to wearing such fancy clothes.
15. Varying: To be different; not always the same

The candlesticks on the dining room table were of varying heights.

Chapter Seven:

1. Chortling: Laughing because you are amused or pleased by something
Cuffy chortled when he told that funny story about Papa.
2. Execute: To kill someone
Nat Turner and his fellow slaves executed many white people.
3. Flog: To beat or whip someone severely
Ben flogged Paris in front of the other slaves.
4. Garbled: To cause words to become unclear or confusing
Massa couldn't understand my garbled speech.
5. Hilarity: Noisy fun or laughter
Cuffy doubled over in hilarity when he began to tell that funny story about the trick Papa played on Ben.
6. Instigator: A person who starts something
No one could believe that papa was the instigator of such a trick.
7. Interpret: To understand something in a certain way
Nat Turner interpreted the 'serpent' as his enemy.

8. Militia: A group of people who are not part of the armed forces of a country but who are trained like soldiers.
The militia captured Nat Turner.
9. Precious: Very valuable or important; worth a lot of money
Papa stumbled onto one of Massa's precious tobacco plants.
10. Rebellion: An effort by many people to change someone or something by use of violence
Nat Turner's rebellion frightened slave owners.
11. Retribution: Punishment for doing something wrong
The militia killed two hundred blacks in retribution.
12. Serpent: A very large snake
Nat Turner thought that the serpent was his enemy.
13. Sturdier: More strong and healthy
When Papa was sick, he didn't work as fast as some of the sturdier men.
14. Tragedy: A very bad event that causes great sadness or even someone's death
It was a tragedy that Papa died.

15. Trestle:

A frame that is made of a horizontal piece atop two vertical pieces designed to hold something up

Papa's coffin was set upon trestles.

Chapter Eight:

1. **Blurt:** To say something suddenly and without thinking
Massa blurted, "You are so dumb, Ben!"

2. **Efficiently:** Producing desired results without wasting energy, materials, or time
Slaves cannot work efficiently if they are sick.

3. **Irresistible:** Impossible to resist because of cuteness, attractiveness, or strength
Missus found the children irresistible.

4. **Loom:** To appear large, strange, or frightening
Massa loomed over Ben after he had slammed Ben down onto the bench.

5. **Meager:** Very small; too small in amount
Moses moved his meager belongings into the big house.

6. **Rant:** To talk or complain loudly in a way that shows anger
Massa ranted on and on about how dumb Ben was.

7. **Stifle:** To not allow yourself to express something
I stifled a grin as I ran to get Moses from the barn.

8. **Stoic:** Showing no emotion when something bad is happening
I wanted to cry, but I remained stoic.

9. Tolerate: To allow something that is bad or unpleasant to exist, to happen, or to be done

Ben simply had to tolerate Massa's rage.

10. Trickle: A slow, thin flow of water

You will be near your first station on the Underground Railroad when the stream narrows to a trickle.

Chapter Nine:

1. Adequate: Good enough; enough for some need or requirement
Our clothing was not adequate to keep us warm in the winter.
2. Canteen: A small container for carrying water
They filled their canteens in the stream.
3. Cargo hold: A place in the bottom of a ship where goods and supplies are stored
They put Mama in the cargo hold along with hundreds of other slaves.
4. Conserve: To use something carefully in order to prevent waste or to keep some for later use
We had to conserve what little food we had left.
5. Dense: Difficult to see through
We walked for hours through the dense forest.
6. Dungeon: A dark underground prison in a castle
Mama felt like she was in a dungeon when she was being held in the cargo hold.
7. Gangplank: A board or other structure that people walk on to get on or off a boat

They dragged Mama down the gangplank when the ship arrived in America.

8. Gruesome: Horrible, disgusting
The whipping marks on Paris' back were gruesome.
9. Hoist: To raise or lift up
Mama hoisted the bundle containing our food up to a high branch.
10. Maniac: A person who behaves in a wild way; someone who is mentally ill
Mama was carrying on as if she were a maniac.
11. Property: Something that is owned by a person or a business
Massa treated us just like the other property he owned...horses, cows, mules.
12. Reserved: Not openly expressing feelings or opinions
Sarah was the more reserved child.
13. Strenuous: Requiring or showing great energy and effort
Working in the tobacco fields all day was strenuous.
14. Thicket: A group of bushes or small trees that grow very close together or tangled all together

We found a hiding place in a large thicket deep in the woods.

15. Underbrush: Plants, bushes, and small trees growing under larger trees in the forest

We made our beds in the underbrush.

16. Wracked: Suffering great pain

Mama was wracked with sobs when she was telling her story.

Chapter Ten:

1. Admonish: To tell or urge someone to do something
Missus admonished us to travel at night.

2. Assurance: A strong feeling of confidence about yourself or that you are right
Seeing the mountains gave me assurance that we were going north.

3. Consequently: Happening as a result of a particular action or a set of conditions
Our clothes were heavy and wet. Consequently, we walked slowly.

4. Depression: An area on a surface that is lower than other parts; a low spot
Addie was looking for a depression in the ground where we could hide.

5. Elevate: To lift up; make something higher
We had to elevate Addie's leg to keep the swelling down.

6. Gait: A particular way of walking
We had an awkward gait when we were carrying Addie.

7. Marvel: To feel great surprise, wonder, or admiration

I marveled that Addie was able to endure the pain that the bonesetter caused when he was fixing her ankle.

8. Perilous:

Dangerous

Our journey over the mountains was perilous.

9. Ponder:

To think about or consider carefully

I have to stop and ponder about which direction we should go.

10. Preposterous:

Very foolish or silly

It was preposterous to think that we would see a bear.

11. Rapids:

A part of a river where the water moves very fast over the rocks

Moses hoped he would catch a fish in the rapids.

12. Reef:

A long line of rocks near the surface of the water

Moses stood on the reef while trying to catch a fish.

13. Relish:

A feeling of liking something

I relish the idea that I will be free one day.

14. Summon:

To order someone to come to a place

Lydia Harlan summoned her husband to come immediately.

Chapter Eleven:

1. Apologetic: Feeling or showing regret; sorry; expressing an apology
Ben was never apologetic after he whipped somebody.

2. Breakneck: Very fast; dangerously fast
When we heard the patrollers coming, we took off at breakneck speed.

3. Ferocious: Very fierce or violent
The dogs were ferocious when they caught the runaway.

4. Lurk: To wait in secret or in a hiding place to plan something wrong or harmful
The slave catchers were lurking in the bushes.

5. Multiple: More than one; many, numerous
There were multiple hiding places on the Harlan's farm.

6. Object: To disagree or oppose something
The slave catcher objected when Lydia told him that he could not come into the house unless her husband was present.

7. Refuge: Shelter or protection from danger
The hiding place in the barn was my refuge.

8. Relentless: Continuing without getting weaker or less severe
His relentless banging on the door was frightening me.
9. Retrieve: To get something and bring it back
Those men were trying to retrieve a slave.
10. Robust: Impressively large and strong
Jacob was a robust man who picked Addie up easily.
11. Salve: A creamy substance that you put on a wound to make it heal faster or to make it less painful
Lydia rubbed a soothing salve on our sore feet.
12. Scowl: To look at someone in a way that shows anger.
That mean man scowled at Lydia and Harlan as he stomped out of the house.
13. Shriveled: To become wrinkled, like a prune
Having been in wet shoes for so long made our feet all shriveled up.

The minuscule openings barely let in enough air so we could breathe.

9. Smidgen: A small amount; a little bit
There was a smidgen of straw on the bottom of the wagon.
10. Spellbound: Giving all of your attention to something or someone
I was spellbound by Elijah's and Betsy's story.
11. Surly: Rude and unfriendly
The slave catchers were surly characters.
12. Treacherous: Very dangerous and difficult
Elijah's and Betsy's journey was more treacherous than ours.
13. Trance: A state in which you are not aware of what is happening around you because you are shocked or thinking about something else
Betsey thought that I was in a trance because I looked so odd while she was telling her story.

Chapter Thirteen:

1. Accommodations: A place such as a room where travelers can sleep
Elijah and Betsey shared beautiful accommodations in the Edmundson's large home.
2. Clamber: To climb or crawl in awkwardly
I had to clamber back into the wagon.
3. Discreetly: Not likely to be seen or noticed
Discreetly I slid my hand down my leg to the sheathe that hid my knife.
4. Encounter: To meet someone without intending or expecting to
Without a warning we encountered two slave catchers.
5. Gimmick: A trick
Sometimes abolitionists had to use clever gimmicks to help a slave.
6. Navigate: To find the way to get to a place while in a boat, ship, airplane, car, etc.
The old fisherman helped us to navigate The Underground Railroad.

7. Sheathe: A covering that protects something such as a knife or a sword
The sheathe strapped around my leg covered my knife.
8. Skiff: A small light boat, usually for one or two people
We tied the skiff to a tree so we could eat our lunch.
9. Stately: Very impressive in appearance and size
Dr. Edmundson's home was stately.
10. Tethered: Tied by a rope or a chain so that it will stay in place
Our boat was tethered to the large tree.
11. Utterly: Complete and total
We were utterly exhausted after rowing for such a long time.
12. Vital: Extremely important
It was vital for us to rest occasionally.

Chapter Fourteen:

1. Conscientiously: Very careful about doing what you are supposed to do
The porter looked over my papers conscientiously.

2. Complexion: The color or appearance of someone's skin
My freedom document noted my especially light complexion.

3. Forge: To make or copy something in order to deceive someone
My forged freedom document said that I had been a free person for a long time.

4. Fumble: To handle something in an awkward or clumsy way
I was warned to act natural on the train, to not fumble when handing the porter my freedom papers.

5. Granted: Given something legally
The forged document said that I was granted my freedom.

6. Heretofore: Fancy legal language to mean 'up until now'
I had heretofore been registered with the court in Virginia.

7. Hurdle: Something that makes an achievement difficult
When the porter passed my papers, I cleared that hurdle.

8. Legitimate: Accepted according to rules or laws, real, official
The documents made it clear that I was a legitimate free woman.
9. Noticeable: Able to be easily seen or noticed
The document said that I had no noticeable scars.
10. Obvious: In a way that is easy to see, understand, or recognize
It was obvious to Anna that I was frightened.
11. Porter: A person whose job is to help passengers on a train
The porter lifted my satchel up onto the train.
12. Register: An official list, book, or system for keeping records
The forged document said that I had registered in the court in Virginia.
13. Renewal: Extending the period of time when something is legal
My new document stated that it was a renewal of an earlier freedom paper.
14. Satchel: A small bag that is used for carrying clothes
The porter helped me with my satchel.
15. Society: A group of people who work together on a cause
The Abolitionist Society had purchased my train ticket.

Chapter Fifteen:

1. Aspect: A part of something or someone
Massa controlled every aspect of our lives when we lived on the plantation.
2. Cargo: Goods and materials carried from one place to another by boat
The cargo included fruits and vegetables.
3. Companionship: The good feeling that comes from being with someone else
We enjoyed the companionship of Dr. Edmundson's family.
4. Fidgety: Moving around a lot because of nervousness
As we waited to depart, Addie was fidgety.
5. Gangway: A board or other structure that people walk on to get on or off a boat; also called a gangplank
The gangway was put in place so we could walk off the boat.
6. Genial: Cheerful and pleasant
Our hosts, the Edmundsons were genial people.
7. Grandly: Very well; very good

The Edmundsons treated us grandly while we stayed in their lovely home.

8. Helter-skelter: In a confused and careless way
Addie was jumping about helter-skelter.
9. Hospitality: Generous and friendly to visitors and guests
The Edmundsons extended their warm hospitality to us.
10. Overwhelming: Used to describe something that is so difficult, so confusing, that you are unable to do it or to understand it
The kindness shown to us by the family was overwhelming.
11. Primp: To try to make yourself more attractive by making small changes to your clothes, hair, etc.
Addie, primped, checking her clothes to be sure that she looked fine.

Chapter Sixteen and Epilog:

1. Abscond: To escape from a place secretly
Four slaves absconded after they discovered that the overseer was missing.
2. Concept: An idea of what something is
Being allowed to learn was a new concept for us.
3. Contagious: Causing other people to feel or act in a similar way
James had such a contagious smile; it made me smile too.
4. Convulsed with: Used when something such as laughter causes a person's body to shake
Young Moses was convulsed with laughter when he met the other Moses.
5. Crossroad: A place where two or more roads cross
Culpeper was a crossroad for the Northern and Southern armies.
6. Eulogy: A speech that praises someone who has died
James delivered the eulogy at his mother's funeral.
7. Innovative: Introducing new ideas or methods
Missus turned out to be an innovative businesswoman.

8. Interminable: Continuing for a very long time
There seemed to be an interminable quiet as we couldn't think of what we should say.
9. Journalist: The job of collecting, writing, and editing news stories
I was a journalist reporting on the war.
10. Levity: An amusing quality
James brought some levity to the serious moment.
11. Reconstruction: The act of rebuilding something that was damaged or destroyed
Culpeper went through a long period of reconstruction after the war.
12. Rein in: To bring under control
I was trying to rein in my emotions.
13. Route: To send something to a particular place
The man in the post office routed Moses' letter to my post office box.
14. Tariffs: A tax on goods coming into or out of a country
Moses' daughter was arguing that tariffs should be reduced.
15. Wrestle: To struggle to control something; to struggle to deal with
James was wrestling with his emotions, just as I was.

16. Upheaval:

A major change that causes a lot of conflict, anger or confusion

After the Civil War, many slave owners experienced an upheaval when they had to free their slaves.