ABOUT THIS BOOK

Thousands of years ago, when impoverished Egyptians couldn’t repay their debts, they were sold into slavery. Slave women in Ancient Rome faced never-ending household drudgery in their owners’ homes. Ninth-century Zanj people were transported from East Africa to work the salt marshes of Iraq. Eighteenth-century cotton pickers sweated under the sun in the American South, trying to meet their daily quotas.

Ancient history? Yes and no. In our time, slavery wears many faces. James Kofi Annan was just six years old when his parents in Ghana leased him to a fisherman because they could not afford to feed him. Julia Gabriel was trafficked from Arizona to the cucumber fields of South Carolina, where she worked under the threat of violence. Amadou, a young boy in Mali, thought he was getting a job, but instead he was brought to Africa’s Ivory Coast and forced to collect cocoa pods day after day for five years without pay.

_Five Thousand Years of Slavery_ tells the story of these slaves and others, from ancient times to the present day. It brings history to life with the firsthand accounts of slaves, the courageous tales of abolitionists, and the sordid stories of slave owners. And it suggests ways to fight slavery in the world today.

Through the stories, some themes emerge:

- Slavery is universal. It has been practiced by virtually all cultures and persists to this day.
- Some characteristics of slavery are common wherever and whenever people keep other people as property.
- Abolition movements are rare, but the successes of those in the United States, Canada and Britain show that slavery can be stopped.
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Five Thousand Years of Slavery is a narrative-driven history whose themes dovetail perfectly with the social studies and history curricula of many Canadian provinces and American states. Here is a sampling of some of these intersections:

Human Rights
Many states and provinces require students to study violations of human rights, including slavery.

Five Thousand Years of Slavery tells the stories of victims and those who fought the abuses. It presents the movement to abolish slavery in the British West Indies as the first human rights campaign in history. It shows how the techniques developed by the first British abolitionists, from petitions to public meetings, from lobbying to boycotts, continue to be used by modern human rights activists.

Social Reform
Many states and provinces require students to learn about labor laws, such as restrictions on child labor.

Five Thousand Years of Slavery shows that laws protecting workers are new. Historically, laws more commonly equated slaves with cattle. The book also describes activists in many countries today who are fighting employers who try to evade labor laws and use slave workers.

Historical Content

Ancient Civilizations
Many states and provinces require students to study the great ancient civilizations, such as Mesopotamia, Greece and Rome, the Indus Valley, China, Mesoamerica, and Africa.

Five Thousand Years of Slavery examines the ways slaves were captured, bought, sold, and used in all these cultures, and how many of the great cities of the past were built by slave laborers.

Indigenous Peoples of the Americas
Many states and provinces teach the cultures of the indigenous peoples of North America, Mesoamerica, and South America.

Five Thousand Years of Slavery explores the economic and social structures of these cultures, and shows how indigenous peoples both used slaves themselves and were enslaved by Europeans, especially from Spain and Portugal.

U.S. and Canadian History
At various grade levels, U.S. curricula cover the growth of America from the arrival of early pioneers through the Colonial period, the American Revolution, the Civil War, and Reconstruction.

Similarly, all Canadian provinces cover the settlement of New France and British North America through the Loyalist period and the War of 1812, and discuss the impact of the American Revolution and Civil War on Canadian history.

Five Thousand Years of Slavery traces slavery in the United States from the arrival of the first African indentured servants and slaves, and their use in both the North and the South, through to the Civil War. It explains the struggles between the nation’s Founders who favored slavery and those who opposed it. It outlines how American abolitionists tried to end slavery, and how President Lincoln moved toward an increasingly antislavery position in the course of the Civil War.

Five Thousand Years of Slavery also tells how Britain’s more northern colony, Canada, permitted slaves but gradually ended the practice. It shows how slaves who fought for the British in the American Revolution and the War of 1812 found freedom in Canada, and how runaways from the United States used the Underground Railroad to make their way to a free country.
TEACHING ACTIVITIES

The suggested activities for students appear under one of four headings: writing, drama, music, and visual arts. Each activity is followed by its curriculum connection and the pages in *Five Thousand Years of Slavery* to read as background. For some of the activities, a student worksheet or background text is available in a printable PDF, usually following the related activity or group of activities.

WRITING

1. **Historical Letter**

   Until very recently, people wrote many letters to each other, and often kept them as a permanent record of events. Today, historians use these letters to learn about the past.

   Step back to an earlier period in history, long before email, texting, and the telephone were invented. Imagine that you’re one of the following historical characters and in that person’s voice, write the letter as that person would have. To make your letter look old, paint a sheet of white computer paper with strong, cold tea or coffee. When it is dry, write the good copy of your letter on this “antique” paper with a fine-point marker (or a calligraphy pen) in brown or black ink.

   Here are some suggested letters:

   a. From Thomas Clarkson to his wife, Catherine. Describe what Clarkson learned during one of his extended trips on horseback around England as he collected evidence for the upcoming parliamentary hearings on the slave trade. Detail what he discovered about the slave trade, the dangers he experienced, and the positive events as well.

      **Curriculum Connection:** The Abolition Movement in Britain

      **Background Reading:** Chapter 8, pages 79 – 85

      For further background on Clarkson, check out: The Abolition Project website, which describes more about Clarkson’s trips around England.

      Click on “Sources,” then under the year 1787 select “Clarkson’s Diary (Travels in the West Country 1787)” for a transcript of his record of his trip to Bristol.

      On the same site, “Sources,” under 1807, choose “Letter from Thomas Clarkson (expressing joy at the passing for the 1807 Law),” then choose “Manuscript letter p. 1” at the bottom of the page, to see some letters of that period.

   b. From C. Z. Pieters, who was captured by the Balangingi while aboard the Petronella, to another captain, for help in gaining his freedom. The letter would explain how Pieters came to be captured, why he should be freed, and the actions the captain would have to take to buy his freedom.

      **Curriculum Connection:** Human Rights

      **Background Reading:** Chapter 11, pages 133 – 136

   c. From a young person in the 1830s to the editor of *The Liberator*, William Lloyd Garrison’s antislavery newspaper. Give your opinions on slavery, why it is wrong, why it is cruel, and what action people should take. (You can write as a free white person, a free black, a former slave, or a slave.)

      As an example of how people wrote to newspapers in the nineteenth century, here is an excerpt from a letter sent to *The Liberator* on February 12, 1831. The writer says being prejudiced against people of a different race is like looking at a person through the fog of the morning, because it gives a distorted picture of what the person is really like:

      Prejudice may be compared to a misty morning in October. A man goes forth…, and sees at the summit of a neighboring hill, a figure of apparently gigantic stature, for such the [morning mist] would make him appear; he goes forward a...
few steps, and the figure advances towards him; his size lessens as they approach; they draw still nearer and the extraordinary appearance is gradually, but sensibly diminishing; at last they meet and, perhaps, the person he had taken for a monster, proves to be his own brother.

**Curriculum Connection:** The American Abolition Movement

**Background Reading:** Chapter 10, pages 111 – 112

d. From Janet Lim to the English lady who freed her from being a slave, a *mui-tsai*, in Singapore. Tell the story of Janet’s life from the time her parents sold her until she was taken to Singapore. Tell how she felt when she and her friend planned their escape, and thank the woman for giving her freedom and an education.

**Curriculum Connection:** Human Rights and Social Reform

**Background Reading:** Chapter 11, pages 141 – 143

Please use Writing Activity 1, Worksheet A: Planning Sheet for Your Historical Letter.

### 2. Picture book or Comic on Iqbal Masih

Read a children’s biography of Reebok Youth in Action Award winner Iqbal Masih. (One good one is *Iqbal Masih and the Crusaders against Child Slavery*, by Susan Kuklin, published by Henry Holt in 1998.) On a storyboard sheet, list some of the main events in Iqbal’s short life and make some sketches to illustrate these events. Then tell his life story in a picture book or a comic strip. Many templates for comics are available online.

**Curriculum Connection:** Human Rights: Child Labor

**Background Reading:** Chapter 12, pages 153 – 156

Please use Writing Activity 2, Worksheet B: Planning Sheet for Your Picture Book or Comic.

### 3. Compare-and-Contrast Poster and Report

Make a compare-and-contrast poster to show the similarities and differences between slavery in the past and slavery today. Label the sections “Slavery in History” and “Slavery Is Not History.”

Present your comparison to your class by answering two questions: In what ways is slavery today like slavery in the past? In what ways is it different?

**Curriculum Connection:** History and Human Rights

**Background Reading:** The chapters in *Five Thousand Years of Slavery* related to the periods you have selected.

For further background on slavery today, consult the websites of some major antislavery organizations, such as:

- Free the Children: [www.freethechildren.com](http://www.freethechildren.com)
- Anti-Slavery International: [www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)
- Free the Slaves: [www.freetheslaves.net](http://www.freetheslaves.net)
- International Justice Mission: [www.ijm.org](http://www.ijm.org)
- International Labor Rights Forum: [www.laborrights.org](http://www.laborrights.org)
- Not for Sale: [www.notforsalecampaign.org](http://www.notforsalecampaign.org)

Please use Writing Activity 3, Worksheet C: Planning Sheet for Your Compare-and-Contrast Poster and Report.

### DRAMA

These activities assume that students will research the historical characters, using the references from *Five Thousand Years of Slavery* for historical background for their scripts. Some students may not know how to prepare a script. As a model, you may use Worksheet D: Time Traveler Reporter.
1. Time Traveler Reporter interview

Imagine that you’re a news reporter for the weekly television program *Time Traveler Reporter*. Every week you travel back through time to interview someone from the past. Working with a partner, write an interview. Then perform this interview for your class.

*Five Thousand Years of Slavery* tells the stories of many slaves and slave owners who lived in the past. Choose one of the following as an interview subject, or select another one from the book:

a. A slave who survived Spartacus’s uprising
   **Curriculum Connection:** History: Ancient Greece
   **Background Reading:** Chapter 2, pages 11 – 13

b. John Foss, captured in 1793 by Barbary pirates
   **Curriculum Connection:** History: Slavery in the Islamic World
   **Background Reading:** Chapter 4, pages 34 – 35

c. Meli, an African girl enslaved in East Central Africa
   **Curriculum Connection:** History: Slavery in Africa
   **Background Reading:** Chapter 5, pages 50 – 51

d. Bartolomé de Las Casas, the Spanish priest who turned against European enslavement of American natives
   **Curriculum Connection:** History: Enslavement of Native Americans by Europeans
   **Background Reading:** Chapter 6, pages 59 – 60

e. Explorer John R. Jewitt and Nootka Chief Maquina; interview them together to get their different perspectives on Jewitt’s captivity
   **Curriculum Connection:** History: Enslavement of Whites by Native Americans
   **Background Reading:** Chapter 6, page 56

f. Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua, a slave captured in Benin and enslaved in Brazil in the 1800s
   **Curriculum Connection:** History: Slavery in South America and the Caribbean
   **Background Reading:** Chapter 7, pages 61 – 66

g. Cinqué, leader of the *Amistad* captives
   **Curriculum Connection:** History: American Abolitionism
   **Background Reading:** Chapter 10, pages 113 – 115

For more information on the *Amistad* trial, click here: [Amistad](#)

Please use Drama Activities 1 and 2, Worksheet D: Time Traveler Reporter.

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2. Slavery Past and Present: Compare-and-Contrast Interviews

Adapt the interview format in Worksheet D, Time Traveler Reporter, to an interview with two subjects, a slave from the past and a slave from the present. Encourage a conversation between the two. Your questions should draw out how their experiences are similar and how they are different.

a. Two men enslaved as children: Saint Patrick and Francis Bok
   **Curriculum Connection:** History: Slavery in the Middle Ages and Today
   **Saint Patrick Background Reading:** Chapter 3, pages 21 – 22
   **Francis Bok Background Reading:** “To Be a Slave,” pages 1 – 2, and “To Be Free,” pages 157 – 158.

b. Two women enslaved as children: Kali, the Hindu slave girl, and Janet Lim, enslaved in China in the 1920s
   **Curriculum Connection:** History: Slavery in Ancient India and Early Twentieth-Century China
   **Kali Background Reading:** Chapter 11, page 130
   **Janet Lim Background Reading:** Chapter 11, pages 140 – 143

Click for Drama Activities 1 and 2, Worksheet D: Time Traveler Reporter.
3. Slavery Trials
Imagine that you are the judge or a lawyer at one of these trials. Make a speech about the case.

a. You are the defense lawyer for the slave Kapitani, accused of killing his brutal master Achilles Underwood. Give the speech he addresses to the judge and jury, explaining why Kapitani should not be convicted of killing Underwood.

Curriculum Connection: History: Blackbirding in the Pacific
Background Reading: Chapter 11, pages 138 – 139

b. Imagine that the police in Lahore, Pakistan, have found the man who shot and killed child slavery campaigner Iqbal Masih, and that the jury has convicted the man of murder. Write and deliver the closing speech the trial judge gives in sentencing him to life in prison.

Curriculum Connection: Human Rights: Child Labor
Background Reading: Chapter 12, pages 153 – 155

4. Scenes to Dramatize with a Group
Many incidents in the book lend themselves to dramatization. For an example of one, see Drama Activity 4, Worksheet E, Frederick Douglass Learns to Read.

a. You are Englishwomen living in Manchester, England, in 1788. You've been boycotting West Indian sugar and writing letters to your members of Parliament against the slave trade. Imagine that you're at a tea party, discussing slavery and your antislavery activities with your friends (it can be an all-women party, or a mixed group).

Curriculum Connection: History: British Abolition
Background Reading: Chapter 8, pages 85 and 87

b. British women did something new in the campaigns against the slave trade in the late eighteenth century, and against slavery itself in the 1820s – 1830s: they lectured in public. Stage an antislavery meeting. As one of the women presents her arguments against slavery, show how various members of the audience react to her ideas, and to a woman who dares to speak in public.

Curriculum Connection: History: British Abolition
Background Reading: Chapter 8, pages 85 and 87 and 90 – 91

c. Henry Brown escaped from slavery in 1849. He soon published the story of his life and his extraordinary escape, the Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown, Written by Himself. Working with a group, act out the story of Henry Brown's escape in a shipping crate. Include the sale of his wife and child, his idea for escape, his trip from Richmond by wagon, his journey by train steamer, and his arrival and emergence from the box in Philadelphia.

An excerpt from Henry Brown’s narrative is on Worksheet F. (For the complete narrative online, go to Documenting the American South.)

Curriculum Connection: History: Runaway Slaves
Background Reading: Chapter 10, pages 117 – 120

Please use Drama Activity 4, Worksheet F, Excerpts from Henry Box Brown’s Narrative

MUSIC

Work with a group of students who like to sing. Ask your music teacher or choir director to teach you one or two songs sung by African-American slaves (sometimes called “Negro spirituals”). Many of these songs reflect the slaves' yearning for freedom. Because the slaves were fearful of their masters' reactions, the words did not speak openly about running away. Study their lyrics and tell the class what you believe the words are about.
Here are two songs you can learn:

**Go Down, Moses**
When Israel was in Egypt land,
Let my people go,
Oppressed so hard she could not stand,
Let my people go.

*Chorus:*
Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt land.
Tell old Pharaoh,
To let my people go.

Thus spoke the Lord, bold Moses said,
Let my people go,
If not, I’ll smite your firstborn dead,
Let my people go.

*Chorus*

**Steal Away**

*Chorus:*
Steal away, steal away,
Steal away to Jesus.
Steal away, steal away home,
I ain’t got long to stay here.

My Lord He calls me,
He calls me by the thunder;
The trumpet sounds within-a my soul,
I ain’t got long to stay here.

*Chorus*

Green trees are bending,
Poor sinner stands atrembling;
The trumpet sounds within-a my soul,
I ain’t got long to stay here.

*Chorus*

**Curriculum Connection:** History: American Slave Life.

**Background Reading:** Chapter 9, page 109
(Also see Chapter 1, page 8, for the biblical story of the Exodus.)

You can listen to many of these songs on the "Negro Spiritual Workshop" website.

**Some broadsides were mostly text, but this example, "Illustrations of the American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1840," used pictures showing the ill-treatment of slaves to make their point.**

Create a modern antislavery poster with scenes from the lives of present-day slaves, and captions explaining where each is enslaved and the type of work he or she is performing. If you can, tell how this individual became enslaved.

You can learn about modern slavery by visiting the websites of modern antislavery organizations like:

Free the Children: [www.freethochondren.com](http://www.freethochondren.com)
Anti-Slavery International: [www.antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org)
Free the Slaves: [www.freetheslaves.net](http://www.freetheslaves.net)
International Justice Mission: [www.ijm.org](http://www.ijm.org)
Not for Sale: [www.notforsalecampaign.org](http://www.notforsalecampaign.org)

Please use Visual Arts Activity, Worksheet G: Sketch Sheet for Modern Antislavery Poster.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Marjorie Gann moved to Canada from the United States in 1968. For over twenty years she lived in New Brunswick and taught grades four through six next door in Nova Scotia. She reviewed children’s books for many publications and wrote Discover Canada: New Brunswick which explored the history and geography of her home province. While teaching Maritime history, she realized that students needed to improve their research skills, so she wrote Report Writing I and Report Writing II to show middle grade students how to write projects using their own words.

Janet Willen has been a writer and editor for more than thirty years. She has written many magazine articles, and edited books for elementary school children as well as academic texts and a remedial writing curriculum for postsecondary students. With a master’s degree in political science, she has also edited history and political books and articles. For the past fifteen years, she has tutored middle grade students on their history, English, and math homework. She lives in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Marjorie and Janet, who are sisters, grew up in an America where “Whites Only” signs could still be seen. They remember how a powerful civil rights movement fought off the legacy of slavery to gain equality under the law for all Americans. When they learned about slave raids in modern Sudan and about children sold into slavery in modern Ghana, they decided that the story of world slavery had to be told. Five Thousand Years of Slavery is the result.

www.fivethousandyearsofslavery.com