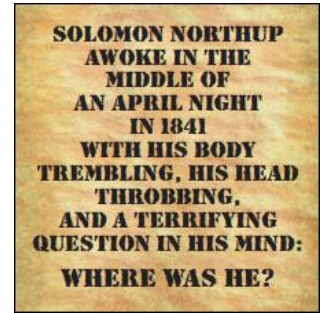


DISCUSSION GUIDE

Stolen into Slavery: The True Story of Solomon Northup, Free Black Man

by Judith and Dennis Fradin

Instructions: Address one prompt within the *Events*, *Names*, and *Escapes* sections. Address both the *Law* and *Choice* prompts. You may type or write your responses. Be prepared to discuss your thoughts during your discussion group meeting.



Events		
<p>The chapter titles offer an interesting way to focus on specific subjects, events, and ideas in the book.</p> <p>Select one chapter in the book. Describe the key players, what are the circumstances, and how does the title reflect the importance of that section in the book.</p>	<p>Not only do we learn about the life of a slave from Solomon's own experiences, but we also meet other slaves.</p> <p>In Solomon's experience, did the slaves stay to themselves or did they establish communities, even families? Were they able to help each other? What did the different seasons bring to their lives? Were they allowed to celebrate special occasions or holidays?</p>	<p>Solomon encounters a number of slave owners, overseers, and white workers. Most of them simply accept slavery as part of their way of life. Some have generous natures, but many are cruel, evil, and even violent.</p> <p>Select one slave owner who you consider to be the worst. If he were to be put on trial, what kind of evidence and what arguments might persuade a jury that this slave owner is guilty of a crime?</p>

Names		
<p>The quote that opens Chapter 3 is: "I will learn you your name."</p> <p>The New Orleans slave dealer Theophilus Freeman tells Solomon this when Solomon does not respond to his new name, Platt.</p> <p>Why is it so important to the slave dealer, and later the slave owners, that slaves take on new names?</p>	<p>In the case of kidnapped free men, why is it particularly important that they use their slave names and never speak their real, given names?</p> <p>What are typically the consequences of not using their slave names?</p>	<p>After he recovers from smallpox, Solomon is purchased by William Ford, and his name becomes Platt Ford.</p> <p>How does losing his own name affect Solomon?</p>

Escape	
<p>On the sailing vessel, the <i>Orleans</i>, Solomon makes some friends and finds what he hopes are allies. He makes plans to escape.</p> <p>Review the plans in detail and suggest changes, additions, or alternatives to make the plan stronger.</p> <p>Why does Solomon's plot fail? What bit of hope does Solomon cling to at the end of this very eventful time?</p>	<p>We learn about another of Solomon's plans to escape or to be freed in Chapter 6.</p> <p>Lay out the plan – each painstaking step.</p> <p>Was there anything that would have increased the possibilities of success? What hard lessons does Solomon learn from this experience? Do you think he lost his will to be free at this point?</p>

Change
<p>Things change for Solomon when he meets and begins to trust Samuel Bass.</p> <p>Reflect on the theme: "one good man can change the world" by discussing one modern-day person who has helped to "change the world."</p> <p>What qualities does Samuel Bass share with your modern-day hero?</p>

Law
<p>In Chapter 5, we learn about a law in New York, "An Act to Protect the Free Citizens of this State from Being Kidnapped, or Reduced to Slavery."</p> <p>Not only did it protect its citizens from the crime of kidnapping, but it also required the Governor to actively find a person who had been illegally enslaved and bring him back to New York. In part, this act, passed in 1840, states:</p> <p>Whenever the Governor of this State shall receive information satisfactory to him that any free citizen or any inhabitant of this State has been kidnapped or transported away out of this State into any other State or Territories of the United States, for the purpose of being there held in slavery, or that such free citizen or inhabitant is wrongfully seized, imprisoned or held in slavery...on the allegation or pretense that such a person is a slave, or by color of any usage or rule of law prevailing in such State or Territory is deemed or taken to be a slave, or not entitled of right to the personal liberty belonging to a citizen; it shall be the duty of the said Governor to take such measures as he shall deem necessary to procure such person to be restored to his liberty and returned to this State...</p> <p>How did this law eventually help Solomon to win his freedom? What were the obstructions along the way that had to be overcome before the law could help him?</p>