**WS: Some Impressions of Slavery**

**“Old Black Joe” by Stephen Foster**:

1. Who is Old Black Joe?

2. What is the sense of the song? What is the feeling of the song?

3. What does it indicate about slavery? Cite evidence from the lyrics.

Old Black Joe

1. 2.

Gone are the days when my heart was young and gay, Why do I weep when my heart should feel no pain

Gone are my friends from the cotton fields away, Why do I sigh that my friends come not again,

Gone from the earth to a better land I know, Grieving for forms now departed long ago.

I hear their gentle voices calling "Old Black Joe". I hear their gentle voices calling “Old Black Joe”.

Chorus Chorus

I’m coming, I’m coming, for my head is bending low, 3.

I hear those gentle voices calling, "Old Black Joe". Where are the hearts once so happy and so free?

The children so dear that I held upon my knee,

Gone to the shore where my soul has longed to go.

I hear their gentle voices calling "Old Black Joe".

**Painting “Negro Life in the South” by EJ Johnson**:

4. What activities are being shown in the painting?

5. What do you see (general observations)?

**Video clip: The Birth of a Nation** is a classic silent film which was directed by D. W. Griffith, a pioneer in movie production. It was made in 1915. It was a great film for its time because of film making innovations.

6. How are the slaves portrayed in the film clip that was shown? Cite evidence.

7. What might this suggest about slavery?

8. From whose point of view is this film clip given about slavery?

**Writing from John Little**, a former slave: (Source: Zinn, Howard. A People’s History of the United States, 1492 – Present. 1999. p. 172)

”They say slaves are happy, because they laugh, and are merry. I myself and three or four others, have received two hundred lashes in the day, and had our feet in fetters; yet, at night, we would sing and dance, and make others laugh at the rattling of our chains. Happy men we must have been! We did it to keep down trouble, and to keep our hearts from being completely broken; that is as true as gospel! Just look at it,--must not we have been very happy? Yet I have done it myself – I have cut capers in chains.”

9. What is learned about slavery conditions from this passage?

**Sold, a Wife** – **Moses Grandy**, suspecting nothing, was standing on the street when his wife passed by, in chains. (Source: Joy Hakim’s A History of US, p. 136)

“Mr. Rogerson was with them on his horse, armed with pistols. I said to him, “For God’s sake, have you bought my wife?” He said he had; when I asked him what she had done, he said she had done nothing, but her master wanted money. He drew a pistol out and said that if I went near the wagon on which she was, he would shoot me. I asked for leave to shake hands with her, which he refused, but said I might stand at a distance and talk with her. My heart was so full that I could say very little… I have never seen or heard from her from that day to this. I loved her as I loved my life.”

10. What does this passage reflect about slavery?

11. Why does the master sell the wife?

12. What would you have done in Moses Grandy’s place?

**Video clip from “Roots”** – a groundbreaking television miniseries from 1970s

13. Does this video support or contradict Moses Grandy’s writing?

**Listen to the Song: Deep River**

Deep river, my home is over Jordan Oh, chillun  
Deep river, Lord Oh, don’t you want to go, to that gospel feast  
I want to cross over into campground That promised land, that land where all is peace?  
Deep river, my home is over Jordan Walk into heaven, and take a seat  
Deep river, Lord I want to cross over into campground  
 And cast my crown at Jesus feet

Lord, I want to cross over into campground  
Lord, I want to cross over into campground  
Lord, I want to cross over into campground  
Lord, I want to cross over into campground

14. What is the “feeling” of the song? And, why is this feeling conjured up? What is the song’s purpose?

15. Compare “**Deep River**” with “**Joshua Fit de Battle of Jerico**” as to tempo, feeling, and possible purpose?

Joshua fit de battle ob Jerico, Jerico, Jerico; Joshua fit de battle ob Jerico; An’ de walls come tumblin’down.

Both “**Deep River**” and “**Joshua** …” are examples of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_