

## USS *Constellation* Historic Ships Museum's African Squadron Reader<sup>1</sup>

**Reading Supplement - Statement of Purpose.** The USS *Constellation* Museum's African Squadron Reader supports Baltimore City schoolchildren and teachers in the subjects of history, reading, vocabulary, and listening. Through classroom reading, discussion, analysis, and performing the reinforcement exercises, students achieve two outcomes. First, through reading original historic texts written by those who touched and were touched by the trans-Atlantic slave trade, students focus on and become aware of a little known aspect of their cultural and national heritage. Second, by thoughtfully addressing the texts and supporting materials, individually and collectively, students work to acquire and reinforce their essential communication skills. It is the objective of this Reading Program to support our city's youth and their teachers as they strive to achieve these goals.

**Supporting State Curricula.** The USS *Constellation* Museum's African Squadron Reader Program" supports Maryland's State Voluntary Curricula in the subject of history; the reading processes fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension; and the development of listening skills. For specific goals, see Unit IV, Chapter R.

### Method.

1. The Historical Backgrounds, Post Scripts, and Additional Information sections provide a great deal of information about the circumstances surrounding the events described. Teachers should preview the material and explain or read it to the class. Footnotes provide still more detailed, factual information that when explained, will help students put the writings into a meaningful historical context.
2. Readings are taken from accounts, reports, journals, or letters. As students read or are read them, they will be exposed to new vocabulary, mannerisms of expression, and the concepts they revealed. Many students for the first time will be introduced to an extraordinarily significant page of their cultural heritage.
3. Following each reading students share their thoughts in small group or classroom discussions to gain experience expressing their own ideas. Discussions focus on the concepts addressed in each writing and how they were expressed. Once students understand a concept, they restate it in their own words.
4. Reinforcing Materials. Quizzes, exercises, games, and puzzles provide a variety of reinforcing opportunities and help ensure mastery of the new materials. New vocabulary words are underlined in the text, defined in a glossary after each reading, and are the subject of several reinforcing exercises.

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## A. Historical Background<sup>2</sup> (To be read to and/or discussed with the class.)

The slave trade and the United States.

During the mid-1800s, slave trafficking between Africa and the Western Hemisphere was a booming business. Enormous profits guaranteed that the oceanic slave trade permeated the maritime industry from lowly longshoremen and caulkers to ship owners and captains. The profits that could be obtained by buying a human being in Africa for \$30 and selling him in the Caribbean for \$300 were enough to overcome many moral and philosophical hesitations and guarantee the perpetuation of the trans-Atlantic slave trade as long as there was a market for it.

For American ships, though, the trade was illegal. Although the elimination of slavery in the United States was politically impossible until the end of the Civil War, certain steps against the institution had been taken throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. In 1808, Congress banned the importation of slaves into the United States. In 1819, Congress authorized the President to use naval vessels to seize any American ships actually or intended to be used in the act of transporting slaves. In 1820, Congress declared the transportation of slaves by U.S. citizens aboard U.S.-registered ships to be piracy, punishable by death. Since then, varying numbers (albeit very small numbers) of U.S. naval vessels maintained station off the African west coast in order to at least slow down the transportation of slaves out of Africa.

During this time, Britain became the world's leading force at sea combating the trade. With the largest fleet in the world, Britain could and did maintain a significantly stronger presence in African waters than any other nation. Adding to the effectiveness of her fleet, Britain entered into agreement with most other major European powers to authorize mutual search and seizure of shipping. This meant that British ships could stop, board, and if a ship were found to be carrying slaves or fitted out to do so, the ship could be seized. The only maritime powers not willing to sign these treaties were the United States and Brazil.<sup>3</sup> By the early 1840s the Royal Navy was once again stopping and boarding U.S. ships to determine their nationality and whether or not they were slavers.

By 1842, Congress had three reasons to cooperate with the British: first, and probably most importantly, to stop the Royal Navy from boarding U.S. ships; second, to support the growing maritime trade with Africa; and third, to appease the growing abolitionist movement in the United States. The resultant Webster-Ashburton Treaty (also known as the Washington Treaty) stipulated that each country would maintain off the African coast a naval force of at least 80 guns.<sup>4</sup> It reflected America's growing commitment to slow down the slave trade at sea and its refusal to allow foreign navies to stop and board U.S. merchant ships. The happy result was that US warships off Africa

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<sup>2</sup> C. Herbert Gilliland, *Voyage to a Thousand Cares, Master's Mate Lawrence with the African Squadron, 1844-1846*. Naval Institute Press, 2004. pp. 1-15.

<sup>3</sup> The U.S. had fought a war with Britain only 30 years earlier precisely to stop foreign powers, particularly Great Britain, from stopping and boarding U.S. vessels at sea. Brazil was a major slave importation center in the Western Hemisphere, and it was against its interests to oppose slavery

<sup>4</sup> Ship size was stated in terms of its number of guns. One ship-of-the-line could carry 80 guns. Four sloops of 20 guns each could also meet the requirement. The treaty did not stipulate what type ships would be employed – only the total number of guns that would be committed by each nation

meant fewer slave ships would deliver slaves and that US vessels would be stopped only by US naval warships and boarded and possibly seized only by US Navy crews.

Unfortunately, slave ship captains were quick to respond to the new situation. Now that Royal Naval vessels could not board U.S. ships, when a man-of-war appeared, slavers first attempted to determine its nationality. If the warship were British, the slaver hoisted an American flag and made every pretense of being a Yankee trader. The British warship would then have to bear off and observe from afar. On the other hand, if an approaching warship were thought to be American, the slaver hoisted a British flag, thus forcing the American to bear off. It is tragic to imagine how many captive Africans slipped through the blockade and into slavery as a result of this simple ruse.

### The *Pons*.

This was exactly the situation when, on the morning of November 27, 1844, the British warship *Cygnets* sailed away from the African coast and put out to sea. For the preceding 20 uneventful days, her lookouts had observed a suspicious vessel, the *Pons*.<sup>5</sup> *Pons* was at anchor just off the slave-trading town at Kabinda.<sup>6</sup> She appeared American-built, she flew an American flag, and no slaves were observed going aboard. Thus, with no legal reason to board *Pons* or to inspect her hold for evidence, *Cygnets* sailed off.

Immediately, *Pons* showed signs of activity, her American captain turned over his command to a Portuguese officer named Gallano, and the ship began bringing aboard food, water, and what would soon total 903 slaves. By 8:00 PM, she was ready to set sail. To avoid the British ship, that evening and through the night, *Pons* hugged the coast line and remained in shallow waters.

The following morning, they again sighted *Cygnets* at a great distance. To avoid being sighted themselves, Gallano ordered the sails furled, and soon *Pons* began drifting closer to the shore – so close, that the local Africans ashore lined the nearby beach expecting the ship to run aground. While hugging the shore, *Pons*' bare masts and yards blended with the inland background and so, the ship avoided detection. At noon Gallano set the lower sails and *Pons* slowly edged her way out to sea until she'd sailed a distance from shore and the shallows were safely behind, where the higher sails were set and she picked up speed for her long trek across the Atlantic.

Two days later, on December 1, *Pons* sighted yet another vessel. Gallano moved his ship away and, probably thinking the distant ship to be the *Cygnets* again, he hoisted his American flag. Had the ship been British, *Pons* would have been in the clear and immune to search and seizure. But, as it quickly became evident, the distant ship was not British – she was American. Gallano's heart must have sunk as he watched the stranger's flag rise and then spread out high over her decks. The stars-and-stripes were as unmistakable then as they are now. Quickly adjusting to the new circumstances. The slaves he had temporarily released from the hold below to the open air of the spar deck he quickly ordered back to the hold. Neither could he risk those slaves to be seen or the possibility of their making enough noise for the American to hear, so he ordered the hatches shut and sealed. The stranger seemed more than willing to play the same game

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<sup>5</sup> Technically, *Pons* was a barque (bark); that is, she had three masts carrying sails fore-and-aft much like modern sail boats (rather than perpendicular to the hull such as those carried on USS *Constellation*.)

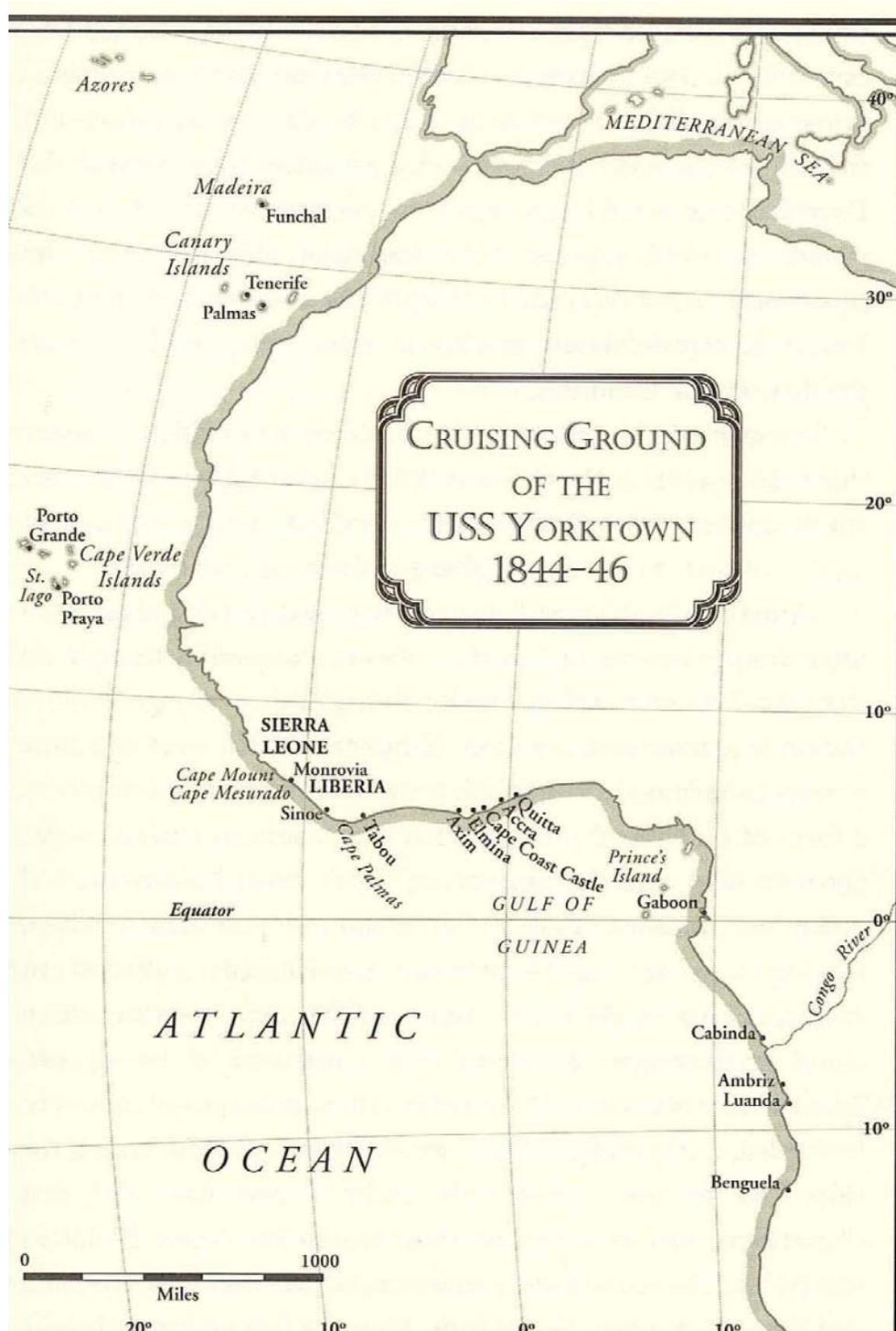
<sup>6</sup> Also Cabinda. Slave trading center 25 miles northwest of the Congo River. See pp. 5 & 54.

and had hauled down the first flag and had replaced it with a British ensign. This may have given Gallano some moments of uncertainty, but when it became clear that the far off-ship was now bearing down on him and that there was nothing he could do to avoid a confrontation, Gallano's spirits must have reached new lows.

Sailing in closer for a much better look was the American warship *Yorktown*. A sloop of 16 guns, USS *Yorktown* had patrolled the West African waters for the past year. Her commander was Captain Charles W. Bell, a 46-year-old New Yorker who loathed slavery and had come to these waters twice before to do exactly what he was doing just now, his best to fight slavery. Bell was experienced. He had served in 1812 aboard the large frigate USS *United States* when she captured the British frigate *Macedonian*. He had commanded other ships off West Africa in 1839 and 1840, so he knew the waters, the climate, and as he was clearly demonstrating now, he knew the ways of slave ship captains and their tactics. As Gallano was finding out as he watched the American move in, Bell was also aggressive. In the past, Bell had expanded his fight against the slavers beyond the sea to inland slave stations where he ordered landing parties of marines and sailors to burn the places down. Today, he was not about to be deterred by any legal delicacies that might be implied by the newly-displayed British ensign. The original U.S. flag was all the authorization Bell needed, and he was not about to back down now. *Yorktown* bore down on *Pons* and her soon-to-be-unemployed Captain Gallano.

When near enough, Bell ordered a boat lowered and a boarding party soon crossed the distance between the two ships and stepped aboard the slaver. From *Yorktown*'s quarterdeck, Bell could see someone aboard *Pons* hurrying to toss materials overboard that appeared to be wrapped in white cloth. Bell suspected these were the genuine ship's documentation papers that would have proven in a court of law the ship to be American and the purpose of her voyage the transportation of slaves. He shouted to the boarding party aboard *Pons* in hopes they could arrest the destruction of the evidence, but those sailors were already fully engaged inspecting the ship and opening locked doors and battened hatches. Below decks the captives were crammed tightly together behind sealed hatches, but they must have known something was happening. They felt the ship stop and they heard the strange voices above them. Sensing that freedom was about to break in through the sealed hatches, the slaves erupted in a cacophony of rejoicing and exultation that is known only by those who have been delivered safely from spiritual oblivion. Bell's warning shouted from *Yorktown*'s decks was not heard above the jubilant chorus, and the evidence went over the side and was gone.

Although Gallano denied having any ship's papers, the facts remained that although there was not a single American crew member on the vessel, *Pons* was American-built, she had shown an American flag, and emblazoned upon her stern was the brightly painted name, "Pons of Philadelphia." To Bell, she was as American as apple pie. Immediately, he ordered a prize crew aboard *Pons* who would sail her to Monrovia, Liberia, and there move ashore the liberated Africans. The ship would then be sailed back to the United States for final disposition.



<sup>7</sup>  
USS Yorktown's area of operations, 1844 - 46

## B. Captain Charles W. Bell's Report

<sup>7</sup> C. Herbert Gilliland, *Voyage to a Thousand Cares, Master's Mate Lawrence with the African Squadron, 1844-46*. Naval Institute Press. 2004. p. 6.

## To the Secretary of the Navy, George Bancroft<sup>8</sup>

11 December 1845. Sir, I am sorry for the lateness of this report. I was anxious to dispatch the ship for Liberia.<sup>9</sup> There, I hoped to land the slaves and to release them from their confinement as quickly as possible.

The *Pons*, . . . was at anchor at Kabinda for about twenty days before she took on board the slaves. During that time she was watched by the British brig *Cygnnet*. As long as *Pons* stayed at anchor, the British ship could do nothing, so after twenty days, *Cygnnet* set sail and sailed away. As soon as the British left, the *Pons* embarked nine hundred and three slaves.<sup>10</sup>

Instead of sailing directly to sea, she kept in with the coast during the night. At daylight *Pons* was off Kacongo, about twenty-five miles to the north of Kabinda,<sup>11</sup> Captain Charles Bell, USN when they again spotted the *Cygnnet*<sup>12</sup>. *Pons* quickly furled sails and drifted so near the shore, that the villagers lined the beach in hope of a shipwreck. They remained there



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<sup>8</sup> Charles W. Bell was the captain of USS *Yorktown* during that ship's 1844-45 cruise with the African Squadron. Ten years later, Bell was given command of the new and much larger warship, USS *Constellation*. For her maiden cruise to the Mediterranean (1855-57). *Yorktown*, like *Constellation*, was a sloop-of-war; that is, her guns were located on a single deck and she had three masts. *Yorktown*, however, was about one-third smaller and she carried a crew of only 150 men. Bell penned this report twelve days after capturing *Pons* and submitted it directly to the Secretary of the Navy. At this time, the U.S. Navy had no admirals.

<sup>9</sup> Liberia: In the 1820s, the U.S. government supported colonization of Monrovia with the intent of encouraging freed blacks in the United States to relocate to Africa. The plan enjoyed a wide range of support. Christian organizations sought to expand Christianity and civilization. Philanthropists presumed that freed blacks could attain their fullest potential only in Africa from whence they or their ancestors had originated. Abolitionists predicted that an African coast populated with freed men would be less induced by or inclined to the slave trade. Finally, even Southern slaveholders enthusiastically supported the plan. They viewed the growing populations of freedmen as a volatile element among the black community and a threat to social stability; thus, to slave holders, to the extent that the Monrovia plan would remove freed blacks from the United States, it would stabilize the institution of slavery. Be that as it may, to the United States Navy and to Captain Bell, Liberia was a nearby coast where the slaves captured at sea were landed and reabsorbed into an African community.

<sup>10</sup> *Pons*: A slaver bark. A bark is a three-masted vessel in which the sails are arrayed fore-and-aft much like they are in a modern sail boat. Compared to *Constellation*, *Pons* was small (two-thirds as long, half as wide, and one-seventh the weight). A well-built ship, she was designed to carry a limited amount of high-value cargo quickly. When below decks aboard *Constellation*, particularly on the berth deck where the sailors slept and ate, one wonders how 300 sailors managed to do it in what seems to be so little space. Imagine then the misery of 900 slaves, (that's three times the number of people aboard *Constellation*) aboard a ship only about one-third the size.

<sup>11</sup> In the 1840s, as now, it was sometimes easier to describe a location at by its geographic or spatial relationship to a known point on land. Here, instead of expressing *Pons*' position as latitude and longitude, Captain Bell describes the location's proximity to known villages along the coast. *Pons* was sighted off Kacongo, a very small village, but which was 25 miles north of a larger and better-known village, Kabinda. Neither of these places are well known to us, today, so writing about it now, one might describe the position as being off Angola's northern most coastal point, 50 miles north of the mouth of the Congo River.

until noon. Upon finding they had not been discovered, they set their lower sails in order to clear the shore. As the *Cygnets* drew off from the land, *Pons* set the remainder of her sails.<sup>13</sup>

Two days later we captured her. Her crew consisted of Spaniards, Portuguese, Brazilians and some from other countries. She continued under the American flag and probably carried American papers, but did not have one American on board.<sup>14</sup>

As I could not sail on the evening of her capture, she kept company with us that night. The next morning I regretted to learn that eighteen had died and one jumped overboard. So many died in so short a time because all the slaves had been put below decks and hatches had been closed when *Pons* encountered us. The *Pons*' captain had ordered all this in order to escape detection.<sup>15</sup>

The vessel has no slave deck, so upwards of eight hundred and fifty men were piled almost in bulk on the water casks below. About forty or fifty females were confined in one half of the round house cabin on deck.<sup>16</sup> The other half of the cabin remained for the use of the officers. The ship appeared to be less than three hundred and fifty tons.<sup>17</sup> It seemed impossible that one half could have lived to cross the Atlantic. About two hundred filled up the spar deck when they were permitted to come up from below. Yet the captain told me that it was his intention to have taken four hundred more on board, if he had the time.

The smell from below was so great that it was impossible to stand, more than a few moments, near the hatchways. Our men who went below from curiosity were forced up sick in a few minutes. Then all the hatches were off. What must have been the sufferings of those poor wretches when the hatches were closed? I am informed that very often in these cases, the stronger will strangle the weaker. This was probably the reason why so many died or rather were found dead the morning after the capture. None but an

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<sup>12</sup> *Cygnets*: (Sig'-net) the name of a British naval vessel (man-of-war) that shared *Yorktown*'s slave-interdiction mission.

<sup>13</sup> Using only her lower sails, *Pons* was able to proceed cautiously close to the coast. Turning seaward, she left the dangers associated with shallower waters and could risk greater speeds, so she set the higher sails.

<sup>14</sup> Merchant ships were required by maritime law to carry papers of registration that identified the ship's owner, place of registration (city and state), cargo, and destination. Each ship would fly the flag of its country of registry. Here, Captain Bell is implying a little skepticism that *Pons* was an American ship after all. Although she flew an American flag, not a single American was in the crew.

<sup>15</sup> Hatches are opened completely only to allow the passage of cargo into or out of the cargo holds inside the ship. At other times, hatches are covered with heavy, latticed squares that do not cut off the circulation, but that are sufficiently heavy enough for people to walk and very heavy objects to be placed on them. When the circulation of air is not the primary priority, hatches are covered completely by tarps and/or boards and secured. *Constellation* has several large hatches, and they are usually kept covered with latticed hatch covers that allow a great deal of air circulation into the lower decks. When it rains or the temperature falls, the hatches are covered as described above. In order to prevent *Pons*' slaves from being seen or heard, her hatches were closed.

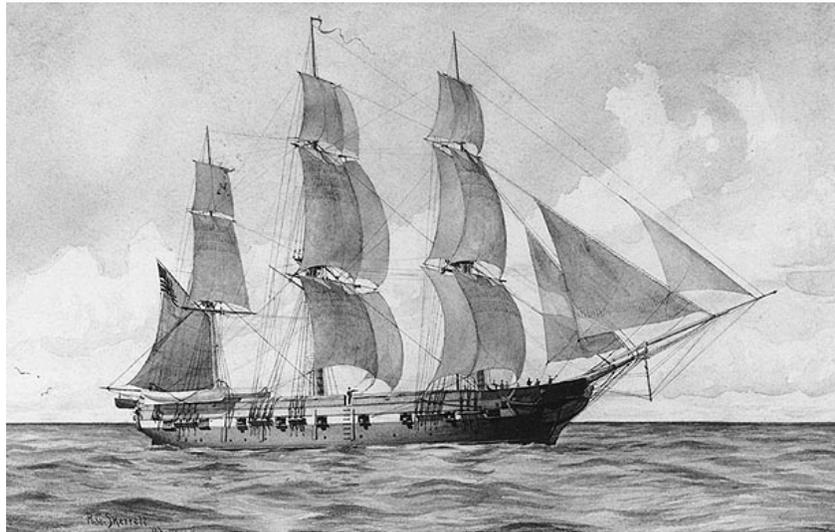
<sup>16</sup> Slavers usually had two decks. The spar deck was the upper-most deck. Below that was the slave deck upon which slaves were kept for sometimes days at a time in their voyage across the Atlantic. Below the slave deck were kept ballast (iron bars totaling many tons laid along the ship's bottom for stability), water in pipes or barrels, and farina (grain, when cooked with oil, served as the staple slave food). Although conditions on a slave deck were obscenely cramped and stifling, slaves were placed on framed, planked shelves. *Pons* had no slave deck. Instead, bags of farina were laid on the ballast and between the water barrels, and thus, slaves were stowed on top of their food.

<sup>17</sup> In fact, Bell overestimated *Pons*' size, as her displacement was, in fact, but about 200 tons.

eye witness can form a conception of the horrors these poor creatures must endure in their transit across the ocean.

I regret to say that most of this misery is produced by our own countrymen. They furnish the means of conveyance in spite of existing enactments. There are strong circumstances against Berry the late master of the *Pons*, sufficient to induce me to detain him if I should meet with him. Yet I fear neither he nor his employers can be reached by our present laws. He will no doubt make it appear that the *Pons* was beyond his control when the slaves were brought on board.<sup>18</sup> Yet from the testimony of the men who came over from Rio as passengers, there is no doubt the whole affair was arranged at Rio before the ship sailed. Later, they discharged a portion of their cargo. Then, they received on board a number of hogsheads filled with water. These were stowed on the ground tier. A tier of casks containing spirits was placed over them. They were then informed that the vessel was going to Kabinda for a load of slaves.

On their arrival at the latter places the spirits were kept on board until a few days before Berry gave up the command. The water casks were covered in order to elude the suspicions of any warship. For twenty days did Berry wait at Kabinda. There, he was protected by the flag of his country while his ship was closely watched by a foreign man-of-war. The instant that ship was compelled to withdraw for a few hours, Berry sprang at the opportunity of enriching himself and the owners. He disgraced the flag which had protected him. . . . Captain Charles H. Bell, USN



No photographs exist of USS *Yorktown*, but this is one of her sister ships, USS *Dale*.  
Sepia wash drawing by R.G. Skerrett, 1903. Courtesy of the Navy Art Collection, Washington, DC.  
U.S. Naval Historical Center Photograph Photo #: NH57817

### C. Post Scripts and Additional information (To be read to and/or discussed with the class.)

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<sup>18</sup> James Berry was *Pons*' master and commander until the ship began loading slaves. Berry had helped plan the voyage and had captained the boat across the Atlantic from the U.S. to Africa, but as soon as slaves arrived on board, he turned over command to a Portuguese master named Gallano. Consequently, as Berry was not actually *Pons*' captain at the time of her capture, he could not be charged.

Captain Bell. After returning from African waters to the United States, Captain Bell continued to serve his country. In 1855, he commanded the much larger warship, USS *Constellation*, during her maiden cruise to the Mediterranean from 1855 to 1858. During the American Civil War, he rose to the rank of rear admiral and commanded the Pacific Squadron.

Justice evaded. Captain Berry was not charged as he was not in command when *Pons* was seized. Captain Gallano came ashore in Monrovia, but quickly disappeared. The four Portuguese crew members were not tried as they were not subject to U.S. statutes at sea. *Pons'* owners never came forward and could not be tried. Throughout the entire history of the African Squadron, these and results like these were all too typical.

The liberated. It took another week for *Pons* to reach Monrovia. By that time only 764 of the original 903 Africans remained alive, and the survivors could not be expected to take care of themselves once they reached the shore. Boats and canoes helped transport the survivors, but the offload was not completed before ten more had died and, attracted by the bodies, sharks had infested the waters.

The *Pons*. *Pons* sailed to Philadelphia where she drew large crowds. She became a focal point for abolitionist movement and compelling argument against the maritime slave trade. That 900 slaves had been penned into the hold and that another 400 hundred were to have joined them outraged Northern tempers. That each slave had but about 17 square inches of space and every cubic inch of air in the hold was breathed more than twice each hour sickened Northern sensitivities. By the end of April, 1846, her sails removed, her hold purified and whitewashed, and her pumps repaired, *Pons* and everything that had been aboard was sold at public auction for \$5,657.50. After payment of expenses, the remaining money was divided between the Naval Retirement Fund and the entire crew. In 1847, her new owners changed her name to *Cordelia*, and sent her to Ireland where yet another famine was underway. There, the Irish whose desperation to flee that country overcame their reluctance to cram themselves into a small ship, boarded the "coffin ship" and sailed for America. Upon arrival in Philadelphia, the ship was seized for being overcrowded. (U.S. law forbade ships from carrying more than two passengers for every five tons of displacement. As the ship was only about 200 tons, and as she was found to be carrying 110 Irish, the ship was determined to be overcrowded by 20 persons.) The irony is staggering. Only a year earlier, the ship had carried more than 900 slaves.

The African Squadron. Including the slaves liberated aboard *Pons*, the African Squadron, between 1843 and 1862 captured 34 ships and released 3,676 slaves. Nevertheless, these numbers are quite puny when compared to the half million slaves who were transported across the Atlantic to North America or the 9.2 million taken to South and Central America. It took the American Civil War to push back the transatlantic slave trade, and it took post-war international political and military cooperation to secure its ultimate ruin.

In 1858, the new sloop, *Constellation*, took her place as the flagship of the African Squadron. During her three-year tour, she captured three slave ships and

released 705 slaves. Upon capturing the slave brig *Triton*, *Constellation*'s crew learned that Lincoln had imposed a blockade on the South and that the country was, in fact, in a state of civil war. Soon, she returned to the United States for refitting and new orders.

*Constellation*, the last all-sail ship brought into the United States Navy, and the only ship still afloat that took part in the Civil War, is berthed in Baltimore's Inner Harbor near the intersections of Pratt and Light streets. With more than 50 percent of her mass still original, she offers an unparalleled experience to students of all ages to see and learn first-hand about mid-19<sup>th</sup> century ships-of-war and those who served at sea. Daily presentations and tours provide visitors a unique opportunity to learn through hands-on activities and to feel what life in Mr. Lincoln's Navy was all about. The museum's education department offers a variety of day programs geared to support Maryland Voluntary State Curricula standards and to make learning fun.



Street in Monrovia, Liberia.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Anna M. Scott, *Day Dawn in Africa*, New York: Protestant Episcopal Society for the Promotion of Evangelical Knowledge, 1858.

## D. New Vocabulary

anxious: 1. eager; 2. extreme uneasiness

brig: 1. *n* two-masted, ship-rigged vessel (ship-rigged means the sails are set 90 degrees to the vessels fore-aft angle); 2. *n* jail on board a ship

British: of Great Britain

bulk: Cargo that is placed into a ship one piece at a time is considered bulk cargo.

Individual bricks, boxes, barrels, or slaves are classified as bulk cargo. Bulk cargo must be moved about on a ship one piece at a time.

cabin: compartment; living quarters

casks: barrels for liquids

circumstances: conditions or facts associated with a thing

compelled: forced

confinement: being confined; having limitations imposed on one's ability to move about

curiosity: a desire to know

detain: to hold or restrain; to keep back

detection: discovery; being found

discharge: 1. *v* to relieve of a burden; to get rid of; 2. *v* to fire off as to fire a cannon

dispatch: 1. *v* to send away; b. to put to death; 2. *n* an important official message sent by a diplomatic, military, or naval officer

elude: to avoid or escape from

embarked: loaded aboard (disembarked: off-loaded or taken off)

encountered: met; as a meeting between opponents

eye witness: someone who has seen something occur

furled: rolled up and secured to the spars

hatch: horizontal opening in a ship's deck

hogshead: a large cask or barrel containing from 63 to 140 gallons

induce: to cause

Liberia: West African nation located on the Atlantic coast. In the 1840s, US ships returned the Africans they had rescued to Liberia.

man-of-war: A warship of a nation's navy

master: the captain and chief navigator of a merchant ship

overboard: off the ship and into the water

permitted: allowed

Rio: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

spar: and of the long, wooden yards, booms, and gaffs that hold, carry, or otherwise help to control sails

spar deck: a ship's top-most, full-length deck. The spar deck gets its name because it is the deck upon which sailors work with the spars.

spirits: 1. *n* alcoholic solutions such as wine, whiskey, and rum; 2. *n* ghosts; 3. *n* lively or brisk qualities in a person or among people

sufficient: enough; ample

testimony: a statement made by a witness of an event about that event

tier: a layer

ton: 2,000 pounds. Thus, 350 tons = 2000 pounds x 350 = 700,000 pounds

transit: to pass over or across

## E. In Your Own Words

1. Writers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century certainly expressed themselves differently than we do today. Captain Bell's report has many statements that we would probably have written differently had we written the report. Is it possible to say or write the same thing in different ways? Here are some quotes from Captain Bell's report that reflect the different way people expressed themselves in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Discuss what these quotations mean in the context of his report. Then, share your ideas of how we would convey the same thing but by using words and expressions we use today.

- a. "I was anxious to dispatch the ship for Liberia," (Teacher: p. 7; Student: p.
- b. "As I could not sail on the evening of her capture, she kept company with us that night." (Teacher: p.8; Student: p.
- c. ". . . so upwards of eight hundred and fifty men . . ." (Teacher: p. 8; Student: p.
- d. "None but an eye witness can form a conception . . ." (Teacher: p. 9; Student: p.
- e. "They furnish the means of conveyance in spite of existing enactments . . ." (Teacher: p. 9; Student: p.
- f. "neither he nor his employers can be reached by our present laws." (Teacher: p. 9; Student: p.
- g. "There, he was protected by the flag of his country . . ." (Teacher: p. 9; Student: p.
- h. "He disgraced the flag which had protected him." (Teacher: p. 9; Student: p.

2. Imagine yourself the captain of USS *Yorktown* having just captured the slave ship *Pons*. Think about everything that happened: the pursuit, the capture, and what you found when you boarded *Pons*. Now, imagine that you will be writing three letters to three different people in which you will tell them about the event. You will send the first, an accurate report, to the Secretary of the Navy. The second letter you will send to your brother or sister. The third letter you will send to the editor of a large news paper. Each letter will address: (1) why you pursued and boarded the *Pons*; (2) how your ship captured the *Pons*; and (3) the condition in which you discovered the slaves on board the *Pons*. Think about it, then discuss the following questions.

- a. Will your three letters differ? Why or why not? Can you think of other persons to whom you might write about this event? How would letters to them differ from these three?
- b. Write a letter to someone about this event being sure to mention the pursuit, the capture, and what you found on board *Pons*.

## F Vocabulary Stowage – Reinforcement Activities

Section 1. Match each vocabulary word with its correct definition.

Key

- |    |     |                  |   |
|----|-----|------------------|---|
| o. | ___ | 1. circumstances | a. to cause   |
| g. | ___ | 2. hogshead      | b. loaded aboard                                      |
| j. | ___ | 3. overboard     | c. forced   |
| p. | ___ | 4. spirits       | d. a warship of a nation's navy                       |
| l. | ___ | 5. tier          | e. to send  |
| m. | ___ | 6. sufficient    | f. to avoid or escape                                 |
| t. | ___ | 7. discharge     | g. a large cask or barrel                             |
| e. | ___ | 8. dispatch      | h. horizontal opening in a ship's deck                |
| r. | ___ | 9. furred        | i. barrels for liquids                                |
| d. | ___ | 10. man-of-war   | j. off the ship and into the water                    |
| n. | ___ | 11. master       | k. met  |
| q. | ___ | 12. permitted    | l. a layer  |
| c. | ___ | 13. compelled    | m. enough; ample                                      |
| s. | ___ | 14. curiosity    | n. the captain and chief navigator of a merchant ship |
| f. | ___ | 15. elude        | o. conditions or facts associated with a thing        |
| a. | ___ | 16. induce       | p. wine, rum, whiskey                                 |
| b. | ___ | 17. embarked     | q. allowed  |
| h. | ___ | 18. hatch        | r. rolled up  |
| k. | ___ | 19. encountered  | s. a desire to know                                   |
| i. | ___ | 20. Cask         | t. to relieve of a burden; to get rid of              |

Section 2. Fill-in. Fill in the blank with letter of the best word to complete each sentence.

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a compartment on board a ship used as living quarters.  
a. hold      b. hatch      **c. cabin**      d. locker      e. lodge
2. \_\_\_\_\_ are the horizontal openings in a ship's deck.  
a. spirits      b. tiers      c. holds      **d. hatches**      e. spars
3. Jim had practiced very hard and was very \_\_\_\_\_ to have the try-outs over with.  
**a. anxious**      b. obnoxious      c. excelled      d. induced      e. encountered
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ is the top-most, full length deck of a ship.  
a. gun deck      b. berth deck      **c. spar deck**      d. lower deck      e. quarter deck
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is the West African nation located on the Atlantic Coast where the US Navy returned the slaves freed from the slave ships:  
a. Angola      **b. Liberia**      c. Brazil      d. Monrovia      e. Haiti
6. To hold or restrain someone is to \_\_\_\_\_ him.  
a. replace      b. confine      c. transport      d. retrain      **e. detain**
7. Cargo that is placed into a ship one piece at a time is considered \_\_\_\_\_.  
**a. bulk**      b. heavy      c. high-rate      d. low-cost      e. hazardous
8. To avoid \_\_\_\_\_ she remained hidden beneath the table and didn't make a sound.  
a. reception      d. injection      c. projection      d. infection      **e. detection**
9. How many pounds equal a ton?  
a. 1000      b. 20,000      **c. 2,000**      d. 10,000      e. 100,000
10. To make a transit is to pass \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. under      b. across      c. by      d. around      e. beneath

Section 3. Words with multiple meanings.

Some of the words contained in Captain Bell's report are examples of words that can have more than one meaning. Use each of the words listed below in two sentences that each reflect the different meanings of listed word.

For example: can

He can do the job.  
The can is on the shelf.

1. anxious

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2. brig

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3. dispatch

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4. spirits

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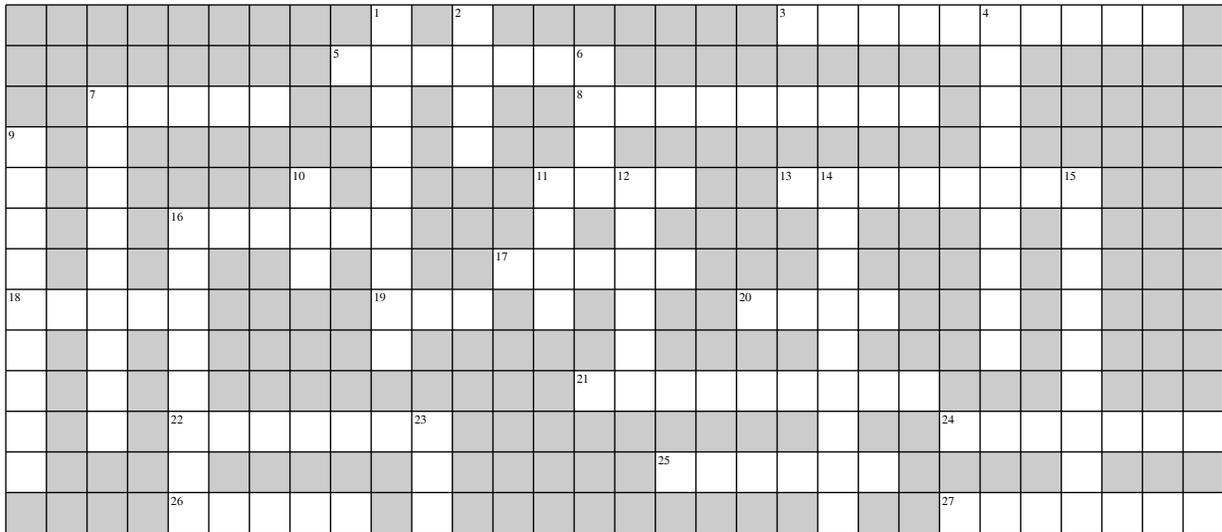
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5. discharge

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### Word Bank

|           |            |           |           |           |           |
|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| anxious   | brig       | bulk      | cabin     | casks     | compelled |
| curiosity | detain     | detection | discharge | dispatch  | elude     |
| embark    | encounter  | eye       | furl      | hatch     | hogshead  |
| induce    | Liberia    | man       | overboard | permitted | spar      |
| spirits   | sufficient | testimony | tier      | ton       | transit   |

### Clues

| <u>Across</u>  | <u>Down</u>   |
|--|---|
| 3. ample; enough   | 1. to meet  |
| 5. eager; extreme uneasiness                                 | 2. layer  |
| 7. compartment or living quarters in a ship                  | 4. forced   |
| 8. allowed   | 6. a ____ deck is a ship's top-most, full-length deck         |
| 11. two-masted vessels with square sails                     | 7. a desire to know   |
| 13. large cask or barrel                                     | 9. discovery  |
| 16. to hold or restrain                                      | 10. a ____ of war is a warship                                |
| 17. to avoid or escape                                       | 11. Cargo that is placed into a ship one piece at a time      |
| 18. barrels for liquids                                      | 12. to cause  |
| 19. an ____ witness is someone who has seen something occur  | 14. off the ship  |
| 20. to roll up   | 15. to relieve of a burden; to get rid of                     |
| 21. a witness's statement                                    | 16. to send away; to put to death; important official message |
| 22. to pass over or across                                   | 23. 2000 pounds   |
| 24. alcoholic solutions such as whiskey and rum              |   |
| 25. to load aboard a ship                                    |   |
| 26. an opening in a deck, usually horizontal and rectangular |   |
| 27. West African nation                                      |   |

## Unit II. The Homecoming – The Return to Africa of the Newly-Emancipated

## G. Historical Background (To be read aloud and/or discussed with the class.)

Captain Bell ordered a twelve-man prize crew from *Yorktown* to board *Pons* and to sail her to Monrovia, Liberia, where the slaves would be off-loaded and returned to their native land. It would have been impossible for Bell to return the slaves to their home communities as they were spread out over thousands of square miles, and it would have made no sense at all to return them to the coastal towns from which they had been loaded aboard *Pons* where they would quickly be recaptured and put aboard the next slaver that approached the coast.

Two officers and ten sailors from *Yorktown* came aboard *Pons* to find 900 slaves crammed into two compartments. On the top-most deck, they found 50 women confined in half of a cabin that was designed to be only large enough to accommodate the few officers on board. Bad as this was, they found much worse below decks when they removed the hatch covers and opened the hatches. There, 850 slaves that had been stacked together for three days like so much cord wood in what could only be described as a hell-hole. The sight horrified – the smell nauseated. Quickly, 250 of the captives were brought up to the top deck, but there was simply no room for more. The other 600 remained below. Sailors passed down water buckets, but soon fights broke out as men, now with a new hope of surviving, struggled for a drink or a sip. They had not eaten in three days, either, so the sailors cooked farina and fed them as best they could. But preparing and distributing food for 900 people was an almost insurmountable job for men who had stepped aboard *Pons* thinking they were simply going to take the vessel for a quick return to Africa, then a leisurely trip across the Atlantic. The task of feeding so many people was endless and almost overwhelming, and still, they had to sail the ship.

Master's Mate John C. Lawrence's journal reflects these demands in its scant entries that note only the feeding and dying of the Africans. It may be that by the end of the seventh day he had reached emotional end and could write no more about the suffering or his experience in it. Finally, on the seventh day, his words reveal his frustrations and anxiety, and they build to an abrupt crescendo in an appeal to God for deliverance. Then, silence, and he writes no more.

It took *Pons* two weeks to reach Monrovia during which time 139 captives perished. Forced to endure conditions we now can scarcely imagine, the survivors were still unable to cross that last distance to the shoreline on their own. Boats, canoes, and men who could handle them had to be located, and it took another day before the offload could begin. It was during that most frustrating exercise in patience that delegations from the town boated out to *Pons* and boarded her. Among the visitors were the Reverends W. B. Hoyt and J. B. Benham. Although they most certainly had the best of intentions, the fact was the ship's stench precluded any kind of lengthy stay, and the visitors returned ashore after only a short stay aboard on the top deck where they caught what glimpses they could of the horror below decks.

Revolted and moved by what they saw, Hoyt and Benham went home and described their experience in letters to friends. Their accounts of the flies, stink, filth, and the pitiful, emaciated survivors with their open sores provided a stark, emotional, first-hand account of the deplorable conditions they saw.

## H. Journals & Letters

### 1. Journal entries from Master's Mate Lawrence aboard the captured slaver *Pons* .

30 November 1845.

... Upon boarding *Pons*, I felt such a load of misery fall upon my heart that I almost wished myself a wild beast. I wanted more than anything to escape. I wanted to be away from the pain of sympathy that I felt for the sufferings of the wretched slaves confined on board. Of course, they knew some change in their destiny was about to take place. In their desperate agonies, hope construed the change about to take place in their favor. When our boats approached the bark they hailed us with clapping hands and outstretched arms. But who can represent by words the state of the wretches below in the hold. Their tongues were white and dry for want of water. Their lips were cracked open from the same reason. Their bodies were covered with loathsome scabs. They were all under the influence of a burning fever that almost burnt one's hand to touch them. Writing all this gives but a faint notion of their sufferings. The atmosphere was of a temperature of about 160 to 180 Fahrenheit.<sup>20</sup> How few could we alleviate from their sufferings!

2 December 1845.

Wind light; calms this day. Having got things in order we parted company from the *Yorktown* at 4:15. The wind sprung up and we soon lost sight of her. We fed and watered the slaves. In the morning there were twenty-odd dead bodies. These people died of thirst etc., etc.

5 December 1845.

The wind at 5 P.M. today set in fresh and continued so for 24 hours. Fed and watered slaves; twelve or fourteen dead.<sup>21</sup>

7 December 1845.

Sunday. On board one week this day. . . Up to this date ninety-one slaves have expired – oh for a deliverance from this floating hell; my heart is oppressed with a thousand cares – God deliver us!

\* \* \* \* \*

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<sup>20</sup> Here, Lawrence exaggerates. Temperature on could reach as 110 degrees in equatorial waters, and temperatures below decks could well exceed 125 degrees, but the temperatures described here were impossible. Still, to Lawrence, it may have felt like 180 degrees.

<sup>21</sup> The brevity of Lawrence's entries here are a testament to the never-ending work he is required to perform. Throughout his journal, he is frequently chatty and able to compose a good deal of verbiage. During these seven days, he is exceptionally brief. After the 7<sup>th</sup>, he writes no more.

2. Excerpt from letter written by Reverend W.B. Hoyt:

14 December

Here and there might be seen individuals in the last agonies of expiring nature, unknown, and apparently unnoticed. There was no offer of sympathy to alleviate in the least their misery. Their companions appeared dejected, weighed down with their own sorrows. My heart sickens at the remembrance of that awful scene.

As I came on the crowded deck, I saw directly in front of me one emaciated and worn down by long suffering to a mere skeleton. He was pinning away and apparently near eternity.

I looked over into the steerage. The hot, mephitic air almost overpowered me. At the foot of the ladder lay two of the most miserable beings I ever beheld. They were reduced, as the one above named, so that their bones almost protruded from their flesh. Large sores had been worn upon their sides and limbs, as they had been compelled to lie upon the hard plank composing the deck of the vessel. They lay directly under the hatchway, whither they had crawled, apparently to obtain a little purer air. One I thought dead, until by some slight motion of the limbs I discovered his agonies were not yet ended. The other lay with his face toward me, and such an expression of unmitigated anguish I never before saw. I cannot forget the horrid picture. These were not isolated cases, but as they were those that were first noticed they made, perhaps, a stronger impression on my mind.

Rev. W.B. Hoyt

\* \* \* \* \*

3. Excerpt from letter written by Reverend J.B. Benham.

15 December

The sailors pointed me to a group of three little boys, under the bow of the long boat, on deck. One of them was probably eight years of age, and almost in a dying state, and had been pinning away for the last six days. Two others, perhaps ten and twelve years of age, were sitting by him, one on either side, watching him with a great deal of apparent sympathy, and administering to him as they were able. They had procured a small quantity of oakum, with which they had made his bed, and a small piece of muslin for his pillow. They did not leave him night or day, and the sailors always found one of them awake. Through an interpreter I commended them for their kindness to the little sufferer, and promised to take them to live with me, and that they should bring with them their sick companion. I gave each a slip of paper with my name, directing them to keep them, so that I might know them when I landed. The elder boys are brothers, the younger was from the same tribe.

Reverend J.B. Benham

## I. Postscripts & Additional Information (To be read to and/or discussed with the class.)

The entire population of Monrovia poured out and on to the beaches to watch as the new Liberians came ashore and to offer food and water. Not long after their arrival in Monrovia, each of the *Pons* survivors, now called “Captain Bell’s protégées,” was apprenticed to a sponsor who would teach a trade, English, and other skills. Local Christian missionaries took care of 100 survivors and within days had named each, collected local funds for their support, and had initiated appeals to groups in the United States that would eventually reap a substantial monetary harvest.

The Liberian government passed a special act authorizing the apprenticeship of each new arrival for an established period of time. During their apprenticeships, sponsors were to teach their charges a skill or trade and English. One hundred children were cared for by Christian missionaries who educated and converted them, and within twenty-four hours were sporting names like Silas Comfort, Benjamin Clark, and John Wesley.

To 21<sup>st</sup> century on-lookers, it might appear as though the recaptives had simply exchanged one brand of servitude for another, albeit it one less lethal. The fact is that in the 1840s, apprenticeships were practiced throughout the United States and accepted as a means of upward mobility. The apprentice system had been fully operational in Liberia long before *Pons* discharged her passengers, and although the unprecedented number of new apprentices certainly caused the system to bulge at the seams, the practice itself was nothing new or at all objectionable to 19<sup>th</sup> century thinking or social delicacy.

Re-colonization societies in the United States responded well to appeals for financial and logistical support, and soon, a ship from America pressed across the Atlantic with food and other supplies.

Mixed reports follow the recaptives throughout the years. Some note progresses in education and affluence, others pointed out a significant number of run-aways and a disappointing small number of lasting conversions. Be that as it may, the fact remains that those survivors who returned to Monrovia from their westward voyage to the New World did not long experience the shackles of slavery. Certainly, their experience was horrendous, and no doubt they took those memories to their eventual graves. But, *Pons*’ slaves did not continue westward across the Atlantic, they did not disappear without a trace, and their unborn generations were not delivered unto shackles. Instead, they were returned to communities in Africa. They were not submerged into oblivion, they re-emerged in a place, though their original home, where they could start to live again. Their rest of their lives would, of course, be different than they would have been had they been left alone in the first place, but they would live, and they would start new homes and new generations, and they and their generations would be forever free.

## J. Vocabulary Words

### 1. New Vocabulary from Lawrence's journal

agonies: intense pains of the mind or body; in this case, a death struggle

atmosphere: here, is meant the oppressive heat; stuffiness; humidity

construed: understood

deliverance: to set free

destiny: a predetermined course of events; something to which a person is destined; one's fate

etc.: etcetera; others of the same sort; in this case, persons died due being denied the basic physiological needs of sufficient air, water, or nutrition

expired: died

Fahrenheit: measurement of temperature in which freezing = 32 degrees, the accepted normal human physiologic temperature is 98.6 degrees.

faint: slight; to lose consciousness

hold: nautical term meaning a lower portion of a vessel in which cargo is kept

loathsome: something detestable or worthy of hate

odd: in this case, Lawrence implies an approximate; e.g.: in writing "20-odd dead

on board: on a vessel

oppressed: spiritually or mentally burdened or crushed

notion: an individual's conception or impression

sympathy: feeling sorry for; feeling empathy in a sorrowful way    wretched: deeply afflicted, dejected, or distressed; miserable; woeful, grievous.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 2. New Vocabulary from Reverend W.B. Hoyt's letter.

agonies: intense pains of the mind or body; in this case, a death struggle

alleviate: to make something easier to be endured; to lessen

banish: to expel

compelled: forced

composing: making up; constituting; put together and combined to make

deck: a floor of a ship or boat

dejected: depressed; cast down in spirit – downcast

emaciated: to cause to lose flesh so as to become thin; to make feeble

expiring: dying

impression: a telling image made on one's thoughts or feelings

isolated: set apart from others; here, "not isolated" indicates that the examples of suffering described here by Hoyt were shared by many

limbs: arms and legs

mephitic: foul-smelling; noxious stench

pinning: to yearn intensely; to anguish

plank: board used to make a ship's deck (Boards used to make decks are called "planks." Boards used to make the hull are called "strakes.")

protruded: to project or stick out unnaturally

steerage: the section of a ship for which passengers pay the absolute minimum fare; here Hoyt's analogous use of "steerage" implies a stark contrast to what paying passengers would classify as the cheapest compartments with the slaves' experience

sympathy: feeling sorry for; feeling empathy in a sorrowful way

unmitigated: unrelieved; not made less severe; in this case, Hoyt means unrelieved suffering

\* \* \* \* \*

### 3. New Vocabulary from Reverend J.B. Benham's letter

administering: taking care of; assisting

interpreter: one who can explain the meaning of one language to someone who only understands another; in this case, Benham is referring to someone who translates into English the African words of someone else

muslin: a plain woven cotton fabric

pinning: to yearn intensely; to anguish

procured: acquired; obtained

quantity: amount

oakum: loosely frayed and twisted hemp fiber used to caulk seams and packing joints aboard ship

tribe: a social grouping comprised of many clans, families, and generations and including dependents, adopted outsiders, and slaves.

## K. In Your Own Words

Once again, we see 19<sup>th</sup> century expressions that we would not likely use. Consider these expressions and the thoughts or feelings they convey. Rewrite each in your own words, but try to convey the same thoughts and feelings.

- a. “Upon boarding *Pons*, I felt such a load of misery fall upon my heart that I almost wished myself a wild beast.” (Teacher p. 20; Student: p. 9)
  
- b. “... change in their destiny was about to take place...” (Teacher p. 20; Student: p. 9)
  
- c. “...who can represent by words the state of the wretches below...” (Teacher p. 20; Student: p. 9)
  
- d. “...Writing all this gives but a faint notion of their sufferings...” (Teacher p. 20; Student: p. 9)
  
- e. “...Having got things in order we parted company...” (Teacher p. 20; Student: p. 9)
  
- f. “my heart is oppressed with a thousand cares . . .” (Teacher p. 20; Student: p. 9)
  
- g. “I cannot banish the horrid picture.” (Teacher p. 21; Student: p. 10)
  
- h. “...were weighed down with the sorrows.” (Teacher p. 21; Student: p. 10)

2. Imagine that you are a sailor who had boarded *Pons*. You would have seen the same horrible conditions described by Master’s Mate Lawrence and Reverends Hoyt and Benham. Now, imagine that after spending several hours on the slave ship, you return to your own ship, *Yorktown*, and you have time to write two letters. The first letter you write to your closest family member. The second, you write to your best friend. Will each letter describe the same things? Will the descriptions be the same? If you believe your letters will be different, why do you think they will be? Write the two letters, and be prepared to explain why you wrote the same letter to each person or, if your letters are different, why they are different.

## L. Vocabulary Stowage – Retention/Support

Section 1. Match each vocabulary word with its correct definition.

| Key | Vocabulary Words        | Definitions   |
|-----|-------------------------|---|
| l.  | _____ 1. banish         | a. intense pains of the mind or body                  |
| e.  | _____ 2. expired        | b. understood   |
| h.  | _____ 3. interpreter    | c. a predetermined course of events; one's fate       |
| p.  | _____ 4. sympathy       | d. abbreviation for etcetera; others of the same sort |
| a.  | _____ 5. agonies        | e. died   |
| c.  | _____ 6. destiny        | f. spiritually or mentally burdened or crushed        |
| f.  | _____ 7. oppressed      | g. taking care of; assisting                          |
| k.  | _____ 8. alleviate      | h. someone who can translate a language               |
| b.  | _____ 9. construed      | i. to yearn intensely; to anguish                     |
| t.  | _____ 10. procured      | j. a social grouping comprised of many clans          |
| j.  | _____ 11. tribe         | k. to make something easier to be endured             |
| g.  | _____ 12. administering | l. to expel   |
| i.  | _____ 13. pining        | m. arms and legs                                      |
| q.  | _____ 14. Fahrenheit    | n. slight   |
| m.  | _____ 15. limbs         | o. board used to make a ship's deck                   |
| r.  | _____ 16. protruded     | p. feeling sorry for                                  |
| o.  | _____ 17. plank         | q. measurement of temperature                         |
| d.  | _____ 18. etc.          | r. to project or stick out abnormally                 |
| s.  | _____ 19. wretched      | s. deeply afflicted, dejected, or distressed          |
| n.  | _____ 20. faint         | t. acquired; obtained                                 |

Section 2. Fill-in. Fill in the blank with letter of the best word to complete each sentence.

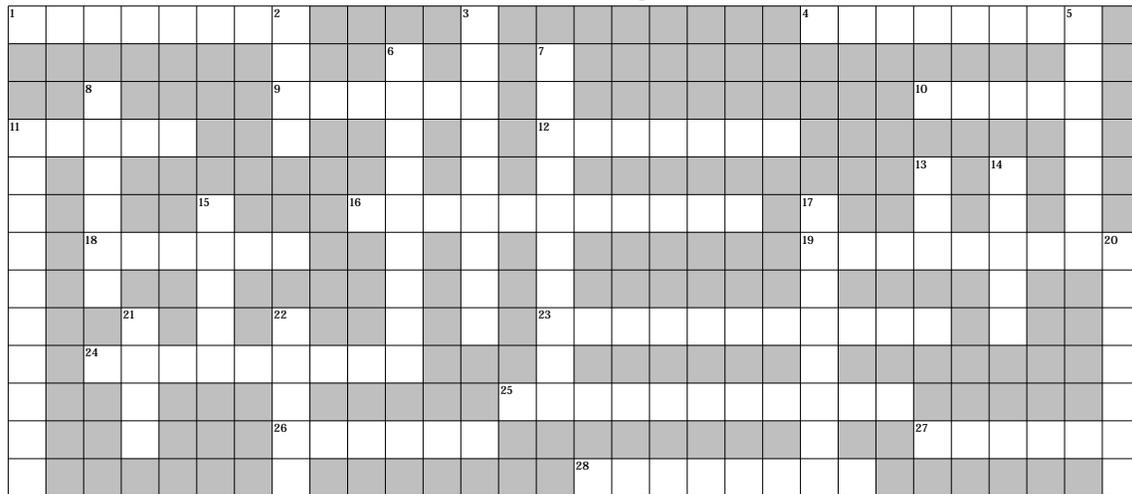
1. His \_\_\_\_\_ of how the music should sound was different than mine.  
a. construe    **b. notion**    c. oakum    d. believe    e. sympathy
2. The sailor was \_\_\_\_\_ the ship when he discovered that he had lost his wallet.  
a. unmitigated    b. compelled    **c. on board**    d. loathsome    e. delivered
3. She felt \_\_\_\_\_ when she learned about the storm damage to her home.  
a. oppressed    b. construed    c. expired    **d. wretched**    e. pining
4. The teacher felt \_\_\_\_\_ for the student who lost his homework.  
**a. sympathy**    b. construed    c. mephitic    d. isolated    e. compelled
5. The story of the slaves aboard *Pons* made a lasting \_\_\_\_\_ on me.  
a. mitigation    **b. impression**    c. destiny    d. isolation    e. protrude
6. The section of a ship for which passengers pay the minimum fare is called \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. the hold    b. the plank    c. the deck    d. oakum    **e. steerage**
7. Because his room was \_\_\_\_\_ from the other rooms he could not hear all the noise.  
**a. isolated**    b. unmitigated    c. sympathetic    d. dejected    e. construed
8. Loosely frayed and twisted hemp fiber used to caulk seams is called \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. steerage    b. below    c. hold    **d. oakum**    e. compost
9. His pencil fell off the table and landed on the \_\_\_\_\_.  
**a. deck**    b. steerage    c. mephitic    d. ceiling    e. oppression
10. His dog ran away, and he looked quite \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. elated    b. sympathetic    **c. dejected**    d. oppressed    e. compelled
11. His snack was \_\_\_\_\_ of ice cream, peanut butter, whipped cream, and nuts  
a. pining    b. expiring    c. holding    **d. composed**    e. mephitic

12. He missed his buss, so he was \_\_\_\_\_ to run to school to avoid being late.  
a. dismissed   b. composed   **c. compelled**   d. unmitigated   e. oppressed
13. The music was \_\_\_\_\_ to him, but the radio was turned up so high he could not escape it.  
a. sympathetic   b. unmitigated   c. construed   d. emaciated   **e. loathsome**
14. The \_\_\_\_\_ is lower portion of a ship in which cargo is kept.  
a. steerage   **b. hold**   c. deck   d. bow   e. oakum
15. His shirt was quite plain and made of \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Muslim   b. muslin   c. sympathy   **d. muslin**   e. oakum
16. His sore tooth was causing him a lot of \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. sympathy   b. loathsome   c. deliverance   d. banishment   **e. agony**
17. Something is \_\_\_\_\_ if it is foul-smelling.  
a. **mephitic**   b. protruding   c. oppressed   d. construed   e. magnetic
18. The \_\_\_\_\_ pain of most slaves below decks on *Pons* continued until they left the ship.  
a. banished   b. alleviated   **c. unmitigated**   d. oppressed   e. atmosphered
19. Many of the slaves came ashore thin and feeble. They were \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. unmitigated   **b. emaciated**   c. absorbed   d. alleviated   e. banished
20. USS *Yorktown* was responsible for the capture of the *Pons* and the \_\_\_\_\_ of the 900 slaves aboard her.  
a. expiration   b. oppression   c. pining   d. sympathy   **e. deliverance**



Section 3.

## A New Homecoming - Student



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### Word Bank

|           |             |            |             |           |             |
|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| alleviate | deck        | etc        | interpreter | oakum     | protrude    |
| banish    | dejected    | Fahrenheit | limbs       | oppressed | tribe       |
| compel    | deliverance | faint      | mephitic    | pinning   | unmitigated |
| compose   | destiny     | hold       | muslin      | plank     | wretched    |
| construed | emaciated   | impression | notion      | procure   |             |

### Key

| <u>Across</u>   | <u>Down</u>   |
|---|---|
| 1. miserable; woeful; grievous  | 2. a nautical term for a ship's floor                           |
| 4. foul-smelling; stench  | 3. to lessen; to make something easier                          |
| 9. to force   | 5. to make up; to put together and combine                      |
| 10. hemp fiber loosely frayed and twisted   | 6. spiritually or mentally burdened or crushed                  |
| 11. slight; to lose consciousness   | 7. a telling image made on one's thoughts or feelings           |
| 12. to acquire or obtain  | 8. to yearn intensely; to anguish                               |
| 16. being set free  | 11. measurement of temperature in which freezing = 32 degrees   |
| 18. an individual's conception or impression  | 13. abbreviation for etcetera                                   |
| 19. to cause to lose flesh; to make feeble  | 14. a board in a ship's deck                                    |
| 23. one who can explain the meaning of one language to someone who only understands another | 15. arms and legs   |
| 24. understood  | 17. depressed; cast down  |
| 25. unrelieved; not made less severe  | 20. predetermined course of events; fate                        |
| 26. expel   | 21. compartment low in a ship for cargo stowage                 |
| 27. a plain woven cotton fabric   | 22. social grouping made up of clans, families, and generations |
| 28. to project or to stick out unnaturally  |   |

### Unit III. *Constellation* Captures the Slave Ship *Cora*

#### M. Historical Background<sup>22</sup> (To be read to and/or discussed with the class.)

Five years after *Pons*' capture, the slave trade, always extraordinarily profitable, remained alive and well. *Yorktown* had returned home, and several other U.S. vessels now patrolled the slave routes in the West African waters. USS *Constellation* had been the flagship of this small squadron since 1859, and William Inman had been her captain. He was also the commodore<sup>23</sup> of the squadron.

#### The African Squadron.

Commodore Inman's command had been quite successful. *Constellation* had captured the slave ship *Delicia* in 1859, and by June, 1860, his squadron had captured 14 slave ships carrying a total of 3,032 slaves. These captures represented about half of the total number of slaves freed at sea between 1839 and 1859. Still, fighting the slave trafficking business was difficult, hard on ships, and harder on crews.

The naval leaders considered the African Squadron a hardship duty assignment and hoped monetary incentives would attract enough sailors to adequately man the ships. When slave ships were captured, they were eventually sailed back to the United States where they and every bit of hardware on them were sold. Half the sales receipts the navy kept to support aged and crippled sailors. The remainder was divided among the officers and crew of the capturing ship. To this, Congress authorized a bounty in the amount of \$25 for each freed captive.

Inman's squadron was small, but surprisingly effective. It included two other all-sail sloops close in size to *Constellation* and smaller, steam-powered vessels. Slave ships were powerless to resist any of the squadron's 95 guns, but the problem had never been one of beating the slave ships once they were found. The problem had always been, and still was, first finding a slave ship in the ocean's vastness and then, managing to stop, board, and seize a suspected slave ship, legally. It was still illegal for U.S. warships to stop British vessels and for British warships to stop U.S. vessels. International agreements and delicacies would be observed, no matter the cost to those in the slaver's holds.

#### The ships: USS *Constellation* & *Cora*

Inman's flagship, USS *Constellation*, was relatively new and the African Squadron was her second deployment. She was built at the naval shipyard in Gosport, Virginia (now Portsmouth, adjacent to Norfolk at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.) in 1854. She was beautiful, and she was unique. The last all-sail ship constructed for the

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<sup>22</sup> Glenn F. Williams. *USS Constellation, A Short History of the Last All-Sail Warship Built by the U.S. Navy*. 2000. and Wilburn Hall. "Capture of the Slave-Ship 'Cora,' The Last Slaver Taken by the United States." *Century, A Popular Quarterly*. Vol. 48, Issue I. pp. 115-129.

<sup>23</sup> The term "flagship" denoted the presence on board of the commander of a group of naval vessels. USS *Constellation*'s most significant contribution to naval and U.S. history resulted from her tour as flagship of the African Squadron, 1858-1861.

U.S. Navy, she was also the largest example of Chesapeake Bay shipbuilding. Designated a sloop-of-war, she carried a broadside battery of 20 guns on a single gun deck and a crew of approximately 340 officers and sailors. She was fast. During her first cruise in the Mediterranean (1855-58) she had regularly recorded speeds of 14 knots (about 16 miles per hour) and, wind permitting, had actually sailed circles around her steam-powered escorts. Unfortunately, her keel extended about 21 feet below the surface. In the waters off the African coast, such a deep draft meant she had to remain a considerable distance from the shore. Slave ships of shallower draft could and did hug the shoreline or venture up river estuaries. Perhaps more of a problem was *Constellation's* dependence upon the winds. In strong winds, the ship would fly through the water, and no slave ship could long escape. Unfortunately, winds are not predictable and sometimes, they disappear altogether. A large ship, *Constellation* required a lot of moving air. Slave ships were much smaller and required much less wind to maintain their headway. Thus, Inman's successes with *Constellation* were much affected by the elements.

*Cora* was a 405-ton barque built in Baltimore in 1851, and registered in New York. Not entering the slave-trafficking business until 1860, she had a very short career as a slaver. Like Pons, *Cora* had three masts that carried sails fore-and-aft much like modern sail boats. At 450 tons, *Cora* was about one-quarter *Constellation's* displacement (weight) and size. Visitors who come aboard *Constellation* today frequently remark about the cramped conditions for the crew. When one considers that more than twice that number of slaves had been packed below decks on a ship that was one-fourth the size, the horror of the slaves' nightmare begins to come into view.

Ensign Wilburn Hall.

Wilburn Hall, a recent graduate of the United States Naval Academy, reported aboard USS *Constellation* in 1859 while the ship was already in African waters. He was immediately assigned as the junior watch officer and flag-lieutenant. As the junior watch officer, Hall was the lowest ranking commissioned officer in the ship's chain of command. As the flag-lieutenant, he served as the Commodore's personal assistant. Thus, he was in a good position to observe events on board *Constellation* as they unfolded. In 1894, Hall wrote a 14-page article for *Century* magazine about *Cora's* capture. Excerpts from the article provide a unique insight into the circumstances and drama surrounding the event, and they provide excellent subject matter for the study and reinforcement of writing, vocabulary, and language development.

N. "Capture of the Slave-ship *Cora*," by Wilburn Hall

It was about 7 PM and the sea was calm as a floor. A beautiful moon lit the waters with a splendor rarely seen. The crew and officers were all on deck enjoying the refreshing change. Songs were heard forward. Messenger boys were skylarking and officers were pacing the lee quarter-deck.<sup>24</sup> Suddenly from aloft the lookout cried, “Sail ho!”

Instantly, laughter ceased, songs ended, men jumped to their feet.

“Where away?” came sharply through the speaking-trumpet from the officer of the deck.”<sup>25</sup>

“About one point for’ard of the weather beam,<sup>26</sup> sir.”

Every eye caught the direction indicated. Sure enough, bright and glistening in the reflected moonlight, the sails of the stranger were seen, hull down. The upper parts of her courses were in view. She looked like a white phantom outlined against the clear-cut horizon. Glasses showed her to be a bark.<sup>27</sup> Soon, the ship was braced sharp into the wind, ready for further developments.<sup>28</sup> **For nothing on the African coast went unexamined**, and every sail meant a chase and examination. The ship now felt the wind, and had the slight heeling which was one of her great peculiarities, but which only meant that she was like a thing of life, instinctively ready for the race.

By this time came the quick, sharp, and clear notes of the First Lieutenant, “All hands on deck!”<sup>29</sup> The first lieutenant had taken the deck.<sup>30</sup> The chase was to begin. The sounds of the boatswain’s whistle, and those of his mates, gave shrill notice throughout the ship. Their deep-toned voices, one after the other, repeating the order, like rolling echoes of hoarse thunder in mountain glens. Their sounds had not died away before three hundred men stood silent and expectant at their posts of duty, showing the discipline of the ship, and the eagerness of the men. There was always excitement in the chase.<sup>31</sup>

Orders to the men aloft and on deck holding the lines came quick and clear.

*Constellation* was simply superb in tacking, and round she came, raising her sharp bow from the sea like a racer ready for the signal.

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<sup>24</sup> Officers managed the ship from the quarterdeck. The lee (down wind) side of the quarterdeck was relegated to the officers while the windward side of the quarterdeck was considered the captain’s province.

<sup>25</sup> Officer of the deck: the officer in control of the ship at the time. Upon his arrival at the quarterdeck, the captain assumes control of the ship. In his absence, the designated officer of the deck is in charge of the ship and crew.

<sup>26</sup> Weather beam: directly away 90 degrees on the up-wind side of the ship.

<sup>27</sup> Bark: three-masted ship carrying sails fore-and-aft as opposed to perpendicularly to the hull

<sup>28</sup> Close up to the wind: here, *Constellation* is sailing in a direction as close to the face of the wind as the ship could sail. Imagine *Constellation* at a point in the center of a clock face and that the wind is blowing on to the ship from the 12 o’clock position. *Constellation* can not sail any closer toward 12 o’clock than about the 2 or 10 o’clock positions, and she can not sail at all between those two positions. Here, Hall is implying that the ship is sailing as close as possible to the direction from which the wind is blowing.

<sup>29</sup> With his arrival, the ship’s first lieutenant assumes control of the ship from the Officer of the Deck. The First Lieutenant is second in command only to the captain.

<sup>30</sup> Take the deck: nautical expression meaning to assume control or command of the ship

<sup>31</sup> Here, Hall describes the rapid and complete change in the ship from his first description. Signaled by the boatswain’s call, a very high-pitched peeling whistle, a series of other calls and shouted orders pierced the quiet and propelled the whole crew to their battle stations. The evolution was characterized noise and hustle as hundreds of men scrambled to their assigned positions. The clamor was immediately followed by an absolute silence throughout the ship. The crew, now ready for whatever was to come, awaited the next order.

Soon her sails filled and she was dashing along. The *Constellation* was a remarkable sailor, and few ships were ever known to equal her. In no time at all, the courses of the stranger began to rise, showing the gain we were making. In an hour, she was nearly hull up. It was as clear as day, by that wonderfully soft light the moon gives. The stranger's sails were as white in that light as a pocket-handkerchief. The breeze had freshened, so that we were running at least nine knots.<sup>32</sup> Men had been sent aloft to wet down the topsails, and every thread was stretched with its duty.<sup>33</sup>

At this time, a gun from our bow was fired – a signal for the stranger to heave to, but on she sped, silent as a dream. We could now plainly see through the glasses that there was not a light about the ship. It was a most significant sign.<sup>34</sup> Another gun was fired. As the white smoke came pouring over our deck, we lost sight of the chase. As it was swept to leeward, we saw her unchanged, silent and glistening. Suspicion now amounted almost to a certainty that we had a slave-ship at hand.

I was ordered to the gun deck and there to direct one of the 32-pounders<sup>35</sup>. I was directed to carry away the upper spars and rigging, but under no circumstances to hit the vessel's hull. "Aim high and make your mark!"<sup>36</sup> I touched my cap and smiled; it was so like the caring warning of a mother to her son.

Soon, one gun was sending round-shot whirling through the rigging. The bark edged away still further until the wind was directly astern of her. She then went flying over the sea like a great white bird with her wings widely extended, with *Constellation* following suit. Every moment we hoped to bring down some of her spars or upper masts. At this time the chase was not a mile distant, but in the moonlight her distance seemed not half that.

Suddenly, our attention was attracted by dark objects on the water ahead of us. The slaver was reducing the weight of the ship by throwing overboard casks, spars, and even spare masts. The sea appeared as if filled with wreckage in a long line. All at once boats were seen.

"Steady your course," commanded the commodore.

Sure enough, they were boats, and as we sped they seemed to be coming swiftly to us. My heart beat with quick emotion as I thought I saw them crowded with human forms. Men on deck shouted that they were crowded with people, but we swept by, passing them rapidly. The slaver hoped we would stop to pick up his boats, and thus gain more time, but his ruse made us even more eager. Now, we knew the end must come soon, but there seemed no way to stop the chase without sinking her, and humanity forbade a shot in her hull.

On we went, until suddenly, I saw her course begin to change. She began coming to windward. Soon her sails were furled and she was hove to.

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<sup>32</sup> Nine knots = a little less than 10.5 miles per hour

<sup>33</sup> Wetting down sails enabled them to "hold" more air.

<sup>34</sup> Ships at sea typically employ lights at night called running lights that reveal the presence and direction of the ship. A ship not using running lights would be suspected of trying to evade detection. To Hall, this alone is indicative of something suspicious.

<sup>35</sup> 32-pounder: large 7,000 – lb. cannon firing a solid, 32-lb. iron projectile a range of about 1 1/4 miles

<sup>36</sup> *Constellation*'s guns could not target the hull as it was filled with slaves. Consequently, Hall's gun crew had to aim higher in hopes of damaging the ship's masts, yards, sails, and rigging enough to compel her captain to stop.

“Away there, first cutter, away!” called the boatswain’s mates. Their shrill whistles ceased. I had barely time to get on deck after the guns had been secured. I saw the first boat, with our gallant First Lieutenant, himself, speeding like an arrow to the vessel. Her oars splashing water like sparkling diamonds as they rose and fell. Every officer and man was leaning over the rails breathlessly waiting and watching.

We could hear the First Lieutenant’s commands in the distance as the cutter approached the distant vessel and round up to her gangway. Then came the rattling of oars as they were tossed, and the grating of the cutter alongside. The First Lieutenant’s active figure could be seen quickly climbing the side. Then, he disappeared as he leaped over the gangway and into the waist. For two or three minutes the stillness was painful. One could hear men breathing in their excited anxiety. Suddenly, there was a hail, in tones which I can recall as if heard today – clear, distinct, and manly, “*Constellation*, ahoy! You have captured a prize with over seven hundred slaves!”

For a second it remained quiet. Then, the crew forward of the mainmast gave three loud, ringing cheers. Only the sanctity of the quarterdeck prevented the officers from joining them. They shared the feelings of the crew.

The prize had not been surrendered by her captain. The ship had been hove-to by her crew who were in terror of our guns.

At about 2 A.M. the Commodore ordered eight others and me to board the slaver as her prize crew. When we got on board her, we found the deck covered with all kinds of things. They were to have been cast overboard to lighten the ship. The crew were a set of cutthroats – bearded, dark-looking, scowling and not an American among them. The slaves were nearly all on the slave deck, shouting and screaming in terror and anxiety. I leaned over the main hatchway holding a lantern. The writhing mass of humanity, with their cries and struggles, can only be compared in one’s mind to the horrors of hell as pictured in former days.

I paid dearly for that sight. The sickening stench from hundreds of naked beings crowded into a space so small, in so warm a climate, without ventilation, was frightful. Overcome by horror at the sight and smell, I turned faint and sick at heart, and hastened to the stern. Here, seated on stools, sullen and gloomy, were the officers. When I had divided my small crew into watches,<sup>37</sup> and had put a man at the helm, I had a moment’s time to look into the cabin which was to be my home.

The next morning found us rolling in a dead calm. As the day grew on, the intense heat and glare made the slave ship a den of indescribable horror. The slaves, of course, were brought on deck, or they would have suffocated and died. We continued to do this every day from early light till sunset. They filled the waist and gangways in a fearful jam. There were over seven hundred men, women, boys, and young girls. I also ordered that beginning at daylight, they should be taken in groups of twenty or more and given saltwater baths by hose from the ship’s pumps. This brought renewed life after their fearful nights on the slave deck. That day and the next, *Constellation’s* carpenters and sail makers were aboard repairing damage as *Constellation* remained rolling near at hand.

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<sup>37</sup> Watches are shipboard divisions of labor or working shifts. Typically, crews would be divided into two watches: port and starboard. Watches would alternate periods of duty. For example, the port watch might begin their duty at midnight and be relieved at 4:00 AM by the starboard. The starboard watch would remain on duty until 8:00 AM when it would be relieved by the port watch, etc.

Windsails were provided for ventilation. None but those who have actually seen a slave deck can form an idea of its horrors. Imagine a deck about 20 feet wide, and perhaps 120 feet long, and 5 feet high. Imagine this to be the living and sleeping space of 720 human beings! At sundown, when they were carried below, trained slaves received the poor wretches one-by-one. They laid each creature on his side in the wings. They packed the next against him, and the next, and the next, and so on. It was like so many spoons packed away, fitted into each other, a living mass. Just as they were packed, so they remained. The pressure prevented any movement, or the turning of hand or foot, until the next morning. Then, after their terrible night of horror they were brought on deck once more, weak, and worn, and sick.

Then, after all had come up and received the bath mentioned, there was the invariable horror of bringing up the bodies. Some had died during the night. One-by-one, they were cast overboard. A splash was the only ceremony. For about thirty nights and days this routine continued.

In the mean time much sickness had begun to appear. Some got stomach and other similar troubles, and many distressing and unsightly contagious diseases. I did all I could, but I had no medicine chest. I found some alcohol well diluted, which I used where I thought it would prove effective.

They were fed twice a day, at 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM, when large buckets of water were carried around. Each captive was given a drink. I watched them as they sat chattering around tubs filled with boiled rice and peas. I always carefully examined the tubs before serving, to test the cooking. I felt a deep sense of thankfulness that more had not been lost.

After more than thirty days since parting with *Constellation*, we reached Monrovia, Liberia, where we were to land the slaves.



USS *Constellation*, Flagship African Squadron, 1859-1861  
The USS *Constellation* Museum, Baltimore, Maryland

## O. New Vocabulary

abeam: to the side (directly abeam is 90 degrees to the right or left)

anxiety: a state of worrying

astern: behind; in this case, the wind was blowing on to Cora's stern

bark: also Barque; three-masted vessel carrying the sails parallel to the hull length

beam: directly off the side of a ship 90 degrees

boatswain's mates: a senior crew members responsible for passing along orders from the officers to the men. In this case, the boatswain's mates use both their whistles and verbal commands to convey orders to the crew

bow: a ship's front (opposite: stern)

casks: wooden barrels used for containing fluids such as wine or water

contagious: easily spread from one person to another

course: (1) lowest and largest sails; (2) direction of travel, a heading

cutter: one of several small boats carried on board ship

figure: one's body shape or form

following suit: doing the same as; doing likewise

forbade: forbidden, not allowed or permitted, restricted

gallant: courageous, valiant

gangway: an opening for access to or from a ship

hastened: hurried

heave to: come to a stop at sea

heeling: slanting or tipping to one side

helm: place from which a ship is steered

hove to: past tense of "heave to"

hull: a ship's body

hull up: nautical expression meaning that a ship's hull can be seen above the horizon (opposite: hull down – meaning that only the sails of a ship, not the hull, can be seen above the horizon)

invariable: unchanging

knot: nautical unit of measurement equaling about 1.15 miles an hour

lee: away from the wind; downwind. The side of a ship upon which the wind blows is the "windward side;" the opposite side is the "lee" side. If the wind blows on to a ship's starboard (right) side, then the port (left) side of the ship is the lee side.

leeward: down wind or away from the wind (opposite: windward)

mainmast: the middle and largest mast of a three-masted ship

peculiarity: oddness; uniqueness

point: measurement of degrees – 11 ¼ degrees (2 points = 22 ½ degrees;  
32 points = 360 degrees)

port: (1) the left side of a ship; to the left side (Opposite: starboard); (2) a harbor city

prize: a captured vessel

prize crew: crew sent aboard a captured ship (prize) to repair and sail the ship to port

quarterdeck: the area of a vessel reserved for ceremonies, honors, and usually, officers.

On board a U.S. warship, the quarterdeck was the deck space reserved for officers from which directed the efforts of the crew. Crew members were not allowed on the quarterdeck unless their specific jobs required them to be there.

rigging: all the ropes used to support the masts, operate the yards and sails, hoist materials, and “work the ship” that is located aloft (above the deck)

round shot: Solid iron cannon ball

ruse: a trick meant to mislead

sanctity: sacredness

skylarking: a term meaning not to be working. Originally, it was a nautical term meaning to play in the rigging of a sailing ship. It could also refer to anyone on deck daydreaming or idly gazing out to sea or to the sky.

spars: Any of the long, wooden parts of a ship such as masts, yards, booms, and gaffs

starboard: the right side of a ship; to the right side (Opposite: port)

sullen: brooding, ill-humor, or silent resentment

superb: excellent

touch my cap: to salute

ventilation: airflow or movement of fresh, breathable air

waist: the mid-portion of a ship’s top deck

watches: working shifts

weather: upwind (the weather side of a ship is the side upon which the wind is blowing)

windward: upwind; the side of a ship upon which the wind blows

windsails: Canvas rolled and forming a tunnel through which fresh air passes into a ship and stale air is evacuated

writhing: twisting or squirming

## P. In Your Own Words

1. Instructions. Read and think about these quotations. What did Mr. Hall mean? Then, rewrite each statement in your own words. Be prepared to explain your choice of words.

- a. “For nothing on the African coast went unexamined, . . .” (Teacher: p. 33; Student 18)
  
- b. “. . . with *Constellation* following suit.” (Teacher: p. 34; Student: p. 19)
  
- c. “. . . humanity forbade a shot in her hull.” (Teacher: p. 35; Student: p. 19)
  
- d. “. . . figure could be seen quickly mounting the side.” (Teacher: p. 35; Student: p. 19)
  
- e. “For two or three minutes the stillness was painful.” (Teacher: p. 35; Student: p. 19)
  
- f. “Only the sanctity of the quarterdeck prevented the officers from joining them.” (Teacher: p. 35; Student: p. 19)
  
- g. “I paid dearly for that sight.” (Teacher: p. 35; Student: p. 20)
  
- h. “I turned faint and sick of heart.” (Teacher: p. 35; Student: p. 20)

## Q. Vocabulary Stowage

Section 1. Match each vocabulary word with its correct definition.

Key

- |     |       |                 |  |
|-----|-------|-----------------|--|
| f.  | _____ | 1. ventilation  | a. down wind                                 |
| j.  | _____ | 2. writhing     | b. hurried                                   |
| t.  | _____ | 3. superb       | c. doing the same as; doing likewise         |
| g.  | _____ | 4. waist        | d. a trick meant to mislead                  |
| a.  | _____ | 5. lee          | e. sacredness                                |
| w.  | _____ | 6. contagious   | f. airflow or movement of fresh air          |
| m.  | _____ | 7. gallant      | g. the mid-portion of a ship's top deck      |
| r.  | _____ | 8. invariable   | h. not allowed or permitted                  |
| b.  | _____ | 9. hastened     | i. the body of a ship                        |
| h.  | _____ | 10. forbade     | j. twisting or squirming                     |
| k.  | _____ | 11. casks       | k. wooden barrels used for liquids           |
| q.  | _____ | 12. anxiety     | l. brooding, ill-humor, or silent resentment |
| c.  | _____ | 13. follow suit | m. courageous                                |
| i.  | _____ | 14. hull        | n. a ship's left side                        |
| d.  | _____ | 15. ruse        | o. oddness                                   |
| o.  | _____ | 16. peculiarity | p. a captured vessel                         |
| l.  | _____ | 17. sullen      | q. a state of worrying                       |
| e.  | _____ | 18. sanctity    | r. unchanging                                |
| n.  | _____ | 19. port        | w. easily spread from one person to another  |
| p.. | _____ | 20. prize       | t. excellent                                 |

Section 2. Fill-in. Fill in the blank with letter of the best word to complete each sentence.

1. The ship's captain stood on the \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. windsail   b. quarterback   **c. quarterdeck**   d. halfback   e. phosphorescence
2. The hurricane's winds built mountainous waves and the ship \_\_\_\_\_ over dangerously.  
a. aboded   **b. heeled**   c. tacked   d. waisted   e. prevailed
3. As the captain walked aboard, the pipes sounded as he passed through the \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. casks   b. tropics   c. hull   **d. gangway**   e. bark
4. To get a better look at the dolphins in the water just in front of the ship, he climbed out on to the ship's \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. helm   b. lee   c. waist   d. prize   **e. bow**
5. After being captured, the Cora was sailed back to Africa by a \_\_\_\_\_ crew.  
**a. prize**   b. tacky   c. knotty   d. contagious   e. taut
6. The lady pretended not to be at home by keeping her house and front porch lights turned off, and I think her \_\_\_\_\_ kept the trick-or-treaters away.  
a. prevail   b. articles   c. admonition   **d. ruse**   e. hull
7. He \_\_\_\_\_ to finish painting the fence before the rains came that afternoon.  
**a. hastened**   b. chastened   c. fastened   d. harkened   e. lingered
8. On land we state our speed as miles per hour, but at sea, sailors use the term \_\_\_\_\_ to describe a ship's speed  
a. hulls   b. tauts   c. watches   d. tropics   **e. knots**
9. The place from which the ship is steered is the \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. starboard   b. port   **c. helm**   d. bow   e. stern
10. To be directly to the side of a ship 90 degrees is to be \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. abaft   **b. abeam**   c. astern   d. to the lee   e. to the windward

Section 3 – Words with multiple meanings – Fill in each blank with the letter of the best word from the word bank. Each of the words in the word bank will be used more than once.

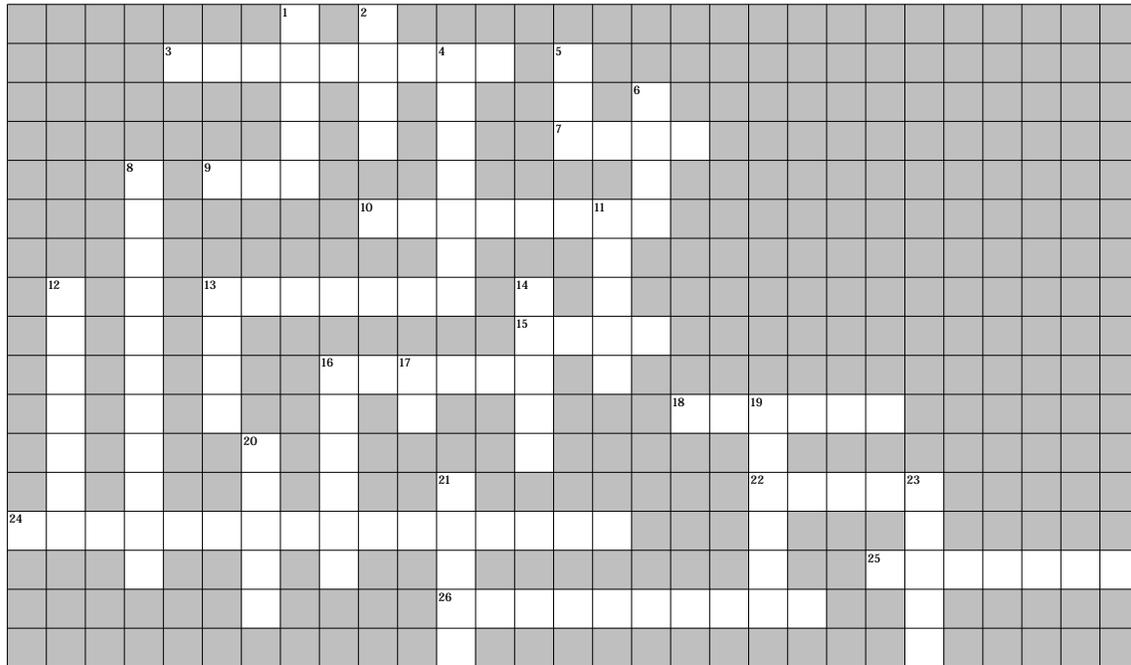
|            |           |           |           |         |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| (a) port   | (c) prize | (e) heel  | (g) bark  | (i) bow |
| (b) course | (d) knot  | (f) watch | (h) waist |         |

1. The **(a) port** side of a ship is the left side.
2. Another term for tipping over or slanting is **(e) heel**.
3. A three-masted ship with sails that are parallel to the ship's hull is called a **(g) bark**.
4. The lowest and largest sail on a mast is called a **(b) course**.
5. A captured vessel is also called a **(c) prize**.
6. His **(f) watch** had begun at midnight and would not be over until 4:00 AM.
7. **(i) Bow** is a word meaning the front of a ship and is spelled the same as an apparatus used to shoot an arrow.
8. Of **(b) course** I know the man. I've seen him on t-v a hundred times.
9. A **(d) knot** is a nautical unit of measurement equaling 1.15 miles per hour.
10. I could see the crew standing near the **(h) waist** of the ship just by the main mast.
11. A town or city harbor is a **(a) port**.
12. He tied the line around his **(h) waist** and jumped into the rough sea.
13. According to his **(f) watch** it was 5:53 P.M., and he was late.
14. Once the strange ship stopped, the captain sent over a **(c) prize** crew to board her.



Section 4.

Puzzle for Sail! – Student



Created with EclipseCrossword – www.eclipsecrossword.com

Word Bank

|                   |            |          |           |         |             |
|-------------------|------------|----------|-----------|---------|-------------|
| abeam             | astern     | bark     | bow       | braced  | casks       |
| course            | cutter     | gangway  | heave     | heeling | helm        |
| knot              | lee        | mainmast | port      | prize   | quarterdeck |
| rigging           | skylarking | spars    | starboard | touch   | up          |
| USS Constellation | waist      | watches  | wind      |         |             |

Clues

| Across  | Down   |
|---|--|
| 3. the right side of a ship is its _____ side   | 1. a captured vessel   |
| 7. _____sails are canvas tunnels through which fresh air is circulated below decks and stale air is evacuated | 2. the left side of a ship is the ship's _____ side                            |
| 9. away from the wind; downwind   | 4. ropes aloft used to support the masts and work the ship                     |
| 10. the middle and largest mast of a three-masted ship  | 5. a ship's front  |
| 13. tipping to one side   | 6. measurement = 1.15 miles per hour   |
| 15. three-masted vessel carrying sails parallel to the hull   | 8. area of a vessel from which officers directed the crew                      |
| 16. lowest and largest sail; direction of travel, heading   | 11. any of the long, wooden parts such as masts                                |
| 18. a ship is _____ sharp when sailing as near to the on-coming wind as possible                              | 12. working shifts aboard ship   |
| 22. for a sailor to _____ his cap is for him to salute  | 13. place from which a ship is steered   |
| 24. vessel that captured the slave ship <i>Cora</i>   | 14. to the side of a ship  |
| 25. an opening for access to or from a ship   | 16. one of several small boats carried on board a ship                         |
| 26. not to be working   | 17. a ship is said to be hull_____ when its hull can be seen above the horizon |
|   | 19. behind a ship  |
|   | 20. wooden barrels used for containing fluids                                  |
|   | 21. mid-portion of a ship's top deck   |
|   | 23. _____ to stop at sea is to _____ to  |

## R. *Constellation* Captures the Slave Ship Cora - William Ambrose Leonard

“William Ambrose Leonard’s journal provides a daily account of a seamen’s life on board USS *Constellation* while the ship was in commission as the flagship of the U.S. Navy’s African Squadron from 1859-1861. As ship mates, there is little doubt that Wilburn Hall and William Leonard knew each other. Leonard’s journal provides a great deal more information about shipboard life and spans the three years *Constellation* served as flagship of the African Squadron. It includes detailed descriptions of shipboard routines, crime and punishment, leisure activities such as liberties (including a 48-hour visit to the island of St. Helena capped by a visit to Napoleon’s Tomb and Residence during his exile), shipboard clubs and societies, theatrical performances, dances, and rare and unique glimpses of the some of the personalities that made up the ship’s company. Leonard effectively captures the loneliness, boredom, excitement, and endless routine of life on the African Station. He also captures the sense of the drama that accompanied *Constellation*’s pursuit and capture of the slave ship *Cora*.”

April 9<sup>th</sup> 1860. Chase, and Capture of the American Slave Barque<sup>38</sup> *Cora* of New York, with 705 slaves in her. By the United States Flag Ship *Constellation*. September 25<sup>th</sup> 1860

It was a beautiful moonlight evening. Just as the messenger boy of the watch had struck 6 bells<sup>39</sup> the lookout reported a sail on our weather bow sailing right toward us with all her sails set. On seeing us she changed course<sup>40</sup> away from us. No sooner had she done this than we did the same. Now, she was on our weather bow<sup>41</sup> and about two miles ahead of us. We could see that she had on every stitch of canvass<sup>42</sup> and that she was determined to out sail us if she could.

By 8 o’clock we saw that we had gained on her. By this time there was not a man or boy on board who was not on deck watching the chase. We were filled with excitement as to whether she was a slaver<sup>43</sup> or not. Everyone could see we were gaining, and in another hour, Number One gun crew was ordered to their stations. They loaded their gun with shot<sup>44</sup> and prepared to fire. Their first shot crossed the distant ship’s bow, but she did not heave to<sup>45</sup> and continued on her course. Now the boys were excited. Not

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<sup>38</sup> Barque (also Bark): Three-masted ship. The fore and main masts are square-rigged (sails suspended perpendicularly to the ship’s hull) and the mizzen mast (back-most mast) is sloop-rigged (sail suspended fore-and-aft; parallel to the length of the hull).

<sup>39</sup> A ship’s bell announced the time throughout each day. Each half-hour, the bell was rung. Six bells in the early evening is 6:00 PM.

<sup>40</sup> Course: direction a ship sails

<sup>41</sup> Weather bow: forward of the ship and on the side from which the wind is blowing; up wind.

<sup>42</sup> Canvas: in this case, it means sails – they were using all their sails.

<sup>43</sup> Slaver: a slave ship; also a “black-birder.”

<sup>44</sup> Shot: solid, iron cannon ball

<sup>45</sup> Heave to: to stop.

one of the off-duty crew below could sleep a wink.<sup>46</sup> Everyone was on the spar deck watching.

We were fast gaining on her and the distance between the ships lessened as the slaver began to fall leeward.<sup>47</sup> At 10 o'clock we fired another shot at her, but it was of no use. She kept right on. When she was only about a half-mile ahead of us, she cut away one of her boats. She did this in hopes we would stop or slow down to collect it. That would have given them a chance to get away. We could see that there was nobody in the boat, so our captain did not order us to stop. We sailed on.

By now, the slaver had crossed our bow and was down wind of us.<sup>48</sup> We set more sail and picked up the pace. Anyone could see we were closing in on them. To lighten their load, they began throwing overboard their water casks, spars, and anchors.<sup>49</sup> In fact they seemed to be throwing overboard everything that was movable. When, at last, we had sailed to within hailing distance,<sup>50</sup> our captain gave an order to fire one more shot near her. If then she failed to heave to, the Captain ordered the next shot to be fired into her. We fired and waited. No change. The next shot cut away some of her forward-most rigging. Still, she would not heave to.

In a loud voice the Captain ordered that the cannon be loaded with shell and primed.<sup>51</sup> On hearing our captain's order, they hove to, whereupon we did the same.

Our Captain then hailed her and ordered that her sails be furled.<sup>52</sup> He ordered our cutter into the water. Men armed with pistols and cutlasses<sup>53</sup> climbed aboard. Each man was armed with a pistol and cutlass. The ship's 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant and Sailing Master commanded the boat.<sup>54</sup> We watched as the cutter was rowed the 50 yards to the other

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<sup>46</sup> Off duty crew: on board a ship, the crew is divided into watches (port and starboard). When one watch is working, the other is frequently off duty. In the evenings, the off duty watch slept below decks while the on duty watch remained on the top decks and worked. As the drama unfolded here, the off duty watch could not sleep and returned to the top deck to watch the action.

<sup>47</sup> Leeward: down wind, toward *Constellation*.

<sup>48</sup> Crossed our bow: the slaver, still forward of *Constellation*, sailed across her path from one side to the other.

Bow: the front of a ship

<sup>49</sup> Overboard: off of the ship

Water casks: barrels

Spars: long wooden items such as yards (yards hold the sails) and upper masts (the top parts of masts)

<sup>50</sup> Hailing distance: the distance between ships in which it is possible for a voice to be heard

<sup>51</sup> Shell: Unlike a solid shot which was a solid iron ball and could pass harmlessly by a ship, a shell would explode and cause massive and indiscriminate damage. Thus, in shouting these orders so that the slaver's crew could also hear them, the Captain's order was his intention to do harm to the slaver and, possibly, to the crew.

Primed: The last step before firing a cannon is priming it. Nothing remains to do to fire the weapon but applying a match or pulling a hammer string. By shouting out an order to prime the cannon, the captain knew that the slaver's crew was aware that he was not going to spend any more time or gunpowder with warnings. The next cannon firing would bring destruction and, possibly, death.

<sup>52</sup> Furled: rolled up

<sup>53</sup> Cutlasses: swords

<sup>54</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant and Sailing Master: ship's officers junior to the captain but senior to the crew

ship. As the moonlight shone very brightly, we could see our party boarding her very plainly.

Pretty soon our 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant hailed our ship, “*Constellation* Ahoy! Hello! We have got a fine fat prize,<sup>55</sup> chock full of slaves!”

Upon hearing this, our ships company<sup>56</sup> gave three hearty cheers, which made the bell ring. Our captain now gave orders to lower away the gig to bring the slaver’s captain, mates and crew on board of our ship. Your humble servant,<sup>57</sup> being one of the gigs crew, had an opportunity of seeing the elephant.<sup>58</sup> When we got alongside her, the officers and crew of the slaver were ordered into our boat by the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. They numbered 29 in all. We took the crew to our ship and then returned to the prize.

This being the first slaver I ever saw with slaves, my curiosity led me down below to the slave deck. The scene that presented itself to my eyes baffles<sup>59</sup> description. It was a dreadful sight. The slaves there were all packed together like so many sheep. Men, woman, and children were there, entirely naked, and suffering from hunger and thirst. They had nothing to eat or drink for over 30 hours. As soon as they were aware that we would be friendly to them, they commenced shouting and yelling like so many wild Indians. They were so overjoyed at being taken by us that I thought they would tear us to pieces. We then took the slaver’s captain and officers off the ship and rowed them back to *Constellation*. Upon our return, our boys crowded around us to get the news, but it was now 8 bells or 12 o’clock midnight, I went below decks to my hammock.<sup>60</sup> Being very tired, I soon fell asleep dreaming of the evening’s events.  
Adieu, W.A.L.<sup>61</sup>

## S. New Vocabulary.

1. baffles: confuses; is hard to understand or to explain
2. bow: the front of a ship
3. canvas: a sail; also, heavy material used to make sails
4. casks: barrels
5. course: the direction a ship sails; lowest sail on the main and fore masts
6. cutlass: sword
7. furled: rolled up
8. hammock: bed made of heavy canvas or netting that is hung from an overhead beam.
9. slaver: slave ship; (*syn.*) black-birder
10. spars: long, wooden pole-like items such as yards and upper masts

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<sup>55</sup> Prize: a captured ship

<sup>56</sup> Ship’s Company: a ship’s crew

<sup>57</sup> Here, the author is implying that he (your humble servant) was aboard the gig.

<sup>58</sup> Elephant: 19<sup>th</sup> century term implying something big; in this case, the slave ship they had spent hours pursuing.

<sup>59</sup> Baffles: confuses; is hard to understand or to explain

<sup>60</sup> Hammock: a bed made of heavy canvas or netting that is suspended from an overhead beam.

<sup>61</sup> Adieu: French for good-bye; W.A.L. the author’s initials (William Ambrose Leonard)

## T. Vocabulary Stowage

Section 1. Beside each vocabulary word is a blank. In that blank write the letter of the best definition for that word.

| Key | Vocabulary Words | Definitions                                   |
|-----|------------------|---|
| c.  | _____ 1. bow     | a. barrels                                    |
| a.  | _____ 2. casks   | b. sword                                      |
| d.  | _____ 3. furled  | c. front of ship                              |
| e.  | _____ 4. spars   | d. rolled up                                  |
| h.  | _____ 5. baffle  | e. long, wooden pole-like items such as yards |
| i.  | _____ 6. hammock | f. the direction a ship sails                 |
| b.  | _____ 7. cutlass | g. a sail; heavy material used to make sails  |
| g.  | _____ 8. canvas  | h. to confuse; hard to explain or understand  |
| f.  | _____ 9. course  | i. bed made of heavy canvas or net            |
| j.  | _____ 10. slaver | j. slave ship                                 |

Section 2. Fill-in. Fill in the blank with the letter of the best word to complete each sentence.

1. The pickles remained fresh for months. They had been stored in wooden \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. hammocks      b. canvas      c. **casks**      d. baffles      e. cannon
2. He could see the ship's \_\_\_\_\_ plough through the water making a blanket of white foam as it sliced through the waves.  
a. **bow**      b. spars      c. casks      d. baffles      e. cutlass
3. She was \_\_\_\_\_ as she looked up and saw all the ship's rigging and wondered in amazement how it all worked together.  
a. canvassed      b. **baffled**      c. sparred      d. furled      e. bowed
4. As the ship came to a stop the sailors climbed aloft to \_\_\_\_\_ the sails.  
a. baffle      b. course      c. bow      d. **furl**      e. canvas
5. Using his \_\_\_\_\_ the sailor cut through the ropes.  
a. hammock      b. spars      c. casks      d. bow      e. **cutlass**
6. The ship's \_\_\_\_\_ would take her to the Western Pacific and Japan.  
a. casks      b. hammocks      c. cannon      d. **course**      e. deck
7. The heavy \_\_\_\_\_ used to make the sail had yellowed with age.  
a. **canvas**      b. spars      c. deck      d. masts      e. bow
8. As he slept, his \_\_\_\_\_ swayed back-and-forth, but he did not feel any motion at all.  
a. cutlass      b. casks      c. **hammock**      d. baffles      e. spars
9. The long, wooden pole-like \_\_\_\_\_ seemed so high to the boy that he thought the clouds would bump into them.  
a. hammock      b. **spars**      c. bow      d. slaver      e. cutlass
10. The \_\_\_\_\_ had sailed from the coast of Africa with 705 slaves, but *Constellation* captured her and liberated the captives.  
a. bow      b. spars      c. hammock      d. warship      e. **slaver**

## Unit IV. Supplemental Materials

### U. In Support of Maryland Voluntary State 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Curricula Goals.

The USS *Constellation* Museum's "Sea Chests on Loan Program" supports the following, specific Maryland State Voluntary Curricula:

Standard 1.0 History. Students will examine significant ideas, beliefs, and themes; organize patterns and events; and analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time in Maryland and the United States. Students will use historical thinking skills to understand how individuals and events have changed society over time.

Indicator 1. Analyze the major sources of tension, cooperation, and conflict in the world and the efforts that have been made to address them. (The international trafficking of slaves in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the efforts made by a small, but influential community of western nations, provides the focal point for addressing these objectives.)

Objective b. Analyze and describe the efforts of world nations and groups to assist in the resolution of conflicts within and among regions, such as the United Nations, the International Red Cross-, and other humanitarian organizations.

Objective c. Analyze and describe efforts by world nations to promote cooperation within and among those regions, such as the International Monetary Fund, United Nations, World Bank, and world-wide healthcare initiatives.

Standard 1.0 General Reading Processes

Topic C. Fluency

Indicator 1. Read orally at an appropriate rate

Objective a. Read familiar text at a rate that is conversational and consistent

Indicator 2. Read grade-level text with both high accuracy and appropriate pacing, intonation, and expression

Objective a. Apply knowledge of word structures and patterns to read with Automaticity

Objective b. Demonstrate appropriate use of phrasing

- Attend to sentence patterns and structures that signal meaning in text
- Use punctuation cues to guide meaning and expression
- Use pacing and intonation (emphasis on certain words) to convey meaning and expression
- Adjust intonation and pitch (rise and fall of spoken voice) appropriately

Objective c. Increase sight words read fluently

## Topic D. Vocabulary

Indicator 1. Develop and apply vocabulary through exposure to a variety of texts

Objective a. Acquire new vocabulary through listening to, independently reading, and discussing a variety of literary and informational texts.

Objective b. Discuss words and word meanings daily as they are encountered in text, instruction, and conversation.

Indicator 2. Apply a conceptual understanding of new words

Objective a. Classify and categorize increasingly complex words into sets and groups.

Objective b. Explain relationships between and among words.

Assessment limits:

- Antonyms and synonyms
- Concept hierarchies
- Multiple meaning words
- Specialized use of vocabulary in specific content areas

Indicator 3. Understand, acquire, and use new vocabulary

Objective a. Use context to determine the meaning of words.

Assessment limits:

- Above grade-level words used in context
- Words with multiple meanings
- Grade-appropriate idioms, colloquialisms, and figurative expressions

Objective b. Use word structure to determine the meaning of words.

Assessment limits:

- Prefixes and suffixes
- Grade-appropriate roots and base words

Objective c. Use resources to confirm definitions and gather further information about words.

Assessment limits:

- Electronic and/or print dictionaries
- Thesauruses
- Other grade-appropriate resources

Objective d. Use new vocabulary in speaking and writing to gain and extend content knowledge and clarify expression.

Topic E. General Reading Comprehension

Indicator 1. Apply comprehension skills through exposure to a variety of texts, including traditional print and electronic texts.

Objective a. Listen to critically, read, and discuss texts representing diversity in content, culture, authorship, and perspective, including areas, such as race, gender, disability, religion, and socio-economic background.

Objective c. Discuss reactions to and ideas/information gained from reading experiences with adults and peers in both formal and informal situations.

Indicator 2. Use strategies to prepare for reading (before reading)

Objective a. Select and apply appropriate strategies to prepare for reading the text.

Indicator 3. Use strategies to make meaning from text (during reading)

Objective a. Select and apply appropriate strategies to make meaning from text during reading.

Indicator 4. Use strategies to demonstrate understanding of the text (after reading)

Objective a. Identify and explain the main idea.

Assessment limit: In the text or a portion of the text

Objective b. Identify and explain information directly stated in the text.

Assessment limit: Main ideas, supporting details and other information stated in the text or a portion of the text.

Objective c. Draw inferences and/or conclusions and make generalizations.

Assessment limit: Implied or stated information from the text or A portion of the text.

Objective d. Confirm, refute, or make predictions and form new ideas.

Assessment limit: Stated or implied information from the text

Objective e. Summarize or paraphrase.

Assessment limit: The text or a portion of the text

Objective f. Connect the text to prior knowledge or personal experience.

Assessment limit: Prior knowledge or experience that clarifies, extends, or challenges the ideas and/or information in the text.

Standard 6.0 Listening. Students will demonstrate effective listening to learn, process, and analyze information.

Topic A. Listening

Indicator 1. Apply and demonstrate listening skills appropriately in a variety of settings and for a variety of purposes.

Objective a. Use criteria to evaluate oral presentations, such as purpose, Facial expressions.

Objective b. Gather information from listening to a speaker.

Objective c. Use memory techniques for various listening tasks

Indicator 2. Apply comprehension and literary analysis strategies and skills for a variety of listening purposes and settings.

Objective a. Ask relevant questions concerning the speaker's content, delivery, and purpose.

Objective b. Determine a speaker's purpose and viewpoint.

Objective c. Interpret the speech or performance or presentation.

Objective d. Make inferences or draw conclusions based on the Presentation.

Objective e. Provide constructive feedback to speakers concerning the Coherence and logic of a speech's content and delivery as well as its overall impact upon the listeners.

## U. Additional Materials

### Section 1. An Antebellum Timeline (Supporting Unit I.A. Historical Background)<sup>62</sup>

The term “antebellum” means existing before a war. In the United States, the term means before the American Civil War (1861-1865). Few realize that before the Civil War the United States took steps to limit the international trafficking of slaves and to stop the involvement of Americans in that trafficking. The assignment of *Yorktown* and *Constellation* to African waters resulted from this antebellum involvement.

- 1502** First reported slaves in the New World.
- 1640** Large-scale slave importation from Africa to Caribbean.
- 1776** 13 English colonies declare independence and propose the equality of all men.
- 1794** U.S. Congress prohibits the U.S. manufacture, fitting, equipping, loading or dispatching of any vessel to be employed in the slave trade.
- 1800** U.S. Congress prohibits U.S. citizens serving on board slave ships trading between two foreign countries.
- 1820** U.S. Congress equates the slave trade with piracy. Establishes squadron in West African waters to search for U.S. ships involved in the slave trade.
- 1839** The slave ship *Amistad* is seized in U.S. waters off Long Island and taken to New London, Connecticut.
- 1842** U.S. enters into agreement with Great Britain to provide significant naval force in West African waters to interdict slave trade.
- 1844** USS *Yorktown* joins African Squadron. Captures the slave ship *Pons* (900 slaves).
- 1859** USS *Constellation* joins African Squadron (flagship, 1859-61).
- 1860** USS *Constellation* captures the slave ship *Cora* (705 slaves).
- 1861** Southern states secede the Union, plunging U.S. into a state of civil war.
- 1863** “Emancipation Proclamation” frees slaves in “border states” and Southern states occupied by Union forces.
- 1865** XIII Amendment to Constitution prohibits slavery in the United States.

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<sup>62</sup> For additional significant events associated with this subject, see “Exploring *Amistead* at Mystic Seaport - Timeline” at <http://amistad.mysticseaport.org/timeline/atlantic.slave.trade.html>



Section 2. The Powder Monkey. This photograph of a ship's boy was taken on board the Union warship, USS *New Hampshire*. The boy, 13 year old Aspinwall Fuller, was born in New York, but enlisted into the navy in Baltimore, Maryland. Before and during the American Civil War, U.S. warships carried a number of boys like Fuller. About five percent of each ship's crew were young lads thirteen to sixteen years of age. Naval regulations prevented younger boys from enlisting, but it can be presumed that many lied about their age, particularly orphans. Fuller may have been among them.

Ship's boys were an integral part of each ship's crew. They were subject to the same rules of conduct and discipline as everyone else, and they were frequently required to perform very adult duties. Their traditional nickname, "powder monkeys," developed from their responsibilities during battle. Each powder monkey was assigned to serve a cannon and to keep it supplied with gun powder. As the battle raged, the guns fired, recoiled, and were swabbed, reloaded, and run back out into firing position by the large gun crews. A ship's broadside gun line could have between two and eighteen guns, each firing as rapidly as possible. Supplying each gun with its powder charge before each firing was a young powder monkey.

To appreciate a powder monkey's job, it helps to imagine the circumstances surrounding it. As the long lines of cannons fired, their blasts hurled the guns rearward five or six feet. When they stopped their recoil, up to 14 sailors around each gun began swabbing, loading, and hauling tackles. Strewn across the decks were countless ropes, buckets, and any number of other obstacles. Add to this confusion a thick shroud of smoke and the deafening roar of each blast, and it is easy to imagine the chaotic world of the powder monkey in battle. To retrieve the powder and carry it to his gun required sustained strength, a running back's agility, and the ability to stay focused on the task at hand.

Thus, the nickname powder monkey. "Monkey" was a 19<sup>th</sup> century expression meaning "a smaller version." For example, a brass monkey was a small rack upon which cannon balls were stacked. A powder monkey, then, was a smaller version of a sailor. The nickname also reflected the monkey-like agility necessary to carry the powder through the maze of confusion on a gun deck. There was nothing childish about a powder monkey's job. Indeed, the Congressional Medal of Honor was awarded to two boys, much like our Mr. Fuller.

Young Mr. Fuller strikes a jaunty pose in front of one of *New Hampshire's* great guns. Perhaps it was this gun that Fuller served. His posture, facial expression, and the rakish tilt of his cap reflect a level of self-confidence not usually present in someone his age and suggests that by the time of the photograph, he had obtained a certain veteran-like status. The embroidery on his smock tends to confirm as much in that such needlework took time to learn and it was customary for sailors to apply their own talents and tastes to their own uniforms.

Sharing this information about the boy photographed will help students understand the different circumstances experienced by young persons in a different age. Asking them questions, and providing them an opportunity to write their own observations will cultivate their thinking and writing skills. Among the questions that might be addressed, consider the following:

1. In what ways does Aspinwall's appearance reflect his life at the time the photo was taken?
2. Can you imagine yourself sharing Aspinwall's life? What kinds of changes do you think you would experience if you were a powder monkey?
3. Does Aspinwall's pose reflect an attitude? What kind of an attitude?
4. Imagine that you were photographed alongside Aspinwall. What kind of an attitude would your pose reveal? In what way might your pose be different?
5. Aspinwall's youthful appearance belies the seriousness of his duties. Still, there is little doubt that he found opportunities to have fun. What do you think he might have done for enjoyment, entertainment, or play?



U.S. Navy photo

## Consider The Powder Monkey

Meet Aspinwall Fuller. Mr. Fuller was a ship's boy on board a large warship. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, warships commonly carried young boys on board who, in times of battle, brought gun powder to the ship's cannon.

This photograph reveals a lot about Mr. Fuller and what goes on around him. Look at it closely. See if you can find information to help you answer these questions.

1. How old do you think this boy is?
2. What suggests that he might be on a warship?
3. What differences do you see in his clothing and the clothing of the boys around you?
4. How does Mr. Fuller appear to you? Shy? Confident? New on board? Experienced?
5. Do you think his uniform looks exactly like everyone else's uniform?
6. What in the photograph might lead you to think that it was taken a long time ago?
7. What does this photograph reveal about the weather?
8. Which deck do you think Mr. Fuller was on when photographed?



U.S. Navy photo

## Section 2. Black Sailors in Navy Blue!

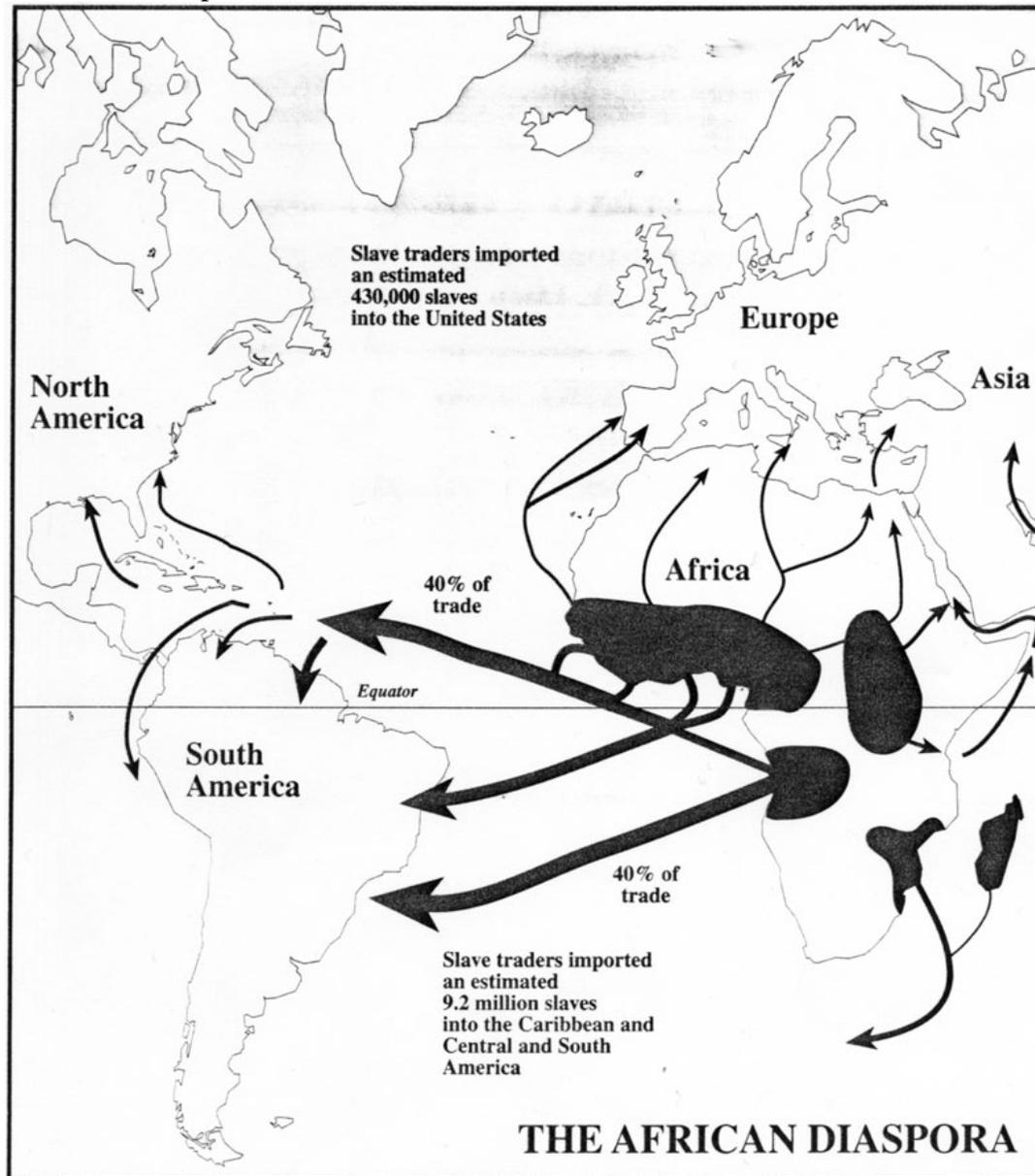
The sailor photographed here served aboard a U.S. naval warship. Americans of African descent served in the U.S. Navy since 1775. Black Americans were on board U.S. warships in the African Squadron, and by the end of the American Civil War, one of every five sailors on the navy's rosters was black. Indeed, Lincoln's Navy could not have maintained an effective blockade against the South without the enlistment and support of such men as pictured here.

As USS *Yorktown* closed the distance with the slave ship *Pons*, men such as the gentleman pictured here climbed up the rigging and took great interest in the convergence of the two vessels. Some of the sailors may have been the very first generation of freed men born in their families since their ancestors had been brought to the Americas. Can you imagine what they must have been thinking and feeling as they clung to the rigging and watched the two ships come closer-and-closer together?

The sailor pictured here is standing upon his ship's upper-most deck and he is leaning against one of his ship's cannon. Look closely at the picture, and think about these questions. Then, discuss your thoughts with others.

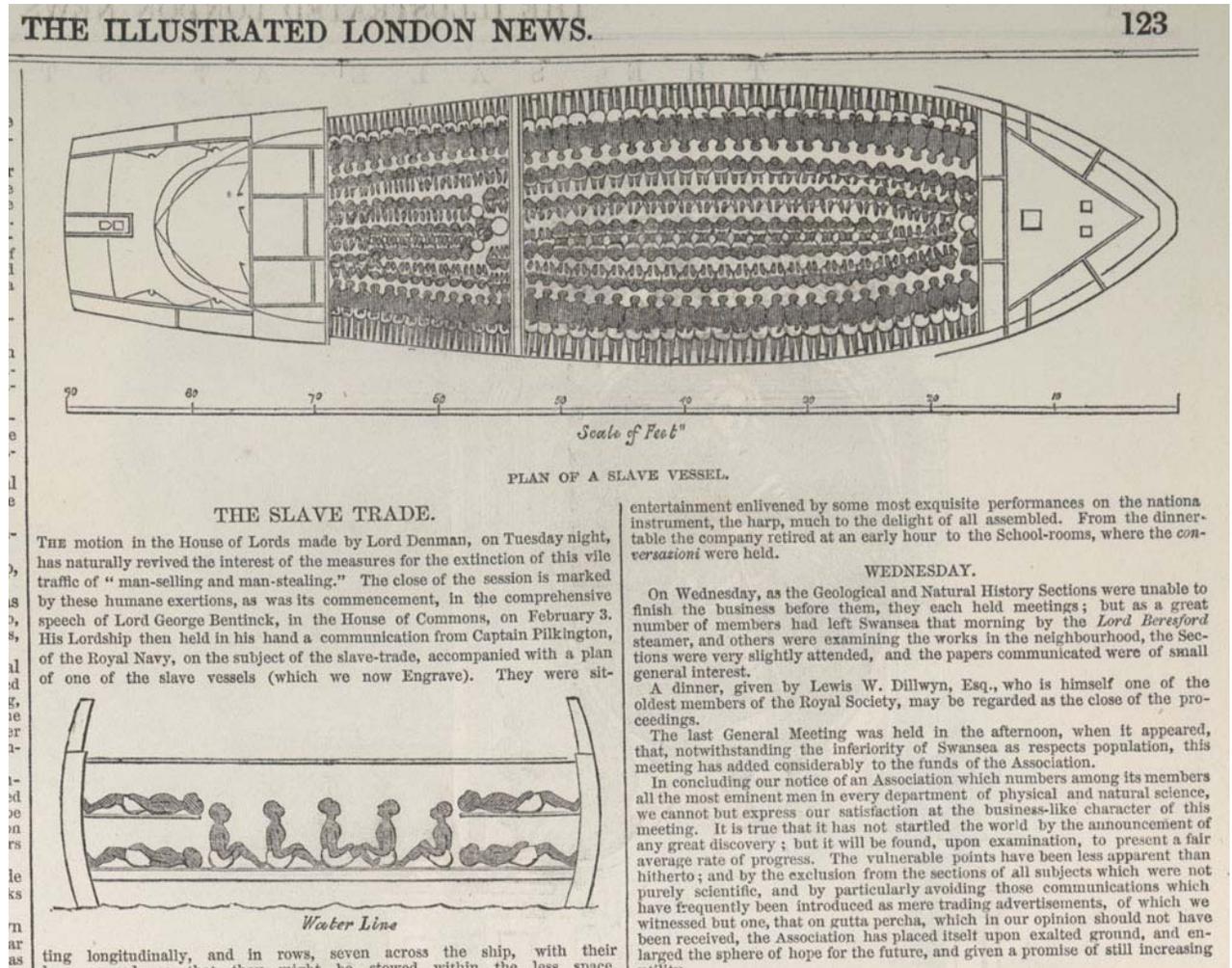
1. What about his posture suggests that the sailor is confident?
2. What in this photo tells us that the sailor took pride in his appearance?
3. Only one person is photographed here, but it is quite possible to deduce other facts about the crew from this individual. For example, what information from this picture suggests that the size of the crew? Do you think the crew was small? (10 to 20 men) Do you think the crew was large? (300 to 500)
4. What do you think the other sailors wore?
5. In what season of the year do you think this photograph taken?

V. Illustrations  
Number 1: Diaspora.<sup>63</sup>



“Diaspora” is the forced dispersion and world-wide resettlement of a people into foreign lands. This is an account of the African Diaspora. Can you think of other peoples throughout history whose cultural heritage could also be described in a “Diaspora” picture? (Jewish, Irish)

<sup>63</sup> Source: Paul Finkelman and Joseph Miller, eds., Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery (New York, 1998), vol. 1, p. xlvi. (Reproduction courtesy of Macmillan Reference USA, an Imprint of the Gale Group, a Thomson Learning Company) found on “The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in Africa,” at: <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/details.php?categorynum=1&categoryName=Maps:%20Africa,%20New%20World,%20Slave%20Trade&theRecord=28&recordCount=30>



**THE SLAVE TRADE.**

THE motion in the House of Lords made by Lord Denman, on Tuesday night, has naturally revived the interest of the measures for the extinction of this vile traffic of "man-selling and man-stealing." The close of the session is marked by these humane exertions, as was its commencement, in the comprehensive speech of Lord George Bentinck, in the House of Commons, on February 3. His Lordship then held in his hand a communication from Captain Pilkington, of the Royal Navy, on the subject of the slave-trade, accompanied with a plan of one of the slave vessels (which we now Engrave). They were sit-

entertainment enlivened by some most exquisite performances on the national instrument, the harp, much to the delight of all assembled. From the dinner-table the company retired at an early hour to the School-rooms, where the *conversazioni* were held.

**WEDNESDAY.**

On Wednesday, as the Geological and Natural History Sections were unable to finish the business before them, they each held meetings; but as a great number of members had left Swansea that morning by the *Lord Beresford* steamer, and others were examining the works in the neighbourhood, the Sections were very slightly attended, and the papers communicated were of small general interest.

A dinner, given by Lewis W. Dillwyn, Esq., who is himself one of the oldest members of the Royal Society, may be regarded as the close of the proceedings.

The last General Meeting was held in the afternoon, when it appeared, that, notwithstanding the inferiority of Swansea as respects population, this meeting has added considerably to the funds of the Association.

In concluding our notice of an Association which numbers among its members all the most eminent men in every department of physical and natural science, we cannot but express our satisfaction at the business-like character of this meeting. It is true that it has not startled the world by the announcement of any great discovery; but it will be found, upon examination, to present a fair average rate of progress. The vulnerable points have been less apparent than hitherto; and by the exclusion from the sections of all subjects which were not purely scientific, and by particularly avoiding those communications which have frequently been introduced as mere trading advertisements, of which we witnessed but one, that on *gutta percha*, which in our opinion should not have been received, the Association has placed itself upon exalted ground, and enlarged the sphere of hope for the future, and given a promise of still increasing

ting longitudinally, and in rows, seven across the ship, with their

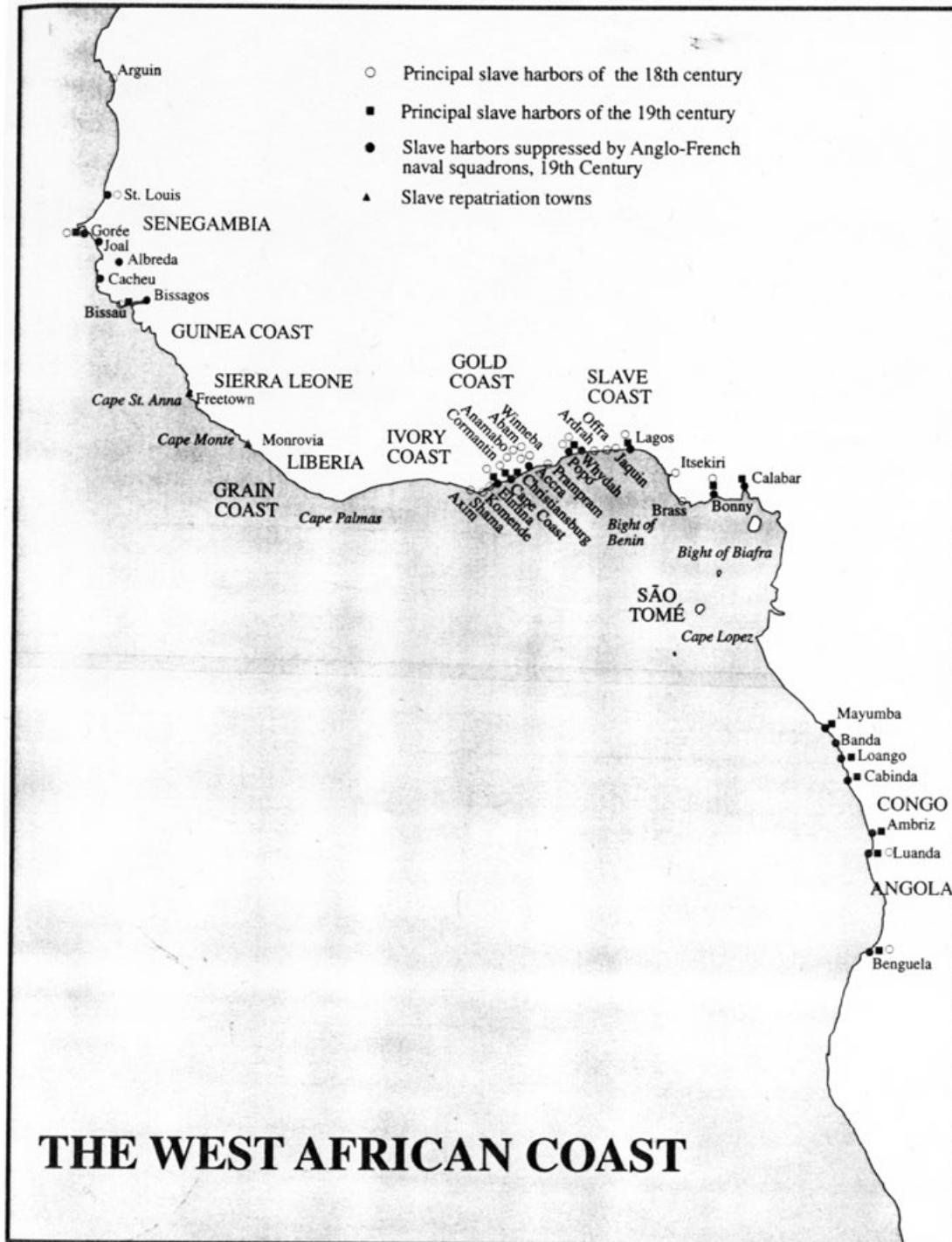
<sup>64</sup> Source: The Illustrated London News (April 26, 1848), vol. 13, p. 123. (Copy in Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library) found on "The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in Africa," at: [http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/details.php?categorynum=5&categoryName=Slave%20Ships%20and%20the%20Atlantic%20Crossing%20\(Middle%20Passage\)&theRecord=62&recordCount=71](http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/details.php?categorynum=5&categoryName=Slave%20Ships%20and%20the%20Atlantic%20Crossing%20(Middle%20Passage)&theRecord=62&recordCount=71)

Number 3. West & West Central Africa, 1862.<sup>65</sup>



<sup>65</sup> Joan Blaeu, [Atlas major] Geographia, quae est Cosmographia Blaviana . . . (Amsterdam, 1662), vol. 9, between pp. 101 and 102. (Copy in Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library). "The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas" at: <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/details.php?categorynum=1&categoryName=Maps:%20Africa,%20New%20World,%20Slave%20Trade&theRecord=13&recordCount=30>

Number 4. "Slave Ports of West African Coastal Areas"<sup>66</sup>



<sup>66</sup> Source: Paul Finkelman and Joseph Miller, eds., Macmillan Encyclopedia of World Slavery (New York, 1998), vol. 1, p. lvii in "The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas" at: <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/details.php?categorynum=1&categoryName=Maps:%20Africa,%20New%20World,%20Slave%20Trade&theRecord=27&recordCount=30>

## W. Suggested Sources

### *Printed Sources.*

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870*. Dover Publications, Inc. 1970.

Gilliland, C. Herbert. *Voyage to A Thousand Cares, Master's Mate Lawrence with the African Squadron, 1844-1846*. Naval Institute Press. 2004.

Williams, Glenn F. *USS Constellation, A Short History of the Last All-Sail Warship Built by the U.S. Navy*. USS Constellation. 2000.

\*To be added to this small list of excellent printed sources will be:

Canney, Donald L. *The African Squadron, The U.S. Navy and the Slave Trade, 1842-1861*. Potomac Books. September, 2006.

### *World Wide Web Sources.*

“Atlantic Slave Trade” at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic\\_slave\\_trade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_slave_trade)

Handler, Jerome S. and Tuite Jr., Michael L. “The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas, A Visual Record.” At <http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/index.html>

The Mariner’s Museum. “Captive Passage: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Making of the Americas.” at <http://www.mariner.org/captivepassage/index.html>

Mystic Seaport. “Exploring the *Amistad* at Mystic Seaport.” <http://amistad.mysticseaport.org/sitemap/welcome.html>

Williams, Glenn. “The Crowning Crime, The International Slave Trade.” USS *Constellation* website at <http://www.constellation.org>



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Affix 1<sup>st</sup> class  
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