

# Primary Source Activity

The logo for 'networks' features the word in a bold, sans-serif font. The letter 'o' is replaced by a stylized globe icon with several lines radiating from it, suggesting a network or global connection.

## North and South

### Lesson 4 *People of the South*

#### A Life in Slavery

The lives of most enslaved people were miserable and inhuman. They worked hard for long hours, did not earn any money, and had no hope of freedom. Many people believed that slavery was wrong and they fought to end it. They were called abolitionists. The following excerpts are primary source descriptions of the conditions of enslaved people.

A multitude of facts, illustrating the position that slaveholders treat their slaves worse than they do their cattle, will occur to all who are familiar with slavery. When cattle break through their owners' enclosures and escape, if found, they are driven back and fastened in again ... but when *slaves* that have escaped are caught, they are flogged [beaten] with the most terrible severity. When herds of cattle are driven to market, they are suffered to go in the easiest way, each by himself; but when slaves are driven to market, they are fastened together with handcuffs, galled by iron collars and chains, and thus forced to travel on foot hundreds of miles, sleeping at night in their chains. Sheep, and sometimes horned cattle, are marked with their owners' initials—but this is generally done with paint, and of course produces no pain. Slaves, too, are often marked with their owners' initials, but the letters are stamped into their flesh with a hot iron. Cattle are suffered to graze their pastures without stint [limitation]; but the slaves are restrained in their food to a fixed allowance. The slaveholders' horses are far better fed, more moderately worked, have fewer hours of labor, and longer intervals of rest, than their slaves; and their valuable horses are far more comfortably housed and lodged, and their stables more effectually defended from the weather than the slaves' huts.

from "Slavery, a System of Inherent Cruelty"  
by Theodore D. Weld, a well-known abolitionist and educator.  
He helped found the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833.

# Primary Source Activity *Cont.*



## North and South

Now, how is it with the slave? He gets a peck of corn (occasionally a little more) each week, but rarely meat or fish. He must anticipate the sun in rising, or be whipped severely for his somnolency. Rain or shine, he must toil early and late for the benefit of another. If he be weary, he cannot rest—for the lash [whip] of the driver is flourished over his drooping head, or applied to his naked frame; if sick, he is suspected of laziness, and treated accordingly. . . . Has he a wife and children, he sees them as cruelly treated as himself. He may be torn from them, or they from him, at any moment, never again to meet on earth. Friends do not visit and console him: he has no friends. He knows not what is going on beyond his own narrow boundaries. He can neither read nor write. . . . Nor has his wretched condition been imposed upon him for any criminal offence. He has not been tried by the laws of his country. No one has stepped forth to vindicate his rights. He is made an abject slave, simply because God has given him a skin not colored like his master's; and Death, the great Liberator, alone can break his fetters!

from a letter by William Lloyd Garrison, 1830, a white abolitionist from Boston. He started an antislavery newspaper, *The Liberator*, in 1831.

### Reader's Dictionary

- galled** irritated
- vindicate** defend
- peck** about 8 quarts
- abject** miserable
- somnolency** sleepiness

**Directions:** Answer the following questions.

### Analyzing Primary Sources

- 1. Identifying** Give two examples from Weld's writing of how cattle were treated better than enslaved people.

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# Primary Source Activity *Cont.*



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**2. Describing** How is an enslaved person treated when he is sick or tired according to Garrison?

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**3. Interpreting** Do you think an owner values his cattle or his slaves more? Why?

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**4. Explaining** For what reason is someone made a slave according to Garrison?

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### Critical Thinking

**5. Comparing** Both of these excerpts describe the lives of enslaved people. Name two things that they have in common.

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**6. Evaluating** Do you think writings like these would be effective in changing people's opinions about slavery and the treatment of enslaved people?

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