

Chapter 2, “The Middle Passage”

Vocabulary:

Match the words on the left with the definition on the right that comes closest in meaning.

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|-------------------|--|
| 1. ____ sedgy | a. bound together |
| 2. ____ withes | b. make others aware of, in a strong, clear way; take over |
| 3. ____ hogsheads | c. grassy and marsh-like |
| 4. ____ truculent | d. making amends for something |
| 5. ____ manacled | e. slender, flexible branches |
| 6. ____ mangroves | f. large barrels |
| 7. ____ assert | g. trees or shrubs that grow in tropical salty marshes or shallow salt water |
| 8. ____ expiation | h. ready and willing to fight |

Similes and Metaphors

An author sometimes uses *similes* or *metaphors* to make writing more descriptive. A *simile* is a comparison that shows how two different things are alike. A simile uses words such as *like* or *as* to compare. For example: The shining full moon was *like* a great smiling face. A *metaphor* is a comparison of two different things without using words such as *like* or *as*. One thing is said to *be* the other thing. For example: The shining full moon *was* a great smiling face.

Each of the following sentences or phrases from chapters 1 and 2 contains a metaphor or simile. Put an **M** in the space after the sentence if the comparison is a metaphor. Put an **S** if the comparison is a simile.

1. . . . summoned by the music and swaying with it like a field of tall grass before the wind. ____

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2. But the slavers, advancing among them, tossed the At-mun-shi about like leaves in a wind. _____
3. Leaves, large as cloaks, hung down from the trees. _____
4. . . . the At-mun-shi saw a ship. . . . To them it was a great bird sent for their deliverance. _____
5. They stood in a long patient row, like animals trained at last to obey commands. _____
6. Where the great bird in whose belly they lay would bear them he did not know. _____
7. The graceful white-winged bird approached her home port of Boston on the first Sunday in July of the year 1725. _____
8. His own name and the dwindling dust of a few memories was all that he had brought with him from his home land. _____

Questions:

1. Name the four gods to whom At-mun prays during the canoe trip.

2. What does At-mun think of doing while everyone in the canoe sleeps? Why doesn't he do it?

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3. How long do the slavers keep the At-mun-shi in pits?

4. What do the traders exchange for human beings?

5. How many . . .
 - a. . . . slaves did the captain of the White Falcon buy? _____
 - b. . . . slaves died on the way to America? _____
 - c. . . . slaves were sold in Charleston? _____
 - d. . . . slaves were sold between Charleston and Boston? _____

6. How much time passes between At-mun's capture and his arrival in Boston?
What are the only things At-mun possesses when he arrives?

7. Though the author does not specifically tell, which slave stands tall with unbowed head through the horrors of captivity listed in this chapter?

8. Why does At-mun decide to answer Caleb Copeland's question, though he has vowed never to speak to a white man?

Thinking About the Story:

9. Read the following passage from the book:

Frightened and angry, the captives milled around in their confinement. They fought for the food thrown down to them and had neither hate nor friendship in common, only an animal instinct to survive, though for what end no one knew.

The author says that the cruelty to the Africans had left them with only an animal instinct. Explain what is meant by animal instinct. In what other ways do the Africans begin acting more like animals and less like human beings?

10. Read the following passage from the book:

The traders were pleased at what the time and treatment in the pits had done. For the African tribesmen and women now were what they wanted them to be—merchandise that could be exchanged for merchandise

Here the author is also comparing the Africans to merchandise. Why do you think the traders would want the Africans to be like “merchandise”?

11. What two things does At-mun feel he must “burn forever upon his memory”? Why do you think these two memories are most important to him?

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Writing Project:

Imagine that you lived during the time of this story and that you have a friend who is involved in the slave trade. He is unsure whether he should continue in this business and writes to you asking for advice. Write a reply to your friend advising him on what he should do. Give clear reasons why you feel as you do about the slave trade.