Roots Study Guide

Roots by Alex Haley

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Roots: The Saga of an American Family became a sensation immediately after its publication in 1976. It was adapted into a popular miniseries, and became one of the most-watched television programs in American history. Two sequels, *The Next Generation* and *The Gift,* quickly followed.

Roots appealed to readers of every background: for African American readers, the story inspired pride and a greater understanding of the past; and for readers of other ethnicities, it was a powerful look at an American family's immigrant past. Moreover, Haley's work is widely credited with starting the American genealogy craze.

The continuing controversy over Haley's writing and research methods and the facts of his narrative has not dimmed his achievement. *Roots* is viewed as a mythic saga of African American history, portraying the ways in which enslaved Africans endured suffering and fought for their place in American society. It has earned a place among the popular classics of American literature and remains a profoundly influential and well-loved book.

Author Biography

In 1921 Haley was born in Ithaca, New York. He grew up in Henning, Tennessee, and even after his family moved, he spent his summers there. Haley's mother, Bertha, died when he was only twelve years old. Haley's father, Simon, was a respected professor of agriculture who died just before *Roots* was completed.

Haley was an indifferent student and eventually joined the Coast Guard. He found he had a talent for writing, and began to submit pieces to magazines. When he left the service at age thirty-seven, he had become the chief journalist for the Coast Guard, a position that had been created for him.

After struggling to make ends meet in his new civilian life, Haley received an assignment from *Playboy* to interview Miles Davis, the first of what were to become infamous as "the *Playboy* interviews." Soon afterwards, he began to collaborate with Malcolm X on his autobiography, which after Malcolm X's death in 1965 became a bestseller.

After finishing his book on Malcolm X, Haley began researching his own family history. He traced the names of Tom and Irene Murray, his great-grandparents, and found a *griot* in Africa with knowledge of the Kinte family.

After twelve years of research, he wrote *Roots: The Saga of an American Family,* which became an immediate best-seller. It was adapted into the wildly popular television miniseries of the same name. The miniseries was followed by another. *Roots: The Next Generation,* and the television

movies *Roots: The Gift, Queen,* a drama about Haley's paternal grandmother, and *Mama Flora's Family,* centering on the life of his maternal great-grandmother.

After the publication of *Roots,* Haley spent much time lecturing around the country. On a lecture trip to Seattle in 1992. Haley suffered a heart attack and died at age seventy-one.

Plot Summary

Kunta Kinte

Roots begins in a small African village named Juffure with the birth of a son to Omoro and Binta Kinte. The boy is named Kunta Kinte in honor of his famous grandfather, Kairaba Kunta Kinte, who saved the people of Juffure from a terrible drought.

At the age of five, Kunta graduates to the second *kafo.* He begins to herd goats and go to school. When he is eight, Kunta goes with his father on a journey to visit the new village his uncles, Janneh and Saloum, have founded. By this time, he has formed a close relationship with his younger brother, Lamin.

At the age of ten, Kunta completes his schooling and goes through his manhood training with his mates. He moves into his own hut and gets his own land to farm. By fifteen, he has built a thriving farm. One day, while hunting for wood with which to make a drum, Kunta is captured by white slavers, known as the *toubob.*

On the long journey to the United States, the slavers place Kunta in the hold of a ship with dozens of other men. After a harrowing journey across the ocean, Kunta and the surviving men and women arrive in Virginia. Kunta begins plotting his escape.

Almost as soon as he has the strength, he tries to escape; he is quickly recaptured. He tries again three more times. On the fourth attempt, the two white patrollers who catch him cut off half of his foot. He quickly loses consciousness, and wakes to find himself on a new farm.

While he recovers, he is tended by Bell, a young African American slave who will later become his wife. Kunta soon meets Fiddler, a talkative man who teaches him English and tells him about events beyond the plantation. He is given the name "Toby" but he insists to Fiddler that Kunta Kinte is his real name.

Kunta begins to work in the plantation garden. He realizes that he prefers life on the plantation to the certainty of death if he tries to escape, though he knows that this acceptance will come at a terrible price to his soul. After Luther, the driver, is sold for helping a young girl escape, Kunta becomes the new driver for the master of the plantation, a doctor named Master Waller.

His new position makes him a source for information about current events. Fiddler resents Kunta's new position, although it does not destroy their friendship. One Thanksgiving, after he has driven Master Waller to a ball, he meets another African, one of the most joyous experiences of his life Soon afterward, influenced by Boteng Bediako's words to him, "[s]eeds you's got a-plenty, you jes' needs de wife to plant 'em in," he marries Bell and they have a daughter, Kizzy.

Although Kunta loves his daughter, he does not approve of the friendship she forms with Miss Anne, Master Waller's niece. When he drives Kizzy to Miss Anne's house, he tells her about Africa and teaches her many Mandinka words, something Kizzy will pass on to her descendants. When Miss Anne and Kizzy are teenagers, they begin to drift apart, as Anne starts courting and their difference in status becomes too much to ignore

Kizzy begins an affair with Noah, another slave, which ends in tragedy when she is caught trying to help Noah escape. Bell and Kunta plead with Master Waller not to sell Kizzy, but she is sold to a man named Tom Lea. She never sees her parents again.

Kizzy

Almost immediately, Tom Lea rapes Kizzy and impregnates her with her only child, a son Lea names George. Although Kizzy initially rejects George, she comes to love him□as do the other blacks in the quarters, Sister Sarah, Malizy, and Uncle Pompey. As soon as George is old enough, Kizzy teaches him about her father, Kunta Kinte.

By the time George is nine, he has begun to "preach," amusing the blacks and whites alike. Tom Lea decides to apprentice George to Uncle Mingo, who cares for Lea's fighting cocks. When he orders George to move in with Mingo, nearer to the birds, Kizzy, in her anger, blurts out that Lea is George's father.

Chicken George

George quickly becomes expert at handling the cocks, and begins to make money from "hack fight-

ing" with other African Americans, using the master's rejected birds to stage side fights. After liaisons with women on neighboring plantations, George marries Matilda.

The religious and responsible Matilda□ known as Tilda□quickly becomes part of the slave community on Lea's plantation. As George and Tilda's children grow up, George teaches them about their heritage. George's fourth son is named after Tom Lea, and grows up to become a blacksmith and the leader of the family.

George, Tom, and Tilda try to earn enough money to buy the family's freedom. Unfortunately their entire savings is lost when Tom Lea bets his own and George's money at a cockfight against Lord John Russell. George is sent to England with Lord Russell as part of Lea's payoff on the bet, though Lea promises George his freedom on his return to the United States.

In George's absence, Lea's fortunes continue to decline. He sells Tilda and her children, leaving Kizzy, Malizy, Sarah, and Pompey on the plantation. Lea agrees to Tom's request that he sell the older folks too, but Tom knows it might take years to do so. Uncle Pompey is found dead on the day they are due to leave.

Tom

Tom diligently works to save money to buy freedom for his family members. He marries a half-Native American woman, Irene, who brightens the family's lives. They quickly start a family of their own; the youngest is Cynthia, who will grow up to be Alex Haley's grandmother.

When George arrives from England, he gets his freedom from a drunken Tom Lea. He arrives on the Murray plantation for a reunion with his family, but is soon forced to leave because free blacks are not allowed to live in the state.

Soon after, the Civil War begins Tom works for the Confederate Army, is accused of stealing, and nearly killed. The white boy who actually did the stealing, George Johnson, ends up begging for food from the slave cabins, and is made the overseer by Master Murray. Eventually Johnson endears himself to the slave community by working as hard as they do, and never exhibiting any prejudice. "Ol' George" remains a part of the community even after they are emancipated, which they are in 1865, at the war's end.

The family soon moves to Henning, Tennessee after George meets some whites who need their help building a new town. Tom earns the respect of the whites after he builds a traveling blacksmith shop. The African Americans in Henning build a strong community of their own, and they construct a church that becomes the center of the community.

Tom forbids his daughter Elizabeth from marrying a "high yaller" light-skinned black man. Tilda dies, followed by a heartbroken George. Tom's youngest daughter Cynthia marries Will Palmer, who becomes the owner of Henning' s only lumber business.

The Haleys

Cynthia and Will Palmer have a daughter, Bertha, who marries Simon Alexander Haley at a wedding that everyone in town□black and white□ attends. Bertha and Simon quickly surprise Cynthia and Will with a son, Alex, who will grow up to write *Roots.*

Alex spends a lot of time in Henning as a child, developing a close relationship with his grandfather, Will Palmer, and his grandmother and great aunts, particularly after his mother dies. After growing up and becoming a writer, Haley decides to research the family stories he so often heard as a child.

Alex meets a linguist who pinpoints the origins of the remembered African words, and he journeys to Africa. He arrives in Juffure to meet a *griot* who knows of the Kinte family, and learns of a man named Kunta Kinte who went to chop wood for a drum and is never seen again. Haley excitedly tells the *griot* that in *his* family story, an African named Kunta is captured after going to chop wood for a drum.

The men of Juffure give thanks to Allah for the return of one who has been long lost. The villagers call Haley "Mr. Kinte," which touches him deeply. Haley decides to write a book that will be a symbolic saga of all people of African descent. After twelve years of research, he writes *Roots.*

Chapters 1-10

Chapters 1-10 Summary

In 1750 a boy is born in the village of Juffure in the Gambia, West Africa, to Omoro and Binta Kinte of the Mandinka tribe. The old, wrinkled midwives, Nyo Boto and the baby's grandmother, Yaisa, rejoice to see that the baby is a boy, as their Muslim belief is that Allah bestows special blessings on both the parents of a first-born son and their families. The boy's father, Omoro, happily announces the birth of his son to the other men of the village as they return home from their morning prayers, and before the men all go off to their daily work, farming the fields surrounding the village.

A week later, all the villagers gather for the baby boy's naming ceremony. This ceremony is very important to the Mandinka people as they believe that a child develops the characteristics of whoever or whatever he is named after. The alimamo, a prayer-leader, asks Allah to grant the boy a long and successful life, and then Omoro whispers the boy's chosen name first into the baby's own ear, since it is believed that each person should be the first to hear his or her own name. Omoro then whispers the name to the 'arafang,' or teacher, who announces it to the whole gathering. The boy is to be called 'Kunta,' after his late grandfather, Kairaba Kunte Kinte. He had been the village's holy man and much revered for having saved the villagers from famine when he first arrived from his native Mauritania. Omoro later completes the naming ritual alone with his son, by holding him up to the heavens and telling him 'Behold - the only thing greater than yourself.'

Soon after, Binta returns to work on her rice plot with the other women of the village, taking Kunta with her in a sling across her back. Omoro has built a shelter at the rice plot for Kunta. Soon the food from the previous harvest has been depleted, and when the early rains begin, the villagers plant their crops, and the women conduct their annual fertility ceremonies in the fields, chanting ancestral prayers for a good harvest. As Kunta grows, he joins the other children of the 'first kafo,' who are under 5 years of age. The grandmothers of the village, who tell them many stories, often with a moral theme, look after these children.

As their food supplies run low, Nyo Boto tells the children of a time when the village suffered a serious drought, and people began to die. It was then that Kairaba Kunta Kinte was believed to have been sent by Allah to the village, where he prayed continuously for five days, following which the rains arrived and the village was saved. Kunta now senses what an important man his grandfather was, and how well respected his widow, Yaisa, is among the villagers. Even though the annual rains are now falling on Juffure, the people still go hungry and some die as the growing crops are not yet ripe enough to eat. The men are too weak to go hunting wild game, and tribal taboos forbid the Mandinka clan to eat any of the numerous monkeys and baboons which live wild around the village. As devout Moslems they would never dream of eating the wild pigs. Death and disease continue to sweep the village, and Grandma Yaisa becomes very

frail. When Kunta visits her, she tells him the story of his grandfather, who came from a family of holy men and had himself been ordained in his mid-30s, after traveling throughout Africa as a pilgrim for many years. When he heard of the plight of Juffure, he came to save the village, married his first wife and had two sons, Janneh and Saloum, before later marrying the 15-year old Yaisa, who gave birth to Omoro, Kunta's father.

One morning, Kunta is told that he has a new baby brother, who is later named Lamin. Shortly after Lamin's birth, Grandma Yaisa dies and is taken in a traditional ceremonial procession to the burial ground some distance away from the village. Kunta is very distressed at the death of his grandmother, until his father tells him that three groups of people live in every village - those you can see, the ancestors, and those waiting to be born. Food gradually becomes more plentiful, and the village comes to life again. Kunta enjoys playing boisterously with the other village boys, including his special friend Sitafa Silla. The boys have all been taught to pay the greatest respect to adults, especially Kunta, whose mother Binta is strict and will not tolerate any bad behavior. When a new moon is seen to be shrouded in clouds, the villagers beg Allah for forgiveness, as they believe that the heavenly spirits are displeased with them. Like those in surrounding villages, their drums are beaten to appeal for a magic man to come to come and drive out the evil spirits. Two days later, a magic man does arrive and banishes the spirits from the village before accepting gifts and moving on.

A year later when Kunta and his friends are four years old, they are given the task of escorting visitors into Juffure during the Gambia's season for travelers. The boys of Kunta's kafo are envious of those aged five to nine who are in the second kafo, as these boys are taught the Koran by the arafang, and then have to herd the goats into the brushlands for the day's grazing. This year, however, Kunta and his friends are allowed to help their fathers to harvest the crops. As is the custom, these young boys have remained naked up to this time. Now, their mothers sew them their first dundikos to cover themselves, signifying that they have officially joined the second kafo and are starting to become men.

Omoro gives Kunta his first slingshot and announces that he will begin tending goats and going to school. They are trained in goat herding by the older boys, and warned about the dangers lurking in the nearby forest, including lions and panthers, and especially the 'toubob' and their black slatee helpers who steal people and take them away to be eaten. The boys proudly begin their study of the Koran under the guidance of Brima Cesay, the arafang, and then they tend the goats by themselves for the first time, as the older boys are now preparing for their final examinations in Koranic recitations and in the writing of Arabic. Kunta feels overwhelmed by all his new responsibilities and reflects that he has no time for any serious thinking any more.

Chapters 1-10 Analysis

The early chapters of Roots are about Kunta's childhood in the Gambia, which contrasts sharply with his later youth and adulthood as a slave in North America.

It is evident from these opening chapters of the book that Kunta is very much loved and cherished by his parents and grandmother, which makes his later capture seem all the more tragic, particularly as it is becomes clear that he will never see his family or his village again.

Islam is extremely important in Kunta's early life, and he continues to practice alone as a Muslim as best he can for the remainder of his life. In contrast to commonly-held beliefs about the societies from which slaves were taken, Kunta came from a culture in which education was extremely important, and in which children studied Islam and learned how to write Arabic from an early age. He was also very well disciplined by his mother Binta, who regarded courtesy and good behavior as being of paramount importance, and this set the standard for his behavior throughout life.

Rituals and ceremony are very important in the Mandinka clan, and include the traditional naming ceremony, which Kunta will cling onto as his link with his African past, and pass down through the later generations of his family as a continuing reminder of their African heritage. Other important aspects of village life include the separation of men and women, who even sleep in their own separate huts, and the importance of the rituals marking the coming of age at different stages of childhood and youth.

Another key theme is the poverty and vulnerability of the villagers and their extreme dependence on the seasons. The village frequently suffers starvation in times of drought and many become ill and die. In his later life in America, despite all the suffering that Kunta undergoes, hunger is one problem which he never has to face again. In one sense, therefore, through becoming a slave, he escaped the threat of starvation and survived to father successive generations of the Kinte family.

Chapters 11-20

Chapters 11-20 Summary

The villagers of Juffure are preparing for their annual harvest festival celebration. The women are especially busy, as they have to harvest the rice, help the men to pick cotton, and sew new clothes for their families. The men are also kept busy repairing the village fence and the huts, and building new huts for newly wed couples. At this time, the children are left to play unattended, since even the old grandmothers are occupied in making hairpieces for the unmarried girls of the village to wear at the harvest festival. When the first day of the weeklong harvest festival arrives, Kunta and his friends rush to watch the costumed adults dancing wildly to the festival drumbeat. Caught up in the beat, Kunta finds himself joining in. After a whole day's dancing, the highlight of the second day of festivities is a parade for this year's 'people of honor,' including the arafang, the alimamo, the hunters, and the senior elders. As the second kafo boys form their own parade, Kunta sees pride in his parents' eyes as they watch him. Many travelers visit Juffure at this time, including traders who set up stalls of their wares, traveling musicians, griots who tell stories of ancient kings, clans, battles and legends, and religious griots who conduct ceremonies to appease Allah.

However, pagan traders selling tobacco and alcohol pass by, knowing that the people here are Moslems who do not smoke or drink. Towards the end of the festival, drum beat from a nearby village challenges the people of Juffure to a traditional wrestling match, and the villagers rush to watch the match in which their own wrestlers narrowly beat the visiting opponents. The wrestling is a prelude to the traditional courtship ceremony, in which the village's unmarried girls join the wrestlers in a dance, following which each girl flings her headwrap into the ring. If any of the men pick it up, it signifies his interest in the girl and the possibility that he might consult her father about her bridal price. If a visiting wrestler picks up the headwrap, the girl will be lost through marriage to the other village.

On the final day of the harvest festival, Kunta is awoken by screams, and discovers that the boys of the third kafo are being taken from their huts by the men of the village, who are wearing fierce masks and tall headdresses, for their manhood training. Now Kunta and his peers are anxious and distracted, realizing that they will be the next group of boys who are hooded and taken away for the year-long training, believed to involve hunting wild animals, forest survival, and circumcision. The second kafo boys have now improved their goatherding skills, and are also very competent at shooting small creatures with their slingshots, bows and arrows. While tending the herds, they often play imaginative games of stalking wild game. Kunta enjoys the occasions when he is separated from the other boys and fantasizes about stalking a dangerous mad buffalo and being rewarded with a drink of water by the most beautiful village maiden. During one of these daydreams he lets his goats escape and feels very ashamed.

The hot dry season arrives early and, drained by the heat, the boys no longer play wildly while tending their goats. Yet they still need to collect firewood for the village as the night-times are very cold. In the evenings, the villagers sit in separate groups around their fires: the men in one group, the women and unmarried girls in another, the elders in another, and the old grandmothers and young children in a fourth group. When the dusty, dry harmattan wind arrives, the villagers of Juffure become irritable and many quarrels occur, especially between spouses.

After the winds subside and the heat returns, the eight-year old Kunta reflects on the hardships faced by his people. Binta is expecting another child, and her temper is even shorter than usual. Kunta feels sorry for his younger brother Lamin, and asks starts taking him out with him. Gradually, the brothers grow close; Kunta is proud to teach Lamin the things he knows, and he feels protective of his younger brother, while Lamin idolizes Kunta. Kunta feels irritated at this time that he is still of the second kafo, a mere child who still sleeps in his mother's hut. He likes to pretend, when he is with Lamin, that he is a grown man taking his son on a special journey. When Lamin asks Kunta, 'What are slaves?' Kunta feels ashamed that he does not really know. He asks his father, who explains that many slaves lived among them in Juffure, and could be identified by the fact that their huts were roofed with a different type of thatching grass to the huts of free people. He told Kunta that people become slaves in different ways; some had been starving in their own villages and had come to Juffure and begged to be the slave of someone who would feed them, while others had once been enemies and had been taken as prisoners. Omoro explained that slaves were respected and looked after by the villagers, their rights were protected by village laws, and that many became very prosperous and later bought their freedom.

Kunta is surprised and curious when Omoro tells him that Nyo Boto is a slave. On visiting the old lady, he asks her about her past and she tells him that her own village had been burned down by white slave raiders. Nyo Boto's two babies and her aged mother had been murdered by the slave raiders, and she herself had been taken prisoner along with the other able-bodied villagers and marched for days bound neck-to-neck with thongs. When the line of prisoners reached Juffure on their journey to the river, Nyo Boto had been sold to the village for a bag of corn.

After their visit to Nyo Boto, Kunta recalls recent incidents in which villagers were believed to have been stolen away by the toubob, or slave-raiders. Omoro tells him and Lamin about a time when he had been invited by his brothers to observe the toubob at the Kamby Bolongo river, and they had seen the canoes on the river, the black helpers stacking the cargoes, and the beatings and cruelties inflicted on the prisoners. He tells them that the slaves had all their hair cut off, their teeth, throats and private parts inspected, and then were branded with hot irons across their backs and shoulders before being loaded into big canoes.

According to the elders, Omoro says, the slaves were taken to a land where they would be sold to huge cannibals and eaten. One day, Kunta tells Lamin about their uncles Janneh and Saloum the great travelers, and acts out their legendary journeys into different parts of Africa. A few days later, word reaches Juffure that the uncles are

building a new village, five days' walking to the east, and would like Omoro to attend the ceremonial blessing. Kunta hardly dares to hope that his father will take him along, and is ecstatic when Omoro tells him had had already told Binta that he would be going. Before leaving the village, Kunta visits old Nyo Boto, who presents him with a saphie charm to encircle his upper arm, and tells him that the charm had been blessed by his grandfather for the manhood training of Omoro's first son. Nyo Boto says that this journey will be the real start of his manhood training.

The night before Kunta leaves, he hears his mother crying, and when it is time to go she hugs him tightly, making him feel truly loved. Then he and his father carry out the traditional ritual of scraping up the dust of their first footprints and putting it into their hunters' bags, to ensure that their footsteps would return to the village. When they reach the traveler's tree, Omoro adds two cloth strips to the hundreds already hanging there, each representing the prayer of a traveler that his journey would be safe and blessed.

On the way, Kunta struggles to keep up with his father's pace, and soon becomes very tired, but resolves not to stop.

When Omoro finally halts by a pool of water, Kunta gratefully takes a drink and then falls asleep. After he awakes, Kunta feels nervous when Omoro warns him that the toubob are not far away, and they must sleep in a village that night for safety. They walk on, seeing the trails of hyenas and elephants, and moving into an unfamiliar landscape of heavy grasses, palms and cactus. They spend the night in a village inhabited mainly by old or sick people, which had been attacked by slave-raiders some time before. After setting off the next day, Kunta is soon exhausted and his feet are bleeding, but his father insists they carry on. They pass many villages on the way, some of which are deserted, and some of which they visit at the invitation of the village elders. On these occasions, Kunta is very proud to be the centre of attention of the village children who envy his adventure.

Finally, Kunta and Omoro reach the new village, their arrival announced by drumbeat. Omoro's brothers greet them rapturously and take them on a tour of the impressive new village. Kunta is very excited by the new experiences and fascinated to see many people from other tribes there, such as the Wolof, Serahuli and Jolas.

Mingling with the other children, Kunta learns that the villagers were people who had been dissatisfied with living in their old homes and had followed Kunta's uncles to live in their new village. That evening, everyone sits together around the fires, and the alimamo blesses the gathering, before Janneh and Saloum tell stories of their many adventures. They talk of the importance of gold and salt in the history of Africa and show the gathering a map of Africa, etched on a large piece of tanned hide, and the location of The Gambia on the map. They tell of toubob ships which land on the north African coast bringing goods from far-off lands. These are transported into Africa by camels and donkeys inland, and African products are taken back to the ships and exported. Kunta is enthralled by the tales and vows to visit the exotic places he hears about.

Drums announce the arrival of the marabout, or holy man, and his party of wives, children, students and slaves. The marabout is soon dealing with the many requests of the villagers, and Kunta himself, who has purchased a piece of goatskin, asks the holy man to bless it, as he secretly plans to ask Nyo Boto to keep it safe for the saphie charm of his own first-born son. Observing this holy man, Kunta now truly understands how great his own grandfather was, and how important Islam is in their society.

Chapters 11-20 Analysis

The descriptions of the African village society from which Kunta originates contrast sharply with the Western perspective which saw eighteenth-century Africa as a very primitive place. Kunta's village is shown to be a complex society, with its organization and way of life being based on a combination of Islam and traditional African customs and rituals. Men are regarded in very high esteem, and everyone has an established role, which is defined by their age, gender and family background. This is not an isolated society. On the contrary, there is considerable contact with surrounding communities, and news travels the country in the language of the drumbeat. The stories told by Kunta's uncles, and the map they showed to the gathering at the new village, demonstrated just how advanced Africans were at that time, as they had already explored and mapped out much of their continent and were actively engaged in trade with the west on an equal footing. The practice of slave trading would change this balance as the continent became depleted of many of its able-bodied people.

Slaves already existed as a category of people in traditional African society, but were treated respectfully by the communities in which they lived, and often became quite prosperous.

Indeed, like all categories of people in the village, from the youngest to the oldest, they had an important role in village life, and received respect and recognition for their contributions. The western slave-raiders, on the other hand, dehumanized their captives, introducing the sort of brutal practices which Omoro and his brothers had observed at the river, and which had been experienced by Nyo Boto at her original village. The villagers now lived in fear and dread of the slave-raiders, and the African traitors, or slatees, who helped them.

Kunta's own personality traits are already largely formed by the time he is eight years old, by which time he is already thinking in a mature way and no longer wants to be seen as a child. Like the other boys of his age, he both dreads and eagerly anticipates his manhood training, and is very proud when his father takes him on the journey to the new village as this is a sign that his father recognizes his growing maturity. He is very proud and endures the pain and fatigue of the journey without complaint, as he wishes to show that he deserves the privilege of accompanying his father on the trip. These traits reflect the culture of the society in which he lives, in which male bravery and honor are of paramount importance. Younger boys look up to and learn these traits from their older brothers and fathers, as can be seen in the growing relationship between Kunta and Lamin.

Kunta also has a vivid imagination and is inclined to daydream. He is adventurous and dreams of traveling to distant lands, being motivated particularly by the experiences of his uncles. When his goats escape during one of Kunta's daydreams, it is the first sign that his lapses of concentration will be his downfall. Ironically, he will travel to a distant land, but as a slave rather than a free man. When Kunta mingles with people from many different tribes in his uncles' new village, this foreshadows his later experiences on the slave ship.

Chapters 21-30

Chapters 21-30 Summary

When Kunta returns to Juffure, he is eager to tell the other second kafo boys of his adventures. It is while they are distracted by one of his stories that a panther attacks and kills one of Omoro's goats. Kunta is ashamed that he has let his father down, and cuts off the goat's hide to take to him, as is the custom. He believes that Allah is punishing him for boasting and fears that his father will send him away from the village. However, Omoro just tells Kunta to learn a lesson from the incident, and Kunta feels deep love for his father. At ten years old Kunta graduates from his second-kafo education, having been publicly tested on history, mathematics, Arabic writing, and Koranic reading. There is a big feast to celebrate the boys' graduation, and the next day Omoro presents Kunta with two goats as a graduation present. The boys of Kunta's age anxiously await the next harvest festival when they will be taken far away from Juffure for their manhood training.

Eventually this festival arrives, and on the last night Omoro comes into Binta's hut and pulls a long hood down over Kunta's head, leaving him sitting terrified on a stool to await the break of day. In the morning, he is snatched up roughly and taken through the door into a deafening noise of drums and screeching voices. He cries under his hood, realizing that he won't see his family for four months, and that when he returns to the village, it will be as a man.

The boys are forced to march until mid-afternoon when they reach the jujuo and their hoods are at last removed. Kunta is nervous to see that the strict elder Silla Ba Dibba will be their kintango, or trainer. The jujuo has several mud huts, surrounded by a bamboo fence. From the outset, the training is brutal and strict, with many beatings. On the first night, the boys are forced to undertake a night march into the forest, being verbally abused and beaten on the way, until they are eventually allowed to stop and eat. For six consecutive nights they are forced to march into the jungle again.

Although Kunta's feet are badly blistered, he starts to feel pride in his accomplishments, especially when he successfully leads the boys back using only the stars as a guide. In the next stage of their training, the boys observe and copy the techniques of wild animals in hunting, deep in the bush. When one of the boys breaks the rules one day by shouting out when a large bird lands near them, he is ordered by the kintango to bring him the live bird. The boy is missing for four days, but eventually returns having captured the bird. The kintango tells the boys that this teaches them to do as they are told, and keep their mouths shut, if they want to be men.

By the second month of their manhood training, the boys are already making good progress in jungle survival and hunting and are learning other skills such as the secret language of men. They realize that the welfare of the group depends on each one of them, and they grow in their respect for the kintango and his teaching methods. After

three months, the boys are elated to see their fathers, older brothers and uncles arrive at the jujuo, yet the men show no sign of having recognized the younger boys, and when one boy rushes to his father, he receives from him a beating and is scolded for showing his emotions. The men silently watch the boys' demonstrations of their new skills and leave. Later that night, one of the assistants whispers to Kunta that he has a new brother, Madi, the fourth boy of the family.

As he drifts off to sleep that night, Kunta reflects proudly on how the Kunte family history will sound when it is told by successive generations of griots. Kunta and the other boys are taught how to be warriors, and learn about the famous Mandinka warrior Sundiata, his defeat of the armies of the cruel King Soumaoro, and how he brought long-lasting peace to Mandinka lands. Juffure's wrestling team arrive at the jujuo to train the boys in wrestling techniques, and their visit is followed by that of an old griot, Kujali N'jai, who teaches the boys about the crucial role of griots in passing on the historical record of the Mandinka tribe. He tells them tales of old Africa, including the rich kingdoms of ancestral Ghana and ancient Mali, which had become prosperous due to their positions on the ancient trading routes, and Timbuktu in Mali, the major center of learning which was populated by thousands of scholars. A few days later a Moro, the highest grade of teacher in the Gambia, visits the camp and reads to the boys from the Koran and from the Bible. He also teaches them how to conduct themselves in the mosque, which they will be visiting for their daily prayers once they return home as men. As he falls asleep that night, Kunta reflects on the inter-connectedness of everything he has been learning, and feels his own place in the world to be small yet important. The time now arrives for the circumcision which the boys have been dreading. They are lined up and asked to hold out their penises, which are then wrapped in a leaf covered with a numbing green paste.

The boys' fathers and uncles arrive for the ceremony which commences in the evening with drumbeat, while costumed dancers brandish spears among the frightened boys. Then each boy is summoned behind a screen for the operation. Once their penises start to heal, the boys feel proud that they have truly become men. As a final test, they have to return to Juffure in the middle of the night and steal provisions from their mothers' storehouses, a ritual which tests whether they can outsmart all women, even their mothers. The mothers play their part by pretending not to have heard their sons. Finally, the kintango tells them of their new responsibility to guard Juffure, and to ensure the village is kept clean and orderly. They return home triumphantly, but reflective of their experiences and what lies ahead of them.

Kunta is greeted by an emotional and proud Binta, who is carrying her new baby Madi in a sling. Now Kunta must behave as a man, and does not show any emotion, although he feels proud to be the centre of attention among the women and younger children. Looking for his father, he finds him cutting thatch for the hut that will be Kunta's own. Despite their pride, they talk unemotionally and in an everyday manner about the work to be done on the hut. Next, Kunta goes to visit Nyo Boto, who he has missed very much. He is hurt that she shows no emotion on seeing him, not knowing that she herself feels even more pain to have to act this way towards Kunta, as he is now a man. Kunta

shows the same coolness towards his brother Lamin, who is excited and proud to see him when he returns from tending the goats.

The next day, Kunta joins the other men at the mosque for the early morning prayers, after which he and the other boys conduct a thorough inspection of the village and apprehend many villagers for failing to meet their high standards. Kunta soon settles into his new life as a man of the village, and accumulates many possessions for his hut by trading couscous and groundnuts for other goods. Now that he is older, he increasingly starts to dream about what it would be like to be with a woman. He also starts to feel restless and sorry for himself, feeling that his work is worthless compared with the more important duties of the older boys.

At this time, Kunta's relationship with his mother deteriorates. Binta always seems to disapprove of what he does and is particularly annoyed when he takes possession of something that she has not made for him, such as the woven basket given to him by a widow who Kunta has become friendly with.

One day, Kunta meets three young travelers who invite him to accompany them to hunt for gold, and draw him a map in the dust. Kunta decides to follow their trail and asks Omoro if he might take Lamin along. Omoro agrees and Lamin rushes to Kunta's hut in great joy, but Kunta has to conceal the great love he feels for his brother, in accordance with the code of behavior they live under. Like Kunta on his earlier journey with Omoro, Lamin finds the journey very difficult, but his pride ensures that he keeps up with Kunta. On the second day, they meet an old man who is on his way to see Timbuktu before he dies.

Walking on, Kunta turns to tell Lamin about Timbuktu, and reprimands himself when he realizes that Lamin had fallen behind and he had not noticed his absence. Further on, Kunta fails to notice a panther on the limb of a tree in front of them, until Lamin alerts him, and Kunta realizes that he needs to stop his habit of daydreaming, which is preventing him from being a good hunter. Eventually they arrive at the clay pits where they had arranged to meet the three travelers and to search for grains of gold in the clay. They find enough to fill six pigeon quills, which they take back to Juffure and present to Binta. She is very happy and proud of her sons and her relationship with Kunta now improves. He often helps her to look after his younger brothers and starts to look forward to having a family of his own.

Chapters 21-30 Analysis

The main theme of this part of the novel is Kunta's progression into manhood. The four-month- long-manhood-training is brutal and arduous, but it prepares the boys fully for their future lives as hunters and for their role as the men of Juffure. The content of the training reflects the values and attributes which are of highest importance in the society, including bravery, hunting skills, self-discipline, control of the emotions, and knowledge and awareness of their cultural heritage.

Having completed his manhood training, life seems anti-climatic to Kunta, who becomes restless and dissatisfied with his daily existence in Juffure. He continues to daydream about traveling to far-away places, inspired by the stories that he heard from the griot. These stories reveal how advanced African societies were at this time as trading and educational centers, before the continent's regression which resulted from mass slave-taking. At this stage, Kunta does not appreciate his life in Juffure, which will be so cruelly taken away from him and for which he will spend the rest of his life yearning. However, his great love for and appreciation of his family is always in evidence, despite the protocol which, now that he is a man, prevents him from displaying his emotions.

Chapters 31-40

Chapters 31-40 Summary

Kunta often sits at the edge of the formal sessions of Juffure's Council of Elders, which passes judgment on cases brought to it in accordance with the principles of Islam and traditional village law. Everyone is treated fairly by the Council; even slaves can bring cases against their Masters. People wishing to marry must obtain the permission of the Council, and this may be refused if it is discovered that one of the partners is not of good character. The council hears many charges of adultery, in response to which the offending man is usually required to give up his possessions to the wronged husband, or to become his slave for a period of time. Repeat adulterers may be publicly flogged as required by ancient Moslem law.

Kunta learns that a husband can divorce a troublesome wife by putting three of her possessions outside her hut and uttering 'I divorce you' in the presence of witnesses. He also discovers that a man accused of being inadequate of lovemaking by his wife will be observed in the sexual act by three old people appointed by the council as judges. One day two boys of Kunta's age ask the council for permission to have 'teriya' friendships with two of the village's widows, who would cook for them and sleep with them until the time comes for the boys to marry, and their request is approved. A case which fascinates Kunta is that of Jankeh Jallon, a teenage girl who had been raped by a slave-raider and had given birth to a pale-skinned baby. Shunned by the villagers, Jankeh had approached the council for help, and they adjourned to consider her case further.

While on his lookout platform one night, Kunta is thinking about his secret plan to travel to Mali, the home of his forefathers. He had already consulted the arafang about the route and had plans to take Lamin with him. At daybreak, instead of going straight home, he decides to go and chop some wood for the frame of the drum he is making. He lingers on the way, enjoying the view and thinking about its permanency. He is just entering a grove to chop a tree trunk when a white toubob (slave-trader) rushes towards him, followed by another toubob and two slatees (black helpers). Kunta kicks and punches wildly, but falls unconscious when the men club him on the temple.

Four days after his capture, Kunta is lying naked, chained and shackled, on wooden planks between two other men in the hold of a ship. It is pitch dark, very hot and foul-smelling. He hears men all around him who are vomiting, weeping, praying, and crying out in different local dialects. Kunta also vomits and empties his bowels in fear, and prays to Allah for forgiveness for whatever he is being punished for. He recalls that after his capture he was gagged, blindfolded and bound with rope, and then taken to a place where there were other male and female captives. Two other white men arrived, including a short, stout man with white hair, who inspected the prisoners' private parts, and selected six of them, including Kunta. These six were branded on their backs with a hot iron, chained together and taken by canoe to the ship, where they are now held in

captivity. When Kunta feels the ship start to move, he feels instinctively that he will never see Africa again.

As the days pass, Kunta forces himself to eat the disgusting mixture of ground maize and palm oil that the toubob bring the prisoners daily, in order to keep up his strength. A slatee, or black toubob helper, is discovered by the prisoners to be among them and is killed by the neighboring man, a member of the Foulah tribe who are renowned for being quiet and gentle. This man is in turn savagely beaten by the toubob when they discover what he has done. The conditions become increasingly unbearable, the planks being covered with a thick layer of urine, vomit and faeces, and the men all infested with body lice and fleas. Eventually the toubob release the prisoners from their chains and take them on deck where they are doused with seawater and scrubbed with brushes, causing agonizing pain where they have whip wounds. Kunta observes that there are many toubob on the ship, mostly pale and ugly, and some with deformities and the scars of injury or disease. He notices that the ship has a high barricade of bamboo half-way across, with metal sticks and a large barrel poking through it towards the naked prisoners.

Some naked black women and children are herded from behind the barricade, the girls being leered at by the white men. When two of the toubob start to play an accordion and an African drum, the others dance, gesturing for the prisoners to join in. One of the black women shrieks in Mandinka, 'Jump to kill toubob!' and the girls start singing in a happy tone, but in the Mandinka language they tell how they had been used like dogs by the men. 'Kill toubob!' they sing. The shackled men join in, hopping weakly up and down, until the white-haired chief toubob approaches, inspects them and smears grease on their wounds.

A young girl escapes her guards and leaps over the ship's rail, but as she swims away she is caught and eaten by a shark. The shocked prisoners are taken back into the hold. Now there is a constant buzz of sound, as the men develop increasingly sophisticated communication methods to talk of their families, villages and professions, with those who can speak more than one language being used to pass on messages. One day, the question is relayed whether anyone is from Juffure, and Kunta confirms that he is. He is told that one of the men had heard the drums of his grieving village, and dissolves into sobs to think of his family's pain. When a prayer to Allah is whispered around, the Wolof man next to Kunta makes it known that he is not a Moslem, and Kunta realizes that they can never be friends.

The men start making plans to attack and kill the toubob, but there is now a split between those supporting a fierce Wolof, who wants to attack immediately, and those who are behind the Foulah, who favors longer preparation before the attack, and wants to keep some toubob alive to sail the ship back to Africa. One day, when everyone on deck is distracted by a flight of flying fish, the Wolof snatches a toubob's 'metal stick' and clubs him with it, killing this man and hitting several others, before he is overpowered and beheaded with a knife.

Chaos erupts, and the metal sticks and the big barrel erupt in a roar of smoke. The prisoners are herded back into the hold and chained in place, but a toubob is mistakenly locked in with them and they all shout threats to kill him. They are then taken back on deck and made to watch the Wolof's body being beaten into a pulp. Back in the hold, the Foulah announces that they will attack the toubob the next time they are taken on deck. However, the plan never materializes as that night a massive storm hits the ship and water starts pouring into the hold. The toubob close off the windows, but many prisoners die and others, like Kunta, fall unconscious and are taken up onto the deck. A contagious disease now spreads among the remaining prisoners, and Kunta suffers terribly from diarrhea, vomiting, fever and pain. After he is carried up on deck one day he sees land in the distance. He realizes that he has survived the journey, but dreads what is going to come next. Before being taken off the ship, the prisoners are scrubbed clean, their wounds treated and their hair shaved off. Their bodies are oiled and they are given loincloths to wear. Then the captives are herded off the ship chained together. Kunta is amazed to see strange vehicles drawn by unfamiliar animals, and a large number of toubob men and women at a marketplace.

On seeing two black men walking quietly behind a toubob, Kunta is given hope that he won't be eaten after all, but is disconcerted to see the fear in the black men's eyes and wonders why they don't try to escape. The captives are taken inside a brick building and chained to the walls. Terrified, Kunta now misses the familiarity of the ship. While they are in this building, other black men wearing toubob clothes are frequently thrown in with them, bearing the wounds of recent beatings.

Chapters 31-40 Analysis

This section of the book covers Kunta's capture by the slave-traders and his horrifying journey in the slave ship to America. Immediately preceding this, there is an account of village law and the equality of treatment which is accorded to everyone in this traditional African society, which is in stark contrast to the appalling treatment and inhumane conditions which Kunta and the other slaves will be subjected to following their capture. It is notable, however, that the practice of white slave-raiders was already upsetting the established systems of tribal law and organization, since the Council of Elders were at a loss for how to deal with Jankeh Jallon, who had been raped by a white man and given birth to a child, since there had been no precedent on which to base their judgment.

Kunta's tendency to daydream, already his downfall on several occasions. now leads to his capture by the slave-raiders, when he failed to hear their approach in time to escape. The conditions on the slave ship are absolutely appalling and the descriptions cannot fail to shock and disgust. Although the captives endured by far the most inhumane and terrible conditions and treatment, the voyage must have also been a nightmare for the many white men whose job it was to try to clean out the filthy hold and to guard the prisoners. From Kunta's descriptions of this group, they seem to have been of low class and were perhaps criminals being deported or made to work on the slave ships as a punishment for their crimes.

The slaves now develop their own social order and methods of communicating which are impressive in their sophistication, such as the passing on of messages in the women's songs and the translation of different languages among the men in the hold. Despite their captivity, at this stage their proud warrior backgrounds sustain them as they plot to overpower the toubob and return to their homelands, but they are ultimately overpowered themselves by the terrible storm and the disease which finally ravages all but the strongest among them.

On arrival in the land of the toubob, Kunta is puzzled to see black men who appear to be freely working for white men, without trying to escape. At this stage he cannot understand how this could be the case. He quickly realizes, however, that the belief that blacks were taken to be eaten in the toubob land is incorrect. This gives him hope that he might survive and be able to escape back to Africa.

Chapters 41-50

Chapters 41-50 Summary

After six days, Kunta and five other men are dressed in unfamiliar clothes, chained together, and taken outside to where a slave auction is being held, being whipped as they go. There are many toubob mingling there, and Kunta recoils at their strong smell. The auctioneer inspects the men and calls selling points to the crowd: 'just picked out of the trees' ... 'bright as monkeys' ... 'top prime, young and supple'! Several men approach Kunta and inspect his body, private parts and teeth with their hands, before bidding on him.

Eventually Kunta is unchained and taken off by one of the toubob who is accompanied by a Wolof man. The Wolof lifts him into a box on wheels which is attached to an animal, chaining him to the floor. As they move off, Kunta sees a line of chained black men walking along, singing in mournful tones, and Kunta recognizes them as being from Mandinka or other familiar tribes, although some are fairer as they have been fathered by white men. He also sees blacks working in the fields that they pass. After traveling all day, the box turns into a road with a large white house ahead of them, and the toubob descends and enters the house. Some black people approach Kunta, and peer at him, laughing. He is taken out of the box and chained to a pole set in the ground, with cans of food and water set in front of him, which he refused to touch. All night he lays awake, furious at himself for his carelessness and inattention and what it has cost him, until it is time for his morning prayer to Allah.

When the toubob and his black helper return, they set off on the main road again. After a day's travel, they stop at another big house and Kunta senses an opportunity to escape. He feigns weakness when the black man signals that he should get out of the box, and then springs upwards and strangles the man until he falls limp. Despite his pain and fatigue, Kunta is elated to be free, and runs away bent low through the stalks of cotton. He enters what initially appears to be deep forest, but soon the trees thin again and to his despair he realizes it is only a small patch of woods between two farms. Clawing his way back in to the thickest part, he hears dogs approaching and the shouting of men.

Then the man who Kunta had tried to strangle rushes towards him, and he is hit over the head, trussed with a rope, and whipped viciously. He hears and smells many black people outside. Later, the black man he had choked comes in and sets food down before him, and since by this time Kunta is starving, he tries to eat the food, but realizes that it is pork and vomits into the plate. When the black man returns in the morning, he rubs the contents into Kunta's face before leaving a new can of food.

Kunta lies for four days and three nights in this hut, wondering how the people he hears outside could be singing in the land of the toubob. On the fifth day, the black man enters and puts ankle cuffs on him, before releasing him from the four chains, and forcing him

out of the hut. The man jabs at Kunta's chest and tells him that his name is now Toby, before introducing himself as Samson. Kunta is flooded with rage, and wants to shout out his real name. He is taken for a wash, given some toubob clothes to wear and some food and then taken to relieve himself in a cramped hut where there is a plank seat over a large hole. Samson then accompanies him to a distant field where the other black people are working and signals that he should cut cornstalks. The toubob hovers nearby, frequently whipping those who he feels are not working hard enough.

Kunta now has to work daily in the fields, and while doing so he starts to plan his next escape. While eating in the old cooking woman's hut each day, he keeps a lookout for anything that he might steal to use as a weapon. During this time, he is treated with distaste by the other blacks, who do their best to avoid him, while in turn he ignores them. He vows never to become like these apparently docile and compliant people who serve the toubob without complaint, and realizes that it is because they have been born here rather than in Africa that they know no different life. He is starting to understand some of the toubob language now, but is still puzzled by the meaning of the word 'nigger' which he hears every day.

The atmosphere on the farm becomes less tense as the harvest is completed. In the evenings, Kunta lies inside his hut, missing Juffure and observing the other black people who gather round the fire of the cooking woman. He is intrigued to see that they display many characteristics which are obviously African in origin - the way the women plait their hair, the way that the children are taught to respect their elders, and their great love of singing and dancing. They are now starting to become more friendly towards him, and he realizes that they conceal their true feelings of hatred for the toubob, and like the captives on the ship have developed their own secret ways of communicating among themselves.

Kunta hears sadness and anger in their voices, even though he can't understand their language. He realizes that the oldest man leads the others in some kind of prayer, and wonders if their 'Lawd' is the same as Allah. One morning they are all sent to the barn rather than the field, where they eat and drink and dance to music played by the old black man on a stringed instrument. The toubob also join in with the dance, and Kunta comes to realize that the white and the black people somehow depend on one another.

When Kunta's ankle becomes badly infected, the overseer orders his ankle cuffs to be removed. Immediately, he tries to escape again, but is captured and brought back to the farm by Samson. Another opportunity for escape comes when he is mending a wire fence with another black man, and a knife is left lying on the ground behind him. Praying to Allah for forgiveness, he fells the other man with a blow to the back of the neck, snatches the knife and runs off. But it is snowing, and Kunta realizes that he is leaving footprints. He is freezing cold, and attempts to find cover, but is soon caught by some toubob who whip him harshly until he loses consciousness. Awakening in his hut, he realizes to his horror that he is wrapped in a cloth which has been soaked in pig-fat. Two days later he hears festivities outside, and the black people shouting 'Christmas gif, Massa!'

From this time, Kunta is avoided and reviled by the other blacks. He continues working in the fields, and spends the rest of the time in his hut, having imaginary conversations with his family. After several months have passed, he hatches another plan to escape on one of the tobacco wagons which often pass by the plantation during the night. He succeeds in jumping into one of the wagons, and settles himself down among the hated pagan plant. As dawn approaches, he jumps out of the wagon and runs through the woods for several days, sleeping on a bed of leaves and grass at night. He eats slices of dried rabbit which he had managed to kill and store before escaping, and drinks water from the cupped leaves of plants.

On the fourth day he hears hounds baying in the distance, and runs on, but has to stop from exhaustion and sleeps for the whole day. On waking, he runs off again, realizes he has dropped his knife, and grabs a fist-sized rock as an alternative weapon. Eventually the dogs catch up with him, closely followed by two white men he has not seen before, one of whom is uncoiling a long, black whip. Kunta throws the rock, hitting one of the men on the head, before he is attacked by the dogs and the men, who club him hard with a gun. One of them then returns to his horse and comes back holding an axe, and the other man gestures that Kunta must choose whether they cut off his penis or his foot with the axe.

As Kunta covers his penis, knowing he must be able to have sons to be a man. They tie him to a tree truck and bring down the axe on his foot severing the front half of it. In tremendous pain, Kunta loses consciousness until he awakes in a hut where a tall, unfamiliar white man has entered carrying a black bag. The man dresses Kunta's foot, and calls out for a black woman called Bell. This woman, who is short and sturdy, with a stern face, seems strangely familiar to Kunta, as she gives him a drink of water. For days Kunta lies in the hut, with Bell coming regularly to look after him. One day, she furtively covers his chest with a steaming leaf poultice, after which his fever breaks, and he wonders how she knows about such traditional medicines. Eventually, Kunta's dressing is removed by the toubob, who is a doctor, and he is given some walking sticks. Initially he refuses to use them, not wanting to co-operate in any way, but after they have left he uses the sticks to hobble around his hut.

Chapters 41-50 Analysis

This section of the novel covers Kunta's arrival in America to his arrival at the Waller plantation where he meets his future wife, Bell. On their arrival in America, Kunta and his fellow captives are now little more than a commodity for sale, and the language and manner of the auctioneer demonstrates that slaves were regarded as little more than animals in that society.

During this initial period of his life in the white man's land, Kunta's urge to escape is very strong, and he makes several unsuccessful attempts to do so. Unfortunately, the skills he learned in his manhood training, like jungle survival and warfare, are of little use in this society where he is unfamiliar with the landscape and is at the mercy of white people. Eventually, Kunta receives the injury to his foot that puts an end to any further

escape attempts and limits his usefulness even as a slave. His choice to have his foot rather than his penis cut off, however, was the crucial factor in ensuring that his family line would be continued, and ultimately led to the birth of the book's author himself.

During this period, Kunta still sees everything through African eyes and is baffled to see people here who he regards as Africans accepting their lives as slaves. As time passes however, Kunta slowly starts to take on a new identity as he starts to learn to speak English, wears 'toubob' clothes, and gets to know the other slaves. He also develops a rudimentary understanding of the interdependence between the white people and the black slaves who are inter-dependent in this society. Yet he retains his strong African identity, which will never leave him, and at this stage is reluctant to become fully integrated into the slave society, keeping himself distant and reserved. He continues to hold great bitterness and distrust for white people and their black helpers, despite the kindness shown to him by Master Waller.

Chapters 51-60

Chapters 51-60 Summary

From the doorway of his hut, Kunta sees that this farm is much better maintained that the last one, and that the slave huts are whitewashed and even have small garden plots. wW He also notices that the black people go to the fields to work unaccompanied by a white person. One day, the toubob's buggy arrives carrying a brown-skinned man with his arm in plaster, who is helped out and taken to an empty hut. Curious, Kunta approaches his hut the next day, but the man speaks sharply, and Kunta runs off. He observes that the other black people congregate in this man's hut every evening to hear him talk. On meeting the man while visiting the outhouse one day, Kunta is beckoned to his hut.

Although Kunta can't understand the man's language when he tells him all the white people's laws that 'niggers' have to abide by, Kunta enjoys being spoken to as a person at last. He starts visiting the man every afternoon while the others are in the fields. The brown man tries to advise Kunta to give up being an African and trying to escape, and to fit in with the other people. When he calls him 'Toby,' Kunta blurts out his real name in anger, the first time he has spoken to the man.

The brown man introduces himself as 'Fiddler' and makes a sawing action across his left arm, then takes out his fiddle from a strange shaped box that Kunta had seen him arrive with. Kunta repeats the word, and the man starts to teach him other words in English each day, until Kunta can make himself understood. When visiting the brown man's hut one day, he finds the old gardener there, who tells Kunta that he also tried to escape many times when he was younger, and that most black people have at least thought about running away, but none have succeeded. He informs Kunta that the Master had decided that he should work with him in the garden.

Kunta now realizes that escape is impossible, and although he can't bear the thought of living the rest of his life this way, he agrees to work with the gardener, and they do so in companionable silence each day. Kunta feels pleased one day when the blacksmith Gildon hands him a pair of shoes, with the front half of the right one stuffed with cotton. Soon he is walking easily in the shoes, and is grateful that he doesn't need crutches anymore. That same week, the Master's black driver Luther asks the fiddler to explain to him that the Master had bought Kunta from his brother. Kunta is ashamed that he should be 'owned' by anyone, but relieved that he will not have to return to the other plantation.

Each evening Kunta draws Arabic characters with a stick on the dirt floor of his hut before going to join the others in the fiddler's hut. He also continues praying to Allah. In African style, he keeps track of time passing by dropping a pebble into a gourd after each new moon, and realizes he is now nineteen years old. Every day Bell, who works

as the Master's cook, comes to the garden to pick vegetables, but she always ignores Kunta, which puzzles and irritates him.

When the old gardener falls sick, Kunta is humiliated when Bell expects him to carry her basket for her. One day, she beckons him into the house and gives him some food, and she continues to do so every day. When harvest time arrives, the black people have to work very hard, and Kunta is exhausted every day. He attends the Harvest dance, and watches the lively dancing to the fiddler's music, in which the slaves imitate the planting and harvesting of the crops, just as they did in Juffure.

When Christmas arrives, Kunta avoids the festivities, knowing that they involve a different God. The passing seasons remind Kunta of life in Juffure, and he observes that at least people here don't starve between the harvests as food is stored. When the other slaves are allowed to attend a religious meeting, there are so few people on the farm that Kunta could have run away again, but instead he resigns himself to the fact that he is better off staying here than taking the risk of being captured again and maybe killed. He knows now that he will probably never see his family again, but hopes that at least one day he might have one of his own.

As another year passes, Kunta wonders why the slaves seem to enjoy their lives so much, and why the toubob, who gives them presents at Christmas, does not set them free if he really wants to make them happy. But at the same time he is starting to accept their ways. His friendship with the fiddler grows, despite Kunta being troubled by how much liquor he consumes, and the fiddler confides in Kunta that he had run away after his previous Master was drowned and hid with Indians until he could get to Virginia, where they now live. He tells Kunta that Indians were in the country before the white men. Kunta also makes an effort to get to know the old gardener and Bell. The gardener tells him about 'pattyrollers,' the low-class white people who are hired as patrollers to whip and jail any blacks found wandering the roads without a pass from their Masters since the white people are frightened of a slave revolt. He also tells Kunta that Master Waller is from a rich, dignified English family, and doesn't want anyone to beat his niggers, so he doesn't employ an overseer. In conversation with Bell, Kunta learns that Master Waller was previously married, but his wife died in childbirth, along with their baby girl.

One day Bell excitedly tells Kunta that the Sheriff had come to tell the Master about fighting between white people in the north of the country in protest at having to pay the English king's taxes. When the driver, Luther, returns from taking Master Waller north, he tells the other slaves about the 'Boston Massacre' when the Boston soldiers had marched on the king's soldiers, who had taken arms and shot them, including a nigger called Crispus Attucks. Over the following months, they learn of the white people's increasing concern that the King might offer to set slaves free to fight against the white people, and that some were locking their doors in fear of their slaves.

A visiting black driver tells Bell that the white people had held an important meeting in Philadelphia, called The First Continental Congress. The slaves continue to hear of battles between the white men and the king's soldiers, and one day Luther tells them

that someone called George Washington had been chosen to run an army. Luther had also heard that some niggers had been recruited to help fight the king's soldiers, and that the Quakers had started an Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia. Shortly after, they get word that the governor of Virginia had proclaimed freedom for any slaves who joined up to serve on his English fleet of fishing boats and frigates. Master Waller reads out a newspaper article to Bell, which threatens death to any slaves conspiring to 'rebel or make insurrections' and instructs her to show it to the other slaves. As news continues to arrive, they learn that a Lord Dunmore had been burning down the big houses of the Masters, ruining plantations, and promising freedom to any niggers that joined his army.

In early 1776, the news is that a General Cornwallis had come from England with boatfuls of sailors and soldiers but a great storm had scattered them. Later in the year, Luther told them there had been talk of a Declaration of Independence and also reported that in Baltimore a life-sized rag doll 'king' had been burnt on a bonfire. He later conveyed news of a big battle in Virginia where slaves had been fighting on both sides. A slave soldier called Billy Flora had ripped up planks from a bridge, preventing the English forces from crossing it, saving the day for the Colonial forces.

The French entered the war on the Colonial side in 1778, and Luther reported that many states were authorizing the enlisting of slaves with the promise of freedom when the war was won. They hear that up to 5,000 blacks were enlisted, and that there were some all black companies, one of which even had a black colonel. In May 1781 the news came that redcoats had ruined Thomas Jefferson's plantation Monticello, destroying all the crops, burning the barns and taking the horses and slaves. General Washington's army headed to Virginia to attack England's Cornwallis, who surrendered. The war was over, and Bell tells the other slaves that Philadelphia had been named as the first capital of the United States. They hear that Jefferson had introduced an Act that allowed niggers to be freed, but that the Anti-slavery movements were protesting because the Act gave the Masters the freedom to decide whether to do so. When General Washington disbanded the army in November 1783, and ended 'The Seven Years War,' the fiddler sourly comments that it will be even worse now for the slaves.

On counting his pebbles one night, Kunta is stunned to discover that he is now thirty-four years old and to realize that he has lived in the white man's land for as long as he lived in Juffure. He feels confused as to who he really is, and concerned about his lack of identity with no family or homeland to call his own. He is ordered to become Master Waller's driver when Luther is sold after helping a housegirl to escape, and Kunta is now kept very busy day and night as he drives the Master to visit his patients, including his brother John's wife who gives birth to a baby girl, Anne. At one stage the doctor and Kunta are overwhelmed with work, as a plague fever sweeps the county. At other times it is much quieter, and there are only routine house calls and visits to the doctor's friends and relatives, including the doctor's parents at Enfield.

Kunta retains his stiffly dignified and reserved style, and it takes time for the cooks at the houses he visits to get to know him, although he always clears his plate of whatever they give him, except for any pork. One day, the cook at the Newport home of the Master's old aunt and uncle proudly shows Kunta round the house and the plantations,

showing him the family coat of arms, silver seal, and other regalia. Kunta is amazed to see what a highly honored family they are. The cook talks as if she owns the plantation rather than just working for the family.

When Kunta wonders why Master Waller starts to visit his brother so much, Bell tells him the baby reminds him of the girl that he lost. Kunta still finds it hard to think of white people as having feelings. On his travels, he is shocked by some of the things he sees, such as a black woman suckling a white infant, and the children's games which involve the white children beating the black children or riding on their backs like animals. The other slaves tell him that the white and black children on plantations often become quite attached to one another, and that many slave children had learned to play instruments by listening and copying the lessons of their white friends.

Kunta also hears stories of slave cooks serving food containing their bodily wastes, crushed glass, or poison, of white babies being killed by housemaids, and of groups of slaves who had hidden muskets and weapons and planned to kill their Masters. Yet Kunta doesn't feel that a rebellion could ever be successful and realizes he has lost his taste for trying to escape. Kunta also notices that the black slaves are better off than some of the poor white families he sees, some of whom are indentured white slaves from overseas, whose boat-fare here had been paid by Masters and who were working to pay it back. Many of these people live in dirty slums and are close to starvation. The behavior of some is offensive to Kunta, as it involves gambling, smoking and drinking in seedy bars. It is from this group that the violent patrollers are often recruited.

In 1786, Kunta hears that the Quakers were now not only encouraging slaves to escape, but were actively helping them to do so, and a wealthy Quaker called John Pleasant had bequeathed freedom to his two hundred slaves in his will. Bell reported that Master Waller and his dinner guests had been discussing the fact that slavery had been abolished in a northern state called Massachusetts.

Observing the lavish parties that he drives Master Waller to, Kunta finds it hard to believe that such incredible wealth exists, and that the white people can be so civilized with one another while they fail to treat as human beings those who make it possible for them to enjoy such a life. When arriving at Enfield for Master Waller to attend a Thanksgiving Ball, Kunta is astounded to hear someone beating an African drum-like instrument, and he senses that it is an African. He follows the sound, and finds an elderly black man playing the instrument amid a crowd of blacks having their own Thanksgiving celebration. As their eyes meet, the two men spring towards each other and embrace, greeting one another in Arabic as they each know instinctively that the other is a Muslim. Kunta promises to return, as it is the first time in twenty years that he has met another African that he can communicate with. When the Master next returns to Enfield two months later Kunta goes to the man's hut and greets him in Arabic.

Chapters 51-60 Analysis

This section of the novel introduces the fiddler, who becomes one of Kunta's closest friends, despite the fact that they have little in common, Kunta being a reserved and devout Moslem and the fiddler a talkative fellow who drinks a little too much liquor. For the first time since arriving in the land, Kunta feels he is recognized and talked to as a person, and he gradually gets to know and is accepted by the other slaves. From the fiddler and the gardener Kunta learns about the futility of trying to escape and comes to understand more about the other slaves and how they mostly feel the same as he does about white people. Over time, Kunta establishes his own role on the Waller Plantation, working as a gardener and then as Master Waller's buggy driver, which can be attributed not only to his disability, but also his diligence and the way he conducts himself, which the Master comes to respect.

From this section of the book onwards, the political situation in America and the importance of slavery and anti-slavery movements in this history of the country are the backdrop to the story of Kunta and his descendents. From the outset, slavery was both a factor contributing to the war between north and south, as well as a weapon, with slaves being used to fight on both sides. The value of the novel is in representing this history from the perspective of slaves themselves, which contrasts with more conventional accounts of American history.

As the years pass and Kunta grows older, he feels a sense of alienation because he still cannot identify with this new society, yet has no link with his own home and family. This is partly why the meeting with the Ghanaian touched him so deeply, since he felt such a strong sense of belonging with this fellow African, the first he had met since arriving in America. By this time, however, Kunta is starting to recognize the advantages of his situation in comparison, for example, with the poor white people, since at least the slaves on the Waller plantation are well fed and have good living conditions.

Chapters 61-70

Chapters 61-70 Summary

When Kunta goes to the African man's hut, they both conceal their excitement in typical African style. The man tells Kunta that his real name is Boteng Bediako but he is now known as Pompey, and that he is sixty-six years old. When a young boy in Ghana, he tells Kunta, he was the messenger for the chief of his tribe. The chief had an umbrella on top of which was a carving of a man holding an egg, which represented the care with which the chief used his powers, and a staff carved with a turtle, representing his patience. A carved bee on the shell symbolized the fact that nothing could pass through the hard shell. Pompey tells Kunta that he has learned that the key to living in the white man's land is a hard shell and patience, and advises Kunta to find a wife and plant his seeds, embarrassing him. Kunta is deeply moved by their conversation and feels as if he had been talking to his father Omoro. Their meeting unsettles him, as he realizes that he has been losing his African identity, not even thinking in Mandinka any more. He now becomes distant with the other slaves with whom he feels he has little in common, and who he sees as ignorant as they have no knowledge of their African heritage. When he does approach the fiddler and gardener to discuss the latest news, they snub him as he has been so unfriendly, but eventually the fiddler settles down to talk to him, realizing he has something on his mind, and suspecting that it is a woman.

Kunta realizes that this is actually what he has been thinking about since receiving the Ghanaian's advice. Increasingly he dreams of being with a woman, and sometimes fantasizes about Liza, the cook at Enfield who he knows is attracted to him, yet something holds him back. Then he thinks of Bell, and how tenderly she looked after him when he was injured although in African tradition she is too old to be his wife. The gardener and fiddler suspect his intentions towards Bell when he starts asking them about her, and tease him.

Kunta now keeps to himself while he tries to understand his mixed feelings towards Bell. Some of her habits offend him, such as smoking tobacco in a pipe, the way she shakes her behind when dancing at festivities, and her harsh tongue. He decides to make Bell a gift of a pestle and mortar, and after hesitating for two weeks he puts them down on the kitchen step one morning.

When Bell picks them up, she begins to cry, as it is the first time in twenty-two years on the plantation that any man had made something for her, and she feels guilty for the unkind way in which she has sometimes treated Kunta. For the next two weeks they are awkward with each other, until one evening Kunta calls at Bell's cabin and they go for a walk together, but they avoid talking about their feelings for one another. Kunta is shocked some days later when Bell mentions in conversation that she has been married before, as in African tradition he cannot take a wife who is not a virgin. Yet he finds himself looking forward to going to Bell's cabin when she invites him for dinner and this

soon becomes a regular occurrence, although he still has mixed feelings about her and her Christian beliefs.

One evening, after Kunta presents Bell with a plaited rug he has made from bulrushes for her, and she in turn gives him a pair of knitted socks, Bell takes his hand and they retire to the bedroom together. It is the first time Kunta has made love to a woman in his 39 years.

Master Waller agrees that Kunta and Bell can marry, and the wedding is planned for the Sunday before Christmas, to be held in the front yard next to the flower garden. All the slaves, Master Waller, his niece Missy Anne and her parents are in attendance, as well as Kunta's special friend the Ghanaian. After the ceremony is conducted by Aunt Sukey, the laundress, Kunta and Bell jump over the broomstick together as is the tradition at slave weddings. As he recalls marriage ceremonies in Juffure, Kunta feels confused, and hopes Allah will forgive him for marrying in this way. During the reception afterwards, he is shocked to see how much wine Bell drinks, and to hear the crude language she uses. Over the following weeks however, after he has moved into her neat and cozy cabin he soon gets used to her ways and enjoys her voluptuous body. He is shaken, however, to see the deep lash scars on her back, which match his own that he has almost forgotten about. Now he realizes that he likes everything about Bell and is glad that he married her. He is sometimes surprised at the things Bell seems to know about, and one day she reveals to him that she is able to read, having been taught by the children of the Master she used to work for. She keeps a secret stash of the Master's old newspapers, but is frightened of being sold if the Master discovers she can read. Taking some paper, she shows Kunta how to write their names, before burning the paper so it won't be discovered.

Irritated that Bell is not aware of his own Arabic writing ability, and that she thinks he is completely uneducated, one day Kunta takes some ashes from the fireplace and scratches his name into them with a stick. Later, he tells her all about his childhood and his education in Juffure, and she asks him how to say the words for things in Mandinka. It is the first time she has shown any interest in Africa and Kunta is very pleased.

When Bell starts behaving strangely, and one day she puts Kunta's hand on her stomach and he feels a baby move. He is filled with joy and makes plans for his first man-child who will carry on the family name. When Bell wakes up moaning one night, and tells Kunta she dreamed that their baby was given away as a prize in a white people's party, Kunta is unsettled as he has heard many stories of black babies being given away or sold. He is also concerned to think of his child playing with toubob children who would grow up to be their Masters.

In 1790, as Bell goes into labor, she confesses to Kunta that she had two children when she was very young, who were sold away. Bell gives birth to a baby girl, who is unmistakably Mandinka in her features, and Kunta feels great pride even though the baby is not the boy he had hoped for. He thinks carefully about her name, as in Mandinka tradition, but when Bell gets annoyed because she is worried Master Waller will sell them all if he hears they are practicing African customs. Kunta is adamant that

the child must be named properly. Near to midnight, under the moon and stars, he whispers into her ear 'Your name is Kizzy,' and lifting her face to the heavens tells her' Behold, the only thing greater than yourself!' Afterwards, he tells Bell that the name means 'you stay put,' and means that she will never get sold away.

The baby's name is recorded by Master Waller in the plantation records. Missy Anne, now four years old, comes frequently to the plantation to see Kizzy and this irritates Kunta, but Bell tells him the Master will be happy that Missy Anne comes to visit so often as he regards her as a replacement for his own lost daughter. Concerned at the way Missy Anne fusses over the baby, he is reminded of an African saying 'In the end, the cat always eats the mouse it's played with.' Bell tries to reassure him by telling him that white girls often show lifetime devotion and loyalty to their black playmates, and of one case where a girl stopped her parents from selling her black friend away.

The slaves now talk among themselves about the white people becoming increasingly frightened of blacks, who nearly equal them in number and are still being brought into the country. Many have been set free, and some counties now have hardly any slaves. Yet the fiddler tells them there are vast plantations in the West Indies being worked by slaves.

Kunta and the fiddler convey many stories about Haiti, where some 36,000 French whites were outnumbered by half a million blacks on huge plantations, and Bell adds that she had heard there had been so much inter-breeding there that there were now almost 28,000 mulattoes, most of whom had been given their freedom. Many of these sought lighter coloured mates in order to have children of white appearance, and others bribed officials for documents declaring that their ancestors had been anything but African, and many became rich landowners themselves.

Apparently the poor white Haitians were so scandalized at this that they had petitioned France to pass laws prohibiting blacks from mixing with whites, and both the poor whites and the mulattoes were taking out their frustrations on the black slaves with many being tortured or beaten to death. In 1791 they heard that Haiti's black slaves had risen up in a bloody revolt, slaughtering white people violently, raping women and burning plantations, and by the end of August the few thousand white people left were in hiding or trying to escape from the island.

In Virginia, it was clear that the local toubob were nervous of uprisings, and even Master Waller acts very coolly towards the slaves. The county militia began patrolling the roads, beating or jailing any blacks that they were suspicious of. The slaves discuss the stories they have heard of the increasing numbers of anti-slavery societies in both the north and the south of the country, and Bell tells them that more and more Christian white people are starting to question whether slavery is right or not, especially the Quakers and the Methodists. Yet from the conversations that Kunta hears in the Master's buggy he knows that many rich and influential white people still believe that Africans are naturally stupid, lazy and unclean, and believed that their Christian duty was to teach these people discipline, morality, and respect for work, by example and through laws and punishments.

Chapters 61-70 Analysis

Kunta's conversation with the Ghanaian both excites and unsettles him; he is happy to be able to affirm his African identity again, but the meeting also makes him feel different from the other slaves who do not share his background. The Ghanaian also makes him face up to his feelings of wanting to be with a woman. In deciding who to take for a wife, he weighs up the pros and cons of the women he knows in very practical terms, and his choice of Bell is surprising. She is so different from Kunta, being quite crude and outspoken, in comparison to his reserved quiet manner, and she has already been married and had children, while in African society Kunta would have expected to marry a virgin.

Despite the calculating way in which he considers her merits and drawbacks, in the end it is their emotions and feelings for one another that bring them together, and Kunta realizes later that she is a good choice for a wife, and has had a very difficult life, having been brutally treated as a young slave and having had her children sold away from her.

When Kizzy is born, Kunta begins the family tradition of telling a new-born child about their African heritage, which will be continued by his successive generations, and later allow the novel to be written.

Kizzy's relationship with Missy Anne seems typical of the ways in which white people interacted with their slaves. Treated almost as a possession by the older girl when a baby, Kizzy became a close playmate later on, but as Anne herself grew older and more socialized into the norms and acceptable behavior of the time, Kizzy was shunned by her. When Kizzy is sold, ironically because Missy Anne had taught her to read and write, Missy Anne does nothing to save her, proving Kunta right in his saying 'the cat always eats the mouse it's played with.'

There is an underlying increase in tension apparent in the wider society of the time, as the numbers of slaves grow and massive plantations are developed in the West Indies. White people were clearly becoming very nervous about the sheer numbers involved and revert to strict enforcement of their laws, and, in some cases, brutal treatment of their slaves in attempting to retain their power and control.

Chapters 71-80

Chapters 71-80 Summary

When the gardener passes away, the other slaves dig him a grave, and Kunta feels remorseful that since Kizzy was born he hadn't spent as much time with the gardener as he used to. The Master declares a half day off for the gardener's funeral, and the slaves tell each other stories about long-time house-cooks or wet nurses being given a big send-off and buried in the white graveyards, making Kunta reflect bitterly on what a reward that was for a lifetime of service. They take the gardener in a procession to the slave graveyard, along with Master Waller, singing hymns along the way, and Kunta thinks of the African funeral traditions in which dancing and happiness accompanied wailing and sorrow, as they believed the deceased had gone to be with Allah.

For Kizzy's second birthday, Kunta carves a Mandinka doll from pinewood. He is furious when the Master tells Bell that Missy Anne is coming to spend Kizzy's birthday with her, as he and Bell had been planning to have a cake and party in their cabin.

A few weeks later, when Bell tells Kunta that the Master wants to take Kizzy to his brother's house to spend the day with Missy Anne, Kunta storms out and spends a sleepless night weeping in the barn, while Bell weeps alone in the cabin. The next day, he drives the Master and Kizzy to Missy Anne's house, and later drives Kizzy home alone as the Master has to stay out all night with a sick patient. It is the first time he has been alone with his daughter. When this happens again, he starts to teach her some Mandinka language on the journey, but Bell scolds him when she finds out, telling him that their daughter is not African. Kunta is mortified that Bell has raised her voice to him, and has disowned his heritage.

The next day Kunta hears the latest story of Toussaint, a former slave who had organized a large army of black rebels in Haiti and was leading them successfully against the French, Spanish and English. Toussaint had become a hero for Kunta and he looks forward to telling the others the latest story. But this is forgotten when he gets home and Bell tells him that Kizzy has mumps. Missy Anne sends a fully dressed toubob doll as a present, which reminds Kunta of the carved doll he made for her birthday, but forgot to give to her.

Although Kizzy is pleased with his doll, it is clear she loves the toubob doll more, and Kunta feels angry with her for the first time ever. As Kizzy recovers, she spends more and more time with Missy Anne, inviting her to the cabin, showing her Kunta's gourd of pebbles. The next day, Bell is called into Master Waller's drawing room and sternly asked about the African voodoo going on in their cabin. Returning to the cabin she spanks Kizzy and warns her not to bring Missy Anne there any more, before warning Kunta of the trouble his African traditions are causing. After a couple of weeks the girls start playing together again, but Kunta resents their increasing intimacy, and even senses uneasiness in Bell.

Kunta is annoyed when Bell announces that the Master has said Kunta can drive the slaves to their annual religious gathering, but she tells him that was the only way to get him to Kizzy's christening. Missy Anne had asked her parents if Kizzy could go to church with them, and she would need to be christened first. When they arrive at the gathering, he is amazed to see so many black people in one place. A preacher shouts out praises to the lord, which the people are respond to, and then a number of women including Bell started dancing wildly, flailing their limbs. It reminds Kunta of the way his own people danced to the spirits back in Juffure. After a while everyone follows the grey-haired preacher to a pond, which he wades into, followed by a number of youths who are submerged in the water until they struggle for breath. When the preacher asks if anyone else wants to consecrate their children to Jesus, Kunta is horrified when Bell stands up holding Kizzy. Running for the first time since his lost his foot, he reaches the pond and cries out a protest, but Bell tells the preacher to ignore him and go ahead. Kunta is embarrassed when the preacher just splashes water onto Kizzy's face, and joins Bell and Kizzy for a picnic afterwards.

When Kizzy is seven years old, Bell starts taking her to the big house to help with the work. Kunta has mixed feelings as he agrees that she should make herself useful, just as the children in Juffure were taught skills from an early age, but he resents her being closer to the toubob and cleaning up after him. Kizzy still goes to play with Missy Anne at her house, and Kunta now welcomes these occasions as they give him the opportunity to be alone in the buggy with her. He continues to teach her Mandinka words, and Kizzy grows curious about Africa and asks him lots of questions about his family there. She finds it hard to understand why they can't go to visit her grandparents in Juffure, and cannot comprehend what he means when Kunta tries to make her understand that they belong to the Master and are not free.

Kunta learns of more developments among the white people when he drives Master Waller to a party at Enfield one night and chats in the kitchen with the fat black cook, Hattie, while waiting for him. She tells him that France had raided some US trading boats, and that President Adams had sent the US Navy who defeated eighty French boats. She also says that the previous year a mulatto led a revolt against the freed black slave Toussaint, but was defeated when the President sent boats to help Toussaint. One of the serving women comes in and reports that the men are talking about freed niggers, of whom there were already some 13,000 in Virginia alone.

Early each morning, Kunta gets up before dawn and slips away to say his morning prayers to Allah in the barn. On the way back, he would often be greeted by Noah, the young fieldhand, who is always very reserved and serious. Noah is ten, two years older than Kizzy, but they have never become friends even though they are the only two slave children on the plantation. By now, Kunta has become used to sharing Kizzy with Master Waller and Missy Anne, as well as Bell, but he enjoys the time he can spend alone with her on Sunday afternoons when Missy Anne returns home after church with her parents. They often go walking together, stopping by the stream for a picnic. One day, Kizzy tells Kunta the Peter Pumpkin rhyme that Missy Anne has taught her, which makes no sense to Kunta, and he decides to tell her one of Nyo Boto's stories. He tells

Kizzy not to forget her African heritage, and shows her how to write her name in the dust in Arabic.

A year later, in 1800, Kunta has to take his Master to Fredericksburg for a week-long visit, and it is arranged that the Master's brother, Master John, will come and look after the plantation while he is away. Kunta is worried about Bell and Kizzy, as he knows that Master John can be cruel, but Bell reassures him that she can cope. For the first two days everything is normal on the plantation, then after a visitor calls on Master John he assembles all the slaves and tells them of a slave plot in Richmond to kidnap the governor, massacre the white people, and burn the city. Most of the plotters had been caught and armed patrols were out looking for the rest.

Master John announces that he would be patrolling the plantation day and night, and that none of them were to set foot outside, or leave their cabins after dark. He burned all the newspapers after reading them, and made Kizzy taste all his food before he ate it. The slaves are worried sick about the fiddler, who had left the day before to play at a ball in Richmond. Kunta and Master Waller return three days early but the fiddler still isn't back. Kunta tells Bell he had heard that the revolt had been planned by a free blacksmith called Gabriel Prosser, who had rounded up two hundred specially selected black men and trained them for a year. Prosser was still at large, and patrollers were combing the countryside. There were reports of some Masters beating their slaves to death, for little reason.

A few days later Kunta is returning home after delivering a note about the missing fiddler to the sheriff, when the fiddler appears climbing from the ditch alongside the road. He tells Kunta he had managed to escape when chaos broke out at the ball, and had spent five days making his way back through the woods. The day before he had been caught by some patrollers, but when he told them he was a fiddler they just made him play for them then sent him on his way.

After the capture and execution of the slave conspirators including Gabriel Prosser, things return to normal and politics once again become the main topic of conversation among Master Waller and his friends. The slaves hear that a Thomas Jefferson had been made President, that he is a regarded as a very good Master by his slaves, and that he wants to gradually send slaves back to Africa. Yet slave traders continue to bring new boatloads of slaves into the country. When the fiddler tells of a slave auction he saw in which an old greybearded nigger was sold and went off screaming and cursing the white people. Kunta and Bell realize that it must have been the preacher who baptized Kizzy. Kunta also sees a slave auction while out with Master Waller one day and is very upset to see a girl being sold who looks just like an older Kizzy.

When they return to the plantation, Bell tells Kunta that a slave trader had called and left his card for the Master, and they are very nervous about being sold. Kunta is reassured, however, when listening to the conversation in Master Waller's buggy, to hear that he has no plans to sell his slaves and believes that slaves are a good investment. He hears that the price of slaves is very high due to the demand for workers caused by the cotton boom, and that slaves had become the best skilled workers in many areas. One day the

fiddler brings news that the French leader Napoleon had sent an army to re-capture Haiti from the blacks, and that their liberator, General Toussaint, had been captured and taken to France. Kunta is very upset as he is a great admirer of Toussant. The fiddler cheers him up by telling him that he has at last saved up the $700 that the Master said he would need to buy his freedom, but the next day Kunta comes across him dejectedly playing a mournful tune. In tears, he tells Kunta that the Master had refused to grant him his freedom, saying that since the price of niggers had gone up he would now need to raise at least $1500 to buy his freedom.

Kunta succumbs to a fever that sweeps the county a few months later and has to take to his bed, while the fiddler takes over his driving duties. Bell steps in as the Master's assistant and after helping him administer his medicines, she also gives patients her own traditional herbal brew and prays by their bedside. She is very worried about Kunta, who is now in a coma, and she realizes how much she loves him. One day Missy Anne comes and reads the Lord's Prayers outside Kunta's cabin, to the admiration of the slaves. Eventually Kunta starts to recover.

Chapters 71-80 Analysis

Kizzy and Kunta become closer as they spend more and more time together in the buggy, and this is when Kizzy's interest in and identification with Africa begins, contributing to the stories being passed down through successive generations. Bell is very frightened of emphasizing their African heritage, as she thinks the Master will sell them. Indeed he is very suspicious when he hears about Kunta's pebbles and thinks they are African voodoo, again reflecting the nervousness among white people at the time about their slaves and any practices they have which white people do not understand.

The christening of Kizzy is the point at which Kunta's family line changes from being Moslem to Christian. Although initially unhappy, he recognizes there is nothing he can do to stop this, and he goes along quite complacently with the plan.

Kizzy's questioning of Kunta about what it means to be a slave, and why they couldn't visit her grandparents, shows how protected and relatively privileged her life was as a child on the Waller plantation, making her later experiences seem all the more poignant.

Politically, there are gradual moves towards the abolition of slavery, particularly with the appointment of Jefferson as President, yet at the same time more and more slave ships are arriving, and the slave trade is fueled by the cotton boom and the need for labor on the big West Indian plantations. Similarly, the growth of the anti-slavery movement was counter-balanced by the fact that many slaves were becoming highly skilled by this time and therefore indispensable to their owners.

Chapters 81-90

Chapters 81-90 Summary

Kunta is concerned to see that Missy Anne is teaching Kizzy to read English, as it is dangerous for a slave to know how to read. Yet over time he observes that the girls are becoming less close to each other. When Missy Anne's sixteenth birthday party is held at Master Waller's house, Kizzy is very upset when Missy Anne ignores her and she is just expected to wait on the guests. As their friendship cools off, Kizzy spends more and more time writing and reading in the cabin. From the newspapers the family learns that President Jefferson is believed to be doing a good job of running the government and is admired by the white Masters, especially since he had purchased Louisiana from the French.

Kunta is depressed, though, to hear that Toussaint had died in captivity in France. A few days later, he returns to the cabin where Kizzy is lying down feeling poorly. He realizes that she has begun menstruating, and he thinks about how she would soon become a bride if she were in Africa. He realizes that here he should follow the toubob customs and find someone her own age for her to marry, and he thinks of Noah, the young fieldhand. One day Noah approaches Kunta, and tells him of his plans to escape. Kunta warns him not to involve Kizzy, and Noah reassures him, but says he plans to buy her free once he reaches the north and saves up enough money.

One morning, shortly after Kizzy's sixteenth birthday, it is discovered that Noah has not turned up at work. Kunta doesn't tell the other slaves of Noah's plans, but goes to the barn to pray to Allah for his successful escape. The next morning, Master Waller asks Kunta to drive him to the Sheriff's office to report Noah's disappearance, and Kunta hears him telling the Sheriff that even if Noah returns he will be sold for breaking the rules. Several days later, the Sheriff comes to the plantation, and Bell runs out of the house to tell Kunta that he and the Master were talking to Kizzy. Returning to the house, they are told by Master Waller that Noah had knifed two patrollers who had captured him, and under force had confessed that Kizzy had forged a pass for him. Kunta and Bell burst into the dining room where Kizzy is being held, but are threatened by the Sheriff and retreat into the hallway, hearing Kizzy screaming for them. Running to the front of the house, they see Kizzy being dragged away at the end of a chain. They scream and plead with the Master not to sell her, or to sell all of them together, but Kizzy is taken away in the Sheriff's wagon. Remembering that dust from footprints will ensure the person's safe return, Kunta scoops up some dust from where Kizzy last trod, but as he returns to his cabin he knows that he will never see her again. In despair, he violently throws down and shatters his gourd, which now contains 662 pebbles representing his 55 years of age.

Several days later, Kizzy is lying in the darkness in a cabin planning her escape, when the door opens. The white man who had bought her enters the cabin, threatens Kizzy with a whip, and violently rapes her. At dawn she awakens in great pain and in

embarrassment, to find that a young black woman is gently cleaning her private parts. When the woman leaves, promising to bring food later, Kizzy reflects on her experiences of the last few days. After being turned over by the Sheriff to a slave trader, she had been taken to a different town and sold to this new Master. She wonders whether Bell and Kunta were also sold, and what had happened to Noah, who had forced her to prove her love for him by forging the pass. She briefly entertains a hope that Missy Anne might persuade Master Waller to buy her back, then realizes that if she had done so they would have come to fetch her already.

Returning with food, the woman who had cleaned her introduces herself as Malizy, the big-house cook. She tells Kizzy that the Master, who is called Tom Lea, loves nigger women and is likely to come to Kizzy regularly. She warns Kizzy that he can be very mean, and tells her that he has a wife who is scared of him. Previously a po-cracker, or poor white man, he had become wealthy since winning a fighting rooster in a raffle and becoming one of the area's most successful game-cock owners. Kizzy learns that there are only five slaves here, and that she will be made to work with the others in the fields. Kizzy soon becomes pregnant with Tom Lea's baby, and after continuing to work in the fields throughout her pregnancy a boy is born in the winter of 1806, with the slave Sister Sarah serving as the midwife.

Kizzy is shocked to see that her baby is fair-skinned, and is ashamed when she recalls her father's pride in being black. About a month after the baby is born, Tom comes to the cabin again to have sex with Kizzy, after telling her she must return to work the next day. Afterwards he tells her he wants the baby to be called George, after a hardworking slave he once knew. Kizzy is furious as she had wanted her child to be called Kunta, or Kinte, after her father. She tells herself that she will always regard the child as the grandson of an African.

Kizzy now becomes closer to Uncle Pompey, Sister Sarah, and Miss Malizy, the other slaves working for Tom Lea, as they fuss over the baby George. When she first returns to work in the fields she discovers that Uncle Pompey, who has hardly spoken to her before, has made a shelter for George, and on Sunday afternoons, when Tom Lea and his wife go out for their buggy ride, the slaves gather round the chinquapin tree and take turns to hold George. They tell Kizzy about Mingo, the reclusive slave who looks after Tom Lea's chickens. As George grows bigger, Kizzy starts leaving him at the big house with Miss Malizy when she goes to the fields. He is a lively, healthy child, who amuses them all with his antics. When he is near two years old, Uncle Pompey starts telling the boy stories of 'Br'er Rabbit' and 'Br'er Bear,' to the surprise of the others. One day Sister Sarah offers to tell Kizzy's fortune, and Kizzy is devastated to be told that she will never see her parents or Noah again.

By three, George is a lively and inquisitive child, who starts asking Kizzy about his father. To avoid telling him the truth, she tells him about Kunta, saying that they share him and that George should call him 'Gran'pappy.' She tells him the story of how Kunta had come from Africa and had his foot cut off when he tried to escape. After this, George becomes increasingly interested in learning about Kunta and his African background, and Kizzy starts to teach him some African words. At six years old, George

starts working in the fields, and his antics are a constant source of amusement for the slaves. As he grows older, he demonstrates a great gift for mimicry, and the slaves are hysterical with laughter to see his impression of Mingo the chicken-rearer.

One day Miss Malizy reports that Master Lea and his dinner guests were discussing a new war which had started with England. Over the next two years, news filters through to the slaves about developments in the war, and in 1814 they learn that the English had burnt down the Capital and the White House in Washington, DC. Master Tom asks George to wait on his dinner guests, and by the age of twelve George is doing so regularly and becomes the main channel of news from the outside world. He tells the slaves about a meeting of thousands of free niggers which had taken place in Philadelphia, and about slave revolts which were taking place in the West Indies.

In 1818 he informs them that a society of white people were trying to return free niggers to Liberia in Africa, at which Sister Sarah remarks that she wouldn't want to go and live in the trees in Africa. Kizzy is very offended, and even George is irritated at this and tells Kizzy that he will tell his own children about Gran'pappy and Africa. George starts spending more and more time with Mingo, and tells Kizzy that Mingo is going to ask the Master if he can help him with the chickens. Sister Sarah tells Kizzy that she has read George's fortune, and that he is never going to be an 'ordinary nigger' but will always be getting into something new and different.

Master Lea agrees to Mingo's request to let George help him with the chickens, being concerned about Mingo's failing health and the difficulty of replacing him. George is thoroughly trained by Mingo and starts to feel awe and respect for the chickens. Master Tom suggests that they should build a shack for George, so he can live near Uncle Mingo and look after the chickens full-time. Kizzy is horrified, and in her anger blurts out that Master Lea is George's father. In tears, George packs a bag and retreats to the gamecock area, sleeping outside that night. Guessing what has happened, Mingo treats him gently, and over the following months George throws himself more and more into learning about the chickens. By the time he is fourteen, he is spending his Sundays off partly with his slave-row 'family,' keeping them entertained with his accounts of the brave gamecocks, but soon becomes restless to return to the chickens, which he has grown to love and admire. When the cockfighting season arrives, George is excited when he is taken by Mingo and Master Lea to the first fight, and when one of Mr. Lea's birds wins, he is filled with pride for the bird that he had helped to rear. The slaves are very proud of George, especially when Miss Malizy tells the others that she heard Master Lea telling some dinner guests that he had a boy who was destined to match any of the best gamecock trainers in the county. Mingo is also very proud of George, but sometimes chides him for bursting into tears when one of his birds gets killed. Mingo also warns George about sneaking off overnight to see a house-maid, Charity, at one of the adjacent plantations, and advises him to be careful not to be caught by the patrollers.

Chapters 81-90 Analysis

The complete powerlessness of the slaves and the strict lines of division between them and their Masters was reflected in Master Waller's decision to sell Kizzy for breaking his rules, despite the long-standing relationship he has had with her family and their loyalty to him. Now Kizzy's comfortable childhood comes to a very abrupt end as she is brutally raped by her new Master and has to learn to survive away from her parents, who she quickly realizes she will probably never see again.

With the birth of George, Kunta's African blood is now mixed with white, and the very different characteristics that George inherits from Tom Lea and from Kunta Kinte will manifest themselves in the contrasting personalities of their various descendants.

George himself is very unlike his grandfather Kunta, being a flamboyant and frivolous character, who entertains his 'slave family' and Master Lea from an early age with his antics.

Chapters 91-100

Chapters 91-100 Summary

On approaching slave row on one of his Sunday's off, George senses that something is wrong as none of the slaves are waiting to greet him. When he reaches Kizzy's cabin, she tells him that some free niggers had been discovered plotting to kill white people in South Carolina, and the Master had gone to a meeting telling his wife to kill anyone she saw outside the cabins. George is indignant and determines to remind the Master whose father he was. When Master Lea later returns he threatens George and Uncle Mingo, telling them that niggers are all the same. They feel very resentful that he is treating them this way, and George is in agony to think that Master Lea will only ever act like a Master towards him. He cannot talk to anyone about his feelings as he is not sure whether the other slaves know, and he knows it is too painful for his mother to talk about what happened.

After a couple of months, the tensions ease and Master Lea reverts to his usual self. George takes the opportunity to tell Uncle Mingo and Master Lea of his idea that they could win more cockfights if they strengthened the wings of their birds. Impressed, Tom Lea goes along with the plan, which pays off when many of their birds win in the 1823 cockfighting season. One day Master Lea reveals to George that he knows he has been slipping out to see Charity, but instead of banning him from doing so he just warns him to be careful of the other nigger she is apparently seeing. George resolves to see other girls now he knows that Charity is not faithful to him.

Impressed by George's growing skills in handling the chickens, Mingo suggests to Master Lea that they might let him fight some of the culled birds in the hackfights, which were mainly for poor whites, free blacks, and occasionally slaves. Tom Lea himself had started out as a hackfighter with just one bird, and symbolized among his peers the rise of a white poor man to eminence as a cockfighter. George is over the moon when he learns of the plan and Tom Lea's promise to give him a share of any winnings. At his first hackfight in 1824, a slight hesitation when releasing his rooster costs him the bird's life, and he feels very discouraged. Even after winning the next fight and gaining two dollars, George is still despondent and ashamed that he lost the first. But a string of victories follow, and George soon gains a good reputation among the hackfighters, along with the nickname 'Chicken George.' The gamecocker aristocrat George Hewitt tries to buy George from Tom Lea, who refuses his offer and accuses George of treachery, but George explains he has only been going to the Hewitt plantation to visit a field hand girl there. He expects a punishment from Tom, but instead he is asked to accompany Tom to the cockfights now that Mingo is in poor health and can no longer attend.

One day when they are out alone together in the wagon, Master Lea starts talking to George about his own poor family background, and how hard he had had to work to improve his life. Although reserved and distrustful of him at first, George gradually

opens up as he is encouraged by the Master to talk, and when the Master asks him about his experiences with women, and says he will write him a pass every night to go out and meet them, George tells him of his fondness for a slave called Matilda who is owned by a Mr. McGregor, and who he would like to marry. Mr. Lea agrees to approach Mr. McGregor and tells George that if she agrees to marry him he will build them their own cabin. Chicken George is lost for words at the Master's offer.

George and Matilda are married in August 1827. On the morning of the his wedding day, George puts the finishing touches to their new cabin, then dresses in his characteristically colorful and flamboyant outfit, topped off by the black derby hat that Mr. Lea had given him as a present. Before leaving for the McGregor plantation with Kizzy and the other slaves, he takes a drink of white lightning, slipping a small bottle into his pocket and continuing to drink on the way. On arrival he is already drunk, and his behavior becomes increasingly embarrassing during the ceremony. For George, the reception passes in a blur, and when he returns to the Lea plantation with Matilda, he falls over the bathtub he had left out in their cabin, and Matilda puts him to bed.

Matilda is readily accepted by the other slaves, although George is rarely at home, going to big cockfights with Tom Lea for days at a time. Matilda is hard-working and very religious, and she starts leading regular Sunday prayer meetings for the other slaves. She gives birth to a baby boy in Spring 1828, who she names Virgil after her own father, but George is away at the time. On his return, he is elated at the birth of his son, and Kizzy is overjoyed when he starts to tell the baby boy about his great-grandfather Kunta Kinte. Matilda sometimes complains to George about his long absences, but he always manages to win her over with his charm. When Matilda becomes pregnant again, Kizzy scolds George for not spending more time with his family and reveals that she knows he goes out drinking and gambling, when he has told Matilda he is tending sick chickens. In 1830 George is away at a major cockfighting tournament in Charleston when his second son, Ashford, is born.

On his return he tells the slaves he had seen a long line of niggers being driven along in chains, many from Virginia. Kizzy is very upset since her parents were in Virginia, and Matilda scolds George for his insensitiveness. George's behavior improves for a while after Matilda makes it clear she knows what he has been up to and warns him that God will punish him. He is at home in January 1831 when his next son is born, and he keeps up the tradition of gathering the family around while he tells the new baby about Kunta Kinte.

In August 1831 there is slave revolt led by a Nat Turner, and whole families of white people are killed. Master Lea threatens his slaves with his shotgun and searches all their cabins for weapons. It takes a year for the fear and panic to subside. After that the relationship between Master Lea and George grows stronger as they prepare for a three month trip to a major tournament in New Orleans, which George is excitedly anticipating. He is now the father of four boys and agrees to Master Lea's suggestion to call the new-born baby Tom, but Matilda expresses her disapproval and George storms out and stays away for five days. Although he knows that Matilda is a fine and loyal wife, he continues to enjoy the company of fun-seeking women when away on his trips with

Master Lea. When he returns to the cabin after their argument he is still angry, but is pacified by the sight of his sons, and by Kizzy telling him how much they all love him. When she asks him to tell the story of Kunta Kinte to the boys, Virgil jumps in and tells the story of their great-grandfather to his younger brothers.

George goes on a trip with Master Lea to collect the new wagon that they will drive to New Orleans, and he buys a new derby hat to go with his green and yellow suits, red suspenders and green scarf. But on arriving back at the plantation, they learn that Mingo has had a stroke and died. George is full of grief and feels guilty for not spending more time with Mingo. To his dismay, Master Lea decides to cancel the trip to New Orleans since there is no one at home to mind the chickens. Now that George has to look after the chickens alone, he persuades Matilda to let the 6-year old Virgil join him. But Virgil has little interest in the chickens, and George sends him back to work in the fields.

The following year George's fifth son, James, is born. Around this time, George hears of increasing bitterness against white people. In Florida, when white men captured the black wife of an Indian Chief, Osceola, a war party of Indians and black slaves had ambushed and killed over 100 American soldiers, while at The Alamo a band of Mexicans had massacred a garrison of white Texans, including a woodsman named Davey Crocket. In 1837 George hears that President Van Buren had ordered the army to drive all Indians west of the Mississippi River. George's sixth son, Lewis, was born in this year, and the following year Matilda at last gives birth to a girl who is named Kizzy after her grandmother. George tells Matilda of his plans to save up his hackfight winnings and buy themselves free, and they calculate that they would need about sixty-eight hundred dollars for the whole family.

Chapters 91-100 Analysis

Although Tom initially refuses to formally acknowledge that George is his son, he does grant him special privileges and over the years they gradually become quite close for a slave and his Master, particularly as George shares Tom's love for and interest in the chickens. George is confused, however, by the mixed messages he receives at times, such as when Tom shuns him and treats him as harshly as the other slaves at the time of the revolts. George is a great perfectionist and finds it difficult to accept failure, since he is devastated whenever their chickens fail to win a fight, particularly those which he trained, and blames himself for any losses.

By the time of George's marriage with Matilda, he has become quite irresponsible in other areas of his life, drinking heavily and womanizing, habits which continue after the wedding. Despite this, he is clearly a charming and charismatic man, and Matilda idolizes him. Despite being angry that he does not spend more time with his family, Kizzy is proud that her son continues the tradition of passing on the story of Kunta Kinte.

George's success in breaking out of the traditional slave mould through working as the chicken trainer enables him to envisage a future of freedom for himself and his family, in the longer term. His plans to buy his family free are later dashed when Tom Lea loses the big cockfight, but ultimately the family will become free, with the exception of Kizzy who will be the last family member to die a slave.

Chapters 101-110

Chapters 101-110 Summary

George persuades Master Lea to let his son Tom train as a blacksmith, and an apprenticeship is arranged under the black blacksmith Isiah on the Askew Plantation. Tom is overjoyed, but is accused by his brother Ashford of being their parents' favorite. Kizzy is now ten and Mary, George and Matilda's second daughter, is eight. When the 16-year old Tom returns home for Thanksgiving nine months later, he sees how proud his family are of him. He now becomes the main source of news from the outside world, telling them about a new 'telegraph' form of communication, and that there was a new President, Zachary Taylor. He also tells about famous northern black men and women, like Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, and Harriet Tubman who were fighting against slavery, giving lectures and telling their life stories; about the Californian goldrush; and about the great debates about slavery between Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln.

When George asks Tom to go for a stroll with him after dinner, his brothers James and Lewis are very envious, but at least the hostile Ashford is away, visiting another plantation. George confides in Tom about his plans to buy the family free, and they calculate that between them they could save enough in fifteen years.

In 1855 George is excited to hear that a wealthy gamekeeper from England, Sir C. Eric Russell was coming to pit his birds against some of the finest in the U.S. with huge prize money at stake. Master Lea invests a $1875 bond in the competition, and George himself takes his and Matilda's own stash of $2,000 savings to bet on the Lea birds. Matilda is furious that he is gambling with their freedom, and complains to Tom, who now has his own busy blacksmith shop on the plantation. Tom Lea tells Tom that if they win, he will set him and his family free for the amount of Tom's winnings.

A vast crowd has gathered at the gamefight, and when Tom Lea's birds are called, his rowdy poor cracker fans call out drunken cheers and insult the Englishman, angering him and his host and embarrassing Tom Lea. Sir Russell asks Tom Lea to join him in a personal side bet of ten thousand dollars, which Lea raises to twenty thousand dollars. George is shocked, as the sum represents everything that Master Lea owns, including all the slaves and George's own savings. When their bird wins the fight, George is elated, knowing that they will now be free. But the Englishman challenges Master Lea to put his winnings on another bet, and this time their bird is killed. On the way back, Master Lea tells George that he had reached a deal with the Englishman to pay him all the cash he had, along with a mortgage on the house, and to let George go and work for him for two years in England. He shows George a piece of paper granting him freedom when he returns, which he says he will keep in his strongbox. When George asks why he can't set Matilda and the children free now, Master Lea becomes cold, and blames him for losing the money.

After George leaves for England, Master Lea's fortunes continue to decline, and he loses most of his fights. He takes to drink and is known to beat his wife. George's family are terrified of being sold, and their fears are realized when a slave trader comes to the house. He tells them that Mrs. Lea had insisted that George's family should all be sold together, and that he had customers with a nearby tobacco plantation who wanted a nigger family that would give them no trouble. The older slaves including Kizzy were being allowed to stay on the Lea plantation. Tom asks Master Lea if he could buy the older slaves from him, and is told he could have them for $300 dollars each, but not until the money is paid.

The night before the family leaves for their new home, they discover that Uncle Pompey is dead. After a week on the Murray plantation, Matilda and her children agree that they are better off here, as Master Murray and his wife are good Christians. They settle into life on the new plantation, and Matilda pleases the new Master and mistress with her excellent housekeeping and cooking, while Tom impresses them with his blacksmith skills. Their houseguests are always impressed with the things that Tom has made, and as his reputation grows he gets lots of orders from other customers. Matilda is pleased when her reserved son tells her that he wants to marry a housemaid called Irene who he met at the home of the rich Master Edwin Holt, owner of the Holt Cotton Mill.

Master Holt had been impressed with some of Tom's work he had seen and asked him to install some decorative window grilles in his home. While there, he met the pretty, coppery-skinned Irene, and started visiting her every Sunday. Irene's mother had been captured by Indians and taken to their village, and her father was an Indian. After she was born, her mother was recaptured by her Master, who sold her and her daughter to a nigger trader before Master Holt bought them.

Irene is very proud of her Master and his family, and Tom begins to tire of hearing their praises. He loves Irene but feels that unlike her he can never trust, let alone worship, white people. He is concerned that if they should marry they would have to live on separate plantations, but Irene cunningly persuades her Master and mistresses to sell her to Master Murray so she can marry Tom, by telling them that she is being pursued by two young Masters. They agree, and offer to host the wedding and reception dinner. At the wedding Tom presents his wife with a beautiful hand-wrought iron rose he has made for her. After the newly married couple return to the Murray plantation, Irene asks Tom to make her a handloom and is soon making beautiful clothes for all the family and Master and Mrs. Murray. Soon she is pregnant with Tom's first child. Around this time, Matilda enlists several members of the family in a ploy to get the flighty L'il Kizzy to settle down with the railroad hotel worker Amos, by telling her about his other admirers to make her jealous.

Chicken George is shocked when he returns home to the run-down Lea plantation after five years in England. He comes across old Miss Malizy picking salad greens, who gradually recognizes him, but seems vacant and confused. She tells him that his mother Kizzy had died and that his wife and children were sold off. Furious, George marches into the house calling for Master Lea. When the disheveled Tom emerges, he hugs George and asks him to take a drink with him.

George demands to know where his family are, and reminds Tom Lea of his promise to set them all free when George returned. As Master Lea gets increasingly drunk, he tells George that he has hidden some money and still owns ten acres of land, that he would pass on to George, since there was blood between them. George resolves to get him more drunk and to find the freedom note in the strongbox and plays along with the conversation until Tom Lea falls asleep.

George creeps into his bedroom, steals the strongbox and smashes it open to find the paper, before riding off to find his family. When he arrives at the Murray plantation, the heavily pregnant Irene recognizes him instantly from his flamboyant appearance and lumbers off to tell the family of his arrival. George informs them of the deaths of Kizzy and Sister Sarah, and after their grief has abated a little he tells them about the freedom paper, and about his experiences in England working for Lord Russell, who had paid Master Lea to keep him there longer than agreed but had rewarded George well. On the way back, he had spent several days in New York, where he had met many free niggers, some poor, but others who had made good lives for themselves. The black people were annoyed that so many white immigrants were now arriving and taking their jobs.

George's family becomes concerned about what his status will be on the new plantation. When he accompanies Tom to buy supplies in a nearby town, they go into a store owned by a former sheriff named J.D, Cates, and George looks around cockily, inspecting the merchandise. When Cates asks George to fetch him a dipper of water, George shows him his freedom paper. Cates tells them that Master Murray should know the county laws better and says he will be over to talk to him.

After his visit the next day Master Murray tells George that no freed black is allowed to stay in North Carolina for more than sixty days or he can be re-enslaved. Master Murray offers to keep him on, and says he will be treated well, but later Matilda says he must leave as he is the first free one among them. Even though he has another forty days to go, he decides to leave immediately, telling Tom and Irene to tell their child about the family.

In November 1860 Tom and Irene's daughter is six months old. When the family all gather in Matilda's cabin, Tom tells them that Abraham Lincoln has been elected President, and is against anyone in the south keeping slaves. Soon after, they learn that Carolina had seceded from the United States. Tensions are rising between the north and the south, and Tom warns them that there is likely to be a war. There are more secessions of southern states in early 1861, who join a confederacy headed by Jefferson Davis. In March the slaves hear that President Lincoln has been sworn in, that a Confederate flag had been unveiled at a huge ceremony, and that Jeff Davis had declared the African slave trade abolished, which is confusing to them. Days later, the North Carolina legislature called for 20,000 military volunteers. On April 12, 1861 they learn that war has broken out. The North Carolina Governor pledges support for the Confederate Army, and over the following weeks, hundreds of white men enlist to fight the Yankees.

Chapters 101-110 Analysis

The quiet, reserved Tom, who exhibits many of the characteristics of his great-grandfather Kunta Kinte, becomes the accepted leader of the family in George's

absence, and is the next link in the family tree leading to Alex Haley. Before George's departure, freedom is almost in the family's grasp when Tom Lea's bird wins the fight against the Englishman's bird, but Lea is a perpetual gambler and his dissatisfaction with his initial winnings cost him nearly everything he owned and lost George's family the promised chance of freedom although it is unclear whether Tom would have actually kept his promise to set them free. Ironically, George's wife and children are better off than before after being sold to a new Master, although George cannot be with them. Once again poor Kizzy is cruelly taken away from the family that meant so much to her and will never see her son or grandchildren again before she dies.

When Tom marries Irene, this introduces Indian blood to the family, further diluting Kunta's African genes.

When George does return and claims his freedom as promised by Tom Lea, he is to learn how little freedom can mean in a country where slavery is still prevalent and there are laws and rules governing the movements of even freed slaves. Having been used to freedom of movement, George can no longer adapt to a settled existence under such conditions, and he leaves earlier than necessary, which shows that his freedom has become more important to him than being with his family.

Chapters 111-120

Chapters 111-120 Summary

Another baby girl is born to Tom and Irene, and the following morning the whole family as well as the Master and Mistress troop in to see her. She is to be called Ellen after Irene's mother. Tom invites everyone to their cabin on the following Saturday evening for the family tradition in which the new baby is told the story of Kunta Kinte. The outside news is of many Confederate triumphs. In Spring 1862 Sheriff Cates comes to ask Master Murray to let Tom do the horse-shoeing at the training camp for the new cavalry unit he is commanding. Tom would work alternate weeks for Cate and Murray for the duration of the war.

During Tom's second week at the camp, he is awakened one night by a noise from one of the nearby garbage tents. On investigating he sees a thin, sallow-faced white youth, who in the process of running away, stumbles over something that alerts the guards. They suspect Tom of stealing, and keep him captive until morning when they take him to Major Cates, who refuses to believe him about the white boy and whips Tom. Humiliated, Tom grabs his tools and returns to the big house, where Master Murray supports him and tells him not to go back. One day, there is a tap at Tom and Irene's cabin door and as Irene opens it Tom is amazed to see the white man who was stealing at the army camp, begging for food.

The boy runs off, but next day he returns to the big house and begs the Master to feed him, telling him he is called George Johnson, that he is 16, and that the war ruined his farm's crops in South Carolina. To the family's horror, the Master offers him a trial as an overseer, but when George starts work their anger subsides as they find he is a reasonable person who gets along well with them and even asks them to train him to do his work. They nickname him Ol' George, since he is so young. He works just as hard in the fields as they do and is happy to mingle with the slaves. Around this time, Tom and Irene's third daughter, Viney, is born. Ol' George goes away for a few weeks and when he returns he brings with him his heavily pregnant, very young wife, Martha. Two weeks later Martha goes into labor, but the baby girl is born dead.

On New Year's Day 1863 Matilda rushes into slave row announcing that President Lincoln had signed an Emancipation Proclamation setting all slaves free. The slaves rejoice wildly, but as the weeks pass it becomes clear that the Confederacy is ignoring the presidential order. Towards the end of 1864, however, Tom brings regular reports of Yankees marching through southern states burning them to the ground, and in 1865 news arrives that the Confederacy Army had surrendered.

The slaves join thousands of others on the main road praising the Lord for their freedom, but are plunged into grief a few days later when they learn of the assassination of President Lincoln. In May, Master Murray summons them all and tells them they are free, and they can leave if they wish or can stay and be paid. That night,

Tom gathers the family together for a discussion about what to do. They agree that they are not ready to leave and decide to take up the Masters offer to parcel out the plantation to them for sharecropping. A week or so later, Chicken George arrives, and tells them he had found for them all a western Tennessee settlement whose white people waited for them to help build a new town. George boasts about the virtues of this location, and Tom begins planning the alteration of farm wagons into a covered 'Rockaways' to transport all the families to Tennessee. Soon, many other black families arrive asking if they can go too. After two months of feverish preparation, twenty-eight wagons are ready to leave, and another one is built when Ol' George and Martha ask if they can join them.

On arrival in the 'settlement' of Henning, the families find that the town does not quite match up to their expectations as there is hardly anything built yet, but the surrounding land is indeed prime farmland, and thirty acres is allocated to every family. Soon they are busy planting land and building cabins. When Tom is approached by three white men who tell him he cannot open a blacksmith's shop unless he is employed by a white man, he is angry and resolves to take his family and move on, but is struck by an idea. Helped by Virgil, he transforms his wagon into a rolling blacksmith's shop, which no one can object to. Soon, Tom and the whole family have earned the respect of the white people of the town and are welcomed for the extra business they bring. In 1874, led by Matilda, they build the New Hope Coloured Methodist Episcopal Church, which was attended by nearly all the black people from 20 miles around on its first Sunday of opening.

Two years later, Sister Carrie White, a graduate of Lane College in Jackson, Tennessee, is teaching the children on their first day of school indoors, having previously done so outside under the brush arbors. Tom and Irene's oldest five children attend the school, Cynthia being the youngest. By the time Cynthia graduates in 1883, her eldest sister Maria Jane is already married and has given birth to her first child. Elizabeth, the best student among Tom and Irene's children, had become her father's book-keeper. A year later she falls in love with John Toland, an educated and religious man, but is told by her father that they can't marry because he is too fair. When Matilda hears about this she is furious and tells Irene that Tom's father has white blood. In her rage, she has a heart attack and dies two days later. After Matilda's death, Chicken George is never the same again, his old warmth disappearing with her, and at the age of 83 he falls into the fire at granddaughter Maria Jane's house, and dies from his burns.

One day Cynthia asks her parents if Will Palmer, who manages the local lumber company for a Mr. James, can walk her home from church. Privately Tom is pleased as he respects Will Palmer, but he does not want to seem to eager. Ten months later, Will proposes to Cynthia and they are soon married. They build their own home and Cynthia gives birth to their first son, who lives only for a few days. Will continues to work hard, and impresses a local banker who later asks him to take over as the company owner when Mr. James goes bankrupt. Will asks the banker to write out an anonymous check for Mr. James for half of his savings. The company is a great success under Will's ownership and wagonloads of black people come from miles around to see the first

black-owned business of its kind in Tennessee. In 1895 a healthy girl is born to Cynthia and Tom, and is named Bertha George.

Cynthia carries on the tradition of telling the baby all about the story of the African Kunta Kinte, although Will is little irritated that he is considered to have married into Cynthia's family rather than the other way round. He starts to spoil little Bertha, and as she grows up, he arranges credit for her at every store in town. In 1909 she graduates from eighth grade, and goes to attend the Lane Institute, which will lead onto college where she wants to study to become a teacher. She starts courting a man she had met in the church choir, Simon Alexander Haley, and when she brings him home he meets with approval of her parents and community, being self-assured and friendly, although some are privately a little concerned about his fair complexion, as he had two Irish white grandfathers. Simon serves in France in the US Army during WWI, and he and Bertha were married in 1920, before traveling to New York, where they would both be studying. At first, Bertha writes home regularly, but her parents become concerned when they don't hear from the couple for some time. Cynthia decides to go to New York to investigate, but shortly before she leaves she and Tom are awakened one night when Bertha and Simon arrive, holding a baby boy. The boy is the author of this novel, *Roots*, Alex Haley.

The author recalls being told by his father that his grandfather, Will, immediately took the baby in his arms and out to the back of the house where he stayed for half an hour. Bertha and the baby stayed with her parents while her husband returned to New York to complete his studies, and the boy was adopted by her parents, as the son they had always wanted. Will died when Alex was nearly five years old, and his father returned to Henning to take over the lumber mill, while his mother taught at the local school.

Many Murray family relatives came to spend summers with them, and listening to their conversations, Alex, and younger brothers George and Julius learned about the story of Kunta Kinte and his descendants. Later Simon sells the lumber company and becomes a professor of agriculture, with the family moving to live wherever he was teaching at the time. Bertha died at the age of 36, and two years later his father remarried and a daughter, Lois, was born.

While serving in the US Coast Guard during World War II Alex started writing, and he became a full-time writer retiring from the service in 1959. When working on an assignment about the Rosetta Stone, he is struck by the analogy between the messages on the stone and the oral history that had been passed down through his family, and he decides to try to find out the origin of Kunta's language. After visiting the Cousin Georgia Anderson, the last surviving member of the family's generation that used to talk on the Henning front, he locates the family records in the National Archives in Washington. He meets a Belgian oral historian who specialized in African languages and learns that the words used by Kunta are Mandinka in origin. As word of Alex's quest spreads, he is also introduced to a student from The Gambia, Ebou Manga, who tells him he is a Wolof, and accompanies Alex on a trip to the Gambia where he has assembled for him a group of men knowledgeable about the country's history.

The men show Alex on a map the village where his ancestors are believed to have come from and tell him that there are still Griots who are experts in the oral history of the country and who could help in his search. On his second trip to Africa, Alex meets up with a griot called Kebba Kanji Fofana, who knows a lot about the Kinte clan, and they travel into the heart of the Gambia with a party of interpreters and musicians. Eventually Alex arrives in Juffure, which has changed little over two hundred years. As the villagers crowd in on him, he is struck by the knowledge that, for them, he represents the millions of black people who had been taken from their country and were never seen again.

The old griot recites the history of the Kinte clan in great detail, and after two hours reaches the point where Omoro and Binte had four sons, the first of which was Kunta, who went away to chop wood and was never seen again. The words echo everything that Alex had heard from his boyhood on his grandmother's porch. Suddenly all the people get up and form a circle around him, and mothers give their babies to him to embrace, and Alex learns later that this was one of the earliest ceremonies of mankind, the 'laying on of hands' in which the people were telling him he was one of them and they a part of him.

Traveling back through the next village he bursts into tears as he realizes that all the villagers are crying out 'Meester Kinte!' as the word of his visit has spread. On his return he resolves to write a book, in which his ancestors would symbolize all African-descended Americans. He learns that Cousin Georgia had passed away at almost at the exact time he had entered Juffure, and feels that she had completed her job to get him back to Africa before joining the other ancestors.

Enlisting the help of Lloyds of London, he eventually finds the records of a ship called Lord Ligonier, which sailed from The Gambia to Annapolis, arriving on 29 September 1767. At the Maryland Hall of Records he finds a newspaper from that time, which advertised for sale 'A Cargo of Choice Healthy Slaves' that had arrived on the Lord Ligonier. On September 29, 1967, two hundred years to the day that Kunta Kinte arrived, Alex stands weeping on a pier at Annapolis. Back at the Hall of Records he discovers that only 98 of the 'Negroes' that left the Gambia on that ship had lived through the voyage. In Richmond, Virginia, he locates a deed dated 1768 in which John Waller transferred to William Waller land and goods, including a Negro man slave named Toby. While writing *Roots*, Alex Haley flew to Africa and returned to the US on a freighter ship. Each night, he climbed down into the cargo hold and lay throughout the night on bare planks, trying to imagine what Kunta and his companions had endured.

Finally, Alex tells the readers that his father had died at 83, having lived a full life. He recounts how, as a student, his father had impressed a white man he had served while working as a night porter on a train, and the white man later sent him the cost of a full-year's tuition. This enabled Simon to score marks that earned him a scholarship and led to a successful academic career. This family background in turn provided Alex and his brothers and sister with the opportunities they needed to make successful careers in their own chosen fields. Alex closes the book with a hope that it will help 'alleviate the legacies of the fact that preponderantly the histories have been written by the winners."

Chapters 111-120 Analysis

After four generations of slavery, Kunta Kinte's descendants at last gain their freedom, and move to start a new life together. Once freed, the family's fortunes improve significantly over time, since they are able to use their intelligence, skills and hard work to take advantage of the opportunities that were previously denied to them. The remainder of the book traces the generations leading ultimately to the novel's author Alex Haley. Incredibly, the tradition of telling new born children about Kunta Kinte and how he was taken from Africa is still being practiced the family, and this is how Alex gets to hear of his African roots and decides to write a book about the history of slavery from the slaves' perspective.

From Haley's account of his return to Africa, it is striking how little life has changed in Juffure, in great contrast to the sweeping historical changes that have taken place in American society. It is likely that the impact of slavery on the African continent contributed to this lack of development and enduring poverty of the people. Remarkably, the present-day Griots are still able to recount orally the accurate history of the Kinte clan, right up to the time of Kunta's capture, and Haley is incredulous at how closely they correspond to the stories passed down by Kunta's own descendents. For the people of Juffure and the neighboring villages it is apparent that Alex plays a very important role in returning to them as a symbol of all their people that were so cruelly taken away.

Haley's final account of how his father became successful signifies a new era in American history, in which black people were at last accepted and helped, rather than exploited, by white people, and in which people whose grandparents had been slaves could rise to prominence in their chosen careers and become wealthy members of society.

Characters

Bell

Bell is the cook on Master Waller's plantation. Eventually, she becomes Kunta's wife. When she is in labor, she tells Kunta about the two baby girls who were sold away from her when she was younger. In response, he gives their daughter the name Kizzy (the name means "you stay put").

Bell is sometimes exasperated by her husband's African ways and by his refusal to accept Christianity, but they have a deeply loving relationship based on mutual respect. Like Kunta, Bell is devastated by the sale of Kizzy.

Nyo Boto

Nyo is Kunta's grandmother, a woman who cares for the children of the village and fears no one. When he leaves on his first trip away from the village, she gives him a saphie charm to ward off evil spirits.

The Fiddler

One of the most colorful characters in *Roots,* Fiddler is "half-free," as he explains to Kunta, because his former master was drowned and he must stay near another master for protection. He plays his fiddle at parties and learns much about current events. He is the one, for example, who tells the other slaves about the Boston Massacre.

Fiddler is garrulous, likes to drink, and is a staunch friend to Kunta. He saves $700 hoping to buy his freedom, but is devastated to learn that Master Waller wants twice that amount to free him. In his anger and pain, he smashes his fiddle, and his playing is never the same after that.

Chicken George

Kizzy's flamboyant son, George is doted on by the adults on the Lea plantation. As he grows up, he becomes the apprentice to Uncle Mingo, and quickly becomes an expert trainer of gamecocks.

Often absent from his family's lives, George is not faithful to his wife, but is in his own way a loving father and husband He plans to buy his family's freedom with money he's saved from cock-fighting, but loses it all when Tom Lea□at George's urging□bets too much in a cockfight. George is forced to travel to England and work for Lord John Russell for several years, returning to find his family has been sold. Lea gives him his

freedom, and he finds his family at the Murray plantation, only to be forced to leave the state.

When the family is emancipated in 1865, George rejoins them. The family journeys to Henning, Tennessee. After his wife Matilda's death, George dies from a bad burn.

Alex Haley

The author of *Roots,* Haley is the son of Simon and Bertha Haley. He grows up in Henning hearing stories of his African ancestors and his other relatives After a long career in the Coast Guard, Haley becomes a writer; he is eventually dnven to research his family's past. The high point of his life comes when he hears of his African ancestor, Kunta Kinte, while on a journey to Africa. After twelve years of research, Haley publishes *Roots*

Simon Haley

A railroad employee who becomes a professor, Simon is Alex Haley's father. He is devastated by his wife's early death. *Roots* ends with an account of his funeral

01'George Johnson

After begging on the Murray plantation, Ol' George is a white man that becomes the overseer. He earns the respect of the slaves by working hard and never exhibiting any prejudice. When the Murrays leave their plantation, he and his wife journey with them to Henning. Ol' George becomes a part of the black community and is subject to the same treatment the blacks suffer.

Binta Kinte

Binta is the mother of Kunta Kinte and his brothers Lamin, Suwadu, and Madi.

Janneh Kinte

Janneh is Kunta's uncle and the son of Kairaba Kunta Kinte and his first wife. Janneh and his brother Saloum have traveled over much of Africa before founding their own village.

Kunta Kinte

The protagonist of *Roots,* Kunta Kinte is born in Juffure, Africa, to Binta and Omoro Kinte. Soon followed by three brothers, Kunta grows up according to the traditional

ways of his village. By fifteen, he already owns a thriving farm, has traveled within the Gambia, and has made plans for a trip to Mali with his brother Lamin.

When Kunta goes one morning to chop wood for a drum, he is captured and enslaved by the *toubob* (white slavers). After a harrowing journey to the African coast, Kunta is placed in the hold of a ship, which arrives in Virginia several weeks later. He attempts to escape from his captors four times, and on the last attempt his foot is cut off by two white patrollers.

While he recovers, he is sold to Master John Waller. Kunta becomes the gardener on the plantation, and later is assigned to be Waller's driver. Gradually Kunta learns English, aided by his friend the Fiddler, who teaches him many English words. Kunta becomes a part of the slave community, though he does not forget his African identity.

Unlike the other blacks on the plantation, Kunta refuses to become a Christian, and continues to pray to Allah. Likewise, he tells the other slaves his name is Kunta Kinte, not Toby, the name given him by his original master. Kunta marries Bell, the plantation cook, and they have a daughter, Kizzy. Kunta teaches Kizzy about his heritage, including his life in Juffure and many Mandinka words. Kunta and Bell are devastated when Kizzy is sold away from them at sixteen, after she has helped her lover Noah escape.

Lamin Kinte

Lamin is Kunta's younger brother. Lamin accompanies Kunta on his trip to find gold.

Omoro Kinte

The father of Kunta Kinte, Omoro is stern but loving. When Kunta loses a goat to a wild animal, he expects his father to punish him. Instead, Omoro tells Kunta that he still bears the scars from trying to save one of his own goats when he was a boy, and, out of his concern for Kunta, he tells him never to run toward a wild animal. Omoro also takes Kunta on his first trip, which gives Kunta a love of traveling.

Saloum Kinte

Saloum is Janneh's brother and Kunta's uncle.

Yaisa Kinte

Yaisa is Kunta1 s grandmother. When he is a child, she cares for him and tells him stories. Her death is Kunta's first experience of loss.

Themes

Assimilation and Separatism

Kunta Kinte1 s story illustrates an enduring theme of African-American life: the conflict between assimilation and separatism. In Africa, Kunta would never have been confronted with this issue, but in the American colonies he is subject to the powerful pressures of assimilation.

Kunta tries to hold onto his African identity, which has always defined him. Yet he is forced to accept a new name. As a slave, his entire social context has been redefined. Kunta cannot fully express himself because he is not free; he has lost his autonomy, which had so defined him as a young man in Africa

Moreover, Kunta is very lonely away from his home, family, and culture. In order to assuage his loneliness, he reaches out to the other blacks. Eventually Kunta realizes that he prefers life on the plantation to certain death, which he risks if he attempts to escape again.

Yet the knowledge that he has to surrender part of himself to survive is soul crushing, and he realizes that he has lost an essential part of himself. However, Kunta does pass on as much of his African knowledge as he can to his daughter, Kizzy, who in turn passes stones of her father on to succeeding generations, who cherish their African heritage while seeking the American dream of freedom and success.

Coming of Age

The first part of *Roots* is a coming-of-age story the young hero, Kunta Kinte, learns how to be an adult. This is not an emotional or intellectual journey so much as it is a process of learning the steps to adulthood. As a young child, Kunta hears stories that teach him his place in the world. When he is older, he has a job taking care of his father's goats and he attends school. At ten, he embarks on his manhood training, formally becoming an adult in his culture, which means he has his own farm and his own hut.

Kunta's continued growth into adulthood is halted by his descent into slavery. He must come of age all over again, learning a new language and culture. However, Kunta can never fully become an adult in a slave society. Like a child, he is forever subject to the whims of others. He has no freedom of movement, and most heartbreakingly, he cannot save his daughter Kizzy from being sold. Although Kunta behaves with an adult sense of responsibility, he is always subject to the humiliating realization that he is treated as less than a man, human being, and adult.

Human Rights

Roots is a story that illustrates the incompatibility of slavery with basic human dignity. The crux of incompatibility is the manner in which individual family members are sold without regard for family ties.

For instance, Kunta and Bell have their daughter sold away from them, and Kizzy suffers the same fate when Tom Lea sells her daughter-in-law and grandchildren from her. It is in these heartrending scenes that the cruelty of treating humans like property is most evident.

Slaves who are sold away from their families never see them again, cannot attend a loved one's funeral, hold a grandchild, or celebrate a son's marriage. Master Waller can order Kunta to drive him to see his family whenever he wants, but when he sells Kizzy, Kunta knows he will never see her again. Although both Master Waller and Master Murray are portrayed as relatively fair owners, the constant threat of separation shows how inhumane slavery is and how their participation in slavery makes them inhumane.

Style

Narration

Roots is narrated by a third-person narrator. The device of a third-person narrator enables the text to change settings when the characters do. For example, when Kizzy is sold away from the Waller plantation, the narrative moves with her, recording her actions and thoughts on the Lea plantation. In this way the narrative moves from generation to generation, from Kunta Kinte to Bertha Palmer Haley.

At the very end of the book, the narration switches from the third person to the first person with the arrival of Alex Haley, the book's author. Haley records his own thoughts and actions in his own voice.

Setting

The setting of *Roots* changes as the characters are sold or move. It begins in Juffure, Kunta's village, and then moves to the ship in which Kunta is placed for his journey across the Atlantic.

The narrative then moves to Virginia, on the Waller plantations where Kunta lives. When Kizzy is sold away from the Waller plantation, the setting switches to Tom Lea's plantation in North Carolina. Kizzy's daughter-in-law and grandchildren are later sold to Master Murray in Alamance County, also in North Carolina. After emancipation, the family moves to Henning, Tennessee. At the end of the novel, Alex Haley journeys to Juffure and the narrative comes full circle.

Realism

Haley called his book "faction," a mix of fact and fiction. Although Haley creates the thoughts and dialogue of his characters, *Roots* is meant to be a realistic account of Mandinka culture and slave life in the American colonies and the United States. Haley frequently has his characters refer to historical events, and he relies on oral and written accounts in order to realistically imagine what the lives and thoughts of his characters may have been like.

Plot

The plot of *Roots* becomes more episodic as the story goes on. Haley presents the extraordinary events in the lives of his characters such as birth, marriage, death or sale, or important events like George's biggest gamecock matches or the Fiddler's inability to gain freedom. At times, the narrative skips years in the lives of the characters because not much of consequence occurs.

Historical Context

Haley began writing his novels during the Civil Rights movement, and he researched and wrote *Roots* at a time when African Americans and European Americans were reevaluating slavery and its legacy. Many Americans believed in what has often been called the *"Gone With the Wind* version" of slavery, in which enslaved Africans were happy-go-lucky, childlike people who were cared for by benevolent, paternalistic masters. One consequence of the Civil Rights movement was the reevaluation of this myth.

The reality of slavery was much more complex. White masters were certainly invested in the myth of paternalism, which allowed them to justify the enslavement of human beings on the grounds that the relationship of slaves and masters was a reciprocal one□the master took care of his slaves and claimed the fruits of their labor.

Although African Americans opposed this myth, they were often able to use paternalism to demand rights. The slaves came to accept certain things as their due: the right to practice their religion: no work on Sundays; and the right to be adequately fed and sheltered. As Haley's characters do, the slaves also made distinctions between good and bad masters. They may have keenly felt the horrors of slavery in general but recognized that it was easier when they had a humane master.

Family was a very important concept for slaves who were under constant threat of being sold away from their families. A master who sold individual family members was a bad master. After they were emancipated in 1865, many slaves went to great lengths to find lost family members.

Frequently, slaves formed strong communities; they often considered all blacks on the plantation as members of their family, much like those on the Lea plantation do. Children grew up with an extended group of people who would care for them, and, in particular, allowed for children without fathers to experience the care and example of a male role model. Chicken George has this kind of relationship with Uncle Mingo. his mentor in cock-fighting.

The romantic myth of slavery held that blacks and whites on plantations formed a kind of family unit. To some degree, this was true, and it can be seen in Matilda's concern for the Murrays after the black Murrays are freed. Yet, like many slaves, Matilda's concern only goes so far□she does not hesitate to move to Henning when she gets the chance.

Eugene Genovese notes that many slaves pretended devotion in order to make their own lives easier, but often the most "devoted" slaves on a plantation were the first to leave after the Civil War. Whites believed that blacks cared for them as if they were family, but even if some did. they chose to assert their own freedom rather than remain with their former masters. Most slaves valued their own kin far more than they did their masters and mistresses. Although proximity can lead to close bonds, most slaves found

that it was difficult to love someone with the power to punish, sexually abuse, or sell them, even if that power was not exercised.

Sometimes, the blacks and whites on a plantation were relatives; the coercion or rape by whites of African American women was a common practice. As in Kizzy's situation, even when the man didn't use violence, it was impossible to obtain a slave woman's consent for sexual relations because her owner had the power to make her submit

It was not uncommon for the children and siblings of a master to also be his slaves, as in Chicken George's case. Although some slaveholders treated their own kin better than the other slaves they owned, often they treated them no differently.

In spite of the hardships of being owned, slaves created a strong culture that enabled them to survive. Chief among their comforts was religion, which enabled them to look forward to freedom in the next world Their religious practices bound slaves together in a community created by God. Slaves took care of each other, calling each other "brother" and "sister" as at the Lea plantation, and helped each other to survive.

Contrary to the myth, all slaves felt the hardships of their slavery; as Tom says, it was sometimes impossible for whites to understand that "being owned by anyone could never be enjoyable." Some slaves did run away successfully, sometimes with the help of whites and free blacks, though Kunta Kinte was never able to.

Most slaves, much like Kunta, decided to stay with their families and plantation communities. Although slaves longed for the rights whites took for granted, they made accommodations to slavery. The slaves' ability to accommodate slavery did not mean that they preferred it to freedom, as many whites insisted. Haley's book, which documents the slaves' yearning for freedom, was an eye-opener for many, blacks and whites alike, who believed the old myths about slavery.

Critical Overview

For the most part, *Roots* was a critical success, although no amount of critical acclaim could have overshadowed its overwhelming popular reception. Critics of *Roots* have tended to focus on the historical accuracy of the novel, Haley's use of dialect, and the book's emotional power.

Russell Warren Howe asserted that *Roots* "is crammed with raw violence and makes valid demands on the tearducts of the dourest reader."

Arnold Rampersad contended that Haley's "recreation of Kunta's middle passage journey in the hold of a slave ship is harrowing, the major place in the book where facts are incontrovertibly alchemized into vivid narrative."

Likewise, critics praised Haley's renderings of heart-wrenching scenes like the one where Kizzy is sold away from her parents, about which Paul Zimmerman wrote, "this soapy passage is heartbreaking."

Even critics who have found themselves moved by *Roots* have taken issue with the historical accuracy of the book. Some have argued that *Roots* is a mythic account, not a strictly factual one□more of an "unchallengeable testament of symbolic truth."

Nevertheless, other critics have continued to find fault with Haley's historical accuracy. Howe maintained that Kunta would never have identified himself as "African" while still in Africa, nor would he have seen African slavers as traitors. He wrote, "the people of his village, Juffure, did not see all 'Africans' as brothers. Indeed, they had no concept of Africa."

Other critics have maintained that Haley's portrayal of slave life unrealistic. David Herbert Donald contended that "he simply has not done enough reading about the South, about slavery, about American agriculture."

Some critics of Haley have also seen his portrayals of whites as monolithic. Howard Stein saw in *Roots* "a reversal of white stereotypes, popular and sociological, [which] obscures much of the interpersonal complexity and internal anguish in those both Black and White."

Almost all reviewers and critics of Haley noted his use of black dialect Rampersad asserted that "Haley's ability to write dialogue and dialect is competent at best, and stilted and artificial far too often." Zimmerman deemed the dialect "authentic," but argued that it "grows wearing and turns ridiculous when forced to convey historical bulletins."

Several critics found fault with Haley's introduction of American historical events into the action of the book Rampersad called the inclusion "uninteresting" and Donald wrote, "it

is awkward that the only way Haley can devise to introduce chronology is to have house slaves rush down to the quarters announcing the latest big-house gossip."

Most critics have noted that Haley's portrayal of Kunta Kinte is by far his strongest characterization. Rampersad called Haley's "presentation of Kunta's unfolding consciousness of the strange new white world of America" "brilliant." Although some critics praised Haley's rendering of life in Juffure, Howe argued that "only when Juffure has become a distant childhood memory, and Kunta is acculturated into slave America, does the character become arrestingly true."

There have been periodic challenges to Haley's research methods and veracity. One critic, Philip Nobile, has argued that because "the uniqueness of *Roots* lay in the fact that it claimed to be painstakingly researched, and true," inconsistencies between Haley's account and historical records meant that Haley was basically a fraud.

In a rebuttal to this claim, Clarence Page argued that "the difference between fiction and journalism is that journalism deals with 'facts' while fiction deals with 'truths.' If so, it will always be easier for somebody to chip away at Haley's 'facts' than for anybody to deny his 'truths.'"

On the whole, most critics of *Roots* have tended to agree with Rampersad, who wrote that the book is "a work of extremely uneven texture but unquestionable final success."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Dougherty is a Ph.D. candidate at Tufts University. In the following essay, she explores Haley's use of the past in Roots.

When discussing *Roots,* Haley contended that he was "just trying to give his people a myth to live by." If one definition of myth is "a useable version of the past," Haley's saga certainly succeeds in overturning other myths about the Black American experience and giving African Americans a proud history.

Haley's book must be seen, at least in part, as a corrective to prevailing American myths about slavery and about Africa. Some critics have called *Roots* a counter-narrative to Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind,* which depicted happy-go-lucky, childlike slaves with no connection to their Afncan heritage.

Instead, Haley presents a harrowing account of the devastating toll slavery took on American blacks and the cultural strategies they used to endure it, an account which is intended to give African American readers a useable version of their shared past.

Haley concludes *Roots* by asserting that he set out to write a book not only about his own family's history, but one that would serve as a "symbolic saga of all African-descent people□who are without exception the seeds of someone like Kunta who was born and grew up in some black Afncan village, someone who was captured and chained down in one of those slave ships that sailed them across the same ocean, into some succession of plantations, and since then a struggle for freedom."

Haley assumes this task in part because he recognizes how fortunate his family is compared with many other African American families. Most African Americans cannot trace their ancestry back to a specific African ancestor because of the dislocations of slavery.

For example, in Haley's book, Bell has had two girls before Kizzy, both of whom were sold away from her. Neither girl would have grown up knowing who her parents were, nor where she had come from. Fortunately, Haley's family is able to stay together and they can pass their story on to their descendants In addition, the Haley family takes pride in their African past, and they want to pass their story on because it says something about who they are: in their stones of their ancestor "Kin-tay," their hope for freedom stays alive

It was long held by apologists for slavery that the Middle Passage made by enslaved Africans across the Atlantic effectively erased their identities This *tabula rasa,* or blank slate theory, excused the social control slaveholders sought to exercise over their slaves by making slavery "paternalistic" in nature In other words, it was believed that because their former identity was erased that Africans had to be treated like children.

In the myth of paternalism, as Eugene Genovese notes, the master became the slaves' father, caring for them because they could not care for themselves. For the myth of paternalism to operate effectively, the African past of the slaves had both to be destroyed and denigrated. The family of master, mistress, children, and slaves had to replace the African families left behind; for paternalism to work effectively, slaves had to identify with their masters, not their African forebears.

Africa represented a powerful independent source of identity that had to be eliminated. Moreover, because African cultural practices were often adapted as survival strategies, and were used to undermine the all-encompassing power of slavery, it was felt that they had to be resisted, denigrated, and destroyed.

Through the character of Kunta Kinte, Haley offers a powerful counter-story to the myth of the *tabula rasa.* Kunta carries all his African experiences and expectations across the ocean with him in spite of the agony he endures on the passage. Indeed, he has a greater experience of his African-ness on the ship than he would have on the land, where, as Russell Warren Howe notes, he would have identified with clan, village, region, and religion before identifying as African,

Kunta's expenence of his African identity is forged by the suffering he shares with the other men□all Africans□in the hold of the ship and by their common desire to resist the men who hold them there□all Europeans. The men comfort each other, pass on information, and plan their resistance. Through these communications, they become a community. Haley writes:

The relaying of any information from whatever source seemed about the only function that would justify their staying alive When there was no news, the men would talk of their families, their villages, their professions, their farms, their hunts. And more and more frequently there arose disagreements on how to kill the toubob, and when it should be tried. Some of the men felt that, whatever the consequences, the toubob should be attacked the next time they were taken up on deck. Others felt that it would be wiser to watch and wait for the best moment Bitter disagreements began to flare up. One debate was suddenly interrupted when the voice of an elder rang out, "Hear me' Though we are of different tribes and tongues, we must remember that we are the same people! We must be as one village, together in this place!"

Although the men forge a kind of pan-African community born of their suffering in the hold, Kunta retains his tribal identification. He stops speaking to his Wolof neighbor when he realizes that he is a pagan, and even in the American colonies, he instinctively identifies other blacks according to their tribes.

The American blacks have little time for what they call Kunta's "heathen Africanisms"; when Kunta tells his wife Bell that she is like a Mandinka woman, the highest compliment he can think of to pay her, Bell takes it as an insult. The American blacks have been taught to denigrate their own African heritage and to identify with the European culture of their masters; in fact, Kunta is astonished to see black slaves obediently following orders instead of rising in revolt.

Clearly, being forced to give up their African identities is one step toward identifying with the slave system; Kunta is named "Toby" as a symbolic attempt to rid him of his old identity and replace it with a slave identity. To the end of his life, Kunta will resist the master's attempts to separate him from his own identity, and insist that his name is Kunta, not Toby.

Although they denigrate their own African heritage, the American blacks have familiar practices. Kunta often notices how black American cultural practices are like African ones. Haley writes:

And Kunta had been reminded of Africa in the way that black women wore their hair tied up with strings into very tight plaits□although African women often decorated their plaits with colorful beads And the women of this place knotted cloth pieces over their heads, although they didn't tie them correctly. Kunta saw that even some of these black men wore their hair in short plaits, too, as some men did in Africa.

Kunta also viewed Africa in the way that black children here were trained to treat their elders with politeness and respect. He saw it in the way that mothers carried their babies with their plump little legs straddling the mothers' bodies. He noticed even such small customs as how the older ones among these blacks would sit in the evenings rubbing their gums and teeth with the finely crushed end of a twig, which would have been lemongrass root in Juffure. Although he found it difficult to understand how they could do it here in *toubob* land, Kunta had to admit that these blacks' great love of singing and dancing was unmistakably African.

Clearly, even the American blacks who denigrate their African heritage are engaging in cultural practices that are unmistakably African. These cultural practices bind the community together in a shared African American culture, which is separate from that of the master. These enduring Africanisms give the lie to the theory of *tabula rasa,* and thus loosen the grip of paternalism: the slaves maintain separate identities from their masters, building a powerful communal culture.

By far the most important element in the culture of the slaves is their religion. When Kunta goes to his first black Christian religious service, he is "astonished at how much it reminded him of the way the people of Juffure sat at the Council of Elders' meetings once each moon." In spite of this realization, Kunta remains true to his Muslim faith.

Yet for his descendants, Christianity represents a way to hold onto the idea of freedom. As Genovese notes, slaves identified with the sufferings of Jesus, and expected that one day a new Moses would lead them to the Promised Land of freedom. Likewise, Kunta's descendants exp

Genovese notes that many masters tried to control their slaves' religious expressions, but didn't succeed. They were more successful in their attempts to destroy and denigrate African culture. In particular, they sought to destroy those aspects of African culture that could be used against them. It was routine for tribesmen to be sold to different farms, lest they be able to plot insurrection or escape in their own languages.

Likewise, Kunta noted that the drum talk that was a constant feature of life in African villages had been stilled in black communities in the American colonies. Drumming was made often made illegal in Southern communities because slaveholders thought it "agitated" their slaves, often not realizing that drumming was actually a way of communicating.

Kunta also noticed that American blacks had secret ways of communicating, much like the "sireng kato" language of his village. These secret methods of communication included special handshakes and ways of talking and, most famously, the secret messages in slave spirituals. For these reasons alone, the masters encouraged the destruction and denigration of African culture.

This denigration of African culture is a common feature of American life even today; most Americans, both black and white, are ignorant of the history, diversity, and magnificence of African life. Moreover, many blacks do not have direct access to their African heritage because of the dislocations of slavery. For many readers, *Roots* was their first chance to see an African past which they could admire.

As Chester Fontenot maintains, "this book stands as the first thorough attempt by an Afro-American to come to terms with his African heritage." Haley offers a powerful myth of a beautiful African culture and its enduring influence in black American life, and thus gives black American readers a profound source of pride. As Haley asserts, *Roots* is a myth his people can use.

Source: Jane Elizabeth Dougherty, in an essay for *Novels for Students,* Gale, 2000.

Critical Essay #2

Taylor discusses the enormous success and popularity of Roots *in the following essay, paying particular attention to the feeling of connection to the past that it offered so many rootless people.*

I acknowledge immense debt to the griots of Africa where today it is rightly said that when a griot dies, it is as if a library has burned to the ground The griots symbolize how all human ancestry goes back to some place, and some time, where there was no writing Then, the memories and the mouths of ancient elders was [sic] the only way that early histories of mankind got passed along . for all of us today to know who we are

With these words, Alex Haley concludes the Acknowledgments page of his ambitious work, *Roots.* The tribute to the African griots he paid here, and in the final chapters of the book not to mention at countless lectures and interviews after publication was paid back to him by African-American critics. For instance, his biographer Mary Siebert McCauley entitled her study *Alex Haley, A Southern Griot.* In *The Black Scholar,* published only months after the first transmission of the television mini-series, black columnist Chuck Stone praised Haley for producing, as he had intended, "the symbol [sic] saga of all of us of African ancestry." Calling him "the griot from Tennessee," he praised Haley for "painstakingly unraveling the umbilical cord that had stretched tortured distance from Africa to America." For many critics, and millions of readers and TV viewers, Haley unraveled that umbilical cord by using his own family's story, and his griot-like powers, to link the pre-literate African past to his own literary, professional present via the terrible saga of slavery. The griots passed stones on orally, "for all of us today to know who we are." Haley as befitted a contemporary figure who was the culmination of centuries of oppression and resistance, slavery and freedom gave his story massive pre-publicity circulation on campus lecture tours and in popular journals, then wrote it down for publication and subsequent TV serialization. Whatever his original intention, Haley (already a race hero for his authorship of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X,* 1965) slipped comfortably into the role of mythic national figure, welcoming claims made for the vast symbolic importance of *Roots* for his race and nation.

The impact of Haley and *Roots* has been profound. For African-Americans, deprived for centuries of their ancestral homes and families, enslaved and exploited, denied basic human and civil rights, including the crucial right to literacy, this book published in Bicentennial Year, 1976 offered a fresh perspective on their history, community and genealogy. Although usually regarded as a novel, it was published originally as nonfiction, supporting Haley's apparently thoroughly researched claims that the book told the true story of his ancestors, traced back to the Mandinka tribe of Juffure, the Gambia. This was no tale found in books; it was a culmination of an epic quest. Haley had heard fragments of it first at his grandmother's knee in Henning, Tennessee, and had subsequently traveled the world, interviewing people, seeking sources, and eventually being led to an old African griot who revealed the name of his original ancestor Kunta Kinte.

The problem with this romantic account is that it has been disputed by several distinguished historians and journalists, who have challenged Haley's version of events, research methods, and source material. The most recent, and most damning, attack on the authenticity of Haley's claims comes from journalist Philip Nobile, arguing in the *Village Voice* that *Roots* is "a hoax, a literary painted mouse, a Piltdown of genealogy, a pyramid of bogus research." Far from being a griot and literary giant, in Nobile's account Haley is a liar, plagiarist and fantasist. Ever since *Roots* first appeared, many voices□most stridently, Haley's own□have been heard to defend and attack both book and TV series. It seems appropriate, in a journal issue devoted to "Voice," to examine the weight and validity of the various voices and silences which have surrounded this controversial text, one which claimed above all else that it derived from verbal accounts within a predominantly oral culture.

Roots begins in the year 1750 and records the story of the original ancestor of ex-Coast Guard journalist Alex Haley. Kunta Kinte, a Mandinka warrior, is captured into slavery, and taken to the South, where he becomes the first of a long line culminating in Alex, his brothers and sister. The book records the horrors of the Middle Passage, the cruelties and deprivations of slavery, the separation of families, economic and sexual exploitation, the rise of abolitionist fervor, Secession, the Civil War, Emancipation, and gradually a new prosperity for what became the Haley family. The main story ends with Alex's grandfather hanging up his sign, in 1893, "W.E. palmer Lumber Company1' and his wife giving birth two years later to Bertha; the final page records the professional careers of Haley and his siblings. Pervading the book is the theme of loss of an idealized African culture, the ordered, patriarchal and hierarchical Muslim society in which Kunta Kinte would have played a major social and familial role.

Roots was an instant success. Its advance print-run of 200,000 sold out at once; 1.5 million hardback copies were sold in the first eighteen months, and millions have sold since. The novel was translated into at least thirty-three languages and distributed in twenty-eight countries. Among many major awards, it won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize. By the mid 1980s, 276 colleges and universities had adopted the book for black history curricula; it was popularly recognized as a sort of black family Bible.

In January 1977 (ironically because the programming director feared low ratings) the twelve-hour television mini-series was broadcast over eight consecutive evenings on ABC-TV to record American audiences. ABC research estimated that 130 million viewers saw some part of the series; virtually three-quarters of the TV audience watched the eighth, final part. (The previous record was set by the first broadcast of *Gone With the Wind* in November 1976, which attracted 65 percent of the audience.) The huge success of the TV series (in Britain as well as the USA) was both astonishing to all concerned and seen by some as a major cultural event. "Haley's Comet," *Time Magazine* called it; black readers claimed it as the most important civil rights event since the 1965 Selma, Alabama, march. In Britain, reporting on the impact of the first U.S. broadcasts, the *Daily Express* (3 February 1977) referred to the way "30 million Americans fought blizzards, ice and fellow commuters to be home in time for *Roots",* while the *Daily Mail* reported the cancellation of night school courses, a huge drop in restaurant business, and the emptying of bars and hospital wards. In the *Sunday*

Telegraph (30 January 1977) the series was described as "the most traumatic event in the nation's broadcasting since Orson Welles's 'War of the Worlds' produced panic in the 1930s." Audience figures were all the more amazing because 90 percent of the TV audience was white, and *Roots*—in an unprecedented eight sequential nights of broadcasting—became the film trade's dream "crossover": a feature which appealed to the urban black mass market as well as the majority white audiences. The TV series won 145 different awards, including nine Emmys.

Roots has enjoyed multiple intertextual circulations. Fifty cities declared "Roots Weeks"; the Governor of Tennessee (Haley's home state) proclaimed May 19-21, 1977 "Alex Haley Days"; while the Gambian Government pronounced Kunta Kinte's home in Juffure to be a national shrine and began to market "Roots trips." T-shirts, plaques, "Roots music" recordings appeared; "Roots-tracing kits" with imitation parchment genealogical charts became the rage (among whites as well as blacks). Schools were sent supplementary materials to use with the book and show, and colleges gave students credit for simply watching the mini-series. New black babies were named Kunta Kinte and Kizzy, after the show's main protagonists. As recently as 1988, in Eddie Murphy's successful comedy *Coming to America,* H[is] R[oyal] H[ighness] Akeem (Murphy) enters a barber's shop and is proclaimed by the barber "a Kunta Kinte"—an authentic African.

Haley himself became a folk hero. Letters arrived from all over the world addressed to "Alex Haley, 'Roots', America." De Burg notes he was the third most admired black man among black American youth (after Muhammed Ali and Stevie Wonder). In the prestigious "Black One Hundred," a list of the most influential blacks, Haley is still listed above major writers James Baldwin and Tom Morrison. He was invited to meet presidents and crowned heads, to front TV commercials, speak on talk shows, at prestigious lecture venues, and at autograph parties. He was given the key to many U S. cities; special citations from the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, profiles in magazines and newspapers galore. Two black colleges, Fisk and Lane, placed him on their boards, and dozens of publishers and hundreds of individuals sent him manuscripts for endorsement and patronage.

The (mainly Caucasian) critics who have waxed most fulsomely about *Roots* have made large, often extravagant claims for it. Despite a damning indictment of its literary style, writing in 1979 Leslie Fiedler recognized the cultural significance of the book and TV series Noting that Kunta Kinte had become a household name, he said, "with *Roots,* a Black American succeeded for the first time in modifying the mythology of Black-White relations *for the majority audience"* (a majority which was of course white), and he goes on to argue how unlikely it might have seemed that this book, like Mrs. Stowe's, [would] be "read equally in the parlor, the kitchen and the nursery, but be condensed in the *Reader's Digest* and assigned in every classroom in the land." Almost a decade later, Harold Courlander (who had by then won a plagiarism suit against Haley) noted:

Roots continues to be read and quoted, is found everywhere on library shelves, is a cornerstone of various black studies programs.... In short, the book has an established place in contemporary American literature and will be spoken of, no doubt, for some time to come

Willie Lee Rose describes *Roots* simply as "the most astounding cultural event of the American Bicentennial."

Celebration of Haley's focus on roots recurs in the critical acclaim. David A. Gerber, by no means uncritical of the work's historicity and style, argues that "the lives of both Kunta Kinte and Malcolm X have filled a powerful emotional need for inspiring models of strength, dignity, and self-creation in a hostile or, at best, indifferent White world," and that Haley has reminded us "we know no way to think of the present or conceive of the future except with reference to our pasts ... to our roots." Judith Mudd, giving two Indian views of *Roots,* quotes justice V. R Krishna Iyer, judge of the Supreme Court of India

The dignity of a race is restored when its roots are known ... and that explains how Gandhi in India

could resist the imperial rulers with knowledge of our strength and sustenance from our roots. *The Discovery of India* by Nehru was prompted by the same urge to trace one's roots which induced Alex Haley to research the black Americans' roots.

In 1992, after Haley's death, his editor and co-writer Murray Fisher quoted black leader Jesse Jackson "[Haley] made history talk ... He lit up the long night of slavery. He gave our grandparents personhood. He gave *Roots* to the rootless."

This refrain, of roots to the rootless, is one reason I have dwelt on the enormous commercial, critical and indeed world-wide success of this text. *Roots* must be the only non-religious text to have achieved such universal success and endorsement; *Gone With the Wind* has probably out-sold it but certainly rarely found itself on a school or college syllabus, praised by statesmen and judges, and its writer was never compared with a figure of the stature of Nehru. This smash hit, which made its author a multi-millionaire, national black hero, and international roving ambassador, is of considerable cultural importance. If Haley is not the griot he is cracked up to be, the furore over the devaluation of *Roots* should be explosive

Source: Helen Taylor, "'The Griot from Tennessee': The Saga of Alex Haley's Roots," in *Critical Quarterly,* Vol 37, No.2, Summer 1995, pp 46-62

Critical Essay #3

In this essay, Blayney argues that prior to Roots *white America did not perceive African Americans as having the same "noble" stature that had been accorded Native Americans.*

Time Magazine called it "Haley's Comet" Black readers hailed it as the most important event in civil rights history since the 1965 march on Selma, Alabama. In January 1977 *Roots* was proclaimed the most popular television program in the medium's history, with the last of eight consecutive episodes reaching an unprecedented 90,000,000 viewers. *Roots* attracted a larger audience than such all-time favorites as *Gone with the Wind* and the 1977 Superbowl. Spurred by the television success, Alex Haley's novel went into fourteen printings after its initial publication in October 1976. During and after the nights it was telecast long lines formed outside bookstores displaying *Roots.* Those too impatient to wait broke into bookstores to obtain copies of the bestseller. Haley was instantly transformed from writer into celebrity. The author's appearance at book parties frequently produced mile-long lines. Haley was deluged with fan mail, and he reportedly received about one thousand letters per week. Meanwhile, the American Broadcasting Company announced plans to air *Roots Two,* a production for 1979 which concentrated on the adventures of Haley's ancestors since the Civil War. Juffure, the village of Haley's famous African ancestor, Kunta Kinte, rapidly became a shrine for boatloads of tourists, and Gambian President Dawda Jwara declared the village a national monument. In South Africa, *Roots* threatened to spark an international incident when the white government there openly voiced its fears that the showing of *Roots* by the United States Information Service might provoke race riots. Meanwhile, the novel has been translated into twelve languages and made available to twenty-eight countries. The mini-series has been broadcast in thirty-two countries.

Despite the frequent criticism of *Roots* as a shallow melodrama, it has been granted academic respectability in 276 colleges and universities which adopted the novel as a standard part of the curriculum in black history. At least one Afro-American history text boasts Alex Haley as its consultant. Clearly, *Roots* is a significant phenomenon in American popular culture.

The almost universal acclaim the broadcast of *Roots* received startled its creators. In producing a period piece of slavery from the slave's perspective, ABC executives took a high-risk gamble. They feared that white audiences might refuse to watch a twelve-hour drama in which whites were consistently portrayed as villains against a group of heroic blacks. One reason well-known television personalities like Loren Greene and Edward Asner were given parts was to counter a possible negative white reaction. Despite its heavily charged racial theme, *Roots* enjoyed a popularity rare for any television presentation. While one can easily understand why blacks hailed Haley as a "savior," *Roots'* popularity among its larger white audience requires further explanation. It seems likely that *Roots* failed to appreciably affect white attitudes, and perhaps no novel or television program could hope to accomplish such an enormous undertaking.

Why then did the *Roots* phenomenon succeed in captunng the white imagination? To better understand the appeals *of Roots* for white Americans, we should consider the noble savage, that long-held romantic image of the American Indian. From the time of the earliest American settlements, whites, when not viewing Indians as agents of Satan, have frequently perceived the red man as living in harmony with nature, possessing deep spiritual wisdom and extraordinary courage. By contrast, blacks have been pictured as either comic Sambos or fiendish devils in literature and popular culture. Even the recent departure from some of the more vicious stereotypes since the end of the Second World War has failed to produce a black hero the stature of Hiawatha or Chief Joseph. It was not until the publication of *Roots* that Africans and the descendants of Africans for the first time became heroes in the tradition of the noble savage. The concept of the noble African is central to an understanding of *Roots'* appeal to whites, because unintentionally, both novel and broadcast provided whites with a safe Negro. Just as popular treatment of the legendary noble red man fails to address the contemporary situation of native Americans, so Kunta Kinte was palatable to white audiences precisely because of his failure to remind whites of the plight of contemporary blacks.

From the first white contacts with the New World, the American Indian has been romanticized. Christopher Columbus viewed Indians as innocent, kind, intelligent, and generous. Rationalistic philosophers of the eighteenth century invented the term noble savage as part of a larger attack upon the Christian doctrine of the fall of man. For these European philosophers, the Indian became an idealized "child of nature," not the savage fiend and child of the devil depicted by American frontiersmen. The noble savage experienced a primitive, unburdened existence in the wilderness free from tyrannical government and class distinctions. His simplicity enabled him to live in harmony with nature and his fellows. He was articulate, intelligent, and handsome. Being freer than civilized man, the noble savage was also happier. He was a stranger to the greed, materialism, and pretense of white civilization.

In his *Notes on the State of Virginia,* Thomas Jefferson praised the political system of American Indians as having very little external coercive power. Since laws of nature were part of their normal condition, man-made laws did not need to be imposed from without. Jefferson also admired Indians because their society possessed no artificial class distinctions, and he speculated on the possible racial amalgamation between Indians and whites. On the other hand, Jefferson opposed any future racial union between whites and blacks. For Jefferson, noble savages were found only in America. For white Americans like Jefferson, much of the Indian's nobility grew out of his integration with nature. Throughout the early years of discovery and settlement, many Americans perceived America in Edenic terms. In a similar way, Europeans portrayed the new world as a Garden of Eden, a paradise on earth. Those who held the garden image also intended to view the Indian as a noble savage.

The noble Indian spoke with an eloquence and a wisdom few white men possessed. Chief Logan's famous speech to Lord Dunmore, for example, was used in McGuffey's fourth-and fifth-grade readers in the 1850s and 1860s. The speech taught white children Christian ethics and further served to idealize the American Indian.

No early American writer popularized the myth of the noble savage more than James Fenimore Cooper. Cooper's Leatherstocking tales offered nineteenth century readers two types of Indians: the savage fiend and the noble savage. While in no way minimizing the importance of the Indian as the devil in Cooper's works, characters like Satanstoe, Uncas, Chingachgook, Hard-Heart, and Rivenoak all perpetuated the noble savage myth in the popular mind. Cooper gave his noble Indians physical beauty and a keen intelligence. Like the slaves in *Roots,* Cooper's Indians looked backward to an earlier age of glory. As a species already vanishing, at least some Indians could be sentimentally regarded The hero Chingachgook, for example, emerges as a "brave and just minded Delaware," respected by his "fallen people." White civilization's depravity ultimately corrupts Cooper's Indian. The white man brings firewater which disrupts the Indian's harmonious integration with nature.

Unlike their image of the American Indian, the image of Africans held by whites was conceived in almost wholly negative terms. Sixteenth century Europeans likened Africans to the apes that inhabited the Dark Continent. For Elizabethan Englishmen, a fine line existed between black people and anthropoid apes like the chimpanzee ("orangoutangs"). Like apes, Africans were though of as lewd, wanton savages devoid of humanity Similarly, Europeans imagined Africa a hostile, forbidding place inhabited by dangerous animals and an appropriate home for uncivilized men. Unlike America, the black man's home was never seen in idyllic paradisic terms. The black man was a savage, without nobility and a Garden of Eden Perhaps for these reasons, Negroes were therefore fit only for the ignominious burden of slavery.

Despite his eighteenth century rationalist convictions, Thomas Jefferson found it impossible to place blacks on the same level, either intellectually or physically, with whites. Jefferson rejected environmental arguments for the intellectual equality of the races. Jefferson reluctantly concluded that Africans were therefore incapable of future intellectual growth. He favored African colonization, not integration, as the most desirable alternative to slavery, and opposed any future racial union between blacks and whites. Jefferson attributed the peculiar body odor of blacks to their skin glands, which secreted more, and to their kidneys, which secreted less than whites. Even on a purely aesthetic level, Jefferson chose red and white rather than black as nature's most beautiful colors.

James Fenimore Cooper's novels juxtaposed blacks to Indians. In *The Redskins,* the Littlepages' English servant observes that "the nigger grows uglier and uglier every year, ... while I do think sir, that the Indian grows 'andsomer and 'andsomer." Cooper believed that the black's intellect was also inferior to the Indian's, and because Indians possessed an integrity and independence surpassing blacks, the two were never natural allies. The common enemy, the white man, in no way made for common interest between the two races. For Cooper, the lack of nobility in the black man's character meant he could never rise to the level of the noble savage. The Indian's death provided another source of nobility over the African, for even though the red man was destroyed physically, he endured spiritually while the black man merely survived on a physical level.

White Americans during the nineteenth century often viewed the Negro as entertaining, but never as noble. Negroes figured largely in the popular culture of the early republic. The nineteenth century minstrel show, which accurately mirrored the common man's thinking, portrayed blacks as comic Sambo figures. The minstrel show served important cultural and psychological needs for their white audiences Minstrels created "a ludicrous Northern Negro character that assured audience members that however confused, bewildered, and helpless they felt, someone was much worse off than they were." Minstrel shows provided a non-threatening view of race at a time when race threatened the Union, while at the same time helping to justify racism.

In the twentieth century, a new form of popular culture, the motion picture, continued to deny black nobility. David Wark Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) was in many respects the first modern motion picture. This hundred-thousand dollar spectacle achieved unparalleled heights of screen realism. Grifith boasted "magnificent settings, gorgeous costumes, thousands of actors and smiles, tears and thrills." In *The Birth of a Nation* the Negro was portrayed as a brute whose demonic instincts were unleashed with emancipation. Freedom for blacks during Reconstruction ended in tragedy as freedmen attempted to soil the purity of white womanhood. Only the dramatic intervention of the Ku Klux Klan at the film's climax saved the white South and reconciled the two sections.

With the advent of the talkies, negative black stereotypes were heard as well as seen. Two popular types in the 1930s were "coons" and 'Toms." "Coons" were lazy, good for nothing and shiftless, and were constantly getting into trouble. The best known "coon" of the 1930s was Stepin Fetchit, who became the most successful Negro in Hollywood. Stepin Fetchit was laziness and ignorance personified. His performances followed in the tradition of the nineteenth century minstrel characters, for the characters he played lacked humanity, much less nobility.

Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, the most famous 'Tom" of the era, frequently co-starred with Shirley Temple. Unlike Stepin Fetchit, "Uncle Billy" was well-mannered and always knew his place. Robinson delighted Shirley by dancing for her. He was both intelligent and reliable. For white audiences, he represented a safe, if hardly noble, Negro.

By the end of the thirties the black Hollywood image underwent considerable improvement. Negro characters in *Gone with the Wind* (1939) were a far cry from those in *Birth of a Nation.* In *Gone with the Wind* Hattie McDamel turned in an exceptionally strong performance as the mammy of the O'Hara household. As both counselor and manager, she was much more than a fawning servant. McDaniel became the first black to receive an Oscar, an honor that divided liberals, some of whom objected to her demeaning servant role. Yet even those who found her role demeaning found it difficult to criticize her Oscar. *Gone with the Wind* represented a turning point in which Negroes began to take more attractive roles in films. Like McDamel, however, most continued in traditionally inferior roles.

Despite improvement during and following the Second World War, the black image in American film remained fundamentally dissimilar from white perceptions of Indians as

noble savages. War against a racist power necessitated opposition to racism at home. Typical of the improved image was Dooley Wilson as Sam, the piano player in *Casablanca* (1942). Following the war *Home of the Brave* (1949) became the first movie to attack white bigotry openly. In *Lost Boundaries* (1948) whites rejected a light-skinned negro family that passes as white in a small New England community. Their race is finally discovered, and white friends turn against them until the town's minister persuades the community to accept the family.

In the 1950s and the 1960s individual stars and movies with racial themes won white audience approval, but none captured the white imagination like *Roots.* Dorothy Dandridge, Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier, Richard Roundtree, and Pamela Greer enjoyed widespread popularity among whites, but none of these stars performed in any motion picture whose popularity matched *Roots*

Source: Michael Steward Blayney, *"Roots* and the Noble Savage," in *North Dakota Quarterly,Vo*\ 54, No 1, Winter 1986, pp 1-17.

Adaptations

Roots was adapted as a television miniseries in 1977, starring LeVar Burton, Ben Vereen, John Amos, Leslie Uggams, Maya Angelou, Cicely Tyson, Edward Asner, Harry Rhodes, and Robert Reed.

A sequel, *Roots: The Next Generation,* was shown in 1979 as a miniseries It covered the lives of Haley's ancestors after the Civil War. A Christmas movie, *Roots: The Gift,* heralded the return of Kunta Kinte, played by Burton, as well as the Fiddler, played by Louis Gossett, Jr., to network television.

Topics for Further Study

Create your own account of Kunta and Bell's time on the Waller plantation after their daughter Kizzy is sold. What do you think happened to these characters?

Research your family tree. How far back can you go? What do you know about your family's history and heritage?

Research the Haitian slave revolt and Kunta's hero, Toussaint Louverture. How did slave life in Haiti differ from slave life in the American colonies? How did conditions in Haiti make a successful slave revolt possible?

Examine the central beliefs of the Quakers, who were the first American abolitionists. Did their religious faith and practice influence their commitment to abolitionism? How did other religions in the antebellum period treat the question of slavery?

Compare and Contrast

1760s: Thousands of enslaved Africans arrive at every port in the American colonies.

1970s: African Americans explore their African heritage

Today: The term "African American" becomes the most popular term for Americans of African descent Henry Louis Gates Jr makes a series of public television programs about African cultures.

1760s: Most white people cannot read. Slaves are legally prohibited from learning to read and write.

1970s: In the first full decade of mandated school integration, many black students are bused to white schools in order to integrate these institutions. Busing becomes a controversial issue.

Today: Many African Americans question the merits of integration. A sobering statistic, more black men are in jail than in college.

1760s: African Americans are brought over to America as slaves to work on plantations in the South, as well as other areas of the colonies.

1970s: The legacy of slavery and the realities of racism make race relations a controversial subject in America. A dialogue about racial issues is initiated as many artists, writers, cultural figures, and politicians bring race into the foreground of the American consciousness. Many African Americans become interested in their heritage and begin to appreciate the accomplishments of African Americans

Today: The wounds of slavery have still not healed. Racism still exists, but many laws have been enacted to battle institutionalized racism.

What Do I Read Next?

Song of Solomon (1977), Toni Mornson's lyrical novel, recounts the story of a black man searching for his roots.

Russell Banks's *Cloudsplitter* (1998) is a fictionalized account of the saga of John Brown narrated by his son, Owen Brown

Praisesong for the Widow (1983), written by Paule Marshall, presents a middle-aged black woman's journey into her own past.

Chinua Achebe's classic novel, entitled *Things Fall Apart* (1958), chronicles life in an African village

Further Study

Russell Adams, "An Analysis of the *Roots* Phenomenon in the Context of American Racial Conservatism," in *Presence Africame,* Vol. 116, No 4, pp. 125-40

This article explores the factors that contnbuted to the success of *Roots.*

Helen Davis Othow, *"Roots* and the Heroic Search for Identity," m *CLA Journal,* Vol XXVI, No 3, March, 1983, pp 311-24

Chavis describes Haley's book as the embodiment of the "feverish search for meaning in an alien universe."

Elizabeth Stone, *Black Sheep and Kissing Cousins- How Our Family Stories Shape Us,* Penguin, 1989, 254 p

Stone interviews one hundred people and records their family histones.

Tomrnie Morton Young, in *Afro American Genealogy*

Sourcebook, Afragenda, 1998, 199 p Young provides a multitude of genealogical resources for those interested m exploring their own genealogy.

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David Herbert Donald, in a review in *Commentary,* December, 1976

Chester J. Fontenot, "Radical Upbringing," in *Prairie Schooner,* Spring, 1977, pp 98-9.

Eugene D Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll- The World the Slaves Made,* Vintage, 1974

Russell Warren Howe, "An Elusive Past," in *The New Leader,* January 3, 1977, pp. 23-4

Philip Nobile, "Was *Roots* One of the Great Literary Hoaxes'" in *The Toronto Star,* March 8, 1993, p A13

Clarence Page, "Alex Haley's Enduring Truths," in *The Courier Journal,* March 11, 1993, p. 8A.

Arnold Rampersad, in a review in *The New Republic,* Vol 175, No. 23, December 4, 1976, pp. 23-4, 26

Pascoe Sawyers, "Black and White," in *The Guardian,* September 13, 1997, p 6.

Howard F. Stem, "In Search of 'Roots' An Epic of Origins and Destiny," in *Journal of Popular Culture,* Vol. XI, No 1, Summer, 1977, pp 11-17.

Paul D, Zimmerman, "In Search of a Heritage- Roots," in *Newsweek,* Sept 27, 1976, p 94

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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