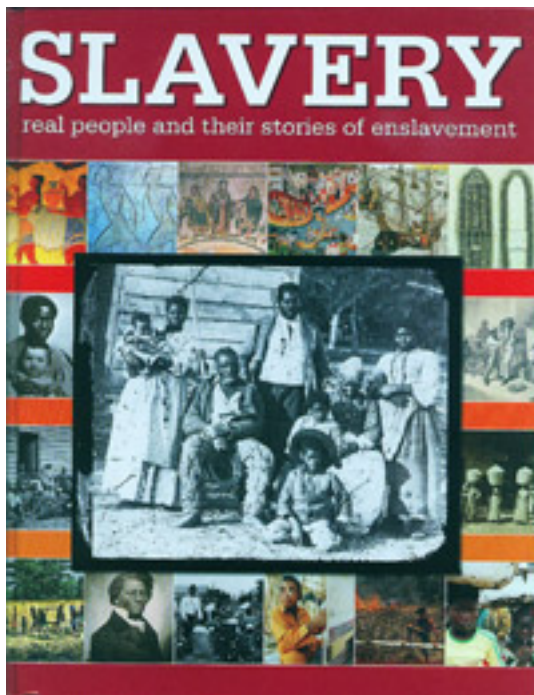


Book review: Slavery: Real People and Their Stories of Enslavement

Written by Terri Schlichenmeyer



Every night after dinner, you have chores to do.

Most Saturdays, if you're not already busy, you've got more chores. Maybe your allowance is even tied to doing things around the house or helping out. Room cleaned, garbage out, do the dishes, help Mom, help Dad, it never ends.

Doing chores is no fun, but neither is listening to your parents yell at you to do your chores. So imagine working 18 to 20 hours a day and getting nothing but somebody's outgrown clothes and seed to grow your own food. That was how some people lived when they were slaves, and in the new book "Slavery: Real People and Their Stories of Enslavement" by Reg Grant, you'll learn about what it was like. You may never complain again.

While you might think slavery only happened in America in the early-to-mid 1800s, the truth is that slavery in ancient times was very common. During wartime, victorious armies captured their enemies and enslaved them. Slavery of this sort was even common in Africa where many warriors saw other ethnic groups as "foreigners".

While slavery was common in America thousands of years ago, Grant says the slave trade increased here because colonists needed extra hands for plantation work. The Dutch were the first Europeans to bring African slaves to this continent, and by the late 1700s, some 100,000 enslaved Africans had been brought to the Americas.

Imagine being taken away from your home and all your toys, chained or yoked, and marched miles across the country. That's what happened to millions of enslaved Africans who were then packed aboard ships so tightly that they could barely roll over. The passage from Africa to North America often took months, and although captains of the ships wanted their human cargo to survive – living slaves were saleable, dead slaves were not – 1 in 20 Africans died on the trip.

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Slaves in the New World did lots of things. Many of them worked in the fields, some processed the crops, others panned for gold, and many worked as personal servants. In many cases, African slaves raised their white master's children!

But even though there is no slavery in the U.S. any more, slavery still exists in the world. In Pakistan, Africa, Haiti, and elsewhere, slavery is once again common – and surprisingly, children are often the enslaved.

“Slavery” is a decent enough book. It's got lots of pictures, a comprehensive timeline, and diary excerpts from former slaves and others. The problem comes in the shallowness of the information: author Reg Grant doesn't elaborate much on any one subject, perhaps because there's such a vast amount to be said. Also, astute parents and teachers will want to note that there are a few un-PC words in this book that may bear explaining.

Still, “Slavery” is an important book and will get kids thinking about this part of our history, as well as that which is still going on around the world. For your 7-to-13-year-old, reading and absorbing this book won't be a chore.

“Slavery: Real People and Their Stories of Enslavement” by Reg Grant | c.2009, DK Publishing | \$24.99 / \$28.99 Canada | 192 pages