

Slavery through the Ages Handout

I. Ancient Greeks:

- A. Since there was more work in Greece than the Greeks themselves could do, slaves were a necessity.
- B. A slave could be any race or color.
- C. Slaves were called helots.
- D. Slaves were obtained through battle as prisoners of war.
- E. Slaves were also used in trade between city states.
- F. Slaves held the lowest position on the social ladder.
- G. It was possible for a slave to earn wages and buy his/her freedom if they became skilled in a certain trade and became an artisan.
- H. Slaves were treated well so that they would do good work. Restraints were not used.
- I. At its height, the city-state of Athens probably had 50% of its population as slaves.
- J. Slaves were used for everything from menial tasks to the building of great monuments.
- K. Without slaves, Greece would not have accomplished as much as it did.

II. Ancient Romans:

- A. Slave labor was seen as essential to Roman society.
- B. Massive construction efforts, such as roads, monuments, and military installations, required slave labor.
- C. Rome gathered its slaves from areas it conquered and often used prisoners of war.
- D. Roman criminals were also sold into slavery when there was a demand.
- E. Without slaves, the Roman Empire could not have expanded as far as it did.
- F. Children could be sold into slavery by their parents as a way to get out of debt.
- G. If a slave became skilled enough at a craft and became an artisan, he/she could earn a wage and eventually buy their freedom.
- H. Slaves who worked in small groups or for owners in a large city seemed to have been treated pretty well according to records.
- I. Slaves who worked in large groups and on big projects were not treated well. These slaves were often abused.
- J. Some slaves in Ancient Rome were restrained by chains.

III. Tribes of Early Africa

- A. Slaves in Africa were often criminals or those captured in war.
- B. Making a distinction between slave and citizen was hard, since both had nearly the same rights.
- C. Everybody worked in society. In Greece and Rome, some members of the upper classes had slaves do their work.
- D. Slaves were considered at the bottom of the social ladder.

- E. Slaves could earn money to buy freedom; however, they didn't need to become a skilled artisan.
- F. If a slave did become a skilled artisan, it was possible to move up on the social ladder to a more prominent position.
- G. Restraints were not used.
- H. Slaves almost seemed to be a luxury. They were not necessary for the African cultures to survive.
- I. Slaves were used for everyday work, not the building of monuments and roads.
- J. Slaves were treated well, almost as equals in some cases.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

DIRECTIONS: Each student should complete three sets of these questions, one for each civilization.

Name of the Civilization: _____

1. How were slaves treated?

***** Wait to answer these questions until you have read all three handouts.**

8. Where were slaves treated the best and why?

9. Where were slaves treated the worst and why?

10. Can the use of slave labor ever be justified?