

"SAIL AWAY"

Music and Lyrics by Randy Newman

In America you'll get food to eat
Won't have to run through the jungle
And scuff up your feet
You'll just sing about Jesus and drink wine all day
It's great to be an American

Ain't no lions or tigers-ain't no mamba snake
Just the sweet watermelon and the buckwheat cake
Ev'rybody is as happy as a man can be
Climb aboard, little wog-sail away with me

Sail away-sail away
We will cross the mighty ocean into Charleston Bay
Sail away-sail away
We will cross the mighty ocean into Charleston Bay

In America every man is free
To take care of his home and his family
You'll be as happy as a monkey in a monkey tree
You're all gonna be an American

Sail away-sail away
We will cross the mighty ocean into Charleston Bay
Sail away-sail away
We will cross the mighty ocean into Charleston Bay.

First Person Experience: The *Middle Passage*

The first object that saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship...waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, that was soon converted into terror...I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I was sound (healthy), by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had got into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me...I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation (greeting) in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that, with the loathsomeness (disgusting) of the stench (bad odor), and with my crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat...I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables; and on my refusing to eat, one of them held me...and laid me across, I think, the windlass (a large cylinder used for winding up rope), and tied my feet, while the other flogged (whipped) me severely...In a little time after, amongst the poor chained men, I found some of my own nation...I inquired of these what was to be done with us. They gave me to understand we were to be carried to these white people's country to work for them. I was then a little revived (recovered)...But still I feared that I should be put to death, the white people looked and acted, as I thought, in so savage a manner: for I had never seen such instances of brutal cruelty: and this is not only shown towards us blacks, but also to some of the whites themselves...I could not help expressing my fearful apprehensions to some of my countrymen...I asked them how the vessel (ship) could go. They told me they could not tell; but that there was cloth put upon the masts by the help of the ropes I saw, and then the vessel went on; and the white men had some spell or magic they put in the water, when they liked, in order to stop the vessel...While we stayed on the coast I was mostly on deck; and one day...I saw one of these vessels coming in with the sails up...when the anchor was let go, I and my countrymen who saw it, were lost in astonishment to observe the vessel stop, and were now convinced it was done by magic...At last, when the ship...had got in all her cargo... we were all put under deck...The stench of the hold, while we were on the coast, was so intolerably (unbearably) loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time...now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential (deadly, infectious). The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, being so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious (a large amount of) perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration (breathing) ...and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the improvident (reckless) avarice (greed)...of their purchasers. This deplorable (miserable) situation was again aggravated by the galling (aggravating) of the chains...and the filth of the necessary tubs (containers used for human waste), into which children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered it a scene of horror almost inconceivable (unbelievable)...In this manner we continued to undergo more hardships than I can now relate, hardships which are inseparable from this accursed (cursed) trade...

1. What is the setting for the events described above?
2. What is the tone of this selection? Select the five words (not the synonyms!) that most effectively convey or establish the tone.
3. Using evidence from the reading, describe how the Olaudah Equiano (the person whose experience is being recounted) felt about white people.
4. Based on the details in Equiano's account, what was the one experience, in your opinion, that was the **worst** aspect of the *Middle Passage*? Explain your reasoning.
5. Read the song lyrics on the other side of this page. The song, "Sail Away", is "sung" from whose perspective? Which specific phrases or lines support your belief about the identity of the 'singer'?