

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## **The African-American Civil Rights Movement** (Background)

### Slavery:

The first slaves in the American colonies (which later became the United States) were brought to the Jamestown colony in 1619 to work in the tobacco fields. Over the next 200 years, around 600,000 more slaves were brought to the American colonies. Most of these worked on tobacco and cotton plantations.

The slaves were brought over by ship from the continent of Africa. The conditions on the slave ships were terrible. Often slaves were "packed" tightly in the ship's hold (below deck) where they were chained up and unable to move. Many slaves died during the trip due to disease and starvation.

The international slave trade (the buying and selling of slaves from other countries) was outlawed by Britain in 1807 and by the United States in 1808. However, slavery itself was still legal, and slaves could be bought and sold *within* the United States up until the end of the Civil War.

### Slave Codes:

Slaves had no rights. They were considered the personal property of their owners. Some slaves were treated well by their owners, while others were treated horribly. They were sometimes beaten, whipped, branded, burned, and imprisoned.

The colonies established laws regarding slaves called **slave codes**. Some of these laws told what the punishments were for slaves who wouldn't work or tried to escape. Other slave codes made it illegal to teach a slave to read, to help a slave to hide, or to pay a slave to work.

Slaves were not allowed to have weapons, leave their owner's plantation, or talk back to (or threaten) a white person.

Children of slaves were owned by the slave owner. They were often taken from their parents and sold to other owners. The parents had no say.

*To be continued . . .*

**Vocabulary:**    Slavery                      International slave trade                      Slave codes

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many years ago were the first slaves brought to what is now the United States?

Why?

2. Where did the slaves come from?

How did they get here?

3. What rights did slaves have?

4. What were slave codes?

5. Why do you think in some states there were laws that made it illegal to teach a slave to read or to pay a slave to work?

6. 200 years ago, slavery was legal in both the U.S. and Mexico. If you lived back then, would you have wanted to own a slave? Would you have cared if other people owned slaves? Explain.