

Comprehension Questions: Preface (blank)

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Reread the following sentences: “They were not so much responsible for the curse under which I was born, as the God of nature and the fathers who framed the Constitution for the United States. The law descended to them, and it was but natural that they should recognize it, since it manifestly was their interest to do so. And yet a wrong was inflicted upon me; a cruel custom deprived me of my liberty, and since I was robbed of my dearest right, I would not have been human had I not rebelled against the robbery.”

- A) Who is Keckley referring to as “they”? Replace the word “they” in the sentences with the noun. Then circle “yet” and “since” in the third sentence.
- B) Rewrite the three sentences in your own words.
- C) What does Keckley describe in the first two sentences?
- D) How does the third sentence relate to the first two?
- E) How do these three sentences describe Keckley’s ideas about slavery?

2. Reread the following sentences: “An act may be wrong, but unless the ruling power recognizes the wrong, it is useless to hope for a correction of it. Principles may be right, but they are not established within an hour.” Circle the word “but” in each sentence.

- A) Consider how Keckley uses the word “but” in each of these sentences. Rewrite Keckley’s sentences in your own words. Write as many sentences as you need to to express the same meaning.
- B) What is she describing?

3. Divide the following sentence into meaningful chunks, drawing a slash mark between phrases: “The masses are slow to reason, and each principle, to acquire moral force, must come to us from the fire of the crucible; the fire may inflict unjust punishment, but then it purifies and renders stronger the principle, not in itself, but in the eyes of those who arrogate judgment to themselves.” (Hint: Chunk based on punctuation first, then locate phrases.)

- A) Look at each chunk of meaning in the sentence. Identify the connections between each chunk, (i.e. does it describe another phrase? Provide additional information? Introduce a new idea? Annotate the text as you think through the connections, using circles and arrows.
- B) Break the sentence into two or more shorter sentences.
- C) Rewrite the shorter sentences in your own words.

4. Who are “those who give force to moral laws”? Are these the same people as “the ruling power”?

5. Circle words in paragraph 1 that are strong or stick out.

- A) What is significant about those words?
- B) What feelings do you associate with those words?
- C) How does Keckley use words to impact and enhance the meaning of the text?

6. According to Keckley, what influenced slavery to be perpetuated in the United States?

7. Keckley says, “The solution was developed so gradually that there was no great convulsion of the harmonies of natural laws.”

- A) To what solution is Keckley referring?
- B) How is the solution for eradicating the “plant of evil” a gradual one rather than one that can happen quickly?
- C) What steps does Keckley describe must happen for change to occur?
- D) What influences people to desire change?