

### In The Shadows of Liberty (Question Generation Activity)

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**Directions:** Below is an excerpt from the introduction of *In the Shadows of Liberty*. We will be reading this book in our class and drawing upon excerpts for the next two weeks. This activity, however, is meant to draw upon prior knowledge and gauge your interest in the topics discussed. Read the excerpt, answer the questions, and construct questions of your own.

For more than two hundred years, racial slavery was as much a part of our nation's story as Pilgrims, presidents, pioneers, wagons rolling west, and waves of immigrants streaming to America's shores. Well into the twentieth century and the civil rights movement, the poisonous legacy of slavery shaped many attitudes about African Americans.

For much of that time—in letters, newspapers, books, and speeches—many white people commonly described enslaved African Americans as shiftless or lazy, disrespectful or “uppity,” and ignorant. Often compared to apes and monkeys, they were thought dangerous—especially young black men. Those cruel and wrong stereotypes eventually became attitudes widely accepted by generations of Americans, white and black. Those prejudices continue to the present day.

More important, slavery destroyed society's most basic pillar—the family. It did so by telling enslaved people if and when they could marry. It made marriage a whim of the master rather than a legal right. It made women sexual slaves whose children were slaves. And it tore mothers from children and wives from their husbands, to be sold for profit or punishment.

In many years of writing about American history, I have tried to answer a hard but crucial question. It has to do with the gaping hole between the words and deeds of many of America's great men. These men fought for independence and were true believers in concepts like liberty and equality. How could such men keep other human beings as slaves, denying their freedom and basic rights?

Before writing this book, I tried to answer that question by looking at the writings and actions of Washington, Jefferson, and other men known as the Founding Fathers. But now I want to answer in a different way—by learning about the lives of some people who were enslaved by four of America's greatest heroes.

Name:

Date:

Period:

### Questions

- ☐ What more would you like to know about these individuals who were enslaved?
- ☐ What more would you like to know about how slavery destroyed the value of family?
- ☐ How would you answer the question author Kenneth C. Davis purposed in the second to last paragraph?

### Question Generation

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