

## Harriet Beecher Stowe's

### Uncle Tom's Cabin

#### Chapter XII: Select Incident of Lawful Trade

1. "Yes, Tom, we must confess it, was rather proud of his honesty, poor fellow, - not having very much else to be proud of; -if he had belonged to some of the higher walks of society, he, perhaps, would never have been reduced to such traits." (Page 86)

What is Stowe implying about the shift in virtues as class status increases? Why is pride in honesty reduced? What might she be implying about the upper classes?

2. "We can't reason from our feelings to those of this class of persons." (Page 90)

What are the different ways in which emotions are demonstrated by the slaves? How is 'calm' used to describe various emotional reactions? In what ways are the slaves' emotions greater? Greater than Haley's? Emotion is a theme throughout the text, but in what way is the lack of emotion a theme?

3. "It pleased Providence, for some inscrutable reason, to doom the race to bondage, ages ago; and we must not set up our opinion against that." (Page 90)

How do "Cursed be Canaan" and the Golden Rule conflict? In what ways are they used in support or against slavery? Is separating family's part of the destined servitude? (Page 91) How is judgment day used in the argument for or against slavery?

4. How does Stowe use religion to argue for or against slavery? Does she think religion is to blame? What do you think? (Pages 95-96, as well as throughout the chapter)

5. "We have here no continuing city, but we seek one to come; wherefore God himself is not ashamed to be called our God; for he hath prepared for us a city.' These words of an ancient volume, got up principally by "ignorant and unlearned men," have, through all time, kept up, somehow, a strange sort of power over the minds of the poor, simple fellows, like Tom." (Page 85)

What does she mean when she says "ignorant and unlearned men"? What does this suggest about Tom's perspective of religion (also discussed on 95)? Is his view more genuine? How does his perspective differ from others?

6. "The most dreadful part of slavery, to my mind, is its outrages on the feelings and affections, -the separating of families, for example." (Page 89)

Do you agree? How is the separation of families a theme in this chapter? How does Stowe use it in her argument against the slave trade?

7. Is Haley naturally mean, or did his cruelty evolve from the institution? Traders are despised, but who makes them this way? (Page 97) Who is to blame, and what characteristics belong to those at fault? Why is future judgment more tolerable on the trader?

8. "We must beg the world not to think that American legislators are entirely destitute of humanity, as might, perhaps, be unfairly inferred from the great efforts made in our national body to protect and perpetuate this species of traffic. Who does not know how our great men are outdoing themselves, in declaiming against the *foreign* slave-trade." (Page 97)

What does this say about legislators? Why are they concerned about the horrors of the African slave trade, and not their own? (Page 98) What does this say about America?

9. "He had seen that same look hundreds of times. You can get used to such things, too, my friend; and it is the great object of recent efforts to make our whole northern community used to them, for the glory of the Union." (Page 95)

In what ways is the North to blame for supporting the institution of slavery? In that same paragraph, how does the religious and political goal of overcoming "weakness and prejudice" illustrate how people get "used to" the cruelty?

10. How does Stowe use sarcasm to illustrate main points? She constantly refers to Tom as a "simple fellow," (page 85) or a "poor, ignorant black soul," (page 96) but is Tom's understanding of the slave trade and religion actually deeper than most?

11. The dichotomy of the two worlds, that of the slaves and that of the upper class, is a constant theme throughout the book. Stowe uses the physical design of the ship when illustrating the contrast of life on the upper deck to life below deck. Can this also be a metaphor? Perhaps for freedom and slavery? North and South? Is there more to it than just different decks of a ship?