**The Slave Narrative/Abolitionist Literature**

Harriet Beecher Stowe: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

Harriet Jacobs *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Both write in the slave narrative genre. One is fictional (Stowe) and one is autobiographical (Jacobs) yet both seem to make similar moves re: describing slavery.

**Prepare for Learning** (5 min): Ask students to partner up and give their response to the works. What was the draw of abolitionist writing/slave narratives at this point in our nation’s history?

Have students share answers (5 min).

Write on board:

Many slave narratives make similar moves:

1. Story starts with the slave being defined by others and moves to the slave defining himself/herself (goes from being an “object” to a “subject”).
2. Often details the acquisition of literacy as an important element of freedom
3. Highlights the development of the slave’s “voice”.
4. Provides an indictment of the physical and material culture of slavery.
5. Borrows from earlier narrative forms, like the captivity narrative, in the journey to “salvation.”
6. Appeals to the reader’s sense of moral decency and humanity even as it indicts the reader’s complicity in the slavery culture.
7. Team 7 will have a unique job to 1) research “The Cult of True Womanhood”/ “The Cult of Domesticity” 2) define what it is 3) find a scene in *UTC* where it is at play.

**Direct the Learning** (25 min)

Divide class into teams. Each team takes one characteristic and

1. finds a scene in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* which depicts that characteristic. Draw it out, including the most pertinent dialog, in graphic novel form.
2. finds a corresponding scene/passage in Jacobs’s work which mimics the same characteristic.

Have each team present their findings to the class (10 minutes).

**Reinforce the Learning:**

* Outside of the genre moves we have here identified, what are the similarities between the two writings?
* What are the differences?
* How would we tell the two writers apart in a spot quote?

Have students turn in their depictions of each characteristic and scan and send out to class.

**Spot Quote**

*UTC*

“If it were your Harry, mother, or your Willie, that were going to be torn from you by a brutal trader, to-morrow morning,--if you had seen the man and heard that the papers were signed and delivered and you had only from twelve o’clock till morning to make good your escape,--how fast could you walk? How many miles could you make in those few brief hours, with the darling at your bosom,--the little sleepy head on your shoulder,--the small, soft arms trustingly holding onto your neck?” p. 782

*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

“But, I, ye happy women, whose purity has been sheltered from childhood, who have been free to choose the objects of your affection, whose homes are protected by law, do not judge the poor desolate slave girl too severely! If slavery had been abolished, I, also, could have married the man of my choice; I could have had a home shielded by the laws and I should have been spared the painful task of confessing what I am now about to relate; but all my prospects had been blighted by slavery. I wanted to keep myself pure; and, under the most adverse circumstances, I tried hard to preserve my self-respect; but I was struggling alone in the powerful grasp of the demon Slavery; and the monster proved too strong for me. I felt as if I was forsaken by God and man; as if all my efforts must be frustrated; and I became reckless in my despair.” p. 827