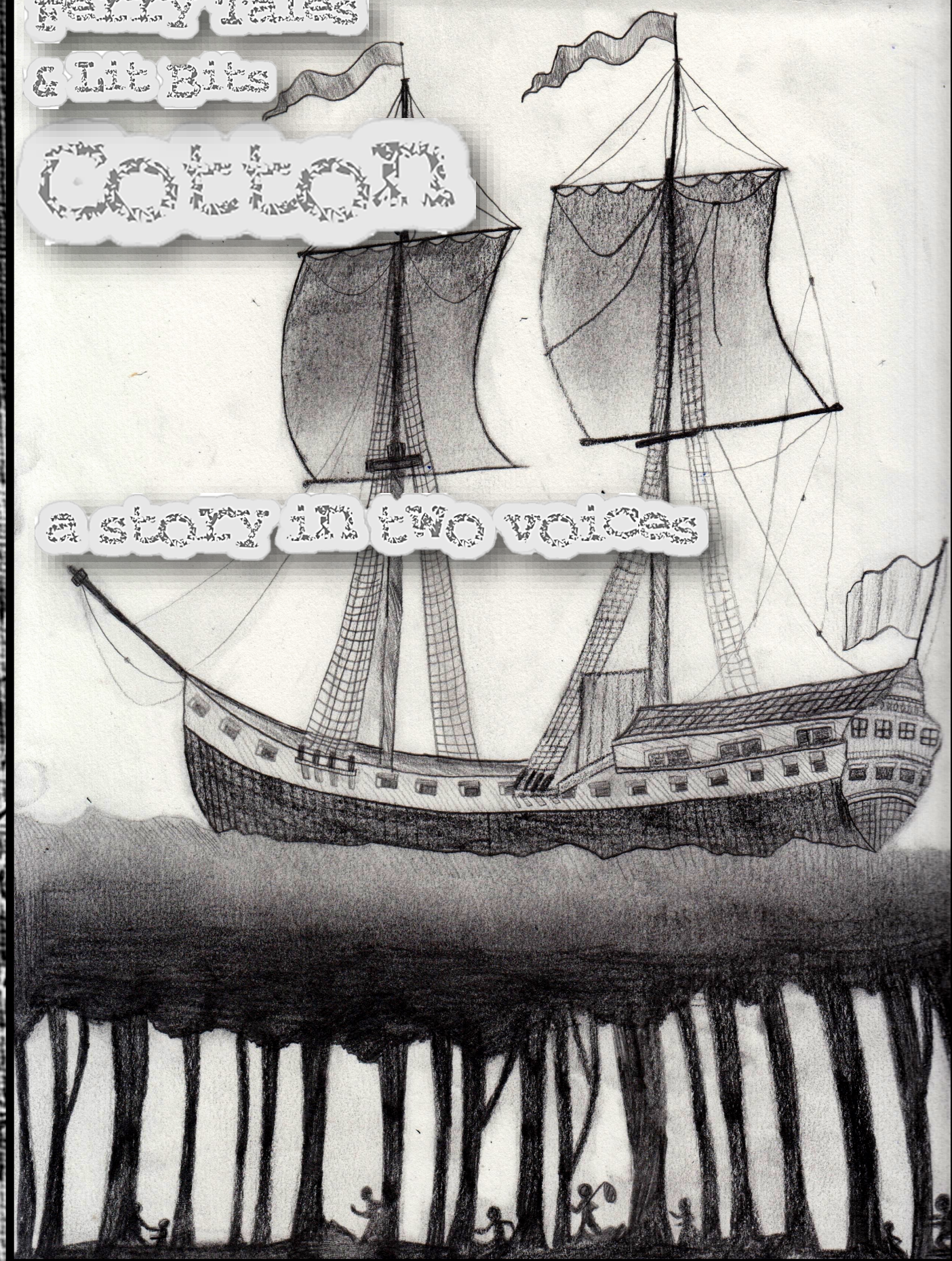


Harry Tates

& The Bits

Cotton

a story in two voices



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Two Boats, One Shore

Cotton Is... & Sing a Song of Cotton

The Voices of Cotton

The Faces of Cotton

On the Heels of Cotton

by Olivia O'Grady [grade 8]

Implausible
Ridiculous
Opposite
Nontonal
Yokelish

**Yokelish: Lacking in refinement

Cover Art: Madeline Mallon [grade 7]
Two Boats, One Shore

Cotton Is... & Sing a Song of Cotton

The Voices of Cotton

The Faces of Cotton

On the Heels of Cotton



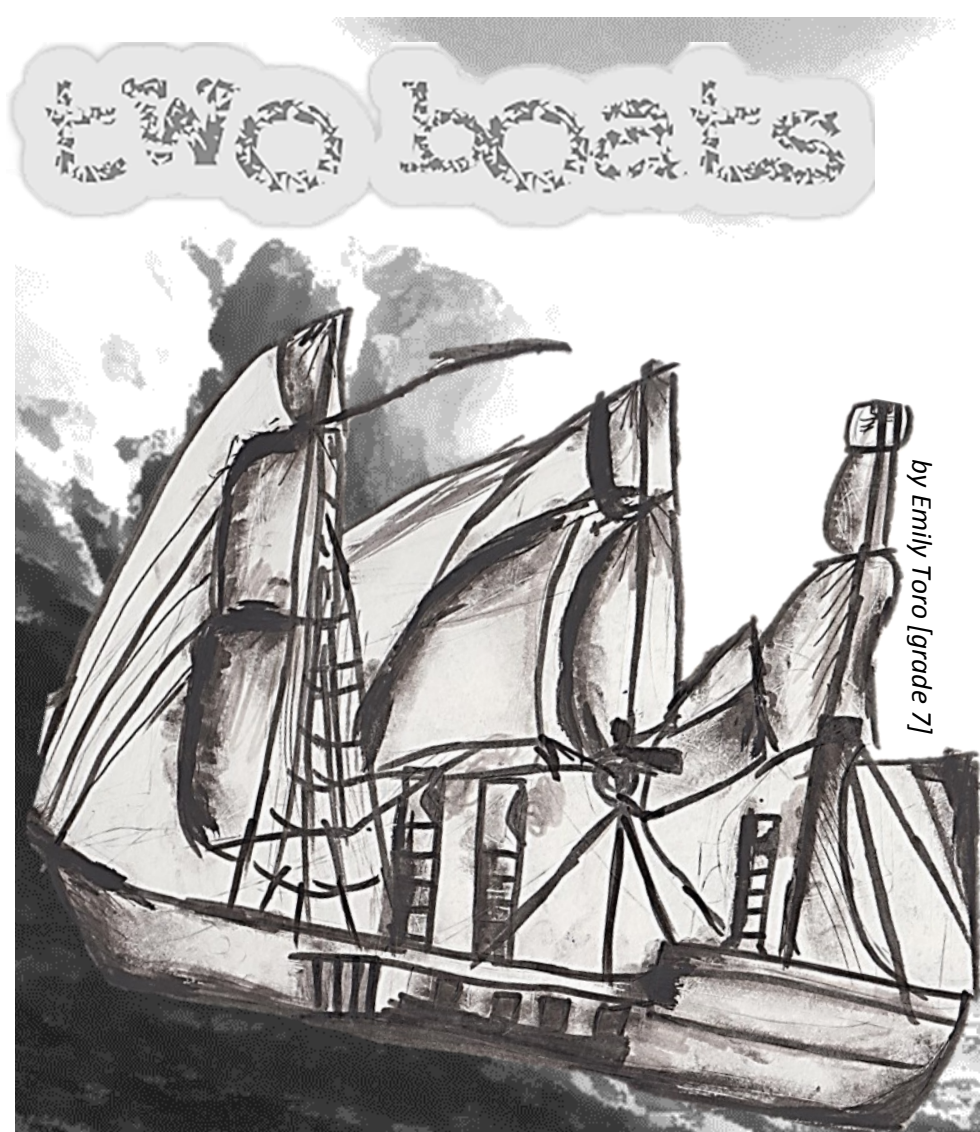
Two Boats, One Shore
by Mrs. Strocchia

In cargo holds so sickly tossed
Through storms and gales so many lost
Two boats came on the waves affright
One by bonds and one by might

One to flee from tyranny
One stolen from their family
One pursuing freedom's name
One forsaken by the same

One held hope for richer life
One sold into bitter strife
One laying claim to another's land
One taking the lash from fellow man

Two boats came to one great shore
Prosperity's double-edge cut and tore
Siding one race against another
Stealing from one to give to his brother



Freedom was our most valued possession until they came
They took us by the dozens—no the ship loads
We had no space to move; they were evil mean cruel
They had not honor
When we arrived, we were sold into work but no pay, and to them it was just
They act like we're the dirt below their feet
They harmed us if we did not do as they said
They took us from our families
Some tried to run but were killed
Those who lived—like I did—
Had to grow cotton; and we all suffered from the little who ran
We had the chance to fight with the men in red to gain our freedom
The men in red lost, some gained freedom, some died, most remained slaves
Cotton was all some grew, others grew wheat
but cotton
Is now sickening to us
It is not good to us; it has brought us sorrow

by Gregory Aiello [grade 7]

On A Boat
by Lucas Tusinean [grade 7]

I see my family, and others,
Through our eyes, we understand our plight.
Just waiting, hoping, pleading,
For the day we are let out, to see the light.

I'm blinded as we're greeted with the intense beams of sunlight,
This new land's vibrancy hurts my eyes,
We're still in chains, and almost tripping each other,
I didn't know what to expect, but find a dreadful surprise.

We're being sold off to do farm work.
To harvest cotton, and do laundry, what did we do?
I put the earth-stained white plant in a Cotton Gin,
And my owner shouts to me, "Hurry up, or I'll whip you after supper!"

17 Years Later...

One day, looking over my owner's shoulder, I read the newspaper's title. "War Declared!" So there will be war between the North and South!
My heart skipped a beat, soon I might be free!
As I stepped outside, I joined the slaves' cheerful cries.

One Shore

cotton

by Paul Gaudani [grade 8]

Cotton is not so fluffy, it is bug-filled and stringy
Cotton makes many things that I can't have
Cotton costs more than money can buy, it costs work and sweat.
Cotton is not easy to clean or prepare,
All I see are very long cotton filled fields.
Cotton is as soft as the pillow I don't have,
Cotton is the cause that I sweat in the hot sun.
Cotton is as easily pulled apart as I was from my family.
Cotton is what makes me different

by Lucas Tusinean [grade 7]

Bushy, horrid-smelling, gray.
Clothing, paper, fluffy white balls.
Cotton costs lots of work and sweat.
Picking cotton, making pulp, spun into thread.
South, Louisiana, Carolina, Georgia.
The cotton is kept in small rooms like me.
Putting us in shackles to make clothes.
We don't get to speak much, working in the
hot sun.
I am cotton, I wear clothes of it, and I pick it.

by Tobias Shedd [grade 8]

Cotton is rough, scratchy, sweaty.
Cotton is wigs, mattresses, clothes.
Cotton is picking, cleaning, spinning.
Cotton is Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina.
Cotton is a dirt floor, wooden walls, and one table.
Cotton is pain, tired, sweat.
Cotton is your family, and no one else.
Cotton is sweaty, exhausted, sadness.
Cotton is my life.

by Emily Herold [grade 8]

Cotton is fluffy, old, and white
Cotton is clothing, paper, and sheets
Cotton is expensive, work, and sweat
Cotton is picked, woven, sewed
Cotton is from Louisiana and the Carolinas
Cotton is warmth and comfort
Cotton is a necessity
Cotton is keeping my family warm, comfortable, and happy
Cotton is me, the slave owner

by Angelleigh DeTroy [grade 8]

Cotton is dirty, fluffy, rough
Cotton is clothing, paper, drapes
Cotton is work, expensive, sweat
Cotton is labor, harvested, difficult
Cotton is south, land, mill
Cotton is crowded, cold, hard
Cotton is deteriorating, hard work, tired
Cotton is poor, unhappy, separated from those we love
Cotton is me

by Lucas Tusinean [grade 7]

*"Sing a song of cotton,
Sing a song of freedom.
At a time when I won't have to fiddle
with buttons,
At a time away from my master,
I won't have to feed him."*

by Alexia Bohm [grade 8]

**The melody of freedom fills the fields,
Cotton-workers hum their plea to be free,
The wind carries their wish to thee who try to
help,
When the night falls, some flee,
Some stay afield,
The North Star leads them to a new leaf,
They are given the freedom they sang,
For all those years.**

sing a song of cotton

by Emily Herold [grade 8]

Sing a song of freedom
Sing a song of cotton
Stuck in these dirty fields
I feel I will never leave

Sing a song of freedom
Sing a song of cotton
Separated from my family
I feel I will never see again

Sing a song of freedom
Sing a song of cotton
Cotton has taken over my life
I fear it will forever be the same

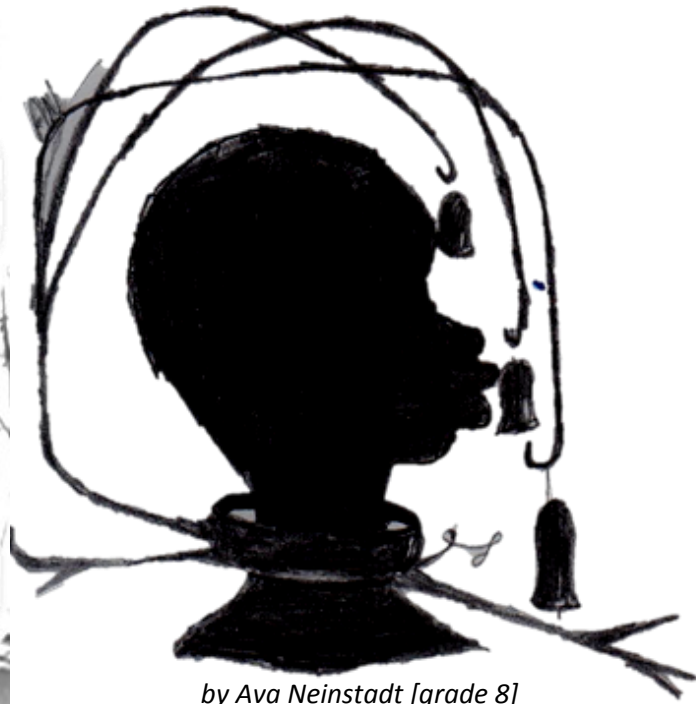
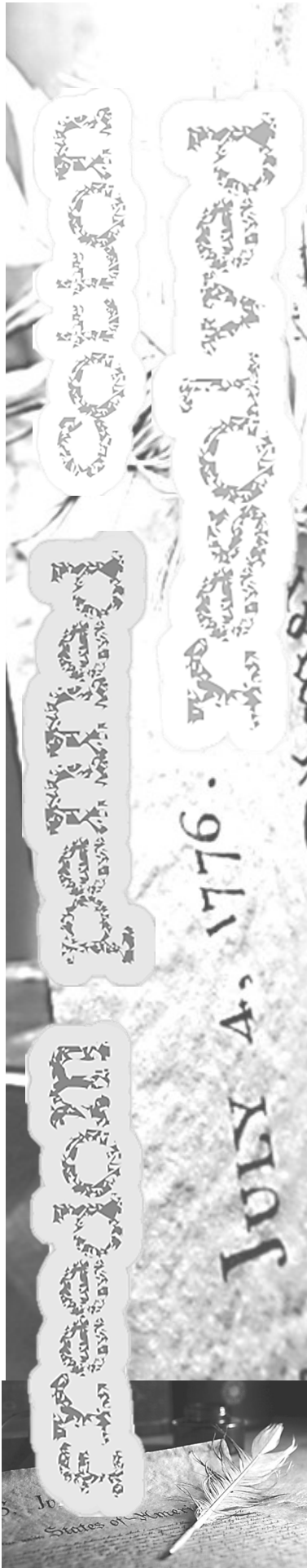
by Andre Phillips [grade 7]

*Cotton is in your clothes.
It is a plant so it grows.
Slaves work for hours a day.
Getting whipped so you have clothes to
put away.
They knew not how to read and write.
But looked up at that glow so bright.
Fleeing from their horrible homes.
The slaves run away
on a secret railroad.
They go through blazing sun and
snowy night.
To find freedom in the North Lights.
The slaves of cotton are now free.
So they can shout out in pure glee.*

by Kaleigh Kuddar [grade 8]

by Emily Toro [grade 7]





by Ava Neinstadt [grade 8]

The Voices of Cotton

by Andre Phillips [grade 7]

Hello my name is John. I am a twelve-year-old slave. It is really not the best way of livin', but it's the only way I know. My parents were traded away when I was five. When it happened, I was confused and had no clue what was going on. I do lots of work around here, especially with cotton. My master's wife is very nice. She taught me how to read and write! I am very thankful for my master's wife. My master, on the other hand, is the complete opposite. He treats us like trash. He could starve us for a week and still expect each of us to prepare two-hundred pieces of cotton a day. I hate him more than the people who took my ancestors, and that's pretty bad. It's hard to live the life I'm livin', but things are the way they are.

"Back to your post," I yell at one of my slaves, "or else you're going to get a whipping." Sometimes I don't get what's wrong with them, I mean, I give them all one ration of food a day. They'll still come and complain to me after that. I provide houses, clothes, and food for them. What else do they need? I think that's all the dirty rats need. I'm going to treat them only what they are. There's no point in treating them any more than that. Sometimes I see my wife giving them extra food. It makes me furious, but I love her too much to say anything to her. Oh, and by the way, my name is Adam.

"There you go," I say to the last of the slaves that I was giving food. My name is Laura, and I am Adam's

wife. He is very undignified, giving slaves one ration of food a day, while we have three full meals. I love all of our slaves and wish to set them free, but Adam would never do that. He depends on the slaves, but threatens them and treats them like dirt. I love him so dearly and wish he would agree with me. I walk to the window and look at our slaves, sweating and starving just because we need them to harvest cotton. Then my eye catches John. He is looking in at me through the window. I signal him to come in. He looks both ways then comes in. I see the sweat shining on his dark body. This is also because he has longer hair than most of the other slaves. He opens the door and I greet him.

"Hello Ms. Laura, how ya doin'."
"I'm doing just fine, thank you"
"I need to tell you something"
"OK, what?"

My mind racing, I try to gather my thoughts. "Mr. Adams gave us all a good whipping," I say, out of breath. Ms. Laura, with a worried expression, says, "Really, why?"

"I complained about not having enough food, and he got real mad at me. He whipped me the worst, but for some reason, he whipped everyone else."

"I'll have to talk about this to him," Ms. Laura says. "Now let's take a look at your wound."

It stings as she rubs some stuff that's going to help my wound get better. She keeps soothing me as she rubs the stuff on me.

"That should do it, it'll be better in a couple of days," she says.

I thank her, and cautiously look around before goin'. It's really hot out, so I don't rush to get back to my work. My fingers are blistered from all the work. I reluctantly start to gather cotton under the beatin' down sun.

"You did what?" I say outraged.

"Don't know why you are so mad. I only was trying to help, and there was no reason to whip any of the slaves over something like that."

I feel my face getting so red with anger, that I'm afraid I might explode. "Please go away," I say as calmly as possible.

She walks out of the room, giving a little "Humph" as she does. I don't understand it; why would she do that? I decide to go out on the porch and smoke my pipe. The smoke rises and then is blown away by a breeze. I watch the slaves gathering cotton. *Maybe the breeze cooled them off a bit*, I think to myself. *Baa, who cares*. I get up and walk to my buggy. I find one of my

horses, and we go into town.

The town is very busy today. I walk into the convenience store to buy some of the things we need. I bump into Jack Stoodler.

"Hey there," he says.

Here we go again, I think. Jack is a stubby guy. He is the most annoying person I've ever met. He has short brown hair and a ridiculous looking mustache.

"Hi," I say, trying to sound happy.

"Wanna hear a joke?" not even waiting for an answer he says, "What do you call a dancing horse? A horse and buggy!" He starts laughing hysterically.

I give a forced smile and go buy the things I need. I told you he was annoying.

I am not sure what to do with myself. I am afraid to do anything nice for the slaves because of what happened. It's getting dark, so I start to prepare dinner. *When will he get home?* I think to myself. Suddenly someone barges through the front door. *Oh here we go*.

"Someday I'll give that Jack Stoodler a joke so good he'll never have the nerve to tell another one." I can hear grumbling on and on about it.

"What happened now," I call to him.

"That stupid Jack Stoodler wasted my time again," he replies furiously.

I roll my eyes and continue working. "We're having beef stew tonight," I tell him. *Hopefully that will cheer him up*.

"*Beef stew?! My favorite!*" he shouts with glee.

I lie in bed. *Another sleepless night*, I think to myself. I roll over and tug on my sister's long braids. "Alexandra, wake up," I whisper.

She wakes up with a jolt, making some of the dirt cloud up. "What," she whispers angrily.

I forgot to mention Alexandra. She is my older sister. She's 15 years old and ain't the most pleasant thing to be around. Sometimes I've snuck into town to spy on our master. I've heard him say that he might trade her away too. Even though she's not that nice, I still love her, and I hope he doesn't trade her away. "Ya know Master might be tradin' ya," I say.

"No he's not," she replies. I can sense a worried tone in her voice.

"Yeah, I heard him say he would."

"And just how did you learn this."
"Snuck into town to spy on Master"
"YOU DID WHAT! YOU COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED IF HE CAUGHT YOU!"
"Sorry," I mumble, and I go to sleep.

I am very worried about what may happen. Adam says he is going to trade some of our slaves away at the next auction. He said he might trade John's sister! John would be devastated if he knew. I am inviting some friends over for tea. I have the table set and everything. My friends and I all agree on a lot of things, but the thing that we agree on the most, is that slavery is wrong.



by Rachel Fox [grade 7]

Rui

Foolish Hope

by Krishna Kahar [grade 8]

When at the age of but four,
Exposed to cotton, as I was
I neglected the principles of this so
called "logic",
That my masters bore down on me.

Clearly, I remember
The noons after,
When I, asking of my elders
Begged to keep but a thread,
Only one.

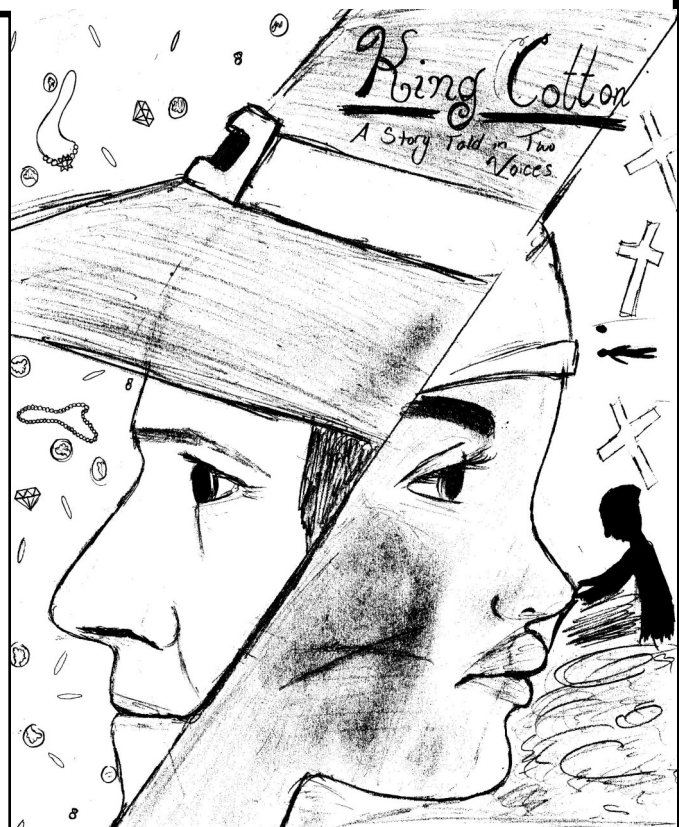
Foolish as I was then,
I thought not if it would matter
Toiling in the fields, as we were
I thought it only right,
Only just,
Only deserving,
That we receive a portion.

How wrong was I,
My master, within earshot
Cracked his whip with a growl
As I was at but the age of four,
My mother rushing to act as wall,
Between me and the unforgiving
lashes.

The night rang with pained screams,
Torturing all that heard,
And watched.
My mother plead on behalf of me,
Asking, shouting,
To spare me.
After all, I was of but four.

Though spared I may have been,
From the burn of the whip,
I was not spared the pain in my
heart,
Forced to look upon my mother,
Sprawled on the ground.

Oh, how foolish was I
But that is in the past,
And I have little to hope for the fu-
ture
Except a hard day in the endless
fields of cotton...
Earning nothing but an hour's rest.



by Janice Healey [grade 8]

Just a Piece

by Ariana DiGesio [grade 8]

I pluck the soft cotton from the stem
The leaves crumble and break in my hands
I wish to keep a piece, but don't for it is condemned
And I fear the punishments I'd have to withstand

Just a piece, to hold to have
Just a small bit of comfort
I want it bad, I'd even take half
Just to make up for all of my effort

The cotton is a curse to me
I work for it, and get nothing
The cotton is a blessing to the free
I work for it and they get everything

I often wonder if I should have hope
If it's merely a made up thing
That doesn't exist, that at nothing I grope
I wish to fly away with my nonexistent wings

I can do nothing
Somebody save me
For freedom my heart is aching
Will I ever be free?

Slave and Owner

by Zoe Elaro [grade 8]

I clung to Big Sister, she kept
me safe
Her strong arms around me
were warm
Like the hot summer air, that
choked and chafed
It was loud, the people a
swarm
I heard the men yelling
Louder and louder
Why were they wailing
As the dust rose like powder
One cried out, excitedly
And two rough hands
grabbed me
Big Sister was reciting rapidly
A prayer, it must be
I was torn from her comfort
As she was carried away
I was crying, though unhurt
I wanted my Sister to stay
I could not see past all my
tears

The last moments with Sister
Were ones wrought with fear

I rushed into market
I surely was late
But there were still slaves left
Luck granted by fate
I needed a young girl
Who could help my mother
With donning clothes and
Bear her bags without bluster
I scanned through the
options
And saw one just perfect
She was ten or eleven
With a face that seemed
rollick

I called out my bid
And surprisingly won
I waited while she skid
Being pulled and beaten
She had clutched to a smaller
girl
While the auction progressed
Now finally I had her
And could go home to rest

Greater Than White-Indigo

by Riley Callahan [grade 8]

The plantation sat next to a small brook. More than
twenty slaves worked, picking cotton and sowing the
crops. Mr. Wilkson, their master, was far from kind. Four
overseers surrounded the field, frequently whipping the
slaves. After the small uprising patrols to check on the
slaves were made more often.

Mr. Wilkson had put in and asked for more overseers,
and he had gone out to get more slaves that very day. He
pulled up to the docks and tied up his horse. He tipped his
hat to people as he walked in. He was nothing if not gen-
tleman-like—to *his* kind that is.

Finally. There they are.

I watched a girl my age try to hold on to her sister. It
was pointless, though. The white men still took her away
from her and towards the road, slapping her across the
face more than once.

I sighed. I learned that nothing could stop the white
men. Not our defenses, not our pleas, not my father's
punches, not my mother's cries. Finally, one of the white
men seized me by the elbow. I didn't resist. I didn't find a
point. I knew I was strong enough to escape their clutches,
but I also knew it was pointless. I'd never have a life.

I tried to read my new master. He wasn't kind, that I
could tell. But there was something...something about
him. He tied me to his horse and made me jog to keep up
with him.

And so started my long life of slavery.

A friend of Mr. Wilkson looked upset a few weeks later.
Mr. Wilkson found out that his daughter had fallen ill.
Within the month she had died, along with a few other
children and slaves.

Mr. Wilkson watched from his front porch as a carriage
pulled into view. He knew why it was there. There was a
sickness spreading, and Mr. Wilkson was sure that his
plantation would be the next victim. He had hidden that
one of his slaves was showing the symptoms. The carriage
was here to take the slave away.

I had pulled any string I could not to get sick. Staying as
far away as possible from Isabel, another slave that had
gotten sick. I did, however, admire her strength. Even
through racking coughs and horrible headaches she
worked just as hard as the rest of us. Maybe she thought
that if she acted as if nothing was wrong that everything
really would be fine.

A sharp pain on my back, the crack of a whip, brought
me back to attention. I turned back to my sowing. We had
each been assigned different plots of land to tend to. I had

the honor of tending to indigo.

Isabel had a more tedious job, she knew it, I knew it,
even the master knew it. And so, during one of my free peri-
ods, I decided to ask the master something.

"Master," I said feebly. I had hoped to sound stronger,
more like the fifteen-year-old I was, instead I sounded as
young as a child. He stood up so he was a full foot taller
than me. Granted he was wearing very tall boots. I cleared
my throat. "I'd like to request that I take over Isabel's job.
She is a woman, fit to be washing and sewing. Not sowing."

"Request?"

"Request," Mr. Wilkson repeated. "*Request?! You are
dirt, boy!* You do not have the right to *request* something of
me!" The boy shrank back for a moment before standing
even taller.

"Sir, I am merely suggesting something that will be of
benefit to you," he said boldly. "This way you can get both
plots sown much faster, as I am the fastest worker here, and
you shall also get your laundry done." Mr. Wilkson consid-
ered this. The boy was indeed the strongest worker he had,
and the girl was rather feeble. But that would be allowing
this slave to have power. That is something Mr. Wilkson
could not stand for.

"Back to work, boy," he finally said. "Your own work,
might I add." He watched the boy go back to his plot before
starting towards this slave, Isabel.

Once he was behind her he cleared his throat. She
jumped and spun towards him.

"Oh, M-master," she stuttered. She did a rushed curtsy.
"What'n I help with?" The boy's speech was much better
than the girls, Mr. Wilkson noticed right away.

"I've decided that you will be working inside from now
on," he said simply. "You have proved not strong enough for
this labor." She nearly dropped her hoe. "Come now. I will
bring you to my house servant, and she will teach you what
to do. She has grown too old to be any help anyhow."

Isabel quickly apologized for not being strong enough and
promised that she would carry out the house work better
than the previous servant had. She was smart enough not to
thank him. After all, this was merely for his own success.

Once I returned to my plot I noticed Master speaking
with Isabel. I couldn't help but smile. She turned to me
while following the master to the house and flashed me a
smile. My smile faded as soon as I turned back to my work.
This was dangerous. I couldn't let anyone know what hap-
pened. I could be seen as a threat, as someone powerful.

And so I sowed, day in and day out. Week after week.
Long after they had taken Isabel and the Master said she
had died. Finally, three years had passed. I was eighteen,
now. I left to join the rebellion in the dark of the night.



by Ariana DiGesio [grade 8]

SWING
LOW
SWEET
CHARIOT

1851
1852
1853
1854
1855

"The Underground Railroad from Freedom" By Wilbur H. Blebert. 1855, by The Macmillan Company.

by Riley Callahan [grade 8]

Sing low, sweet chariot

I hear the sound,
Over the wind.
The call,
The sound of my kin.

Coming for to carry me home,

In the dark of night,
A single beam
Of light
Gleams

Swing low sweet chariot

Announcing the freedom
That we've longed for
For that we've run
Let the songs lure

Coming for to carry me home

Set me free
Through the tunnels
Where we can't see
Out of the trouble

Swing Lower Sweet Chariot

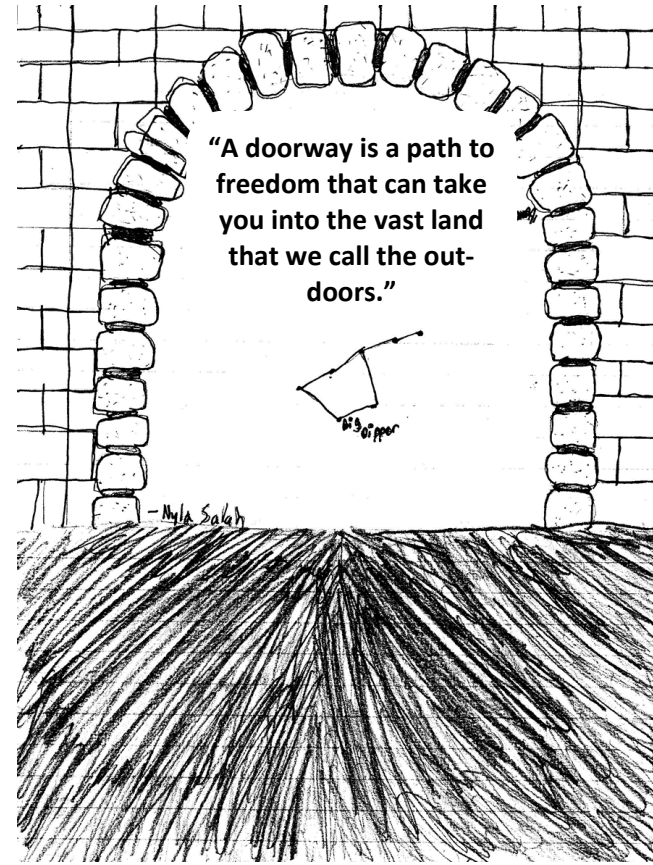
by Zoe Elaro [grade 8]

I'm crying, crying
There's no hope
The brief, dark night
Will soon be naught
And once again
I'll toil without stop
'Til the next sun sets
And the cycle repeats
I sink farther and farther
Swallowed in despair
It was endless, pointless
Year after year

But then it rang
That song, through the night
The song that called
And brought me up
From my own darkness
And led me from bondage
To a new beginning



by Rachel Fox [grade 7]



"A doorway is a path to
freedom that can take
you into the vast land
that we call the out-
doors."

-Nyla Salah

by Nyla Salah [grade 6]

Slave Owner Poem

by Lucas Tusinean [grade 7]

Ever since I was 23,
I wondered why slaves help us,
Now I know that they
were stolen and brought here.
I only really understand
their weariness now,
When war was declared,
all I could hear
were cheers.

Epilogue

by Tobias Shedd [grade 8]

While American slaves in 1809 were sold for around \$40,000 (in inflation adjusted dollars)

1: Working. All day and most of the night. If we don't, our family won't get enough food. If it's bad enough, we'll get whipped. It's hard being enslaved, but we have to scrape by. Otherwise... If we try to escape, we'll be hunted until we're found. That's life as a slave.

2: Finally, a bit of time off! There's a holiday today, and we'll be having two or three hours off, in celebration. It's not one of ours, I think it's called Resurrection Sunday. Anyway, we have time off, which is why I'm writing this. It's also because I managed to find some paper in the field. It might've blown out the window, but still... well, I can talk to someone no—he is coming.

3: I have no idea how my brother got ahold of paper and a pencil. He does have a habit of getting himself into trouble. By the way, I'm his sister. It feels... kinda weird talking to a piece of paper, but here I am! So, here's how the story goes: He was writing in his... diary? And Master came walking around the side of the house, and found him, and oh boy, it went bad! He accused him of stealing from him, and when he said he didn't, he got even madder than he was before! Master tied him to a pole in the yard, and whipped him until he fainted, and then some. There was blood everywhere... Anyway, he'll be better soon, hopefully...

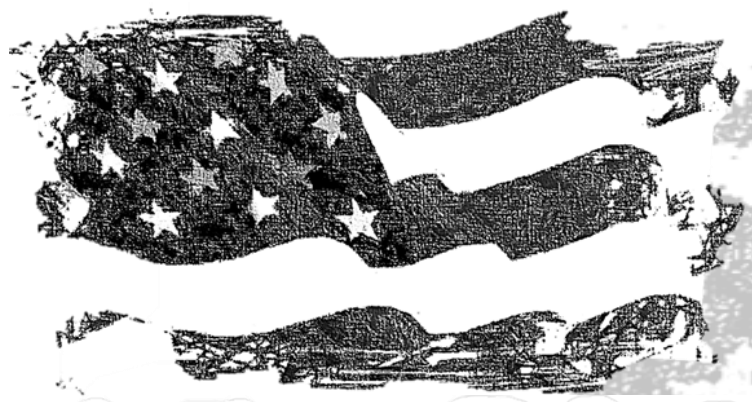
4: It's been one week, and his back still looks awful. I'm worried that he won't be able to walk again, as his back is covered in blood still, and the cuts still aren't closed. It's... awful.

5: He's back up and awake, but scarred badly. I don't think he'll be working anytime soon, that's for certain. Mama made him something out of some plants she found in the woods. It seemed to make him feel a bit better. I'm wondering what it's made of? Maybe Mama will teach me sometime later...

Unfortunately, things like this happened all the time. Slaves were often whipped to the point of fainting and death. Slavery was an awful practice, and unfortunately, it continues to this day in some countries, such as Sudan and Niger. However, people are taking actions against it, and there are groups against it. Visit iAbolish.com for more info on slavery in ISIS, and for info on groups on slavery.



by Tobias Shedd [grade 8]

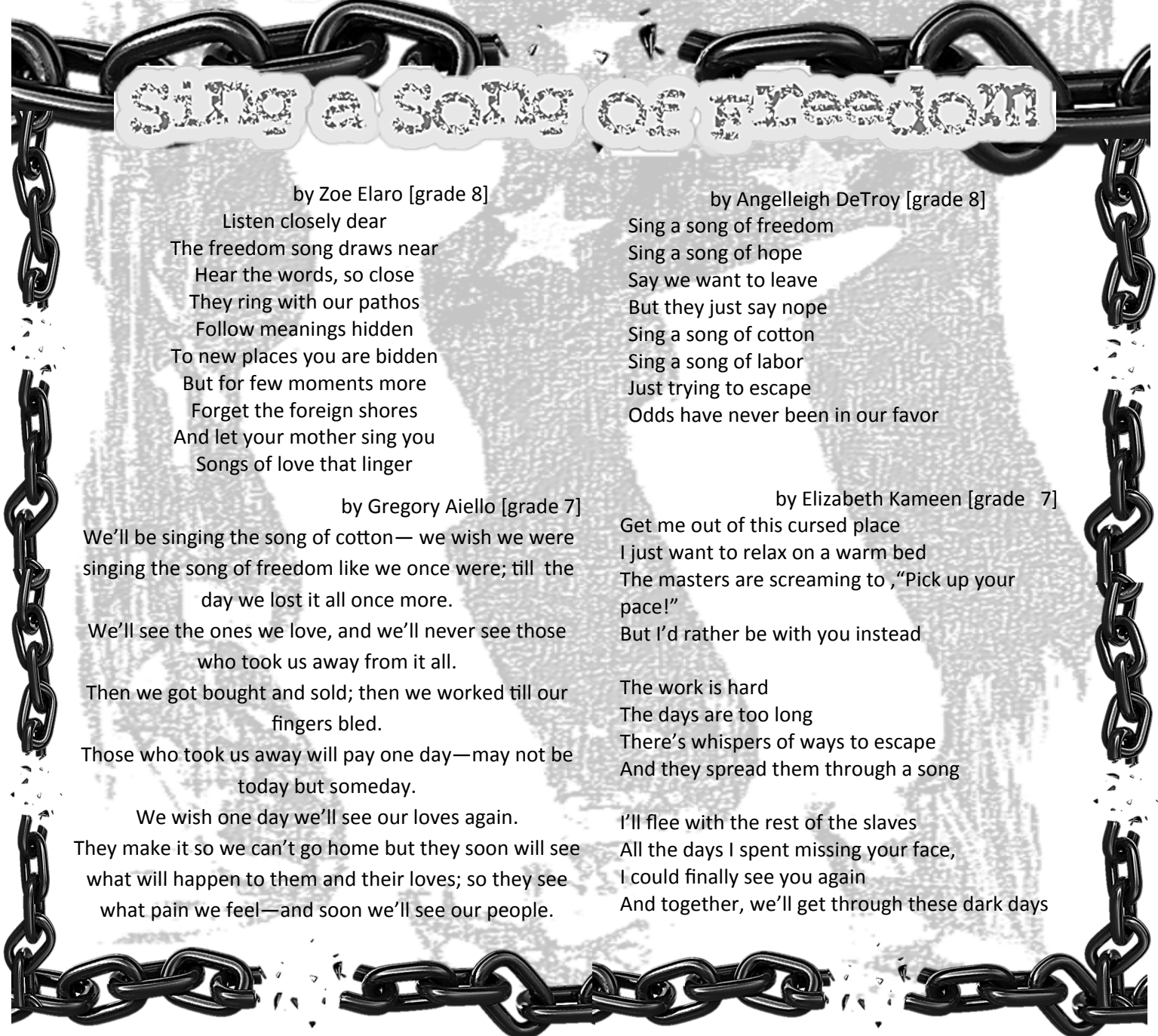


star-spangled
cotton

I Am Sorry

by Alexia Bohm [grade 8]

It was pretty grim in my day of age. I was a slave on a ship on my way to my new master's estate. It was terrible, they treated me and the other slaves like piles of dirt. When we were on the horrid ship we were stuck down below the deck. And when I got to my "new home," harvesting cotton... My masters were evil people, they punished me for the smallest things I did wrong, like not harvesting cotton on time or keeping some of the material instead of giving it to them so they could sell it or if I'm sick and not doing my job. I hated it then, when colored people didn't matter and it was like the whites were Kings and Queens. But now I'm free and I hear about your time period. Yours is better in some parts of the world, but others it's like nothing changed. And to those parts of the world, "I am sorry."



by Zoe Elaro [grade 8]

Listen closely dear
The freedom song draws near
Hear the words, so close
They ring with our pathos
Follow meanings hidden
To new places you are bidden
But for few moments more
Forget the foreign shores
And let your mother sing you
Songs of love that linger

by Gregory Aiello [grade 7]

We'll be singing the song of cotton— we wish we were singing the song of freedom like we once were; till the day we lost it all once more.
We'll see the ones we love, and we'll never see those who took us away from it all.
Then we got bought and sold; then we worked till our fingers bled.
Those who took us away will pay one day—may not be today but someday.
We wish one day we'll see our loves again.
They make it so we can't go home but they soon will see what will happen to them and their loves; so they see what pain we feel—and soon we'll see our people.

by Angelleigh DeTroy [grade 8]

Sing a song of freedom
Sing a song of hope
Say we want to leave
But they just say nope
Sing a song of cotton
Sing a song of labor
Just trying to escape
Odds have never been in our favor

by Elizabeth Kameen [grade 7]

Get me out of this cursed place
I just want to relax on a warm bed
The masters are screaming to , "Pick up your pace!"
But I'd rather be with you instead
The work is hard
The days are too long
There's whispers of ways to escape
And they spread them through a song
I'll flee with the rest of the slaves
All the days I spent missing your face,
I could finally see you again
And together, we'll get through these dark days