

# The American Yawp

## VOLUME I: to 1877

### Essay 2

#### Understanding American freedom through the experience of Harriet Jacobs

American freedom was built on American slavery. Nearly every aspect of antebellum America was rooted in racial and gender inequality. The exploitation of enslaved people fueled the rise of American capitalism, and white Americans, North and South, upheld a system of white supremacy that guaranteed the continuation of inequality. Few Americans truly believed that men and women should have equal rights, but gender inequalities took on an even more desperate cast for enslaved women. Understanding the experience of Harriet Jacobs, a woman who lived both as a free person of color and as an enslaved woman helps us understand the limits of American freedom.

In between 1,000 to 1,500 words, use [Harriet Jacobs's narrative \*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl\*](#) to answer the question, "What did it mean to be free in antebellum America?"

Be sure to have a clear argument that you defend with relevant evidence. Organize your paper with a logical structure and use clear topic sentences and transitions to help your reader understand the logic of your organization. Edit your paper thoroughly to avoid errors and to improve readability. Give your paper a title that reflects your argument.

Grading criteria:

- **Argument: 25%** Does your paper have a clear, singular, specific argument that answers the question?
- **Evidence: 25%** Do you use all of the relevant evidence to defend your argument?
- **Organization: 25%** Does your paper have a logical structure and use clear topic sentences and transitions?
- **Clarity: 25%** Is your prose efficient, crisp and polished, free of excessive passive voice or distracting spelling or grammatical errors?

Formatting:

- 12-pt., Times New Roman font, double-spaced
- 1" margins
- 1200-1500 words (4-5 full, double-spaced pages)

Due **DATE** through **LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

\* For this assignment, you may only use Jacobs' narrative.