

**The Peculiar Institution** *For use with textbook pages 432–437*

**Content Vocabulary**

**spiritual:** African American religious folk song (page 433)

**slave codes:** laws in the Southern states that controlled enslaved people (page 434)

**Drawing From Experience**

When you feel sad, what can you do to help yourself feel better? Do you play your favorite music? Do you visit a friend? Music and friendship were among the ways that enslaved African Americans coped with their harsh lives.

This section describes what life was like for enslaved African Americans. You will also learn about ways they resisted slavery.

**Organizing Your Thoughts**

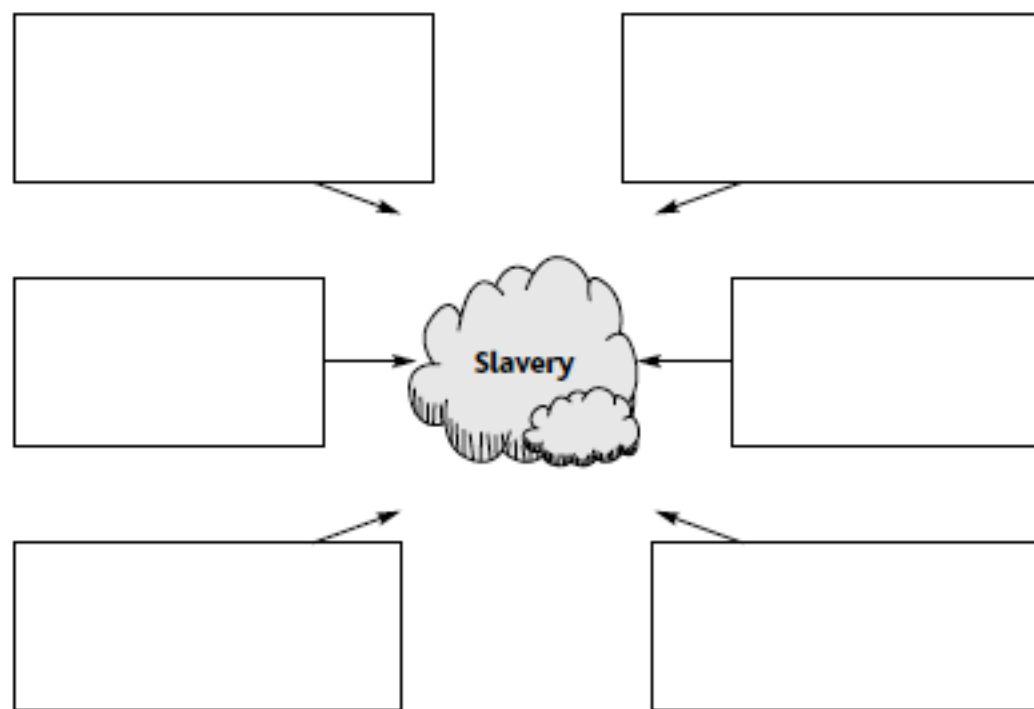
Use the diagram below to help you take notes. Think about some of the ways that enslaved African Americans resisted slavery.



**US8.7** Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people in the South from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced.

Focuses on:

**US8.7.2, US8.9.1**



## Life Under Slavery (pages 433–434)

**Main Idea** Enslaved African Americans faced many hardships but were able to create family lives, religious beliefs, and a distinct culture.

Enslaved people constantly faced uncertainty and danger. Laws did not protect them. Family members could be sold away at any time. To create some stability, enslaved people formed networks of relatives and friends as extended families. If parents were sold away, an aunt or close friend could raise the children. Large, close-knit extended families became an important part of African American culture.

Enslaved African Americans combined African and American elements to form their own culture. Their culture and communities helped them cope with the hardships of slavery.

In 1808 Congress outlawed the slave trade. Slavery, however, remained legal in the South. No new slaves could be brought in, but children born to enslaved parents became part of the enslaved population. By 1860 almost all enslaved people in the South had been born there.

Native-born African Americans continued to practice African music and dance. They passed traditional African stories to their children. Many African Americans accepted Christianity, but they followed African religious practices as well. They created their own ceremonies for religious events such as marriage.

Christianity became a religion of hope and resistance for many enslaved African Americans. They expressed their suffering and hopes for freedom in **spirituals**—African American religious folk songs. They often used spirituals to communicate secretly with one another.

1. Why did enslaved African Americans develop extended families?

### Academic Vocabulary

**constant:** happening a lot; frequent (p. 433)

### Academic Vocabulary

**communicate:** to share knowledge or information (p. 434)

## Resisting Slavery *(pages 434–437)*

**Main Idea** Many enslaved people fought against slavery.

Since the 1700s, the Southern states had passed laws called **slave codes** that controlled enslaved people. The laws were intended to prevent a slave rebellion. For this reason, they prohibited slaves from meeting in large groups and from leaving their master’s property without a written pass. Slave codes also made it illegal to teach enslaved people to read or write.

In 1831, Nat Turner, an enslaved religious leader, led a brief but violent revolt in Virginia that killed at least 55 whites. Turner was hanged, but his rebellion frightened whites and led to more severe slave codes.

Before Turner, several other slave revolts had also failed. Informers gave away a plot by Gabriel Prosser in 1800 and one by Denmark Vesey in 1821.

Armed revolts were rare, however. Enslaved people knew they had little chance of winning. Instead, they resisted by other means. They worked slowly or pretended to be ill. Sometimes they broke tools or set fire to a plantation building.

Some enslaved African Americans tried to run away. Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass gained their freedom by fleeing to the North. Getting to the North from the Deep South was nearly impossible. Most slaves who successfully escaped came from the Upper South. Many runaway slaves received assistance from the Underground Railroad—a network of “safe houses” owned by free blacks and whites who opposed slavery.

Most runaways were captured and severely punished. Even those who made it to free states were not safe. In many Northern states, fugitive slaves were captured and returned to the South. As a result, many fled to Canada.

2. What was the purpose of slave codes?

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