Step 4 The reverse underground ANSWERS

Exercise 1:

First, the action takes place in a plantation; then they are in New York City, in 1841 (flash back). Then back on the plantation. The film tells what happened to him.

Solomon Northup was a famous violinist. One day, he was poisoned, kidnapped, and sent to Georgia, to work as a slave in a plantation.

If he wants to survive, he should do and say as little as possible. According to me, it’s a good piece of advice because he should avoid being beaten or killed; he should try to find a way to escape secretly…

In the trailer, the protagonist is successively called: a slave, a free man, boy, Solomon Northup, a Georgia runaway, a free man.

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Exercise 2: When he was a free man, he was celebrated as a great violin player, a respectable father and husband, he acted freely, he smiled, he was well dressed.

When he realizes he was kidnapped, he demands his rights to be respected, but his identity is denied to him.

Whereas while working as a slave in the plantation, he is submissive, he must accept to be a slave and obey his masters. However, he lets the Canadian man know that he knows about the North. He is recognized as a knowledgeable man (“I thought you knowed something”). He is shown as joining the choir — thus looking like any other slave — while waiting for the right moment to escape. (“I will keep myself hearty till freedom is opportune. I was a free man, I’m not a slave.”). Unlike other characters, he never seems to accept the identity of a slave — for 12 years…

Exercise 3: In the extract, the slave holder announces that if a slave does not obey his master, he will be whipped; he says that it is written in the Bible (“That’s Scripture.”). Obviously, anyone can justify anything this way. He did not actually read an extract of the Bible; he knows the slaves would take his words for it, as most slaves could not read.

Exercise 4: Solomon must have felt outraged, frustrated, infuriated, to have to obey the slave holders. It must have been extremely hard to give up his rights, his identity, his freedom. He must have suffered deeply to be separated from his loved ones. It must have been quite a challenge to remain resilient and hopeful for 12 years until he escaped. In his place, I think I would have given up… / I think I would also have kept hope…

The trailer makes me feel like watching the movie because, since it’s a real story, I want to know what happened to him. / I have already seen the movie; the trailer is good because it shows in just a few minutes the ordeal that Solomon had to go through.

**Titre de la vidéo :** 12 Years a Slave trailer (2’28)

**Solomon Northup**: I wanna ask you what part of the country you come from?

**Canadian abolitionist**: I originate from Canada. And guess where that is.

**Solomon Northup**: Well I know where Canada is; I’ve been there myself.

**Canadian abolitionist**: Well traveled for a slave.

**Man 1**: Solomon Northup is an expert player on the violin.

**Solomon N.**: I was born a free man, lived with my family in New York, “Be good for your mother”, until the day I was deceived.

**Man 2**: To Solomon!

**Solomon N.**: --Kidnapped, sold into slavery.

**Slaveholder 1**: Well boy, how you feel now?

**Solomon N.**: My name is Solomon Northup, I’m a free man and you have no right whatsoever to detain me.

**Slaveholder 1**: You no free man; you’re nothin but a Georgia runaway.

**Master**: And that servant that don’t obey his Lord shall be beaten with many strikes. That’s Scripture.

**Canadian Abolitionist**: The condition of your laborers, it’s all wrong.

**Master**: They’re my property.

**Canadian Abolitionist**: You say that with pride

**Master**: I say it as fact. Speak! Man does how he pleases with his property.

**Master**: You come here…

**Solomon N.**: Mister…

**Master**: I say come here!

**Solomon N.**: Days ago, I was with my family in my home, now you tell me all is lost.

**Slave man**: If you wanna survive, do and say as little as possible.

**Solomon N.**: But I don’t wanna survive, I wanna live.

**Slaveholder 2**: I thought you knowed something!

**Solomon N.**: I did as instructed! If there’s something wrong, it’s wrong with the instruction.

**Mistress**: Master brought you here to work. Any more will earn you a 100 lashes.

**Slave Woman**: I know what is like to be the object of Mas’r’s lash. In his own time, the good Lord will manage them all.

**Solomon N.**: I will survive! I will not fall into despair! I will keep myself hearty till freedom is opportune. I was a free man, I’m not a slave.