

HIST221

Study Questions for Boyrereau Brinch and Benjamin F. Prentiss's (Benjamin Franklin's) *The Blind African Slave, or Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nicknamed Jeffrey Brace*

Please write out your answers to the questions that follow and/or take notes on the relevant areas in the text: Boyrereau Brinch's and Benjamin F. Prentiss's (Benjamin Franklin's) *The Blind African Slave, or Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nicknamed Jeffrey Brace*. It is best to get into the habit of doing this while reading. You should complete this exercise after you have read and highlighted, or noted, areas of the text that you think are important. The purpose of this exercise is to help you follow the authors' intent and to think critically about their assertions. Following are a list of questions that, once answered, will ensure that you have a good grasp of this document's purpose and an in-depth understanding of its historical importance.

Context:

The Blind African Slave, or Memoirs of Boyrereau Brinch, Nicknamed Jeffrey Brace is the memoir of a slave's journey from being a free man in West Africa, through years of horrific abuse as a slave in Barbados and North America, to becoming a hero of the American Revolution and the first African American citizen of Poultney, Vermont.

This memoir is one of the most renowned and most discussed narratives of the life of an African slave in the New World. The descriptions of his life, family, and companions, and their situation, is a compelling tale of human dignity in times of great suffering and loss.

Even though later in his life, Brinch had learned to write, due to a degenerative eye condition, he dictated his memoirs to Benjamin F. Prentiss, a well-known antislavery lawyer, who published them in 1810. What probably started as a private expression of his memories became the voice of millions of slaves who were forcibly taken from Africa to the New World and their unimaginable suffering.

Note on Questions:

Remember that for this assessment, we will only be covering the first 94 pages of this text, in other words, the introduction and first four chapters.

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Thus, we will concentrate our attention Brinch's description of his homeland—the ancient kingdom of Bow-woo, his capture by white traders, his journey across the Atlantic in 1758 and 1759, and his arrival at Barbados.

Questions:

1. According to the author's narrative, did the English traders only capture and enslave adult men, adult men and women, or adult men and women as well as children?
2. We know that Brinch converted to Christianity later in his life, but if you have paid attention to his description of the rituals and festivals in his West African homeland, you should be able to guess his religion before conversion. Can you name/describe it?
3. How did Brinch describe the relation between Europeans and the natives?
4. In pages 58–60, the author mentions a theory by which the Africans were descendants of Cain. Can you explain this theory and discuss its implications?
5. In the context section, we have explained that Brinch collaborated with Benjamin F. Prentiss, a well-known antislavery lawyer, when writing his memoirs. Can you find an example argument in favor of the equality of human nature?
6. Who was this book intended for?
7. Apart from the immediate aim of writing his memoirs before dying, what do you think was Brinch's ultimate goal?

