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Learning is part of the journey at Hearst Networks EMEA and you'll be offered personal and professional development opportunities throughout your career with us. We'll do everything we can to see you thrive and grow. slavery, condition in which one human being was owned by another. A slave was considered by law as property, or chattel, and was deprived of most of the rights ordinarily held by free persons.There is no consensus on what a slave was or on how the institution of slavery should be defined. Nevertheless, there is general agreement among historians, anthropologists, economists, sociologists, and others who study slavery that most of the following characteristics should be present in order to term a person a slave. The slave was a species of property; thus, he belonged to someone else. In some societies slaves were considered movable property, in others immovable property, like real estate. They were objects of the law, not its subjects. Thus, like an ox or an ax, the slave was not ordinarily held responsible for what he did. He was not personally liable for torts or contracts. The slave usually had few rights and always fewer than his owner, but there were not many societies in which he had absolutely none. As there are limits in most societies on the extent to which animals may be abused, so there were limits in most societies on how much a slave could be abused. The slave was removed from lines of natal descent. Legally, and often socially, he had no kin. No relatives could stand up for his rights or get vengeance for him. As an "outsider," "marginal individual," or "socially dead person" in the society where he was enslaved, his rights to participate in political decision making and other social activities were fewer than those enjoyed by his owner. The product of a slave's labor could be claimed by someone else, who also frequently had the right to control his physical reproduction. The remarkable resilience of enslaved people in colonial AmericaHistorical interpreter Stephen Seals discusses the everyday lives and remarkable resilience of enslaved people in Colonial Williamsburg and the United States.See all videos for this articleSlavery was a form of dependent labor performed by a nonfamily member. The slave was deprived of personal liberty and the right to move about geographically as he desired. There were likely to be limits on his capacity to make choices with regard to his occupation and sexual partners as well. Slavery was usually, but not always, involuntary. If not all of these characterizations in their most restrictive forms applied to a slave, the slave regime in that place is likely to be characterized as "mild"; if almost all of them did, then it ordinarily would be characterized as "severe."Slaves were generated in many ways. Probably the most frequent was capture in war, either by design, as a form of incentive to warriors, or as an accidental by-product, as a way of disposing of enemy troops or civilians. Others were kidnapped on slave-raiding or piracy expeditions. Many slaves were the offspring of slaves. Some people were enslaved as a punishment for crime or debt, others were sold into slavery by their parents, other relatives, or even spouses, sometimes to satisfy debts, sometimes to escape starvation. A variant on the selling of children was the exposure, either real or fictitious, of unwanted children, who were then rescued by others and made slaves. Another source of slavery was self-sale, undertaken sometimes to obtain an elite position, sometimes to escape destitution.Slavery existed in a large number of past societies whose general characteristics are well known. It was rare among primitive peoples, such as the hunter-gatherer societies, because for slavery to flourish, social differentiation or stratification was essential. Also essential was an economic surplus, for slaves were often consumption goods who themselves had to be maintained rather than productive assets who generated income for their owner. Surplus was also essential in slave systems where the owners expected economic gain from slave ownership. The History of Slavery in North America Quiz Ordinarily there had to be a perceived labor shortage, for otherwise it is unlikely that most people would bother to acquire or to keep slaves. Free land, and more generally, open resources, were often a prerequisite for slavery; in most cases where there were no open resources, non-slaves could be found who would fulfill the same social functions at lower cost. Last, some centralized governmental institutions willing to enforce slave laws had to exist, or else the property aspects of slavery were likely to be chimerical. Most of these conditions had to be present in order for slavery to exist in a society; if they all were, until the abolition movement of the 19th century swept throughout most of the world, it was almost certain that slavery would be present. Although slavery existed almost everywhere, it seems to have been especially important in the development of two of the world's major civilizations, Western (including ancient Greece and Rome) and Islamic.There have been two basic types of slavery throughout recorded history. The most common has been what is called household, patriarchal, or domestic slavery. Although domestic slaves occasionally worked outside the household, for example, in haying or harvesting, their primary function was that of menials who served their owners in their homes or wherever else the owners might be, such as in military service. Slaves often were a consumption-oriented status symbol for their owners, who in many societies spent much of their surplus on slaves. Household slaves sometimes merged in varying degrees with the families of their owners, so that boys became adopted sons or women became concubines or wives who gave birth to heirs. Temple slavery, state slavery, and military slavery were relatively rare and distinct from domestic slavery, but in a very broad outline they can be categorized as the household slaves of a temple or the state. The other major type of slavery was productive slavery. It was relatively infrequent and occurred primarily in Classical Athenian Greece and Rome and in the post-Columbian circum-Caribbean New World. It also was found in 9th-century Iraq, among the Kwakiutl Indians of the American Northwest, and in a few areas of sub-Saharan Africa in the 19th century. Although slaves also were employed in the household, slavery in all of those societies seems to have existed predominantly to produce marketable commodities in mines or on plantations.A major theoretical issue is the relationship between productive slavery and the status of a society as a slave or a slave-owning society. In a slave society, slaves composed a significant portion (at least 20–30 percent) of the total population, and much of that society's energies were mobilized toward getting and keeping slaves. In addition the institution of slavery had a significant impact on the society's institutions, such as the family, and on its social thought, law, and economy. It seems clear that it was quite possible for a slave society to exist without productive slavery; the known historical examples were concentrated in Africa and Asia. It is also clear that most of the slave societies have been concentrated in Western (including Greece and Rome) and Islamic civilizations. In a slave-owning society, slaves were present but in smaller numbers, and they were much less the focus of the society's energies.Slavery was a species of dependent labor differentiated from other forms primarily by the fact that in any society it was the most degrading and most severe. Slavery was the prototype of a relationship defined by domination and power. But throughout the centuries man has invented other forms of dependent labor besides slavery, including serfdom, indentured labor, and peonage. The term serfdom is much overused, often where it is not appropriate (always as an appellation of opprobrium). In the past a serf usually was an agriculturalist, whereas, depending upon the society, a slave could be employed in almost any occupation. Canonically, serfdom was the dependent condition of much of the western and central European peasantry from the time of the decline of the Roman Empire until the era of the French Revolution. This included a "second enserfment" that swept over central and some of eastern Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries. Russia did not know the "first enserfment"; serfdom began there gradually in the mid-15th century, was completed by 1649, and lasted until 1906. Whether the term serfdom appropriately describes the condition of the peasantry in other contexts is a matter of vigorous contention. Be that as it may, the serf was also distinguished from the slave by the fact that he was usually the subject of the law—i.e., he had some rights, whereas the slave, the object of the law, had significantly fewer rights. The serf, moreover, was usually bound to the land (the most significant exception was the Russian serf between about 1700 and 1861), whereas the slave was always bound to his owner; i.e., he had to live where his owner told him to, and he often could be sold by his owner at any time. The serf usually owned his means of production (grain, livestock, implements) except the land, whereas the slave owned nothing, often not even the clothes on his back. The serf's right to marry off his lord's estate often was restricted, but the master's interference in his reproductive and family life ordinarily was much less than was the case for the slave. Serfs could be called upon by the state to pay taxes, to perform corvée labor on roads, and to serve in the army, but slaves usually were exempt from all of those obligations.A person became an indentured servant by borrowing money and then voluntarily agreeing to work off the debt during a specified term. In some societies indentured servants probably differed little from debt slaves (i.e., persons who initially were unable to pay off obligations and thus were forced to work them off at an amount per year specified by law). Debt slaves, however, were regarded as criminals (essentially thieves) and thus liable to harsher treatment. Perhaps as many as half of all the white settlers in North America were indentured servants, who agreed to work for someone (the purchaser of the indenture) upon arrival to pay for their passage. Some indentured servants alleged that they were treated worse than slaves; the economic logic of the situation was that slave owners thought of their slaves as a long-term investment whose value would drop if maltreated, whereas the short-term (typically four years) indentured servants could be abused almost to death because their masters had only a brief interest in them. Practices varied, but indenture contracts sometimes specified that the servants were to be set free with a sum of money, sometimes a plot of land, perhaps even a spouse, whereas for manumitted slaves the terms usually depended more on the generosity of the owner.Peons were either persons forced to work off debts or criminals. Peons, who were the Latin American variant of debt slaves, were forced to work for their creditors to pay off what they owed. They tended to merge with felons because people in both categories were considered criminals, and that was especially true in societies where money fines were the main sanction and form of restitution for crimes. Thus, the felon who could not pay his fine was an insolvent debtor. The debt peon had to work for his creditor, and the labor of the criminal peon was sold by the state to a third party. Peons had even less recourse to the law for bad treatment than did indentured servants, and the terms of manumission for the former typically were less favourable than for the latter. a person who is the property of and wholly subject to another and forced to provide unpaid labor.a person entirely under the domination of some influence or person.She was a slave to her own ambition.a drudge.a slave ant.Photography. a subsidiary flash lamp actuated through its photoelectric cell when the principal flash lamp is discharged.Machinery, Computers. a device or process under control of or repeating the actions of a similar device or process.Machinery, Computers. to connect (a device) to a master as its slave.Archaic. to enslave.a person legally owned by another and having no freedom of action or right to propertya person who is forced to work for another against his willa person under the domination of another person or some habit or influencea person who works in harsh conditions for low paya device that is controlled by or that duplicates the action of another similar device (the master device)(as modifier)"Collins English Dictionary — Complete & Unabridged" 2012 Digital Edition © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012to work like a slave(tr) an archaic word for enslave"Collins English Dictionary — Complete & Unabridged" 2012 Digital Edition © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012slaveless adjectiveslavelike adjectiveproslave adjectivesemislave nounOrigin of slave1First recorded in 1250–1300; Middle English sclave (also slave), from Old French escla(i)ve, and Medieval Latin sclāvus (masculine), sclāva (feminine) "slave," special use of Sclāvus "Slavic, a Slav, slave" (Latin does not tolerate the consonant cluster sl- and employs the cluster scl- instead); so called because Slavs in Central Europe and the Balkans were commonly enslaved in the early Middle Ages; SlavOrigin of slave1C13: via Old French from Medieval Latin Sclāvus a Slav, one held in bondage (from the fact that the Slavonic races were frequently conquered in the Middle Ages), from Late Greek Sklabos a SlavExamples have not been reviewed.For me, you get limited opportunities to watch people react to the thing that you slave over every detail of as a group.In 2020, I wrote about how Black Americans have used various media formats to fight for racial and economic equality — from slave narratives to smartphones.That project began in 2019 as a one-off album recorded in a small Louisiana studio, of songs inspired by the transatlantic slave trade and the suffering and often unheard voices of Black women.Beginning in 1850, the Houston law professor said, Fillmore sent troops to accompany federal marshals seeking to apprehend escaped slaves who had fled north.The holiday celebrates the last American slaves to be officially freed.bond servant bondslave bondsman/woman www.thesaurus.comcaptive chattel serf Slavslave antBrowse#aabbccddeeffgghhiijjkkllmmnnooppqqrrsstttuuvvwwxxyyzzAboutCareersContact usCookies, terms, & privacyHelpFollow usGet the Word of the Day every day!© 2025 Dictionary.com, LLC PORTSMOUTH, N.H. (AP) — Juneteenth celebrations unfolded across the U.S. on Thursday to mark the day in 1865 when Union soldiers brought the news of freedom to enslaved Black people in Texas. The events include one in Galveston — the holiday's birthplace — where former President Joe Biden was expected. Juneteenth has been celebrated by Black Americans for generations, but became more widely observed after Biden designated it a federal holiday in 2021. It is recognized at least as an observance in every state, and nearly 30 states and Washington, D.C., have designated it as a permanent paid or legal holiday through legislation or executive action. READ MORE: Pentagon restores some webpages honoring minority service members but defends DEI purge On the East Coast, the Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire orchestrated a weekslong celebration that will culminate with a community dance and rededication of the African Burying Ground Memorial Park in Portsmouth. In Virginia, a ceremonial groundbreaking was held for rebuilding the First Baptist Church of Williamsburg, one of the nation's oldest Black churches, The holiday to mark the end of slavery in the U.S. goes back to an order issued on June 19, 1865 as Union troops arrived in Galveston at the end of the Civil War. General Order No. 3 declared that all enslaved people in the state were free and had "absolute equality." Those who planned the history tours, community discussions and other events in New Hampshire said they wanted to highlight contradictions in the familiar narratives about the nation's founding fathers ahead of next year's 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. "Although they are historically courageous, smart men, they were also human. They held people in bondage. They had children with their enslaved," said JerriAnne Boggis, the Heritage Trail's executive director. "What would the story look like if the story of America was told from these Black descendants?" The celebrations come as President Donald Trump's administration has worked to ban diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, or DEI, in the federal government and remove content about Black American history from federal websites. Trump's travel ban on visitors from select countries has also led to bitter national debate. During his first administration, Trump issued statements each June 19, including one that ended with "On Juneteenth 2017, we honor the countless contributions made by African Americans to our Nation and pledge to support America's promise as the land of the free." READ MORE: Colleges cut ties with The PhD Project, a nonprofit targeted by Trump administration over DEI New Hampshire, one of the nation's whitest states, is not among those with a permanent, paid or legal Juneteenth holiday, and Boggis said her hope that lawmakers would take action making it one is waning. "I am not so sure anymore given the political environment we're in," she said. "I think we've taken a whole bunch of steps backwards in understanding our history, civil rights and inclusion." Still, she hopes New Hampshire's events and those elsewhere will make a difference. "It's not a divisive tool to know the truth. Knowing the truth helps us understand some of the current issues that we're going through," she said. And if spreading that truth comes with a bit of fun, all the better, she said. "When we come together, when we break bread together, we enjoy music together, we learn together, we dance together, we're creating these bonds of community," she said. "As much was we educate, we also want to celebrate together." Your donation makes a difference in these uncertain times. Also found in: Thesaurus, Medical, Legal, Financial, Acronyms, Idioms, Encyclopedia, Wikipedia.Related to slave: slave trade, Slave Dynasty (slāv)n.1. One who is owned as the property of someone else, especially in involuntary servitude.2. One who is subservient to or controlled by another: his boss's slave.3. One who is subject to or controlled by a specified influence: a slave to alcohol; a slave to an irrational fear.4. One who works extremely hard.5. One who acts out the role of the submissive partner in a sadomasochistic relationship.7. A machine or component controlled by another machine or component.intr.v. slaved, slav·ing, slaves 1. To work very hard or doggedly; toil.2. To trade in or transport slaves.3. To cause a machine or component to be controlled by another machine or component.[Middle English sclave, from Old French esclave, from Medieval Latin sclāvus, from Sclāvus, Slav (from the widespread enslavement of captured Slavs in the early Middle Ages); see Slav.]Word History: The derivation of the word slave encapsulates a bit of European history and explains why the two words slave and Slav are so similar; they are, in fact, historically identical. The word slave first appears in English around 1290, spelled sclave. The spelling is based on Old French esclave from Medieval Latin sclavus, "Slav, slave," first recorded around 800. Sclavus comes from Byzantine Greek sklabos (pronounced sklä′vōs) "Slav," which appears around 580. Sklavos approximates the Slavs' own name for themselves, the Slovĕnci, surviving in English Slovene and Slovenian. The spelling of English slave, closer to its original Slavic form, first appears in English in the 1500s. Slavs became slaves around the beginning of the ninth century when the Holy Roman Empire tried to stabilize a German-Slav frontier. By the 1100s, stabilization had given way to wars of expansion and extermination that did not end until 1410, when the Poles crushed the knights of the Teutonic Order at Grunwald in north-central Poland. · As far as the Slavs' own self-designation goes, its meaning is, understandably, better than "slave"; it comes from the Indo-European root *kleu-, whose basic meaning is "to hear" and occurs in many derivatives meaning "renown, fame." The Slavs are thus "the famous people." Slavic names ending in -slav incorporate the same word, such as Czech Bohu-slav, "God's fame," Russian Msti-slav, "vengeful fame," and Polish Stani-slaw, "famous for withstanding (enemies)."American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. Copyright © 2016 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved. (sleiv) n1. (Law) a person legally owned by another and having no freedom of action or right to property2. (Industrial Relations & HR Terms) a person who is forced to work for another against his will3. a person under the domination of another person or some habit or influence: a slave to television. 4. (Industrial Relations & HR Terms) a person who works in harsh conditions for low pay5. (Mechanical Engineering) a. a device that is controlled by or that duplicates the action of another similar device (the master device)b. (as modifier): slave cylinder. vb6. (often foll by: away) to work like a slave7. (tr) an archaic word for enslave[C13: via Old French from Medieval Latin Sclāvus a Slav, one held in bondage (from the fact that the Slavonic races were frequently conquered in the Middle Ages), from Late Greek Sklabos a Slav]Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014 © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014 (sleiv) n., v. slaved, slav•ing. n. 1. a person who is the property of and wholly subject to another; bond servant. 2. a person entirely under the domination of some influence or person. 3. a drudge: a housekeeping slave. 4. a mechanism under control of and repeating the actions of a similar mechanism. Compare master (def. 17). v.i. 5. to work like a slave; drudge. 6. to engage in the slave trade. v.t. [1250–1300; Middle English sclave < Medieval Latin sclāvus (masculine), sclāva (feminine) slave, orig., Slav; so called because Slavs were commonly enslaved in the early Middle Ages] Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary, © 2010 K Dictionaries Ltd. Copyright 2005, 1997, 1991 by Random House, Inc. All rights reserved.amanuensis - Literally "slave at hand"—for a literary assistant, especially one who takes dictation or copies manuscripts.ciao - Also ciau; from Italian, it is an alteration of schiavo, "(I am your) slave."serve - From Latin servire, "serve," from servus, "slave."addict - To addict originally meant "to award as a slave"; an addict now is a slave to his/her habit, from Latin addictus, which, in Roman law, meant "a debtor awarded as a slave to his creditor."Farlex Trivia Dictionary. © 2012 Farlex, Inc. All rights reserved.Past participle: slavedGerund: slavingImperativePresentPreteritePresent ContinuousPresent PerfectPast ContinuousPast PerfectFutureFuture PerfectFuture ContinuousPresent Perfect ContinuousFuture Perfect ContinuousPast Perfect ContinuousConditionalPast ConditionalCollins English Verb Tables © HarperCollins Publishers 2011 Noun1.slave - a person who is owned by someone bondsman, bondman - a male slavebondmaid, bondwoman, bondswoman - a female slavebond servant - someone bound to labor without wagespuppet, tool, creature - a person who is controlled by others and is used to perform unpleasant or dishonest tasks for someone elsegalley slave - a slave condemned to row in a galley3.slave - someone entirely dominated by some influence or person; "a slave to fashion"; "a slave to cocaine"; "his mother was his abject slave"Verb1.slave - work very hard, like a slavebreak one's back, buckle down, knuckle downdo work, work - be employed; "Is your husband working again?"; "My wife never worked"; "Do you want to work after the age of 60?"; "She never did any work because she inherited a lot of money"; "She works as a waitress to put herself through college"Based on WordNet 3.0, Farlex clipart collection. © 2003-2012 Princeton University, Farlex Inc.noun2. drudge, skivvy (chiefly Brit.), scullion (archaic) Mum says to Dad, `I'm not your slave, you know!'verb1. toil, labour, grind (informal), drudge, sweat, graft, slog, sweat blood, skivvy (Brit.), work your fingers to the bone, work your guts out, keep your nose to the grindstone slaving over a hot stoveCollins Thesaurus of the English Language – Complete and Unabridged 2nd Edition. 2002 © HarperCollins Publishers 1995, 2002nounverb The American Heritage® Roget's Thesaurus. Copyright © 2013, 2014 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved. عَبْدبَعْمَلْ عن عَيْره عملا شاقاًيَكْدَحْSklaveschuftenSklavinabarbeitenesclavotrabajar como un negrotrabajar como una bestiaesclavizaragyondolgozza magátrabszolgaschiavoschiavalavorare come uno schiavopedissequamentepedissequovergasvergautivergovévergvaldystèslavetrellsite som en gamparbeide som en slavearbeidsslavepaбpaбyнярабскийвыполнять тяжелую работуkölelöle gibi çalışmakköle gibi çalışanCollins Spanish Dictionary - Complete and Unabridged 8th Edition 2005 © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1971, 1988 © HarperCollins Publishers 1992, 1993, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2005Collins English/French Electronic Resource. © HarperCollins Publishers 2005Collins German Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged 7th Edition 2005. © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1980 © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1997, 1999, 2004, 2005, 2007 [slerv]1. n → schiavo/ato be a slave to sth (fig) → essere schiavo/a di qcto be a slave of habit → essere schiavo/a delle abitudini2. vi to slave (away) at sth/at doing sth → sgobbare per qc/per fare qcCollins Italian Dictionary 1st Edition © HarperCollins Publishers 1995 (sleiv) noun1. a person who works for a master to whom he belongs. In the nineteenth century many Africans were sold as slaves in the United States. slaaf عَبْد роб escravo otrok, -yně der Sklave, die Sklavin slave σκλάβος, δούλοςesclavo ori برده orja esclave עבד ווו, ווווו rob, ropkinja rabszolga budak þræll schiavo 奴隷 vergas vergs hamba abdi slaafslave, trellnieiwolnik غلام escravo sclav раб, невольник otrok, -kyňa suženj rob slav, träl ווו köle 奴隷 раб, невільник غلام người nô lệ 奴隶2. a person who works very hard for someone else. He has a slave who types his letters and organizes his life for him. slaaf كادح, شَخْص يَعْمَل عن غَيْره عملا شاقاً слуга escravo otrok der Sklave, die Sklavin slave υποτακτικός esclavo ori کسي که کار سياه ميکند orja esclave עבד ווווווווווווו ווווווווווווו ווווווווווווו rob (raditi kao rob) „rabszolga" pekerja keras vinnuþræll schiavo 献身的に働く人 ( ) vergas vergs hamba slaafarbeidsslave najemnik, niewolnik قاقابر escravo sclav раб gibi çalışan 苦力 раб ملازم người làm việc đầu tắt, mặt tối 苦工 verb'slavery noun2. the system of ownership of slaves. slawerny نظام العُبوديّة робство escravatura otrokárství die Sklaverei slaveri δουλείαesclavitud orjapidamine برده داري orjuus esclavageעבדות ווווווווווווו ווווווווווווו ווווווווווווו ropstvo rabszolgaság perbudakan þrælahald schiavitù, schiavismo 奴隷制度 vergvaldystè verdzība; verdzības iekārta pengh slavernijslaveriniewolnictwo غلامي escravatura sclavagism рабовладение otrokárstvo sužnjelastništvo ropstvo slaveri ווווווווווווו kölelik sistemi 奴隷制度 робство ŝir غلامی ŝir روح آجْرَة مُتَحَبِّضَة شاق شاق كا غلامی ŝir chiếm hữu nô lệ 奴隶制度3. very hard and badly-paid work. Her job is sheer slavery. slawerny عَمَل شاق робия escravidão otročina die Sklavenarbeit slaveri σκληρή και άθλια αμειβόμενη εργασία, κάτερ raskas ja huonopalkkainen työ esclavage עבודה ווווווווווווו ווווווווווווו ropstvo rabszolgamunka perbudakan þrælavinna schiavitù, schiavismo 苦役 vergavimas vergošana pengabdian slavernijslavearbeid katorga مريتوب escravatura sclavie рабский труд otročina suženjsko delo ropstvo slavgõra וווווווווווו