

Mount Vernon's Greenhouse Slave Quarters | BRidge from the Past Special, Constitution Day 2021

Answer Key

Part I: Viewing Guide

- 1) Approximately how many enslaved men, women, and children lived in the Greenhouse Slave Quarters during Washington's time?
 - a. 45-50 enslaved people
- 2) How did the Greenhouse serve as a boundary on Mansion House Farm?
 - a. Washington designed the estate so there was a space for the Washington family and wealthy visitors to entertain themselves. The Greenhouse was a show piece for visitors to be impressed by Washington's wealth. On the other side of the Greenhouse are the slave quarters.
- 3) Who provided the majority of the written evidence about the lives of the enslaved at Mt. Vernon?
 - a. Visitors to Mount Vernon
- 4) How is the Greenhouse Slave Quarters atypical or unusual as a home for enslaved people?
 - a. It is made of brick, with glass windows, a door, and a hearth (fireplace).
- 5) What is "nightwalking"?
 - a. When the enslaved would walk during the night to visit with their families on other parts of the property. This was an example of the enslaved exercising agency over their own lives. Many families were separated because Washington wanted them to live where they worked.
- 6) Choose one artifact from either the men or women's side of the Slave Quarters and explain how it provides a glimpse into the lives of the enslaved people who lived here.
 - a. Box trap: enslaved workers supplemented their meager diet by hunting. Sometimes they confiscated guns from poachers and sold them to Washington
 - b. Food: Washington was required to provide food to his enslaved workers, but they supplemented their diet by having garden plots and hunting, fishing.
 - c. Laundry: enslaved people received 2 outfits—one for winter, one for summer.
 - d. Children's pallet or mattress: children were born into this system
- 7) In the video, Jeremy talks about a "culture of fear." What is the role of fear in maintaining the system of slavery? Why is this difficult to show to visitors who come to Mount Vernon?
 - a. One cannot see the fear that was used to coerce or force individuals to work. Jeremy mentions the lack of privacy and fear of being watching or punished as an example of things that are hard for visitors to grasp just by looking at the objects in the structure or the structure itself.

Part II: Questions for Discussion

Accept reasoned answers for this section.