



## COURSE CONNECTIONS – ASSIGNMENT IDEAS

### Film Screening **12 YEARS A SLAVE**

#### Discussion or Reflection/Response Paper Questions:

1. How does the film treat Solomon Northup's social status both as a free man and as a slave? How does his status compare to that of other slaves in the film? Consider how those differences (along the lines of region, class, education and length of experience as a slave) affect how the story is told.
2. How does the film depict moments of racial consciousness in Northup, if at all? Can you identify moments when Northup seems to identify as a black man (as opposed to as a free vs enslaved man, or as an educated vs uneducated man, etc)? What is the purpose of those depictions of racial consciousness?
3. Compare the treatment of Northern society to Southern society in the film regarding such things as relationships between men and women and attitudes about race? How would one verify the accuracy of those depictions?
4. How do slaves and other African Americans in this film experience and/or assert power despite being overwhelmed by the dominant social, economic, political and legal power of white Americans? How do African Americans in the film resist white power?
5. How does the film depict slave masters and mistresses? How does slave ownership and control affect whites?
6. How does the film depict other whites (from abolitionists to sympathetic whites to occasional slaveholders)? What is their relationship to and importance in Northup's story ?
7. What stories may have been left out of this film?
8. The slave narratives, including Northup's story, and even the film itself in recent years have been the subjects of debate about historical accuracy. What should the standards of "accuracy" be in such a film? How does one verify these standards? Is it possible for a historical film to "tell the truth" without every detail being accurate?