

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Uncle Tom's Cabin: George's Speech

*Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote her novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, in 1852. It was an immediate success and became the bestselling novel in the 1800s. Stowe's novel is a sharp criticism of slavery. It energized the abolitionist movement, which was trying to outlaw slavery. In this passage from Chapter XI, George, a slave, has escaped and meets with Mr. Wilson, a man he had once worked for.*

"Well, I grew up, long years and years, father, no mother, no sister, not a living soul that cared for me more than a dog; nothing but whipping, scolding, starving. Why, sir, I've been so hungry that I have been glad to take the bones they threw to their dogs; and yet, when I was a little fellow, and laid awake whole nights and cried, it wasn't the hunger, it wasn't the whipping, I cried for. No, sir, it was for *my mother* and *my sisters*, it was because I hadn't a friend to love me on earth. I never knew what peace or comfort was. I never had a kind word spoken to me till I came to work in your factory. Mr. Wilson, you treated me well; you encouraged me to do well, and to learn to read and write, and to try to make something of myself; and God knows how grateful I am for it. Then, sir, I found my wife; you've seen her, you know how beautiful she is. When I found she loved me, when I married her, I scarcely could believe I was alive, I was so happy; and, sir, she is as good as she is beautiful. But now what? Why, now comes my master, takes me right away from my work, and my friends, and all I

like, and grinds me down into the very dirt! And why? Because, he says, I forgot who I was; he says! After all, and last of all, he comes between me and my wife, and says I shall give her up, and live with another woman. And all this your laws give him power to do, in spite of God or man. Mr. Wilson, look at it! There isn't *one* of all these things, that have broken the hearts of my mother and my sister, and my wife and myself, but your laws allow, and give every man power to do, in Kentucky, and none can say to him nay! Do you call these the laws of *my* country? Sir, I haven't any country, anymore than I have any father. But I'm going to have one. I don't want anything of *your* country, except to be let alone, to go peaceably out of it; and when I get to Canada, where the laws will own me and protect me, *that* shall be my country, and its laws I will obey. But if any man tries to stop me, let him take care, for I am desperate. I'll fight for my liberty to the last breath I breathe. You say your fathers did it; if it was right for them, it is right for me!"

### What's the Meaning?

What does "none can say to him nay" mean?

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What does George mean when he says "I haven't any country"?

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To what is George referring to when he says "You say your father did it"?

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### What's the Meaning?

What does "none can say to him nay" mean?

**Actual answers will vary.**

**The laws permit a slave owner to mistreat the slaves.**

What does George mean when he says "I haven't any country"?

**George does not want to be part of a country that allows him to be a slave and allows slaves to be treated so badly.**

To what is George referring to when he says "You say your father did it"?

**The American Revolution**