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Identity and Racism in Alex Haley's novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*

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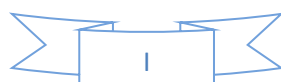
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Dedication 1

This work is dedicated to my parents, who have always been supporting me.

I dedicate my dissertation to my family and my best friends, especially Bedj Hocine. Who have always been supporting me.

I would also like to dedicate it to my wonderful mother, who offers me the inspiration of success and keenness throughout my life, and to my brothers Abdel Karim, Achraf Salim, Ahmed Riyadh who always encourage me with passion and endless support; they have helped me and believed that I could accomplish this research and my studies. Additionally, I would like to thank all of my colleagues with whom I have shared a place of study at Amar Thelidji University, Department of English.



Dedication 2

I dedicate my dissertation work to all the people who assisted me.

A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears... May God protect them.

To my brothers: Abdelkader, Badr Eddine, Ahmed, and my little sister

Abir.

To my best friend and brother Said, who helped me realize this work

To my grandparents and all my family members

To my teachers whom I met throughout my educational life

Thank you for being in my life. Thank you for believing in me.



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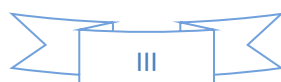
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Abstract

African Americans responded and resisted the institution of slavery in the United States in different ways, such as in literature and politics. The African slaves in the US provided their stories in the form of slave narratives. Among these writers is Alexander Haley, whose slave narrative *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* represents the story of a family that was gathered and separated during a period of unsafe conditions and oppression. This memoir is one of the many slave narratives that demonstrate the real image of slavery. In order to achieve the dissertation's aims, the descriptive approach was employed to explore the numerous methods by which the slaves' community resisted slavery and to investigate the novel's primary themes, literary techniques, and characters. The analytical approach was employed to explore identity and racism in Alex Haley's novel, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*. In conclusion, this research sheds light on the diverse strategies of resistance employed by African Americans in the context of slavery. It utilizes the powerful narrative of Alex Haley's *Roots* to emphasize the enduring importance of these historical records in comprehending the intricate interplay of racism, identity, and resilience within the African American community.

Key words: Slavery, Alexander Haley, African Americans, racism, identity

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General Introduction

Slavery is regarded as one of the crucial periods in the history of the United States, which impacted the country on economic and political levels as well as the formation of American society. Slavery's influence could still be evident in American society following the Civil War, particularly among African people. The latter is made up of Africans who were transported to America to work mercilessly on plantations under repressive and completely cruel conditions, only to be termed "African Americans" after slavery was abolished. They would also occasionally provide entertainment for their masters. That is, they have experienced physical and sexual abuse, which has resulted in psychological illnesses. On the other hand, the African American population was subjected to horrible existential situations, which instilled in them a great desire for liberty and freedom. As a result, the African American community eventually formed groups to fight for their right to live an equal life and to disprove the inferiority stereotypes that had come to be associated with them. Their conflict was not just political; it also gave birth to a new literary genre known as African American literature. Slave narratives played a prominent part in American literary history, particularly African American literature. These narratives provided insight, documented the system of slavery, and exposed individual experiences to the public.

Alexander Murray Palmer Haley is a slave narrative writer whose memoirs are currently popular. He introduced the novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, which became a worldwide hit, particularly when adapted into a television series. The adventures of Kunta Kinte and his family in the new world became stories of the battle against losing one's origins and one's own identity. It is based on Alex Haley's family background, as told to him by his grandmother. In addition, the author conducted some investigations and discovered that most of what his grandmother told him was genuine.

Alex Haley is considered one of the most renowned African American writers. His works, including 'Roots: The Saga of an American Family,' have received significant attention and literary acclaim for their exploration of various themes, including racism and the quest for identity. The portrayal of the impact of slavery on American history, the struggles of slaves for their freedom, and the development of their identities constitute crucial topics within the novel.

The following are the research questions that guided the work:

1. What are various forms of slavery in the United States?
2. How did slaves fight slavery?
3. What are the aspects of slavery in the novel?
4. How did Alex Haley employ identity and racism in his novel?

We hypothesize that Alex Haley incorporated themes of identity and racism within the framework of his novel.

To answer these questions, it is necessary to put forward the following statements, which are presented as the research objectives: These objectives are formulated with reference to the research questions raised:

- To explore the different factors that formed the slavery institution in the United States.
- Identify the numerous ways in which the slaves' community resisted slavery and discrimination.
- To give an outline of the novel's primary themes, literary techniques, and characters employed by Alex Haley's narrative.
- To explore the themes of identity and racism in Alex Haley's novel.

This study is significant as it will be related to African American Narrative: *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*. It involves issues such as racism and identity in order to improve and develop an understanding of writers' styles and use of language to express their thoughts and beliefs at a high level.

Among the previous studies that have dealt with the themes of slavery, racism, and the quest for identity within Alex Haley's magnum opus, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, a noteworthy examination is presented in the work titled "Every Tub Must Sit on Its Own Bottom," authored by Deborah Plant and published in 1995. Additionally, insights from Amel Dehmoune's publication "African Trade: Unionism and Apartheid in South Africa" are also drawn upon. Furthermore, the exploration of self-discovery and authority within Afro-American narratives is elaborated upon in Valerie Smith's 1987 publication. In the realm of critical analyses, the dissertation titled "A Story Not to Be Told: The Depiction of Slavery in American Novels, 1875–2000," which was submitted for the attainment of a Doctor of Philosophy degree in 2007, offers pertinent perspectives. Lastly, Alex Haley's journal article "My Furthest-Back Person—The African: The Inspiration for *Roots*," published on July 16, 1972, provides an additional layer of insight into the genesis and inspirations behind his seminal work.

Yet, these studies have not fully analyzed identity and racism in Alex Haley's novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* due to its significant impact on literature and its exploration of African American history, which is one of the main aims of this study.

In this research, the descriptive approach was employed to explore the numerous methods by which the slaves' community resisted slavery and to investigate the novel's primary themes, literary techniques, and characters. The analytical approach was employed to explore

the themes of identity and racism in Alex Haley's novel, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*.

This dissertation is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter consists of two background studies. The first is a historical background that looks at aspects of slavery in the United States, beginning with the slave trade until the forms of resistance that defined the African American community. The second background is an entrance into Alex Haley's life as a writer and an overview of African American literature.

The second chapter provides a general overview of the novel *Roots*, including major themes, characters, and literary devices, in order to facilitate comprehension of the subject. the literary devices used by the author in order to bring more illustration to his thoughts. This would help to better understand the novel's relationship to the concepts of slavery, including identity and racism. Finally, the third chapter provides a discussion of *Roots* and its relations with racism and black identity and shows how the author discussed and expressed his view toward racism and how blacks kept their identity present in the novel.

Chapter One:
Historical and biographical Backgrounds

Introduction:

Slavery in America began in the 17th century, when slaves were first transported to the settlement of Jamestown, Virginia. Since cotton had been heavily exported by 1815, the exchanged slaves mostly labored in the rice, tobacco, and cotton fields. Additionally, slaves weren't just used as cheap labor. They were also a container into which a white slave-owner dumped everything of his bigotry, hatred, and brutality. As a result, slaves experienced severe physical brutality and sexual assault. Despite all the difficulties, the society of slaves has certain outstanding traits that have cemented it in history. A resistance movement headed by free anti-slavery activists grew out of all the suffering that came with slavery and produced their African American narratives.

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the key elements of slavery in America. Beginning with a brief description of the slave trade in America. Then, we'll discuss the physical brutality that slave owners inflicted on their charges. This chapter also features a presentation on the slaves' society and the most well-known methods it employed to fight against slavery. Following that, we discussed Alex Haley's biography as the author of *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*. The latter has truly described his life, family and revealed his narrative, including specifics about all of the incidents he has experienced. Moreover, we shed light on African American literature and its writers. This chapter is crucial for analyzing the events and situations as well as identifying his place and role within the huge slave society.

1. Historical background of slavery in America:

Slavery is a concept that refers to the conditions in which people are owned by others who regulate where they live and work, even to the point of separating them from their relatives. It is based on property legal ideas that allow enslaved victims to be defined as property that may be owned, purchased, or sold. In most cases, a person becomes a slave as a consequence of capture, purchase, or birth. In addition, slavery, or the brutal system, is defined as a human being's permission to dominate and confiscate another human being's ideas and freedoms until he is released or dies. According to Richard Hellie, slavery is a condition in which one human being is owned by another. A slave was considered by law to be property, or chattel, and was deprived of most of the rights ordinarily held by free persons. The legal definition of slavery is dependent on the concept of ownership; yet, the right of ownership over another person is no longer legally permissible. There is a lack of clarity in this definition in relation to the concept of ownership and the travaux préparatoires to the 1926 Convention. (Allain)

Early in the 1500s, during the Age of Discovery, African slaves were brought to the New World and used as servants or troops in various parts of North, Central, and South America. Slavery in America began two and a half centuries ago, with the arrival of African slaves in the New World. Furthermore, slavery existed throughout the European colonization of the Americas, including the thirteen colonies that comprised the United States. African slaves were considered property throughout this time period, and the system of slavery in the United States lasted until the abolition of slavery. Enslaved people's status as a racial class tied to African heritage had been established by the time of the American Revolution, which lasted from 1775 to 1783. During and soon after the Revolution, most northern states approved abolitionist legislation, and a campaign to abolish slavery arose. Slavery was fundamental to

the establishment of the modern world. By the 17th century, the slave trade was frequently used to create the new globe. In the three centuries or so following Columbus' landing, maybe ten million Africans were transported in chains to the new world. Only roughly four million made it to North America. The vast majority arrived after the year 1700. (Bradford) Slavery expanded in colonial America in both the 17th and 18th centuries, virtually as soon as the English landed and established a permanent settlement at Jamestown in 1607. Southern economics, in particular, are centered on slave labor. Slave traffickers excuse their slavery of Africans by claiming that they are uncivilized. (Davis)

This section is crucial to this dissertation because it provides us with historical data regarding slavery that will help us grasp this long history and its connection to the studied tale.

2. Factors Relating to American Slavery:

Looking at the history of the United States, we can see that several factors contributed to the history of slavery in the United States.

2.1. Trade in slaves:

Slavery as an institution had started in North and West Africa before Europe got involved in that business (Horton; Horton). At first, only twenty Africans were brought from their original countries to the United States as slaves. "The first Africans had come to the colony in 1619, little more than a decade after its founding in 1607" (Horton; Horton). Afterward, the number of slaves brought from Africa started to increase. Olaudah Equiano was the first slave to share his biography, which contains his experience in the Middle Passage. Equiano explained the horrible conditions during these six- to eight-week journeys (Horton; Horton). After the long journey that slaves would have taken, they would enter a new stage of enslavement known as the seasoning process, in which slave masters chose the healthiest slaves and paraded them

around the town. This process was so traumatic for families because it separated them from each other since they were sold to different slave merchants. (Martin R. Pierre)

According to Marcus Rediker, the transatlantic slave trade began in the early 15th century in the Americas, when 240 Africans from West Africa were transported to Lagos, Portugal. They also sold slaves on estates to produce commodities like sugar, tobacco, and rice, he added. As said by Rediker Beginning in the late sixteenth century, slave ships played an important part in the early stages of capitalism. Africans were turned into profit-making human commodities. He argues, Central to a profound, interrelated set of economic changes essential to the rise of capitalism, the seizure of new lands, the expropriation of millions of people and their redeployment in growing market-oriented sectors of the economy; the mining of gold and silver; the cultivation of tobacco and sugar; the concomitant rise of long-distance commerce; and finally a planned accumulation of wealth and capital beyond anything the world had ever witnessed. (Rediker)

Furthermore, the British colonies defined different laws to be applied to slaves to legalize their ownership. By the 1660s, the Chesapeake colonies had started establishing a legal foundation for the racial distinction that helped create the formal structure of racial slavery in the eighteenth century. The regulations they set helped establish the slave system. In 1662, Virginia changed the law that suggests a child would take the father's status to a law that a child's status would go through the maternal line to prevent the children who are the product of slaveholders' and slave females to be free and to remain slaves forever. Another law issued in 1696 treated slaves as land. Consequently, the proportion of slaves in South Carolina accounted for 70 percent of the property of a specific population in 1720. (Horton)

3. Sexual exploitation and Physical abuse:

African American slaves in the United States endured hard conditions both during their trade phase and enslavement years. Mostly, those conditions were caused by the bad physical treatment they received from their masters and traders. There was a surgeon who had the experience of traveling on a slave ship from West Africa to the West Indies; he confirmed that around fifty or sixty slaves at once were chained one to another and fixed to the lower deck of a ship. When a doctor was about to consult one of them, he had to step on their chained bodies because they covered the whole floor (Horton; Horton). This is only one example of the terrible and horrific agony endured by slaves when they were transported from their native countries, primarily Africa, to the United States.

If slaves survived the hardships of the journey to get to their new destinations, they would impossibly survive the brutal treatment of their masters, be they a woman, a man, or a child. What slaves suffered from was not related to their tasks incompleteness or imperfection only; some others were harshly lashed to give access to their wives and daughters to the un-human slaves (Harriet).

Sexual abuse was centered in southern culture, which considered all women as objects and properties. This culture prohibited the mixed sexual relations of white women and black men to keep a pure race. On the other hand, they protected the sexual relations between white men and black female slaves, which resulted in mixed-race children (Smith). Therefore, sexual abuse is also another form of oppression that slave masters used against their female slaves. The situation of attractive women was especially dangerous, for they had no choice but to submit to the masters' orders. Harriet Jacobs, a fugitive slave, narrates in her 1861 autobiography the harassment she received from her master. Female slaves were also targets

of the masters' wife's jealousy and frustration. Yet they could not confront their husbands' sexual relations (Horton; Horton).

4. The community of slaves:

The slave community in the United States encountered several challenges that aided in its formation and emphasized its presence. Families established a strong sense of solidarity and unity via distinct values, courage, and resistance, such as music, which assisted them in feeling liberated while enslaved.

Slave's community is mainly composed of two groups that had to do different tasks to be privileged over another. Slaves serving at their masters' houses are called "house slaves". They had more advantages and better treatment than those in the field; thus, they were superior. Yet, being a house slave also has its disadvantages, such as being exposed to the family's negative emotions, anger, and abuse, as Lewis Clarke describes his experience (Horton; Horton). Moreover, the slave driver position played an important role within the slave community, for he had to be trustworthy for his master and at the same time cooperate with his fellow slaves. For example, Solomon Northup worked as a driver on a plantation for eight years, and he used his job to help his friends. Additionally, slaves committed themselves to the trust of each other and shared support so they would not accept to steal from each other (Horton; Horton).

Even though it was difficult to create families, slaves were able to discover a way to secure the continuity of their generations and to develop a distinguished society that supported its members. The continuity of the African American generation was affected by some laws put in place by the institutions, which wanted with all their might to keep racial discrimination and at the same time to have the slaveholders' right to sexually exploit the female slaves. Some

rules restricted slaves from forming families. However, perhaps due to those restrictions, they were able to form a community too. Slave narratives and autobiographies illustrate that families took a position of importance in slaves' lives, which is why some slaves exposed their lives to danger to stay with their families and spouses to prevent separation (Brown). As well, the slave narratives also show that many families split up either because they were sold or because one of their masters moved away. That's why slave narratives and autobiographies are so important for understanding the community of slaves (Brown).

5. Slaves and different kinds of resistance:

Slaves devised methods of resistance and insurrection against slavery. One of these forms is music, to which they were attached as members of the African American community. Through the transmission of their music and songs to future generations, Slave musicians helped to maintain the continuity of African American life by passing on their songs and music to the next generations. On the one hand, those musicians were entertainers and taught the black community a sense of community through preserving African culture (Cimbala). The songs that slaves sang in the fields were group creations and had subtle messages to tell of their sufferings; they added lines and harmonies one after another and had a leader who would be randomly selected because of the strength of his voice (Horton, Horton). The slaves who performed music were talented individuals who wanted to preserve African American identity. They played a strong role in easing the slaves' souls regularly on different occasions (Cimbala).

Adding to that, escape was a common type of resistance amongst slaves, and it was either the result of a long planned process or traumatic events that the slave had witnessed. Running away was at some point a hard action due to family composition, especially for young children. In such cases, parents are sometimes compelled to abandon their children or take half of them. In 1856, Margret Garner ran away with her husband and her children, but she ended

up killing one of them when she realized there were slave catchers. She said she would have killed all of them rather than imagine them growing up in slavery. There was a Vigilance committee that dedicated itself to helping the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad is an important chapter in American History because it contained organized groups that helped those who took the risk of escaping. One of the most famous conductors in history is Harriet Tubman, who worked along with William Still. Those conductors also engaged in interracial activities with white abolitionists who offered great aid to the movement of the Underground Railroad, such as John Rankin. Another form of resistance that slaves did was suicide. The new slaves sometimes threw themselves into the ocean during the shipping process. Therefore, the masters of newly arrived slaves always checked on them to make sure they were not willing to commit suicide. Instead of suicide, some other slaves ran away temporarily to heal themselves psychologically from the torturing conditions they lived in (Horton; Horton).

On the other hand, many slaves utilized religion as a tool of resistance, either by holding to vestiges of their own religious traditions or by accepting and practicing Christianity as they saw fit. Slaves found refuge in religion to escape their everyday misery. African slaves attempted to incorporate African beliefs and customs into American Protestantism. As Catholics, many black Africans were baptized and converted to Christianity. They linked Christianity to emancipation. Furthermore, most slaves attended church with their owners, but in the slave quarter, they convened and organized a secret assembly. They adopted the Biblical tale of Exodus to believe that, as Israel's children, they would be free of slavery. Slaves differed from their masters as they utilized religion as a means of resistance. (Herriet). They eagerly participated in any religious service, shouting their prayers and singing their spirituals, channeling their profound emotions and desires for liberation and a better future.

6. The Author's Personal Biography:

This section provides insight into the life of the author of "Roots: The Saga of an American Family," since learning about his life is crucial in understanding how the larger events of his life connect to the events of the novel.

6.1 Alexander Murray Palmer Haley:

Alex Haley was most known for his historical work, which included the critically praised *Roots*. On August 11, 1921, Alexander Palmer Haley was born in Ithaca, New York. He immediately relocated to Henning, Tennessee, with his mother, while his father got his degree at Cornell University. Haley's future work will be heavily influenced by his grandmother, who retold the family history during family reunions. After graduating from high school and attending Alcorn State College for two years, Haley joined the United States Coast Guard in 1939. Haley served as a chef in the Pacific during World War II. To break up the monotony of life on the ship, he began to write to alleviate the monotony of life on the ship (Haley).

After advancing to the post of chief journalist for the Coast Guard, Haley left the service in 1959 to pursue a full-time journalistic career. In 1962, his first published article, an interview with Miles Davis, appeared in *Playboy*. Several of Haley's interviews, including several with Black Nationalist leader Malcolm X, were later published by *Playboy*. The *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965), Haley's first major book, was based on these interviews. The book was an instant success, thanks in part to the subject's assassination earlier that year, and it is today regarded as a literary masterpiece (Haley).

After reading Malcolm X's *Autobiography*, Haley's focus shifted to exploring the family legends his grandmother had told him. Haley released *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976) after more than a decade of meticulous genealogy study. Haley narrates the tale

of his mother's relatives from Juffure, a tiny hamlet in modern-day Gambia, who were seized and transported to Virginia aboard a slave ship. The story finishes with a quick look at Haley's immediate relatives in Henning, Tennessee. The article also chronicled his personal hunt for his ancestors. While it was quickly revealed that the book was mostly fake, it was nonetheless a literary hit. *Roots* sold six million copies in more than 30 languages and earned Haley the Pulitzer Prize in literature. When *Roots* was converted into a television miniseries, it garnered more than 130 million people, a record at the time (Haley).

Furthermore, his fascination with what his grandmother used to tell him about his African ancestry, or "my furthest-back person (Haley, *My Furthest-Back Person: The African: The Inspiration for Roots* 12), inspired him to begin working on his next project, *Roots*. The tale follows the life of Kunta Kinte, a proud African who was kidnapped from his village in West Africa. After surviving the middle passage from Africa to America in the worst conditions that a person could go through, he was made a slave on a plantation in the United States. Haley visited archives, libraries, and research repositories on three continents to make the book as authentic as possible. He even reenacted Kunta's experience during the middle passage by spending a night in the hold of a ship stripped to its underwear.

Both the novel and the miniseries have left an indelible mark on American society. Though *Roots* was about an African American family, it was read or viewed by individuals of all races who identified with the main characters. As a result, *Roots* has been credited with significantly increasing interest in family genealogy. Haley continued to write after *Roots*. His following works include *A Different Kind of Christmas* (1990) and *Queen: The Story of an American Family* (1993), which documented the history of his paternal family in the same way that *Roots* did for his maternal family. Haley was also in high demand as a lecturer at the time of his death in 1992, while on his way to a speech in Seattle, Washington (Haley).

Haley's attitude toward following the African ancestor did much to enhance his popularity because it was after the *Malcolm X Biography*, which is based on a person who rejected the American name given to his family and replaced it with an X to symbolize his ignorance of his ancestry.

7. An overview of African -American Literature:

Multiple social, cultural, and historical events influenced the formation of African American literature, prompting a considerable number of African Americans to pursue careers as authors and poets. They were committed to their works and were able to acquire a position within the American community by focusing their tales on issues such as boosting black consciousness about their nationhood and condemning racism. They prioritize both freedom and social justice. As a result, their abundance of works emphasized the notion of being aware of and appreciating one's own identity. Moreover, it's crucial to understand the major difficulties of that time period before comprehending the beginnings of African American literature. African Americans were compelled to utilize writing to carve out a position for themselves within that community as a result of racial and ethnic conflicts. The problem of segregation was exacerbated by the English. They had formed notions of inferiority and differentiation based on stereotypes of blackness and the physical distinctions between the two populations. (Bruce 02). Those negative views were formed by English explorers and traders who traveled to the continent of Africa. Africans and their manner of life were presented negatively in the literature that was being read at the time in England. It was said that Africans were an inhumane and nasty race. (01).

Writing for African Americans provided a means for them to become more logical for whites, to demonstrate their humanity, and to enjoy full independence beyond slavery. Claude Mackay was among the first black writers to utilize his literary ability to legitimize the

existence of black people in American Culture Blacks were more secure in their distinctive culture and sought their own identity so as to "stand on an equal footing with the other peoples of the world" (Wen Chi 103). Racial awareness was the wellspring that allowed African American authors to capture their race's collective energy and instinct and establish a real literature that depicted their race's encounters in the Western world. Furthermore, blacks attempt to market themselves through their literary works. "the images of the black and educate the white about the real characters of the black" (110).

African-American autobiography began with slave stories in order to make whites aware of the blacks yearning for personal and individual independence. The earlier attempts were less handy and less literary in nature. This was due to the statute that banned slaves from being educated, and those who were fortunate enough to obtain a modest amount of knowledge lacked the capacity to compete with white writers or even persuade white readers of their skills. African-American autobiographical texts became more stylistic and convenient later on. Such as Frederic Douglass' and William Wells Brown's. They were attempting to demonstrate their ability to be complete American citizens. Also, for African-American writers, autobiographies served as a type of defense against white racism and prejudice. As a result, they tackled direct social and political problems concerning the black population.

The second generation of African-American authors attempted to go beyond simply relaying slave stories. They attempted to concentrate on the complexity of their identities and how whites attempted to impose the "white identity"(210); As a result, they utilized their writing to depict their own or others' lives, as well as to explain their family's former lives. In addition, Alexander Haley is the best-known example of a writer who employed this style. Alex Haley employed autobiography as a genre of writing in both Malcolm X's Autobiography and Roots: The Saga of an American Family to investigate and convey the other view, the black

one. As a consequence, African-American writers used writing to reflect their experiences. Blacks utilized literature for political goals, combining history and literature for more legitimacy and motivation. They also attempted to explain their culture to whites. Even whites were assisting them and partnering with the black issue, and they published on how whites and blacks should interact with one another. This situation occurred across the American community. However, Numerous social, cultural, and historical events that inspired a large number of African Americans to seek careers as authors and poets helped to shape the development of African American literature. They were devoted to their works and succeeded in finding a place within the American community by focusing their tales on issues like fostering black nationalism and rejecting racism. They place a high priority on social justice and freedom. As a result, they placed a lot of emphasis in their works on the need of self-awareness and valuing individual identities.

8. African American slave narrative writers:

Throughout history, African American literature has evolved significantly. It originated with slave tales that depicted systematic slavery. Those narratives were written by a group of African Americans who wrote their personal stories after escaping slavery and recounted their experience to reveal the reality behind slavery. We are mentioning here many writers who greatly marked their names in African American Literature.

8.1 Harriet Ann Jacobs:

Harriet Ann Jacobs is her full name, and she is also known as Harriet A. Jacobs. She was born in North Carolina in 1813. Jacobs is an American abolitionist and autobiographer who wrote a slave narrative about her experience with slavery. Despite being born a slave, she was able to learn to read and write at a young age. She had a connection with a young white lawyer in the neighborhood when she was a teen, and they had two children. When she declined to be her owner's mistress, she was moved to work on another plantation. She eventually fled and spent seven years in hiding. After fleeing to the north in 1842, Jacobs relocated to New York and worked for Fredrick Douglass' newspaper. She was eventually encouraged to write about her narrative and experience with slavery after accompanying her brother on an abolitionist lecture tour. She published *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* in 1861. Her narrative discusses different aspects of women suffering in slavery, such as sexual abuse and the loss of children. It was finally recognized by scholars in 1981. Moreover, in 1861, she released *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Her story explores several facets of women's suffering under slavery, such as sexual assault and the loss of children. Scholars eventually acknowledged it in 1981. (Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia)

8.2 Charles Ball:

Charles Ball is a former slave who was born into slavery in 1781 on a tobacco farm in Maryland with his mother and sister. Ball was sold to Jack Cox, who treated him properly when his owner died. When the latter died, he was sold again to a harsh and rigorous owner who kept him cold and hungry. His owner hired him into the Navy at the age of 20. Ball was able to escape after two years of duty in the Navy with the assistance of an ex-slave; nevertheless, his previous master returned him and sold him. He had spent seven years as a slave in South Carolina before fleeing to Maryland. He eventually gained his freedom and resided in

Baltimore, but in 1830, he was caught and sold to a plantation in Georgia. Even if he could escape again, he would never be reunited with his family. (Charles Ball) (U.S. National Park Service) In 1836, his story was published. With the aid of Isaac Fischer, *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball* was written. The narrative became popular because Ball describes his captivity experience as being mistreated, causing him and his friends to suffer. (Henderson).

8.3 James Baldwin :

James Baldwin was born in Harlem, New York City, in August 1924, to an unmarried old lady named Emma Berdis Jones. His mother married David Baldwin, a laboring Baptist pastor, three years after his birth. She has eight children with him. Her spouse became enraged, abusive, and aggressive. As a result, he tortured his wife and children. Baldwin's difficult connection with his stepfather compelled him to share his pain. He died in 1987 in southern France. (Nelson 12). *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), Baldwin's first novel, is a short narrative about religion in Harlem. Religion evoked tremendous emotions throughout this time period. It had an impact on people's lives. On the other hand, it ruined their ability to see the truth (High 217). *Giovanni's Room* (1956) was Baldwin's second novel. As a result, these two works deal with psychological issues. Baldwin conveys his rage in *Another Country* (1962). This is his most accomplished piece of fiction. This rage may be seen in other works, such as *The Fire Next Time*, a collection of essays released in 1963 (218).

Conclusion:

Slavery in the United States began with the trade of African Americans to the colonies and ended with a resistance that had a significant influence on history and the United States. Slavery in the United States will be remembered as a symbol of the fortitude of slaves who refused to accept the fate imposed on them by other beings. Moreover, African American literature produced slave narratives, which created a bridge between the past and present to document what some human beings had to endure at a specific phase of their lives. So, African American literature is a pillar built by many ex-slaves and abolitionists who aimed at freeing themselves and their fellows through writing. In addition, Alex Haley is a fantastic example of one of the hundreds of remarkable African American writers, since he sends a powerful message of courage and fighting for life. *Roots* is a novel about an African named Kunta Kinte, his journey to America, and his familial adventures in the New World under white domination. The work also expresses the essence of black identity, which was passed down and retained in the family. One of the most obvious alternatives expressed by Alex Haley in his story is their memories of their grandfather. Furthermore, the story glorifies African and American unity, which has been completely realized and is unblemished by two decades of conflict and its consequences at home or abroad.

Chapter Two:
**Synopsis of the novel Roots: The
Saga of an American Family**

Introduction:

African-American literature is a literary genre produced in the United States by writers who originally descent from Africa. The African American Literature explores different themes such as the role of African Americans within the American society, African-American culture, racism, and mostly slavery. Also, African-American literature was at first a body full of autobiographical narratives as known as Slave narratives. Among Slave narratives, *Roots: the saga of an American family*. It was written by African American writer Alexander Murray palmer Haley. He wrote his story to describe the hardships of his ancestor's journeys in slavery and the suffering a person under bondage might have received. Along with the development of this genre, different questions started to be raised concerning its characteristics, and how the writer have used them commonly to create different themes in that context to convey his message and view of slavery. This chapter is to give first a brief presentation about the novel major themes sand characters. Then, it gives hints about the literary devices used in the novel. Finally, this chapter discusses the outline of the most recurrent themes shared by the writer. This chapter is important for this dissertation as it gives a detailed explanation of this autobiography that we are analyzing. It is important for our analysis as it maintains the truth transmitted in this narrative through the form and content.

1. Synopsis of *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*:

Alex Haley's work, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, was published in 1976. It recounts the life of the protagonist, Kunta Kinte, an 18th-century African abducted as a black youth, sold into slavery in Africa, and brought to North America, as well as the lives of his descendants in the United States, down to Haley. Alex Haley recreates his family's tale in *Roots*, presenting a unique chronicle of African-American history based on 12 years of genealogy study in Africa, Europe, and the United States.

The capture and sale of Kunta Kinte, Haley's great-grandfather, highlights the violent introduction of Africans to the West, while the suffering and survival of four generations of Kintes emphasize the slave experience. In fact, *Roots* may be considered "the first serious challenge to existing popular mythology on the black man's past, that blacks are without a past, without a culture of their own, and therefore inferior and unworthy people" (Berry).

Haley relied on drawing real people, everyday activities, discussions, and interactions. He began to reshape common perceptions of the black experience. Haley learned his ancestors' African names from Kizzy, who passed them on to her son George, who passed them on to his son Tom, who passed them on to his daughter Cynthia, who passed them on to her grandson Alex. Kunta, his wife Bell, his daughter Kizzy, and her son George are archetypes that symbolize the struggles of most African-Americans. As Alex's nephew, Chris Haley, declares, *Roots* represents «all African – Americans with enslaved background and whose stories, equally heroic and tragic never will be known" (Meritt).

The *Roots* tale begins with the birth of Kunta Kunte, who is kidnapped and sent to America when he is seventeen years old. After a terrifying sea trip, he is sold at a slave auction and becomes a field worker on his owner's farm. He is unable to accept his situation and attempts to flee whenever the opportunity presents itself. His fourth try, however, proves disastrous. He is pursued by slave catchers and gets part of his right foot severed. Despite being treated by Kunta's new master, a white doctor, he remains disabled for the rest of his life and must give up any chance of independence. A few years later, he marries and has a daughter named Kizzy, to whom he tells his captivity tale and teaches her some African language so she will know who she is and where she hails from. When Kizzy is sold for disobeying Kunta's owner's regulations, she ends up with a shady slave owner who instantly rapes her. After giving birth to a son, she tells him, and then his children, a story about their great-grandpa. The story continues through the American Civil War and the events leading up to the abolition of slavery

until it reaches Haley's grandmother, who was two years old at the time. “when her father, Tom, and grandfather, Chicken George, led a wagon train of recently freed slaves westward to Henning, Tennessee” (Haley) to settle down and begin a new independent life.

Haley establishes African culture and religion in the first scenes of *Roots*. Kunta was raised in the hamlet of Juffure. He is taught to read and write, to cite the Koran, and to respect his community's ideals. He also learns how to live in an unfamiliar place and listens to the advice of elderly people. Kunta is from this hamlet, which has an impact on his future.

2. Roots major themes :

2.1 Identity:

Identity is omnipresent in *Roots*, and it is present throughout the narrative through the recall and continuity of their grandfather's hostage story and his arrival in America. The creation of a new ritual in America, which started in African tradition, in which the family gathers to hear the ancestors' stories, displays their hold on their heritage.

Since their arrival, Black Africans have identified themselves for their tribes by physical characteristics such as tattoos and facial traits. Despite this, they considered themselves brothers, bonded by the color of their skin rather than the origins of their dads. Kinte's manner of perceiving things and delight in their beauty is reflected by his disdain of white women, which no other species has: “ After seeing the hungry way, the toubob on the great canoe had lusted after black women, he was amazed to see that the toubob had women of their own; but looking at this specimen, he could understand why they preferred Africans ” (Haley 243).

2.2. Assimilation and Separatism:

The narrative of Kunta Kinte demonstrates an enduring topic in African American life: the struggle between integration and independence. Kunta would never have faced this difficulty in Africa, but in the American colonies, he is vulnerable to the enormous demands of assimilation. Kunta struggles to maintain his African identity, which has always defined him. Nonetheless, he is obliged to take a new name. His whole social milieu has been recast as a slave. Kunta is unable to completely express himself because he is not free; he has lost the autonomy that marked him as a young African man. Kunta is also incredibly lonely away from his home, family, and culture. He seeks out to other blacks to alleviate his loneliness. Kunta eventually understands that life on the plantation is preferable to certain death, which he faces if he tries to flee again. However, the realization that he must give up a part of himself in order to survive is soul-crushing, and he understands that he has lost a vital part of himself. Kunta, on the other hand, passes on as much of his African knowledge as he can to his daughter, Kizzy, who in turn passes on stories about her father to successive generations who appreciate their African ancestry while pursuing the American goal of freedom and achievement.

2.3.Racism:

Roots, like any other African American novel, is based on the interaction between races, as exemplified through the seven-generation saga of an African family in America. It all began with the first great-grandfather in his own nation, Africa, and how white and black slave merchants abducted him. This reminds him of the slave kidnapped he heard about in his village. "One of the elders said when they were discussing the slaves' kidnappings "As a child I saw these slatees beating those like themselves to walk faster for the toubob!'" (Haley160). Blacks

knew who was taking blacks from Africa and selling them to whites. They never reproached the blacks, instead blaming the whites for inducing blacks to forsake their race and assisting the "touboub" (whites) in kidnapping their brothers. Furthermore, they think that there is no possibility for whites to change; they believe that whites are totally wicked and cannot change until " the river flows backward!" (160). The blacks, who perceived whites as animals, may have committed a discriminatory act toward whites. Another example of racism towards whites was the way blacks treated Jankeh Jallon's kid, who was:

a strange pale tan color like a cured hide, and had very odd hair [as he was a result of white's rape to Jankeh Jallon after kidnapping her, but she escaped from them] ...and wherever Jankeh Jallon would appear thereafter, people would look at the ground and hurry elsewhere. (Haley 182)

When she sought the council for a solution, they just stated that they would have to weigh the situation until the next Council meeting and felt sorry for the child because of his father's ethnicity, as it was a shame for them to have a white father. Mixed-blood children are considered impoverished and have little possibility of becoming members of the black community. Even in the United States, mixed-blood infants are considered half African and do not belong to either the black or white communities. "At least I'm black, not brown like you!" (Haley 316) That was Kunta Kinte's response to a mixed-blood slave on the estate, demonstrating great pride in being black and utter hatred for everything not black.

2.4.Dehumanization:

The story of *Roots* depicts the incompatibility of slavery with basic human decency. The method in which individual family members are sold without consideration for familial relationships is the essence of incompatibility. For example, Kunta and Bell are taken away from their daughter, and Kizzy endures the same fate when Tom Lea sells her daughter-in-law and grandchildren to her. The brutality of treating persons as property is most visible in these terrible moments. Slaves who are sold away from their family never see them again, and they are unable to attend a loved one's burial, hug a grandchild, or celebrate the marriage of a son. When Master Waller buys Kizzy, Kunta thinks he will never see her again. Although Master Waller and Master Murray are both depicted as rather decent owners, the continual danger of separation demonstrates how harsh slavery is and how their participation in slavery makes them terrible

3. Major characters of roots:

Characters have psychological motivation for readers; they perceive them as live persons rather than literary creations. "Such a drift is related to the dominance of the realistic mode in Western culture and to the fact that through a character is a textual creation, s/he is always perceived in terms which are beyond the text"(Hughes and Patin 7). However, Characters can be employed for a variety of tasks and purposes: They can be shown as individuals and "refer primarily to themselves" (Friedman 22), or as types and refer to "larger classes" (22). In *Roots*, Characters serve as a reference to their race.

3.1.Kunta Kinte:

He is the primary character in the narrative. From the first chapter to the eighty-third, where his daughter Kizzy was sold, the narrative of Kunta Kinte was narrated firsthand. After, it began to talk about his children and grandkids, whom he never forgot and constantly mentioned.

Kunta Kinte is an African from the hamlet of Juffure. Was kidnapped, taken to America, and sold as a slave. He could not endure his inferiority as a free-born person and attempted to flee four times. They sliced his right leg on the last try. He was sold to another master, yet he never forgot his previous master's name or customs.

3.2.Bell :

She is Kunta Kinte's wife and Kizzy's mother. She is a slave-born woman who has never seen or heard anything about Africa. She, like all other slaves, believed that Africans were uneducated and ignorant, unlike her, who is literate and can read. However, after learning about Kunta's literary history, she grew more respectful of Africa. Nonetheless, she tells her daughter that her attraction to Kunta was his pride in his heritage, despite the fact that it did not please or put her at rest because of her previous experiences with white males. She experiences that the white man is not as nice as she portrays him to be, and that he, the white man, does not allow blacks to be and do anything they want, especially if it has anything to do with Africa, as he wishes to cut all ties with Africa.

3.3.Kizzy:

Kunta's daughter is Kizzy. She was born a slave, but she never felt it was bad since she was a little child. She didn't get it when her mother advised her to be proud to be black and not

to trust white people. But when she was sixteen and sold and separated from her parents, she changed her mind about all she thought about white and black relationships because she believed in the existence of a friendship between whites and blacks. She grew increasingly loyal to her African ancestors and insisted on her children and grandkids discussing their grandpa.

3.4.Chicken George:

He is the most well-known of Kinte's grandsons. Kizzy is his father. He is partly white since he is the result of Kizzy's master's rape. George was brave at times and resembled his grandfather in certain ways. He was the father of eight children, two daughters and six sons. The narrative passes through him and his children before reaching the author: "The baby boy, six weeks old, was *me*" (Haley 799).

3.5.The Fiddler :

Fiddler, one of Roots' most colorful characters, is "half-free," as he describes to Kunta, because his old owner perished and he needs to be near another master for safety. He attends parties with his violin and learns a lot about current topics. He is, for example, the one who informs the other slaves about the Boston Massacre.

Furthermore, the Fiddler is a boisterous figure who enjoys drinking and is a close buddy of Kunta. He accumulates money in the hopes of buying his freedom, but he is horrified to find that Master Waller wants twice as much to release him. He breaks his violin in his rage and anguish, and his performance is never the same after that.

3.6.Nyo Boto:

Nyo is Kunta's grandmother, a woman that looks for the village's children and has no fear of anything. She offers Kunta a saphie charm to fight off bad spirits on his first excursion away from the hamlet.

3.7.Tom Lea:

Tom was an impoverished Irish farmer from the Carolina hill area. Craven, though striving and entertaining at times, is constantly distrustful and can't get over his deep-seated envy of his superiors. He buys Kizzy as a 15-year-old and rapes her, leading in the birth of their child George, whom he raises and teaches Cock fighting to. He is tormented by the fact that he owns a slave who is actually his son.

3.8.John Waller:

John Waller was an English colonist who owned a tobacco plantation in Virginia. He adopted Kunta Kinte as a slave upon arriving in America. He was knowing as an alcoholic, in debt, a braggart, and more neglectful than mean, and he was unable to keep his farm going without covert payments from his brother.

3.9.Alex Haley:

He was the book's author and the main character during the last thirty pages. He pretended to be Kunta Kinte's great-great-great-great-grandson.

4. Setting:

The setting is a crucial part of the novel. It provides an analogical role and can supplement indirect character depiction or be in sync with a character's mood. Haley's *Roots* begins with Kunta Kinte's birth in his hamlet of Juffure and continues to chronicle his journey in Africa via thirty-three chapters in which the author tells how the main character was nurtured and schooled. The author then spent the following forty-four chapters discussing how Kunta Kinte became part of the New World and his quest for independence, which he could not achieve. The final chapters focused on the grandchildren's experiences and quest to be free.

The novel is separated into two big sections, as we can see: Africa and Juffure. It is also separated into three broad periods: pre-Civil War, post-Civil War, and modern. It depicts all of the personalities and challenges that blacks suffered in America, including disgrace, oppression, rape, and the splitting up of families by selling members to other farms.

5. Literary devices in the novel:

Haley was clearly touched by the narrative he used to hear from his grandmother about his African grandfather when he was a boy, either it was his mother Lydia Beardsall or his pals Jessie and John. The complaints regarding *Roots*' honesty aren't so relevant here because he admits to using his imagination, even if it was founded on facts. However, this does not imply that he included intriguing hints in his novels in to romanticize them further. There are many components that are a synthesis of his own thoughts, concepts of the period, and the manifestation of those ideals as experienced through the real characters he utilized to hear about.

5.1.Symbols and Metaphors:

Although it is founded on facts, *Roots* is filled with metaphors and symbolism. Symbols and metaphors play a significant role in making the story more fascinating and romantic. The African settlement, complete with houses and trees, is the first of two primary settings. African law is founded on the beliefs they hold and the rules of their forefathers. The town upholds stringent moral norms and disciplinary procedures in conformity with Islamic law. As a result, the town represents lawfulness and cleanliness. It contrasts with American life, which happens later.

Whites' treatment towards blacks is regarded as demeaning. They treated them as if they were animals rather than humans. They brutally captured blacks like animals and shackled them like convicts awaiting execution. "He was gagged, blinded, and chained, his wrists behind him and his ankles crippled by knotted rope" (197).

He had no choice but to yell in response: He'd yelled so loudly that he'd lost his voice, so his thoughts screamed it instead: "Kill toubob—and their traitor black helpers!" (202). This yell represents all Kinte must do to reclaim his respect and pride, which the toubob took away by capturing him and then treating him as an animal, if not worse. The scream and yell became a type of release of the deep grief that no language could express: He sought to force himself away from that empty space, but the scraping of his exposed muscles against the boards caused him to scream in agony. (234). "Toubob fa!" he yelled into the stench, his bound hand jangling the chain attached to Wolof's empty cuff. (234). It was a cry of longing for freedom and the loss of a friend. He screamed things he couldn't believe he was saying in between screams: "Omoró—Omar the Second Caliph, third after Muhammad the Prophet! Kairaba—Kairaba means peace!" (236). The scream reveals how devastated Kunta was when he realized he would perish in an unfamiliar area while shackled. Another scream followed when one of the blacks tried to explain to him why his name

had changed to Toby'; so, "He wanted to shout "I am Kunta Kinte, first son of Omoro, who is the son of the holy man Kairaba Kunta Kinte!" (269) as a method to show his own identity embodied in his name and race.

All of his struggles remind him of his family and ancestors: Moro, Binta, Lamin, Suwadu, and Madi were all stones in his heart. (239) It symbolizes remembering rather than forgetting them. They were stone, unable to move from his pain and thinking.

Furthermore, the drum represents the sole item that can assist to restore history. It represents the family's connection to their African history. The amputation of his right foot represents the loss of hope for a normal life. It represents the dividing line between the former life, which was full of life, happiness, and strength, and the new life, which was full of despair, weakness, and hopelessness.

The humiliation extended not only to him, but also to his children. The master requested Bell to put a cot at the foot of Ann's bed for her daughter. This represents blacks' inferiority. Aside from that, Ann acted as if Kizzy was her doll, taking her from her parents and playing with her whenever she wanted, even though it was Kizzy's birthday, which her parents wanted to spend with their daughter in their own manner.

Conclusion:

In general, themes, characters, setting, and literary devices are essential components to further explain the notion. Haley used them as an author to express his thoughts on race and identity in the novel. He generated *Roots* as a form of autobiography in order to convey the family's tale to all African Americans who are regarded as brothers and sisters and ought to understand the reasons why their ancestors arrived in America and what they experienced.

Chapter Three:

Identity and Racism in Roots

Introduction:

Racism and identity are complex topics that have been studied extensively in the social sciences. Racism is a form of prejudice and discrimination based on a person's race or ethnicity, while identity is an individual's sense of self and how they view themselves in relation to the world around them. Racism can have a profound impact on an individual's identity, as it can lead to feelings of alienation, marginalization, and even oppression. It is important to recognize the ways in which racism can shape an individual's identity and to work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society. However, racism has its impacts when it comes to identity, and African American writers have always included in their writings the theme of identity that came to the surface due to racial discrimination and racism. Alexander Haley is one of them. He is an African American writer who utilized his autobiography, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, to portray his family's experiences in a long and difficult story. He began with the origin (Africa) and how Africans were abducted and brought to America. Through his story, the author attempted to inform whites that, yes, I come from Africa, and we (African Americans) originated in Africa. Although we are distinct, we are both Americans and Africans.

In this chapter, we will attempt to demonstrate how Haley expressed his views on racism in America as an author and how blacks maintained their identity in the New World setting. This is expressed in his work *Roots*, which explores the relationship between African Americans and their past in Africa, as well as what they endured in America for generations.

1. Racism:

1.1.Definition:

Racism is the act of showing distinctions between individuals based on their race. According to Oxford, "racism is the unfair treatment of people of other races or the belief that some races of people are better than others." ¹ In other terms, it is the notion that race explains variations in human characteristics or abilities, and that one race is superior to another, and it is a phrase used to indicate hostile attitudes of one ethnic group or people toward another. It indicates that a specific race of a specific country is regarded as superior to all other races in the globe. Moreover, Racism refers to race based on prejudice, aggression, hatred, and discrimination or oppression. This superiority is often based on skin tone, although it is occasionally considered prejudice against a specific race's culture, values, or traditions. People in our world are recognized to be split into several races: whites, blacks, reds, yellows, and so on. The dominant races typically conduct this ill-treatment because they think that they have different powers and qualities that are defined by race.

Racist powers employ numerous methods or beliefs to undermine the authority of other races by rendering them less human or inferior, allowing them to attack their religion, culture, or customs, and even their behavior. Racism is a vivid issue that can be used to refer to the prejudice based on race against one person or group of people and it is considered as an evil that can destroy society because of its bad effects on people 's life.

2. Racism in USA:

In the United States, racism has been a major issue and its burdens have fallen upon Native Americans, Irish Americans and at the end African Americans .So, it can be noticed that there were differences between people from European origins in America of African descents who were considered as slaves in the South of the United States because it was based on agriculture and many Americans in the southern states owned slaves and they believed that slavery was necessary to their way of life because they were used for agricultural labor as animals . Racism in America was a big problem because there were people with different races or different colors as Manning Marable stated:

From the vantage point of people of color, and especially Americans of African descents, our collective histories and experiences of interaction with the white majority have been largely defined around a series of oppressive institutions and practices. While laws have changed regarding the treatment of racialized minorities over the deep structure of white prejudice, power and privilege Which has formed the undemocratic foundation of most human interactions has not fundamentally been altered. (Marable)

Furthermore, blacks had not the right to vote In the American south because of the segregation laws and the actions of the kuklux.klan, which showed the superiority of the white race and the inferiority of black one.

Black slaves were victims of their master's abuses because they were threatened by violence, sexual abuses and they had no rights. Americans in the South believed that the presence of black slaves in America was very necessary where they can get civilization and religion.

The situation of the black slaves in South America affected the blacks a lot because they were forced to leave their homelands and to travel to foreign countries where they lost their rights and opportunities to live as human beings, so racism in the United States which was a struggle between whites and blacks led to a racial tension and conflicts in the American society because blacks had no civil rights and had not the right to participate in political, economic or social fields because they had no education and even no civilization which gave the American whites the ability to be the leaders of the American society.

The consequences of racism during the era of slavery in the United States were profound and far-reaching. Racism was ingrained in the very fabric of society and had devastating effects on enslaved individuals, their families, and the nation as a whole. One of the most immediate and visible consequences of racism was the brutal and dehumanizing treatment of enslaved people. They were subjected to physical and psychological violence, forced labor, and severe living conditions. Families were torn apart as individuals were bought and sold, often never to see their loved ones again. The denial of basic human rights and dignity resulted in physical and emotional suffering on an immense scale.

Racism also perpetuated a deeply unequal and segregated society. Enslaved people were denied access to education, legal rights, and economic opportunities. They were considered property rather than citizens, further entrenching the racial hierarchy that favored white Americans. Moreover, the legacy of racism endured long after slavery officially ended. Discriminatory laws and practices, such as Jim Crow segregation, continued to oppress African Americans well into the 20th century. The effects of this systemic racism can still be seen today in disparities in education, employment, housing, and criminal justice. On a broader scale, racism during slavery had a corrosive impact on the nation's moral fabric. It contradicted the principles of freedom and equality upon which the United States was founded. It also sowed

the seeds of division and conflict that would culminate in the Civil War, a devastating conflict that claimed countless lives.

In summary, the consequences of racism during slavery in the USA were profound and enduring, affecting not only the lives of enslaved individuals but also shaping the nation's history and its ongoing struggle for racial equality and justice.

3. Theme of Racism in the novel:

Roots, like any other African American novel, is based on the interaction between races, as exemplified through the seven-generation saga of an African family in America. It all began with the first great-grandfather in his own nation, Africa, and how white and black slave merchants abducted him. This reminds him of the slave kidnapped he heard about in his village. "One of the elders said when they were discussing the slaves' kidnappings "As a child I saw these slates beating those like themselves to walk faster for the toubob!" (Haley 160). Blacks knew who was taking blacks from Africa and selling them to whites. They never reproached the blacks, instead blaming the whites for inducing blacks to forsake their race and assisting the "touboub" (whites) in kidnapping their brothers.

Furthermore, they think that there is no possibility for whites to change; they believe that whites are totally wicked and cannot change until " the river flows backward!" (160). The blacks, who perceived whites as animals, may have committed a discriminatory act toward whites. Another example of racism towards whites was the way blacks treated Jankeh Jallon's kid, who was:

a strange pale tan color like a cured hide, and had very odd hair [as he was a result of white's rape to Jankeh Jallon after kidnapping her, but she escaped from them] ...and wherever Jankeh Jallon would appear thereafter, people would look at the ground and hurry elsewhere. (Haley 182)

When she sought the council for a solution, they just stated that they would have to weigh the situation until the next Council meeting and felt sorry for the child because of his father's ethnicity, as it was a shame for them to have a white father. Mixed-blood children are considered impoverished and have little possibility of becoming members of the black community. Even in the United States, mixed-blood infants are considered half African and do not belong to either the black or white communities. "At least I'm black, not brown like you!" (Haley 316) That was Kunta Kinte's response to a mixed-blood slave on the estate, demonstrating great pride in being black and utter hatred for everything not black.

Hating whites stems from what blacks endure under white control and authority, or from witnessing what whites do to their black brothers. Furthermore, Kunta Kinte's animosity for whites begins in his youth, but it peaks when he is kidnapped by slave traffickers in the thirty-third chapter, while looking for materials to create a drum for his younger brother.

The description of whites hunting black slaves is gruesome. They appear to be hunting an animal. And the hunted guy is acting like an animal in a dialogue where there are "no words than the blood and club" (193-194). Even while selling them, whites refer to blacks as animals. such as: "Works like a mule!" or, "Bright as monkeys!" (249-250), and even when they want to buy one, they examine him/her as if they are going to buy a pet: "with short sticks and whip butts, they were examining them without touching them" (250). Even traveling from Africa to America is hardly five-star. He is naked, chained, and shackled, and he is in complete darkness. "He is bitten for four days without mercy. Finding himself gagged, blindfolded, and bound

with his wrists behind him and his ankles hobbled with knotted rope"(197). All of these unusual activities make Kunta, the proud African named after his sacred ancestor, feel degraded and despised. Racism gave rise to a new emotion for the hero: alienation, or the sense of being an outsider. "An outsider one who had been born free" (370).

Furthermore, Kunta is perplexed by the distinction between slavery in Africa and slavery in America. Slaves in Africa are treated as servants and have certain rights. However, in America, they are half human and half animal; they have no rights and their freedom is restricted, except from the presence of many restrictions to comply without the right to resist. Kunta, unlike the blacks born and raised in the New World, could not envisage himself being a slave for the rest of his life. He attempts to flee four times, but on the fourth attempt, he is apprehended and gets his right leg severed by slave hunters. This attitude is far too typical for someone who is descended from a prominent family and has high regard for his tribe and the entire country.

Despite the presence of racism, his grandkids retain a sense of pride despite their familiarity with the situation. As is how Chicken George responds to his owner when he starts condemning blacks for being unappreciative of whites who feed, clothe, and house them. But Chicken George responds to him directly and without fear, saying: "You wants de straight, up-an'-down truth, Massa, I b'lieves mos' niggers figger dey's bein' smart to act maybe dumber'n dey really is, 'cause mos' niggers are scairt o' white folks." (602).

The dread of whites stems from whites who instilled in their children that the black kid should always be the servant of the white child and always be in a lower position than him. For example, when the master requested that Bell make a pallet for her daughter Kizzy at the foot of his niece's bed.

The distinction between labels is another form of racism. Whites are termed "Masters" and "missis," despite the fact that they do not own or even know blacks. Being white implies that s/he is a superior human being who must be revered and approached with respect. However, blacks are considered slaves and servants to whites, and even after being released, they cannot own their labor and be safe unless they work for a white (783). They also had to be named after their master, and their names changed anytime they changed masters through slave trading. For example, while Kizzy lives with her parents on the Master Hamilton estate, she is known as Kizzy Hamilton; yet, when Master Lea acquires her, she is known as Kizzy Lea.

The consequences of racism are vividly depicted and deeply ingrained in *Roots*. The novel portrays how racism has devastating effects on the lives of African American characters, illustrating both the personal and systemic consequences of racial discrimination. At the individual level, the characters in "Roots" experience the dehumanizing effects of racism. Enslaved individuals endure physical and emotional abuse, separation from their families, and a constant struggle for survival. Kunta Kinte, the novel's central character, faces the brutal reality of slavery as he is forcibly taken from his homeland and subjected to the degrading conditions of American slavery. The trauma of racism and slavery is passed down through generations, impacting the identities and experiences of Kunta Kinte's descendants. Moreover, racism in the novel perpetuates a deeply unequal society. Slaves are denied basic human rights, education, and economic opportunities. They are treated as property, reinforcing a racial hierarchy that benefits white Americans. The consequences of this systemic racism are seen in the stark disparities in power and privilege between enslaved individuals and their white oppressors. Furthermore, "Roots" highlights the enduring legacy of racism, even after the abolition of slavery. Characters in the novel continue to face discrimination and prejudice in the post-emancipation era. This ongoing racism shapes their lives and opportunities,

reinforcing the idea that the consequences of racial discrimination extend beyond the immediate context of slavery.

Overall, the theme of racism was tackled extensively in *Roots*. To begin with, the novel's fundamental racist act was slavery. The tagging of slaves by their master's names, on the other hand, is a clue that they belong to them. Racism also exists in the relationship of servant, ex-slave, slave, and master, which is predicated on black inferiority. The era following the abolition of the slave system is also an important period noted by the author, albeit he does not dwell on it extensively.

4. Identity:

4.1. Definition:

According to the Oxford dictionary, identity is "the characteristics, feelings, or beliefs that distinguish people from others" (739). The notion of identity was discussed by two theories: The Social Identity Theory and the Identity Theory (Stets and Burke 223). Although they disagree in how it could be defined, whether it is linked to the group to which the individual belongs (the Social Identity Theory) or linked to the role of the individual (the Identity Theory), both theories agree that identity is "reflexible" (225). Identity is a term that can manipulate and change its classification according to other social categories or classifications. Moreover, Black identity is not an exception to these theories. It has been formed and has become an important element in their societies, for both black South Africans and African-Americans, because of an important concept in the history of their nations, which is racism. So, black identity construction, like any other ethnic identity, is due to the unsafe and unstable political and economic state of the groups or the nation. As a result, each ethnic group tries to distinguish itself from the others (Nzongola-Natalaja 32).

The struggle for identity among enslaved people in the United States was a profound and enduring aspect of their experience. Throughout the nation's history, African Americans faced a relentless battle to establish and assert their identities in the face of systemic oppression and dehumanization. Slaves were stripped of their names, languages, and cultural practices upon arrival in America. This deliberate erasure of their African heritage was a calculated effort to devalue their identities and enforce subservience. Yet, despite these efforts, many enslaved people maintained a strong sense of cultural and familial identity through oral traditions, music, and spiritual practices.

Additionally, the quest for identity among slaves was also deeply influenced by the desire for freedom and autonomy. Many enslaved individuals sought to redefine themselves in the context of their resistance to slavery. Whether through acts of rebellion, escape attempts, or the formation of tight-knit communities, they asserted their agency and individuality. Furthermore, the struggle for identity was intricately connected to the concept of family. Slaves often experienced the heart-wrenching separation of loved ones due to the slave trade. Reconnecting with family members became a powerful driving force, shaping their sense of self and purpose. As slavery persisted, the fight for identity continued. The Civil War and the Emancipation Proclamation offered hope for a new beginning, but the legacy of slavery cast a long shadow. Even in freedom, African Americans grappled with questions of identity, citizenship, and belonging.

the identity struggle faced by enslaved individuals in the United States was marked by persistent efforts to maintain cultural connections, assert agency, and preserve familial bonds. Their quest for identity is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of overwhelming adversity.

5. The quest for Identity in the novel:

Identity is omnipresent in *Roots*, and it is present throughout the narrative through the recall and continuity of their grandfather's hostage story and his arrival in America. The creation of a new ritual in America, which started in African tradition, in which the family gathers to hear the ancestors' stories, displays their hold on their heritage.

Since their arrival, Black Africans have identified themselves for their tribes by physical characteristics such as tattoos and facial traits. Despite this, they considered themselves brothers, bonded by the color of their skin rather than the origins of their dads. Kinte's manner of perceiving things and delight in their beauty is reflected by his disdain of white women, which no other species has: “ After seeing the hungry way, the toubob on the great canoe had lusted after black women, he was amazed to see that the toubob had women of their own; but looking at this specimen, he could understand why they preferred Africans. ” (Haley 243)

We can see that his attitude is influenced by his upbringing, which values darkness and associates it with beauty, as his father told him that "the more blackness a woman has the more beautiful she is"(57). Furthermore, he was overjoyed to carry his name. He wanted to yell “I am Kunta Kinte, first son of Omoro, who is the son of the holy man Kairaba Kunta Kinte!” (269) When he was given the name Toby by the whites.

Kunta Kinte's desire to inform his daughter about Africa stems from his own childhood experiences with his grandpa, who carried the same name as him and felt proud of him. Kunta wishes for his narrative to be narrated for his grandkids in the manner of the African oral tradition in order to preserve their history.

Kunta's adherence to Islam is a kind of resistance against everything white. He even grows more connected to it, but as he becomes more involved in the white man's world, he becomes less religious, which makes him unhappy, and he begins to blame the white man's way of life. Others who were baptized, on the other hand, remained religious, much like any regular African who is known for being religious rather than being committed to a single religion. The fact that they are religious is not the only element that makes them appear like Africans, as Kunta Kinte observes:

...Kunta saw that the dancers' footsteps and body motions were imitating their planting of the crops, the chopping of wood, the picking of cotton, the swinging of scythes, the pulling of corn, the pitchforking of hay into wagons. It was all so much like the harvest dancing back in Juffure... (Haley 329)

These plantation-born blacks, like their white owners, tended to assume that those who had come from Africa had only just climbed down from the trees, let alone had any experience with schooling. This is what whites wanted their slaves to believe, and they worked hard to instill this belief in them so that they would remain thankful for whites protecting them from barbarism. When they realized their assumptions were incorrect, they got interested in knowing more about Africa. Like what happened to Bell, who constantly thinks of Africa as a country full of monkeys and man behaving like monkeys. When Kunta begins talking to Bell about Africa, his life before the kidnapping, and his schooling in his village, Juffure, she begins asking questions about the names of objects, pointing to anything she sees and wanting to know how they titled it in his language (410-411).

Although the mother feels intimidated, the process of naming his first kid makes Kunta pleased, and he feels as if "Africa [pumped] in his veins—and flowing from him into the child... (424).

In addition, Kunta Kinte's daughter, Kizzy, epitomizes the quest for identity. Born into slavery, she yearns to learn about her African heritage and her family's roots. Her thirst for knowledge and her desire to pass down her father's stories to her own descendants become a testament to the enduring importance of cultural identity. Moreover, Chicken George, Kizzy's son, grapples with the duality of his identity. As a mixed-race individual, he occupies a unique space within the enslaved community. His ability to navigate between African and American cultures showcases the complexity of identity in the context of slavery. On the other hand, Kunta Kinte's daughter, Kizzy, epitomizes the quest for identity. Born into slavery, she yearns to learn about her African heritage and her family's roots. Her thirst for knowledge and her desire to pass down her father's stories to her own descendants become a testament to the enduring importance of cultural identity. Moreover, Chicken George, Kizzy's son, grapples with the duality of his identity. As a mixed-race individual, he occupies a unique space within the enslaved community. His ability to navigate between African and American cultures showcases the complexity of identity in the context of slavery.

Tom, another descendant of Kunta Kinte, faces an identity crisis as he is torn between the expectations of his enslaved community and the allure of a more comfortable life as a house slave. His internal conflict highlights the tension between personal identity and societal pressures. Finally, Alex Haley, as a character within the narrative, embarks on a personal journey to trace his family's ancestry. His meticulous research and storytelling efforts reflect the broader theme of seeking identity and connection to one's roots.

The transmission of identity begins when the girl is born and continues throughout her life. This transmission is common in families, as older members gather the children and recount the ancestor's narrative to them. They grow more attached to their traditions, which they establish in order to preserve the old ones as well as their history and identity. The

narrative of Kunta and several Mandinkan phrases, such as 'Ko' for a banjo and 'Kamby Bologo' for a river, are the major elements that keep the family happy and connected.

Conclusion:

Alex Haley wrote *Roots* as a kind of autobiography in order to retell the story of the family as a whole, keeping their invented tradition for all African Americans who are considered brothers and sisters and should know about how their ancestors came to America and what they suffered. Moreover, he involved in his novel *Roots* both the quest for identity and racism to give a clear image of slavery managed by the whites. Through the novel, we noticed that racism is a form of prejudice and discrimination based on a person's race or ethnicity, while identity is an individual's sense of self and how they view themselves in relation to the world around them.

General Conclusion

Through our research, we wanted to see how African American literature presented racism and identity. This pushed us to search behind the factors that influenced the author to write in order to express his ideas about racial segregation and how black characters reflected real black people's ways of preserving their own identity. One figure who played a major role in the literature of the African American community is Alexander Haley. We wanted to know if the author we have chosen included aspects of slavery, such as racial segregation and black identity, in his work. Furthermore, we wanted to examine the history of slavery in the United States and its highlights, as well as the writing style that made up an important phase of African Americans' resistance. The author of *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, via his autobiography, helped us learn more about slavery.

In the first chapter, we have observed that slavery in the United States was an institution that had a deep impact on society, the economy, culture, and politics. It was a prosperous economic resource for the colonies that traded Africans and considered them inferior, therefore justifying their enslavement. We have analyzed how African men and women were laboring hard and could barely get the satisfaction of their masters; on the other hand, women were particularly sexually abused, which made them double oppressed in that history. Even though it was hard and sometimes impossible, the African Americans formed families, and little by little they realized their community had specific values and characteristics. In addition, we have seen African American slave narrative writers. We concluded that through their identity, African Americans could resist slavery in various ways, such as through writing.

In the second chapter, we have taken a closer look at the slave narratives in *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* that contributed to the birth of African American literature. We have also analyzed the major themes, including racism and the quest for identity. Moreover, we have seen the major characters and the literary devices utilized in Alex Haley's novel.

Finally, through the background of the author, we have noticed that the context and the surroundings of the author directed him to his topic. For Alex Haley, the fashion of his time in African American writings was to write a biography. Also, his color of skin and family background led him to write *Roots*. We have concluded that slave narratives are narratives written by those who successfully made their way to freedom. We have noticed that those writers were from both genders, and they could inspire the black community with their writings because they were rich with new themes and shared a common outline.

In the third chapter, we examined the concepts of racism and identity, which are central to Alex Haley's work. We've seen several definitions of racism and identity, as well as their respective locations in America. Furthermore, the protagonist is of the writer's racial group. The protagonist in *Roots* is a black individual who values familial relationships while struggling to keep his identity. The author emphasized the black people while ignoring the white characters, who are characterized as vicious animals.

Through this analysis, we have accomplished our objectives by answering the research questions we set. We have learned about aspects of slavery in the United States and the conflicts African Americans had to go through because of their color. African Americans experienced the worst of living conditions, such as being traded and later facing physical tyranny and sexual assault from their masters. We have found that the African American community has, as a result, found different ways to fight slavery. Their means of resistance differed between music, escape, and building an underground road by slave activists. We have also found that slave narratives are the writing that helped African American writers write their stories for the next generation to be aware of how the United States was built. Alex Haley is one of the slave writers who became conscious of the gap between white men and African Americans.

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Résumé :

Les Afro-Américains ont réagi et résisté à l'institution de l'esclavage aux États-Unis de différentes manières, comme dans la littérature et la politique. Les esclaves africains aux États-Unis ont fourni leurs histoires sous la forme de récits d'esclaves. Parmi ces écrivains, il y a Alexander Haley, dont le récit de l'esclave *Roots : La Saga d'une famille américaine* raconte l'histoire d'un groupe de familles réunies et séparées pendant une période d'insécurité et d'oppression. Ce mémoire est l'un des nombreux récits d'esclaves qui démontrent l'image réelle de l'esclavage. Afin d'atteindre les objectifs de la thèse, l'approche descriptive a été employée pour explorer les nombreuses méthodes par lesquelles la communauté des esclaves résistait à l'esclavage et d'explorer les thèmes principaux du roman, les techniques littéraires et les personnages. L'approche analytique a été employée pour explorer l'identité et le racisme dans le roman d'Alex Haley, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*. En conclusion, cette recherche met en lumière les diverses stratégies de résistance employées par les Afro-Américains dans le contexte de l'esclavage. Il utilise le puissant récit des racines d'Alex Haley pour mettre l'accent sur l'importance durable de ces documents historiques pour comprendre l'interaction complexe du racisme, de l'identité et de la résilience au sein de la communauté afro-américaine.

Mots clés: Esclavage, Alexander Haley, Afro-Américains, racisme, identité

ملخص

قاوم الأمريكيون الأفارقة مؤسسة العبودية في الولايات المتحدة بطرق متنوعة، مثل الأدب والسياسة حيث قدم العبيد الأفارقة في الولايات المتحدة قصصهم على شكل سرد العبيد. من بين هؤلاء الكتاب يأتي ألكسندر هالي، الذي يمثل سيرته الذاتية للعبودية بعنوان "الجنور: ملحمة عائلة أمريكية" قصة عائلة تم جمعها وفصلها خلال حقبة من الظروف الغير آمنة والقمع. هذه السيرة الذاتية هي واحدة من بين العديد من السجلات السردية للعبيد التي تظهر الصورة الحقيقية للعبودية. ومن أجل تحقيق أهداف الرسالة العلمية، تم استخدام النهج الوصفي لاستكشاف العديد من الطرق الذي اعتمد عليها مجتمع العبيد في مقاومة العبودية ولفحص المواضيع الأساسية للرواية وتقنياتها الأدبي وشخصياتها حيث تم استخدام النهج التحليلي لاستكشاف مفهوم الهوية والعنصرية في رواية ألكس هالي، "الجنور: ملحمة عائلة أمريكية". وفي الختام، يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على استراتيجيات متنوعة للمقاومة التي اعتمد عليها الأمريكيون من أصول أفريقية في سياق العبودية ويستخدم السرد القوي لرواية ألكس هالي "الجنور" لتأكيد الأهمية المستديمة لهذه السجلات التاريخية في فهم التفاعل المعقد بين العنصرية والهوية والصمود داخل مجتمع الأمريكيين من أصول أفريقية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العبودية، الكسندر هالي، الأمريكيون الأفارقة، العنصرية، الهوية