

Name _____

Date _____ Class _____

An Account of Our Engagement at Sea

Read Caleb White's statement about the incident on board the *Polly*. Underline the words that describe the actions taken by "Currituck Jack," later known as John Jasper White.

Onboard schooner *Polly*...sailed from Currituck February 14, 1780...Was boarded and Taken by a British Privateer called *Fame* of N. York...we were Immediately confined in Irons...They immediately confined us below deck and lashed the feet of Jack to a station on the quarterdeck, his hands being ironed where he lay 24 hours in a gale of wind or snowstorm...However, we ordered him to term himself an enemy to America this had the effect we wished. They loosened him from his irons and he soon became their right-hand man...on the 22nd...they were above making sail. My Brother who was the master [of the ship] got out of irons and gave the watch word...Jack immediately...engaged two of [the British]...having no weapon but a marlin spike... after bloodshed on both sides we conquered them...& delivered to Congress tell by the wounds & fresh Jack received (he never walked a step for five weeks) after we returned home his master abused him somewhat...my brother bought him and in his last will sold Jack his freedom by his paying his estate 100 [pounds]. The said fellow behaves himself well. Honest and Industrious, is very manerly to all and has commanded a schooner for me five years. Is entrusted by Mr. Daughity with Many Hundred Pound every Year —....

Sam Jasper

Understanding John Jasper White's Story

Consider everything that you have read about John Jasper White, also known as Jack. Think carefully both about what is said and what is not in these documents. Answer the questions below.

List the events of John Jasper White's story in your own words below.

What did White need to do to make his journey to freedom happen?

On the basis of what specific "meritorious" action is Jasper asking for manumission for White?

ANSWER KEY

Understanding John Jasper White's Story

Consider everything that you have read about John Jasper White, also known as Jack. Think carefully both about what is said and what is not in these documents. Answer the questions below.

List the events of John Jasper White's story in your own words below.

Student answers will vary. They should match the document you read as a class in meaning. Included on this page is additional information we know from other sources for your information.

White was enslaved on the ship *Polly* when it was captured by a British privateer. He was chained on the deck of the ship, exposed to the winter elements, and nearly escaped twice. After being moved belowdecks and secured there, his enslaver ordered him to pretend to be loyal to the British in exchange for emancipation. He did so, and the British released him from his chains. When his enslaver escaped his chains, they all fought the British, though with few weapons and much bloodshed, and reclaimed the ship. They sailed to Annapolis and turned the British over to the Continental Congress, who praised Jack's actions and said he should be given his freedom. Instead, despite the injuries he suffered from frostbite and exposure, he continued to be enslaved and was even abused. He was sold, and when that enslaver died, he was freed in the will on the condition that he paid the estate \$100, which he did. At that point the executor, Samuel Jasper, petitioned the General Assembly for Jack's freedom. Upon receiving it, he changed his name to John Jasper White.

What did White need to do to make his journey to freedom happen?

At first, by helping his enslaver to retake his ship from British soldiers, he fulfilled the "meritorious services" clause of the North Carolina law that allowed for emancipation. After that, he had to wait for years for an opportunity to use that clause. Finally, he had to pay \$100. It took four years for him to earn enough money to do that.

On the basis of what specific "meritorious" action is Jasper asking for manumission for White?

White was captured by the British on his enslaver's ship. He continually fought the chains with which they bound him and fought several British sailors to help retake control of the ship. He helped to prevent the ship and its cargo from falling into British hands.