

The Story of James Mars

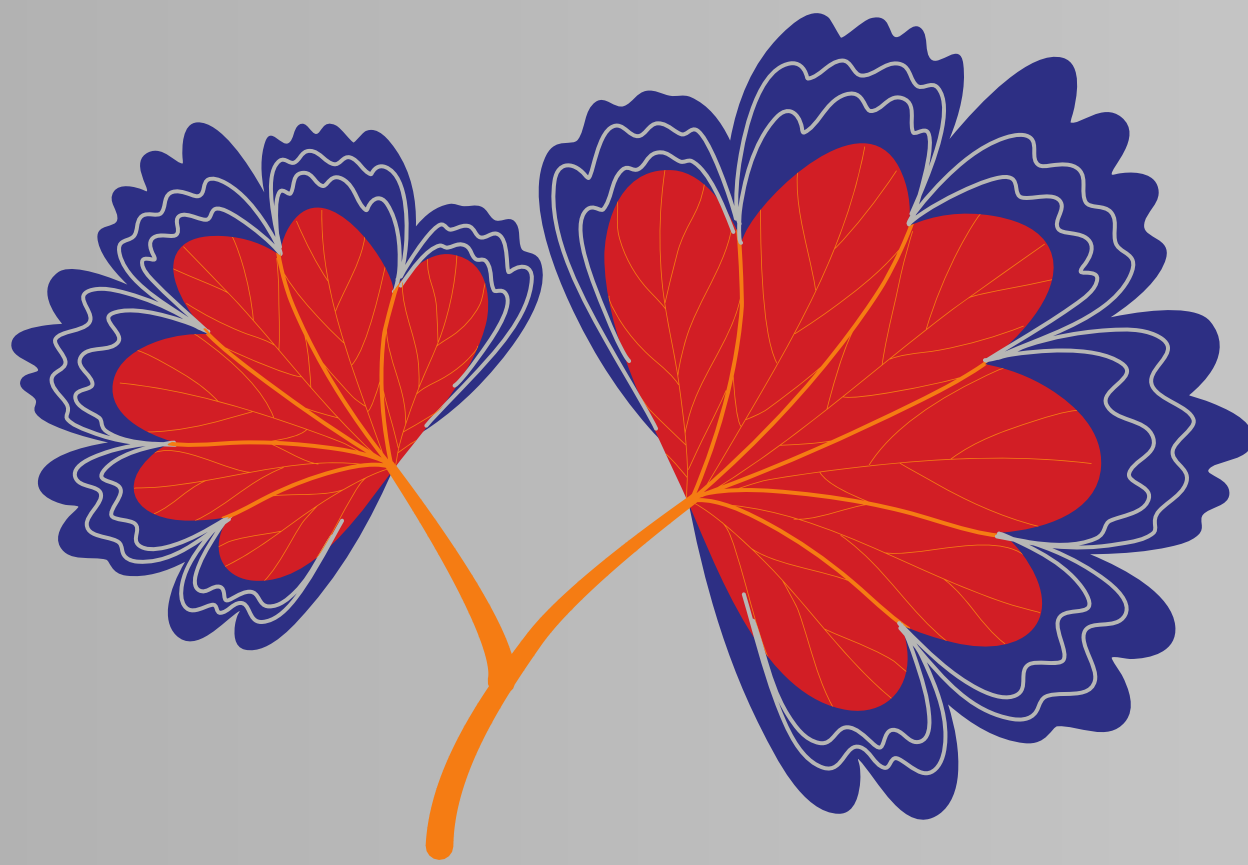
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Illustrations by Canva



**This is a history that means the past,
It's important to learn,
Don't read it fast.**

**Although it's a difficult story to know,
The time is now, let's give it a go.**



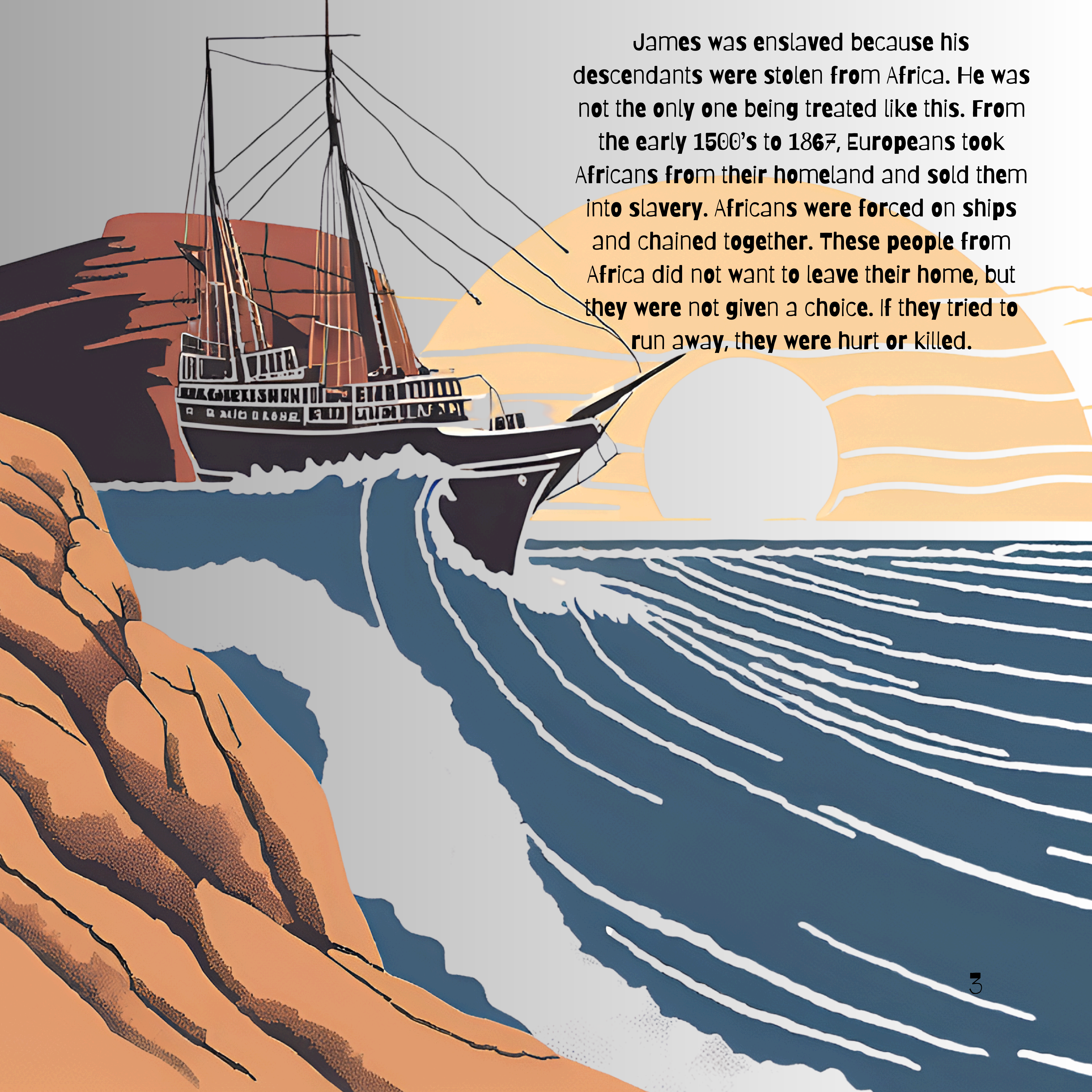
**Today we are learning about James Mars. He was born
in Connecticut in 1790. James was born enslaved. This
means James was owned by another person, who was
white. These people were called enslavers.**





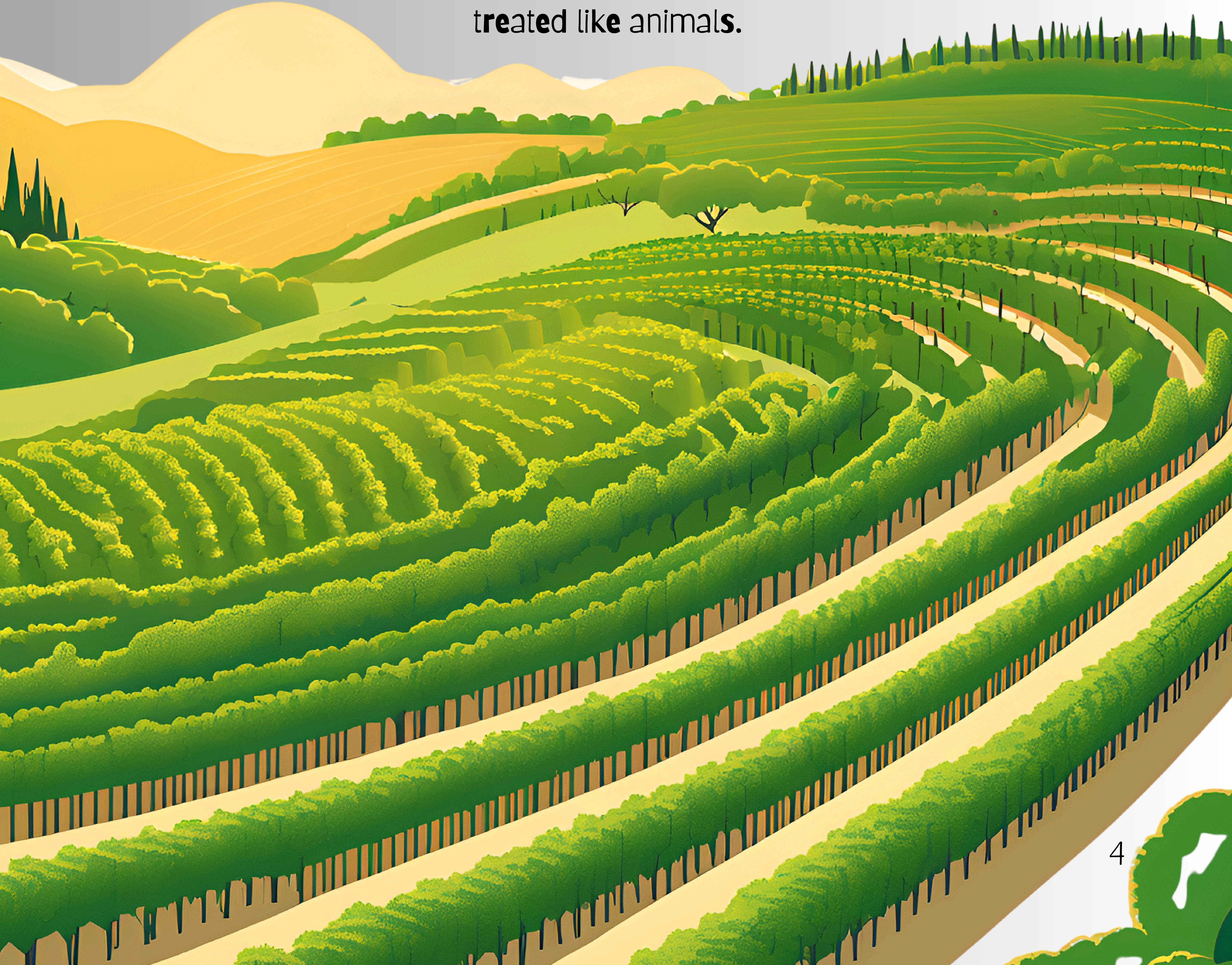
James was forced to work on his enslaver's farm in Connecticut. But the way he worked was not the same as free people. James could not leave his enslaver, and did not get paid. He was expected to obey all commands, and so James was hurt a lot. James was not even considered a person.



An illustration of a three-masted sailing ship, likely a slave ship, sailing on a dark blue ocean. The ship has a white hull with black trim and is moving towards the right. In the foreground, there is a rocky, orange-brown coastline. The background features a large, bright yellow sun setting over the horizon, with horizontal bands of orange and yellow in the sky. The ship's name is partially visible on its side.

James was enslaved because his descendants were stolen from Africa. He was not the only one being treated like this. From the early 1500's to 1867, Europeans took Africans from their homeland and sold them into slavery. Africans were forced on ships and chained together. These people from Africa did not want to leave their home, but they were not given a choice. If they tried to run away, they were hurt or killed.

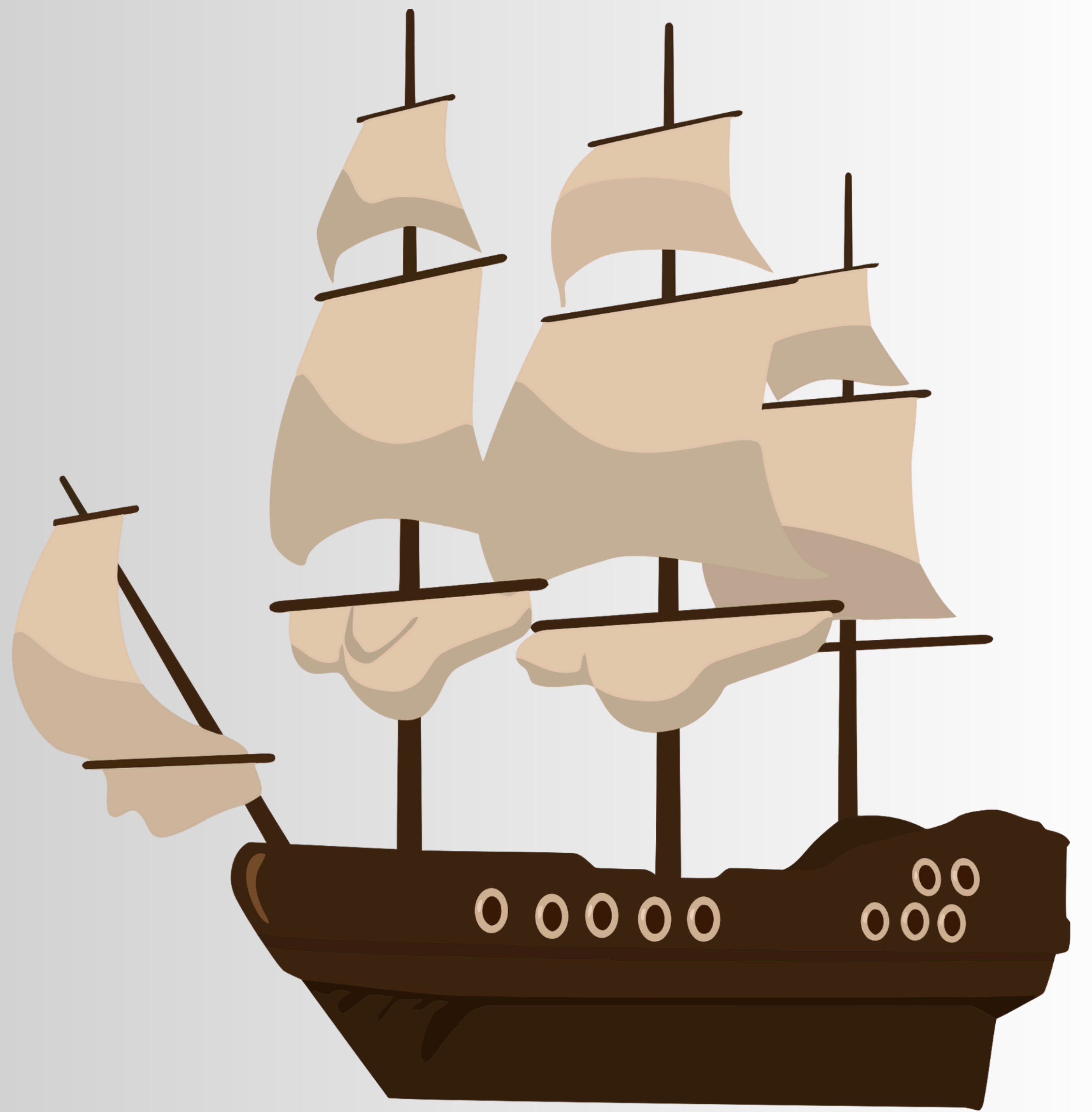
Many **Enslaved Africans** were moved to **places** called **plantations** in **order** to make **money for Europeans**. **Europeans** noticed many **people** from **Africa** were skilled in **Agriculture**, and **forced** many of them to **grow crops**. They suffered **horrible conditions while working**. Many of these **enslaved people** died. They could not **practice their traditions from home, or choose to stay with their family**. They were **treated like animals**.



Other Enslaved Africans were taken in smaller numbers to places that had cold weather, like Canada and Connecticut. These people did not have the comfort of large African communities. This made it very hard for them to remember their languages, music, and cultures. What would you forget if you did not have your family and relatives to remind you?



This process of taking people from Africa and selling them in Europe and America as if they were property, was called the Transatlantic Slave Trade.



As the Transatlantic Slave Trade grew, so did the wrongful assumptions about people of African descent. Many white people spread false, negative ideas about people from Africa.



Let's go back to the story of James. Since James lived in the Northern part of the United States, he did not live on a plantation. They did not have those in the North. He lived in a building on a farm.

Even though James and his parents were born in America they were not free. Laws called the slave codes said the child of an enslaved woman was also born a "slave". James was born in the USA because his African ancestors were stolen from Africa.



Since **enslaved people** were not **considered** human, **enslavers** **bought** and **sold** them. When James **learned** of his **enslavers** **plan** to **sell** his **farm** and **move** to **Virginia**, James **understood** that he **might** be **sold** or **forced** to **go** with him. James' family **formed** an **escape** plan. He and his family **ran** away to **Norfolk, Connecticut**.

James and his brother hid in **one house** and his **parents** and **sister** in another. They were **lucky** to have **help** from **people** living in **Norfolk**. Even though it was **illegal**, some **people** **helped** the **enslaved** by **hiding** them and **helping** them **get** far away from **their enslavers**.



But this tale is not a **happy one**, at least not **yet**. James and his family were caught. **The cruel enslaver struck a bargain**. James' **parents** and **sister** went **free**, but James and his **brother** were **sold to other enslavers**. **Poor James, only ten years old**, was all alone and **separated from his family**.

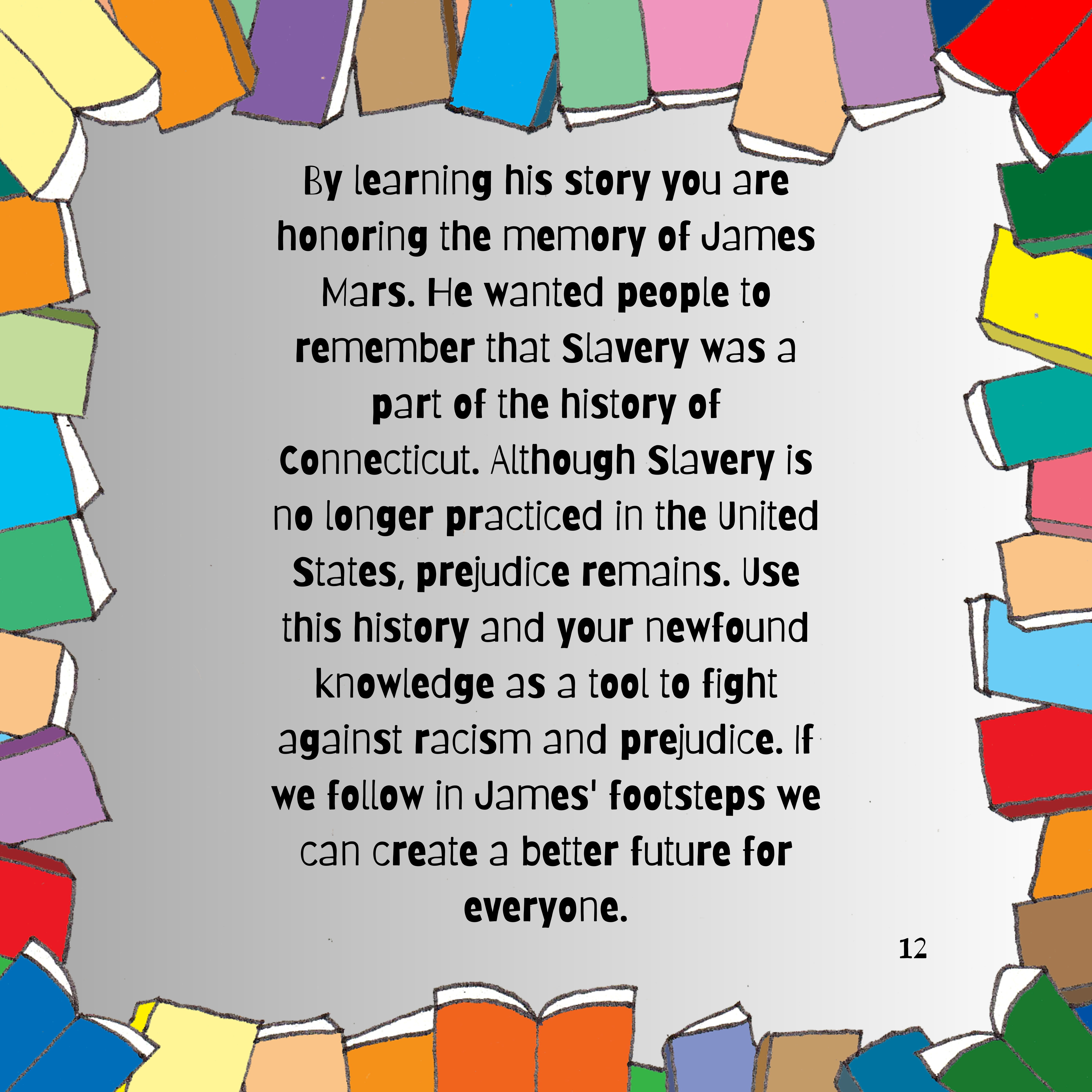


Still in **Connecticut**, James was forced to work for a new enslaver. There was a law passed earlier in 1784 before James was born. It declared that children born into slavery after 1784 were to be freed when they turned 25 years old. So, by law, James had to work 15 more years. He was finally free in 1811. Slavery did not end in the USA until 1865.



After he was freed James married and had two children. He became a deacon and lived in Hartford, Connecticut and then later Pittsfield, Massachusetts. James became a political activist, fighting against slavery and racism. He wrote his biography in the 1870's so that people would always remember the suffering created by Connecticut Slavery.





By learning his story you are honoring the memory of James Mars. He wanted people to remember that Slavery was a part of the history of Connecticut. Although Slavery is no longer practiced in the United States, prejudice remains. Use this history and your newfound knowledge as a tool to fight against racism and prejudice. If we follow in James' footsteps we can create a better future for everyone.



James Mars in 1870