



What would you wear?

Every winter, owners handed out new clothes to their slaves. But often owners didn't give them enough clothes to wear, even though it was the slaves' hard work that made the owners rich.

Usually your clothes had to last you all year. If they wore out, you'd be wearing rags until you got new clothes.



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Many boys and girls wore just long shirts. Sometimes owners gave boys pants to wear, and girls got skirts or dresses. Slave children rarely wore shoes, even when it rained or snowed. When you were about ten, you would start working in the fields or doing other adult work. That's when you got a pair of shoes, and maybe a warm jacket and socks. Children stopped wearing the long shirts at that age.

Slaves often went barefoot during the summer. That way they saved their shoes, so they'd be in good shape for the winter.

"We didn't have hardly any clothes, and most of the time they were just rags. We went barefoot until it got real cold. Our feet would crack open from the cold and bleed. We would sit down [and] bawl and cry because it hurt so. Mother made moccasins for our feet from old pants."

—*Emma Knight, a slave in Missouri*



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