

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

Harriet Jacobs
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On one of these sale days, I saw a mother lead seven children to the auction-block. She knew that some of them would be taken from her; but they took all. The children were sold to a slave-trader, and their mother was bought by a man in her own town. Before night her children were all far away. She begged the trader to tell her where he intended to take them; this he refused to do. How could he, when he knew he would sell them, one by one, wherever he could command the highest price? I met that mother in the street, and her wild, haggard face lives to-day in my mind. She wrung her hands in anguish, and exclaimed, "Gone! All gone! Why don't God kill me?" I had no words wherewith to comfort her. Instances of this kind are of daily, yea, of hourly occurrence.

1. Explain the mood of the passage. Support your answer with at least one detail from the passage.
2. "She wrung her hands in anguish, and exclaimed, 'Gone! All gone! Why don't God kill me?'" I had no words wherewith to comfort her." What does this dialogue reveal about auctions? Support your answer with evidence from the passage.

