



Chapter 2 Life on the Farm

- *“Whenever you’ve been touched by love, a heart-print lingers, so that you’re always reminded of the feeling of being cared for.”*

OPRAH WINFREY

Oprah Winfrey was born on January 29, 1954, in the southern state of Mississippi. At that time, the South was still segregated. That means that some people believed that white and black people should be kept apart. There were separate schools for white and black children and separate neighborhoods for white and black families. There were even separate restaurants, restrooms, and water fountains. Some white people were cruel and hurt African-Americans and called them names. Many African-Americans could not get a good education or a decent job. This kind of behavior is called “**racism.**” Oprah’s family struggled with racism.

Her family also struggled with poverty. Oprah’s parents were young and poor when she was born. Her mother realized she couldn’t take good care of Oprah, so she made a tough decision. She decided to leave young Oprah with Oprah’s grandparents for awhile.



- Oprah’s grandparents owned a farm in Mississippi. Her great-great-grandparents had been slaves and had bought this land when they were freed after the Civil War.

When Oprah was three years old, her grandmother, Hattie Mae, began to teach her to read, write, and do math. She believed that, because of **racism**, Oprah would need to be well educated if she was to succeed.

Many years later, Oprah would declare, “My grandmother really raised me to be who I am because of her belief in education.”

● Oprah and her grandparents worked very hard on their farm, but they never made much money. They ate whatever they could grow, and the clothes they wore were all handmade by Oprah's grandmother. To save money, Oprah's grandmother took care of Oprah's hair. She trimmed it herself and often braided it into two pigtails. Oprah hated having her hair brushed and braided. It hurt when her grandmother accidentally pulled too hard!

Oprah shared her grandmother's room and slept with her under a pile of warm handmade quilts. The only bathroom they had was an outhouse: a small building near the house with a toilet inside. She took a bath once a week in a washing tub in the kitchen with water that was heated on the stove.



● Oprah had many chores on the farm. There was no running water in the house, so every day, Oprah carried two buckets down to the well to draw water. Carrying the buckets to the well was easy. Carrying them back was not. The full buckets were very heavy!

It was also Oprah's job to feed and care for the pigs, cows, and chickens.

To make her chores go faster, Oprah often sang songs she had learned in church. Sometimes she even made up songs of her own to sing as she worked.

