

Abolitionists who wanted children to better understand America's system of chattel slavery would write children's books to communicate their message. This image depicts an example of such a book: *A Picture of Slavery, for Youth*, by Jonathan Walker.

Walker tells his young readers the point of his story (split into paragraphs here, for easier reading):

My Young Friends:

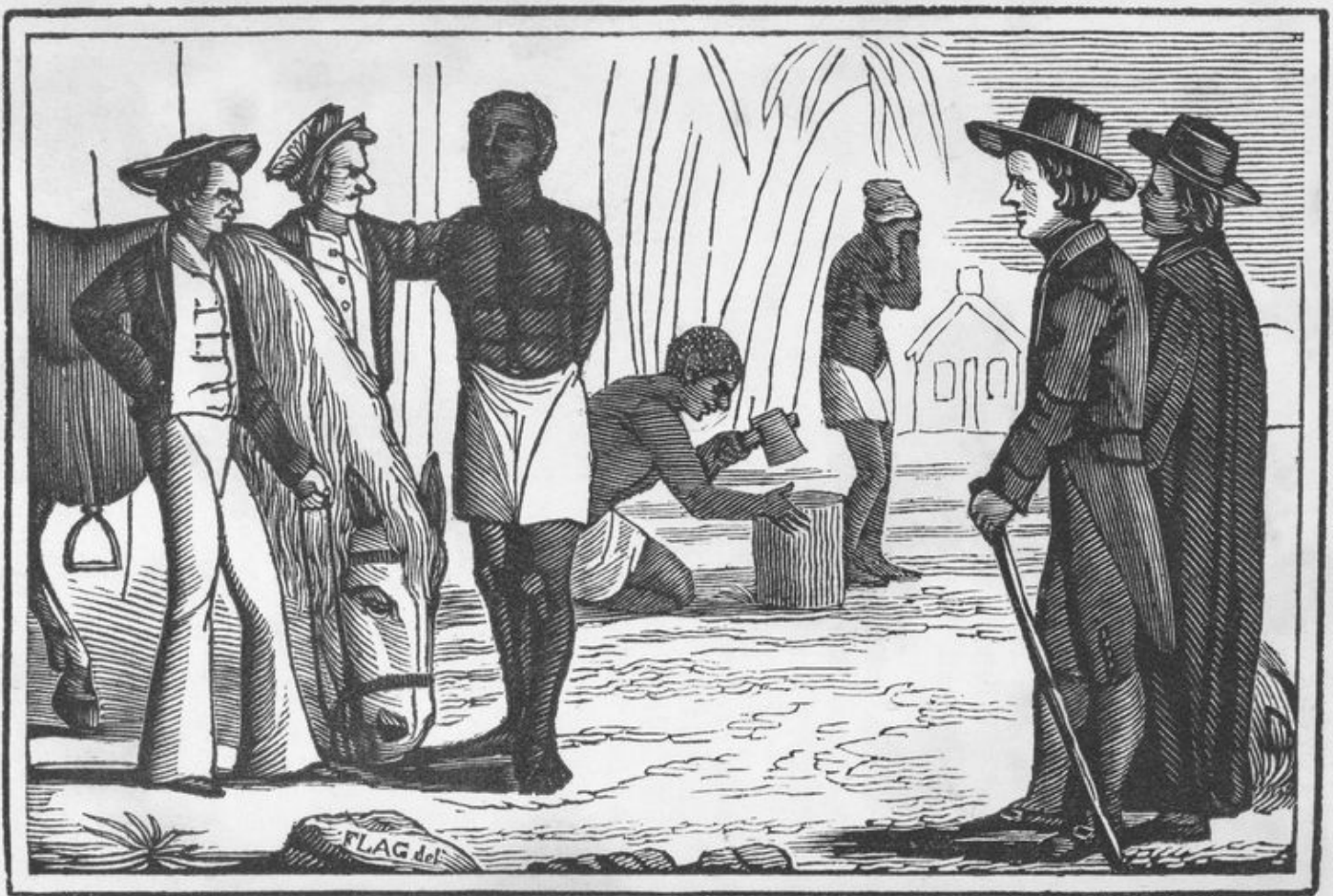
Do you know what slavery is? or what that kind of slavery is which is practised in this country, and with which we are connected?

If you have never lived where you have seen people compelled to work day after day, month after month, and year after year, without having suitable victuals [food] and clothes to satisfy their pressing wants - made to submit to all the demands of wicked and cruel masters, mistresses, overseers, or drivers - whipped, chained, bought and sold like cattle, and separated from brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, parents and children; - I say, if you have not seen this, you cannot know correctly what slavery is; neither can I tell you, so that you can understand it properly.

Although I have been acquainted with this horrid system more than twenty years, I cannot describe it. It can only be known as it is, by seeing and feeling its cruelty, as do the slaves themselves.

But I intend to give you a little knowledge of it, by such means as I have at command, in this little book. (Picture of Slavery, [page 1](#).)

The book continues in like fashion, sparing no emotional impact and encouraging recoiling responses to its hard-hitting pictures. What would it be like, for example, to trade a human being for a horse?



Exchanging Citizens for Horses. Page 106.

Or ... how about "Tanning a Boy?"



Tanning a Boy. P. 145.

“Tanning?” What is that (and what does it have to do with slavery)? The author continues:

The sufferings and outrages inflicted on the slaves are not confined to the descendants of Africa, the colored people, or their friends. But those who never dreamt of interesting themselves about the slaves are sometimes made to feel its fangs. See here a case.

Some years since, a white boy, about seven years old, was stolen from his parents. He was tattooed, painted and tanned. Every other method was also adopted which wickedness could devise, to change the exterior appearance of the unfortunate creature into one uniform dark tinge. In this wretched and forlorn condition, he grew up to maturity; driven, starved and scourged ...

When the boy’s parents finally learned what had happened to him, many years later, they did everything to get him back. Then, in an utterly audacious move, the slave-owner called-upon “the law” to be compensated for the loss of his property:

The kidnapper was a pretended Christian, and when it was communicated to him, that the youth was in safety, under protection of his family, he cursed and reviled all those persons who had aided in his flight, as notorious knaves who had united to rob him of his property, and threatened them with the punishment of the civil law; for it is one of the most flagrant crimes in the slave-driver's catalogue of iniquity, to encourage and assist a slave to escape from his fetters and agony.

And so it was that book-writing abolitionists tried to teach American children to abhor the very concept of chattel slavery.

Credits:

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

Quoted passages from "[A Picture of Slavery, for Youth](#)," online via the Library of Congress.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Abolition-A-Picture-of-Slavery-for-Youth>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Abolition-A-Picture-of-Slavery-for-Youth>

Media Stream



Slavery - Tanning a Boy

Online via the Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Slavery-Tanning-a-Boy>