

0. HUMANS: PROPERTY and AUCTIONS - Story Preface

1. AFRICA, BEFORE SLAVERS

2. SLAVE-TRADE BEGINNINGS

3. THE TRIANGLE TRADE

4. THE MIDDLE PASSAGE MYTH

5. MIDDLE PASSAGE REALITY

6. JOHN NEWTON, SLAVE TRADER

7. OLAUDAH EQUIANO

8. HUMANS: PROPERTY and AUCTIONS

9. WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

10. VOICE of a MOVEMENT

11. MASSIVE EXPLOITATION

12. THE FAMOUS SPEECH

13. CONVINCING the PUBLIC

14. SLAVE TRADE ABOLISHED - FEBRUARY 23, 1807

15. MORE TRAGEDIES

16. AMAZING GRACE

George Bourne, an American abolitionist, included this illustration in his 1838 book, *Picture of Slavery in the United State of America*. Entitled "Auction at Richmond," it faces page 111. Describing the image, Bourne quotes an unnamed Virginian: "Here, half covered with rags, and loaded with chains, human beings are driven together in crowds, and . . . are sold and bought. Within a few days past, I have beheld in Richmond hundreds of men, women, and children, thus exposed in the open streets, and bartered off like brute animals." The image (bourne01) is online via Slavery Images.org, compiled by Jerome Handler and Michael Tuite; sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library. Click on it for a better view.

Arriving in an unfamiliar country, where people did not speak their language, captured Africans were bought and sold at auction as though they were farm horses or cattle. Such was expected in the world of chattel slavery which had developed on "New World" plantations.

The U.S. Library of Congress contains graphic drawings, and photographs, of the buying and selling of Africans in America:

- Buyers gather for a slave sale in Easton, Maryland.
- Captured Africans are grouped together in "slave pens" as they wait to be sold in Alexandria, Virginia.
- White buyers inspect a kidnapped African and negotiate a purchase price with slave traders.
- Arriving in South Carolina in the 1780s, a group of Africans are slated to be sold at Ashley Ferry (outside Charleston).
- Men, women and children are auctioned as though they were farm implements.
- Advertisements highlight the virtues of particular slaves.
- Families are split apart as the cries of a pleading mother - "Buy us too" - fall on deaf ears.

- In Savannah, Georgia "slaves were raised for market."

We are left to wonder what we might do, were we involved in a slave auction as a participant, a bystander or an object of bidding.

Once purchased, the newly arrived slaves endured hard work - and punishment:

- Plowing fields and picking cotton on cotton plantations were major jobs for American slaves.
- Preparing cotton for the gin on "Smith's plantation" was a typical scene after the cotton was harvested.
- It wasn't just overseers, or male "masters," who punished workers as evidenced by this drawing of a white mistress, whipping a black slave girl.
- Before a beating, slaves were often hanged from the ceiling with their hands and feet bound. The next step was the cowhide lash on their backs.
- Wilson Chinn, an African slave in Louisiana, bears the marks of branding and torture.

John Wesley, the famous British pastor and founder of the Methodist Church, had an apt description for American slavery. He called it "the vilest that ever saw the sun."

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HUMANS-PROPERTY-and-AUCTIONS-Amazing-Grace>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/HUMANS-PROPERTY-and-AUCTIONS-Amazing-Grace>

Questions 2 Ponder

How Could Humans Be Auctioned?

When they arrived in the "New World," captured Africans were bought and sold at auctions as though they were farm horses or cattle. Buyers and sellers gave no regard to families who did not want to be split-up.

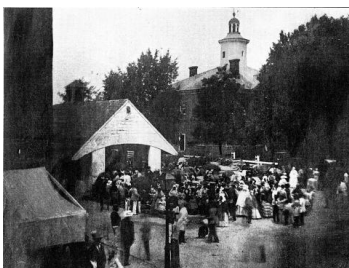
What justification could anyone give for treating human beings like they are someone else's property?

What kind of governmental system would allow treating people like chattel?

Suppose you are a 19th-century buyer / seller / "owner" of slaves. State the best case you can think of which gives you the right to do this.

Now suppose you are the slave ... tell the "owners" why they are morally wrong (even if the law gives them the legal "right" to engage in slave-trading and slave-owning).

Media Stream

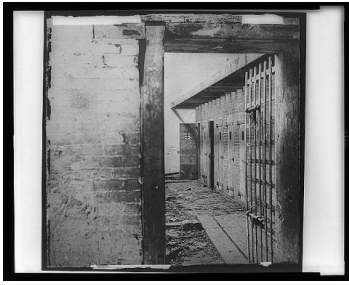


Slave Sales in Maryland

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Slave-Sales-in-Maryland>



Slave Pens in Alexandria

Image described above, online courtesy Library of Congress.

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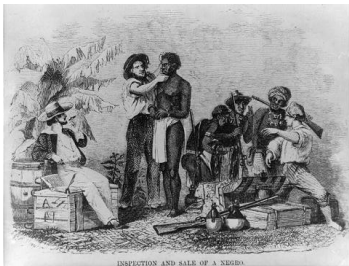


Slave Dealer in Alexandria

Image described above, online courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Buyers Inspect Slave Before Purchase

Image described above, online courtesy Library of Congress.

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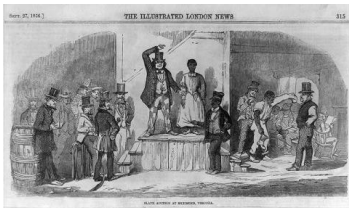


Advertising Slaves For Sale

Image described above, online courtesy Library of Congress.

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Slave Auction of Woman in Richmond, 1856

Image described above, online courtesy Library of Congress.

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Auctioned People - American South, 1861

Image, described above, online courtesy Library of Congress.

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Another Slave is Sold in America - 1863

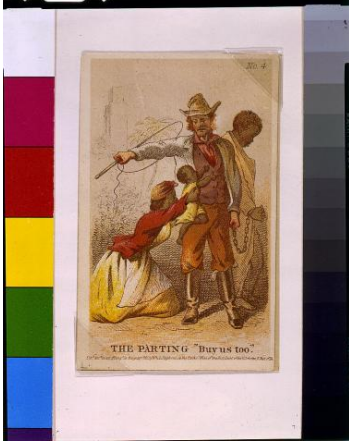
Stephens, H. L., artist. "The Sale," ca. 1863. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction Number LC-USZ62-41837.

[Image online](#), courtesy Library of Congress.

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American Slavery: "Buy us too"

[Image online](#), courtesy Library of Congress.

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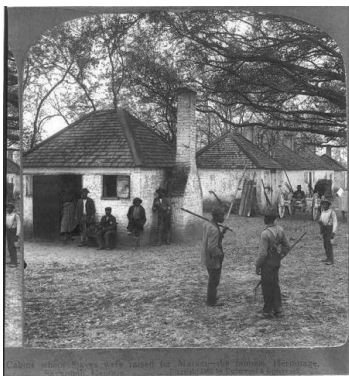
John Wesley and His Scathing Indictment of Slavery

[Image online](#), courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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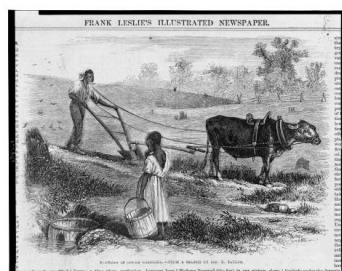


Raising Slaves "for Market"

[Image online](#), courtesy Library of Congress.

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Plowing the Fields in South Carolina

From a sketch by Jas. E. Taylor, this image was published in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. It is [online](#), courtesy Library of Congress.

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Preparing the Cotton for the Gin

Image online, [courtesy Library of Congress](#).

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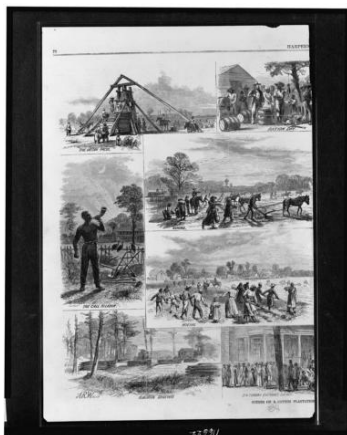


In the Cotton Field

[Image online](#), courtesy Library of Congress.

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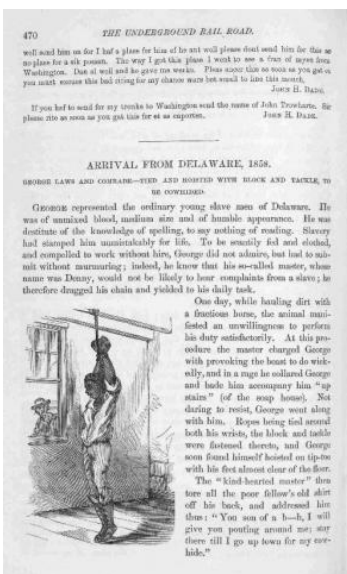


Life on a Southern Plantation

Image described above, [online courtesy Library of Congress](#).

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Preparing for Punishment

Image and narrative, from William Still's book, [online courtesy Project Gutenberg](#).

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Slavery and the Cowhide Lash

Image online, courtesy the Library of Congress, where we learn these details about the image:
 Stephens, H. L. (Henry Louis), artist. "The Lash." C1863. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

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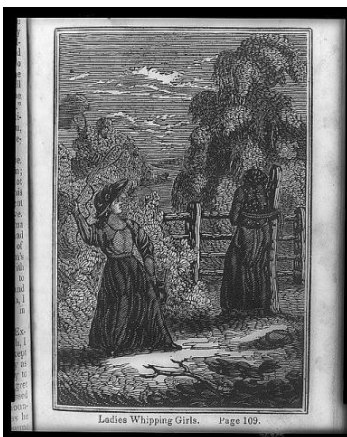
Working with the First Cotton Gin

Image, described above, online courtesy Library of Congress.

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The Whipping - Beating a Slave Girl

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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Wilson Chinn, a Branded Slave

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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