

HUMANS: PROPERTY and AUCTIONS

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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 <u>Slavery Images.org</u>, 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 <u>chattel</u> <u>slavery</u> which had developed on "<u>New World</u>" 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 <u>slave sale</u> in Easton, Maryland.
- Captured Africans are grouped together in "slave pens" as they wait to be sold in Alexandria, Virginia.
- White <u>buyers inspect</u> a kidnapped African and negotiate a purchase price with slave traders.

• Arriving in South Carolina in the 1780s, a group of Africans are <u>slated to be sold</u> at Ashley Ferry (outside Charleston).

- Men, women and children are auctioned as though they were farm implements.
- <u>Advertisements</u> 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:

- <u>Plowing fields</u> and <u>picking cotton</u> on <u>cotton plantations</u> were major jobs for American slaves.
- <u>Preparing cotton</u> 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, <u>whipping</u> a black slave girl.

• Before a beating, slaves were often <u>hanged from the ceiling</u> with their hands and feet bound. The next step was the <u>cowhide lash</u> on their backs.

• <u>Wilson Chinn</u>, 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: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HUMANS-PROPERTY-and-AUCTIONS-Amazing-Grace</u>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/HUMANS-PROPERTY-and-AUCTIONS-Amazing-Grace</u>

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



<u>Slave Sales in Maryland</u> Image online, courtesy Library of Congress. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Slave-Sales-in-Maryland</u>













<u>Slave Pens in Alexandria</u>

Image described above, online courtesy Library of Congress. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Slave-Pens-in-Alexandria</u>

<u>Slave Dealer in Alexandria</u>

Image described above, <u>online courtesy U.S. National Archives</u>. PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Slave-Dealer-in-Alexandria

Buyers Inspect Slave Before Purchase

Image described above, <u>online courtesy Library of Congress</u>. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Buyers-Inspect-Slave-Before-Purchase</u>

Advertising Slaves For Sale Image described above, <u>online courtesy Library of Congress</u>. PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Advertising-Slaves-For-Sale

Slave Auction of Woman in Richmond, 1856

Image described above, <u>online courtesy Library of Congress</u>. PD View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Slave-Auction-of-Woman-in-Richmond-1856

Auctioned People - American South, 1861

Image, described above, online courtesy Library of Congress. PD

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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. PD

View this asset at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Another-Slave-is-Sold-in-America-1863









American Slavery: "Buy us too" Image online, courtesy Library of Congress. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/American-Slavery-Buy-us-too-</u>

John Wesley and His Scathing Indictment of Slavery Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/John-Wesley-and-His-Scathing-Indictment-of-Slavery

Raising Slaves "for Market" Image online, courtesy Library of Congress. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Raising-Slaves-for-Market-</u>

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 <u>online</u>, <u>courtesy Library of Congress</u>. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Plowing-the-Fields-in-South-Carolina</u>







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Preparing the Cotton for the Gin

Image online, <u>courtesy Library of Congress</u>. PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Preparing-the-Cotton-for-the-Gin

In the Cotton Field

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/In-the-Cotton-Field</u>

Life on a Southern Plantation

Image described above, <u>online courtesy Library of Congress</u>. PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Life-on-a-Southern-Plantation

Preparing for Punishment

Image and narrative, from William Still's book, <u>online courtesy Project Gutenburg</u>. PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Preparing-for-Punishment









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.

PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Slavery-and-the-Cowhide-Lash

Working with the First Cotton Gin

Image, described above, <u>online courtesy Library of Congress</u>. PD View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Working-with-the-First-Cotton-Gin</u>

<u>The Whipping - Beating a Slave Girl</u> <u>Image online</u>, courtesy Library of Congress. PD View this asset at: http://www.awecomectories.com/asset/view/The.

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/The-Whipping-Beating-a-Slave-Girl

Wilson Chinn, a Branded Slave

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress. PD

View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Wilson-Chinn-a-Branded-Slave



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