

## Topic: Slavery in Tennessee

Lesson plans for primary sources at the Tennessee State Library & Archives

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**Grade Level:** 8th grade

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**Introduction:** Slavery was an integral part of Tennessee's economy and culture prior to the Civil War. This lesson is designed to help students understand how slave owners and enslaved people defined and challenged the slave system in Tennessee. **Note:** Slavery and the lives of enslaved people are difficult topics to teach and learn about. Teachers should be sensitive to how students may be impacted by this lesson.

### Guiding Question(s):

- How did slave owners view enslaved people?
- How did enslaved people adapt to and resist slavery in their daily lives?

**Learning Objectives:** In the course of the lesson, students will

- Analyze primary source documents
- Describe how slave owners viewed enslaved people
- Make inferences about the lives of enslaved people including how they adapted and resisted in their daily lives.

### Curriculum Standards:

- **8.35** Analyze the characteristics of Southern society and its influence on the social and political conditions prior to the Civil War. (C, E, G, H, P, T)
- **8.36** Identify the conditions of enslavement, and explain how slaves adapted to and resisted bondage in their daily lives, including Nat Turner's revolt. (C, G, H)

### Materials Needed:

[Letter from John W. Childress to Sarah Childress Polk about runaway slave](#)

## [Letter from Anderson Childress to Sarah Childress Polk about a runaway slave](#)

## [Robert H. Cartmell diary- Chart on amount of cotton picked per person](#)

Runaway slave ads from Newspaper for Pheriba and Nancy, John, and Jim and Jack (*found at the end of this lesson plan*)

## [Franklin vs. Franklin Slave inventory](#)

**Preparation:** Print one copy of each document for each student in the class or have students access the digital versions from the documents from the TSLA website. Divide students into small groups. Provide each group with a copy of the guiding questions.

## Background:

[Slavery](#) Author: Anita S. Goodstein

Source: [Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture](#)

[Cotton](#) Author: Wayne C. Moore

Source: [Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture](#)



## Lesson Activities: Day 1

### Introduction:

Give each student a sticky note as they enter the classroom and instruct them to write two facts they know about slavery on the note. Students should share their responses and place their notes on a piece of chart paper for later reference. Explain that over the course of the lesson, students will be analyzing documents to learn more about slavery in Tennessee and then reviewing their initial ideas on the topic.

### Activity 1:

Give each student a copy of the [Cartmell diary chart](#) and have them spend a few moments silently examining the document. Next, instruct them to discuss the document with the other members of their group and be prepared to share their insights with the class.\*

\*If a group cannot make any progress in understanding the document after several minutes of discussion, you may guide their attention to the notation at the bottom of the page that mentions "25 bales."

Discuss the document as a class. Make sure that the discussion covers the following key ideas:

- The chart is a record of how many pounds of cotton each enslaved person on the Cartmell Plantation picked in 1854.
- Some enslaved persons such as Dick and Char[les] picked significantly more cotton than others.
- Some enslaved people did not pick every day recorded on the chart.
- Over the course of 2 months, the eleven people named on the chart picked over 41,000 pounds of cotton.

Tell students that in 1854 cotton sold for approximately \$0.11 per pound. Have them calculate the value of the Cartmell crop. (Approximately \$4,500)

## Activity 2:

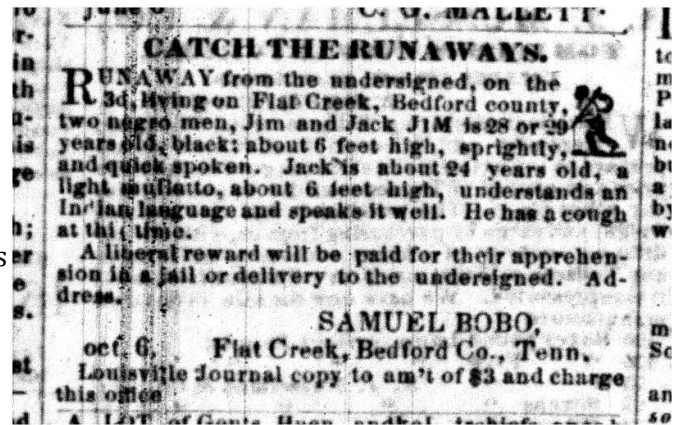
Have each student look at the Inventory of the Estate of Isaac Franklin from the Tennessee Supreme Court Case *William Franklin v. Descendants of Isaac Franklin* from 1852. Ask the students to work with their groups to determine what factors might have affected the monetary value assigned to each enslaved person. Allow students several minutes to read and discuss the document and then have the students discuss their conclusions. Make sure that the discussion covers the following key ideas:

- Age was an important factor in determining the value assigned to enslaved persons. Very old or very young people were assigned lower values because they were assumed to work less.
- Enslaved persons with special skills such as brick mason or blacksmith were assigned higher values than other enslaved persons.



### Activity 3:

Have students look at the runaway slave ads found at the end of this lesson plan. Ask students to consider why slave owners advertised rewards for runaways and what influenced the reward amounts offered. Discuss.



### Lesson Activities Continued: Day 2

Explain to students that in the previous activities they learned about how slave owners viewed enslaved people, but very little about the lives of enslaved people. Ask them brainstorm about the challenges of researching the lives of enslaved people. Key ideas should include:

- Enslaved people were forbidden by law to read and write so few documents written from the perspective of enslaved people exist.
- Enslaved people were not considered legal persons so documentation of their lives including birth records, death records and legal documents were not usually created.

Explain to students that “finding” enslaved people in the existing documents often requires historians to “read between the lines” or make inferences about the motivations and decisions enslaved people made.

### Activity 4:

Have students look at [Cartmell diary chart again](#), ask them to think about the productivity levels of Dick and Char[les]. Ask students to consider whether being a top producer was an advantage or disadvantage for an enslaved person. Students should cite evidence to support their conclusion.

Sample conclusions:

- Being a top producer was an advantage because it could mean rewards such as more food or better housing.
- Being a top producer was a disadvantage because if a person’s totals fell, he or she might be punished as an example to other enslaved people.

### Activity 5:

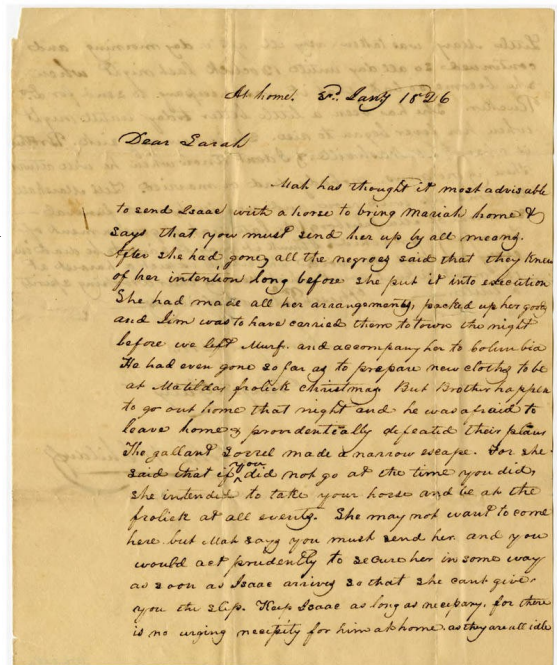
Have students review the runaway slave ads again (found on the next page). Ask them to draw inferences about the motivations of the runaways and or their escape plans based on the ads. Discuss.



**Activity 6:** Give each student copies of the letters from [Anderson Childress](#) and [John Childress](#) to Sarah Childress Polk. Tell the students that the incident described in the letters occurred early in James K. Polk's political career. In November of 1825, Polk won a seat in the United States Representatives after a difficult campaign. Polk left Sarah in Tennessee when he went to Washington to take his seat in March of 1826. Have students read the Anderson Childress letter first, then the John Childress letter before answering the guiding questions. Allow students 20-25 minutes to read and discuss the letters in their groups. Allow each group to share insights from the letters.

### Guiding Questions:

- Why did Mariah run away?
- What was Mariah's plan?
- How did the Childress family respond to Mariah's escape?



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### Culminating Activity:

See last page of this lesson plan for handout for the culminating activity.

Students will list 4 essential ideas about slave owners and enslaved people in Tennessee. Have students review the list of ideas they created during the introductory activity. Ask students to highlight any of their essential ideas that were not part of the original list.

Oct. 16--3.

27 South Wharves, Philadelphia.

### \$500 REWARD.

**M**Y servant JOHN, run away on the night of the 30th Sept. I will give \$100 for his arrest and secured in jail in this State, or \$250 for his arrest, and secured in any jail out of this State, and will give also, \$250 for the arrest and conviction of any person or persons, who have aided him in getting off. John is about 5 feet 6 inches high, very light color, long black bushy hair, rather a down or confused countenance, and might pass for a white man.

Oct. 22--2w.

D. T. SCOTT.

### NOTICE.

### CATCH THE RUNAWAYS.

**R**UNAWAY from the undersigned, on the 3d, living on Flat Creek, Bedford county, two negro men, Jim and Jack JIM is 28 or 29 years old, black; about 6 feet high, sprightly, and quick spoken. Jack is about 24 years old, a light mulatto, about 6 feet high, understands an Indian language and speaks it well. He has a cough at this time.

A liberal reward will be paid for their apprehension in a jail or delivery to the undersigned. Address.

SAMUEL BOBO,

Oct. 6, Flat Creek, Bedford Co., Tenn.

Louisville Journal copy to am't of \$3 and charge this office

**MAXEY, M'CLURE & CO.**  
Marketstreet, Nashville, Ten.

**\$50 Reward.**

**R**ANAWAY from the undersigned on the night of the 7th July, last., a **NEGRO WOMAN** named **PHERIBA**, copper color, about 6 feet high, well formed, her apparel not recollected except a green sun bonnet; full head of hair nearly straight. She has a husband living with **Cyrus Hattum** in **Columbia**. Said woman is about 22 years of age and very likely.



Also, a small girl named **Naney**, about 10 or 11 years of age, spare make, likely, often smiles when spoken to. She was raised by **Geo. W. Walker** of this city. When they left they carried their bed and clothing.

I will give fifty dollars for the **Negroes**, or \$25 for either of them delivered to me, or to **Williams & Glover**, **Nashville, Tennessee**.

**LANGDON HARRISON.**

Five miles south of **Nashville**.

July 18.

Name:

## Slavery in Tennessee Culminating Activity

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Directions: Using the knowledge you gained from the documents and class discussion, complete the statements below. Highlight any statements that were not part of the introductory activity.

Slave Owners in Tennessee	Enslaved People in Tennessee