



A House Divided: Slavery in the United States

LESSON 1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Slavery leads to a national divide

By 1860, the United States had nearly four million slaves, more than any other country in the world. Slavery, a system of forced labor, deprived many generations of African Americans of the inalienable rights defined by the Declaration of Independence—"life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Slavery first arrived in America in 1619. It existed in the northern and southern colonies but primarily flourished in the south, where large cash crops of tobacco, rice, and cotton were grown. Most slaves worked as field hands—planting, hoeing, and picking cotton and other cash crops. During the 1850s, there was an intense national debate over slavery between the Northern and Southern states. This debate ultimately led to the Civil War.

FEATURED RESOURCES

- *Sale of Slaves and Stock* broadside, 1852
- *Anti-Slavery!* broadside, c. 1855
- Analysis worksheet

Copies of these materials are provided at the end of the lesson. All primary sources are from the Chicago History Museum collection.

ILLINOIS STATE LEARNING STANDARDS

English Language Arts

Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

Goal 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information.

Social Science

Goal 14: Understand political systems, with an emphasis on the United States.

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals, and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States, and other nations.

A House Divided: Slavery in the United States

PRIMARY SOURCES: DESCRIPTIONS AND SUGGESTED ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

Use the worksheet (provided at the end of the lesson) to introduce your students to the two broadsides. If needed, explain that broadsides are advertisements intended for wide distribution. The questions below are provided for a more in-depth analysis.

● ***Sale of Slaves and Stock* broadside, 1852**

Selling slaves was a routine business in the South. Enslaved persons were sold individually or in groups for prices based on their age, sex, and skill. Prime field hands and skilled craftsmen fetched high prices, while the elderly and infirm sold for much less. Sales routinely broke up families, separating husbands from their wives and children from their parents.

- What is the range of ages of the slaves being sold? What types of skills are listed? What information is not included?
- How does the broadside illustrate the system of slavery?
- How does this broadside make you feel?

● ***Anti-Slavery!* broadside, 1855**

This broadside illustrates the growing division between the North and South on the subject of slavery, creating what Lincoln called “a house divided.” Abolitionists used broadsides, like this one, to publicize their meetings as they traveled from town to town. As the buying and selling of slaves continued unabated, and as the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 required all citizens to help recover runaway slaves, some Northern abolitionists proposed separating from the South.

- What is the slogan on the broadside? What does it mean?
- What methods did abolitionists use to spread their ideas?
- Why is there a blank space after “will speak at”?
- What kind of places would host an abolitionist meeting?

● **Analysis questions for this collection**

- How would you describe these broadsides?
- How are the broadsides different in tone and purpose?

A House Divided: Slavery in the United States

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Feel free to adapt this activity to meet the needs of your students. You may also duplicate these materials and share them with other educators.

Abolitionist meeting simulation

Educator note: This activity is best completed over two class periods.

Day 1: Analyze and compare the primary sources. Distribute the *Sale of Slaves and Stock* broadside. Discuss this source as a class, using the analysis worksheet and suggested analysis questions (see page 2). Next distribute the *Anti-Slavery!* broadside and hold a class discussion about the purpose of these kinds of meetings. How would the sale depicted in the first document fuel the anti-slavery sentiment of the speakers publicized in the second? You can also take a closer look at the second document using the analysis worksheet.

Day 2: Hold an abolitionist meeting. Within the broad umbrella of the abolitionist movement of the 1850s and 1860s, there were many different ideas about how to end slavery (including colonization, containment in the South with hopes of its eventual extinction, and immediate abolition). Discuss these positions in class or ask students to research them using the Internet and your textbook. Assign students roles as speakers and audience members. Each speaker on the panel should promote a different abolitionist solution. The audience members should ask questions and express their own opinions. After allowing time for preparation, use one class period to hold your simulated abolitionist meeting.

JOURNAL PROMPTS

Option 1: If you were an abolitionist and saw the *Sale of Slaves and Stock* broadside, how could you use it to support your anti-slavery arguments?

Option 2: How do you feel after examining these two broadsides? Formulate a creative response by writing a poem or drawing a picture.

LISTENING TO HISTORY

A House Divided history soundscape

Available at <http://www.chicagohistory.org/lincolnjuarezaudio>

This short audio file suggests the environment of a slave auction. You may play the soundscape at the start of the lesson to set the mood or prior to journal writing to inspire students' entries.

A House Divided: Slavery in the United States

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

The following resources are based on the lives of John and Mary Jones, two of Chicago's most influential and prominent black citizens in the late nineteenth century.

Great Chicago Stories: *Halfway to Freedom*

Available at <http://greatchicagostories.com/halfway/index.php>

Join Hannah as she arrives in Chicago during the 1850s at a stop on the Underground Railroad. She takes shelter with the Jones family and must cope with the dangers facing her even in this northern city.

History Lab: *African American Life in the Nineteenth Century*

Available at <http://www.chicagohistory.org/education/resources/history-lab>

Investigate the lives of John and Mary Jones. Interpret historical artifacts and discover the importance of oral histories while learning about the Black Laws of Illinois, their repercussions, and the fight to have them repealed.

Sale of Slaves and Stock.

The Negroes and Stock listed below, are a Prime Lot, and belong to the ESTATE OF THE LATE LUTHER McGOWAN, and will be sold on Monday, Sept. 22nd, 1852, at the Fair Grounds, in Savannah, Georgia, at 1:00 P. M. The Negroes will be taken to the grounds two days previous to the Sale, so that they may be inspected by prospective buyers.

On account of the low prices listed below, they will be sold for cash only, and must be taken into custody within two hours after sale.

No.	Name.	Age.	Remarks.	Price.
1	Lunesta	27	Prime Rice Planter,	\$1,275.00
2	Violet	16	Housework and Nursemaid,	900.00
3	Lizzie	30	Rice, Unsound,	300.00
4	Minda	27	Cotton, Prime Woman,	1,200.00
5	Adam	28	Cotton, Prime Young Man,	1,100.00
6	Abel	41	Rice Hand, Eyesight Poor,	675.00
7	Taney	22	Prime Cotton Hand,	950.00
8	Flementina	39	Good Cook, Stiff Knee,	400.00
9	Lanney	34	Prime Cotton Man,	1,000.00
10	Sally	10	Handy in Kitchen,	675.00
11	Maccabey	35	Prime Man, Fair Carpenter,	980.00
12	Dorcas Judy	25	Seamstress, Handy in House,	800.00
13	Happy	60	Blacksmith,	575.00
14	Mowden	15	Prime Cotton Boy,	700.00
15	Bills	21	Handy with Mules,	900.00
16	Theopolis	39	Rice Hand, Gets Fits,	575.00
17	Coolidge	29	Rice Hand and Blacksmith,	1,275.00
18	Bessie	69	Infirm, Sews,	250.00
19	Infant	1	Strong Likely Boy	400.00
20	Samson	41	Prime Man, Good with Stock,	975.00
21	Callie May	27	Prime Woman, Rice,	1,000.00
22	Honey	14	Prime Girl, Hearing Poor,	850.00
23	Angelina	16	Prime Girl, House or Field,	1,000.00
24	Virgil	21	Prime Field Hand,	1,100.00
25	Tom	40	Rice Hand, Lame Leg,	750.00
26	Noble	11	Handy Boy,	900.00
27	Judge Lesh	55	Prime Blacksmith,	800.00
28	Booster	43	Fair Mason, Unsound,	600.00
29	Big Kate	37	Housekeeper and Nurse,	950.00
30	Melie Ann	19	Housework, Smart Yellow Girl,	1,250.00
31	Deacon	26	Prime Rice Hand,	1,000.00
32	Coming	19	Prime Cotton Hand,	1,000.00
33	Mabel	47	Prime Cotton Hand,	800.00
34	Uncle Tim	60	Fair Hand with Mules,	600.00
35	Abe	27	Prime Cotton Hand,	1,000.00
36	Tennes	29	Prime Rice Hand and Cocahman,	1,250.00

There will also be offered at this sale, twenty head of Horses and Mules with harness, along with thirty head of Prime Cattle. Slaves will be sold separate, or in lots, as best suits the purchaser. Sale will be held rain or shine.

ANTI-SLAVERY!

"NO UNION WITH SLAVEHOLDERS."

A. T. F O S S
AND

J. A. HOWLAND,

Agents respectively of the Mass. and American

ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETIES,

Will speak at

COME AND HEAR.

