

LESSON PLAN – JOHN W. ANDERSON’S SLAVE PEN (GRADES 4-8)



The John W. Anderson Slave Pen at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

OBJECTIVE: The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center exhibits a slave pen once owned by John W. Anderson. Students will understand how many African Americans were considered property, void of human rights, by slave traders such as John W. Anderson.

CONTENT AREA: Social Studies

TIME ALLOTMENT: One class period (could be extended)

RATIONALE: Through comparison, vocabulary and critical thinking, students will analyze the effects of treating humans as property rather than as people.

VOCABULARY: Trade Market, Auction, Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Demand, Internal Slave Trade, Property, Staple Crop, Abolitionist

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

- 1) Make an inventory list of the items in your cabinet. Then review John W. Anderson's 1834 inventory (page 3 of this document). Examine it closely and see how Anderson's list differs from yours. Students should recognize that his list includes people. Discuss the inclusion of people and then introduce John W. Anderson's letter. (10 minutes)
- 2) Read John W. Anderson's letter. Since this is a primary source, make sure students have an understanding of the document, when it was written and under what circumstances. After reading the letter, work in pairs to complete questions on the back of the work sheet. (20 minutes)
- 3) Take note of the names of African Americans on the inventory list. You may also explore the difference in spelling in the primary source compared to today's grammar and spelling.
- 4) Have students write from one of the following perspectives:
 - a) slave trader
 - b) enslaved person
 - c) abolitionistStudents should use at least five facts from the discussion of John W. Anderson's slave pen letter as well as information supplied by text lessons.
- 5) After reviewing the primary and supplementary resources listed below, explain how artifacts can be used to teach lessons. Write at least five lessons we can learn from the slave pen story.

PRIMARY RESOURCES

Copy of John W. Anderson's Inventory and Letter to Thomas Marshall (see page 2)

John W. Anderson worksheet (see page 4)

SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

The Slave Pen

Visit our website to read a little background information on this core piece of our collection.

<https://freedomcenter.org/exhibits/the-slave-pen>

Online Exhibit: A Slave Pen Journey

Take a virtual tour of the Slave Pen on our Google Arts & Culture online exhibit. Dive deeper into the history of this structure along with other supporting artifacts.

<https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/a-slave-pen-journey/wQ2E2xxD>

COPY OF JOHN W. ANDERSON'S INVENTORY AND LETTER TO THOMAS MARSHALL

The names of enslaved African Americans contained in John W. Anderson's probate inventory:

Simon	Joshua	Ann
Bob	Matt	Addison
Phenton	William	Amada
William	John	Israel
John (epileptic)	John Wesley	George
Phillis	John Dimety	America (female)
Malinda and child	Mtilda	Mariah
Phebe	Mary Jane	Albert
Matilda	Mary Ann	Ghana (male)
Maria	Ann Harriett	Jana
Mahala		Hannah

Portions of a letter from Anderson to Thomas Marshall of Natchez, Mississippi:

"November 24, 1832

Dear Friend,

May next there should not be any more negroes brought to the state for sale and I think in the spring they will be brisk. Negroe men is worth in market at this time from \$550 to \$650 and field women from \$400 to \$425. I have sold 13 and had 3 to dye with collera, 2 men that cost \$900 one child worth \$100. The 16 cost \$5955 and the 13 I sold brought me \$7640...

I want you to find out and purchase all the negroes you can of a sertain description: men and boys from 12 to 25 years old and girls from 12 to 20 and noe children. Don't give more than \$400 to \$450 for men from 17 to 25 years, sound in body and mine, and likely boys from \$250 to \$350, girls from 15 to 20 \$300-\$325 and yonger...

...if there is any to be had you can git them

...sent to my house I will give you half of the cleare profits We will make on them. Or, Purchois them to my house and my overseet will take care of them amonge your friend and acquaintenance I think you might pick up 15 to 20 and that will be as much money as you...will make all year

Flour is worth 5 dollars and corn is worth one dollar per barrel.

Yours, John W. Anderson"

SOURCE: Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives; Public Records Division, Mason County Circuit, case file #11648

JOHN W. ANDERSON WORKSHEET

When farmer Ray Evers read about the new Underground Railroad Freedom Center opening in Cincinnati, he called the curators to say he had something they might want. Inside a barn on his Mason County, Kentucky farm was a storage shed that once had been a slave pen.

The wooden structure, with barred windows and shackle rings, turned out to be one of the few such structures still intact in the United States. But thousands of slave pens once dotted the Southern countryside. They were used in the early 1800s as holding cells, in preparation for slave auctions.

Questions

- 1) Why do you think Ray Evers thought the museum should have the slave pen?

- 2) What clues do you think Carl Westmoreland looked for to prove that the wooden structure was a slave pen?

- 3) Why is the story about the slave pen important?



Mr. Ray Evers



Mr. Carl Westmoreland, Sr. Historian and Curator of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.