

LESSON PLAN – JOHN W. ANDERSON’S SLAVE PEN (GRADES 9-12)



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 (page 4 of this document). (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) Focus on the work characteristics such as 'field woman' and the ages, which were childbearing ages. To get today's conversion of how much Anderson profited from the selling of 13 people, multiply \$7,640 by 25. For more exact conversions, you may search the web for "1832 conversion rates."
- 5) 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.
- 6) After reviewing the primary and supplementary resources (below), explain how economics played a part in the slave trade and the effect economics had on all involved. This essay should list at least five facts learned from Anderson's letter.

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:

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

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 purchaise 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

Questions

- 1) Compare and contrast John W. Anderson's letter to our present day speaking, spelling and grammar.

- 2) In the letter, Anderson talks about men and boys, and women and girls. What kind of characteristics does he give for the people mentioned? Name at least two characteristics.

- 3) Why do you think he focuses on the characteristics you identified in question 2?

At the end of the first paragraph, Anderson talks about how much money he received for the sale of 13 slaves. Write down the amount brought in by the selling of 13 people in the 'Original Total Profit' equation below. Ask your teacher for the current Conversion Rate. Multiply the original total profit by the conversion rate to solve for the profit in today's money.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \$ & \underline{\hspace{2cm}} & \times & \underline{\hspace{2cm}} & = & \$ & \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \\ \text{Original Total Profit} & & & \text{Conversion Rate} & & & \text{Total Profit in Today's Money} \end{array}$$

Do you think Anderson would be considered a rich man? Explain.

Activity

On a separate sheet of paper construct a journal entry describing the experience of one the following people:

- a) slave trader
- b) enslaved person
- c) abolitionist

Explain the rationale of the internal slave trade, the feelings of people involved in the slave trade and the feelings of people outside of the slave trade. Use the economics of the internal slave trade to explain why people would allow such trading to exist.