

LESSON ONE: THE SELLING OF SLAVES

INTRODUCTION

By the time of the American Revolution, 20 percent of the population of the thirteen American colonies was of African descent. The legalized practice of slavery occurred in every colony. The economic realities of the southern colonies, however, perpetuated the institution, which was first legalized in Massachusetts in 1641. During the Revolutionary War period, more than half of all African-Americans lived in Virginia and Maryland. Most of these blacks lived in the Chesapeake region, where they made up to 50 to 60 percent of the overall population. The majority, but not all, of these African Americans were slaves. In fact, the first official United States census, taken in 1790, indicated that 8 percent of the black population was free.

Enslaved African Americans were considered property and thus subject to being bought and sold. Slave auctions, resulting in the transfer of slaves from one owner to another, were regular occurrences during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

OBJECTIVES

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Explain the relationship between property and slavery in the eighteenth century.
2. Describe the activities surrounding an eighteenth-century slave auction.
3. Interpret the point-of-view of various primary source authors.
4. Read and interpret primary source materials.
5. Integrate technology into historical inquiry.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Watercolor: “Miss Fillis and child, and Bill, Sold at Publick Sale...”

Quote: Olaudah Equiano on the Selling of Slaves

Quote: Dr. George Pinckard on the Selling of Slaves

NoteFolio™ Files: PIC and SLAVE

TI-83 Plus

TI Keyboard

NoteFolio™ Application

NoteFolio™ Creator for the TI-83 Plus

NoteFolio™ Tip Sheet (Optional)

Linking Tip Sheet (Optional)

PROCEDURE

SETTING THE STAGE

1. Give students a copy of the watercolor “Miss Fillis and child, and Bill, Sold at Publick Sale....” Conduct a class discussion regarding the activity depicted in the watercolor.
2. Divide the class into groups of four students each. In each group, assign one of the following characters from the watercolor to each student: 1) Miss Fillis, 2) Bill,

3) the auctioneer, and 4) the slave buyers.

3. Distribute copies of the **PIC** and **SLAVE** NoteFolio™ files to students. Within their groups, ask students to assume the role of their assigned character and share their thoughts (from the perspective of the individual(s) they are portraying) about what is taking place in the watercolor scene.

While each group member shares their character's thoughts and feelings, the other group members should take notes in the NoteFolio™ file titled **PIC**. [NOTE: If further assistance in using the NoteFolio™ application is needed, refer to the NoteFolio™ Tip Sheet.]

4. After all four members of the group have shared their ideas, have students use the NoteFolio™ application to write a narrative that includes thoughts regarding all of the following questions:
 - What do you think is happening?
 - What is the role of the various characters?
 - What is their conversation about?
 - What is the relationship between the characters?
 - What will happen next to each of the characters in the picture?
 - What point(s) is the artist trying to convey?

Students should use the notes from their small group discussions to assist them in completing this narrative.

5. Conduct a whole-class discussion in which students share their reactions to the activity depicted in the watercolor. Students can share their written accounts by transferring their NoteFolio™ file to a teacher device for display on a view screen. [NOTE: For directions on transferring files, refer to the Linking Tip Sheet.]

STRATEGY

1. Give each student a copy of the Equiano and Pinckard primary source quotes describing the selling of slaves.
2. Have students read the quotes and, using the NoteFolio™ file titled **SLAVE**, write responses to the following questions:
 - How are the accounts different?
 - What are similarities between the quotes?
 - What conclusions can you make about the authors' points-of-view?
 - How are the authors painting different pictures with their words?
3. When each student has composed their answers to the questions, have them share their responses with a partner. Both students should add any new ideas resulting from the conversation to the list previously recorded in their NoteFolio™ file.

4. Conduct a class discussion about the information obtained from the watercolor and primary source quotes. What was the status of slaves in the colonial period? [NOTE: What should be evident is that slaves were considered and treated as property.]

EVALUATION

Using the information they have acquired, have the students construct a collage or create an illustration showing how slave auctions affected the lives and futures of all of the people involved in them.



“Miss Phillis and child, and Bill, Sold at Publick Sale...,” watercolor by Lewis Miller, Virginia, ca. 1853–1867.

QUOTE: OLAUDAH EQUIANO ON THE SELLING OF SLAVES

Olaudah Equiano (ca 1745– 1797) was the son of a tribal chief in the interior of Nigeria. He was eleven years old when he was taken as a slave in 1756. He was sold twice in Africa and a third time at a slave market on the Guinea coast. After reaching Barbados, he was sold to a Virginia plantation owner. He was later purchased by an English ship's captain. Olaudah learned English, became a skilled seaman, and was baptized. In 1766, he bought his freedom for £40. His autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, was written in 1789.

“Many merchants and planters now came on board though it was in the evening. They put us in separate parcels, and examined us attentively. They also made us jump, and pointed to the land, signifying we were to go there. We thought by this, we should be eaten by these ugly men, as they appeared to us; and, when soon after we were all put down under the deck again, there was much dread and trembling among us, and nothing but bitter cries to be heard all the night from these apprehensions, insomuch, that at last the white people got some old slaves from the land to pacify us. They told us we were not to be eaten, but to work, and were soon to go on land, where we should see many of our country people. This report eased us much. And sure enough, soon after we were landed, there came to us Africans of all languages. We were conducted immediately to the merchant's yard, when we were all pent up together, like so many sheep in a fold, without regard to sex or age....

We were not many days in the merchant's custody, before we were sold after their usual manner, which is this: On a signal given (as the beat of a drum), the buyers rush at once into the yard where the slaves are confined, and make choice of that parcel they like best. The noise and clamor with which this is attended, and the eagerness visible in the countenances of the buyers, serve not a little to increase the apprehension of terrified Africans, who may well be supposed to consider them as the ministers of that destruction to which they think themselves devoted. In this manner, without scruple, are relations and friends separated most of them never to see each other again. I remember, in the vessel in which I was brought over, in the men's apartment, there were several brothers, who, in the sale, were sold in different lots; and it was very moving on this occasion, to see and hear their cries at parting.”

Source: Equiano, Olaudah, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, New York: W. Durrell, 1791. Courtesy, Special Collections, Duke University.

QUOTE: DR. GEORGE PINCKARD ON THE SELLING OF SLAVES

Dr. George Pinckard, a member of the Royal College of Physicians in Great Britain, In 1795, he accompanied a British military expedition to the West Indies as deputy inspector general of the hospitals for the army. This entry comes from letters he wrote home about his experiences while in Barbados. He visited two slave ships, one American and one British. He later attended the sale of a cargo of slaves from a Dutch ship at the new town of Amsterdam in the West Indies. It was a festive day, a kind of “public fair.”

“The fair being opened, and the crowd assembled, these unpitied sable beings were exposed to the hammer of public auction. A long table was placed in the middle of a large room. At one end was seated the auctioneer, at the other was placed a chair for the Negroes to stand upon, in order to be exposed to the view of the purchasers; who were sitting at the sides of the table, or standing about the different parts of the room. All being in readiness, the slaves were brought in, one at a time, and placed upon the chair before the bidders, who handled and inspected them, with as little concern as if they had been examining cattle in Smithfield market. They turned them about, felt them, viewed their shapes and limbs, and looked into their mouths, made them jump and throw out their arms, and subjected them to all the means of trial as if dealing for a horse or other brute animal. Indeed the indelicacy shown towards the poor defenseless African, by some of these dealers in their species was not less unmanly and disgusting than it was insulting to humanity.

We were shocked to observe women in the room who had come to the fair for the express purpose of purchasing a slave. Nay, even children were brought to point the lucky finger and the boy or girl, thus chosen, was bought by papa at the request of superstitious mama to give young massa or missy... .

In the course of the sale, a tall and robust Negro, on being brought into the auction room, approached the table with a fine Negress hanging upon his arm. The man was ordered to mount the chair. He obeyed, though manifestly with reluctance. His bosom heaved and grief was in his eye. The woman remained in the crowd. A certain price was mentioned to set the purchase forward, and the bidding commenced.”

Source: Pinckard, Dr. George. *Notes on the West Indies*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1806. Courtesy, Library of Virginia.

TIP SHEET

NoteFolio™ Application

The NoteFolio™ Application allows the TI-83 Plus device to function as a simple word processor and interact with the word processor on your computer.

1. Begin by inserting the TI-83 Plus into the cradle and plugging the link cable into the keyboard.



2. Open the NoteFolio™ application by pressing the **[APPS]** key then choosing “NoteFolio” then pressing **[ENTER]**.



3. The program will open a new document. Pressing the **[GRAPH]** key will bring up the file menu that allows you to open a new document, open a previously saved document, or save the current document; choosing “Review” will show the document in a smaller font, and more of it will be visible on the screen.



4. Using the arrow keys, **[←]** **[→]**, will display other menus. The EDIT menu has copy and paste functions as well as a find function. The WRAP menu turns word wrap on and off.



KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

◆M	Display MENU	◆V	Paste
◆N	New file	◆F	Find
◆O	Open file	◆H	Help
◆S	Save file	◆A	Select all
◆R	Review file	◆←	Move cursor to the beginning of line
◆Q	Quit	◆→	Move cursor to the end of line
◆Z	Undo	◆↑	Move cursor to the beginning of file
◆X	Cut	◆↓	Move cursor to end of file
◆C	Copy	◆DEL	Insert toggle

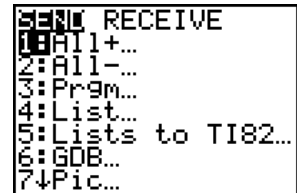
TIP SHEET

Transferring data from device to device

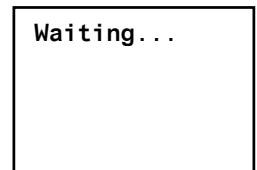
1. Begin by connecting the two calculators by a link cable using the outlet in the bottom of the device.



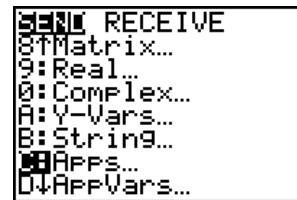
2. On the receiving calculator press the **[2nd]** key followed by the **[X,T,θ,n]** button.



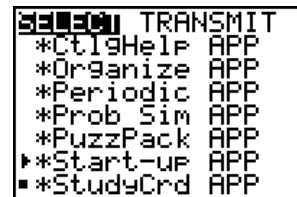
3. Then choose Receive and press **[ENTER]**. The calculator will wait for the transmission from the sending device



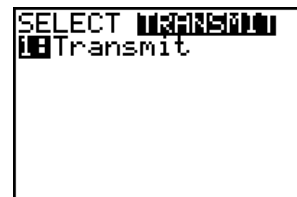
4. On the sending calculator press the **[2nd]** button followed by the **[X,T,θ,n]** button. To transfer an application choose “Apps” from the list. To transfer data for an application choose “AppVars” from the list



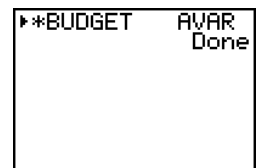
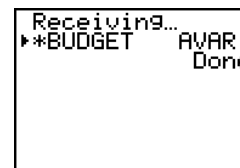
5. The screen will display the available applications or application variables. Move the **[↓]** key to the desired program and press **[ENTER]**. This will place a solid square in front of the desired program(s).



6. Press the **[▶]** key to choose TRANSMIT.



7. Press **[ENTER]** and the data will be transferred. Both calculators will reflect the transfer.



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This TI-83 Plus lesson was adapted from *Slavery: A Colonial Odyssey*, a lesson unit available from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. For more information on this lesson unit and other Colonial Williamsburg instructional materials and classroom resources, visit <http://www.history.org/teach>, or call 1-800-688-6473.

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