

## Lesson Two: *Becoming a Slave*

### Objective:

Students will discover the process and practices of an 1800s slave market through reading primary source documents that relate the experience of being in a slave market from various perspectives. Then, students will research and write their own short story.

**Materials:** *Being Bought and Sold* excerpts by Ingraham and ex-slaves; *Source Tracking* worksheet; *Peggie Peacock Kelly Letter*.

### Procedures:

#### Activity One: *Being Bought and Sold*

1. Distribute the excerpt from J.H. Ingraham's 1835 book, *The Southwest by a Yankee*. Have students read about this white man's visit to the Forks of the Road Slave Market in Natchez with his friend who purchased two slaves.
2. Divide the students into three or four groups and distribute the excerpts from the 1936-1941 Federal Writers' Project oral histories from ex-slaves. Discuss as a class the different perspectives of being bought and sold by a white man and the African American slaves.
3. To see additional transcripts of oral histories by ex-slaves, go to [http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital\\_archives/series/436](http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital_archives/series/436).

#### Activity Two: *Creative Writing Tactics*

1. After students have read the non-fictional accounts of slave markets, have them research and write their own fictional short story about a similar event.
2. Arrange for research time in the school library and any training that is necessary to help students locate research materials. Distribute the *Source Tracking* worksheet to students to assist them in organizing their notes.
3. Give students the opportunity to craft a short story based on their research about slave markets.

#### Extension Activity: *A Prince Among Slaves*

- View *Prince Among Slaves*, the true story of Abdul Rahman Ibrahima Sori, an African prince who was sold to slave traders, brought to Natchez, Mississippi, and sold into slavery. The film focuses on Ibrahima's journey from Africa to America, his life as a slave, and his struggle to gain freedom. Produced by Unity Productions Foundation in association with Spark Media and Duke Media, 2008. 60 minutes, color. Fourth grade to adult.

This film can be borrowed free of charge from the Mississippi History on Loan Collection. Go to <http://www.mdah.ms.gov/new/learn/classroom-materials/mississippi-history-on-loan-film-collection/> or contact the Outreach Programs Coordinator at 601-576-6997.

- Read *Prince Among Slaves: The True Story of an African Prince Sold into Slavery in the American South* by Terry Alford. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. 284 pages.

#### Extension Activity: *The Legacy of Slavery*

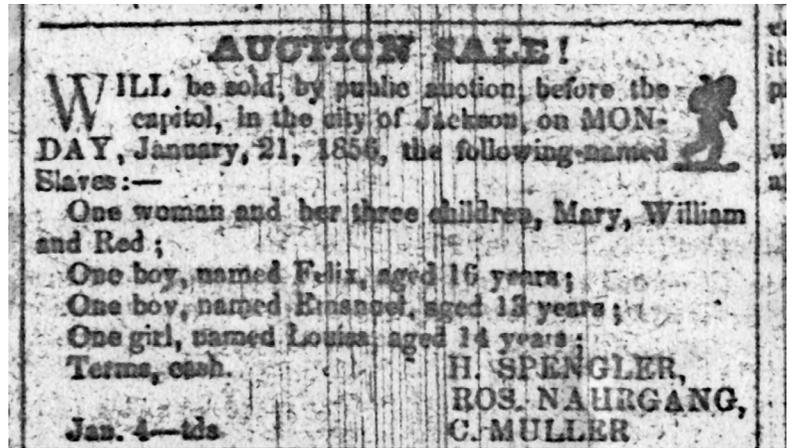
- Read the 1892 letter by Peggie Peacock Kelly asking for information about her family, from whom she was sold away from and had no later contact with. Discuss with your class the continuing ramifications of slavery upon African American families into the Reconstruction era and beyond.

## Being Bought and Sold

Read this excerpt from the 1835 book *The Southwest by a Yankee about a visit to the Forks of the Road Slave Market in Natchez*. This was the first book written by J.H. Ingraham, a white male from the north who settled in Mississippi in 1830 when he was around the age of 20. He later went on to publish several novels.

Then, read the excerpts of oral histories by ex-slaves about their own experiences being bought and sold. Collected between 1936 and 1941 by the Federal Writers' Project, these interviews were usually conducted by white women who interviewed the aging ex-slaves. For additional oral histories by ex-slaves go to [http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital\\_archives/series/436](http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital_archives/series/436).

Compare and contrast the different viewpoints of being in a slave market.



### AUCTION SALE!

Will be sold, by public auction, before the capitol, in the city of Jackson, on Monday, January 21, 1856, the following named slaves: -

- One woman and her three children, Mary, William, and Red;
- One boy, named Felix, aged 16 years;
- One boy, named \_\_\_\_\_, aged 13 years;
- One girl, named Louisa, aged 14 years;

Terms, cash.

H. SPENGLER

ROS. NAURGANG,

C. MULLER

Jan. 4 - tds

Jackson *Mississippian*, January, 1856

"This is the slave market," said my companion, pointing to a building in the rear; and alighting, we left our horses in charge of a neatly dressed yellow boy belonging to the establishment. Entering through a wide gate into a narrow court-yard, partially enclosed by low buildings, a scene of a novel character was at once presented. A line of negroes, commencing at the entrance with the tallest, who was not more than five feet eight or nine inches in height—for negroes are a low rather than a tall race of men—down to a little fellow about ten years of age, extended in a semicircle around the right side of the yard. There were in all about forty. Each was dressed in the usual uniform of slaves, when in market, consisting of a fashionably shaped, black fur hat, roundabout and trowsers of coarse corduroy velvet, precisely such as are worn by Irish labourers, when they first "come over the water;" good vests, strong shoes, and white cotton shirts, completed their equipment. This dress they lay aside after they are sold, or wear out as soon as may be; for the negro dislikes to retain the indication of his having recently been in the market. With their hats in their hands, which hung down by their sides, they stood perfectly still, and in close order, while some gentlemen were passing from one to another examining for the purpose of buying. With the exception of displaying their teeth when addressed, and rolling their great white eyes about the court—they were so many statues of the most glossy ebony. As we entered the mart, one of the slave merchants—for a "lot" of slaves is usually

accompanied, if not owned, by two or three individuals—approached us, saying “Good morning, gentlemen! Would you like to examine my lot of boys? I have as fine a lot as ever came into market.”—We approached them, one of us as a curious spectator, the other as a purchaser; and as my friend passed along the line, with a scrutinizing eye—giving that singular look, peculiar to the buyer of slaves as he glances from head to foot over each individual—the passive subjects of his observations betrayed no other signs of curiosity than that evinced by an occasional glance. The entrance of a stranger into a mart is by no means an unimportant event to the slave, for every stranger may soon become his master and command his future destinies. But negroes are seldom strongly affected by any circumstances, and their reflections never give them much uneasiness. To the generality of them, life is mere animal existence, passed in physical exertion or enjoyment. This is the case with the field hands in particular, and more so with the females than the males, who through a long life seldom see any other white person than their master or overseer, or any other gentleman’s dwelling than the “great hus,” the “white house” of these little domestic empires in which they are the subjects. To this class a change of masters is a matter of indifference;—they are handed from one to another with the passiveness of a purchased horse. These constitute the lowest rank of slaves, and lowest grade in the scale of the human species. Domestic and city slaves form classes of a

\* Male slaves of any age under forty are always denominated boys.

superior order, though each constitutes a distinct class by itself. I shall speak of these more fully hereafter.

“For what service in particular did you want to buy?” inquired the “trader of my friend, “A coachman.” “There is one I think may suit you, sir,” said he; “George, step out here.” Forthwith a light-coloured negro, with a fine figure and good face, bating an enormous pair of lips, advanced a step from the line, and looked with some degree of intelligence, though with an air of indifference, upon his intended purchaser.

“How old are you, George?” he inquired. “I don’t recollect, sir, ’zactly—b’lieve I’m somewere ‘bout twenty-dree.” “Where were you raised?” “On master R——’s farm in Wirginny.” “Then you are a Virginia negro.” “Yes, master, me full blood Wirginny.” “Did you drive your master’s carriage?” “Yes, master, I drove ole missus’ carriage, more dan four year.” “Have you a wife?” “Yes, master, I lef’ young wife in Richmond, but I got new wife here in de lot. I wishy you buy her, master, if you gwine to buy me.”

Then came a series of the usual questions from the intended purchaser. “Let me see your teeth—your tongue—open your hands—roll up your sleeves—have you a good appetite? are you good tempered? “Me get mad sometime,” replied George to the last query, “but neber wid my horses.” “What do you ask for this boy, sir?” inquired the planter, after putting a few more questions to the unusually loquacious slave. “I have held him at one thousand dollars, but I will take nine hundred and

seventy-five cash. The bargain was in a few minutes concluded, and my companion took the negro at nine hundred and fifty, giving negotiable paper—the customary way of paying for slaves—at four months. It is, however, generally understood, that if servants prove unqualified for the particular service for which they are bought, the sale is dissolved. So there is in general perfect safety in purchasing servants untried, and merely on the warrant of the seller. George, in the meanwhile, stood by, with his hat in his hand, apparently unconcerned in the negotiations going on, and when the trader said to him, "George, the gentleman has bought you; get ready to go with him," he appeared gratified at the tidings, and smiled upon his companions apparently quite pleased, and then bounded off to the buildings for his little bundle. In a few minutes he returned and took leave of several of his companions, who, having been drawn up into line only to be shown to purchasers, were now once more at liberty, and moving about the court, all the visitors having left except my friend and myself. "You mighty lucky, George" said one, congratulating him, "to get sol so quick." Oh, you neber min', Charly," replied the delighted George; "your turn come soon too."

"You know who you' master be—whar he live?" said another. "No, not zactly; he lib on plantation some whar here 'bout." After taking leave of his companions, George came, hat in hand, very respectfully, to his purchaser, and said, "Young master, you never be sorry for buy George; I make you a good servant. But—beg pardon, master—

but—if master would be so good as buy Jane—"Who is Jane?"—"My wife, since I come from Wirginny. She good wife and a good girl—she good seamstress an' good nurse—make de nice shirts and ebery ting."

"Where is she, George?" "Here she be, master," said he, pointing to a bright mulatto girl, about eighteen, with a genteel figure and a lively countenance, who was waiting with anxiety the reply of the planter. Opposite to the line of males was also a line of females, extended along the left side of the court. They were about twenty in number, dressed in neat calico frocks, white aprons and capes, and fancy kerchiefs, tied in a mode peculiar to the negress, upon their heads. Their whole appearance was extremely neat and "tidy." They could not be disciplined to the grave silence observed by the males, but were constantly laughing and chattering with each other in suppressed voices, and appeared to take, generally, a livelier interest in the transactions in which all were equally concerned. The planter approached this line of female slaves, and inquired of the girl her capabilities as seamstress, nurse, and ironer. Her price was seven hundred and fifty dollars. He said he would take her to his family; and if the ladies were pleased with her, he would purchase her. The poor girl was as much delighted as though already purchased; and, at the command of the trader, went to prepare herself to leave the mart. Some other negroes were purchased, several of whom appeared merely powerful combinations of bone and muscle,

Page 1  
241-Delta-Negro-Other Stories-Leflore County  
F.C.  
Ann C. Ellison

*very good!*  
f. Stories from Ex-Slaves

*Spoke  
ed* "I was born on the Washington plantation in Richmond Virginia August 16, 1830. The reason I am sho about my birth date, is'cause Mr. Wiley, the man I now live with, writ back to the co't house in Richmond where dey has all de records of the slaves dat used to be on de Washington plantation, so I could get dis old age pension.

Yas8m de Washington plantation was a large one. Slaves were raised on a large scale, it was a slave market you know. I guess there were two or three thousand slaves on de place. When dey had a sale de slaves were placed on a 'slave block' and auctioned off. The ones for sale would run down the road, dance, or stretch to see if their wind was all right.

They were not usually sold until they were twelve years old, however the age/<sup>of selling</sup> depended on their sex, size, ability etc., sometimes a special order would come in for one or two younger ones, like when a family wanted the colored chillun' to play with theirs, you know. The slave girls were trained to do different things such as: weave, cook, sew, and maid service. The ones who were really good, of course brought a higher price at market time. The smaller chillun was used to run errands about the place.



Jerry Eubanks

Ex-Slave- 91

"I was borned in Atlanta, but raised in the State of Mississippi.

"My mamy was named Alice Hamilton, and pa's name was Jerry Hamilton.  
I was named after him.

"I think dey was bred and borned in Atlanta. Yes'im I had brothers  
and sisters-six- but I can't remember bout none of dem but Warren.

"I was brought away over night, when I was twelve years old by a spec-  
ulator's hands and was brought to Columbus, Mississippi where I was sold to  
Joe Eubanks for \$1100. I was jest a small kid about twelve years old. A  
house was built just like cow's stalls where we stayed until sold on a  
high block.

"I don't know nuffin about my grandparents. When I knowed myself,  
dere was jist mammy and pa, three girls and one brother, but I can't bring  
up to my mind anything about de girls.

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41-A-1  
Page 1  
241-Slavery Time, Coahoma County  
FC  
Florence F. Montroy

7c  
RECEIVED  
NOV 17 1938  
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

"My mother, Charolette Williams, was a slave of Mr. Frank Williams of Deeson, Miss., Bolivar County. Frank Williams' father gave my mother and her family to Frank. My father and mother had been separated when they were sold to different owners. My mother's owner wouldn't sell my mother to my father's owner, and my father's owner wouldn't sell him to my mother's owner. So our family never did get together again since I was a child. My father died in slavery.

"There were nine children in our family and I am the only one left."

Reference: Charity Jones, (colored)  
Age 84  
Friars Point, Mississippi  
November 17, 1938

Oral History of Mary Jane Jones, age 94, Warren County, Mississippi  
Interview by Lois B. Lawrence

*Reference*  
*Ms*

Page 1  
200-Folklore, Mary Jane Jones, Warren County.  
FC  
Lois B. Lawrence

"I was born in Jefferson County on Little Deer Creek Plantation, and I was among the last litter of my mother's children, and she was the mother of sixteen head of children and raised eleven of them. You see, my mother was a wedding gift to my marster at the time of his marriage; was given to him as a kind of nest egg to breed slaves for him, and jast as soon as he carried her home, he bought a slave husband fur her and children came to both families thick and fast. My mother would have a baby every time my mistress would have one, so that my mother was always the wet nurse for my mistress.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## Source Tracking Worksheet

Oftentimes, when authors write fictional stories based on historical events they perform extensive research to ensure they include actual facts and depict appropriate character behavior. Fictional stories require many hours of research and the use of both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are first-hand accounts of an event from someone who witnessed the event. A primary source could be a diary, letter, or official government document, among other things. Secondary sources are written by authors removed from an event but who use primary sources to interpret and analyze it. Examples of secondary sources include biographies, magazine articles, and textbooks.

**Use the source tracking cards that follow to perform your own research in preparation to write a fictional account of a slave market. Look at the source card below to see how *The Southwest by a Yankee* could influence a story.**

NAME: EXAMPLE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: date source accessed \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Source *The Southwest by a Yankee* \_\_\_\_\_

Author J.H. Ingraham \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Publication New York \_\_\_\_\_ Publisher Harper's \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Publication 1835 \_\_\_\_\_ Library Call Number 917.6/In4s/v.1 \_\_\_\_\_ **Primary** or Secondary Source?

Two sentence synopsis of source:

The author describes the places and people he met and the events he witnessed during his travels throughout the southern United States in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This particular chapter focuses on his visit to Forks of the Road in Natchez, one of the largest and busiest slave markets in the South.

Quote and page number of the most important fact within source:

"Each was dressed in the usual uniform of slaves, when in market, consisting of a fashionable shaped, black fur hat, roundabout and trousers of coarse corduroy velvet, precisely such as are worn by Irish labourers, when they first come over the water, good vests, strong shoes, and white cotton shirts completed their equipment." page 193

How I will use this source in my writing:

I will use the above quote to describe the clothing worn by the slaves in my story.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Source \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Publication \_\_\_\_\_ Publisher \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Publication \_\_\_\_\_ Library Call Number \_\_\_\_\_ Primary or Secondary Source?

Two sentence synopsis of source:

Quote and page number of the most important fact within source:

How I will use this source in my writing:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Source \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Publication \_\_\_\_\_ Publisher \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Publication \_\_\_\_\_ Library Call Number \_\_\_\_\_ Primary or Secondary Source?

Two sentence synopsis of source:

Quote and page number of the most important fact within source:

How I will use this source in my writing:

Peggie Peacock Kelly Letter

Direct ans in Rev J. F. Nichol

Starkville, Miss. Jan. 31/92

Mr William Peacock,  
Shelbyville Tenn.

Dr Sirs or Friends

I am trying to find my mother  
and father. My father's name was nam  
ed Prince, and mother name was Rose  
they both belong to above Peacock.

They had four children when I was sold  
their names, Peggie, Isaac, John, and George  
and I had two half sisters belonging to old  
Thomas Peacock

I was sold to James Workman in Ky. where  
I lived 3 years then he sold me to Jack  
Lucker, and then was sold to Eben Davis  
in this state

Any information given of any or the  
whereabouts of them will be <sup>be</sup> thankfully  
rec'd. Let me know if they are dead or  
a live.

My name was Peggie one of the  
children of Prince and Rose.

Your inquiring friend,  
Peggie Kelly now  
but Peggie Peacock

## ***Peggie Peacock Kelly Letter***

Not much is known about Peggie Peacock Kelly but she was born a slave, most likely on William Peacock's Tennessee plantation in 1823. She was subsequently sold away from her family and then to a series of later owners. The 1900 federal census of Oktibbeha County lists her as a widowed housekeeper living in Starkville, Mississippi. There is no record of when she died. This rare letter from 1892, written when Kelly was in her 70s, is evidence of the continuing impact that slavery had on families. The letter also pre-dates by several decades an interest in African American genealogy, an area of research that did not become widespread until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and which continues today.

### **TRANSCRIPT:**

Direct ans in Rev. J.H. Nichols

Starkville, Miss. Jan. 31/92

Mr. William Peacock.  
Shelbyville Tenn.

Dear Sir or Friends

I am trying to find my mother and father. My father's name was named Prince, and mother's name was Rose.

They both belong to above Peacock.

They had four children when I was sold.

Their names Peggie, Isaac, John, and George and I had two half sisters belonging to Old Thomas Peacock.

I was sold to James Wortham in Ky. where I lived 3 years then he sold me to Jack Tucker, and then was sold to Evan Davis in this state.

Any information given of any or the where abouts of them will be thankfully rec'd Let me know if they are dead or alive.

My name was Peggie one of the children of Prince and Rose.

Your inquiring friend,

Peggie Kelly now

was Peggie Peacock