



Slavery at The Hermitage

Thematic Unit

Introduction

To many historians, Andrew Jackson was one of the most significant and powerful presidents in our nation's history. Yet his legacy is tarnished by the fact that at one point Andrew Jackson owned 150 slaves who lived and worked at The Hermitage. Enslaved hands built the very bricks of The Hermitage's mansion. How could a man who would become president buy slaves? What was their purpose? And what were their lives like in comparison to the Jacksons, their owners? In this education program, students will be able to examine these issues and more as we discuss slavery at The Hermitage.

Objectives

- A. Examine historical information from a variety of sources, including museum and library collections, letters, maps, documents, oral histories, firsthand accounts, and web sites.
- B. Analyze documentation to discover the causes and effects of slavery at The Hermitage, in the South, and on the United States.
- C. Understand, through dialogue, discussion, and primary sources, how slavery could ever have happened in a nation built on liberty and justice for all.

Background

Andrew Jackson purchased his first slave, Nancy, when he first moved to Tennessee in his early 20s. As Jackson gained land and (fleeting) fortune, so did his need for labor to tend his land and his crops. At the height of Jackson's time as a Great Planter, he owned approximately 150 slaves and 1200 acres.

Vocabulary

Archaeology
Chattel slavery
Cotton Gin
Cotton Press
Dwelling
Farm
Farm Management
Field Slaves
Great Planter
House Slaves
Indentured servitude
Land Speculation
Overseer
Plantation
Planter
Profit
Root Cellar
Runaway Slave
Screw Press
Self-sufficiency
Slave Labor
Slave Market

Suggested Pre-Program Activities

1. Have students write a newspaper article on the invention of the cotton gin, and its possibilities for agriculture in the South.
2. Using this [table](#), have students create a bar graph of the enslaved population of Tennessee from 1790-1860.
3. Have students draw a picture depicting their idea of Andrew Jackson as a slave owner.

Presentation Outline

Note to classroom instructor: this information will be covered within the education program.

1. Begin program by discussing how North Carolina's influence shaped slavery in Tennessee. Discuss "chattel" slavery – as opposed to "indentured servitude" or "debt slavery." What were the rights of these slaves?
2. Discuss Andrew Jackson's arrival into Tennessee from the Carolinas, and the purchase of his first slave, Nancy. Introduce the idea of a hierarchy of slavery

(Farmer vs. Planter vs. Great Planter) and the breakdown of how many slave owners fit into each category.

3. Jackson bought and sold slaves based on need, land acquisitions, and wealth. Show this by comparing significant events in Jackson's early life and career with his acquisition of slaves.
4. Introduce the concept of field slaves and house slaves. Upon Jackson owning 150 slaves, only about ten worked in the Mansion. What does that show as to the ultimate purpose of Jackson's slaves?
5. Using two French cartoons from 1910 about how they imagined life in 2000, introduce the question of why people would own slaves in the first place. Ask students for their thoughts on why slavery was so prevalent in the South. Why would someone buy a slave to work their field?
6. Introduce the various jobs of the enslaved at The Hermitage. What types of jobs were there to be done, and why would Jackson grow so many different crops, as well as raising livestock?
7. Jackson grew about 200 acres of cotton, but had almost 1000 more acres. Why wouldn't he grow more cotton? Discuss the risk involved in growing cotton in Nashville.
8. Discuss how labor-intensive of a crop cotton was, from planting, hoeing, picking, ginning, baling, pressing, and shipping. How was all this done? Introduce Jackson's trusted slaves, Squire and Ben, who were to be the only ones to operate the gin and press. Where would Jackson ship his cotton? Discuss how cotton was exported from New Orleans to Charleston, New York, Boston, and then to Europe.
9. Discuss Northern exports. What was it the Northern states were exporting? What was the labor force in the North – who was working in these factories? European immigrants who were not considered property, but certainly lived in poverty.
10. Introduce the idea of the Northern states profiting from slave labor in the cotton fields. Discuss the importance of cotton on the textile industry, which was found extensively in New England. Introduce Samuel Smith, to whom Jackson referred as the "Father of American Manufactures." Discuss how everybody, even the North, profited from the labor of slaves in the South.
11. Return to The Hermitage. Where would the enslaved people live? Discuss the slave dwellings of The Hermitage, and the rooms each structure would contain. Discuss how the kitchen was the center of the house, as it provided food, light, and heat (in the winter – what would be the hardship in the summer?). Discuss how each slave dwelling would house 5-8 (or more) family members.
12. The slaves lived near where they worked, so introduce the Field Quarter, and why Jackson replaced the buildings with brick structures in 1829.
13. Introduce Jackson's practice of Farm Management, keeping families together. Why would he do this? To be good to his slaves, or to prevent them from running away? Read quote from Hannah Jackson, one of Andrew's slaves, on how Jackson treated she and her husband Aaron. What does this say about Jackson's treatment of his slaves?
14. Read from Jackson's 1804 advertisement in a Nashville newspaper. Discuss.

15. Explain the role of the overseer. Why would Jackson have a go-between between himself and the slaves? Read portion of letter from Jackson to overseer Graves Steele – what does this indicate to students about his interest in their well-being?
16. Explain how Jackson, on his deathbed in 1845, said, “I go but a short time before you, and I want to meet you all in heaven, both white and black.” Is this reflected in the artist’s depiction of his death?
17. Introduce Alfred, who was born into slavery at The Hermitage and worked until the Emancipation, and then worked as a paid employee of The Hermitage, and as a tour guide when The Hermitage opened as a museum in 1889.
18. Explain how we know what we do about slavery at The Hermitage – through primary sources like letters, interviews, photographs, and archaeology. Explain the importance of archaeology as detectives into others’ lives.
19. Discuss why we talk about slavery today. Even though it’s a terrible chapter in our nation’s history, we must ensure that it doesn’t happen again.

Suggested Post-Program Activities

1. Pair students up and have them write letters to each other – one from the perspective of a European immigrant working in a textile mill, and one from the perspective of a slave at The Hermitage.
2. On a map, have students trace the process of cotton production, from planting to exporting.
3. Have students re-draw Andrew Jackson’s death-bed scene based on his quote.
4. Ask students to research and find descendants of enslaved people, and create an oral history on how slavery has impacted their lives.

Selected Bibliography

Burstein, Andrew. *The Passions of Andrew Jackson*. Vintage Books, 2003.

Johnson, Walter. *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market*. Harvard College, 1999.

Lamon, Lester C. *Blacks in Tennessee, 1791-1970*. University of Tennessee Press, 1981.

Remini, Robert V. *Andrew Jackson: Volumes I-III*. Johns Hopkins, 1981.

Web Links

19th Century U.S. Immigration Statistics

(<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/immigration-statistics.htm>)

Andrew Jackson Papers Project (UT-Knoxville)

(<http://thepapersofandrewjackson.utk.edu/>)

Blackstone River Valley (National Park Service)
(<http://www.nps.gov/blac/historyculture/index.htm>)

The New Americans (PBS)
(http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/foreducators_lesson_plan_04.html)

Region of Birth of the Foreign Population, 1850-1990 (Census Records)
(<http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab02.html>)

Slavery at The Hermitage
(http://www.thehermitage.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=36&Itemid=49)

Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture (Slavery entry)
(<http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?EntryID=So44>)

Images & Resources

Alfred Jackson
(http://www.thehermitage.com/images/stories/_reportpix/AlfredJackson.jpg)

Andrew Jackson (1828)
(http://www.thehermitage.com/images/stories/_reportpix/JacksonCivilian1828.jpg)

Children in a textile mill
(<http://fashioninganethicalindustry.org!/file/oldhistory.jpg>)

Hannah Jackson
(http://www.thehermitage.com/images/stories/_reportpix/HannahJackson.jpg)

Immigrants arriving at Ellis Island
(<http://asoto97.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/emigrants-arriving-ellis-island.jpg>)

Workers at Slater Mill
(<http://www.fabrics.net/colpics/8slatermill.jpg>)