

What's a Slave's life worth?

Subject

Social Studies
Language arts

Grade 5- 8

Summary

Students will gain an understanding of what it means to be human property and identify the reasons a slave would run away.

Overall

Expectations

Students will read non-fiction material and explain their interpretation of it.

Specific

Expectations

Students will develop an understanding of the hardship of Slaves during Florida's plantation period (1763 – 1865).

Students will answer questions about a Slave Reward notice posted in a local newspaper.

Author

Kim Saunders
Adapted from material produced by US National Park Service/Timucuan Ecological & Historic Preserve website.

BACKGROUND

Slave life was incredibly harsh and cruel. Plantation Owners who purchased slaves could do with them as they pleased. Slave families could easily be separated by sale. Slaves were unable to choose the type of work they did and this meant they could be assigned to toil in the fields in August (complete with- extreme heat, thunderstorms, biting insects, etc.). Slaves could not read or write and many owners did not want them to learn.

What choices did slaves have? Running away was often one. However, slaves who thought running away was the answer were often caught and killed.

ACTIVITIES

Cedar Point is located on Black Hammock Island, which is a neighboring island to Fort George Island, where the Kingsley Plantation is located. Below is a copy of a notice printed in the local paper, *The Jacksonville Courier*. It was also posted in a common area in town.

Read the reward flyer and answer the questions below.

Ten Dollars Reward

Ran away from the subscriber, a *Negro* man named *Charles* and a *Negro* woman named *Doras*. The man is about forty years old and the woman is about thirty-eight. The man is very black – about five feet nine inches in height with African marks on his face of his native country. The woman is about five feet and rather thick set. Any person returning them shall receive the above reward.

Henry W. Maxey

Cedar Point, March 4

1w10

Jacksonville Courier

Questions

1. In the reward notice, the word “subscriber” is used. Identify the “subscriber” (hint: who would want his slaves back?)
2. Why is Mr. Maxey bothering to place an ad in the local Jacksonville newspaper for a couple of runaway slaves?
3. Consider how the two slaves are to be identified compared to how people are identified if they are “wanted” by the police today? Explain the difference.
4. The life Charles and Doras endured for many years was incredibly harsh. They lived on a Plantation where their Owner made their lives miserable. Their only son was torn away from them and sent away. Mr. Maxey controlled their lives. They had no choice about anything in their lives. Their lives were not their own.

After running for days and hiding in the swamps, (where the dogs couldn't pick up their scent), Charles and Doras have finally found a little hope. They have met up with 2 people from the Underground Railroad who will help them escape to freedom. Tell the story of Charles and Doras's life and include what happens to them after they get “onboard the Underground Railroad”.

Teachers, this activity was adapted from an activity at the website listed below. Visit http://www.nps.gov/timu/education_guide/general_plantation/gp_activities_home.htm to see other activities that may be relevant to your classroom activities.