

# Thinking Like a Historian: Slavery in Texas

## **LESSON OVERVIEW:**

In this lesson, students work collaboratively to analyze four primary sources related to slavery, the domestic slave trade, and resistance. This lesson should follow some general instruction about slavery and the domestic slave trade and would work well situated in a unit covering the 1850s so that students can situate the primary sources within the larger historical context. Using documents related to one enslaver in Austin County, Texas (present day Waller County) students will make inferences and draw conclusions about what questions these sources raise about slavery and resistance on the eve of the Civil War.

## **GRADE:**

5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. history

## **TIME:**

1-2 60-minute class period(s). (Depending on schedule and pacing.)

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVE:**

Students will evaluate primary sources to discern what they reveal about slavery and resistance.

## **COMMON CORE STANDARDS (Grade 6-8):**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2  
*Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.*
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4  
*Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.*
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9  
*Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.*

## **TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS (TEKS):**

- Compare the effects of political, economic, and social factors on enslaved people and free people of color (8.7B)
- Explain the central role of the expansion of slavery in causing sectionalism, disagreement over states' rights, and the Civil War (8.8B)
- The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including technology. The student is expected to:
  - ☞ Differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about the United States (8.29A)
  - ☞ Analyze information by applying absolute and relative chronology through sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions (8.29B)
  - ☞ Support a point of view on a social studies issue or event (8.29E)
  - ☞ Evaluate the validity of a source based on corroboration with other sources and information about the author (8.29F)

## **MATERIALS/PREPARATION:**

- Make sets of handouts that include one of each document. Label the sets 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A, 2B, 2C, etc. (If you include additional documents, adjust your numbering.)
- Primary Source Analysis Sheet (In classrooms with 1:1 devices, teachers might consider creating a Google Form or uploading the primary documents into Perusal, or similar program, for digital and/or collaborative analysis.)
- Pen/pencil

## **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:**

- How did enslaved people resist enslavement?
- What can runaway slave ads tell us about enslaved people's lives?
- How did Southerners' growing reliance on slavery shape their response to resistance?

### **INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH:**

#### 1) Warm-Up:

- Project the image of the "Manifest of Slaves" document.
- Ask students to look at the document. What can they figure out about the document?
  - They might struggle to read the document. This is ok. It might lend itself to a discussion about how historians must rely on sometimes unreliable information or come to different interpretations about what something says or means. This is a great discussion to get them to think about how history is written.
  - Key details they might identify:
    - Lucinda
    - Female
    - 15
    - 5 feet 1 inch (height)
    - Class: Black
    - Shippers or Owners: Fellowes & Co.
    - Residence: J.E. Kirby, Austin Co. Texas,
    - E.B. Nichols & Co.
    - Peel & Dumble Houston
    - Shippers
    - Fellowes & Co.
    - 25<sup>th</sup> May 1858
    - Rathburn
    - Galveston
- Have students hypothesize and discuss with a partner: 1) *what* is this record? 2) *what* is it showing? 3) *why* is it important?
  - Where was she brought to Galveston from? (A: New Orleans)
  - Why was this young girl brought to Texas? Did she have a choice? What do you think this experience might have been like for her?
  - Situate this manifest within the larger discussion about the domestic slave trade, westward expansion, the annexation of Texas, and the economic factors that connected them.

2) Distribute primary source documents.

3) Give students time to read their primary source and to annotate the document.

4) Move students into Breakout Groups based on the LETTER on their handout. All "A"s will meet in one group, all "B"s will meet in one group, and all "C"s will meet in one group. This will create groups of students who all read/analyzed the *same* document. (Depending on the size of your class you might sub-divide these groups to encourage discussion.)

5) Give each Breakout Group the Primary Source Analysis Focus Questions for their source. Give students time to discuss and answer the questions. (Amount of time for this step depends upon students' skill levels.) (Depending upon grade/skill level, you might consider using the Primary Source Analysis Worksheet *instead* of the Focus Questions.)

6) Then move students into their Smaller Groups based on the NUMBER on their primary source. All 1s will meet together, 2s will meet together, and so on. There should be three students in each Smaller Group and at least one student with *each* document in *each* group. (For accommodations, consider assigning two students to each document so when students meet with their Smaller Groups, there are 6 students in the group instead of 3... remember to change how you label the primary source handouts if you do this.)

7) In the Smaller Group, have each student take a turn describing and explaining their document. (You might consider displaying each document one at a time and having a pre-set amount of time for groups to discuss each document. This keeps students focused and keeps the class on pace.)

8) Once each group has discussed all the documents with each other, ask them to make connections between the documents.

- Identify common people—J.E. Kirby is the common named element in all the documents (including the ship's manifest of slaves); Taylor and Bill appear in two of the ads. They might also be recorded on the census record, but we can't know for sure. Why?
  - Why might we conclude that Taylor had successfully escaped? Can we know for sure? Why not?
  - Lucinda (from the warm-up) is likely one of the people recorded on the census. How does knowing someone's name change what we know (or think we know) about their experience?
  - Ask them to consider what information remains unknown. What questions are not answered by their primary sources.
  - What do these documents reveal about slavery that you might not have learned anywhere else?
- 9) Synthesis/Closure Options:
- Class discussion—engage in a whole group discussion centered on the questions posed above.
  - Exit ticket—have each student write a short post-it conveying their “take away” from what they learned.
  - Write a paragraph—ask each student/group to write a short paragraph explaining what they learned and why it is important.

## Document A1

G.W. Perkins & Co. published *The Washington American* from 1855-1857 in Washington, Texas. This weekly newspaper covered local, state, and national news.

**RAN AWAY,**

**F**ROM the subscriber, three negro boys, described as follows, to-wit: BILL, a boy of yellow complexion, about 27 years of age; five feet eleven inches high, with a slit in one nostril.

TAYLOR, a very black boy, aged about thirty years; five and a half feet high, with a coarse voice and wild look.

HENRY, a boy of yellow complexion, aged about thirty; five feet seven inches high, and heavy built. The two latter boys may be together.

REWARD, \$50 each, if caught West, or \$25, if caught East of the Cororado. These boys perhaps, have passes, as one of them is a good scribe. I wish them taken, pass or no pass, wherever found. J. E. KIRBY,  
Rock Island P. O., Austin co., Texas.  
(v2-n21-tf)

*The Washington American* (Washington, TX), April 21, 1857.

## RAN AWAY,

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TAYLOR, a very black boy, aged about thirty years; five and a half feet high, with a coarse voice and wild look.

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Rock Island P.O., Austin co., Texas  
(v2-n21-tf)

Document A2

W Nov. 6 '58--n13v10--3m.

**Runaway Negroes**

**A**BOUT twelve months ago, a negro man ran away from me named Taylor, aged 30, very dark color, upper front teeth out, five feet eleven inches high. He will deny his name and owner.

—ALSO—

Recently, 2 dark colored negro men, aged about thirty, named John and Dan, about five feet nine inches in height, and a negro named Bill, aged about thirty, dark copper color, prominent forward, flat split nose, and about six feet high. These negroes are making for Mexico.

A liberal reward will be paid for their delivery to either of my overseers on either of my plantations on the Brazos, Austin county, or confinement in jail.

n13v10-3m. J. E. KIRBY.  
Hempstead, Austin Co.

ABOUT twelve months ago, a negro man ran away from me named Taylor, aged 30, very dark color, upper front teeth out, five feet eleven inches high. He will deny his name and owner.

—ALSO—

Recently, 2 dark colored negro men, aged about thirty, named John and Dan, about five feet nine inches in height, and a negro named Bill, aged about thirty, dark copper color, prominent forward, flat split nose, and about six feet high. These negroes are making for Mexico.

A liberal reward will be paid for the delivery to either of my overseers on either of my plantations on the Brazos, Austin county, or confinement in jail.

N13v10-3m J.E. KIRBY  
Hempstead, Austin Co.

Document A3

Page No. 40  
 SCHEDULE 2. Slave Inhabitants in Hempstead Precinct in the County of Austin State Texas  
 of Texas, enumerated by me, on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of June, 1860. Jerry L. Wood Ass't Marshal.

1	NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.			DESCRIPTION.				7	8	9	NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.			DESCRIPTION.				8	9
	2	3	4	5	6	1	2				3	4	5	6	7				
	Number of Slaves.	Age.	Sex.	Color.	Fugitives from the State.	Number manumitted.	Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.	No. of Slave houses.			Number of Slaves.	Age.	Sex.	Color.	Fugitives from the State.	Number manumitted.	Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.	No. of Slave houses.	
1	1	40	M	W					7	William Barnett	1	22	F	W					2
2	1	43	F	W						"	2	18	M	W					3
3	1	32	F	W						"	1	20	F	W					4
4	3	25	M	W						"	1	15	M	W					5
5	2	23	F	W						"	1	13	F	W					6
6	1	16	F	W						"	1	1	F	W					7
7	1	14	M	W						H. L. Rankin	1	46	M	W					3
8	1	11	F	W						"	2	25	M	W					8
9	1	11	M	W						"	1	20	M	W					9
10	2	6	F	W						"	1	35	F	W					10
11	2	4	M	W						"	2	26	F	W					11
12	2	3	F	W						"	2	44	F	W					12
13	2	2	M	W						"	1	8	F	W					13
14	1	1	F	W						"	1	3	F	W					14
15	1	45	F	W					4	"	1	5	M	W					15
16	2	52	M	W						"	1	3	M	W					16
17	1	40	F	W						S. W. Allen	6	26	M	W					6
18	2	35	F	W						"	6	26	F	W					18
19	1	12	F	W						"	7	12	M	W					19
20	1	14	F	W						"	1	6	F	W					20
21	1	14	M	W						"	4	2	M	W					21
22	2	11	F	W						J. E. Kirby	5	22	M	W					30
23	4	7	F	W						"	30	30	M	W					23
24	2	3	F	W						"	21	15	M	W					24
25	2	2	F	W						"	15	5	M	W					25
26	1	1	F	W						"	4	22	F	W					26
27	1	38	M	W					3	"	12	25	F	W					27
28	2	36	M	W						"	22	15	F	W					28
29	1	16	M	W						"	25	6	F	W					29
30	2	6	M	W						J. B. White	1	28	M	W					14
31	1	1	M	W						"	1	20	F	W					31
32	3	32	F	W						"	1	24	F	W					32
33	1	28	F	W						"	1	60	M	W					33
34	2	13	F	W						"	4	38	M	W					34
35	2	6	F	W						"	3	22	M	W					35
36	2	1	F	W						"	2	17	M	W					36
37	1	32	F	W					1	"	3	13	M	W					37
38	1	9	F	W						"	2	12	F	W					38
39	1	32	M	W					1	"	4	21	F	W					39
40	1	12	M	W						"	4	35	F	W					40

No. of owners, \_\_\_\_\_ No. of male slaves, 135 No. fugitives, \_\_\_\_\_ No. deaf and dumb, \_\_\_\_\_ No. insane, \_\_\_\_\_  
 No. of houses, \_\_\_\_\_ No. of female slaves, 122 No. manumitted, \_\_\_\_\_ No. blind, \_\_\_\_\_ No. idiotic, \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total slaves, 257

1860 U.S. Federal Census, Slave Schedule, Austin County, Texas.

## Document A3 Transcribed

SCHEDULE 2.—Slave Inhabitants in Hempstead District in the County of Austin State  
of Texas, enumerated by me, on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of June, 1860. Jerry Cloud Ass't Marshal.

NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS	Number of Slaves	DESCRIPTION.			Fugitive from the State	Number Manumitted	Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.	No. of Slave houses.	NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS	Number of Slaves	DESCRIPTION.			Fugitive from the State	Number Manumitted	Deaf & dumb, blind, insane, or idiotic.	No. of Slave houses.
		Age.	Sex.	Color.							Age.	Sex.	Color.				
Mary H	1	40	M	B			7	William Cornett	1	23	F	B				2	
" "	1	43	F	B					2	18	M	B					
" "	1	32	F	B					1	20	F	B					
" "	3	25	M	B					1	15	M	B					
" "	2	23	F	B					1	13	F	B					
" "	1	16	F	B					1	1	F	B					
" "	1	14	M	B				H S Bankin	1	40	M	B				3	
" "	1	11	F	B					2	25	M	B					
" "	1	11	M	B					1	20	M	B					
" "	2	6	F	B					1	35	F	B					
" "	2	4	M	M					2	20	F	B					
" "	2	3	F	M					2	14	F	B					
" "	2	2	M	M					1	8	F	B					
" "	1	1	F	M					1	3	F	B					
M. J. Hanna	1	65	F	B			4		1	5	M	B					
" "	2	52	M	B					1	3	M	B					
" "	1	40	F	B				N N Allen	6	26	M	B		6		6	
" "	2	35	F	B					6	26	F	B					
" "	1	17	F	B					7	12	M	B					
" "	1	14	F	B					1	6	F	B					
" "	1	14	M	B					4	2	M	B					
" "	2	11	F	B				J E Kirby	5	42	M	B				30	
" "	4	7	F	B					30	30	M	B					
" "	2	3	M	B					21	15	M	B					
" "	2	2	F	B					15	5	M	B					
" "	1	1	F	M					4	42	F	B					
Y. G. Lipscomb	1	38	M	B			3		17	25	F	B					
" "	2	36	M	B					22	15	F	B					
" "	1	16	M	B					25	6	F	B					
" "	2	6	M	B				T. B. White	1	75	M	B				14	
" "	1	1	M	B					1	70	F	B					
" "	3	32	F	B					1	70	F	B					
" "	1	28	F	B					1	60	M	B					
" "	2	13	F	B					4	35	M	B					
" "	2	6	F	B					3	22	M	B					
" "	1	1	F	B					2	17	M	B					
Rebecca Woods	1	37	F	B			1		3	13	M	B					
" "	1	9	F	B					2	12	F	B					
John Kirby	1	32	M	B			1		4	21	F	B					
" "	1	12	M	B					4	35	F	B					
No. of owners _____		No. of male slaves _____		135		No. fugitive _____		No. deaf and dumb _____		No. insane _____							
No. of houses _____		No. of female slaves _____		135		No. manumitted _____		No. blind _____		No. idiotic _____							
		Total slaves		270													

## Primary Source Analysis Focus Questions Document A1: "Ran Away"

1. Who placed this ad in the newspaper?
2. When was this ad published?
3. Bill is described as having "a slit in one nostril." Why might he have such a scar?
4. Why might Taylor and Henry be together? What does it imply that Bill was not thought to be with them?
5. Why do you think these three men are described as being "about" 27 or 30 years old?
6. The ad states that there is a reward of \$50 each if caught west of the Colorado River and \$25 each if caught east of the Colorado River. In 1857, \$1 was the same as about \$35 today. How much would the rewards offered be in today's money?
7. The ad says that they might have "passes" with them because one of them "is a good scribe." Why did enslaved people need passes to travel?
8. A *scribe* is someone who knows how to write. What does it suggest that one of these men knew how to write? How would that have helped them escape?

**Primary Source Analysis Focus Questions**  
**Document A2: “Runaway Negroes”**

1. Who placed this ad in the newspaper?
  
2. When was this ad published?
  
3. Why might it be important for the person placing the ad to include the detail that Taylor was missing his upper front teeth?
  
4. How long has Taylor been gone?
  
5. Why do you think John, Dan, and Bill are described as being “about” 30-years-old?
  
6. Why do you think they were headed to Mexico?

## Primary Source Analysis Focus Questions

### Document A3: 1860 U.S. Federal Census

1. A *census* is record counting all the people living in a certain place at a certain time. When was this census record created?
2. Who, specifically, was this record created to count?
3. Column 1 identifies the name of the enslaver. Look at lines 1 and 37 in the first column. What is unusual about these two people when compared to some of the others?
4. Census takers recorded enslaved men, women, and children according to their age, sex, and skin tone. Find J. E. Kirby. According to this census, how many men, women, and children did Kirby enslave?
5. According to this census, how many 30-year-old men did J. E. Kirby enslave in 1860?
6. What is unusual about the ages listed for the people who Kirby enslaved?
7. Column 9 identifies how many cabins or “slave houses” were on each enslaver’s property. How many slave houses were on Kirby’s property? Approximately how many people would have been forced to share a house?
8. Think about your answer to Question 7. What can you infer based on this information about life for enslaved people on the Kirby plantation?

## Primary Source Analysis Worksheet

### **CATEGORIZE**

**What is this document?** *Check all that apply.*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Private Letter    | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislation/Law/Act |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Court Document    | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Announcement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement     | <input type="checkbox"/> Speech              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper Article | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____         |

### **OBSERVE**

*Record any information you have about where and when it appeared.*

Where is it from?

When was it created?

Who created it?

Are there words, phrases, or things that jump out to you in this document? If so, what.

### **ANALYZE & INFER**

What is the purpose of this document? Why was it created?

Based on this document, what can you infer about the time and place in which it was written?

What historical events happened at the time this document was created?

Are there names in this document? What can you conclude from the way they're mentioned?

### **CONSIDER**

What questions do you have about this document?

Where might you go to find out more about this document?