

A LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PRIMARY SOURCE STARTER

SCENE INVESTIGATION: A SLAVE AUCTION AT THE SOUTH

Quick and easy activity ideas to start using Library of Congress primary sources in the classroom

Teacher Instructions

Goal

Students will explore the drawing by Theodore R. Davis and begin to think critically about the time period and why this sketch was created.

Background

The primary source provided is from the Library of Congress. It shows a slave market. The artist Theodore R. Davis, was a writer and artist for the New York City, New York publication called the “Harper’s Weekly.” The artist was born in Boston, Massachusetts and served on the staff of the Union General John Logan. This sketch was published in “Harper’s Weekly” on July 13, 1861. The Civil War had just begun. The southern states had officially seceded from the Union and the battle had begun at Bull Run, where the south was victorious. Harper’s Weekly began publication in 1857 and embedded writers and artists with regiments of the Civil War in order to offer reports on the war to the public.

Activities

Teachers can have students:

- Examine the drawing and record what they see, how they feel, and what they would here
- Speculate the reasoning behind Theodore R. Davis drawing the image
- Support their speculations with thoughts and background evidence

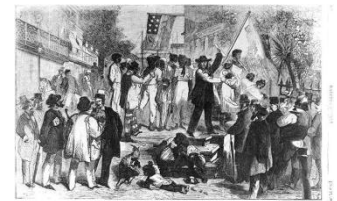
You can also use [primary source teacher guides and analysis tools](#) from the Library of Congress to help students to complete an in depth analysis of the drawing.

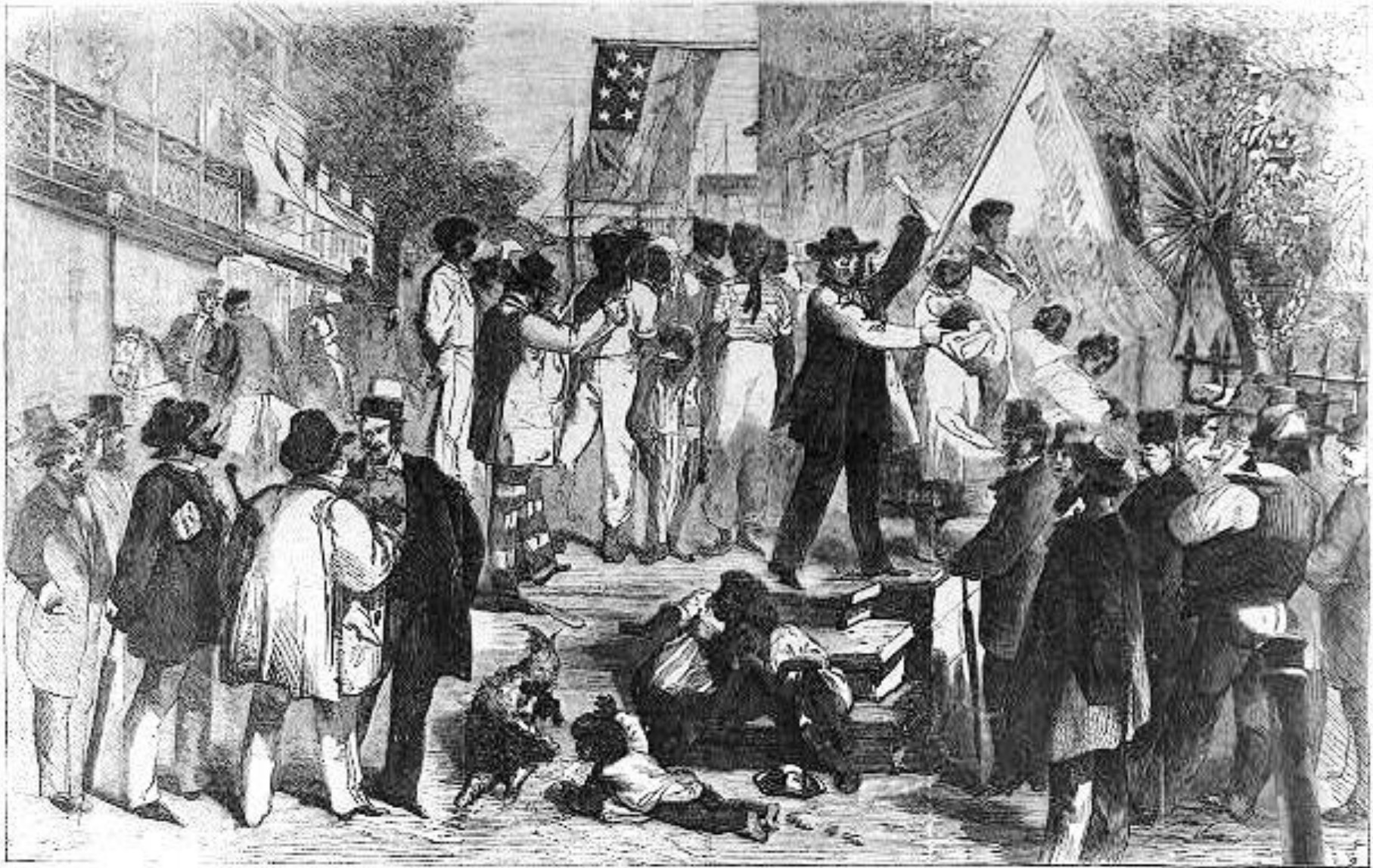
Primary Source

A slave auction at the south

African American men, women, and children being auctioned off in front of a crowd of men

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98510250/>





A SLAVE MARKET AT THE MIDDLESEX HOUSE, NEW YORK, 1851. (From the Illustrated London News, 1851, p. 10.)

PARSONS, 1851

1851



WAYNESBURG UNIVERSITY



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS **TEACHING** with PRIMARY SOURCES

Student Worksheet

The image on the previous page is from the Library of Congress. It shows a slave market drawn by Theodore R. Davis, who was a writer and artist for the New York City, New York publication called the “Harper’s Weekly”. The artist was born in Boston, Massachusetts and served on the staff of Union General John Logan for a time. This image was published in “Harper’s Weekly” on July 13, 1861. The Civil War had just begun. The southern states had officially separated from the Union and the battle had begun at Bull Run, where the south was victorious. Harper’s Weekly began publication in 1857 and embedded writers and artists with regiments of the Civil War in order to offer reports on the war to the public.

1. Examine the image closely. Imagine you are there, on the street shown in the image, during that time period. Use the following prompts to describe the scene.

a) Look all around the scene. What do you see? _____

b) What do you imagine you hear?

c) How do you feel? (physically and emotionally) _____

2. What can you conclude about why the artist drew this scene? _____

3. What evidence supports your conclusion? _____



Teacher Information

Title: A slave auction at the south / from an original sketch by Theodore R. Davis.

Related Names: Theodore R. Davis, artist

Date Created/Published: 1861.

Medium: 1 print: wood engraving.

Summary: African American men, women, and children being auctioned off in front of crowd of men.

Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-2582 (b&w film copy neg.)

Rights Advisory: No known restrictions on publication.

Call Number: Illus. in AP2.H32 1861 Case Y [P&P] [P&P]

Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

Notes: Illus. in: Harper's weekly, v. 5, no. 237, 1861 July 13, p. 442. Reference copy in: LOT 4422-A-1.

Collections: Miscellaneous Items in High Demand

URL: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98510250/>

Answers to the questions will vary, but they should be supported by information gathered from the image and the background information provided. Example answers are listed below.

1. A) Answers should include only what can be viewed within the image. The purpose here is to gather visual evidence from the image itself and students should avoid conjecture.
B) Examples of acceptable answers:
 - i. The Auctioneer
 - ii. Screaming of children
 - iii. Yelling for bids
 - iv. Questions about slaves
 - v. Birds singing
 - vi. Trees rustling
 - vii. Music from windows playingC) Some example answers:
Scared Excited Upset Curious HappyHot Nervous
2. Students may conclude that the artist was against slavery and he wanted to show how bad slavery was.
3. Examples: The artist was from the North and served in the Union army. The publication, Harpers Weekly, was a northern publication.

