

Inventory and Valuation of the Estate of Dr John Channing: Teachers' Notes

This learning resources is aimed at KS3 students. Students will interrogate an original source (an inventory of enslaved people dating from 1817) and complete exercises to answer the enquiry question 'How much can an inventory tell us about the practice of slavery, including the lives of enslaved people, in the United States in the early 19th century?'.

Subject areas: History, English, Maths, Geography, Citizenship

Curriculum links: ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901 (Britain's transatlantic slave trade: its effects and its eventual abolition)

Learning objectives

- To develop the ability to read primary source material with discrimination and ask questions of the material
- To analyse and evaluate evidence in primary source material to come to informed judgements about the transatlantic slave trade

Learning outcomes

Pupils will have:

- Examined an inventory and valuation of the Estate of Dr John Channing dating from 1817
- Understood the different roles enslaved people had on a plantation
- Explored how enslaved people were valued
- Developed an understanding of how much enslaved people were worth in 1817 and related this to values today
- Investigated how enslaved people were named, by whom and how this impacted on their sense of identity.

Content warning

The document in this learning resource dates from 1817, and because of this it contains language which is unacceptable today and which you and pupils may find shocking. This includes racist, sexist and ableist terms. This language is never appropriate to use but has been kept because it is part of the original document.

You may wish to take some time before starting this unit of work to consider how best to address the issues this language raises and other potential sensitivities around the subject area. The following resources may be helpful:

- [Teacher Fellowship Programme: Britain and Transatlantic Slavery / Historical Association \(history.org.uk\)](https://www.history.org.uk/teaching-slavery)
- [Transatlantic slavery – shaping the question, lengthening the narrative, broadening the meaning / Historical Association \(history.org.uk\)](https://www.history.org.uk/teaching-slavery)
- [Teaching Slavery / Historical Association \(history.org.uk\)](https://www.history.org.uk/teaching-slavery) (2010 guide)
- [Teaching and learning about the Slave Trade | Tide Global Learning \(tidegloballearning.net\)](https://www.tidegloballearning.net/teaching-and-learning-about-the-slave-trade)

Using the learning resource

This pack contains the following:

Pupil sheet: this contains the activities relating to the inventory which should be done in conjunction with the handouts. The activities are arranged in seven sections which are self-contained; there is no need to work through

them in order or to complete one section in order to move on to the next one. The exception is Section Seven which asks pupils to draw on answers to other activities to answer the enquiry question. The seven sections are:

- Section One: What is the document all about?
- Section Two: What kind of jobs did enslaved people do and what can we learn from this?
- Section Three: How were enslaved people valued?
- Section Four: The significance of money in enslaved people
- Section Five: Families
- Section Six: Names and identity
- Section Seven: Answering the enquiry question

Handouts: there are four handouts

1. A digital copy of the original inventory.
2. A transcription of the inventory. This has been done exactly as the text appears on the original document, including any original errors or variations in spelling.
3. Glossary. This includes explanation of racist, sexist, and ableist terms which are used in the original document.
4. Name Origins. You will not need this handout if you are not doing Section 5.

Teachers notes: these include context to the document (pp.2-3) and answers to the following activities:

- Section 1 Activity 2 (p.3)
- Section 2 (pp.3-4)
- Section 3 Activity 1 (p.5)
- Section 3 Activity 2 (pp.5-6)
- Section 4 (pp. 6-7)
- Section 5 (p.8)

Context

Charlotte Eliza Channing

Charlotte Eliza Channing (1791-1861), the 'Miss Channing' mentioned in the document, was the only surviving child of John Channing, who was originally from London but moved to America in the early 1750s before returning to England in c 1769. Following John Channing's death in 1792, and the death of her mother a few years later, Charlotte Eliza became the heiress to the estate in South Carolina which is valued in the inventory. In 1812 she married Reverend Thomas Penny White, a clergyman.

Thomas Penny White

Thomas Penny White was born on 19th September 1778. He studied at Queens' College Cambridge between 1798 and 1805 and remained there until 1812. On 3 December 1812 he married Charlotte Eliza Channing at St Mary's Church, Marylebone Road, London. He worked as a curate and minister in Hampshire from 1813 until his death in 1845.

The Inventory and the Plantation

The estate referred to in the inventory was purchased by John Channing (Charlotte Channing's father) in 1766. This plantation, in St Peter's Parish (in modern-day Jasper County, South Carolina) was located on the Savannah River close to the border between South Carolina and Georgia and appears to have been purchased as an investment

property rather than an intended residence for the Channing family. This plantation was kept after the family returned to England in c 1769, likely as a source of income for the Channings.

The inventory and valuation of the South Carolina estate was drawn up in 1817, at the request of Reverend White. A lack of surviving documentation means it is not possible to be certain about what happened to the estate after this, but it seems likely that the valuation was carried out in preparation for it to be sold. Charlotte and Reverend White continued their lives in England and subsequently purchased property in Sussex, where the family remained for generations.

Answers

Section One *What is the document all about?*

Activity 2: Let's look a bit more closely at the beginning of the document. Working in pairs, look at the opening section below and pick out any words or phrases you don't understand.

Now join with another pair and compare answers. Read through the opening section together as a group and try to guess what you think the words mean. Then use the glossary to check which ones you got right.

Now answer the following questions:

a) Which words describe the type of document this is?

Inventory, valuation

b) When was the document made?

14 June 1817

c) Who owned the estate at the time of writing the document?

Miss Channing

d) Who arranged for the document to be produced? Is there anything you notice about this?

Revd Mr White. You may find it surprising that it wasn't the owner of the estate who arranged for the document to be produced.

e) Why do you think this document was written? What was it for?

This document was written to provide breakdown of the value of the property owned by Miss Channing. It may have been prepared with a view to selling the property or ahead of Miss Channing's marriage – such a substantial property may have formed part of a marriage settlement.

Section Two *What kind of jobs did enslaved people do and what can we learn from this?*

Now let's look more closely at the rest of the document. Start by finding out what different jobs or occupations enslaved people had on this plantation. Use the glossary to help you make sense of words that you don't understand. Complete the table below by filling in the names of the enslaved people who had the jobs or occupations listed below. Some people are listed as having more than one job – write both of these down. **Be careful as many of the people on the inventory are not listed as having any job, so don't include these names on the table.**

Job / Occupation	Who had this job?
Carpenter	Nat (rough carpenter), William, Alick (also a field hand)
Cook	Daphne

Cooper	Scipio, Charles
Driver	Moses, Dick (second Driver)
Field Hand	Hector, Jackson, Grace, Edinburg, Catherine, Tom, Adam, Thomas, Stephen, Margaret, Philip, Betty, Tom, Andrew (also a sawyer), Phillis, Clarissa, Billy, Statira, Boatswain, Bess, Alick (also a carpenter), Anthony, Nanny, Morris
Nurse	Pender, Nanny (old nurse)
Ploughman	George
Sawyer	Nat, Andrew (also a field hand)
Trunkminder	Hannibal

Look at your completed table and answer the following questions:

- Which of the jobs/occupations listed is the most common?
Field hand
- What do you think was the main aim of this plantation? Justify your answer
Growing rice – the job of trunkminder is one specifically connected with rice growing. The presence of so many field hands also indicates that the main purpose of the plantation is agricultural.
- What do you notice about the different roles men and women had on this plantation?
The men’s roles are more likely to be skilled jobs (e.g. cooper, carpenter, trunkminder) and only men hold a position of authority (driver). Women’s jobs are more likely to be domestic / based in the home (cook, nurse). There are several female field hands (9 out of 24) but the majority are men suggesting that men’s roles were likely to be more physical.
- A very large number (over 60) of the people on the inventory are not listed as having any particular job or occupation. Do you find this surprising? What do you think is significant about this?
You might find this surprising as the assumption may be that all of the enslaved people on the plantation would be working. The age and description of some of those listed on the inventory accounts for several of the people without jobs – many are too young or too old or infirm to work. It could also be that the valuer only recorded jobs that they thought were important and attractive to a potential buyer.
- What does the document not tell you about what work was like for enslaved people on this plantation?
The document doesn’t tell you anything about the working conditions for enslaved people on the plantation – we don’t know what hours they worked or how hard or heavy the work is.

What other sources might you use to find out more about what work was like for enslaved people on plantations? You are most likely to find information about what work was like for enslaved people through records kept by the plantation owners – enslaved people themselves are unlikely to have been able to record details of their lives. Such sources may include correspondence – plantation owners would have written to agents, family members and friends about plantation business – and diaries. Visitors to America may also have written about their observations on plantation life which could differ from those of the plantation owners.

Papers from abolitionists such as pamphlets may also record details of plantation life – the abolitionists would have been keen to draw attention to the conditions on plantations to support their case for the abolition of slavery.

Accounts from enslaved people / formerly enslaved people themselves are rare but some do exist such as Henry Clay Bruce, *Twenty-Nine Years a Slave* (1895); Lewis Clarke, *Narrative of the Sufferings of Lewis Clark* (1845); Frederick

Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1845); Austin Steward, Twenty-Two Years a Slave (1857), Moses Roper, Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper (1838).

Section Three *How were enslaved people valued?*

One of the many shocking aspects of the history of enslaved people during this period is that they were bought and sold and valued as a commodity rather than as people. How much can this inventory reveal to us about how enslaved people were valued by plantation owners?

Activity 1

In the last section, we looked at some of the jobs or occupations carried out by enslaved people on the plantation. Now let's look at some of the other information about these people which is listed on the inventory. Using the transcript to help you, complete the table below with the details given for each individual named:

Name	Details (including job/occupation)	Age	Value
Bess	Wife of Boatswain, a good field hand, sickly	32	400
Hector	Prime field hand	32	700
Scipio	Cooper, son Catherine, a cooper	22	700
Rose	A cripple & inform wench	19	150
Happy	Daughter of Clarissa	6	250
Young Pitt	A fine lad (burnt hand)	22	550
Betty	A weakly hand, astmatic [sic]	35	200
Clarissa	A field hand, sickly	24	250
Old Pitt	An old Invalid	70	50
Alick	A carpenter & prime field hand	30	700
Winter	Son of Hetty or Tenah		50
Pender	Nurse for children	70	50
Boatswain	A good field hand (rupture and fits)	38	300

Activity 2:

Read the following statements and decide if you think they are true or false. Make sure that you use details from the inventory, including the information you gathered in Activity 1, to justify your answer. Consider if you could improve the statement to make it better. There are rows in the table so you can include your own statements to test

Statement	T or F	Evidence	Improved statement
All enslaved people on this plantation were valued the same.	F	There is a great range in valuation – the highest amount an enslaved person is valued is \$700 whilst the lowest is \$50.	The enslaved people on this plantation were assigned very different values depending on a range of factors such as age and physical health.
All enslaved males on this plantation were valued more highly than females.	F	Enslaved male children were valued less highly than enslaved adult women. For instance Sampson, who is nine years old, is valued at \$250 whereas Betty, a prime field hand aged 23, is valued at \$500. However, it is true that all enslaved adult males were valued more highly than adult females even	All enslaved adult males on this plantation were valued more highly than adult females, even where they are doing the same job.

		where they were doing the same job. For instance, Stephen and Margaret are both described as prime field hands – Stephen is valued at \$700 whilst Margaret is valued at \$500.	
Enslaved children were valued less than enslaved adults.	F	Pre-teen children are valued in the range of \$50 for infants around the age of 1 (e.g. Joe) to \$300 for children around the age of 10 (e.g. Grace). However, some of the older adults (e.g. Pender and Hannibal) are also assigned a value of \$50. The value of children increases as they get older – children who are 14 (e.g. Sukey and Rend) are valued at \$400, nearly as highly as healthy adults and more highly than adults who are ill or old.	Young enslaved children are valued less highly than healthy and fit enslaved adults. Older children are valued at a similar level to adults and in some cases are valued more highly than adults who are ill, old, or otherwise unfit to work.
Enslaved people who were injured or ill were valued less highly than others, even if they performed the same jobs	T	Catherine is a female field hand who is described as sickly and is valued at \$200. Grace is another female field hand who appears to be healthy and is valued at \$500. Similarly Adam is described as a prime field hand (ruptured) and is valued at \$500. Hector is also described as a prime field hand but because he is not injured he has a higher value (\$700).	

Section Four *The significance of money in enslaved people*

Activity

In the last section, you found out some of the values given to enslaved people on the plantation in 1817 – but what would this mean in today’s money? Now you are going to work out what the equivalent value would be today, in British pounds. Complete the table below for each sum of money listed. First use the inflation calculator (A) to work out the amount in dollars, then use the dollar/pound convertor (B) to convert this to British pounds.

(A) [U.S. Inflation Calculator: 1635→2022, Department of Labor data \(in2013dollars.com\)](https://www.bls.gov/inflation-calculator/)

(B) [Convert Dollars to Pounds | USD to GBP Currency Converter](https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/)

Value in 1817	Equivalent value today in US dollars	Equivalent value today in British pounds
\$700	\$15,216 (as of May 2022)	£12,048 (as of May 2022)
\$150	\$3,260 (as of May 2022)	£2,581 (as of May 2022)
\$400	\$8,695 (as of May 2022)	£6,885 (as of May 2022)
\$50	\$1,087 (as of May 2022)	£861 (as of May 2022)

- Think about what you would be able to purchase now for this amount of money. Note down your ideas.

c) Look at the second page of the document carefully. This lists the value of land, animals, and other items on the estate, as well as the total value of the estate. Fill in the correct amount of money below:

The total value of the enslaved people on the estate is \$31,350

The total value of the whole estate is \$61,350

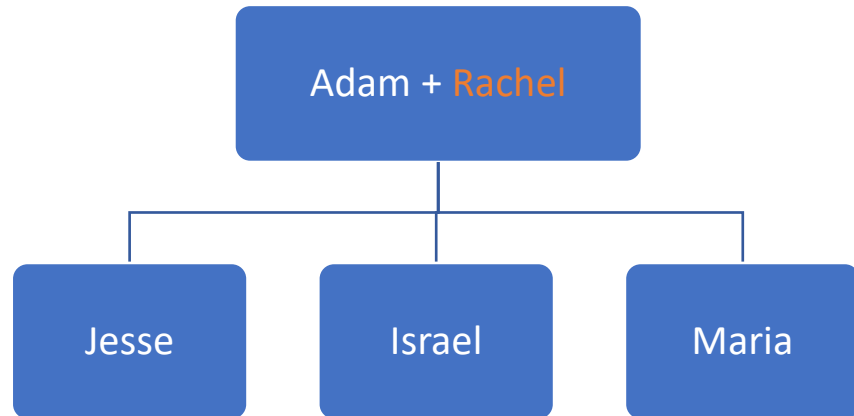
The value of the enslaved people is equal to (circle or highlight the correct answer):

- A a quarter of the value of the whole estate
- B just under half of the value of the whole estate
- C just over half of the value of the whole estate

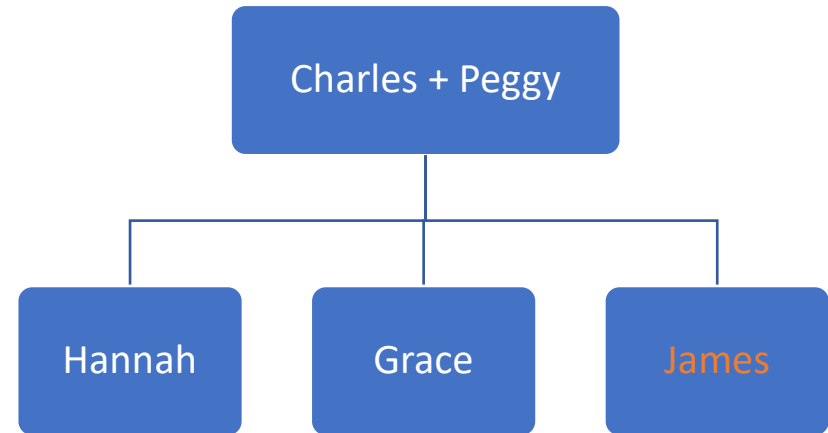
Section Five *Families*

As well as giving information about the jobs, ages and given 'value' of the enslaved people on the plantation, you will also notice that the inventory describes family relationships between these people. Using the inventory and transcript, complete the chart below with the name of the missing family member:

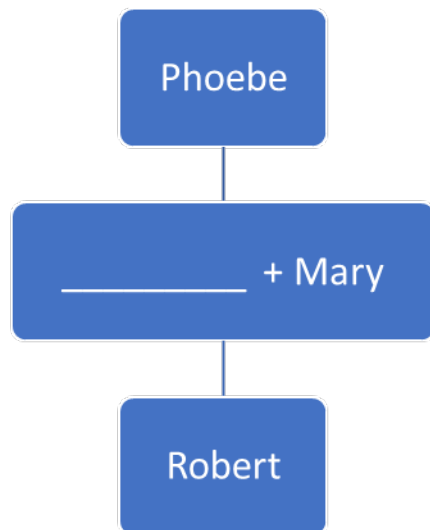
1.



2.



3. Hector



4.

