

LESSON G

PROPERTY

NOTE: The primary source used in this lesson shows people as the property of other people. The teacher will need to determine if sensitivity training may be necessary before going forward with this lesson.

Standards: Economics Standard One: Students will analyze the potential costs and benefits of personal economic choices in a market economy.

Economics Standard Three: Students will understand different types of economic systems and how they change.

History Standard Two: Students will gather, examine, and analyze historical data.

History Standard Three: Students will interpret historical data.

History Standard Four: Students will develop historical knowledge of major events and phenomena in world, United States, and Delaware history.

Objectives: 1) Students will create an inventory of seven items in their bedrooms including approximate values of each item.

2) Students will be able to explain the principle of property.

Materials: 1) Worksheet

2) *Lesson G, Delaware Public Archives, Probate Inventory, Series Number 4545.9 (Image Gallery)*

Procedures:

- 1) Tell students that they are going to take an inventory of their bedroom. Explain that an inventory is a detailed list, or record, of items in one's possession. Pass out the worksheet and instruct the students to write down seven items they own with the approximate values written next to them. Examples include: bikes, posters, toys, CDs
- 2) Discuss the idea of property with the class. Explain to students that the seven items they wrote down are their personal property, or things that they own.
- 3) As a class, brainstorm a list of modern day conveniences such as toasters, telephones, televisions. List the responses on the blackboard.

- 4) Ask: Which of these things would people be without in the 18th century?
Cross out each item as you go through the list. Examples: television, telephones, automobiles, air conditioning, heating, radio, airplanes

- 5) Let's see what kind of items people in the 18th century might own. Project the probate inventory - the slaves will be near the bottom of the list. Instruct students to read down the list and find "one neagro man called gim" toward the bottom of the inventory. Ask: What was the occupation of this individual? (a slave) Can you tell from the other items listed in the inventory what his job might be?

- 6) Ask: Are slaves considered property according to the definition stated earlier? (Yes, because they are owned by Robert Burton and are therefore considered his property.) Discuss the value given to the slaves. (See background information.)

- 7) Conclude the lesson with the following journal prompt:
Why do you think people owned slaves? Give an example to support your thinking.

DOCUMENT TRANSCRIPTION

1785 INVENTORY OF ROBERT BURTON (SUSSEX COUNTY)

Percle of old Casks " 17 6
 Five ox and cows hides 1 17 6
 Percle of flax in the Sheaves 1 2 6
 Percle of wheat in the Sheaves 7 10 "
 Percle of ? in the Sheave and Sorn oats 1 12 6
 Percle of Corn in the Crib 12 10 "
 One Bay mare 8 " "
 One Black mare 8 " "
 One Dun horse 8 " "
 One Bay mare three years old 7 10 "
 One Gray mare three years old 7 " "
 One old mare 3 " "
 Thirty two Sheep and Sixteen ? 13 10 "
 One Yoak of oxen called Lam and Lyon 8 " "
 One Yoak of oxen called Mark and Mendall 8 " "
 One Yoak of oxen called Levon and Sweetem 7 " "
 One Yoak of oxen one steer young the other old 7 " "
 One Bull 2 10 "
 Two three years old Steers 3 15 "
 Two two year old Steers 1 15 "
 Two Four years old Heffers 4 " "
 One three yeare old Heffers 1 10 "
 Three two yeare old Heffers 3 15 "
 Two year old Steers 1 15 "
 Two cows and calves one called Pride the other Cherry 4 " "

Two cows and calves one called Bounce the other Satten 5 10 "
Two cows and yearlings 6 " "
Two Barren cows 5 " "
One neagro man called gim 60 " "
INVENTORY OF ROBERT BURTON (CONTINUED)
One neagro man called Peter 60 " "
One neagro man called Dublen 65 " "
One neagro Boy called Bell 35 " "
One neagro Boy called Spencer 30 " "
One neagro woman called Diner 50 " "
One neagro woman called Hanner 50 " "
One neagro woman (old) called Hob 1 " "
Fifty Pound of woll 8 15 "
Hard Cash in the House 13 19 4
One Two years old Bull 1 10 "

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Legally, African-American slaves were considered their owner's property - extremely valuable property. Note the high appraisal value of the slaves in the inventory. Like any other commodity, slaves could be bought and sold. Although Robert Burton died without a will, other slave owners would will their slaves to their heirs. In a number of instances, this practice would breakup a family because members of the enslaved African-American family would be divided among the heirs of the slave owner's family. Enslaved families could also be broken up when individual members were sold to pay debts incurred by the slave owner's family. Slave owners could also free their slaves through their will.

INVENTORY OF ROBERT BURTON (1785)

This inventory is part of the probate file of Robert Burton (Robert Burton, 1785 - 1796, Sussex County Probates, Series Number 4545.9). Probate is the process used to settle the estate of a deceased person. Probate records are documents generated as part of this process. These records may contain a will, letters of administration, inventories, administration or executor's accounts, as well as other legal documents that may pertain to the settlement of the estate. The inventory appraisal was carried out by Burton Waples and William Burton, Jr. as part of the probate process. The three columns on the right side of the sheet represent the appraised value of each item. At the time of Burton's death (1785) the English monetary system was still being used. In order from left to right the columns represent pounds, shillings, and pence.

ROBERT BURTON

Robert Burton was a Sussex County farmer who owned a farm in the area southwest of Lewes. He died in 1785 (age unknown) without leaving a will to determine how his property and belongings were to be divided. When an individual dies without a will it is known as "dying intestate". At the time of his death, Burton

left a widow named Ann and four children - Joshua, Nancy, William, and Mary.
When his widow Ann died in 1790 several of the slaves mentioned in this inventory
were also found in the inventory of her goods.

INVENTORY OF _____

DATE _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____