

*History*  
UNFOLDING

# THE ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT



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# Introduction

## Slavery and Abolitionism

Today, slavery seems so evil, so cruelly unjust, that we tend to forget that for centuries just about every culture on earth regarded it as normal. Sad to say, slavery was a very common institution. It had existed in Egypt, Greece, Rome, China, and many other civilizations in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. And after 1492, Europeans brought slavery with them to most of the areas they settled in both North and South America.

In a way, what is surprising is not the existence of slavery in the Americas, but the rise and ultimate victory of a movement to abolish it. Calls for the abolition of slavery began in England and the United States among the Quakers and other religious sects. But the most important phase of the abolitionist struggle in the U.S. did not begin until the 1820s and 1830s. Then, under the influence of a powerful religious revival known as the Second Great Awakening, small groups of inspired reformers began to agitate for the immediate abolition of slavery. The end of slavery in the British empire also helped encourage these abolitionists. Yet for several decades, they met powerful and, at times, violent opposition. In the end, they helped push the nation into the crisis that would end once and for all an evil that these abolitionists regarded as the nation's great sin.

The twelve illustrations in this booklet focus on a number of central themes in the history of the abolitionist movement. The illustrations are presented in four lessons. Each lesson uses three illustrations to explore one broad topic in the overall story. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

### **Slavery: Reality & Myth**

These three illustrations focus on those aspects of slavery that made it such a degrading form of labor—and on the myths Southerners used to hide the ugly reality of slavery from others, and from themselves.

### **Runaways & Resistance**

Slaves could rarely take action against their bondage. But runaways and occasional acts of rebellion show how hateful slavery was to them.

### **The Abolitionist Cause**

The militant abolitionist movement that emerged in the 1830s was deeply inspired by a wave of religious feeling and a faith in human perfectibility. The illustrations here focus on some key abolitionists, the ideas that moved them, and the opposition they provoked.

### **Slavery Divides the Nation**

Abolitionists hoped for repentance from the nation and a peaceful end to slavery. But the deep opposition they inspired, especially in the South, kept that from happening. Instead, the movement fueled a growing spirit of violence that divided the nation and plunged it into civil war. It was in the fires of that war that slavery finally met its end.

## Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

## How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

**A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET** This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

**DIGITAL IMAGES** The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

### **DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS**

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will understand slavery not only as a different form of labor, but as a system of total control over human beings.
2. Students will discuss the myths about slavery common in the South.

# Slavery: Reality & Myth

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Illustration 1**

By the early 1800s, the new American nation was growing rapidly. Its wealth was increasing. Its citizens were winning more freedom and more control over their own lives. Except, that is, for slaves. In colonial times, indentured servants of several sorts had existed. But these other kinds of servitude soon faded, leaving two starkly different forms of labor. Most whites either owned their own lands or shops, or they worked for wages at jobs freely chosen. Nearly all African Americans were owned outright. They faced a lifetime of unpaid labor for others. And as this drawing shows, slavery was not just a matter of economics. It was a system of power in which one group of human beings dominated another totally.

**Illustration 2**

Slavery turned each human being into a commodity to be bought and sold. Slave auctions such as this one in Richmond, Virginia, made that horribly clear. At such auctions, human beings were inspected as if they were common work animals. After 1808, it was illegal to import slaves into the United States. But a huge internal slave trade existed. Slaves were raised in Virginia and elsewhere in order to be sold and sent to other parts of the South. Families could be split up and sold at auctions. This was not common. But the fact that it *could* happen was enough to terrify every slave and make all of them much easier to control.

**Illustration 3**

In the late 1700s, many Americans expected slavery to die out on its own. At that time, not even many Southerners defended slavery as a good thing. They simply said it was necessary and could not be ended easily. But the Cotton Gin made cotton “King,” spreading cotton and slavery throughout the South. Wealthy plantation owners and other leaders in the South soon began to defend slavery more forcefully. They saw it as the South’s “Peculiar Institution,” one that made the South different, gentler, more old-fashioned than the North. According to them, most slave owners were kind to their slaves—for economic reasons if not out of a sense of duty. And these owners supposedly gave their grateful slaves a better, more secure life than many Northern workers had. This drawing sums up this typical Southern view of slavery.

## Lesson 1 — Slavery: Reality & Myth

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

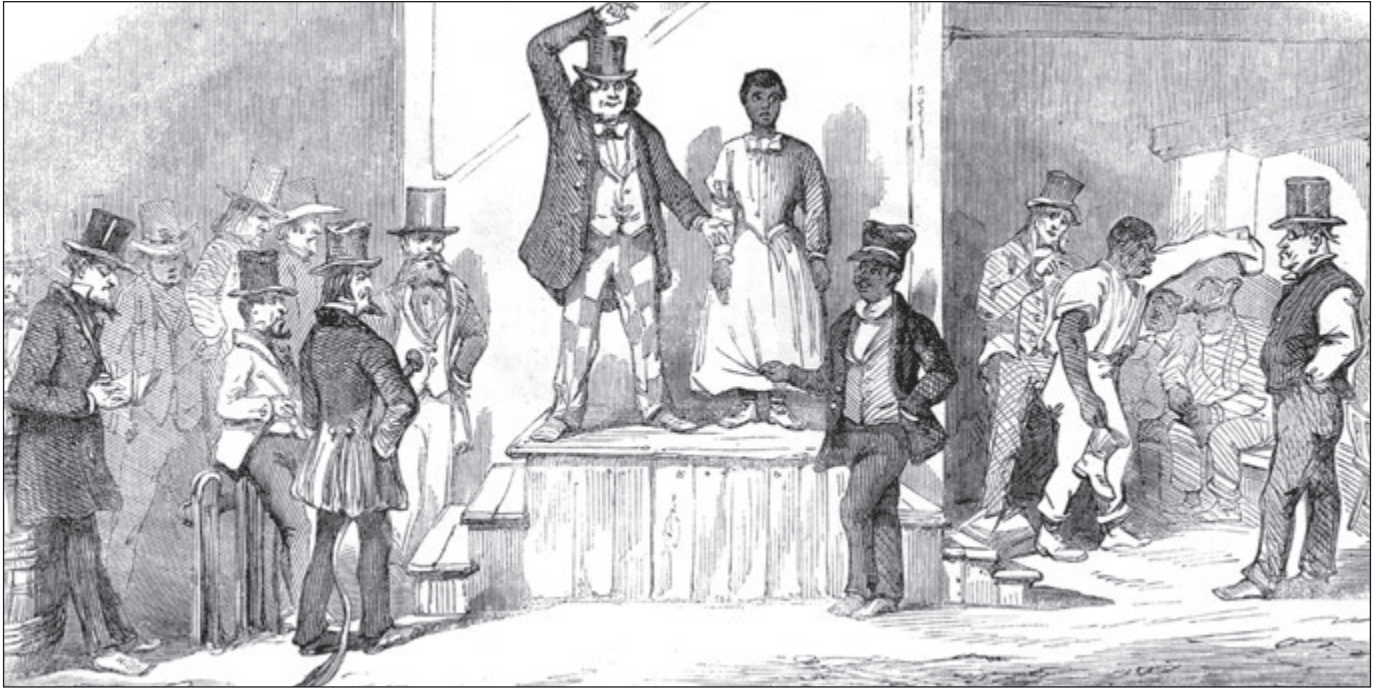
### Discussing the Illustration

1. This drawing shows a group of slaves being led through the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. If you knew nothing at all about American slavery, what could you learn about it just from this drawing alone? What differences between slaves and other kinds of workers does the drawing by itself help to show?
2. Can you describe any other differences between slave and non-slave labor, differences that are *not* shown in this drawing?
3. What extra problems would an owner of slaves have that someone who hired free laborers would not have?
4. In spite of these problems, thousands of plantation owners, farmers and some owners of factories in the South preferred to use slaves as their workers. Why do you suppose that was true?

### Follow-up Activities

1. Create a dialogue or one-act play involving some of the figures in the above illustration. Your dialogue should include at least the couple watching on the left, the man with the whip, the slave mother and child, and one or two of the other slaves. In the dialogue have each figure explain how he or she came to be at this place in Washington D.C., and have the figures describe their reactions to the scene shown above.
2. The nation's founders agreed to these words in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." Yet few leaders in the early 1800s objected to scenes like the one shown above. Choose one of the following leaders and learn more about his views on slavery: Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, or Alexander Hamilton. Now, pretend you are that person. Write a letter to a friend commenting on the above scene in the nation's capital.

## Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Discussing the Illustration

1. This illustration shows one of the saddest and most frightening moments that could occur in the life of any slave in the United States. Can you explain what is happening to the woman on the platform in the center of this drawing?
2. In the time of slavery, slaves were said to be goods, or chattels, not free human beings. How does this drawing show that the white people in it actually do think of the black slaves as chattels?
3. What kinds of things do you think the whites in this drawing are trying to find out about the slaves they are planning to buy?
4. Why do you suppose slaves feared auctions like this so much?
5. Keep in mind that this drawing is not a photograph. The artist who drew it decided to show this auction in a certain way. What features in the drawing help to show this artist's views or feelings about slavery and slave auctions?

### Follow-up Activity

1. Here are the words of two former slaves:

#### James Martin

*At these slave auctions, the overseer yells, "Say you bucks and wenches . . . come out here." Then he makes 'em hop, he makes 'em trot, he makes 'em jump. "How much," he yells, "for this buck? A thousand? Eleven hundred? Twelve hundred dollars?" Then the bidders make offers accordin' to size and build.*

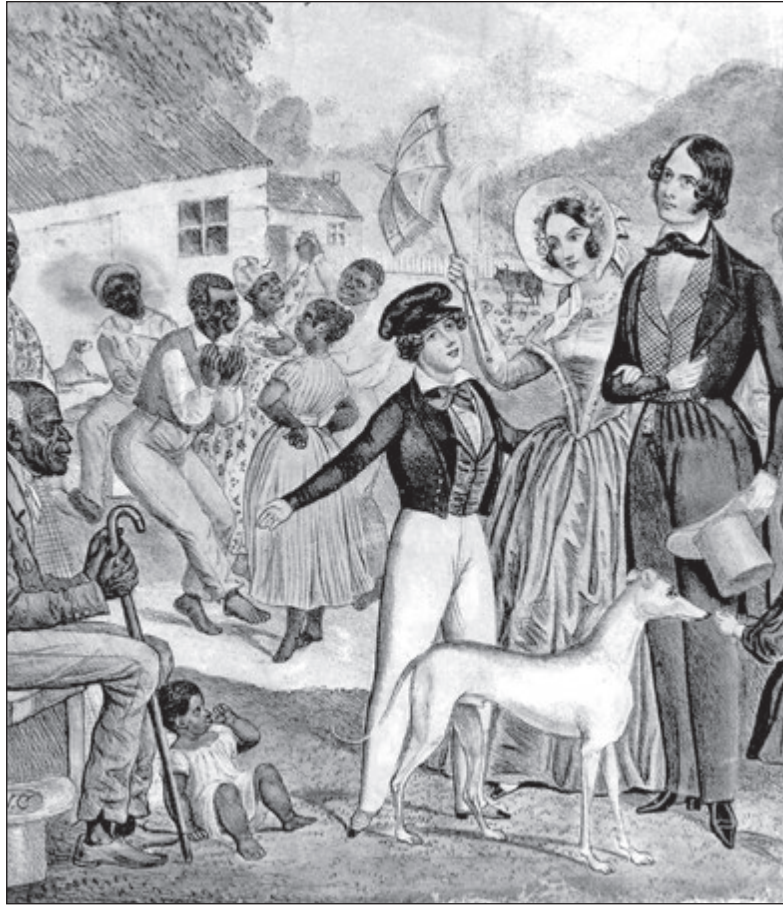
#### Foster Weathersby

*My mother was sole and took from my father when I was jus' a few months old. I never seed him till I was six. I had to be tole who he was. He saw my mother for the first time in six years in the fiel's where we was a-workin. They didn't know how to ac' or what to say. They seem kinda let down, like. You see, he had married ag'in, an' my mother had, too.*

Pretend it is 1840. You are editor of an abolitionist newspaper. Write an editorial on the harmful effects of slavery on the slaves and especially on their family life. Use both quotes in the editorial.

## Lesson 1 — Slavery: Reality & Myth

### Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

#### Discussing the Illustration

1. This illustration offers a typical Southern view of slavery. Just above the picture itself were the words of one of the slaves saying, “God bless you massa! You feed and clothe us. When we are sick you nurse us, and when too old to work, you provide for us!” How are the slaves pictured, and how does the drawing add to the point these words make?
2. The master on the right is also given some words. He says, “These poor creatures are a sacred legacy from my ancestors and while a dollar is left to me, nothing shall be spared to increase their comfort and happiness.” How does the way the planter and his family are drawn add to the point of these words?
3. Most historians would say this drawing gives a very “romantic” view of plantation life. What do you think they mean by this? Do you think the drawing’s view of slavery was sometimes true or never true? Why?
4. If the drawing’s view of slavery were true, would that make slavery more acceptable? Why or why not?

#### Follow-up Activity

1. Here are two statements from former slaves.

##### First Slave

*There never was but one slave whipped on Master Cole’s plantation, and the overseer whips him cause he could not keep up with the driver. The driver was a big slave who could do four times as much work as the old slave. But Master Cole fired the overseer. He says the overseer did not have no foresight.*

##### Second Slave

*Master Black was awful cruel, and he whipped the colored folk and worked ‘em hard and fed ‘em poorly. We had for rations the cornmeal and milk and molasses and some beans and peas, and meat once a week. We had to work in the field every day from daylight till dark.*

As a class, discuss these statements. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different? Together, what do these statements show about life on many plantations? What do you think each of these two slaves would say about the illustration shown above?

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will better appreciate the difficulties facing blacks who tried to fight back against their enslavement.
2. Students will better understand the part played by rebellious slaves in furthering abolitionism.

# Runaways & Resistance

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Illustration 1**

Many white Southerners may have believed slavery to be good for both master and slave. It is unlikely that many black slaves themselves would have agreed. But it isn't easy to know what many slaves felt. They were not allowed to speak out, and few could write and leave records of their thoughts. However, this painting offers one kind of evidence about the willingness of blacks to put up with slavery. It shows some slaves getting help along the "Underground Railroad." The Underground Railroad was a series of hiding places for escaping slaves making their way north to freedom. Many of the stations on these routes north were the homes of abolitionists, both black and white. This is one example of the way abolitionists and the slaves themselves worked together to free slaves and undermine the slave system.

**Illustration 2**

Another example of abolitionists and slaves working together took place in 1839. That spring, about fifty black slaves seized control of the Spanish ship *Amistad* as it sailed along the coast of Cuba. They killed the captain and the cook, and they tried to return to Africa. Instead they landed in New York state and were taken to Connecticut to be tried for murder. Abolitionist leaders came to their aid and defended them in court. After a long, complicated trial, John Quincy Adams argued their case before the Supreme Court and won. The case drew national attention to the abolitionist cause. And the dignity of the Africans, especially their leader Cinque, won the admiration of many Americans.

**Illustration 3**

Uprisings such as the one on the *Amistad* were unusual. But when they did occur, they showed how angry many slaves really felt. This was certainly true of the Nat Turner uprising in 1831. Turner was a black overseer on a farm in Southampton County, Virginia. He was also a preacher who felt called by God to lead his people to freedom. Turner's followers began killing whites and attracting other slaves as they marched from farm to farm. Fifty-five whites died before the militia struck back, killing an even larger number of blacks. The rebellion did not spread far. But it terrified the South. It came as abolitionists were starting to speak out more forcefully. For this reason, it only made the South more determined to defend slavery at all costs.

## Lesson 2—Runaways & Resistance

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Discussing the Illustration

1. This drawing shows fugitive slaves arriving at a farm in the state of Indiana. What were fugitive slaves?
2. Fugitive slaves had existed from the beginning of slavery in this country. But in the 1840s and '50s, the so-called Underground Railroad became much more active. What was this Underground Railroad?
3. The Underground Railroad became much more important after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. There had been other fugitive slave laws before 1850. Why was the one in 1850 so important? Why did it cause slaves, abolitionists, and others to work harder to support the Underground Railroad?
4. Using this drawing and your own imagination, can you describe some of the many problems that usually faced runaway slaves? How would you have solved these problems if you had been a runaway slave in the 1850s?

### Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** Many myths about the Underground Railroad grew up after the Civil War. Your group's task is to decide what the Underground Railroad was really like. First, find out more about it. Then have each group member read about one of the following figures (each was involved with the Underground Railroad):

Levi Coffin	Salmon P. Chase
Thomas Garret	Frederick Douglass
Harriet Tubman	Susan B. Anthony

Based on what you learn about these individuals, try as a group to answer these questions:

1. How large and how well-organized was the Underground Railroad?
2. What part did abolitionists play in it?
3. What part did slaves and free blacks play in it?

Give a brief talk in class explaining what your group learned about the Underground Railroad.

## Lesson 2—Runaways & Resistance

# Illustration 2



### Death of Capt. Ferrer, the Captain of the *Amistad*, July, 1839.

Don Jose Ruiz and Don Pedro Montez, of the Island of Cuba, having purchased fifty-three slaves at Havana, recently imported from Africa, put them aboard the *Amistad*, Capt. Ferrer, in order to transport them to Principe, another port on the Island of Cuba. After being out from Havana about 30 days, the African captives on board, in order to obtain their freedom, and return to Africa, armed themselves with cane knives, and rose upon the captain and crew of the vessel. Capt. Ferrer and the cook of the vessel were killed; two of the crew escaped; Ruiz and Montez were made prisoner.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Discussing the Illustration

1. In July 1839, two Spaniards in Havana, Cuba, bought 53 recently arrived African slaves. They put the slaves on a ship going to Principe, another port in Cuba. The ship never reached Principe. Can you name the ship and explain why it never reached Principe?
2. The slaves wanted to return to Africa. From what you know of the *Amistad* uprising, can you explain how they instead landed on Long Island, in New York?
3. Spain wanted the slaves back. But instead, they were put on trial for murder in Connecticut. Abolitionists organized to defend them in court. From what you know about the *Amistad* case, explain its outcome and describe what became of these Africans.
4. The abolitionists worked hard to make the *Amistad* case known throughout the country. Why do you think they felt it was so important to do this? What lessons did they hope Americans would learn from this slave uprising? What lessons do you think the *Amistad* story can teach us?

### Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** In 1997, the Steven Spielberg film *Amistad* told the story of this revolt by African slaves. However, the movie changed the story in some important ways. Your group's task is to view this film, read more about the *Amistad* mutiny, and write a report comparing the film and the actual mutiny. In your report comment on these figures:

The African named Cinque

John Quincy Adams

Lewis Tappan

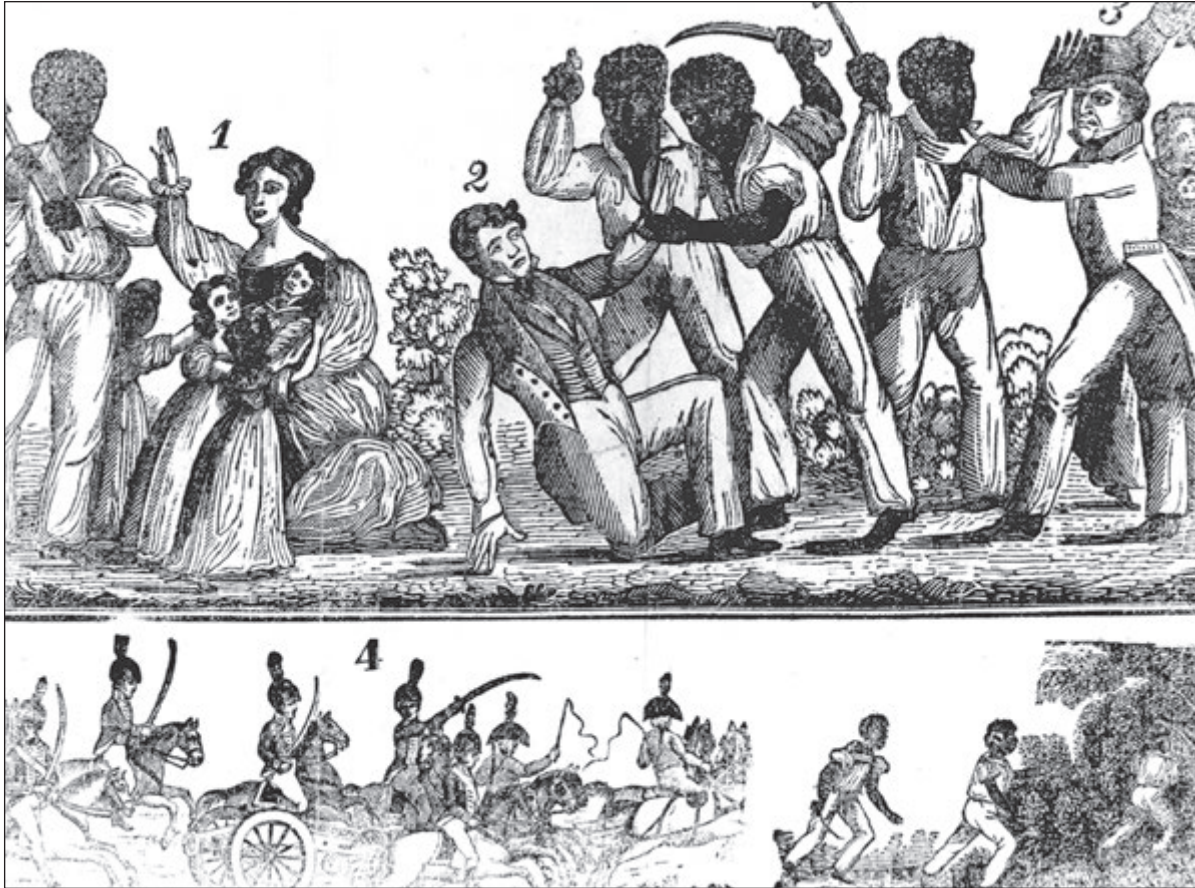
Roger Baldwin

The film character named Theodore Joadson

Compare the portrayal of these figures in the film to what you learn about the real *Amistad* mutiny. Then prepare a brief group report to your class on the film and the event. Explain in what ways the film was and was not accurate. Also, decide as a group whether you think the film is a good one to use to teach about this historical event.

## Lesson 2—Runaways & Resistance

### Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

#### Discussing the Illustration

1. This frightening drawing is titled a “Horrid Massacre in Virginia.” The massacre took place in 1831. Can you tell from the drawing which group of people started this massacre and who their victims were?
2. This uprising of black slaves was led by a slave named Nat Turner. Turner was a preacher who said he was told by God to lead his people to freedom. In the uprising itself, a growing group of slaves went from plantation to plantation killing as many whites as they could. What do you think they hoped to achieve by doing this? Do you think that, as slaves, they had a right to use violence of this sort? Why or why not?
3. Fifty-five whites were killed in the rebellion. But soldiers soon ended it, killing more than a hundred blacks. Do you think a slave rebellion like this in the South could ever have succeeded? Why or why not?
4. Actually, very few slave rebellions were attempted in the South. Nat Turner’s was the bloodiest. Why do you think these uprisings were so rare?

#### Follow-up Activity

1. The above illustration, titled “Horrid Massacre in Virginia” appeared in a Southern newspaper just after Nat Turner’s rebellion. The numbers shown on the illustration are explained in the newspaper story as follows:

*Fig. 1, a mother entreating for the lives of her children. Fig. 2, Mr. Travis cruelly murdered by his own slaves. Fig. 3, Mr. Barrow, who bravely defended himself while his wife escaped. Fig. 4, A company of mounted Dragoons in pursuit of the blacks.*

Read an account of the Nat Turner uprising. Pretend you are the editor of an abolitionist newspaper in the North. Write a news story about the uprising as you think an abolitionist editor might view it. Create your own headline for the story. Use the above illustration with the story, but rewrite the explanations of the illustration so that they fit with your newspaper story and its point of view.

**OBJECTIVE**

1. Students will gain a better understanding of the religious and philosophical ideas that inspired abolitionists and helped them to organize a highly effective movement.

# The Abolitionist Cause

*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Illustration 1**

Even before the American Revolution, some Americans had begun to call for the end, or abolition, of slavery. Then, in the early 1800s, a great renewal of religious feeling swept through much of America. Especially in New England and New York, this religious revival led to many efforts to reform and perfect society. In time, the revival (known as the Second Great Awakening) helped spark a new, stronger abolitionist movement. Abolitionists often started out as speakers at religious revival meetings. Their religious beliefs led them to call slavery a terrible sin endangering the souls of all Americans. This drawing shows abolitionist Wendell Phillips speaking on the Boston Common.

**Illustration 2**

The abolitionist movement was led by Northern religious leaders and others affected by the Second Great Awakening. One of the most radical was William Lloyd Garrison, on the left here. Slightly less radical were the Tappan brothers in New York, Gerrit Smith's group in upstate New York, or Theodore Weld and his followers in Ohio. In addition, a number of free blacks became leading abolitionists. Perhaps the most famous was Frederick Douglass, on the right. Blacks and whites worked together in the movement. But blacks often pushed harder than white abolitionists for equal rights for free blacks. Black women and white women also became involved—though not all male abolitionists were happy about this. Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, the Grimke sisters, Harriet Tubman and many others all did their part.

**Illustration 3**

In the 1830s and '40s, abolitionists were a tiny minority. And they were often hated as much in the North as in the South. This drawing is of a northern mob destroying an abolitionist printing press. In 1837, abolitionist Elijah P. Lovejoy was killed defending his press against a mob. Some Southern postmasters refused to deliver abolitionist literature. But all this actually helped the abolitionist cause. Many who were not abolitionists saw these attacks as a threat to rights they cared deeply about—rights to freedom of press and speech. As a result, more of them began to accept the abolitionist view of the South as an evil "Slave Power" bent on destroying everyone's freedom.

## Lesson 3—The Abolitionist Cause

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Discussing the Illustration

1. This drawing shows abolitionist Wendell Phillips speaking on Boston Common in 1851. Boston was a main center of abolitionist activity. Given what you know about Boston's place in our history, why do you think abolitionism was so strong there?
2. There had always been some Americans against slavery. But Wendell Phillips was one of a number of leaders in the 1830s who helped to make the movement against slavery much more organized and militant. What do you suppose it means to call a group or movement "militant"?
3. Nearly all the abolitionist leaders of the 1830s were deeply affected by a religious revival that swept America in the early 1800s. What is a religious revival? Why do you think religious ideas so strongly affected these leaders' views about slavery?
4. What, if anything, in this drawing helps to show the strong religious feelings that were at the heart of the abolitionist cause.

### Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** In early 1800s, several reform movements arose. Three key ones were: women's rights, temperance, and abolitionism. All three were influenced by the religious revival of the early 1800s. And many (not all) leaders in each reform effort were also involved in the others. Ask your librarian to help you find biographies or articles on the following:

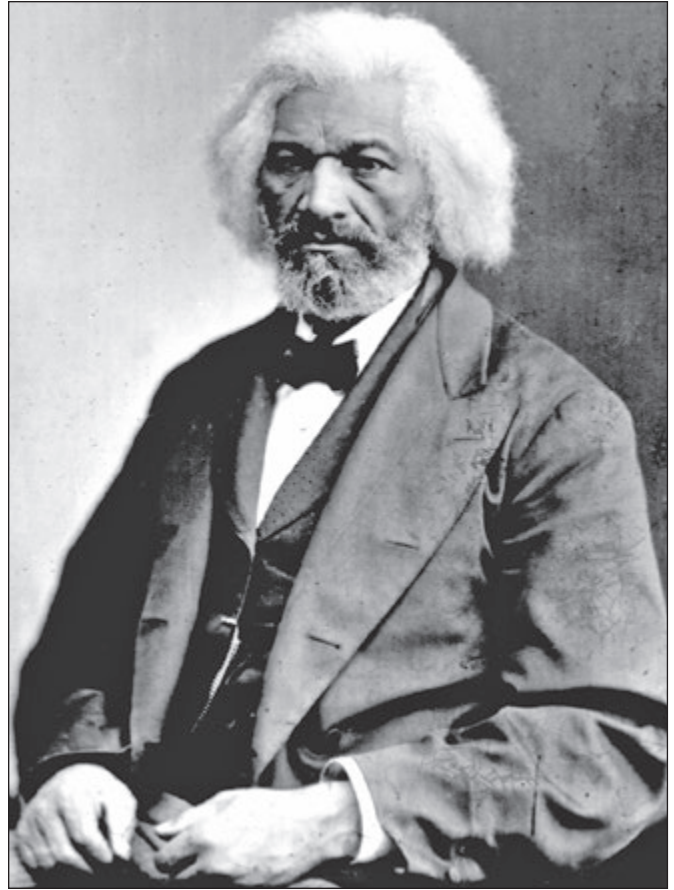
Lewis Tappan	Sojourner Truth
Theodore Weld	Frederick Douglass
Lucretia Mott	William Lloyd Garrison
Sarah Grimke	Angelina Grimke

Have each group member learn more about one of these figures. Now make a chart with three columns, one for each of the reform movements: women's rights, temperance, abolitionism. On the side of the chart, list each of the above names. In the chart's squares, sum up each figure's views about each reform movement. Use the chart and illustrations of the eight figures in a bulletin board display entitled "Abolitionism in an Age of Moral Reform."

## Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Discussing the Illustrations

1. These are two of the most famous abolitionist leaders. Can you give the full name of each man?
2. William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass were against “gradual emancipation” and in favor of “immediate emancipation.” What do you think the difference was between “gradual” and “immediate” emancipation?
3. In his newspaper the *Liberator*, Garrison also opposed the ideas of the American Colonization Society, another anti-slavery group. From the name “American Colonization Society,” can you guess what that group wanted to do about the slaves?
4. What do you think of the idea of colonizing ex-slaves by sending them back to Africa? Why do you think both Garrison and Douglass opposed this idea?
5. Both Garrison and Douglass also believed in full equality for all blacks after slavery ended. Not all abolitionists agreed with this? Why do you think some of them opposed equal rights for blacks?

### Follow-up Activities

1. In 1840, Garrison and Douglass took the same side in a big argument about the role of women in the abolitionist cause. This argument actually split the abolitionist movement. Have each group member learn more about the views of one of the following on this big argument in 1840:

William Lloyd Garrison	Angelina Grimke
Frederick Douglass	Lucretia Mott
Arthur Tappan	Catherine Beecher

Have group members play the parts of these figures in a role-playing debate. First, have them write opening statements about the role of women in the abolitionist movement. Then, they should read and discuss their statements in front of the entire class.

2. Garrison believed only in moral persuasion and was against political action to end slavery, even including voting. Douglass came to disagree with him on this. Find out what both men believed about political action and the U.S. Constitution. Report your findings to the rest of the class in a brief talk.

## Lesson 3—The Abolitionist Cause

### Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

#### Discussing the Illustration

1. This drawing shows a mob smashing the workshop of an abolitionist. From what is being destroyed, can you tell what kind of work was going on in this shop?
2. Many abolitionist editors and printers, both white and black, put out hundreds of newspapers, pamphlets, sermons, leaflets, and posters protesting slavery. From what you know about America in the early and mid-1800s, why would such activities by printers have been especially important to abolitionists?
3. Mobs in the North as well as the South often attacked abolitionist printing presses, speakers, and meetings. Why do you think abolitionists in the North were often violently attacked in the 1830s and later?
4. Catherine Beecher once said that many people joined the abolitionists not because of their arguments, but “because the violence of opposers had identified that cause with the question of freedom of speech, freedom of press, and civil liberty.” What do you think she meant by saying this?

#### Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Your group’s task is to design and write stories for five different front pages for an abolitionist newspaper. The five front pages should tell the story of the following key events in the long abolitionist struggle:

1831: First issue of the *Liberator* published

1835: The great postal campaign in the South

1845: The annexation of Texas

1850: The Compromise of 1850

1859: John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry

Create a masthead (name, etc.) for the top of your newspaper. Write headlines and stories. Find or draw your own illustrations of these events and include them with your stories.

2. In 1837, a mob in Alton, Illinois, killed an abolitionist named Elijah P. Lovejoy. Ask your librarian to help you find sources of information about this abolitionist and what happened to him in 1837. Prepare a brief news story as if you were a radio newscaster giving a report on these events just after they happened.

**OBJECTIVE**

1. Students will better understand how territorial questions in the 1850s added to the North's opposition to slavery and made the entire conflict over slavery much more violent.

# Slavery Divides the Nation

*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Illustration 1**

At first, abolitionists did not talk that much about the cruel treatment of slaves. Men like Garrison wanted to stress that slavery would be evil *even if all slaves were treated well*. But in time, the South's angry refusal to give up slavery led abolitionists to change their approach. The Fugitive Slave Law, one part of the "Compromise of 1850," forced Northerners to help slave owners catch runaway slaves. The law led to painful scenes of slaves being recaptured in the North. This made the cruelty of slavery apparent. In 1851, Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* added to anger about the Fugitive Slave Law. This novel alone helped spread antislavery ideas to hundreds of thousands of people who had never supported abolitionism before.

**Illustration 2**

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 caused new explosions of violence over slavery in Kansas. In 1856, Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner gave an angry antislavery speech about Kansas. He aimed some very insulting remarks at South Carolina Senator Andrew Pickens Butler. Two days later, Butler's nephew, Representative Preston S. Brooks, attacked Sumner on the floor of the Senate. Sumner needed three years to recover. This cartoon pictures the attack, a dramatic example of how bitter feelings about slavery now were, even among the nation's leaders in government.

**Illustration 3**

Most abolitionists worked for a peaceful end to slavery. But war with Mexico had made the battle over slavery much harder to control. That war ended in 1848. And when it did, the nation had a huge new territory to settle. Would this territory be opened to slavery? That question made slavery the nation's number-one issue. The Compromise of 1850 tried to settle this issue, but it failed. The Kansas-Nebraska Act only widened the battle to include older territories. The arguments soon led to real fighting and bloodshed. Some abolitionists began to see violence as the only way to end slavery. The most famous of these abolitionists was John Brown. His raid on Harper's Ferry, shown in this drawing, suggests how divided the nation had become on the eve of the great Civil War that would finally put an end to slavery in the United States.

## Lesson 4—Slavery Divides the Nation

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Discussing the Illustrations

1. These two illustrations are both from an early version of the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. This book was a huge help to the abolitionist movement. Can you name the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the year when it was first published?
2. The top drawing shows two of the main characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The girl is reading the Bible to the man. Have you read this book? If so, can you name the two characters in the top drawing?
3. Some say these two characters were almost too good to be true. If you have read the book, do you agree with this view? How does the drawing help to show what these two characters were like?
4. The bottom drawing shows a frightening event feared by every slave. What event is that?
5. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* told a dramatic story of the horrible treatment of a number of slaves. This book alone may well have led hundreds of thousands of people to support abolitionism. Why do you think that is so?

### Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Your group's task is to read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and illustrate the key parts of the story it tells. Talk about the book after you read it. Decide on at least five scenes to illustrate, along with the two shown above. Use the two illustrations shown here and the ones you draw or paint in a bulletin board display entitled "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Words and Pictures." Add quotes from the book and summaries of each picture so that others will be able to understand the story.
2. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and the book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* together made people in the North angrier about slavery than ever before. Read more about the Fugitive Slave Law. Then read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Write a brief report on this book. In it, explain why knowing more about the Fugitive Slave Law can help a reader understand the big effect that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had on people in the North.

## Lesson 4—Slavery Divides the Nation

# Illustration 2



Print Collection, Miriam D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs  
The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations

### Discussing the Illustration

1. This drawing is about an actual fight that took place in 1856 between two members of the Senate. What is the Senate, and why would a fight in the Senate be shocking to people?
2. The cartoon is about an actual fight in which Preston Brooks, a Southern Representative, used a cane to beat Charles Sumner, a Massachusetts Senator. Brooks was angry because Sumner had insulted his uncle, another Senator. But really the fight was about slavery. In the cartoon, Senator Sumner is holding a speech he made about "Bleeding Kansas." What was happening in Kansas in 1856 that led people to talk about "Bleeding Kansas"?
3. The caption reads "Southern Chivalry—Argument Versus Clubs." "Southern Chivalry" is the idea that Southerners were very honorable and gentlemanly in their dealings with one another. What point does this cartoon seem to make about "Southern Chivalry"? What does it suggest about the arguments over slavery in the 1850s?

### Follow-up Activities

1. Learn more about the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. This act led to a good deal of violence and bloodshed over the slavery issue. Why? Help explain what this act did by using a map you create yourself. The map should show the U.S. states and the various territories in the American West that existed by 1854, including those created by the Kansas-Nebraska Act itself. Mark important locations in the story of "Bleeding Kansas." Finally, write a single-page guide to go with your map. This guide should list details about slavery in the territories and explain the key events between 1854 and 1856 that make up the story of Bleeding Kansas.
2. Read more about the attack shown in this cartoon. Then write three letters to the editor about the cartoon. In the first, pretend you are Preston Brooks. In the second letter, pretend you are his uncle, Senator Andrew Pickens Butler of South Carolina. In the third letter, pretend you are Charles Sumner.

## Lesson 4—Slavery Divides the Nation

### Illustration 3



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#### Discussing the Illustration

1. This drawing also shows how violent the battle over slavery had become by the 1850s. The drawing is of a scene in 1859 just after abolitionists took over a government arsenal at Harper's Ferry in Virginia. The wounded man on the right was the leader of this attempted takeover. Can you name him?
2. John Brown believed slavery was so evil that it was even right to kill in the struggle against it. But what exactly did Brown hope to accomplish by taking over the arsenal at Harper's Ferry?
3. The Harper's Ferry raid did not trigger any slave uprisings at all. And Brown was put to death for his crime. But his action did have a big effect on the nation. In particular, it added greatly to the growing split between North and South. How did it do that?
4. After his trial and execution, Brown became a martyr in the eyes of many abolitionists. But some historians today say he was just a terrorist. What is your view of John Brown and what he did at Harper's Ferry?

#### Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** Your task is to pretend you are a group of people opposed to slavery who are meeting in January 1860 to debate about John Brown and his effort to end slavery: To prepare for this debate, each of you should learn what one of the following six people thought about John Brown and his ideas and activities:

William Lloyd Garrison  
Frederick Douglass  
Abraham Lincoln

Lucretia Mott  
Sojourner Truth  
Henry Ward Beecher

If you cannot find specific statements about Brown by the person you choose to study, try to decide from that person's overall philosophy what he or she would have said about Brown. Within your group, discuss the six people listed above and talk over the events and aftermath of John Brown's raid. Then hold a debate in which each of you takes the part of one of the six antislavery figures. The title of your debate should be: "John Brown and the Future of the Antislavery Movement."



# **Image Close-ups**



## Slavery: Reality & Myth

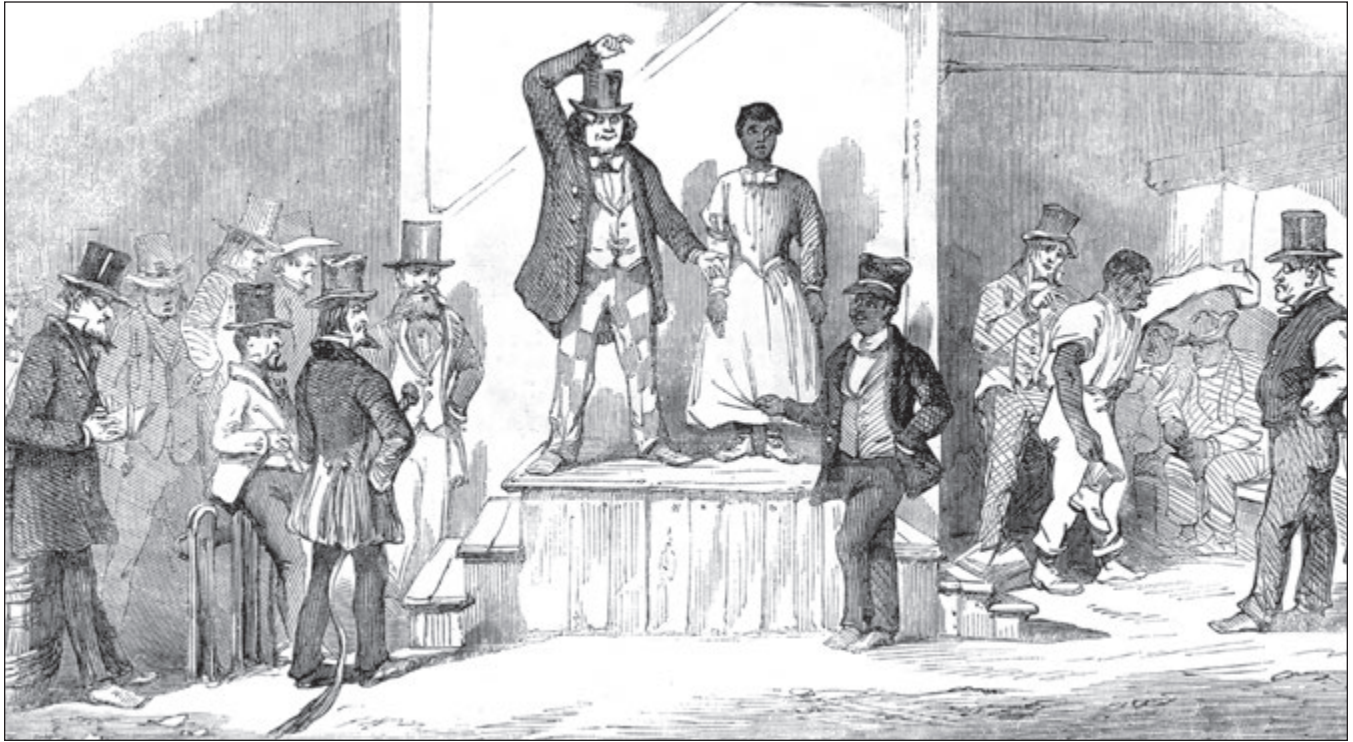
# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

## Slavery: Reality & Myth

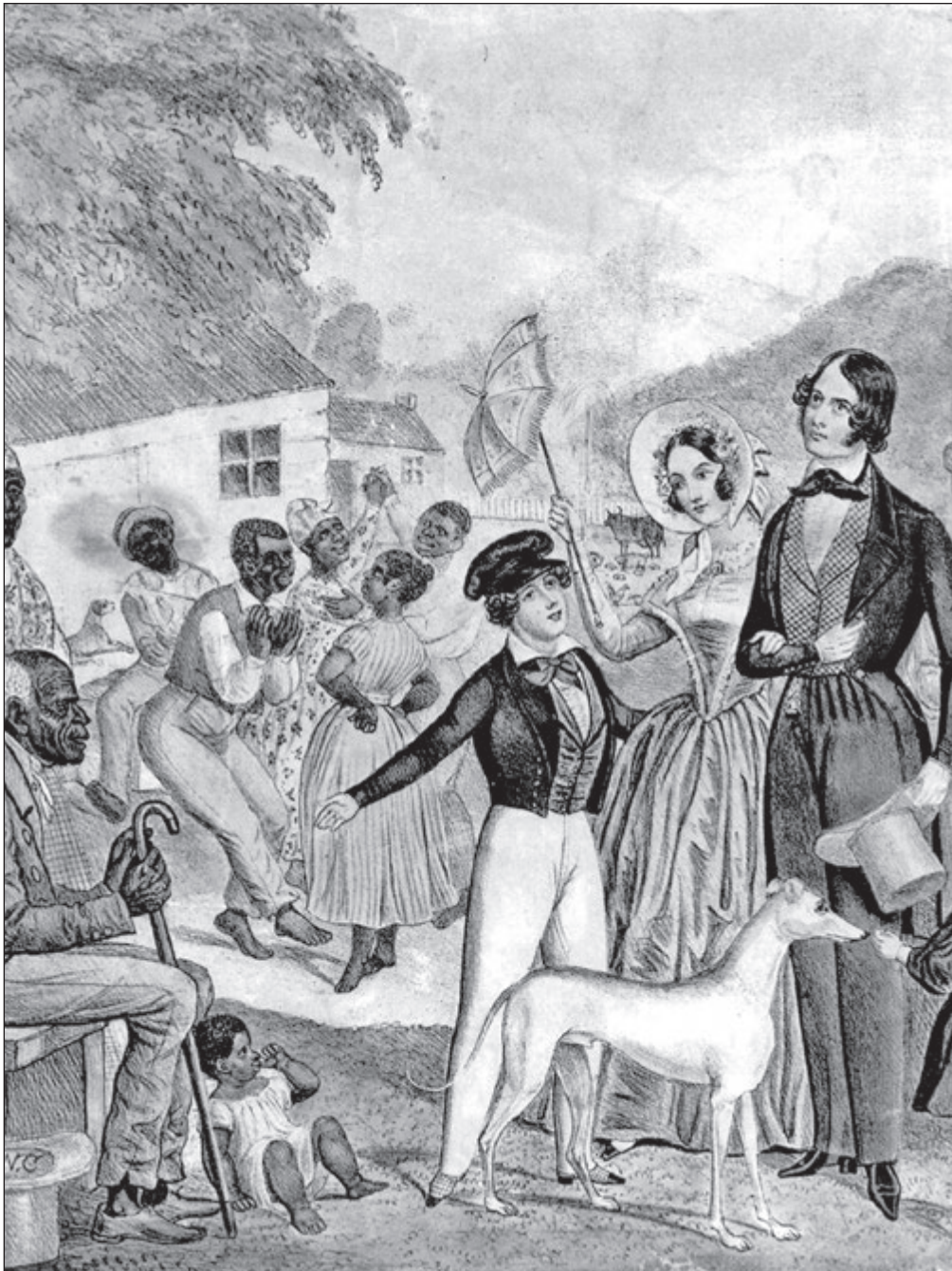
# Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

## Slavery: Reality & Myth

# Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

## Runaways & Resistance

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

## Runaways & Resistance

# Illustration 2



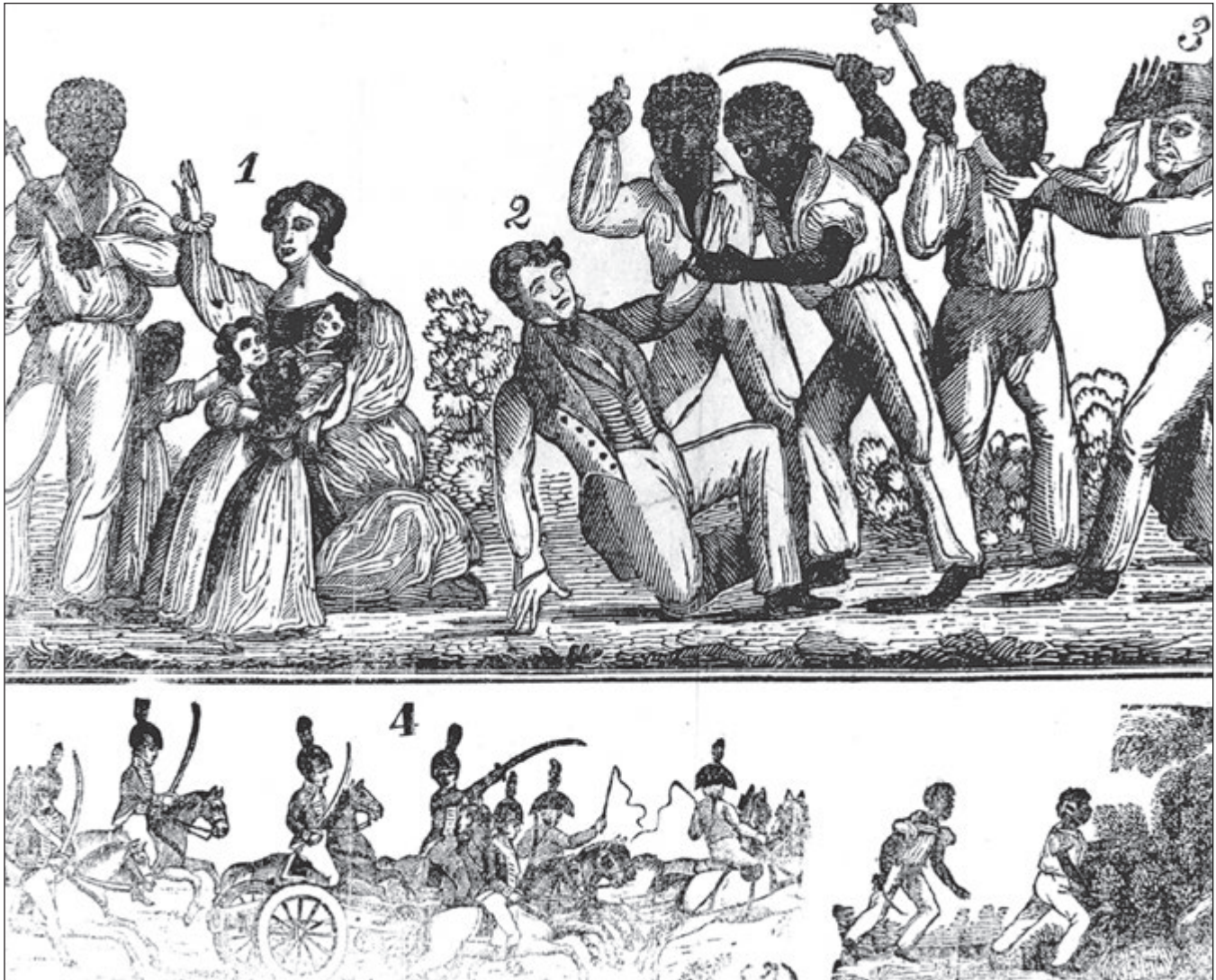
### **Death of Capt. Ferrer, the Captain of the Amistad, July, 1839**

Don Jose Ruiz and Don Pedro Montez, of the Island of Cuba, having purchased fifty-three slaves at Havana, recently imported from Africa, put them aboard the Amistad, Capt. Ferrer, in order to transport them to Principe, another port on the Island of Cuba. After being out from Havana about ten days, the African captives on board, in order to obtain their freedom, and return to Africa, armed themselves with cane knives, and rose upon the captain and crew of the vessel. Capt. Ferrer and the cook of the vessel were killed; two of the crew escaped; Ruiz and Montez were made prisoners.

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Runaways & Resistance

# Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

## The Abolitionist Cause **Illustration 1**



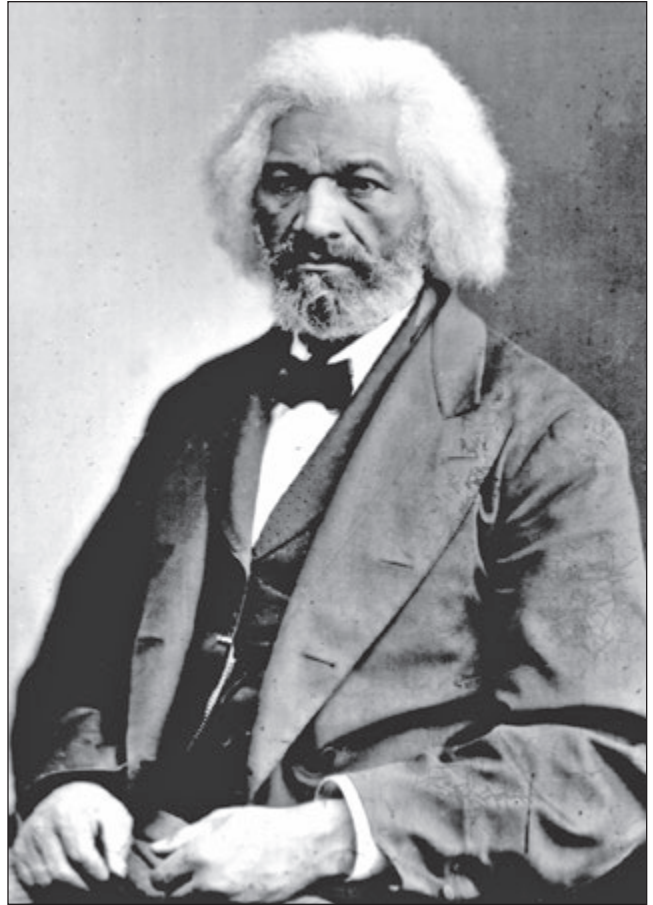
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

## The Abolitionist Cause

# Illustration 2



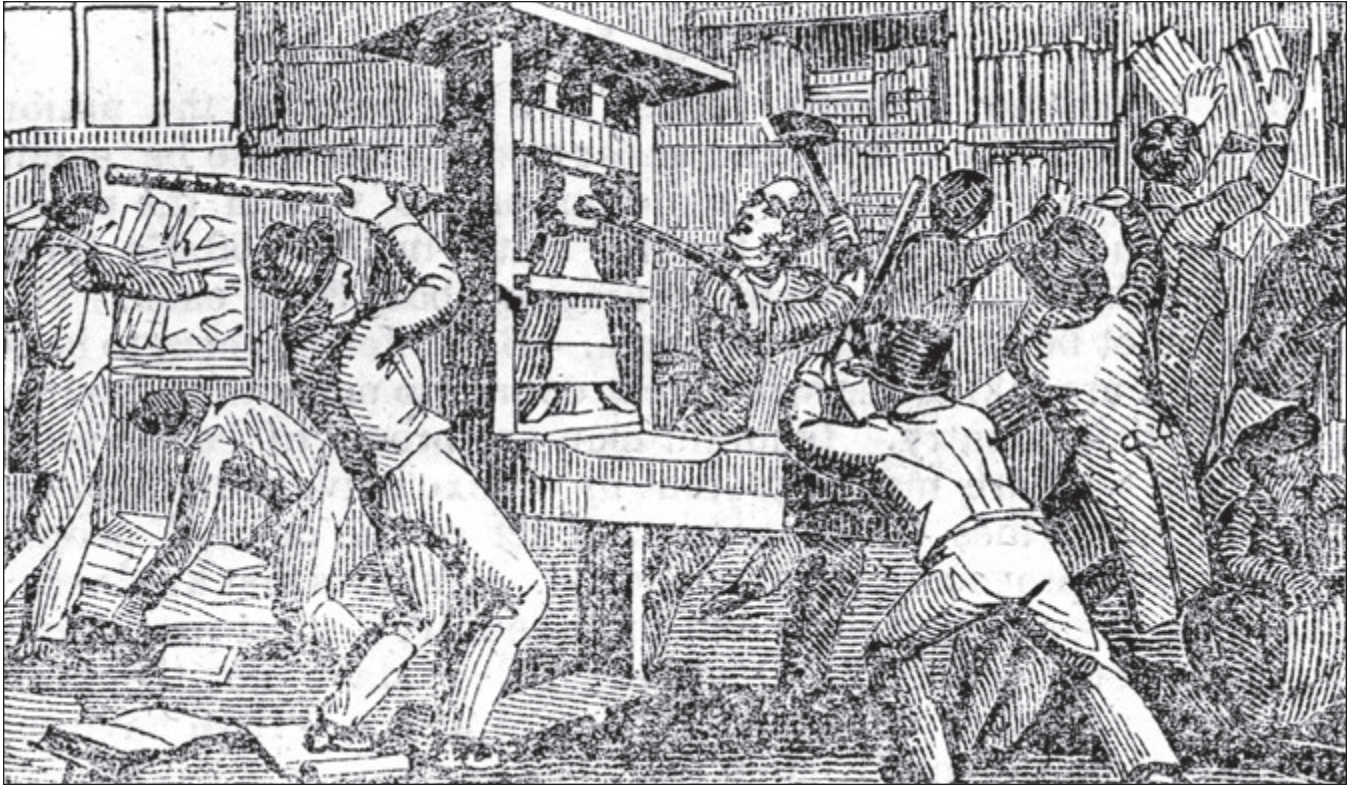
Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

## The Abolitionist Cause

# Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

## Slavery Divides the Nation

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

## Slavery Divides the Nation

# Illustration 2



Print Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs  
The New York Public Library. Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

## Slavery Divides the Nation

# Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



