

DAR MUSEUM

Lessons from the American Home

“A House Divided”: Chattel Slavery in the American Home

Contains content for 4th-12th grades

Disclaimer: This lesson uses primary source evidence from enslaved people who were violently abused. The sources are not especially graphic, and the museum considers them important sources. None-the-less, some students, particularly those who have experienced or are currently experiencing abuse may find this content overly disturbing. We recommend sharing this disclaimer with students before proceeding with the content.

Summary: Students will look at how chattel slavery operated inside American homes. Using a range of historic materials, including primary sources, art and prints, and material history objects, students will develop a nuanced interpretation of chattel slavery. This will reveal the practical logistics and the violence inherit at all levels of enslavement.

Learning Objectives:

- Use critical skills and historical empathy to understand chattel slavery in domestic spaces
- Foster historic empathy for enslaved Black Americans
- Develop an understanding of the logistics of chattel slavery

Time:

Approximately 60 minutes. (scalable)

Program is modular and can be adjusted for classroom timing needs. Includes an optional homework assignment.

Required Materials: all materials included, email museum@dar.org for additional formats

Subjects and Standards of Learning:

Chattel slavery, race, domestic spaces, material history

Curriculum Timing: This should be done after students have been introduced to American chattel slavery, during or prior to discussions of the American Civil War.

Skills, Sources, and Concepts	Examples
Compelling and Supporting Questions	How did chattel slavery work in domestic spaces? How did the enslaved experience space differently from their captors? How does material evidence from wealthy homes tell stories from enslaved people? How do spaces tell narratives? What methods were used to keep enslaved people enslaved?
Data Sources	Material history, museum period rooms, primary sources – prints, historic objects, memoirs
Key Concepts	Development of chattel slavery
Key Strategies and Skills	Critical reading and thinking, historic empathy
Evidence-Backed Claims	Using secondary sources to contextualize historical objects, using sources to develop arguments about slavery, using sources to understand how food and clothing were tools of enslavement
Communication and Action	Students will construct arguments and answer questions using primary sources. Students will problematize information about logistical stats,

	students will write and developed nuanced interpretations relying on primary evidence
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Lesson Outline

Suggested Format: This can be done as an inquiry-based lecture presenting images and sources with the whole class. This can also be done in a think-pair-share format: Allow to students time to look at images/sources, and provide them questions to answer via the suggested *italicized* questions below. Then have them share their assumptions/findings/answers as a class. Separate student materials are included with images and questions.

*The case studies can be used as entirely stand-alone discussions/group discussions or - +*packaged together for a longer program.*

Case Study 1: Looks at a 19th century tray. Uses three sources to look at different ways to discuss objects: one using a museum database, an etiquette guide for servants, and an enslaved woman's memoirs.

Case Study 2: Looks at a 19th century waffle iron. Uses a historic recipe to communicate how extravagant a relatively common (today) food was quite extravagant. Uses Frederick Douglass's description of enslaved diets, as well as nutrition data to contextualize how many enslaved people (particularly field laborers), were underfed.

Case Study 3: Uses a piece of clothing from Thomas Jefferson, information from an art museum, an article on one of his enslaved laborers (laundress), and information on enslaved clothing from Frederick Douglass to think about how clothing distinguished hierarchy, and the complex differences between domestic laborers and field laborers.

Case Study 4 & 5: Coming Soon. This pdf will be updated with two additional case studies looking at how slavery impacted homes that did not hold enslaved persons – northern homes in particular. Wealthy homes would have had access to sugar and mahogany furniture, both of which were harvested and processed by enslaved labor.

Warm-Up [<5Minutes]

Goal: Get the students thinking about space, and how the same space can mean different things to different people.



This is a period room in the DAR Museum. A period room is a space curated¹ to reflect the decorative arts² traditions of an historical era or aesthetic movement.³ Period Rooms range in historical grounding from art displays largely devoid of historical research, to evidenced-based interpretations, to spaces recreated from an historical location. This period room is evidenced-based. [email museum@dar.org for larger images]

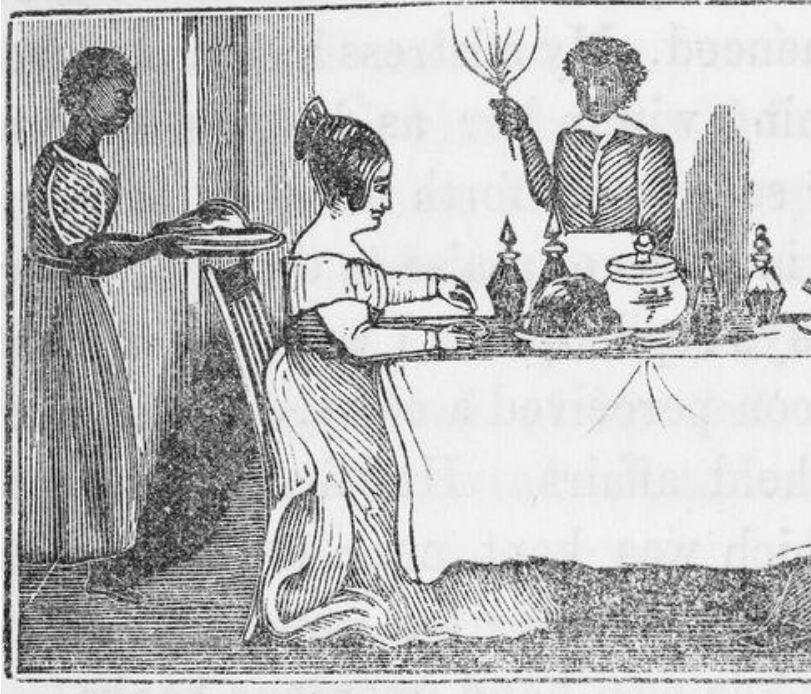
Look closely at this room. *What room is it depicting? What's happening in this room? What evidence in the room shows you that this is a wealthy space? Can you guess where this room is set? What time period is it set? What sort of people would be in a room like this?*

The Period Room we looked at is styled after a dining room in North Carolina set in the 1820s.

¹ Selected or organized by a professional or expert.

² Decorative arts refer to objects that were designed with function and form in mind, referring to most objects contained within homes: tea pots, clothing, quilts, samplers, silverwork, and often paintings are included.

³ An aesthetic movement is when the works produced by a culture are intentionally similar. EX: The rococo movement around the American Revolution focused on asymmetry and natural shapes. It was followed by the neoclassical movement which copied rigid structures and motifs from Greco-Roman ruins.



“The Author Attending at the Dinner-Table,” printed in *Narrative of Henry Watson, a Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself*, 1848.

What are the enslaved people in this image doing? How are they dressed? How does this image resemble the room? How does that change how you view the period room? Who else would be in the room? This image was created based on a description by a formerly enslaved man. How do you think it would have felt to be an enslaved person in this room?

Today we’re going to look at how chattel slavery worked inside of American homes and see how different types of enslaved people interacted with spaces and objects much differently than white Americans.⁴

⁴ Chattel: an item of property that isn’t land. Typically referring to live property. Refers to the unique type of slavery practiced in America and many other places during the period after the Columbian exchange in which human beings were treated like expendable and renewable livestock. All cattle are chattel, but not all chattel is cattle.

Case Study #1: The Tray

Object 1-A: #3967



Look at this object. What is it? What was it used for? What do you think its made of? How big is it? Have the students practice description skills by trying to capture as much of the tray's physical properties as possible. How would we find out more information on this tray?

Source 1-A: From the DAR Museum Collection Database⁵, Catalogue #3967.

Artist/Maker: Stevens Plains, ME Date Made: 1820-1840 Materials: Tin

L: 17.5" W: 12" H: 1 1/8" Date Catalogued: July 12, 1976

What new information does the database hold? What questions do we still have about this tray? Where might you go to find new information about this tray?

Source 1-B: "Hidden People: Objects as used by servants and enslaved," DAR Museum Virtual Tour, 2020.

- o Toleware (painted tin) made in Maine 1820-1840
- o Trays were also called "waiters" at the time

⁵ Many museums offer a public database containing pictures and descriptions of many of the objects they possess: <https://collections.dar.org/Mhomed.aspx?dir=DARCOLL>

- o Says Mr. Roberts⁶: “When you hand a glass, knife and fork, or anything else to any of the company, always take a hand waiter, as it is very improper to hand anything with the naked hand...”
- o POLL: When you are removing things from the table, which hand should you hold the waiter in?
- o Says Mr. Roberts, “...likewise when you are taking any thing off the table, such as a glass, spoons, or any other small article, have a waiter in your left hand, and take off the article with your right.”
- o So this was an indispensable tool for any servant waiting at table. Some were meant to be held with one hand while others were for two, and they came in a variety of sizes (this one is 18” by 12”) and shapes (round, rectangular, oval) and materials (silver, tin, mahogany)

What new information has this given us? How did the museum contextualize the tray? What did they use as evidence? Does this information change how we view the tray? How would a white person have interacted with this object? What would this object mean to an enslaved person?

Source 1-C: *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave. Related by Herself With a Supplement by the Editor. To Which is Added, the Narrative of Asa-Asa, A Captured African* (1831) Electronic Edition, part of the *Documenting the American South Collection* from the University of North Carolina, first edition, 2000. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/prince/prince.html>

One time I had plates and knives in my hand, and I dropped both plates and knives, and some of the plates were broken. He [Her owner, noted as Mr. D-----]⁷ struck me so severely for this, that at last I defended myself, for I thought it was high time to do so. I then told him I would not live longer with him, for he was a very indecent man--very spiteful, and too indecent; with no shame for his servants, no shame for his own flesh. So I went away to a neighboring house and sat down and cried till the next morning, when I went home again, not knowing what else to do.

[Mary Prince was then hired out to another family, which paid Mr. D----- \$2.25 a week for her services. Later Mary was sold to Mr. Wood, who brought her to the island of Antigua.]

What was Mary Prince punished for? Does this change our understanding of how an enslaved person would view a tray? Compare the evidenced used in Source 1-B to this source. Why would the DAR Museum use Mr. Roberts as a source for the tray? What would be the benefits of using one source over the other? Or both? Would the sources you use change based on the audience being presented too? Do you have any remaining questions about the tray? Where could you go to find those answers?

⁶ Robert Roberts wrote *The House Servants Directory* published in 1827. It was the first book published at a commercial publishing house written by a Black man. We don't know if he was born free or enslaved (most tend to think he was born enslaved), but in Boston he was a free man engaged as a Butler in wealthy households.

⁷ Using a letter followed by several dashes was a way to maintain the anonymity of the person being referred to.

Case Study #2: Cast-Iron Device

Object 2-A: #1704



Look closely at this device? What is it made of? What was it used for? What does its unique shape enable it to do? (Look at the “mouth” but look at the handles too).

Source 2-A: DAR Museum Collection Database, Catalogue #1704

Date Made: 1785-1810 Material: Iron

Waffle iron; wrought iron handles; long iron handles enable it to be held away from the fireplace; ring at one end of handle in order to lock arms together and hang when not in use.

What new information did the database provide? Does this tool resemble how we make waffles today? Do you think this would've been a common household item? Why or why not? What's a kitchen appliance today you would find in most American households? What's a kitchen appliance you would only find wealthy households?

Source 2-B: DAR Museum Collection, Catalogue #63.53, manuscript of cookbook by Hannah Bloomfield Giles, c. 1780s.

~To make Waffles~

Take two quarts of milk – one pound of butter, 12 eggs, about a teacup full of good yeast, half a gill [one quarter of a pint] of brandy, a little ginger & half a gill of rose-water – serve them up with pulverized cinnamon, sugar & butter.⁸

⁸ For more on historic cooking and sugar consumption, see “Better than Boxed” at dar.org/museum/teacher-resources

What would this taste like? What is this recipe lacking? Think about the historic prices of goods like cinnamon and sugar. When would people indulge in making waffles?

Source 2-C: *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, regarding food rations on a plantation in Maryland.

Here, too, the slaves of all the other farms⁹ received their monthly allowance of food, and their yearly clothing. The men and women slaves received, as their monthly allowance of food, eight pounds of pork, or its equivalent in fish, and one bushel of corn meal.

...

Our food was coarse corn meal boiled. This was called *mush*. It was put into a large wooden tray or trough, and set down upon the ground. The children were then called, like so many pigs, and like so many pigs they would come and devour the mush; some with oyster-shells, others with pieces of shingle, some with naked hands, and none with spoons. He that ate fastest got most; he that was strongest secured the best place; and few left the trough satisfied.

How was pork or fish kept lasting an entire month? Is this enough food for an adult for a single month? Where would we be able to find that information? How would white captors view enslaved people eating? What would it do to your opinion of yourself if this was how you were forced to eat at home, or in the cafeteria? What emotions would this cause if you were to see someone eating in such a way? How would this method of eating affect how enslaved people thought of each other? How can this be used as a method to further control enslaved people? How might an enslaved person feel about preparing waffles? Or seeing waffles served?

Source 2-D: “What should my daily intake of calories be?”

An ideal daily intake of calories varies depending on age, metabolism, and *levels of physical activity*, among other things. [emphasis added]

Generally, the recommended daily calorie intake is 2,000 calories a day for women and 2,500 for men. [60,000 calories/day for women, 75,000 for men. This is on an assumption of only 30 minutes of rigorous activity, five days a week. Manual labor jobs (working 7.5-8 hours a day) can require 3-4,000 calories a day, or 90,000-120,000 calories a month.]

How many calories do you think an enslaved person would need? Do you think their monthly rations was enough to provide them the energy and nutrition they needed for their level of physical activity?

Source 2-E: Calories in pork and cornmeal

Calories in 8lbs of pork: 8,794 Calories in a bushel of cornmeal: approx. 77,500

⁹ Plantations were often organized into smaller farms – each had its own designated workers and overseers as well as crop productions. Ex: George Washington’s Mt. Vernon was divided into five farms: Mansion House, Dogue Run, Muddy Hole, River, and Union. This tactic also helped divide enslaved families. The father/husband would work on one farm, while his wife/children would be on another. They could be permitted to visit on Sundays. This was a common practice.

= 86,294 calories a month for an enslaved person¹⁰

How does this data help us understand the “allowance”/ration that Frederick Douglass received? Why would a slave owner underfeed their laborers like this? What benefit could it have? What does this tell us about chattel slavery, specifically how captors viewed enslaved people? These rations were very similar to other mid-Atlantic plantations, including Mount Vernon and Monticello.

Source 2-F: Kelley Fanto Deetz, “How Enslaved Chefs Helped Shape American Cuisine,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, 20 July 2018.

Black cooks were bound to the fire, 24 hours a day. They lived in the kitchen, sleeping upstairs above the hearth during the winters, and outside come summertime. Up every day before dawn, they baked bread for the mornings, cooked soups for the afternoons, and created divine feasts for the evenings. They roasted meats, made jellies, cooked puddings, and crafted desserts, preparing several meals a day for the white family. They also had to feed every free person who passed through the plantation. If a traveler showed up, day or night, bells would ring for the enslaved cook to prepare food. For a guest, this must have been delightful: biscuits, ham, and some brandy, all made on site, ready to eat at 2:30 a.m. or whenever you pleased. For the cooks, it must have been a different kind of experience.

Enslaved cooks were always under the direct gaze of white Virginians. Private moments were rare, as was rest. But cooks wielded great power: As part of the “front stage” of plantation culture, they carried the reputations of their enslavers—and of Virginia—on their shoulders. Guests wrote gushing missives about the meals they ate while visiting these homes. While the missus may have helped design the menu, or provided some recipes, it was the enslaved cooks who created the meals that made Virginia, and eventually the South, known for its culinary fare and hospitable nature.

These cooks knew their craft. Hercules, who cooked for George Washington, and James Hemings, an enslaved cook at Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, were both formally trained, albeit in different styles. Hercules was taught by the well-known New York tavern keeper and culinary giant Samuel Frances, who mentored him in Philadelphia; Hemings traveled with Jefferson to Paris, where he learned French-style cooking. Hercules and Hemings were the nation’s first celebrity chefs, famous for their talents and skills.

How does this source enhance our knowledge about the enslaved? How might an enslaved chef like Hercules or James Hemings have a different experience of slavery than Frederick Douglass or Mary Prince did? In what ways would their experiences have been similar? What questions do you have about enslaved food and enslaved cooks? Where would you find answers to those questions?

¹⁰ As a caveat, enslaved people were often not required to labor for their captors on Sundays, but this was the day they would be able to forage, fish, or hunt for food to keep from starving or wasting away.

Case Study #3: The Stock



Object 3-A: #77.19

What material is this made out of? What distinguishing marks are there? What do you think they mean? Notice the slits on the right side? What are those for? Does the ruffling help you figure out what this article is? Who did it belong to?

Source 3-A: DAR Museum Collection, Catalogue #77.19

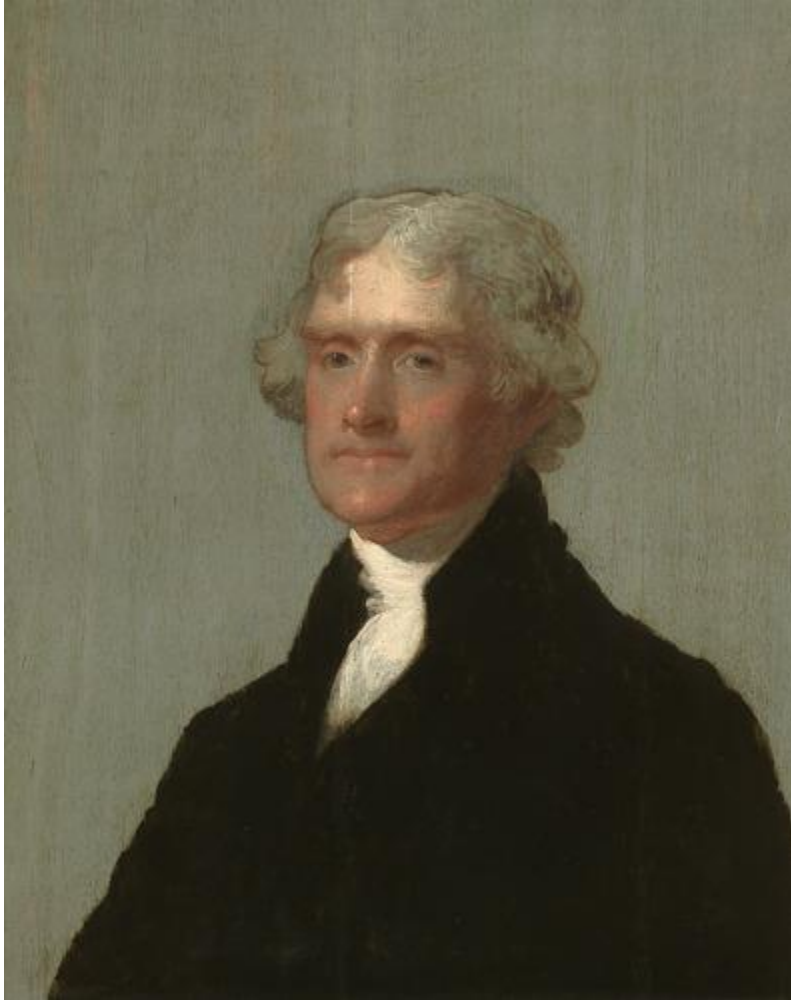
Man's stock is constructed from lightweight linen and heavier cotton twill. The material has been pleated vertically at both ends; the pleating is fine and well done. Four narrow slits, similar to buttonholes have been placed at the left edge. These holes were used to secure the prongs of the buckle, which fastened the two ends together. This shaping was done to allow the cloth to pull through the buckle. The initials, "TJ", with the number "13" below it appears at the left edge of the piece. The number probably was used to indicate the number of stocks in the owner's inventory. A number of items in the Copp family collection at the Smithsonian are similarly numbered. The stock is completely hand sewn.

Although the donor information states that this stock was used during the last years of Thomas Jefferson's life (he died in 1826), the style suggests an earlier date.

How did this source add to your observations of the object? What did you guess correctly? What evidence does the museum site to explain this object's history? Where would you go to try to verify, or prove this information?

Object 3-B: The Edgehill Portrait (Thomas Jefferson), painted by Gilbert Stuart, 1805/1821. Owned jointly by the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery and Monticello.

https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.82.97



From the exhibit label:

Third president, 1801–1809

Thomas Jefferson authored the Declaration of Independence, founded the University of Virginia, and wrote Virginia's Statute for Religious Freedom. He was also a philosopher, inventor, gentleman farmer, and scientist. During his presidency, the nation bought a vast land holding west of the Mississippi River. Known as the Louisiana Purchase, this acquisition from France doubled the size of the United States and led to the remarkable findings of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804–1806). Although Jefferson once called slavery “an abominable crime,” he

consistently enslaved African Americans, including his late wife Martha's half-sister, Sally Hemings¹¹, with whom he had several children.

Known as the "Edgehill Portrait," this painting on mahogany, by artist Gilbert Stuart, was the result of two sittings. Jefferson's brightly lit forehead stands out against the muted gray-green background, as if to emphasize his bold intellect.

Look at the description for the stock from the museum database. Now look at the portrait. Can you compare the neck stock in the portrait to the one in the collection? What impression does the exhibit label give you of Thomas Jefferson? How do they want you to feel about him? What new information does the label provide? What questions do you have after reading it? Where would you go to find the answers to those questions?

Source 3-B: "Ursula Granger," Monticello.org

In mid-January 1773, Jefferson purchased Ursula and her two children, and, later, her husband, George Granger, Sr. Martha Jefferson [Thomas Jefferson's wife] must have known Ursula's skills as she was, "very desirous to get a favorite house woman of the name Ursula." The Grangers were important to Monticello's operation for the next 25 years... They probably lived in the "N[-----] quarter," one of the slave dwellings for multiple families on Mulberry Row.

Ursula worked as a cook, wet-nurse (for Martha Jefferson) [a wet nurse is employed to breastfeed another person's children], house maid, laundress, dairymaid, and also supervised cider-making in 1800; "There is nobody there but Ursula who unites trust & skill to do it," Jefferson wrote. In addition to working in the Jefferson household, she cared for her own family. In 1794 she received 30 yards of linen, 20 yards of "cloth with knap," and 36 skeins of spun sewing thread for clothing. Ursula, George Granger, Sr. and their son George Granger, Jr. all died within months of each other in 1799 and 1800, victims of serious illness treated by a conjurer¹² in Buckingham County.

How might Ursula Granger be connected to the stock? Look at the list of duties Ursula Granger had – how closely was she involved in the Jefferson's lives? Look at the duties again, how many duties of those do you perform? How much time does that take out of your day? Week? Month? What would you be able to do if you no longer had to wash or fold your clothes, cook, clean your kitchen, labor for income? Think about the list of achievements attached to the portrait of Thomas Jefferson? How many of those accomplishments would Jefferson have completed if he had to launder his own clothes? Clean his own house? Till his own field? To what degree was Jefferson's success enabled by the enslaved people he held captive?

Source 3-C: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Their yearly clothing consisted of two coarse linen shirts, one pair of linen trousers, like the shirts, one jacket, one pair of trousers for winter, made of coarse n[-----] cloth [also known as

¹¹ James Hemings, the enslaved chef mentioned in Case Study #2, was the brother of Sally Hemings

¹² A name for someone who sold homemade medicinal recipes, or who utilized superstitious thinking to heal maladies.

Lowell cloth, a coarse cheap fabric], one pair of stockings, and one pair of shoes; the whole of which could not have cost more than seven dollars. The allowance [rations of food and clothing] of the slave children was given to their mothers, or the old women having the care of them. The children unable to work in the field had neither shoes, stockings, jackets, nor trousers, given to them; their clothing consisted of two coarse linen shirts per year. When these failed them, they went naked until the next allowance-day. Children from seven to ten years old, of both sexes, almost naked, might be seen at all seasons of the year.

...

I was seldom whipped by my old master and suffered little from anything else than hunger and cold. I suffered much from hunger, but much more from cold. In hottest summer and coldest winter, I was kept almost naked—no shoes, no stockings, no jacket, no trousers, nothing on but a coarse tow linen shirt, reaching only to my knees. I had no bed. I must have perished with cold, but that, the coldest nights, I used to steal a bag which was used for carrying corn to the mill. I would crawl into this bag, and there sleep on the cold, damp, clay floor, with my head in and feet out. My feet have been so cracked with the frost, that the pen with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes.¹³

What is the difference in the experience between Ursula Granger and Frederick Douglass? Look at what Ursula Granger was allotted to her family. What can we infer about their difference in clothing? Think about the role of enslaved people in the plantation fields, then in the home? How are there experiences different? How is their relationship to their captor different? If Granger and Douglass' clothing was different, was their food different? Where could we go to find more information about this? How might Jefferson view his stock? How might Ursula Granger view it? What might Frederick Douglass think of it?

[Case Study #4](#): Sugar (Coming Soon)

[Case Study #5](#): Mahogany (Coming Soon)

[Case Study #6](#): Cotton (Coming Soon)

[Summative Questions](#):

Pick one of the objects from a Case Study. How would that object have been viewed by: an owner of enslaved people, an enslaved domestic worker, an enslaved field laborer? How were their experiences different? How were they similar? What did our case study add to our understanding of slavery or American History? What questions do we still have? Where would we go to find answers to those questions?

[Further Work](#):

¹³ A common ailment discovered in the narratives of formerly enslaved laborers (particularly field hands), is scarred feet due to frostbite and the lack of proper footwear throughout the year.

Add-a-Source – Pick a case study above, using resources available to you, find another source that adds to our understanding of the object or the story being told. Make sure the source is reliable, authoritative, and adds something new to the case study.

Add-a-Case Study – Find an historic object used by enslaved people (using a museum database or <https://collections.dar.org/Mhomed.aspx?dir=DARCOLL>). Find sources that contextualize the object by explaining: how the object was used, how it fit in to the life of slaver-owners or enslaved people. Write up questions that would help a reader understand and connect your sources together.

Replicate at Home – Find an object in your home that get used regularly. Write about how different members of your family use each object, and what it means to them. Research where the object was made, who made it, who sold it. How would those people view the object differently from you?

Analyze a Museum – (Coming Soon!)

Student Materials

Introduction: This is a period room in the DAR Museum. A period room is a space curated¹⁴ to reflect the decorative arts¹⁵ traditions of an historical era or aesthetic movement.¹⁶ Period Rooms range in historical grounding from art displays largely devoid of historical research, to evidenced-based interpretations, to spaces recreated from an historical location. This period room is evidenced-based.



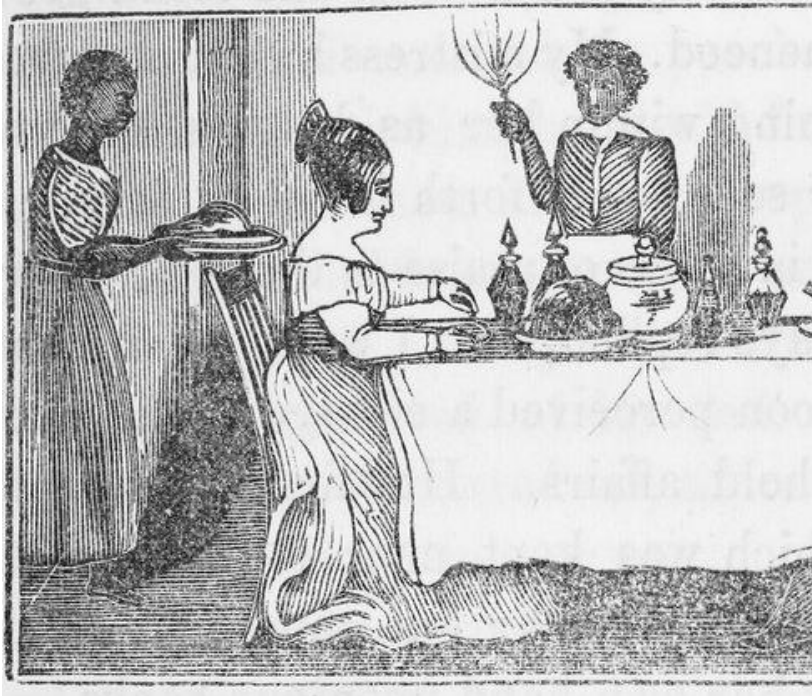
Look closely at this room. *What room is it depicting? What's happening in this room? What evidence in the room shows you that this is a wealthy space? Can you guess where this room is set? What time period is it set? What sort of people would be in a room like this?*

This Period Room is styled after a dining room in North Carolina set in the 1820s.

¹⁴ Selected or organized by a professional or expert.

¹⁵ Decorative arts refer to objects that were designed with function and form in mind, referring to most objects contained within homes: tea pots, clothing, quilts, samplers, silverwork, and often paintings are included.

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“The Author Attending at the Dinner-Table,” printed in *Narrative of Henry Watson, a Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself*, 1848.

What are the enslaved people in this image doing? How are they dressed? How does this image resemble the room? How does that change how you view the period room? Who else would be in the room? This image was created based on a description by a formerly enslaved man. How do you think it would have felt to be an enslaved person in this room?

Today we’re going to look at how chattel slavery worked inside of American homes and see how different types of enslaved people interacted with spaces and objects much differently than white Americans.¹⁷ We will also see how the experience of chattel slavery was different for distinct groups of enslaved people.

¹⁷ Chattel: an item of property that isn’t land. Typically referring to live property. Refers to the unique type of slavery practiced in America and many other places during the period after the Columbian exchange in which human beings were treated like expendable and renewable livestock. All cattle are chattel, but not all chattel is cattle.

Case Study #1: The Tray

Object 1-A: #3967



Look at this object. What is it? What was it used for? What do you think it's made of? How big is it? Have the students practice description skills by trying to capture as much of the tray's physical properties as possible. How would we find out more information on this tray?

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Artist/Maker: Stevens Plains, ME Date Made: 1820-1840 Materials: Tin

L: 17.5” W: 12” H: 1 1/8” Date Catalogued: July 12, 1976

What new information does the database hold? What questions do we still have about this tray? Where might you go to find new information about this tray?

Source 1-B: “Hidden People: Objects as used by servants and enslaved,” DAR Museum Virtual Tour, 2020.

- o Toleware (painted tin) made in Maine 1820-1840
- o Trays were also called “waiters” at the time
- o Says Mr. Roberts¹⁹: “When you hand a glass, knife and fork, or anything else to any of the company, always take a hand waiter, as it is very improper to hand anything with the naked hand...”
- o POLL: When you are removing things from the table, which hand should you hold the waiter in?
- o Says Mr. Roberts, “...likewise when you are taking any thing off the table, such as a glass, spoons, or any other small article, have a waiter in your left hand, and take off the article with your right.”
- o So this was an indispensable tool for any servant waiting at table. Some were meant to be held with one hand while others were for two, and they came in a variety of sizes (this one is 18” by 12”) and shapes (round, rectangular, oval) and materials (silver, tin, mahogany)

What new information has this given us? How did the museum contextualize the tray? What did they use as evidence? Does this information change how we view the tray? How would a white person have interacted with this object? What would this object mean to an enslaved person?

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One time I had plates and knives in my hand, and I dropped both plates and knives, and some of the plates were broken. He [Her owner, noted as Mr. D-----]²⁰ struck me so severely for this, that at last I defended myself, for I thought it was high time to do so. I then told him I would not live longer with him,

¹⁸ Many museums offer a public database containing pictures and descriptions of many of the objects they possess: <https://collections.dar.org/Mhomed.aspx?dir=DARCOLL>

¹⁹ Robert Roberts wrote *The House Servants Directory* published in 1827. It was the first book published at a commercial publishing house written by a Black man. We don’t know if he was born free or enslaved (most tend to think he was born enslaved), but in Boston he was a free man engaged as a Butler in wealthy households.

²⁰ Using a letter followed by several dashes was a way to maintain the anonymity of the person being referred to.

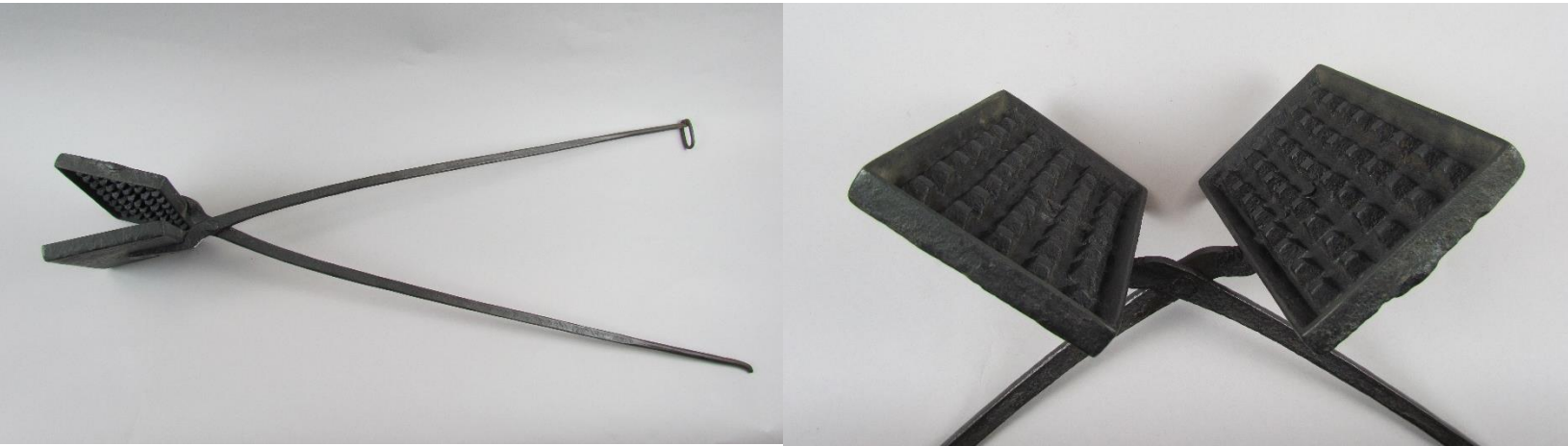
for he was a very indecent man--very spiteful, and too indecent; with no shame for his servants, no shame for his own flesh. So I went away to a neighboring house and sat down and cried till the next morning, when I went home again, not knowing what else to do.

[Mary Prince was then hired out to another family, which paid Mr. D----- \$2.25 a week for her services. Later Mary was sold to Mr. Wood, who brought her to the island of Antigua.]

What was Mary Prince punished for? Does this change our understanding of how an enslaved person would view a tray? Compare the evidenced used in Source 1-B to this source. Why would the DAR Museum use Mr. Roberts as a source for the tray? What would be the benefits of using one source over the other? Or both? Would the sources you use change based on the audience being presented too? Do you have any remaining questions about the tray? Where could you go to find those answers?

Case Study #2: Cast-Iron Device

Object 2-A: #1704



Look closely at this device? What is it made of? What was it used for? What does its unique shape enable it to do? (Look at the “mouth” but look at the handles too).

Source 2-A: DAR Museum Collection Database, Catalogue #1704

Date Made: 1785-1810 Material: Iron

Waffle iron; wrought iron handles; long iron handles enable it to be held away from the fireplace; ring at one end of handle in order to lock arms together and hang when not in use.

What new information did the database provide? Does this tool resemble how we make waffles today? Do you think this would've been a common household item? Why or why not? What's a kitchen appliance today you would find in most American households? What's a kitchen appliance you would only find wealthy households?

Source 2-B: DAR Museum Collection, Catalogue #63.53, manuscript of cookbook by Hannah Bloomfield Giles, c. 1780s.

~To make Waffles~

Take two quarts of milk – one pound of butter, 12 eggs, about a teacup full of good yeast, half a gill [one quarter of a pint] of brandy, a little ginger & half a gill of rose-water – serve them up with pulverized cinnamon, sugar & butter.²¹

What would this taste like? What is this recipe lacking? Think about the historic prices of goods like cinnamon and sugar. When would people indulge in making waffles?

Source 2-C: *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, regarding food rations on a plantation in Maryland.

Here, too, the slaves of all the other farms²² received their monthly allowance of food, and their yearly clothing. The men and women slaves received, as their monthly allowance of food, eight pounds of pork, or its equivalent in fish, and one bushel of corn meal.

...

Our food was coarse corn meal boiled. This was called *mush*. It was put into a large wooden tray or trough, and set down upon the ground. The children were then called, like so many pigs, and like so many pigs they would come and devour the mush; some with oyster-shells, others with pieces of shingle, some with naked hands, and none with spoons. He that ate fastest got most; he that was strongest secured the best place; and few left the trough satisfied.

How was pork or fish kept lasting an entire month? Is this enough food for an adult for a single month? Where would we be able to find that information? How would white captors view enslaved people eating? What would it do to your opinion of yourself if this was how you were

²¹ For more on historic cooking and sugar consumption, see "Better than Boxed" at dar.org/museum/teacher-resources

²² Plantations were often organized into smaller farms – each had its own designated workers and overseers as well as crop productions. Ex: George Washington's Mt. Vernon was divided into five farms: Mansion House, Dogue Run, Muddy Hole, River, and Union. This tactic also helped divide enslaved families. The father/husband would work on one farm, while his wife/children would be on another. They could be permitted to visit on Sundays. This was a common practice.

forced to eat at home, or in the cafeteria? What emotions would this cause if you were to see someone eating in such a way? How would this method of eating affect how enslaved people thought of each other? How can this be used as a method to further control enslaved people? How might an enslaved person feel about preparing waffles? Or seeing waffles served?

Source 2-D: “What should my daily intake of calories be?”

An ideal daily intake of calories varies depending on age, metabolism, and *levels of physical activity*, among other things. [emphasis added]

Generally, the recommended daily calorie intake is 2,000 calories a day for women and 2,500 for men. [60,000 calories/day for women, 75,000 for men. This is on an assumption of only 30 minutes of rigorous activity, five days a week. Manual labor jobs (working 7.5-8 hours a day) can require 3-4,000 calories a day, or 90,000-120,000 calories a month.]

How many calories do you think an enslaved person would need? Do you think their monthly rations was enough to provide them the energy and nutrition they needed for their level of physical activity?

Source 2-E: Calories in pork and cornmeal

Calories in 8lbs of pork: 8,794 Calories in a bushel of cornmeal: approx. 77,500

= 86,294 calories a month for an enslaved person²³

How does this data help us understand the “allowance”/ration that Frederick Douglass received? Why would a slave owner underfeed their laborers like this? What benefit could it have? What does this tell us about chattel slavery, specifically how captors viewed enslaved people? These rations were very similar to other mid-Atlantic plantations, including Mount Vernon and Monticello.

Source 2-F: Kelley Fanto Deetz, “How Enslaved Chefs Helped Shape American Cuisine,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, 20 July 2018.

Black cooks were bound to the fire, 24 hours a day. They lived in the kitchen, sleeping upstairs above the hearth during the winters, and outside come summertime. Up every day before dawn, they baked bread for the mornings, cooked soups for the afternoons, and created divine feasts for the evenings. They roasted meats, made jellies, cooked puddings, and crafted desserts, preparing several meals a day for the white family. They also had to feed every free person who passed through the plantation. If a traveler showed up, day or night, bells would ring for the enslaved cook to prepare food. For a guest, this must have been delightful: biscuits, ham, and some brandy, all made on site, ready to eat at 2:30 a.m. or whenever you pleased. For the cooks, it must have been a different kind of experience.

Enslaved cooks were always under the direct gaze of white Virginians. Private moments were rare, as was rest. But cooks wielded great power: As part of the “front stage” of plantation

²³ As a caveat, enslaved people were often not required to labor for their captors on Sundays, but this was the day they would be able to forage, fish, or hunt for food to keep from starving or wasting away.

culture, they carried the reputations of their enslavers—and of Virginia—on their shoulders. Guests wrote gushing missives about the meals they ate while visiting these homes. While the missus may have helped design the menu, or provided some recipes, it was the enslaved cooks who created the meals that made Virginia, and eventually the South, known for its culinary fare and hospitable nature.

These cooks knew their craft. Hercules, who cooked for George Washington, and James Hemings, an enslaved cook at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, were both formally trained, albeit in different styles. Hercules was taught by the well-known New York tavern keeper and culinary giant Samuel Frances, who mentored him in Philadelphia; Hemings traveled with Jefferson to Paris, where he learned French-style cooking. Hercules and Hemings were the nation's first celebrity chefs, famous for their talents and skills.

How does this source enhance our knowledge about the enslaved? How might an enslaved chef like Hercules or James Hemings have a different experience of slavery than Frederick Douglass or Mary Prince did? In what ways would their experiences have been similar? What questions do you have about enslaved food and enslaved cooks? Where would you find answers to those questions?

Case Study #3: The Stock



Object 3-A: #77.19

What material is this made out of? What distinguishing marks are there? What do you think they mean? Notice the slits on the right side? What are those for? Does the ruffling help you figure out what this article is? Who did it belong to?

Source 3-A: DAR Museum Collection, Catalogue #77.19

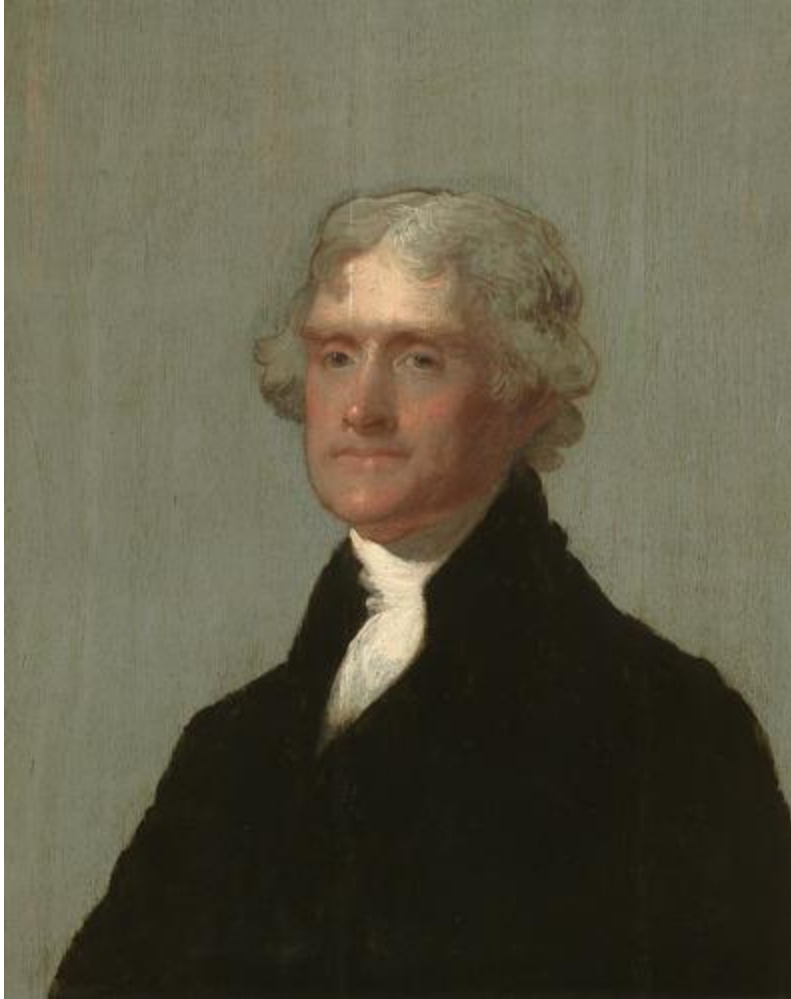
Man's stock is constructed from lightweight linen and heavier cotton twill. The material has been pleated vertically at both ends; the pleating is fine and well done. Four narrow slits, similar to buttonholes have been placed at the left edge. These holes were used to secure the prongs of the buckle, which fastened the two ends together. This shaping was done to allow the cloth to pull through the buckle. The initials, "TJ", with the number "13" below it appears at the left edge of the piece. The number probably was used to indicate the number of stocks in the owner's inventory. A number of items in the Copp family collection at the Smithsonian are similarly numbered. The stock is completely hand sewn.

Although the donor information states that this stock was used during the last years of Thomas Jefferson's life (he died in 1826), the style suggests an earlier date.

How did this source add to your observations of the object? What did you guess correctly? What evidence does the museum site to explain this object's history? Where would you go to try to verify, or prove this information?

Object 3-B: The Edgehill Portrait (Thomas Jefferson), painted by Gilbert Stuart, 1805/1821.
Owned jointly by the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery and Monticello.

https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.82.97



From the exhibit label:

Third president, 1801–1809

Thomas Jefferson authored the Declaration of Independence, founded the University of Virginia, and wrote Virginia’s Statute for Religious Freedom. He was also a philosopher, inventor, gentleman farmer, and scientist. During his presidency, the nation bought a vast land holding west of the Mississippi River. Known as the Louisiana Purchase, this acquisition from France doubled the size of the United States and led to the remarkable findings of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804–1806). Although Jefferson once called slavery “an abominable crime,” he consistently enslaved African Americans, including his late wife Martha’s half-sister, Sally Hemings²⁴, with whom he had several children.

Known as the “Edgehill Portrait,” this painting on mahogany, by artist Gilbert Stuart, was the result of two sittings. Jefferson’s brightly lit forehead stands out against the muted gray-green background, as if to emphasize his bold intellect.

²⁴ James Hemings, the enslaved chef mentioned in Case Study #2, was the brother of Sally Hemings

Look at the description for the stock from the museum database. Now look at the portrait. Can you compare the neck stock in the portrait to the one in the collection? What impression does the exhibit label give you of Thomas Jefferson? How do they want you to feel about him? What new information does the label provide? What questions do you have after reading it? Where would you go to find the answers to those questions?

Source 3-B: “Ursula Granger,” Monticello.org

In mid-January 1773, Jefferson purchased Ursula and her two children, and, later, her husband, George Granger, Sr. Martha Jefferson [Thomas Jefferson’s wife] must have known Ursula’s skills as she was, “very desirous to get a favorite house woman of the name Ursula.” The Grangers were important to Monticello’s operation for the next 25 years... They probably lived in the “N[-----] quarter,” one of the slave dwellings for multiple families on Mulberry Row.

Ursula worked as a cook, wet-nurse (for Martha Jefferson) [a wet nurse is employed to breastfeed another person’s children], house maid, laundress, dairymaid, and also supervised cider-making in 1800; “There is nobody there but Ursula who unites trust & skill to do it,” Jefferson wrote. In addition to working in the Jefferson household, she cared for her own family. In 1794 she received 30 yards of linen, 20 yards of “cloth with knap,” and 36 skeins of spun sewing thread for clothing. Ursula, George Granger, Sr. and their son George Granger, Jr. all died within months of each other in 1799 and 1800, victims of serious illness treated by a conjurer²⁵ in Buckingham County.

How might Ursula Granger be connected to the stock? Look at the list of duties Ursula Granger had – how closely was she involved in the Jefferson’s lives? Look at the duties again, how many duties of those do you perform? How much time does that take out of your day? Week? Month? What would you be able to do if you no longer had to wash or fold your clothes, cook, clean your kitchen, labor for income? Think about the list of achievements attached to the portrait of Thomas Jefferson? How many of those accomplishments would Jefferson have completed if he had to launder his own clothes? Clean his own house? Till his own field? To what degree was Jefferson’s success enabled by the enslaved people he held captive?

Source 3-C: Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Their yearly clothing consisted of two coarse linen shirts, one pair of linen trousers, like the shirts, one jacket, one pair of trousers for winter, made of coarse n[----] cloth [also known as Lowell cloth, a coarse cheap fabric], one pair of stockings, and one pair of shoes; the whole of which could not have cost more than seven dollars. The allowance [rations of food and clothing] of the slave children was given to their mothers, or the old women having the care of them. The children unable to work in the field had neither shoes, stockings, jackets, nor trousers, given to them; their clothing consisted of two coarse linen shirts per year. When these failed them, they went naked until the next allowance-day. Children from seven to ten years old, of both sexes, almost naked, might be seen at all seasons of the year.

²⁵ A name for someone who sold homemade medicinal recipes, or who utilized superstitious thinking to heal maladies.

...

I was seldom whipped by my old master and suffered little from anything else than hunger and cold. I suffered much from hunger, but much more from cold. In hottest summer and coldest winter, I was kept almost naked—no shoes, no stockings, no jacket, no trousers, nothing on but a coarse tow linen shirt, reaching only to my knees. I had no bed. I must have perished with cold, but that, the coldest nights, I used to steal a bag which was used for carrying corn to the mill. I would crawl into this bag, and there sleep on the cold, damp, clay floor, with my head in and feet out. My feet have been so cracked with the frost, that the pen with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes.²⁶

What is the difference in the experience between Ursula Granger and Frederick Douglass? Look at what Ursula Granger was allotted to her family. What can we infer about their difference in clothing? Think about the role of enslaved people in the plantation fields, then in the home? How are there experiences different? How is their relationship to their captor different? If Granger and Douglass' clothing was different, was their food different? Where could we go to find more information about this? How might Jefferson view his stock? How might Ursula Granger view it? What might Frederick Douglass think of it?

²⁶ A common ailment discovered in the narratives of formerly enslaved laborers (particularly field hands), is scarred feet due to frostbite and the lack of proper footwear throughout the year.

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