Inspired by the will of a plantation owner, and using original slave auction and plantation estate documents, Ashley Bryan offers a moving and powerful picture book that contrasts the monetary value of 11 slaves with the priceless value of life experiences and dreams that a slave owner could never take away.

Bryan has created collages around that historic document, and others like it.

**Text Features:**
Each person appears in a four-page section, opening with a page of free verse text opposite a riveting head-and-shoulders portrait with a grim collage background of slavery-related documents. A banner reveals the person’s appraised value, master-imposed slave name, and age. Includes author’s note. Facsimiles of plantation documents.

**Curriculum Connections:**
- Historical fiction, US History, slavery, prejudice & racism, race relations, African-Americans, art
- Best lends itself to instruction of: Civil Rights, character education, close reading in grade band 4

**Common Core Standards**

**Primary:**

RL.2.3: Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

RL.2.6: Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.

RL.2.7: Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

RL.3.3: Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events

RL.3.7: Explain how specific aspects of a text’s illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

**Intermediate:**

RL.4.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RL.4.3: Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions).

RL.4.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RL.5.1: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RL.5.9: Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.
## Lesson Ideas

### Primary:

Make a Venn Diagram comparing their life with the lives of those in the book. Make a list of things that they have that slaves did not have.

Compare and contrast the “jobs” of the eleven slaves and their “dreams”.

Discuss the importance of music in the lives of plantation slaves, follow up with Freedom in Congo Square and include samples of jazz and other traditional music.

Read books from text set and talk about slaves, freedom and ways that citizens helped them.

Quilt squares and underground railroad— provide a series of quilt squares, have students color these and then arrange into a “map”.

Use art style from Freedom over me, to create 4 pages for themselves, (or someone they know.) Imagine their slave jobs vs. their real goals and dreams.

Interview with Ashley Bryan [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovaJp-SJeFs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovaJp-SJeFs)

Harriet Tubman Bio [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYWRoBJ6Ucr](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYWRoBJ6Ucr)

### Intermediate:

Diary — use the text set books, have the students write a diary of “one week” in the life of… Let them choose a time frame or sequence.

Use Nightjohn and Sarny as literature group books & lead students in a “compare and contrast” discussion.

Have students' create game boards for the underground railway; include routes, mileage, hazards, safe places, etc.

Link to lesson plans for older students

[https://teachers.net/lessons/posts/1587.html](https://teachers.net/lessons/posts/1587.html)  — unit with two week lesson on searching the conductor sites and find routes to hide their slaves. Includes activities, vocabulary and quizzes.

[https://teachers.net/lessons/posts/2635.html](https://teachers.net/lessons/posts/2635.html)  — Lessons on the middle passage from Africa; includes role playing, auctions, etc.

### Text Set Options

| All different now: Juneteenth, the first day of freedom, by Angela Johnson & E.B. Lewis | Simon & Schuster | 2014 | AR 3.1 |
| Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt by Deborah Hopkinson & James Ransome Knopf | 1993 | |
| Follow the drinking gourd, by Jeanette Winter Knopf | 1998 | AR 3.5 |
| Henry’s Freedom Box, by Ellen Levine and Kadir Nelson Scholastic Press | 2007 | AR 3.9 |
| Show Way, by Jacqueline Woodson GP Putnam’s Sons | 2005 | AR 3.8 |
| Elijah of Buxton, by Christopher Paul Curtis Scholastic | 2007 | AR 5.4 |
| The Old African, by Julius Lester & Jerry Pinkney Dial Books | 2005 | BL 5.1 |
| Never forgotten, by Patricia McKissack Schwartz & Wade | 2011 | BL 4.1 |
| Nightjohn, by Gary Paulsen and Jerry Pinkney Delacorte Press | 1983 | AR 3.8 |
| Sarny, A life remembered, by Gary Paulsen and Jerry Pinkney Delacorte Press (sequel to Nightjohn) | 1997 | AR 4.6 |

Meet the author—Ashley Bryan [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7REBumHUzPM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7REBumHUzPM)