Key terms:
slave – a person who is not free
raise – to make something grow
crops - plants on a farm
beat - to hit

Slavery in the 1800s

In the 1800s, rich white American men owned big farms in the South. They raised tobacco, cotton and other crops. Slaves did most of the work. These big farms were called plantations. The owners of these plantations bought slaves to do all the work and in exchange for the work, they received housing, food and clothing. They were never paid. But if the slaves did not do the work, the plantation owners would beat them. The plantation owner considered them an investment. At that time, it was not against the law to own slaves. It became illegal when President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and all the slaves were freed.

Key terms:
mistreated – not taken care of
charges – accuses, blames
threaten - to tell someone that they or someone else will be hurt or punished if they do not do what they are told to do
victim - a person who has been hurt or trafficked
jail – prison; where the state locks up people accused of committing crimes
force - to make someone do something they do not want to do
fraud - a scam, swindle, a lie, con or trick
coercion - to achieve something by force or threat
prosecute – to accuse and try someone under the law for committing a crime

Modern-Day Slavery or Human Trafficking

Slavery was supposed to end after 1863 but it still exists today. It is a different form of slavery and it is against the law. The terms that are used today are “modern-day slavery” or “human trafficking.” Present day slaves work in many different jobs that include agriculture, prostitution and domestic servitude. They are mistreated just as slaves in the past and the people who enslave them can face serious criminal charges. The threat of many years in jail does not stop human traffickers. They make a lot of money and can always find more people to enslave if a worker escapes or dies. Traffickers use fraud, force and coercion to get and keep their victims under their control. For example, traffickers will lie to people, promise them good jobs at a fair wages, but then make them do a different kind of job, under dangerous or illegal conditions, for little or no pay. The traffickers guard them and say that they will harm them or family members if the victims try to escape. There are many organizations and agencies that help victims of human trafficking. There are laws to protect victims and to prosecute and punish traffickers. Local law enforcement and a national hotline 1-888-373-7888 can help victims.