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Freedom Over Me: Eleven Slaves, Their Lives and Dreams Brought to Life by Ashley Bryan

Ashley Bryan

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

Imagine being looked up and down and being valued as less than chair. Less than an ox. Less than a dress. Maybe about the same as…a lantern.

You, an object. An object to sell.

In his gentle yet deeply powerful way, Ashley Bryan goes to the heart of how a slave is given a monetary value by the slave owner, tempering this with the one thing that CAN'T be bought or sold—dreams. Inspired by the actual will of a plantation owner that lists the worth of each and every one of his "workers", Bryan has created collages around that document, and others like it. Through fierce paintings and expansive poetry he imagines and interprets each person's life on the plantation, as well as the life their owner knew nothing about—their dreams and pride in knowing that they were worth far more than an Overseer or Madam ever would guess. Visually epic, and never before done, this stunning picture book is unlike anything you've seen.

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