**Letter to the slaver Ziba B. Oakes**

Written by: **A. J. McElveen (1854)**

Dear Sir,

I have bought the boy Isaac for $11.00 [*$1100?*] I think him very fine his equal cannot be found in capacity. He is a general horse lover and a splendid carriage driver. He is also a fine painter varnisher (and the boy says he can make a fine panel door. He is a genius and it's strange to say I think he is smarter than I am. Also he performs well on the violin and other musical instruments. Give him a fair trial and if you do not get $1500 for him I am very much mistaken. His master says he is a first rate cook in meats. I am not restricted to have him sent out of the state unless I choose. I am under promise to not let him come back to Sumter District therefore sell him in Charleston if you can. I paid one half cash the other I pay the 6 -- that is -- sale day. I leave here tomorrow and will be here the last of next week. Write me on the arrival of Isaac. And say what you think of him. As no.1 fellow I expect to buy some negroes down below + several -- to be sold here on the 6th -- If I buy I will put off paying as long as I can. I will draw small amounts tomorrow in order to meet my arrangements if I should buy more negroes then I can get money to pay for I will come down about February without you make arrangements with the bank. I will write you from Kingstree. A sale takes places on the 26th -- and they will be 5- negroes sold. I will tell you J.M. E. Shafer offered $1200 for Isaac and expected to get him but the Doctor -- him out of jail. He would not take any -- for him and he was about sending the boy to Robinson + call to sell for him. I hope you will get fine price for him the --Dr will give me a certificate as regards his capacity. He has owned him from a child up he is 28 years old about 5 feet 10 in. weigh 150 lbs. or 160. Fine legs a little whipped. the Doctor is ready to give any man his opinion and will say everything in his favor he can. The boy was -- of by mean person caused him to flee perhaps I have said more than is necessary.

Yours in haste,

A. J. McElveen

Primary Source Analysis Questions:

1. Was Isaac skilled or educated? What is the difference between the two and why might that be relevant to slavers like McElveen?
2. What language in the letter shows how slavers used white superiority to justify slavery?
3. What does the letter tell us about the different tasks that enslaved people were forced to perform?