

Northwest History Consortium

American Colonies: Newly Freed Indentured Servant Chooses Where to Live in the Colonies

Revised Version of “Where Will You Live in the Colonies?” by Cindy Mapston

Vince Hughes and Betsy Gottschalk
8th Grade

National Standard

Era 2: Colonization and Settlement (1585-1763) / Standard 3

Standard 3: How the values and institutions of European economic life took root in the colonies, and how slavery reshaped European and African life in the America.

BACKGROUND FOR TEACHER AND STUDENTS

Indentured servants traveled to the Americas in great numbers in the early colonial years.

“Indenture” originates from English Common Law. It meant “under contract,” but the term originates from a tearing of two parts of a contract so that identical matching edges can be compared, or two identical contracts with matching indents cut in them.

In the 17th century indentured servants worked for a certain number of years depending on the colony, the contract, and the age of the servant. While the person was indentured, he or she could not marry nor produce children. He or she was the master’s property. After the period of indenture was completed, an indentured servant was often entitled to land, tools, and livestock.

PROBLEM

Geography: Why is “where” important?

Historical Analysis and Interpretations: Whose “story” is it?

Economics: Who should pay? Who should benefit?

Government and Politics: To what extent should society control individuals?

SCENARIO

It’s the 1700s in North America.

After seven years of very long days working as an indentured servant in Philadelphia, you are ready to begin your new life as a free colonial. You have just turned twenty-one.

After your indenture contract was completed, you were given a little money, plus the tools, and a small parcel of land owed to you.

You’ve heard of the need for workers in the growing cities of New England. There are both skilled labor jobs and servant jobs available. Farm hands are needed outside of the cities. You could sell the land you’ve been given and move north to Massachusetts or one of the other New England colonies for work. Or perhaps you could try moving to one of the southern colonies where the weather is warmer and the land is suitable for other kinds of planting. There is a need for labor in Southern cities as well. Then again, there is a lot of good land and work to be done

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right here in the central colonies.

You are left with a life-changing decision to make. You have your whole life ahead of you and there are thirteen different colonies from which to select. Where will you go to begin your new life?

TASKS

Your group must take on the character of a newly freed indentured servant. Choose a colony in which to settle, the skills your character already has or will need in order to succeed there, and present your decision to the rest of the class in a dramatic way. Your group may write and produce a play, movie, or documentary of an indentured servant's life after he or she was freed and the process that he or she went through in order to decide where to live.

1. In addition to the dramatic telling, back your choice with: a list or a map of the colonies with the colonial jobs possible in each (legal ones) in the 1700s, the features which would attract a newly freed man or woman to each colony, and the areas of each colony which were attracting workers in the 1700s.
2. As the newly free male or female colonial, you need to decide what skills you have already and what skills you will need in order to work in the location on which you decide. List colonial jobs possible for newly freed men and women in the 1700s in the thirteen colonies.
3. Should you choose to remain in Pennsylvania and farm the land you now own, then evidence of your choice must reflect the search in other colonies.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS (AND TEACHER)

Book

Davidson, Dr. James West, et al. The American Nation. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall (Pearson Education, Inc.), 2003. 126.

Internet

Alsop, George. "They Live Well in the Time of Their Service." 1663. History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web (George Mason University). ©1999 – 2010. Fairfax, VA. 15 June 2010 <<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5815>>.

Burnaby, Reverend Andrew. "Courtship in New England, 1760." Eyewitness to History.Com. ©1997 – 2010 Ibis Communications, Inc. Geneva, NY. 15 June 2010 <<http://eyewitnesstohistory.com/bundling.htm>>.

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“Captured by Indians, 1755.” Eyewitness to History.Com. ©1997 – 2010 Ibis Communications, Inc. Geneva, NY. 15 June 2010 <<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/cap.htm>>.

“Colonial Williamsburg Trades.” History.Org (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation). Williamsburg, VA. 15 June 2010 <<http://www.history.org/Almanack/life/trades/tradehdr.cfm>>.

“Daily Life on a Colonial Plantation, 1709-11.” Eyewitness to History.Com. ©1997 – 2010 Ibis Communications, Inc. Geneva, NY. 15 June 2010 <<http://eyewitnesstohistory.com/colonialplantation.htm>>.

Fennell, Christopher. “Servants and Masters.” The Plymouth Colony Archive Project (University of Illinois, Urbana – Champaign). ©1998 - 2010 Patricia Scott Deetz and Christopher Fennell. Urbana, IL. 15 June 2010 <<http://www.histarch.uiuc.edu/plymouth/ccflaw.html>>.

“First-Hand Accounts – By Date, 1575 – 1705.” Virtual Jamestown (First-Hand Accounts). ©1999 – 2010 Crandall Shifflett. Blacksburg, VA (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University). 15 June 2010 <http://www.virtualjamestown.org/fhaccounts_date.html#1550>.

Jemison, Mary. “Captured by Indians.” 1824. History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web (George Mason University). ©1999 – 2010. Fairfax, VA. 15 June 2010 <<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5794/>>.

Lowther, Richard. “Richard Lowther Servant Indenture.” 1627. Virtual Jamestown (First-Hand Accounts). ©1999 – 2010 Crandall Shifflett. Blacksburg, VA (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University). 15 June 2010 <<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/jamestown-browse?id=J1046>>.

Mittelberger, Gottlieb. “Work and Labor in This New and Wild Land are Very Hard.” 1750. History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web (George Mason University). ©1999 – 2010. Fairfax, VA. 15 June 2010 <<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5712>>.

“Passage to America, 1750.” Eyewitness to History.Com. ©1997 – 2010 Ibis Communications, Inc. Geneva, NY. 15 June 2010 <<http://eyewitnesstohistory.com/passage.htm>>.

Pond, [unknown]. “A Letter Home From Massachusetts Bay 1631.” 15 March 1631. History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web (George Mason University). ©1999 – 2010. Fairfax, VA. 15 June 2010 <<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5887>>.

“Property Laws.” The Library of Congress (American Women). 2010. Washington, DC. 15 June 2010 <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awlaw3/property.html>>.

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"Slavery and Indentured Servants." The Library of Congress (American Women). 2010. Washington, DC. 15 June 2010 <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awlaw3/slavery.html>>.

Sprigs, Elizabeth. "We Unfortunate English People Suffer Here." 22 September 1756. History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web (George Mason University). ©1999 – 2010. Fairfax, VA. 15 June 2010 <<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5796>>.

ASSESSMENT

Where to Live in the Colonies (Freed Indentured Servant) Role Play

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Historical Accuracy	All historical information appeared to be accurate and in chronological order.	Almost all historical information appeared to be accurate and in chronological order.	Most of the historical information was accurate and in chronological order.	Very little of the historical information was accurate and/or in chronological order.
Role	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were consistently in character.	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were often in character.	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were sometimes in character.	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were rarely in character.
Knowledge Gained	Can clearly explain several ways in which his character "saw" things differently than other characters and can clearly explain why.	Can clearly explain several ways in which his character "saw" things differently than other characters.	Can clearly explain one way in which his character "saw" things differently than other characters.	Cannot explain one way in which his character "saw" things differently than other characters.
Required Elements	Student included more information than was required.	Student included all information that was required.	Student included most information that was required.	Student included less information than was required.
Props/Costume	Student uses several props (could include costume) that accurately fit the period, show considerable work/creativity, and make the presentation better.	Student uses 1-2 props that accurately fit the period and make the presentation better.	Student uses 1-2 props which make the presentation better.	The student uses no props OR the props chosen detract from the presentation.

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