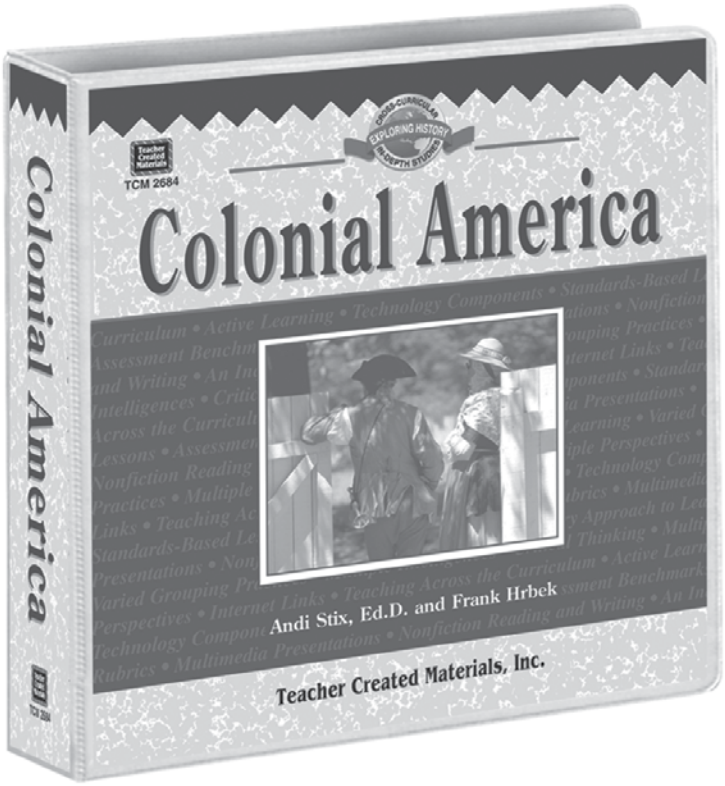
Sample Lesson *from*
Exploring History
Colonial America



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The Peopling of America

Indentured Servants and Slaves

STANDARDS

I. Culture

e. Articulate the implications of cultural diversity, as well as cohesion, within and across group.

II. Time, Continuity, and Change

d. Identify and use processes important to reconstructing and reinterpreting the past, such as using a variety of sources, providing, validating, and weighing evidence for claims, checking credibility of sources, and searching for causality.

III. People, Places, and Environments

c. Use appropriate resources, data, sources, and geographic tools such as aerial photographs, satellite images, geographic information systems, map projections, and cartography to generate, manipulate, and interpret information such as atlases, databases, grid systems, charts, graphs, and maps.

V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

c. Describe the various forms institutions take and the interactions of people with institutions.

e. Identify and describe examples of tensions between belief systems and government policies and laws.

VIII. Science, Technology, and Society

d. Explain the need for laws and policies to govern scientific and technological applications, such as in the safety and well being of workers and consumers and the regulation of utilities, radio, and television.

IX. Global Connections

a. Describe instances in which language, art, music, belief systems, and other cultural elements can facilitate global understanding or cause misunderstanding.

f. Demonstrate understanding of concerns, standards, issues, and conflicts related to universal human rights.

XI. Primary Resources

Most students are not familiar with the fact that the majority of people who migrated to colonial America were either indentured servants or slaves.

To begin this activity, have students turn to the graph in their student handbooks titled Immigration 1620–1780 (EA-14 or EB-14). Have students examine the picture graph of early immigration and discuss what they notice. An overhead transparency of the chart is provided in section F.

Three two-decade periods: 1700–1719, 1720–1739, and 1740–1759 indicate the importation of large numbers of black slaves, which far exceeded the number of immigrants who came to the colonies from Europe. This was reflected in the growing prosperity of the plantations producing sugar, tobacco, rice, and indigo. During this same period, conditions improved in Europe, and fewer Europeans were willing to sign on as indentured servants in the colonies. The decline in the following decade from (1760–1779) indicates the political problems that began to confront the colonists as they approached the revolution. At the same time, political and religious leaders in the colonies and in Europe began calling for an end to the slave trade.

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The Peopling of America

Indentured Servants and Slaves *(cont.)*

Scholars estimate that from 1620 to 1780 over 600,000 immigrants came to the part of North America that became the United States. The majority of the immigrants came as unfree labor. Almost all the blacks were brought as slaves, while an estimated 75% of the white immigrants to the colonies south of New England came as indentured servants.

Between 1620 and 1700, most white newcomers came from England and settled in the New England and Chesapeake areas. From 1700 to 1780, they were joined by Germans, Scots-Irish, and other northern Europeans who settled in the mid-Atlantic colonies. Meanwhile, as the slave trade reached its peak, many Africans were brought to the South. By 1789, when George Washington was inaugurated president, we were already a multi-ethnic and multiracial society.

Source: *Prof. Russell R. Menard, University of Minnesota, and Prof. H. A. Gemery, Colby College.*

Background Information about *On the Misfortune of Indentured Servants*

This primary source document presents difficulties, for it is vividly graphic in detailing the callousness and cruelty of that particular time and place. You may find that your students are highly impressionable, and that much of what they read they will not readily comprehend. The teacher should make every effort to set the stage by providing background and additional information that will put Gottlieb Mittelberger's document into proper perspective. It would be a shame if the students simply regarded many of the passages as the exaggerations of a highly excitable imagination.

The eighteenth century was a callous time, and England proved to be no exception. Life was hard, and human life was cheap. For most, life was drudgery, and many worked themselves into an early grave. Men and women of the lower classes were uneducated and grew up in ignorance, and their children were destined to suffer the same fate. Crime was rife throughout the kingdom, and society's only answer to the problem was to punish with severity and brutality all who transgressed the law. William Hogarth's paintings and engravings, which condemn British society for its festering ills and evils, can provide a classroom of students with sufficient visual proof that here indeed was a world empty of charity, pity, or kindness. Hogarth, who lived from 1697 to 1764, vividly portrayed an England that was a dissolute place of horrors and misery in his engravings *Gin Lane*, *Beer Street*, and *Stages of Cruelty*. Using the overhead projector, you can give your class a glimpse of eighteenth century England by using Hogarth's illustrations to bring Gottlieb Mittleberger's document into better focus.

In eighteenth-century England, women and children were publicly hanged at Newgate Prison for stealing goods worth barely more than a shilling. The hangings were holidays, with thousands coming to see the condemned felons swing from the gibbet, enjoying every minute. The American colonies were a repository for the king's undesirable subjects, including felons, convicts, rebels, and the unwanted portion of the populace that was considered lazy and shiftless because there were no jobs or employment. Hundreds of homeless children were periodically swept up and shipped to the colonies as bonded servants. Is it little wonder that such an institution as indenturing people into servitude flourished in that day and age?

The Peopling of America

Indentured Servants and Slaves *(cont.)*

Background Information about *On the Misfortune of Indentured Servants* *(cont.)*

Early immigration was a result of many factors, including religious, political, and economic strife. Whether it was gentry heading to Virginia or Puritans and religious dissidents settling Massachusetts Bay, profit and success were the desired results. The colonies all struggled to survive in the wilderness, and a shortage of labor was an ever-present problem. To encourage colonization and to secure a sufficient labor force, colonizing agencies like the Massachusetts Bay Company or the Virginia Company sponsored immigrants to make the voyage to America. The various companies, large numbers of landowners, and even individual families negotiated contracts with settlers who could not afford the passage. These poor souls bound themselves into servitude for several years, but very few of them really knew what awaited them when they reached America's shores.

For homework, assign the introduction and the primary source document found in the student handbook (EA-15 through EA-19 or EB-15 through EB-19) which deals with the plight of indentured servants. Allow several days for this task. Encourage students to highlight, underline, or take notes as they read. Ask students to discuss the document and to collectively discuss and participate in their cooperative groups.

1. Ask students to write down, without talking to one another, the most surprising element of this document. Once they have had the opportunity to think for themselves, give them time to discuss it with their groups or literature circles. A literature circle is a group of people who get together to discuss a piece of literature. It is a time when students can discuss issues in a free-flowing manner. Each student is encouraged to participate, and a specific right or wrong answer is not the goal or the desired outcome of this experience. Encourage students to reflect upon their experiences for homework because they may or may not have agreed with other participants in their group.
2. Here are some issues dealing with indentured servitude that can be discussed in literature circles:

- women's rights
- controlling one's own money
- children's lack of rights
- burial at sea
- sanitation of food
- lack of medicine
- similarities and differences between slaves and indentured servants
- humans treated like an article of property available for sale and purchase

3. Allow students five minutes to write down what they learned during their literature group discussion. This makes them accountable for what they discussed.
4. In whole-class format, the teacher may decide to discuss and chart the results.

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Immigration 1620–1780

Years	Whites	Blacks
1620–1639		
1640–1659		
1660–1679		
1680–1699		
1700–1719		
1720–1739		
1740–1759		
1760–1779		

Key

2,500 people = 5,000 people =

Respond to the following staement and questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Describe in detail how the statistics for the three periods: 1700–1719, 1720–1739, and 1740–1759 reflect the business conditions in some of the colonies.
2. For what reasons do you believe there began to be a decline in 1760–1779?

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Indentured Servants

Introduction

In the early part of the 1600s in Colonial America, people traveled and settled with others who shared their beliefs, religion, and customs such as the Puritans, Quakers, Huguenots, Hutterites, Mennonites, etc. During the latter part of Colonial immigration, companies began to sponsor, or pay for, people to make the voyage. However, the passengers paid a very high price.

Few colonists could pay for the cost of passage for themselves and their families to make a start in the New World. For those who could not, companies like the Virginia Company and the Massachusetts Bay Company paid for transportation and maintenance. In return, the settlers agreed to work for the companies as contract workers. Many who came to the New World under this plan soon found that, since they were expected to be servants, they were no better off than if they had stayed at home. In time, the system was harmful to successful settlements, and a new way was found to draw settlers to America. Companies, landowners, and families offered to pay for future settlers to come to America if they promised to work for the person or group who paid for them for a limited time—usually for four to seven years. They were free at the end of this time, and such settlers would be given “freedom dues,” sometimes including a small piece of land.

Many people believe that half of the settlers living in the colonies south of New England came to America under this system as “indentured servants.” Although most of them worked for the full term of their contract, some ran away from their employers. Still, many of them were able to get land and set up homesteads, either in the colonies in which they had originally settled or in neighboring ones. Families who came to America under this form of semi-slavery were not looked down upon, as every colony had its share of leaders who came here as indentured servants.

People often hear about indentured servants, but rarely do they get the real story behind the facts. What follows is the frightening, sad tale of the brave people who settled this country. It is a primary source document, a first-hand story, that tells about one man’s experiences travelling to Colonial America during the mid 1700s.

On the Misfortune of Indentured Servants

Primary Source Document Written in 1754 by Gottlieb Mittelberger

The Sail to Old England

Both in Rotterdam and in Amsterdam, the people are packed densely [tightly], like herrings so to say, in the large sea-vessels. One person receives a place of scarcely 2 feet width and 6 feet length in the bedstead, while many a ship carries four to six hundred souls; not to mention the innumerable implements [an infinite amount of equipment], tools, provisions [supplies], water barrels and other things which likewise occupy much space.

On account of contrary [hostile] winds it takes the ships sometimes 2, 3, and 4 weeks to make the trip from Holland to . . . England. But when the wind is good, they get there in 8 days or even sooner. Everything is examined there and the custom-duties paid, whence it comes that the ships ride there 8, 10 to 14 days, and even longer at anchor, till they have taken in their full cargoes. During that time every one is compelled [bound] to spend his last remaining money and to consume [use up] his little stock of provisions [supplies] which had been reserved for the sea; so that most passengers, finding themselves on the ocean where they would be in greater need of them, must greatly suffer want already on the water between Holland and Old England.

The Voyage to the New World

When the ships have for the last time weighed their anchors near the city of Kaupp [Cowes] in Old England, the real misery begins with the long voyage. For from there the ships, unless they have good wind, must often sail 8, 9, 10 to 12 weeks before they reach Philadelphia. But even with the best wind the voyage lasts 7 weeks.

But during the voyage there is on board these ships terrible misery, stench, fumes, horror, vomiting, many kinds of sea-sickness, fever, dysentery [a disease of the intestines], headache, heat, constipation, boils, scurvy [sickness from the lack of vitamin C], cancer, mouth-rot, and the like, all of which come from old and sharply salted food and meat, also from very bad and foul water, so that many die miserably.

Add to this want of provisions [supplies], hunger, thirst, frost, heat, dampness, anxiety, want, together with other trouble, as… the lice abound [are everywhere] so frightfully, especially on sick people, that they can be scraped off the body. The misery reaches the climax when a gale [storm] rages for 2 or 3 nights and days, so that every one believes that the ship will go to the bottom with all human beings on board. In such a visitation the people cry and pray most piteously [pitifully].

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On the Misfortune of Indentured Servants

Primary Source Document Written in 1754 by Gottlieb Mittelberger *(cont.)*

The Voyage to the New World *(cont.)*

When in such a gale [storm] the sea rages and surges [swells], so that the waves rise often like high mountains one above the other, and often tumble over the ship, so that one fears to go down with the ship; when the ship is constantly tossed from side to side by the storm and waves, so that no one can either walk, or sit, or lie, and the closely packed people in the berths [sleeping compartments] are thereby tumbled over each other, both the sick and the well—it will be readily understood that many of these people, none of whom had been prepared for hardships, suffer so terribly from them that they do not survive it.

I myself had to pass through a severe illness at sea, and I best know how I felt at the time. These poor people often long for consolation [comfort], and I often entertained and comforted them with singing, praying, and exhorting [urging]; and whenever it was possible and the winds and waves permitted it, I kept daily prayer meetings with them on deck. Besides, I baptized five children in distress because we had no ordained [official] minister on board. I also held divine [spiritual or godly] service every Sunday by reading sermons to the people; and when the dead were sucked in the water, I commended them and our souls to the mercy of God. Among the healthy, impatience sometimes grows so great and cruel that one curses the other, or himself and the day of his birth, and sometimes come near killing each other. Misery and malice [hostility] join each other, so that they cheat and rob one another. One always reproaches the other with having persuaded him to undertake the journey. Frequently children cry out against their parents, husbands against their wives and wives against their husbands, brothers and sisters, friends and acquaintances against each other. But most against the soul-traffickers.

My sigh and cry: "Oh, that I were at home again, and if I had to lie in my pig-sty!" Or they say: "O God, if I only had a piece of good bread, or a good fresh drop of water." Many people whimper, sigh and cry piteously for their homes; most of them get home-sick. Many hundred people necessarily die and perish [pass away] in such misery, and must be cast into the sea, which drives their relatives, or those who persuaded them to undertake the journey, to such despair that it is almost impossible to pacify [calm] and console [comfort] them.

No one can have an idea of the sufferings which women in confinement [who are pregnant] have to bear with their innocent children on board these ships. Few of this class escape with their lives; many a mother is cast into the water with her [unborn] child as soon as she is dead. One day, just as we had a heavy gale [storm], a woman in our ship, who was to give birth and could not give birth under the circumstances, was pushed through a loop-hoe [port-hole] in the ship and dropped into the sea because she was far in the rear of the ship and could not be brought forward.

On the Misfortune of Indentured Servants

Primary Source Document Written in 1754 by Gottlieb Mittelberger *(cont.)*

The Voyage to the New World *(cont.)*

Children from 1 to 7 years rarely survive the voyage. I witnessed misery in no less than 32 children in our ship, all of whom were thrown into the sea. The parents grieve all the more since their children find no resting-place in the earth but are devoured by the monsters of the sea.

That most of the people get sick is not surprising because, in addition to all other trials and hardships, warm food is served only three times a week, the rations being very poor and very little. Such meals can hardly be eaten, on the account of being so unclean. The water which is served out on the ships is often very black, thick, and full of worms, so that one cannot drink it without loathing, even with the greatest thirst. Toward the end we were compelled [forced] to eat the ship's biscuit which had been spoiled long ago; though in a whole biscuit there was scarcely a piece the size of a dollar that had not been full of red worms and spiders' nests.

At length, when, after a long and tedious voyage, the ships come in sight of land, so that the promontories can be seen, which the people were so eager and anxious to see, all creep from below on deck to see the land from afar, and they weep for joy, and pray and sing, thanking and praising God. The sight of the land makes the people on board the ship, especially the sick and the half dead, alive again, so that their hearts leap within them; they shout and rejoice and are content to bear their misery in patience, in the hope that they may soon reach the land in safety. But alas!

Payment for the Passage

When the ships have landed at Philadelphia after their long voyage, no one is permitted to leave them except those who pay for their passage or can give good security; the others, who cannot pay, must remain on board the ships till they are purchased and are released from the ships by their purchasers. The sick always fare the worst, for the healthy are naturally preferred and purchased first; and so the sick and wretched must often remain on board in front of the city for 2 or 3 weeks, and frequently die, whereas many a one, if he could pay his debt and were permitted to leave the ship immediately, might recover and remain alive.

The sale of human beings in the market on board the ship is carried on thus: Every day Englishman, Dutchmen and High-German people come from the city of Philadelphia and other places, in part form a great distance, say 20, 30, or 40 hours away, and go on board the newly arrived ship that has brought and offers for sale passengers from Europe, and select among the healthy persons such as they deem [see as] suitable for their business, and bargain with them how long they will serve for their passage money, which most of them are still in debt for. When they have come to an agreement, it happens that adult persons bind [commit] themselves in writing [a contract] to serve 3, 4, 5, or 6 years for the amount due by then, according to their age and strength. But very young people, from 10 to 15 years, must serve till they are 21 years old.

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On the Misfortune of Indentured Servants

Primary Source Document Written in 1754 by Gottlieb Mittelberger *(cont.)*

Payment for the Passage *(cont.)*

Many parents must sell and trade away their children like so many head of cattle; for if their children take the debt upon themselves, the parents can leave the ship free and unrestrained; but as the parents often do not know where and to what people their children are going, it often happens that such parents and children, after leaving the ship, do not see each other again for many years, perhaps never again.

It often happens that whole families, husband, wife, and children, are separated by being sold to different purchasers, especially when they have not paid any part of their passage money.

When a husband or wife has died at sea, when the ship has made more than half of her trip, the survivor must pay or serve not only for himself or herself but also for the deceased.

When both parents have died over half-way at sea, their children, especially when they are young and have nothing to pawn [sell] or to pay, must stand for their own and their parent's passage, and serve till they are 21 years old. When one has served his or her term, he or she is entitled to a new suit of clothes at parting; and if it has been so stipulated [originally agreed], a man gets in addition a horse, a woman, a cow.

Servitude

When a serf [indentured servant] has an opportunity to marry in this country, he or she must pay for each year which he or she would have yet to serve, 5 to 6 pounds. But many a one who has thus purchased and paid for his bride, has subsequently repented his bargain, so that he would sadly have returned his exorbitantly dear ware, and lost the money besides.

If some one in this country runs away from his master, who has treated him harshly, he cannot get far. Good provision [plan] has been made for such cases, so that a runaway is soon recovered. He who detains [holds] or returns a deserter receives a good reward.

If such a runaway has been away from his master one day, he must serve for it as a punishment a week, for a week a month, and for a month half a year.

Response to Literature

You have been asked to work in literature circles so that you can discuss subjects that came up in the indentured servant's story. On a separate sheet of paper, describe what you learned about this time in history dealing with women's rights, children's rights, clean food, control of money, burials, medical care, and the similarities and differences between a slave and an indentured servant. You may respond to other areas that you found surprising as well.

The Peopling of America Quiz

Part I

Directions: Underline the correct answer for each question.

1. The London Company that was granted a charter by King James I to establish a colony in America was mainly interested in
   a. having friendly relations with the Indians
   b. trade and making a profit for the company's shareholders
   c. developing good farming techniques for growing corn
   d. obtaining buffalo hides and pottery as trade goods

2. The Quakers came to America from England to get away from religious persecutions and disputes, led by
   a. Roger Williams
   b. William Bradford
   c. James Oglethorpe
   d. William Penn

3. The Quaker settlement was located
   a. north of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the St. Lawrence River valley
   b. in what is today called Philadelphia and Pennsylvania
   c. in the Cape Fear region of the Carolinas
   d. in Massachusetts

4. This Frenchman explored the entire length of the Mississippi River down to the Gulf of Mexico, and claimed all of the territory he called Louisiana for the King of France
   a. Samuel de Champlain
   b. Peter Stuyvesant
   c. Robert de La Salle
   d. Father Jacques Marquette

5. The number of Black slaves that were brought into the colonies in the early and mid-1700s indicates
   a. immigration laws were not being enforced
   b. they were happy to come to America for the chance at a better life
   c. that southern plantations were increasingly successful and profitable and needed the cheap labor
   d. they came as Freedmen to get land

6. During the colonial period, the 1600s through 1775, which of the following was not a major and profitable plantation crop in the southern British colonies in North America?
   a. cotton
   b. tobacco
   c. rice
   d. indigo

The People of America Quiz

Part I *(cont.)*

7. The paintings and drawings of the British Eighteenth Century artist, William Hogarth (1697–1764), show that life in England was
   a. filled with loving kindness and overflowing with humanity
   b. all generosity, charity, and love for all of God's creatures
   c. horribly cruel, vicious, and totally lacking in mercy and compassion
   d. much like how we live in the United States today

8. The orphaned children of indentured servants who died during the passage to America
   a. would be sold into slavery
   b. themselves became indentured servants upon their arrival to the New World
   c. were cast ashore and made to fend for themselves
   d. were given to loving foster parents who treated them with love and kindness

9. Which of the following vocabulary terms best describes the food and the conditions aboard the ships that carried indentured servants to America?
   a. abominable and disgusting
   b. miserable and wretched
   c. loathsome and detestable
   d. all of the above

10. Which statement is not true about the major differences between the Black slaves that were taken out of Africa and the indentured servants that came from England and Europe?
    a. the indentured servants had a "contract" that determined the length of their service
    b. the indentured servants experienced a great deal of discomfort during their journey to America when they were kept in chains and shackles
    c. the indentured servants could look forward to earning their freedom in a shorter period of time
    d. the indentured servants had better food and more comfortable conditions on the ships that brought them to America

11. It is conservatively estimated that from 1620 to 1780, over 600,000 immigrants made their way to America, to the area that would eventually become the United States, of which
    a. the majority were merchants, tradespeople, shopkeepers, master craftsmen, people with professions and skills, and all free labor
    b. the majority were moderately well off, owned their own farms, and were completely free of debt and obligations
    c. the majority were felons and convicts, sentenced to "forced transportation to the colonies" because they were undesirable elements of British society
    d. the majority consisted of unfree labor, mainly slaves and indentured servants under contract to work in servitude

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The Peopling of America Quiz

Part II

12. Almost one half of the European settlers who formed colonies in America came from England. The first English settlement at Roanoke in 1587 disappeared without a trace, but the 1607 settlement at Jamestown survived a rocky start. Complete the chart below, adding a brief explanation of the reason the settlement was established.

Founder	Colony	Reason
Capt. John Smith	Jamestown	
Cecilius Calvert	Annapolis, Maryland	
William Penn	Philadelphia	
Roger Williams	Aquidneck, Rhode Island	
James Oglethorpe	Savanna, Georgia	
William Bradford	Plymnouth, Massachusetts	

13. Examine the chart. What was the most frequent reason for founding a colony? Briefly explain the conditions in Europe that caused people to seek a new home.

_____

_____

_____

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_____

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The Peopling of America Quiz

Part II *(cont.)*

14. The early colonists had little idea of what awaited them in America. What items do you think would be most useful when venturing to a new home on a new continent? Explain your choices.

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