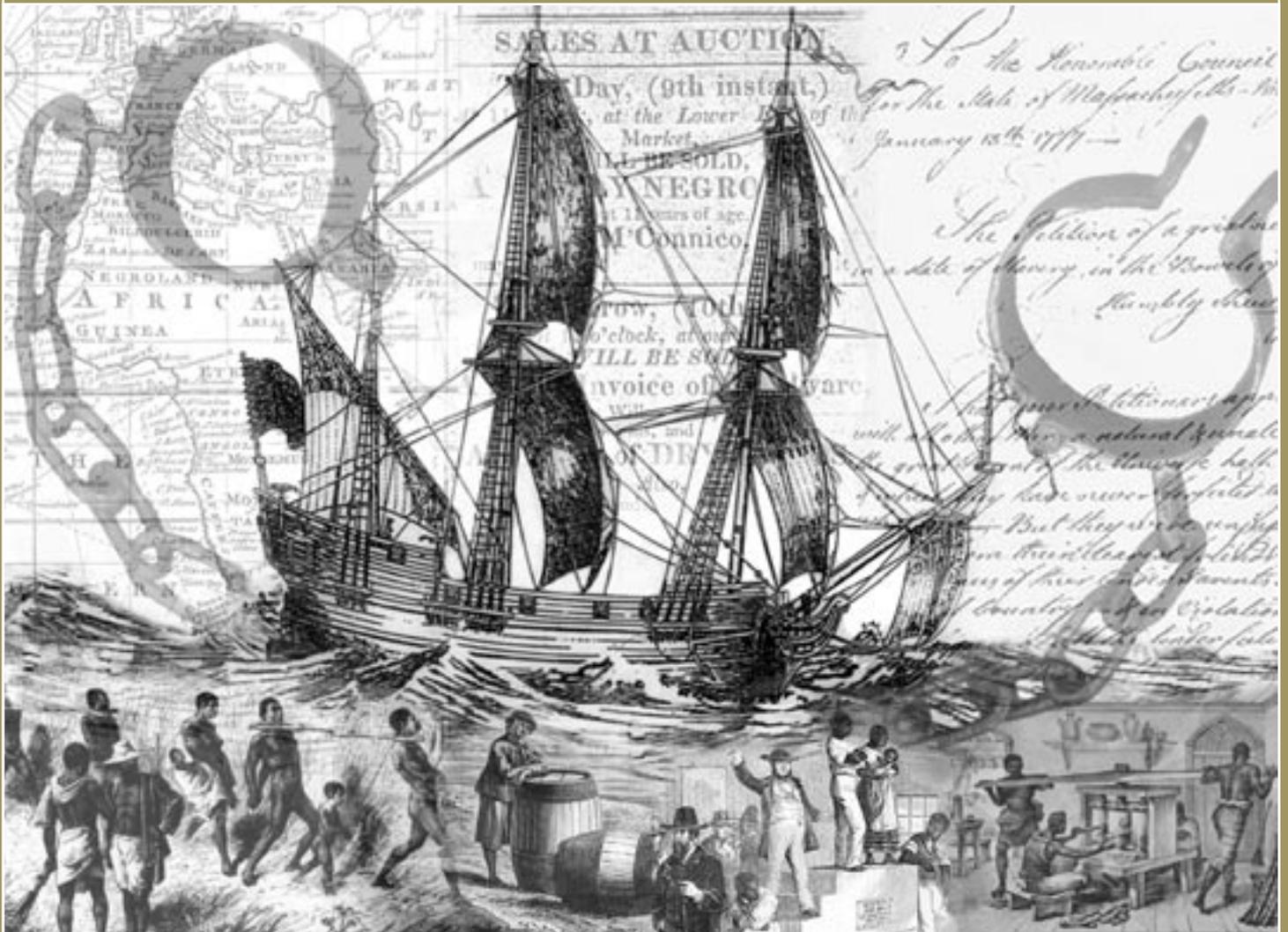


A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England



THE CHOICES PROGRAM

Explore the Past... Shape the Future

History and Current Issues for the Classroom

WATSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
BROWN UNIVERSITY WWW.CHOICES.EDU

**CHOICES
for the 21st Century
Education Program
June 2005**

Director
Susan Graseck

Curriculum Developer
Andy Blackadar

Curriculum Writer
Sarah Cleveland Fox

International Education Intern
Rebecca Leaphart

Office Assistant
Dan Devine

Outreach Coordinator
Bill Bordac

Professional Development Coordinator
Lucy Mueller

Program Coordinator for Capitol Forum
Barbara Shema

Program Associate
Madeline Otis

Staff Associate
Anne Campau Prout

The Choices for the 21st Century Education Program develops curricula on current and historical international issues and offers workshops, institutes, and in-service programs for high school teachers. Course materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

The Choices for the 21st Century Education Program is a program of the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies at Brown University.

Thomas J. Biersteker
*Director, Watson Institute for
International Studies*

Acknowledgments

A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England was developed by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Program with the assistance of the research staff at the Watson Institute for International Studies, scholars at Brown University, and other experts in the field. We wish to thank the following researchers for their invaluable input:

James Campbell
Associate Professor of Africana Studies and American Civilization
Brown University

Neta C. Crawford
Associate Professor (Research)
Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University

Christiana Morgan Grefe
Director of Education and Public Programming
Rhode Island Historical Society

Steven Lubar
Professor of American Civilization, Brown University
Director, John Nicholas Brown Center for the Study of American Civilization

Joanne Pope Melish
Associate Professor of History, University of Kentucky

Joseph Opala
Adjunct Professor of History, James Madison University

Seth Rockman
Assistant Professor of History, Brown University

Keith Stokes
Director, Newport, Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce

John Wood Sweet
Assistant Professor of History, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Michael Vorenberg
Associate Professor of History, Brown University

Special thanks to Tim Bickford and Barry Marshall of Moses Brown School in Providence, Rhode Island for conceiving of this unit, contributing to its development, and writing the Day One lesson plan. Thanks also to Merrill D'Arezzo, Viki Rasmussen, Felicia Ricci, and Benjamin Zimmer for their research assistance.

We also wish to thank the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice.

A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England is part of a continuing series on international public policy issues. New units are published each academic year and all units are updated regularly.

Visit us on the World Wide Web — www.choices.edu

Contents

Introduction: Slavery in the North	1
Part I: New England and the African Slave Trade	2
Bringing Slaves to the New World	2
The Browns and the <i>Sally</i>	7
Part II: Slavery and Abolitionism in New England	10
Enslaved Africans in New England	10
Quakers and Abolitionism	14
Slavery and the Revolution	16
Winter 1783: Rhode Island’s Moment of Decision	20
Options in Brief	21
Option 1: Continue Trading and Owning Slaves	22
Option 2: Emancipate Gradually	24
Option 3: Emancipate Immediately and Completely	27
Option 4: Send Africans Back to Africa	31
Epilogue: The Struggle of Freedom	33
The End of the Slave Trade	33
“Freedom” in the North	35
Supplementary Documents	40
Supplementary Resources	42

THE CHOICES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION PROGRAM is a program of the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. CHOICES was established to help citizens think constructively about foreign policy issues, to improve participatory citizenship skills, and to encourage public judgement on policy issues.



The Watson Institute for International Studies was established at Brown University in 1986 to serve as a forum for students, faculty, visiting scholars, and policy practitioners who are committed to analyzing contemporary global problems and developing initiatives to address them.

© Copyright June 2005. First edition. Choices for the 21st Century Education Program. All rights reserved. ISBN 1-891306-86-3.

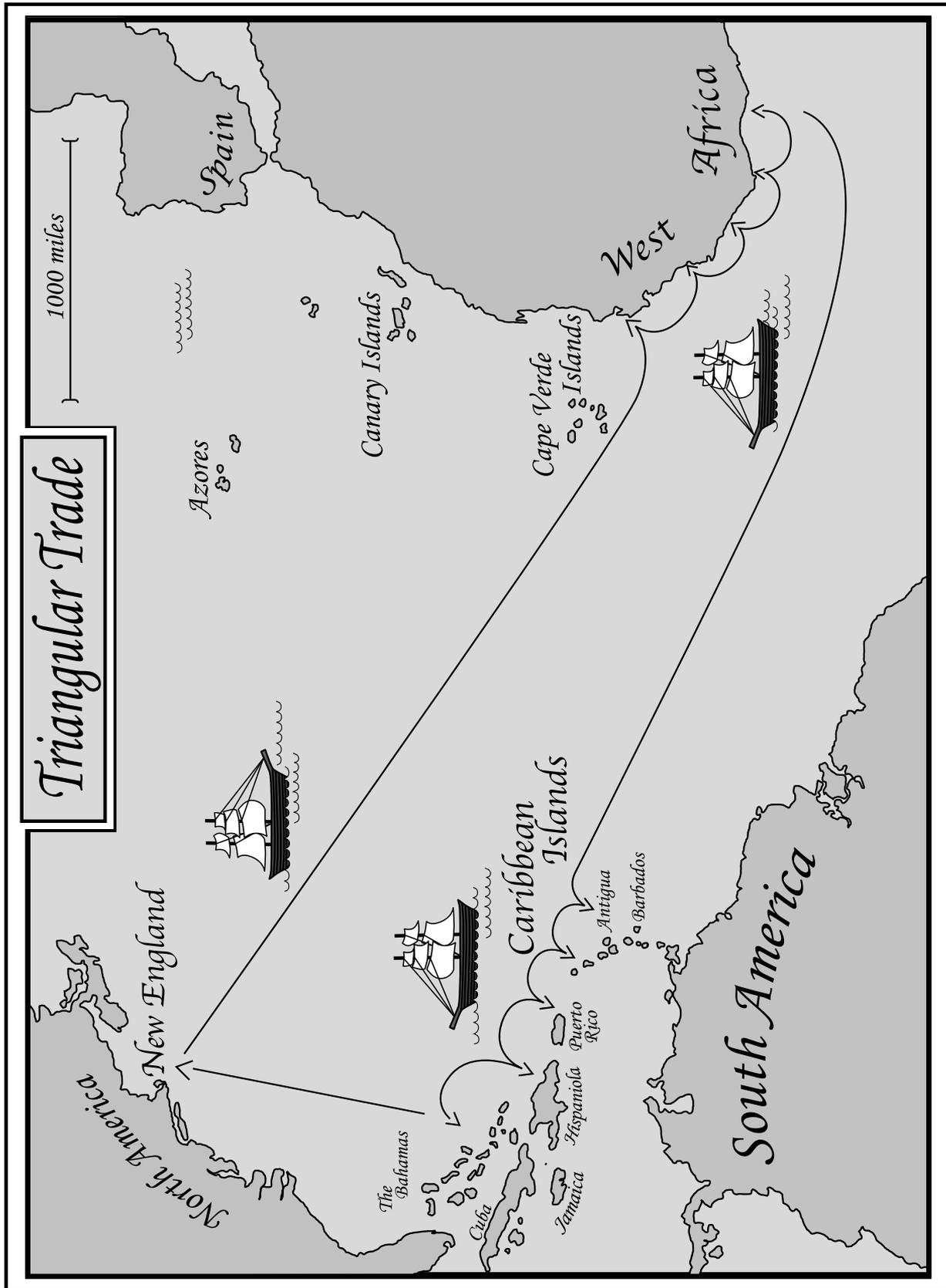


Image courtesy of V. Estabrook.

Introduction: Slavery in the North

In the United States, slavery is often thought of as a Southern institution. Many people today are unaware of the extent of slavery in the eighteenth and nineteenth century North, particularly New England. Long thought of as the birthplace of the anti-slavery movement, New England has a more complex history of slavery and slave trading than many realize.

In the four hundred years after Columbus first sailed to the New World, some twelve million Africans were brought to the Americas as slaves. About 500,000 of these people came to mainland North America, what is now the United States. The first Africans to arrive in the colonies came in 1619, when a Dutch ship sold twenty slaves to people living in the Virginian colony of Jamestown. But slavery was not confined to the South. It existed in all thirteen American colonies and for a time in all thirteen of the first states.

The transatlantic slave trade was history's first great global industry. Ships from Spain, Portugal, Britain, France, Holland, and Denmark traveled to the African coast to load their holds with people. The risks of such trade were many—storms, pirates, disease, and rebellions were common—but the profits were great. Much of the wealth of modern western nations flows, either directly or indirectly, from the trade in human cargo: slaves.

What was the Triangular Trade?

Colonial North American ships began to participate in the slave trade as early as the 1640s. Almost all of colonial America's slave ships originated in New England. Confronted with a landscape and climate unsuitable for large-scale commercial farming, New Englanders looked to the sea for their livelihood.

As a result, in the eighteenth century, New Englanders developed what came to be known

as the Triangular Trade. Ships carried sugar and molasses from the plantation colonies of the Caribbean to New England where colonists distilled it into rum. Merchants then shipped this rum to Africa where it was exchanged for slaves, who were carried back to the Caribbean to produce more sugar.

Some Africans were brought back to New England. Because paid employees were often unavailable or too expensive to use profitably, many New Englanders chose to purchase enslaved Africans. Though the vast majority of the slaves were carried to the sugar colonies of the Caribbean and South America, by 1755, more than thirteen thousand enslaved people were working in New England.

The slave trade became especially important to Rhode Islanders. By the middle of the eighteenth century, upwards of twenty ships per year sailed for Africa from the tiny colony, most of them from the city of Newport. Two-thirds of Rhode Island's fleet was engaged in the slave trade.

What is this reading about?

This reading will explore the effects of the slave trade and slavery in New England. It focuses especially on Rhode Island because of that colony's heavy involvement in the Atlantic slave trade. Part I addresses the economy of the trade. Part II addresses slavery in New England—often forgotten or overlooked today—and the various individuals and groups that argued for its continuation or its abolition following the Revolution. The readings and activities will introduce you to prominent families and individual slaves and their owners. As a central activity you will reenact Rhode Island's debate of 1783-84 on whether to abolish slavery and the slave trade. An epilogue will explain the outcome of the actual debate.

Part I: New England and the African Slave Trade

When English colonists came to New England in the 1630s, they encountered a landscape that had been inhabited for thousands of years. They found that by growing Native American crops like corn they could establish productive, if modest, family farms across the region. Still, the rolling terrain, the rocky soil, and the cool climate generally prevented New Englanders from developing the kind of large plantations that became so profitable to planters in the Southern and Caribbean colonies.

“Unfortunately for its inhabitants, this colony is scarcely anything but a line of sea-coast.”

—Rhode Island merchant John Brown

Why did some New Englanders turn to the sea?

Regulations from Great Britain also caused problems for colonists. Great Britain practiced a policy called mercantilism, a policy which barred colonists from trading with other countries such as France or the Netherlands. The Navigation Acts of the 1650s and 1660s required that colonists in North America trade only with other British colonies or Britain itself. Because most manufactured items like pots and pans or clothing had to be bought from England, the colonists were constantly in debt to Great Britain. Because they could not grow and sell any major commercial crops, New Englanders had to turn to other sources of income to repay those debts. In Rhode Island, shipbuilding and sea-borne commerce provided the answer.

In 1647 Rhode Island held its first general assembly in the town of Portsmouth. In the meeting, the assembly decided that “the seale of the Province shall be an anchor.” With its extensive coastline and abundance of good ports, the colony became home to a variety of sea-based industries as well as to North America’s largest commercial fleet.

Rhode Islanders traded with other colonies along the eastern seaboard, exporting lumber, livestock, wool, and foodstuffs. Trade with England was also important, as was a growing trade with the European plantation colonies in the Caribbean. It was this connection to the Caribbean that led to Rhode Island’s involvement in the slave trade.

Bringing Slaves to the New World

When Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, French, and English colonizers arrived in the New World, they faced significant labor shortages. To resolve their problem they captured and enslaved the local inhabitants. The first slaves in the Caribbean and South America of the sixteenth century were Native Americans.

When the supply of Native Americans proved inadequate due to high mortality from war and disease, European colonists began to import enslaved Africans. It was Africans who built the flourishing sugar industry of the Caribbean and South America. By the eighteenth century, world demand for sugar was so great and the potential profits from producing sugar were so immense that planters considered it economical to work slaves to death and then import more. Once enslaved people arrived in the Caribbean they usually lived only four to seven years.

The New England slave trade was an outgrowth of the Caribbean sugar plantation industry. Early on, Caribbean planters stopped producing food and other necessities because the production of sugar was so much more profitable. That meant that provisions had to be imported from elsewhere. New Englanders seized the opportunity, supplying Caribbean plantation colonies with a host of goods: horses, hay, beef, butter, tar, timber, salted fish, furniture, and iron. From there it was a short step for New Englanders to begin trafficking in slaves.

How did the slave trade impact the Rhode Island economy?

The first recorded New England slave voyage sailed from the city of Boston, Massachusetts in 1644. By the 1670s, Massachusetts traders were regularly carrying slaves between Africa and the Caribbean. Rhode Islanders entered the trade in about 1700. Over the next century, more than 60 percent of the North American ships involved in the African slave trade were based in Rhode Island. However, as a proportion of the transatlantic trade as a whole, the Rhode Island slave trade was quite modest. In all, perhaps one hundred thousand Africans were carried to the New World in Rhode Island ships.

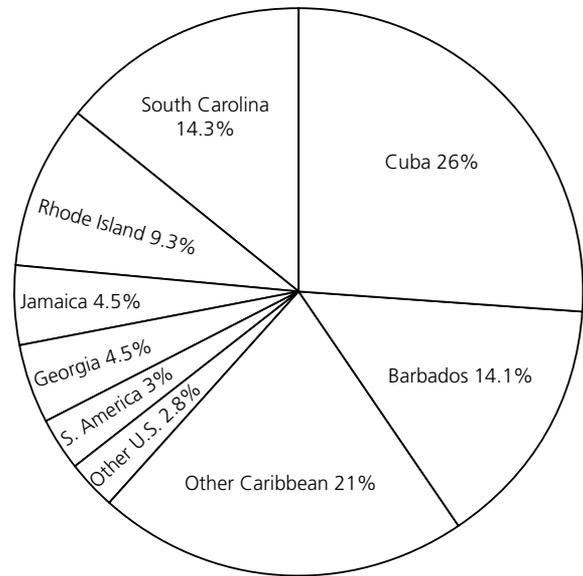
In a small colony like Rhode Island, the slave trade became a crucial economic engine. The trade brought great wealth to some merchants and investors and created jobs for thousands of others. In addition to the sailors employed in the trade, many people worked in industries dependent on the slave trade, from rope making to iron forging, from candle manufacturing to carpentry. Distilling provides perhaps the best example. By the 1760s, the Rhode Island city of Newport alone boasted nearly two dozen distilleries, transforming Caribbean molasses into rum.

What were the risks for merchants in the slave trade?

Slave trading entailed financial risks for merchants and investors. Many slaves did not survive the voyage across the Atlantic. Even though merchants could sometimes purchase insurance on slave cargoes, an accident or epidemic could wipe out their investment. But if slaves arrived in good health, the profits could be spectacular. Slaves sold in the Caribbean for about eight to ten times their purchase price in Africa. New Englanders invested in slave voyages much as people invest in the stock market today. Even average working people could buy shares for very little money and thus try to build up their wealth.

In addition to financial risk, the slave trade involved considerable physical risk to the captains and crews. Voyages lasted approximately

Destinations for slaves on Rhode Island ships, 1700-1807



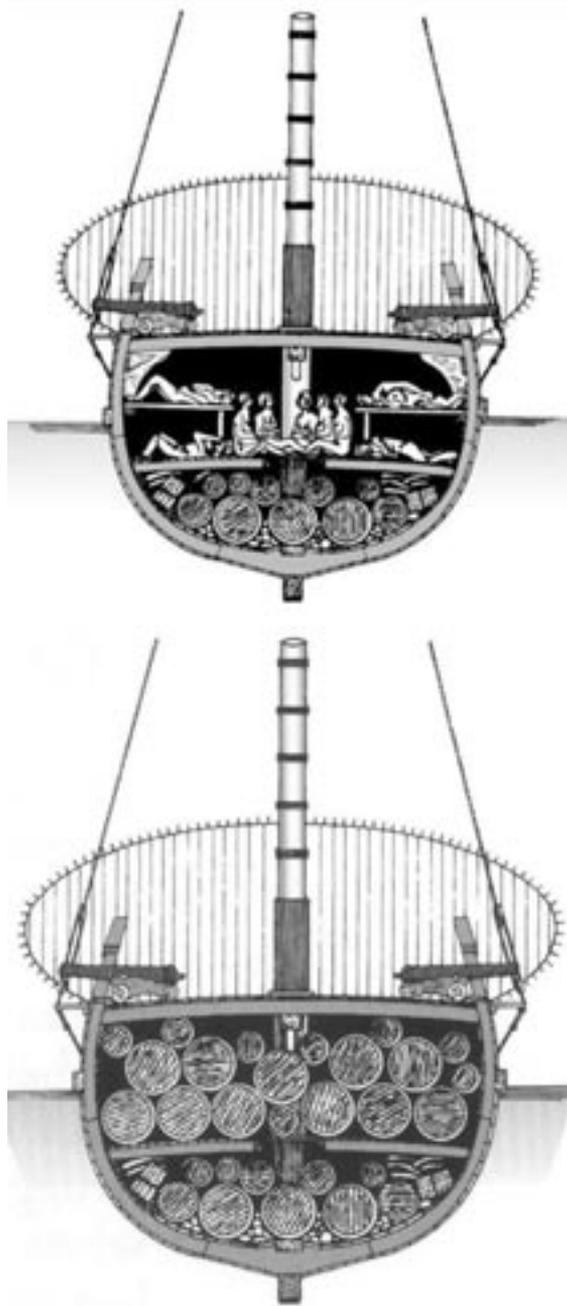
data from *The Notorious Triangle*, Jay Coughtry.

twelve months and disease on the slave ships was frequent. Smallpox, dysentery, yellow fever, and typhus were common. Slave uprisings were also an ever-present threat, especially when ships were close to the African coast.

What was the Middle Passage?

Life for enslaved people on the slave ships—who, unlike the sailors, had not made the choice to be there—was incomparably harder. The voyage from the African coast across the Atlantic is known as the Middle Passage. At least 10 percent and as much as 20 percent of slaves—about two million people overall—died on the Middle Passage. High seas and bad weather meant portholes and gratings were covered, leaving little fresh air for those who were confined below deck. Women and children sometimes remained unchained but most men endured the voyage chained to each other and to the ship. While some ships included slop buckets, many slaves were forced to lie in their own waste.

Slave traders calculated the most efficient way to pack their holds. The spaces in which slaves were kept measured between three and four feet high—barely enough to sit upright. Girl slaves were typically allotted an area of four feet, six inches in length by twelve inches



Courtesy of the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum. Used with permission.

A cross-section of the British ship the *Henrietta Marie*, first with slaves to be sold in the Caribbean, then with casks of goods to be brought to North America.

of width. Boys would typically have five feet by fourteen inches. Adult men and women had slightly more space. Some slaves killed themselves rather than endure the terrible suffering. Others organized mutinies, a few of which succeeded.

“The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time.... It became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us.... The air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died.”

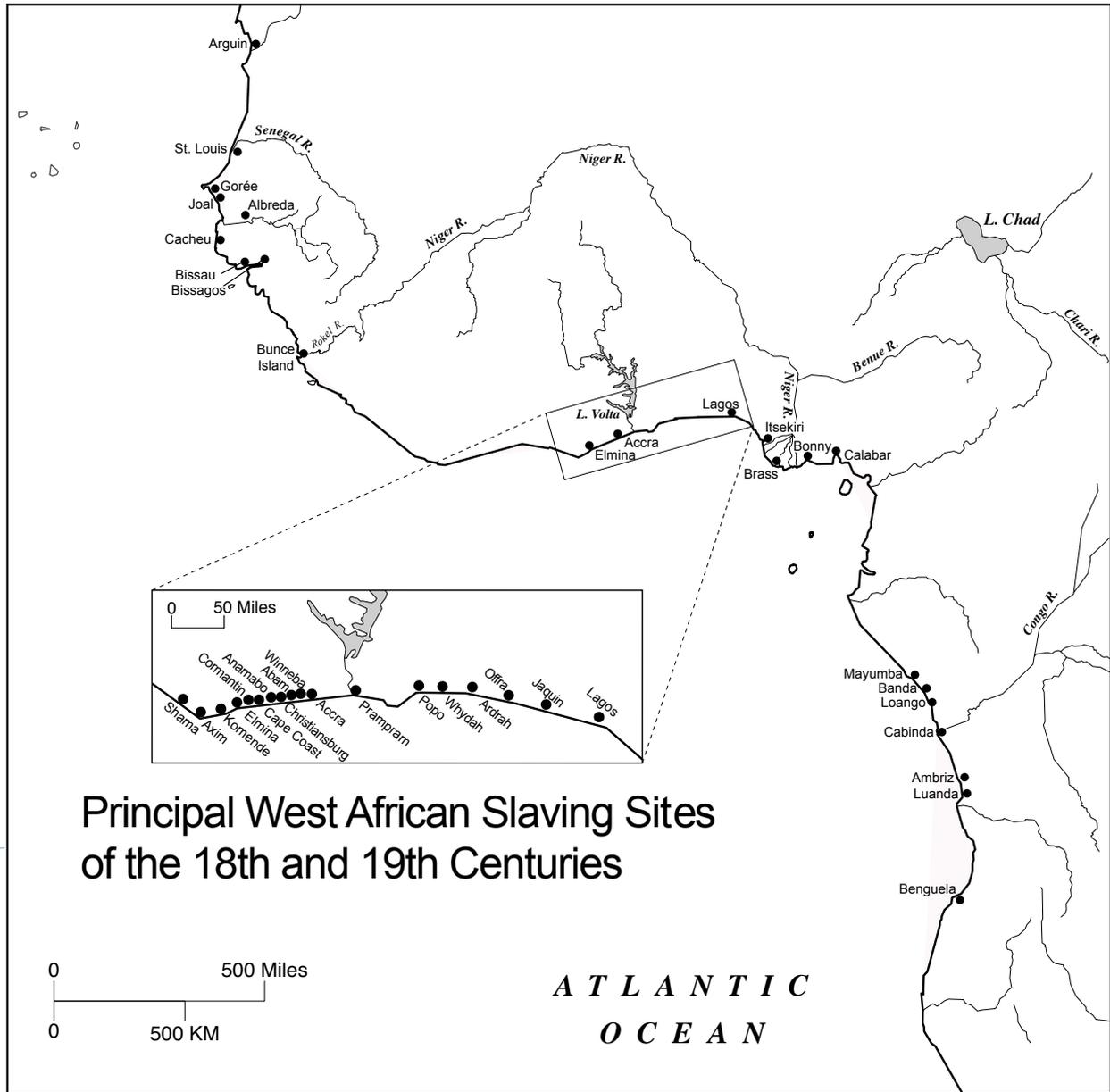
—Olaudah Equiano, an enslaved person from Benin, in his autobiography of 1789

How did New Englanders view slavery and the slave trade?

Although it might be hard for us to believe today, most English colonists viewed slave trading as a respectable business. Governors of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, judges from Massachusetts, the president of Yale University, and prominent members of the clergy all participated in the trade.

As for slavery itself, most whites did not regard it as a moral problem. By and large, most colonial New Englanders believed in a hierarchical society, one in which some people had power and some did not. They accepted servitude as normal, and they expected servants and slaves to be obedient to their masters in the same way that they expected children to be obedient to parents.

Colonial New Englanders also justified slavery in religious terms. They believed that their religion was the only valid religion in the world and that all who did not accept it would go to hell. Many slave traders argued that enslaving Africans was actually a blessing to them, since it introduced them to Christianity. They thought that by removing Africans from their “heathen” land, they were actually ensuring their eternal salvation.



“An overruling Providence has been pleased to bring to this land of freedom another cargo of benighted heathen, to enjoy the blessing of a Gospel dispensation.”

—a Newport slave trader

Another argument addressed the warfare and violence of the African continent. Although warfare actually increased as a result of slave trading, many merchants saw their actions as removing Africans from the dangers of war. Some felt that their actions could be

characterized as charitable or beneficial to the Africans they purchased.

Few slave traders saw hypocrisy in their arguments. Many traders saw the combination of saving bodies and souls and of benefiting the home economy as a perfect match. For those who did feel queasy about their participation in the slave trade, the economic benefits mostly outweighed their discomfort until the late 1700s.

An Account of a Slave's Capture

The narrative of Venture Smith, which he told to a school teacher in 1798, offers one of the only first-person accounts of an enslaved person's experiences from West Africa to New England. Smith was born in what is now the country of Guinea, where his father named him Broteer. His father was prince of the Dukandarra people, so Smith's early years were spent in wealth and comfort. Smith had two brothers and three step-siblings. When Smith was about seven years old, his father's territory was attacked by an enemy group, a group which had attacked others nearby as well. Here are selections from Smith's account of his capture and sale.

"They then came to us in the reeds, and the very first salute I had from them was a violent blow on the head with the fore part of a gun, and at the same time a grasp round the neck. I then had a rope put about my neck, as had all the women in the thicket with me, and were immediately led to my father, who was likewise pinioned and haltered for leading.....

"The enemy had remarkable success in destroying the country wherever they went. For as far as they had penetrated they laid the habitations waste and captured the people. The distance they had now brought me was about four hundred miles. All the march I had very hard tasks imposed on me, which I must perform on pain of punishment. I was obliged to carry on my head a large flat stone used for grinding our corn, weighing, as I should suppose, as much as twenty-five pounds; besides victuals, mat and cooking utensils. Though I was pretty large and stout of my age, yet these burdens were very grievous to me, being only six years and a half old....

"All of us were then put into the castle and kept for market. On a certain time, I and other prisoners were put on board a canoe, under our master, and rowed away to a vessel belonging to Rhode Island, commanded by Captain Collingwood, and the mate, Thomas Mumford. While we were going to the vessel, our master told us to appear to the best possible advantage for sale. I was bought on board by one Robertson Mumford, steward of said vessel, for four gallons of rum and a piece of calico, and called VENTURE, on account of his having purchased me with his own private venture. Thus I came by my name. All the slaves that were bought for that vessel's cargo were two hundred and sixty."

Why did West African merchants participate in the trade?

The west coast of Africa, the source of most American slaves, was culturally and linguistically diverse. There were also notable distinctions in religious practices. Some groups practiced Islam, while others practiced traditional religions. As in other areas of the world, Africans could also be distinguished by their occupations and their differing roles in their societies.

Because of this diversity, it is hard to generalize about experiences with slavery, though a broad overview can help to explain why some Africans sold other Africans into slavery. Slavery existed in Africa before Europeans began to travel there, though the institution was generally less harsh than New World slavery. In Africa, slaves were often prisoners of war

captured from enemies, who were either eventually ransomed back to their families or sold to others. Frequently, enslaved people were allowed to earn money or own land, or even to marry locals. Over the course of generations, enslaved Africans and their descendants were often able to assimilate into their new societies.

When Europeans suggested trading merchandise for slaves, the concept in Africa was not new. Kings or chiefs often traded their prisoners to Europeans in exchange for luxury goods or for guns and other weapons. Over the course of the slave trade Europeans sold approximately twenty million guns to Africans. These guns made leaders more powerful, and gave them an advantage over neighboring groups. Groups who did not possess guns were more likely to fall victim to ones who did, so

guns became essential to survival. Europeans recognized that the influx of guns to the continent of Africa increased warfare and thus the number of prisoners of war available for sale. Once trading of this kind began, there was no easy way for Africans to stop it.

While many European merchants traded luxury items and guns for slaves, American colonists introduced rum to Africa in 1723. New England slave traders became known as “rum men,” providing African leaders with rum and other goods in exchange for captives.

The slave trade enriched African kingdoms and communities that had developed advanced methods of warfare, but destroyed many smaller populations that fell victim to conquest. Many of those victims ended up on slave ships.

The Browns and the *Sally*

In order to understand how colonial merchants thought about the slave trade, it is helpful to look at one family’s experiences. The Brown family of Providence, Rhode Island was heavily involved in many merchant activities beginning in the seventeenth century. Four brothers of the Brown family, Nicholas, John, Joseph, and Moses, joined together to form a single family company in 1762, building on their ancestors’ work. The company, located in Providence, took advantage of several local industries in their early stages. Two of the brothers, John and Moses, would play significant roles in the future debate about slavery’s place in the United States.

The Browns were not significant slave traders; by the standards of Rhode Island, they were relatively minor players. They command our attention because they kept the most exhaustive business records of any colonial company, however, enabling historians to track their activities. They were also involved in the founding of a major university that bears their name.

Until 1750, the city of Newport was Rhode Island’s main port and the colony’s shipping center. The city of Providence, which would eventually become the center of industry and

manufacturing in the state, still held the status of Newport’s little brother. Only a few families lived in the town. The Browns were responsible for a great deal of Providence’s early economic life.

Why did the Browns turn to slave trading?

In 1764, the Browns’ family business, known as the Nicholas Brown and Company, had all or partial ownership in numerous ships, a candle factory, a rope factory, a sugar house, a chocolate mill, and two rum distilleries, as well as a new iron foundry. The Browns made their candles, which were sold all along the eastern seaboard, out of material from whales. They bought the molasses they used to make rum primarily from the island of Barbados. They had business connections from Massachusetts to the Caribbean.

The Brown family’s first recorded involvement in slave trading came in 1735, when the four brothers’ father, Captain James Brown, sent a ship to Africa. The vessel, the *Mary*, was the first slave ship to sail from Providence. It was a moderately successful venture financially. The family’s next involvement came in 1759, when Nicholas and John joined their uncle Obadiah and several other Providence merchants in outfitting another ship. That vessel, the *Wheel of Fortune*, was captured by a French privateer, taking much of the family’s investment with it.

In 1764 Nicholas Brown and Company sent three ships to meet in the Caribbean. Two of those ships were to sell horses and other goods. A third, the *Sally*, was to sail first to West Africa to acquire a load of slaves for sale in the British colonies in the Caribbean. From these ventures the Browns hoped to support their struggling iron and candle businesses. The brothers knew that spreading risk in business was important, and they anticipated a healthy profit from their plan. They could then use their success to continue to build up Providence’s cultural and civic institutions and catch up to Newport, which was their goal.

How did the Browns locate a ship captain for the Sally?

Although ship owners issued instructions, ship captains in the eighteenth century had great control over the outcome of their voyages. The weather, currency exchange rates, and the needs of potential trading partners made each journey different and presented challenges to even the most experienced captain.

Finding a good captain for a slave ship was no easy task. Slave ship captains had a high death rate, chiefly because of disease. Additionally, the possibility of attacks by pirates and privateers, as well as the ever-present threat of slave insurrection, kept captains in a constant state of high alert. Unless the ship had some kind of a doctor (and most did not), a captain often made life-and-death decisions when sickness struck. He also had to know the West African coast and which ports were safest and most profitable. If a slave ship left North America in late summer and made good time, it could reach the Caribbean with its cargo of African prisoners six to nine months later, when sugar planters were at the beginning of their planting season and the demand for slaves was at a premium.

The most successful slave captains rose up from the ranks and were experienced in the West African trade. Though warned by an experienced slave-trading family not to use a stranger to the African trade, the Browns instead chose family friend Esek Hopkins, who had no experience in the slave trade, to captain their vessel.

The Browns spent much of the summer of 1764 preparing for the voyage. By September their ship was ready to go. Captain Hopkins' orders were to engage in any trading activities that would make a profit, and return with a healthy cargo of slaves to Barbados or any other Caribbean port of interest. There he was to sell them and then return to Providence. The *Sally* left Newport for Africa on September 10, 1764.

What happened to the Sally and its passengers?

On November 10, 1764, Captain Hopkins and the *Sally* arrived in West Africa, on the coast of what is now the country of Guinea. He made several visits to African leaders in order to develop relationships that would enable him to buy slaves. He traded with European merchants in the same area. Occasionally he bought a slave from another ship or sold one he had just bought to another ship. A complex web of transactions developed as Captain Hopkins began to pack his ship with slaves. For nine months Hopkins sailed along the African coastline, complaining in his log book of the fierce competition for slaves.

Unfortunately for Hopkins, the *Sally* had arrived at a unpromising moment. With the end of the Seven Years War between France and Great Britain, the West African coast was awash in slave ships. At one port, Hopkins counted seventeen ships. Captives were in short supply and prices were high. Ultimately, it took Hopkins nine months—more than twice the average time—to fill his ship with captives. One can only imagine the experience of those confined below deck during that time.

On August 20, 1765, Captain Hopkins bought his last slave. In all, he purchased 196 slaves, nine of whom he had sold to other traders on the coast, and twenty of whom had died. At least one slave, a woman, had hanged herself. The death toll continued after the *Sally* left the coast. On the eighth day out, the slaves rose in rebellion. Hopkins and the crew suppressed the uprising by firing on the slaves, killing eight and wounding several others.

“By letters from Captain (Esek) Hopkins in a Brig belonging to Providence, who is arrived at Antigua from the coast of Africa, we learn, that soon after he left the coast of Africa, The Number of his Men being reduced by Sickness,

he was obliged to permit some of the slaves to come upon Deck to assist the People. These slaves continued to release the others and the whole rose upon the People, and endeavored to get Possession of the vessel; but was happily prevented by the captain and his men, who killed, wounded, and forced overboard [many] of them, which obliged the rest to submit.”

—*Newport Mercury*,
November 18, 1765

According to Hopkins, the surviving slaves were “so dispirited” that “some drowned themselves, some starved and others sickened and died.” In all, eighty-eight slaves perished during the Middle Passage.

The surviving slaves were sold on the Caribbean island of Antigua. Emaciated and sickly, they fetched very low prices.

The voyage of the *Sally* was a tragedy in every sense. It was also an economic disaster for the Brown brothers. They consoled themselves, however, with the fact that their ship was safe and their friend Hopkins had survived.

“We need not mention how Disagreeable the news of your losing...88 slaves is to us and all your friends, but yourself continuing in health is a great satisfaction to us, that we remain cheerful...”

—Brown brothers to Esek Hopkins,
November 16, 1765

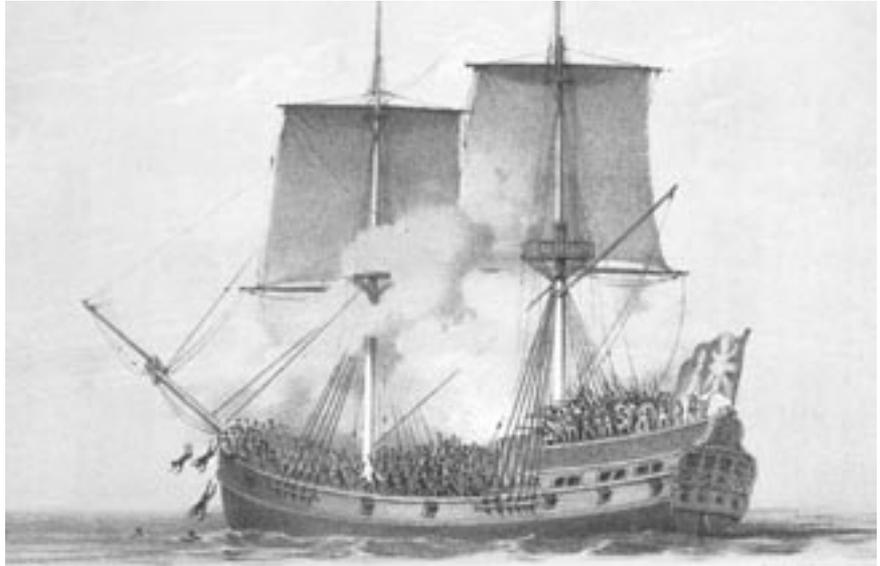


Image courtesy of the British Library. Used with permission.

In this painting of a European slave ship, the crew fires on enslaved Africans during an insurrection. Some slaves are pictured jumping overboard.

Following the disaster of the *Sally*, three of the brothers—Nicholas, Joseph, and Moses—never again participated in the slave trade. Initially at least, they were motivated less by moral concerns than by financial ones: between the *Wheel of Fortune* and the *Sally*, they had good reason to believe that slave trading was too risky an enterprise. The fourth brother, John, continued to believe that the potential profits from slave trading justified the risks. In the years that followed he invested in at least four other slave voyages.

Part II: Slavery and Abolitionism in New England

Colonists in New England not only participated in the slave trade but owned slaves as well. The first slaves in New England were Pequot Indians captured in the Pequot War in 1637. The women were kept in New England as slaves, while the men were transported to the Caribbean and exchanged for Africans. The presence of enslaved people and the labor they provided changed New England's economy from a purely subsistence one, where work supports life at a basic level, to the kind of varied and expanding economy that later formed a foundation of the new United States.

“To prosper, we must have a stock of slaves to do all our business.”

—Bostonian Emanuel Dowling, 1642

Enslaved Africans in New England

Whites, blacks, and Indians in New England each held different statuses before the law. White people were free, but many whites worked under contracts called indentures that required them to labor for others for a fixed number of years. Some whites agreed to be indentured servants in order to repay the debt from their passage from England to America; others were forced into indentures when they were convicted of a crime, orphaned, widowed, or were otherwise unable to support themselves. Indentured servants often worked as hard as slaves, but they had documents that defined the length and terms of their service.

The condition of blacks and Indians was worse. While some black people were free people or indentured servants, the majority were slaves. Enslaved Africans had no paper specifying the terms of their service and no expectation that it would ever end: they served for life. Indians occupied a status somewhere in between whites and blacks. Most were free, though some were indentured and still others were slaves. Indians' circumstances were rarely as bad as those of enslaved Africans, but

they too faced persistent prejudice and discrimination.

Different colonies worked out the legal definitions of slavery at different times and in different ways. There were some consistencies, however. Before the law, a slave was both a person and a piece of property owned by another person. In New England, enslaved persons could testify in court, though not against white people. In a few places, enslaved people could own property. But slaves were also taxed as property, like cars or homes are taxed today. They were considered possessions rather than people. White servants were never taxed, so a clear distinction between whites and blacks arose. Whites could not be slaves.

How did whites in New England view slaves?

Over the course of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, a distinct set of assumptions and ideas about African people began to emerge in New England. Many whites believed that blacks possessed “weak” character traits like laziness, disobedience, and stupidity, and that slavery was God's way of punishing them. Race and enslavement began to be connected as more African slaves arrived in New England. While it was accepted that white servants could eventually become part of the broader community, blacks were usually thought of as outsiders who would never be assimilated.

Not all whites held these views. Whites in New England did not universally accept that blacks were by nature slaves or that “bad” behavior was inherent in black people. Some New Englanders saw slavery as the cause of black people's degraded condition, and argued that their status would improve once they enjoyed all the educational and economic opportunities of free people.

How did enslaved people view slavery?

Enslaved people did not consider themselves to be inherently inferior. Nor did they meekly submit to slavery. On the contrary,

they resisted slavery in a multitude of ways. While enslaved people did not seek open confrontation, many resorted to subversive strategies such as working slowly, running away, or arson. In a few cases, slaves resorted to violence. Occasionally, enslaved people managed to bring their plight to the attention of the colonial governments.

“We have endeavoured rightly to understand what is our Right, and what is our Duty, and can never be convinced that we were made to be Slaves.”

—Prime and Prince, in a petition to Connecticut for their freedom in 1779

Where did enslaved people live in New England?

By the beginning of the 1700s, approximately one thousand enslaved Africans and African Americans were working in New England. That number increased dramatically over the next half century: by 1755 there were 13,300 enslaved people living in New England.

Enslaved people were not distributed evenly throughout the New England colonies. They were concentrated in major cities and in some agricultural areas. By the end of the colonial era there were more enslaved people in Connecticut than any other New England colony. Rhode Island had proportionally more enslaved people than Connecticut, but its overall population was much smaller.

Rhode Island’s slave population was dispersed throughout the colony. The largest numbers lived in port cities like Newport and Providence. Many also lived in South County, an agricultural region which by the middle of the eighteenth century had over one thousand enslaved people. Twenty-seven percent of the town of South Kingstown in 1748 was enslaved, a proportion roughly the same as in Southern colonies at the time. Enslaved people in South County, like their counterparts in Connecticut, were engaged primarily in agricultural work. Robert Hazard, for example, a dairy farmer, owned twenty-four women—twelve of whom worked to make cheese. Much of that cheese went to the Caribbean on trading ships.

Estimates of Percentages of Colonial Populations that were Black

	1680	1700	1720	1750	1770
Massachusetts	0.4	1.5	2.4	2.2	1.8
New Hampshire	3.7	2.6	1.8	2.0	1.0
Rhode Island	5.8	5.1	4.6	10.1	6.5
Connecticut	0.3	1.7	1.9	2.7	3.1

Data from Kolchin, Peter. *American Slavery, 1619–1877*.

Colonial censuses did not, in general, distinguish between slaves and free blacks, so the proportion of slaves might be slightly lower than these estimates. On the other hand, slave owners did not always report the exact numbers of slaves they owned in order to avoid paying additional taxes, so the estimates above are reasonably accurate for the percentage of slaves in each colony.

What kinds of work did enslaved people do?

The majority of enslaved people in New England, like slaves in the South, worked in agriculture or as domestic servants. In addition to farming, women were engaged with spinning, childcare, mending, and cooking. Some slaves became highly skilled workers, serving as clerks, caterers, artisans, and merchants.

Many enslaved people worked in busy seaports. About 20 percent of the town of Newport was black in the middle of the 1800s. Enslaved people worked in maritime trades as rope makers, sail makers, or sailors on whaling ships. Enslaved people were carpenters, rum distillers, chimneysweeps, lock-

smiths, cabinet makers, butchers, and coopers. Enslaved people also figured prominently in the small iron industry of New England. Many enslaved and free blacks worked in the Brown brothers' iron furnace.

There are several examples of individual enslaved people who were able to use their entrepreneurial abilities to carve out special roles for themselves. Cesar Lyndon of Newport kept his master's accounting books and managed a complex network of small business and coastal trading ventures. Newport Gardner, who taught himself to read and write in English and French, opened a singing school in Newport. Adam, an enslaved person on a Connecticut farm, managed the property for months while his master was away. One enslaved man in Connecticut named Primus took over his late master's medical practice.

Skilled slaves had some bargaining power. Their work was in demand, and many owners depended on them. In Connecticut one-half of all ministers, one-half of all lawyers, and one-third of all doctors owned slaves in 1774. The work those enslaved people did in the home or business of their owners made it possible for their owners to work outside the home, to travel in their business, to try new endeavors, or expand their businesses.

The growth in the enslaved population throughout the eighteenth century resulted in an increase in productivity among New Englanders, and an increase in different kinds of economic activity. Once enslaved people could be used to maintain farms, for instance, farmers were free to make crafts to sell. Between 1700 and 1750 the merchant and artisanal classes grew significantly. Slavery made it possible for many New Englanders to build up a great deal of wealth.

How did enslaved people's labor compete with that of whites?

Slaves could be rented for labor when their owners did not need them at home. This practice reinforced the idea that slaves were owned by others and did work for others' benefit. Sometimes enslaved people could

hire themselves out and keep the money they earned. Since many blacks had learned several skills, on some occasions enslaved people took jobs for which whites were paid well. Some whites resented the fact that blacks took their paying jobs. To prevent such competition, they called for laws prohibiting blacks from working in certain industries. Most of these laws never passed.

Despite the skills of a few enslaved people, the majority did back-breaking manual labor for long hours, just like their counterparts in the South. Some Northern enslaved people worked in offices or in trades, but most worked in fields, with livestock, or doing difficult work around the home.

How were slaves treated by their masters?

Slave-owners in New England saw themselves as authority figures who needed to maintain order in their households. While many owners felt they treated their slaves justly, in the end they owned their slaves and therefore had complete legal control over them. Masters in New England regularly used violence against their slaves to maintain their authority and demonstrate their control. Slaves were often accused of theft and were punished, even when no evidence existed. Masters whipped slaves who had been out all night, shackled slaves whom they felt did not do enough work, or branded slaves who did not obey their masters' orders. There were no legally enforceable limits to the violence masters could inflict upon their human property. Even though there were laws that made killing a slave a capital crime, no white person was ever put to death for murdering a slave.

What were slaves' family lives like?

In New England most slaves lived with their masters in the same house. Unlike in the South, where most slaves lived in separate quarters, slaves in the North had frequent—sometimes constant—interaction with owners and their families. Indeed, some slaves had more interaction with whites than with other slaves. This meant that many slaves in the North were under constant supervision. They



Image courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

This painting was made c. 1740 of the Potter family, who lived in Matunuck, Rhode Island. They are pictured having tea served by a slave.

had little privacy in their homes.

Slave families were often divided among different households. Slave marriages were not recognized by law, and when enslaved people did marry, there was no guarantee that they would be permitted to stay together or to live in the same house.

One advantage of owning a woman slave, from the owner's perspective, was the prospect of owning any children she might bear. On the other hand, many masters regarded slave children as a burden. Children had to be fed, clothed, and otherwise provided for before they were old enough to generate income for the master. Sometimes masters tried to sell slave children to avoid the expense of raising them. For those who could afford it, however, this early investment would pay off as children grew and were able to work.

Enslaved people struggled to establish and maintain families. Some were able to maintain marriages and bring up children despite the difficulties they faced. A slave in Connecticut named Venture Smith, for instance, married one of the women who worked for his employer. Despite being sold repeatedly to other masters, Smith was able to maintain his

relationship with his wife and become a father as well. Many enslaved people were not so fortunate.

How were enslaved people connected to their communities?

In contrast to the South, where enslaved people often lived in large plantation communities, most enslaved people in New England found themselves in households with only one or two slaves. But they also enjoyed greater freedom of movement than their counterparts in the South. Enslaved people would meet each other in town while on errands or on market day while shopping for food. They would also gather together on Sundays, their one day off per week. In this way enslaved people began to create a community of their own.

When enough enslaved people lived in a city or town, such as Newport (where about twelve hundred slaves lived in 1755), they developed a rich communal life. One activity practiced in many towns after about 1750 was the election of a "governor" or leader of the black community, usually on the same day in which whites elected public officials. Enslaved people campaigned and made speeches

before the election. White masters often gave slaves time off for these celebrations because the election of one's slave as governor reflected well on the master.

What role did religion play in enslaved people's lives?

Despite their separation from both Africa and each other, many enslaved people managed to retain their African customs and religious traditions. They sang African songs, played African instruments, danced African dances, and worshipped African gods and spirits. These traditions sometimes puzzled white masters, but enslaved people were often able to pass on their traditions on holidays or at election celebrations.

While many enslaved people looked to their ancestral homes for religious inspiration, large numbers were also drawn to Christianity. Initially, many masters did not welcome the interest. Slave owners feared that baptizing Africans meant conceding that they had souls and were thus equal in the sight of God. Masters also feared that Christianity spoiled slaves, by making them "proud" and "saucy."

By the end of the seventeenth century, however, a new organization, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, had begun to encourage the religious instruction of slaves. In time, many owners in New England—of all faiths—would come to think of religious instruction of their slaves as a duty. In the middle of the eighteenth century enslaved people in Rhode Island often went to church and attended prayer meetings. By January of 1767, Sarah Osborne and Susana Anthony, both white Newport educators, counted seventy slaves at their weekly prayer meetings.



Image courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

The Newport Friends Meeting House, where the New England Yearly Meeting was held.

Quakers and Abolitionism

Several members of a minority religious group called Quakers began to view slavery as immoral in the seventeenth century. Quakers believed in the equality of all humankind, and that no one group of people was better or more deserving of God's grace than any other. Many Quakers, like their counterparts of other religious faiths, owned slaves in the seventeenth century, but a few preached and wrote letters denouncing the practice. William Edmunson, from Newport, was an example of a Quaker who called for the abolition of slavery.

“Perpetual slavery is an aggravation, and an oppression upon the mind....”

—William Edmunson in a letter to Quakers delivered in Newport, September 19, 1676

In New England, Quakers were initially shunned for their unorthodox beliefs. By the end of the 1600s, however, their views about slavery had begun to spread. In 1700 a Massachusetts judge named Samuel Sewell wrote a pamphlet which denounced slavery. The ideas in the pamphlet were immediately criticized, but it was also widely distributed.

“It is most certain that all Men, as they are the Sons of Adam are Coheirs; and have equal Right unto Liberty,

and all other outward Comforts of Life.... So that Originally, and Naturally, there is no such thing as Slavery.”

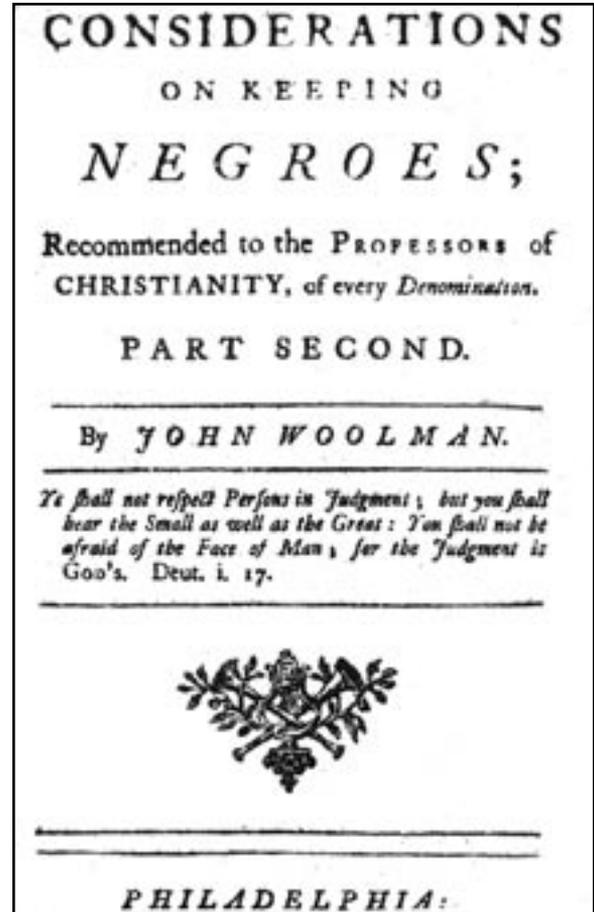
—Samuel Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph*,
June 24, 1700

As anti-slavery ideas took hold in the eighteenth century, manumission, or the voluntary freeing of a slave, increased in frequency. Often New England masters freed slaves in their wills to reward them for lengthy service. This practice led to a growing population of free blacks. Though freed from bondage, these free people of color still faced prejudice, and many found it difficult to find work.

To ensure that freed slaves did not become a burden on taxpayers, Massachusetts and Connecticut passed laws requiring masters to post a bond (a sum of money) when they freed their slaves. Connecticut even required the master to gain consent from the town officials before freeing a slave. While these types of laws might seem on the surface as having the new free blacks’ best interest in mind, they often had the effect of perpetuating ideas that black people could not care for themselves, and that slavery was their true destiny. The laws also discouraged manumission by making it difficult and potentially expensive for masters.

How did Quakers in the mid-Atlantic colonies influence New Englanders?

The anti-slavery movement grew most quickly in the mid-Atlantic states where Quakers made up a large segment the population. In the 1750s Quakers in Pennsylvania and New York addressed the problem of slavery. While sometimes condemning slave ownership, most resolutions they wrote focused on trading in slaves, which some Quakers called “man-stealing.” Today we would view both trading and owning slaves as immoral, but many people in this time period distinguished between the two, accepting slave ownership but denouncing slave trading. The discussions taking place at the meetings had an effect on Quakers, and occasionally others, in New England.



The frontpiece of John Woolman’s 1754 book about abolition.

“Suppose a white Child...falls into the Hands of a Person, who endeavors to keep him a Slave, some Men would account him an unjust Man in doing so, who yet appear easy while many Black People, of honest Lives, and good Abilities, are enslaved.... This is owing chiefly to the Idea of Slavery being connected with the Black Colour.”

—John Woolman, *Considerations on Keeping Negroes*, first published by the Society of Friends in 1754

The 1758 New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (as Quakers were also called) prohibited New England Quakers from engaging in the Atlantic slave trade. The Yearly Meeting in 1773 denounced the ownership of slaves among Quakers as well. The two resolutions

represent milestones in the history of the anti-slavery movement in New England, though both directives sometimes fell on deaf ears. Some Quaker masters offered explanations for why they needed to retain their slaves. Others noted that they had invested a great deal in the upbringing of enslaved children and that to free them would mean a great financial loss. Another group thought that freeing slaves would result in massive disorder and an increase in crime, arguing that black people could not function as responsible citizens. Still others argued that it was their duty to assist their slaves as they grew up, and that to turn them out on the streets would be unjust.

“He Said She had Children that needed the immediate Care of a Mother and he Looked upon it to be his Duty to Keep her to nurse and bring them up.”

—Smithfield, RI Friends Meeting records concerning Stephen Hopkins’ refusal to free his slave

The debate over slavery and slave trading would acquire new sharpness as the conflict between Great Britain and its American colonies deepened in the 1760s and 70s. As American colonists protested against a British plot to “enslave” them, a growing number were moved to question the status of the enslaved people in their own midst.

Slavery and the Revolution

The American Declaration of Independence was signed in July 1776, but the roots of the Revolution reached back to the 1760s when British officials enacted new regulations on American commerce. The British hoped to raise revenue to pay off the enormous war debt from the just-completed Seven Years War with France. American merchants thought the new regulations were unfair and would destroy their businesses. The resulting protests escalated from open resistance, to war, and finally to independence for the North American colonies.

What British laws did slave trading colonists most dislike?

In 1764 Parliament passed the Sugar Act, an act that promised to increase enforcement of existing laws prohibiting North American colonists from trading with non-British ports. Rhode Island merchants, who traded regularly (if illegally) with the French and Spanish colonies in the Caribbean, were furious. Rhode Island officials sent a letter of protest to England. They noted that less than 20 percent of the molasses that came into Rhode Island was from British colonies and that the new act would cripple their economy. The letter also noted Rhode Island’s dependence on the slave trade. The colonists argued that the new laws would make them unable to pay for the British goods they imported annually, and Britain would lose out in the end. The colonists’ pleas had no effect.

“Solely from the prosecution of this trade with the other branches that are pursued in consequence of it, arises the ability to pay for such quantities of British goods.”

—The Rhode Island Remonstrance of 1764

In 1765, the British Parliament passed the Stamp Act, which required colonists to pay taxes on a number of everyday products. Colonists had to buy a stamped piece of paper to prove they had paid the duty. Rhode Islanders began to question their relationship with Great Britain. They insisted that no tax could be imposed on British subjects without the consent of their own representatives. To submit to “taxation without representation,” they argued, would reduce them to the condition of “slaves.”

How did new ideas about freedom and liberty affect the institution of slavery?

As the crisis with Great Britain intensified, colonists were talking about property rights, taxation without representation, freedom, and liberty. They spoke about freedom from oppression and about independence. These concepts referred to their relationship with

Fighting for Freedom

During the Revolutionary War, some enslaved people supported the British, and some supported the American colonists. Many enslaved people ran away from their masters and joined the British, drawn by British commanders' promises of freedom. At the end of the war, about fourteen thousand of these black "loyalists" left with the retreating British Army, much to the frustration of their one-time American owners. Many of these one-time slaves ended up in Canada, chiefly in Nova Scotia.

Other black people supported the colonial side in the Revolution. About twenty thousand black people served on American ships during the war, and about five thousand served in the Continental Army. Others served in individual state militias. Most black soldiers fought with the rank-and-file in the infantry and artillery, and many were singled out for their bravery in combat. Others served in support capacities, as cooks, grooms for horses, or drummers.

The use of black people in combat roles remained a persistent source of debate among American officials. Many whites were uneasy with the idea of putting guns into the hands of slaves, lest they turn them back against their masters. Additionally, Southern whites often refused to fight with Northern black militias. In 1776, the Continental Congress voted to bar blacks from serving in the Continental Army, but the Congress soon reversed itself as the need for soldiers grew.

Great Britain, but some colonists saw them as applicable to slavery as well.

Some whites in New England suggested that the conflict with Britain was a divine punishment on the colonists for the owning and trading of slaves. They made a direct connection to the situation at hand and the fact that so many colonists had engaged in what was now widely thought of as an unrighteous and ungodly practice. These religiously conservative people believed that God was judging them for their actions. One such individual was Moses Brown of Providence. The one-time slave trader was converted to the anti-slavery cause in 1773 following the death of his wife. Convinced that her death was a punishment from God, he manumitted his own slaves. He later converted to Quakerism, and became one of the guiding spirits of Rhode Island's growing anti-slavery movement.

“[Slavery is a] sin of crimson die, which is most particularly pointed out by the public calamities which have come upon us.”

—Newport Minister Samuel Hopkins, 1776

Others saw a more practical problem. They feared that slaves in their midst might side with the British. Some of these colonists began to press for the abolition of slavery, though few could imagine immediate emancipation. Some suggested freeing slaves over time, or paying masters to free their slaves. Colonists' fears about slaves' loyalty later proved right—thousands of enslaved people, drawn by a promise of freedom, fought with the British during the war.

Still others, usually slave owners themselves, saw the property rights arguments advocated by revolutionaries as applicable to their situation. To require masters to free their slaves would be, in effect, to deprive them of their personal property. This was exactly what many Americans were trying to keep the British from doing. John Brown, Moses' brother, became an outspoken supporter of the rights of colonists to pursue whatever commercial opportunities were at their disposal to make a profit, including trading in slaves. As the Revolutionary War loomed, it was unclear what colonists would do.

How did the war assist the anti-slavery effort?

In 1778 Rhode Island began to institute a plan that would pay masters who enlisted their slaves in the war effort. Following the war, those slaves would become automatically free. In Connecticut, if a white man could find someone to take his place, then the white man would not have to serve. Sometimes black men took these spots. The law said that in such cases the black man would gain freedom at the war's end. By the end of the Revolutionary War, more than four thousand blacks had served in the Continental Army, and thousands more had served in the militias. One Rhode Island regiment contained over two hundred blacks. In nearly every battle of the Revolution, beginning with Lexington and Concord, blacks fought to help America gain independence from Britain.

During the war itself, advocates of anti-slavery called slave owners and traders hypocrites for demanding their own liberty while denying it to others. Enslaved people also saw the contradiction between the revolutionary rhetoric that suggested "all men are created equal" and their own condition. A Massachusetts slave named Phillis Wheatley wrote a letter to a minister commenting on the contradiction.

“[I say this] to convince them of the strange Absurdity of their Conduct whose Words and Actions are so diametrically opposite. How well the Cry for Liberty, and the reverse Disposition for the exercise of oppressive Power over others....”

—Phillis Wheatley, 1774

Enslaved people had been fighting against slavery from the beginning simply by attempting to live complete and normal lives. The war brought additional opportunities to fight. Some slaves who fought for the revolutionary militias gave themselves new names, such as Jeffrey Liberty, Ned Freedom, and Juperter Free. Many slaves petitioned their masters or the courts to release them when ownership

was in question. Some of these petitions were successful. Overall, the disruption of the war and the divisions between those loyal to the British and to the revolutionaries allowed many enslaved people to run away or gain freedom by other means.

“Your Petitioners apprehend that they have in Common with all other men a Natural and Unalienable Right to that freedom which the Great Parent of the Universe hath Bestowed equally on all mankind....Your honour...A Life of Slavery Like that of your petitioners Deprived of Every social privilege of Every thing that Request to Render Life Tolerable is far worse than Nonexistence.”

—Prince Hall and others in a petition to Massachusetts, 1777

The Quaker minority that had spoken out a century earlier against slavery had finally been joined by others. Many masters freed their slaves as a reward for serving in the Revolution. Others did so out of fear that their slaves would soon revolt against them. Creating and passing legislation that would *require* citizens to free slaves, however, was another matter.

Why did so few slaves gain freedom from fighting in the war?

Although Rhode Island passed legislation in 1778 that would free slaves who enlisted in the Continental Army, the Assembly did not enforce the law. Many lawmakers saw a contradiction in using slaves to defend the country against oppression. Others had qualms about the adequacy of the compensation arrangement, saying that the money promised to owners did not make up for the loss of their slaves.

By June 1778 the law had been repealed because of opposition. In the intervening time, fewer than ninety slaves had been emancipated through the law. None received the payment usually provided to white soldiers.

The cancellation of the plan to emanci-



Courtesy of the Massachusetts Archives.

The 1777 petition to Massachusetts from Prince Hall and others.

pate black soldiers did not spell an end to the abolitionist cause. The following year Rhode Island passed a law which prohibited masters from selling their slaves out of state. This law prevented masters from trying to prevent

future losses in property by selling before slavery became illegal. Additionally, slaves turned increasingly to the various abolition societies and to influential individuals like Moses Brown for assistance in petitioning their masters for freedom.

What was the African colonization movement?

The end of the war brought new questions about how blacks and whites might live together in the new nation. Some feared that increasing white racism meant that the two races would never be able to live peacefully and as equals in the United States. Many of these individuals said that blacks would find greater happiness and success outside the country, perhaps in Africa, where their ancestors had come from. Others saw sending black people back to Africa as a way to strengthen slavery by ridding the country of its troublesome population of free people of color. Many blacks rejected colonization on the grounds that it suggested blacks could not be useful members of society except as slaves. However, some did join the movement. Prince Hall, whose freedom petition in 1777 to Massachusetts had helped spur the abolition of slavery in that state, led a group of petitioners in requesting state assistance to resettle in Africa. Similar appeals came from Newport's Free African Union Society, the first black mutual aid society in the United States.

As the United States was born, the question of slavery, the slave trade, and relationships between the races—hardly resolved—loomed large.

Winter 1783: Rhode Island's Moment of Decision

During the Revolution, the slave trade ground to a halt as ships and ports were used for military purposes. Following American independence, many traders returned to the business. The DeWolf family of Bristol, Rhode Island, for instance, emerged in the 1780s as the single largest slave trading family in the United States.

Other traders left the business, however, having come to the conclusion that slavery and slave trading were morally wrong. A number of those individuals, notably Moses Brown and Samuel Hopkins, a Newport minister (no relationship to Esek Hopkins), began petitioning for Rhode Island to abolish slavery. They wrote letters to the newspapers and tried to use their considerable status in society to change people's minds.

Over the course of several years, Northern states began to abolish slavery. They did so grudgingly and gradually. Pennsylvania, for example, passed a gradual abolition law that specified that all children born to slave mothers after February 1, 1780, would be free. The law did nothing, however, to alter the status of those already enslaved. Even those children who benefitted from the law were required to serve their masters for a set number of years—twenty-eight years in the case of boys—to compensate them for the costs of raising the children.

In the summer of 1783 Moses Brown learned that another Rhode Island business, the Clarke and Nightingale Company, was planning another trading voyage to Africa. On August 11th Moses wrote a letter to the firm, asking his “respectable friends” to reconsider their plan, recalling his own experience with the *Sally* nineteen years before. Had the ship never sailed, he wrote, he would have been better off.

“I should have been preserved from an Evil, which has given me the most uneasiness, and has left the greatest impression and stain upon my own mind of any, if not all my other conduct in life....”

—Moses Brown to Clarke and Nightingale,
August, 1783

At the same time, Moses turned to the Rhode Island state legislature, hoping to persuade it to end slavery and the slave trade through legal action. In October of 1783 he and five others submitted an emancipation petition to the *Providence Gazette* for publication. Two months later, the proposal was introduced to the legislature. It called for gradual emancipation and an end to the slave trade in the state. The legislative assembly then appointed a committee to look into the matter.

From December 1783 to February 1784, members of the committee considered exactly what type of bill to present to the legislature for a vote. Many members of the assembly sought the opinions of their constituents. People in Rhode Island, as well as in neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut, debated slavery in taverns, places of worship, homes, and businesses. Citizens on all sides of the issue shared their views. One group, made up entirely of white people, supported doing nothing to change the current situation, contending that there should be no end to either slavery or the slave trade. Other people, mostly whites but some blacks as well, supported compromise positions that would allow for gradual emancipation. A third group, made up mostly of blacks, favored immediate and complete emancipation. Finally, a small group of people, made up of both blacks and whites, supported emancipation, but linked it to the idea of sending blacks back to Africa.

Options in Brief

Option 1: Continue Trading and Owning Slaves

Slavery is a natural social system. It provides Africans with a better life than the one they would have had in Africa. Slaves are also a valuable form of property, and it is an offense against the idea of liberty and an affront to all who died in the Revolution to deny a person his just rights as a property owner. Freed slaves will only become a burden on society and will surely cause injury and damage to the community, as free people of color already do. Additionally, slavery is essential to the financial health of Rhode Island.

Option 2: Emancipate Gradually

While slavery is morally wrong and violates both the natural laws of man and the concepts of freedom and liberty, we cannot turn slaves loose on our society all at once. Such action might cause chaos and disorder. We should therefore institute a plan whereby Africans born after a certain date will be free. Africans who are currently slaves will remain so. In this way the institution of slavery will die out gradually, without major social disruption. Additionally, slave owners cannot be expected to give up what they see as their property without compensation. After all, they purchased the slaves, and they are entitled to a return on their investment.

Option 3: Emancipate Immediately and Completely

Slavery in all its forms is immoral and should be ended immediately. It is hypocritical to say that slavery is wrong and yet allow people to continue to own other people for any length of time. It is not true that Negroes are by nature irresponsible or incapable of full citizenship. Their degraded condition is a reflection not of their nature but of the conditions of slavery. All slaves should be freed immediately in order to enjoy the rights and liberties so eloquently addressed in the Declaration of Independence.

Option 4: Send Africans Back to Africa

Slavery must be ended, but it is unrealistic to expect Africans and Europeans to live harmoniously together. The two groups are simply too different from each other. The solution is to free slaves but to send them out of the country, perhaps back to Africa. In this way free Africans will not become a burden on American society. In America, Africans will forever be limited by prejudice. It is much better to send them to where they will be received with open arms. Additionally, the presence of civilized, Christian Africans will greatly benefit the native African people among whom they settle.

Option 1: Continue Trading and Owning Slaves

Slavery is a natural social system. In order for a society to function, some people must have authority and others must be subject to that authority. Some people are more naturally suited to rule, while others are more naturally suited to follow. Slavery, then, does not violate any natural laws; rather, it supports them.

The slave trade that brings Negroes to our shores is essential to American commerce and to the financial health of Rhode Island. It provides goods and services we need here in New England and provides an outlet for the products that we produce. Without the slave trade and the wealth it provides we would most likely still be subject to the tyrannical rule of the British. Now, in order to establish a strong foundation for the new United States and to continue to support the new United States Treasury, we must continue the trade. Additionally, to deny a person his just rights as a property owner is an offense against the idea of liberty and an affront to all who died in the Revolution—fighting for that liberty! To encourage our servants to seek freedom is the same as stealing the coat off a man’s back.

Finally, the ownership of slaves in Rhode Island provides Africans with a better life than the one they would have had in Africa. In Africa, captives and prisoners of war are killed or subjected to a slavery of a much worse kind. They are not educated and they do not have the benefit of a Christian upbringing. We practice humane slavery, and yet we are criticized for it!

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 1

1. Slavery is a natural social system found in many societies.

2. Africans are by nature inferior to whites and destined to servitude.

3. The institution of slavery and the trade in slaves is essential to the New England economy.

Supporting Arguments for Option 1

1. The Revolution affirmed our rights to private property; any government that denies these rights is tyrannical.

2. Slavery is supported in the Bible.

3. Africans have a better life as slaves

in a Christian state than in Africa.

4. Freed slaves will only become a burden on society and will surely cause injury and damage to the community, as free people of color already do.

What should we do?

1. We should maintain the status quo.

2. We should not pass any bill which restricts the rights of people to own property or trade freely.

From the Historical Record

William Snelgrave, British slave trader and author, 1734

“Tho’ to traffic in human creatures may at first sight appear barbarous, inhuman, and unnatural; yet the traders herein have as much to plead in their own excuse, as can be said for some other branches of trade, namely, the advantage of it... In a word, from this trade proceed benefits, far outweighing all, either real or pretended mischiefs and inconveniences.”

Capt. Nathaniel Potter, New England slave trader, The Newport Mercury, 1764

“Without this trade it would have been and always will be, utterly impossible for the inhabitants of this colony to subsist themselves, or to pay for any considerable quantity of British goods.”

Edward Long, British aristocrat, historian, and explorer, Candid reflections upon the judgement lately awarded by the Court of King’s Bench in Westminster-Hall on what is commonly called the Negroe-cause, 1772

“As our trade esteemed Negroe labourers merely a commodity, or chose in merchandize, so the parliament of Great Britain has uniformly adhered to the same idea... [Planters have always] deemed their Negroes to be fit objects of purchase and sale, transferrable like any other goods or chattels: they conceived their right of property to have and to hold, acquired by purchase, inheritance, or grant, to be as strong, just, legal, indefeasible, and compleat, as that of any other British merchant over the goods in his warehouse.”

Eliphalet Pearson, Harvard undergraduate student, in a University-sponsored debate on slavery, 1773

“That Liberty to all is sweet I freely own; but still ‘tis what, in a state of society at least, all cannot equally enjoy, and what even in a free government can be enjoyed in the most perfect sense by none. Such is the nature of society, that it requires various degrees of authority and subordination; and while the universal rule of right, the happiness of the whole, allows greater degrees of Liberty to some, the same immutable law suffers it to be enjoyed only in less degrees by others.

“Slavery...is not repugnant to the law of

nature, and therefore...the principle of natural equality cannot be true.

“...No one surely can remain a moment undetermined, who reflects with the least degree of attention, upon the vast inequality observable between different individuals of the human species, in point of qualification for the proper direction of conduct. Now whether this inequality be considered as arising from difference in natural capacity, difference in the means of improvement, or in disposition properly to employ such means; in a word, whether it arises from nature or education, or any other supposeable quarter, it matters not, while this is in fact the case, while some are actually found so far to excel others both in respect of wisdom and benevolence both in the knowledge....”

Thomas Lynch, Jr., Delegate from South Carolina, to the Continental Congress, 1776

“Freemen cannot be got to work in our Colonies; it is not in the ability or inclination of freemen to do the work that the negroes do.”

John Brown, prominent Rhode Island merchant, as reported in Moses Brown’s notes on the Rhode Island legislature’s debate, February 1784

“[He said] ‘...the slaves in their own country were to be destroyed if not sold, it was therefore a piece of humanity to bring them away and make slaves of them.’”

William Bradford, physician, lawyer, future Rhode Island Senator, as reported in Moses Brown’s notes on the Rhode Island legislature’s debate, February 1784

“[He said] ‘...this little state had gone far enough in stopping the Importation into this state, and it [the proposed ban] would be like the smallest spot in the face of the sun, and would no more stop the trade if we passed the act than ye spot would that light.’”

Nathan Miller, politician, future Delegate from Rhode Island to the Continental Congress, as reported in Moses Brown’s notes on the Rhode Island legislature’s debate, February 1784

“N. Miller agreed that slavery was justifiable from scripture from the Word, ‘Bond slave for Ever.’”

Option 2: Emancipate Gradually

Slavery is morally wrong. It violates both the natural laws of man and the concepts of freedom and liberty. Trading in slaves is also evil and should be stopped. However, we cannot turn slaves loose on our society all at once. Such action might cause chaos and disorder because Africans cannot function responsibly outside of servitude without guidance from whites. They tend to be vicious and disorderly. Our very way of life would be threatened if we released all Africans to immediately roam the streets. We should therefore institute a plan whereby Africans can be born with the promise of freedom at a certain age. They can then learn how to behave as free persons, acquiring the education they need to ensure that they can fend for themselves and will not become a burden on society. If properly prepared, free people of color will be grateful for their status and will become positive members of the society.

Additionally, slave owners cannot be expected to give up their property without some sort of compensation. Such a situation would mean the state would be stealing from its own citizens. Owners should be paid for the loss of the future labor of their slaves, or they should keep their slaves until they have worked long enough to pay back the costs of raising them. In this way owners will have either direct payment or the benefit of their labor as payment for their upkeep and education. After all, they purchased the slaves, and they are entitled to a return on their investment.

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 2

1. The perpetual owning and trading of slaves is sinful and violates the rights of man.
2. Africans need to be taught how to behave appropriately in society before assuming the full responsibilities of citizenship.
3. People should not be deprived of property without their consent or due compensation.
4. Slavery must end, but to do so immediately would be too socially disruptive.

Supporting Arguments for Option 2

1. Removing slavery and the slave trade from our midst will put us on better terms with God.
2. Property owners are more likely to support abolition if the process is gradual and they are compensated for the loss of property.
3. Emancipating slaves gradually will ensure that we maintain control over the Africans in order to help them become useful members of society.
4. With the process of gradual emancipation, slavery will die out over time without undue social disruption.

What should we do?

1. We should pass a bill which provides for the gradual emancipation of slavery, including some form of compensation for masters.
2. Those who are already enslaved should remain so.
3. Children born after a certain date should be free but required to serve their masters for a fixed number of years.
4. We should require vessels sailing for Africa to post a bond promising that they will not engage in the trade of slaves.

From the Historical Record

Francis Alison, Philadelphia Presbyterian cleric, letter to Ezra Stiles, minister in Newport, 1768

“I am assured the Common father of all men will severely plead a Controversy against these Colonies for Enslaving Negroes, and keeping their children...born British subjects, in perpetual slavery.”

John Woolman, Quaker from New Jersey, from his diary of 1769

“As persons setting Negroes free in our province are bound by law to maintain them in case they have need of relief, some who scrupled keeping slaves term of life (in the time of my youth) were wont to detain their young Negroes in their service till thirty years of age, without wages, on that account. And with this custom I so far agreed that I, as companion to another Friend in executing the will of a deceased Friend, once sold a Negro lad till he might attain the age of thirty years and applied the money to the use of the estate.”

Author Unknown, Burlington, NJ, 1773
The following is from An Account Stated on that Manumission of Slaves, Shewing, that in Lieu of the usual Security required, certain Sums paid at several Periods of Manumission, will amply secure the Publick, as well as their Owners from any future Burden.

“Though an indulgence is wished to be granted to such as are conscientiously scrupulous of holding their fellow-creatures in perpetual bondage, it is reasonable that the publick, at the same time, should be cautiously guarded against any in injurious consequences.”

Rev. Levi Hart of Connecticut, Some Thoughts on the Subject of Freeing the Negro Slaves in the Colony of Connecticut Humbly Offered to the Consideration of All Friends to Liberty and Justice, 1775

“...The owners of Slaves will be injured by their being made free, unless they are in some way indemnified....Slaves when made free will be an unsupportable burden to Society, through their imprudence, and vicious and immoral behaviour.

“Under the patronage of Government, the public faith is, in effect, plighted to protect

and support them in the possession of their Slaves, or indemnify them if they are taken away.”

Letter from Rev. Levi Hart of Connecticut to Rev. Samuel Hopkins of Rhode Island, 1775

“The true state of the case appears to be this: the owners of the slaves have purchased them under the personage of the government, and the public faith is in effect plighted to protect and support them in the possession of their slaves. The most proper way therefore in which the slaves can be made free is for it to be done by the act of the legislature of the colony and for the owner to be indemnified at the public cost.

“I am sensible this will be objected to by some who are not owners of slaves as being unreasonable; that they who have had no hand in the slave trade should be punished together with the guilty persons by being obligated to bear a part of the expense of their freedom. But it will appear, when properly considered, that the whole community is concerned in the slave trade.

“But it will perhaps be further objected that such indemnification to the owners of slaves for their freedom will bring a vast unsupportable expense upon the colony. To this it may be answered that be the expense what it may, this is no reasonable objection. For if the slaves have a right to their freedom and we have been guilty of robbing that invaluable jewel, it is more than time to do them justice, and the greatness of the expense attending that act of justice only evidences the greatness of the injury done to the Negroes, for their liberty cannot be of greater value to their owners than to themselves.

“This leads to the other branch of our subject, which was to consider the objections against freeing the Negroes. It is said that the Negroes have not sufficient discretion to conduct their own affairs and provide for themselves and that many of them are addicted to stealing and other enormities now,

and would probably be much more so if they were not under the care and government of their masters who restrain them—that if they were free they would find means to perpetrate so many horrid crimes in stealing and house-breaking, if not robbing and murdering, that private property would by no means be safe and an irreparable injury be hereby done to the public.

“To all this and everything of the like it may be replied that there is no apparent want of capacity in the Negros in general to conduct their own affairs and provide for themselves. Our national pride leads us to imagine them, by nature, much inferior to ourselves in intellectual powers, but this ungenerous self-applauding preference doth not appear to be supported by fact, when proper allowance is supposed for the difference of education and condition in our favor.

“As to their growing more vicious and disorderly and, in particular, more given to stealing by being made free, the prospect is, I think, quite the contrary, for then they will be members of the community and have a common interest with others in support of good order and preservation of private property, whereas now they have no property to be exposed and so no interest in good order.”

Prince Hall, freed slave, in a 1777 petition to the Massachusetts Legislature

“To the Honorable Counsel & House of Representatives for the State of Massachu-

sitte Bay in General Court assembled, Jan. 13, 1777...

“...Your Petitioners apprehend that they have in Common with all other men a Natural and Unalienable Right to that freedom which the Great Parents of the Unavers hath Bestowed equally on all mankind and which they have Never forfeited by any Compact or agreement whatever—but that they were Unjustly Dragged by the hand of cruel Power from their Derest friends...in violation of Laws of Nature and of Nations and in defiance of all the tender feelings of humanity Among A People Professing the mild Religion of Jesus A people Not Insensible of the Secrets of Reasonable Being Nor without spirit to Resent the unjust endeavours of others to Reduce them to a state of Bondage and Subjection.

“They therfor humbly Beseech your honours to give this petition its due weight & consideration and cause an act of the Legislature to be past Wherby they may Be Restored to the Enjoyments of that which is the Naturel Right of all men—and their Children who were Born in this Land of Liberty may not be heald as Slaves after they arrive at the age of Twenty one years so may the Inhabitance of thes States No longer chargeable with the inconsistancy of acting themselves the part which they condem and oppose in others Be prospered in their present Glorious struggle for Liberty and have those Blessing to them, &c.”

Option 3: Emancipate Immediately and Completely

Slavery in all its forms is immoral and should be ended immediately. Negroes who were stolen from their countries have been deprived of everything that makes life tolerable. A slave cannot care for his wife or his children when those family members are separated from him and when marriage between two Africans is not recognized. How can a child obey his father when he must obey instead his master? Slavery, by its very nature, requires the slave to submit to man rather than God, and therefore violates the most basic religious laws. All slaves should be immediately released from bondage!

In this great land we now have liberty and equality. It is inconsistent with the principles of these new United States to hold human beings in slavery. When all men are created equal, why should some men still be masters over others? All persons have a right to the fruits of their own labor. There has been no agreement in which Africans have willingly forfeited their freedom. It is hypocritical to say, as some have recently done, that slavery is wrong and yet to allow people to own slaves for any length of time. The arguments used to justify enslaving Africans could equally be used to justify enslaving white people.

It is not true that Africans are by nature unruly and untrustworthy. Any apparent inferiority is a result not of Africans' nature but of the poor conditions in which they are forced to live. If whites were deprived of education and any incentive to improve themselves, they would behave no better. Once slaves are free, their productivity will increase as freemen work better than enslaved men. All slaves should be freed immediately in order to enjoy the rights and liberties of man.

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 3

1. All men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

2. Slavery in all its forms is inherently immoral and evil.

3. There is no innate difference

between Africans and whites; neither should be the master of the other.

4. It is hypocritical to demand freedom from our oppressor and not provide freedom to the oppressed within our own country.

Supporting Arguments for Option 3

1. Ending slavery and the slave trade will remove the stain of slavery from the United States.

2. By freeing slaves, the state, rather than

a few wealthy individuals, will be able to benefit from their industry and their labor.

3. Free laborers work better than slaves.

What should we do?

1. We should pass a bill which immediately frees all who are now in bondage.

2. We should pass a bill which

prohibits Rhode Island from engaging in the slave trade in any way. Anyone found doing so should be punished.

From the Historical Record

Judge Samuel Sewall, Massachusetts Judge, in the first non-Quaker anti-slavery pamphlet, The Selling of Joseph, 1701

“It is most certain that all Men, as they are the Sons of Adam are Coheirs; and have equal Right unto Liberty, and all other outward Comforts of Life.... So that Originally, and Naturally, there is no such thing as Slavery.”

John Woolman, Quaker from New Jersey, Considerations on Keeping Negroes; Recommended to the Professors of Christianity, of every Denomination, Part Second, 1762

“To suppose it right that an innocent Man shall at this Day be excluded from the common Rules of Justice; be deprived of that Liberty, which is the natural Right of human Creatures; and be a Slave to others during Life...is a Supposition too gross to be admitted into the Mind of any Person, who sincerely desires to be governed by solid Principles.

“...to take them from their own Land, with Views of Profit to ourselves, by Means inconsistent with pure Justice, is foreign to that Principle which seeks the Happiness of the whole Creation....

“...Place on Men the ignominious Title SLAVE, dressing them in uncomely Garments, keeping them to servile Labour, in which they are often dirty, tends gradually to fix a Notion in the Mind, that they are a Sort of People below us in Nature, and leads us to consider them as such in all our Conclusions about them.

“Through the Force of long Custom, it appears needful to speak in Relation to Colour. Suppose a white Child, Borne of Parents of the meanest Sort, who died and left him an Infant, falls into the Hands of a Person, who endeavors to keep him a Slave, some Men would account him an unjust Man in doing so, who yet appear easy while many Black People, of honest Lives, and good Abilities, are enslaved, in a Manner more shocking than the Case here supposed. This is owing chiefly to the Idea of Slavery being connected with the Black Colour, and Liberty with the White: And

where false Ideas are twisted into our Minds, it is with Difficulty we get fairly disentangled.”

James Otis, lawyer, revolutionary, 1764

“The colonists are by the law of nature freeborn, as indeed all men are, white or black.... Does it follow that ‘tis right to enslave a man because he is black? Will short curled hair like wool instead of Christian hair, as ‘tis called by those whose hearts are as hard as the nether millstone, help the argument? Can any logical inference in favor of slavery be drawn from a flat nose, a long or a short face? Nothing better can be said in favor of a trade that is the most shocking violation of the law of nature, has a direct tendency to diminish the idea of the inestimable value of liberty, and makes every dealer in it a tyrant, from the director of an African company to the petty chapman in needles and pins on the unhappy coast. It is a clear truth that those who every day barter away other men’s liberty will soon care little for their own....”

Anthony Benezet, Quaker schoolteacher, A Caution and Warning To Great Britain and Her Colonies, In A Short Representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominions, 1766

“Much might justly be said of the temporal evils which attend this practice [slavery], as it is destructive of the welfare of human society, and of the peace and prosperity of every country, in proportion as it prevails. It might be also shewn, that it destroys the bonds of natural affection and interest, whereby mankind in general are united; that it introduces idleness, discourages marriage, corrupts the youth, ruins and debauches morals, excites continual apprehensions of dangers, and frequent alarms, to which the Whites are necessarily exposed from so great an increase of a people, that, by their bondage and oppressions, become natural enemies, yet, at the same time, are filling the places and eating the bread of those who would be support and security of the country.

“Can any human heart, that retains a fel-

low-feeling for the suffering of mankind, be unconcerned at relations of such grievous affliction, to which this oppressed part of our species are subjected: God gave to man dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the cattle, &c. but imposed no involuntary subjection of one man to another.”

Benjamin Rush, physician from Pennsylvania, in a pamphlet published in Boston, 1773

“Slavery is so foreign to the human mind, that the moral faculties as well as those of the understanding are debased, and rendered torpid by it. All the vices which are charged upon the Negroes in the southern colonies and the West Indies, such as Idleness, Treachery, Theft, and the like, are the genuine offspring of slavery, and serve as an argument to prove they were not intended for it.”

Felix Holbrook, slave, The humble Petition of many Slaves, living in the Town of Boston, and other Towns in the Province, 1773

“To the Honorable House of Representatives in General Court assembled at Boston, the 6th Day of January, 1773...”

“We have no Property! We have no Wives! No Children! We have no City! No Country! But we have a Father in Heaven, and we are determined, as far as his Grace shall enable us, and as far as our degraded contemptuous Life will admit, to keep all his Commandments: Especially will we be obedient to our Masters, so long as God in his sovereign Providence shall suffer us to be holden in Bondage.

“It would be impudent, if not presumptuous in us, to suggest to your Excellency and Honors any Law or Laws proper to be made, in relation to our unhappy State, which, although our greatest Unhappiness, is not our Fault; and this gives us great Encouragement to pray and hope for such Relief as is consistent with your Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness.

“Signed, Felix.”

Rev. Levi Hart of Connecticut, in a sermon preached in Connecticut, Liberty Described and Recommended, 1774

“Of all the enjoyments of the present life, that of liberty is the most precious and valuable, and a state of slavery the most gloomy to a generous mind—to enslave men, therefore, who have not forfeited their liberty, is a most atrocious violation of one of the first laws of nature, it is utterly inconsistent with the fundamental principle and chief bond of union by which society originally was, and all free societies ever ought to be formed. I mean that of a general union for the common good, by which every individual is secure of public approbation so long as he acts for the public welfare.

“Could it be thought then that such a palpable violation of the law of nature, and of the fundamental principles of society, would be practiced by individuals and connived at, and tolerated by the public in British America! This land of liberty where the spirit of freedom glows with such ardour. Did not obstinate incontestable facts compel me, I could never believe that British Americans would be guilty of such a crime—I mean that of the horrible slave trade, carried on by numbers and tolerated by authority in this country. It is not my design to enter largely into the arguments on this subject; all who agree to the general principles already laid down, will join in pronouncing the African slave-trade a flagrant violation of the law of nature, of the natural rights of mankind. What have the unhappy Africans committed against the inhabitants of the British colonies and inlands in the West-Indies; to authorize us to seize them, or bribe them to seize one another, and transport them a thousand leagues into a strange land, and enslave them for life? For life did I say?

“With what ill grace can we plead for slavery when we are the tyrants, when we are engaged in one united struggle for the enjoyment of liberty; what inconsistency and self-contradiction is this! Who can count us the true friends of liberty as long as we deal in, or publicly connive in slavery.”

Letter from Phillis Wheatley, Massachusetts slave and poet, to Reverend Samson Occum, published in The Connecticut Gazette, March 11, 1774

“Rev’d and honor’d Sir,

“...God grant Deliverance in his own Way and Time, and get him honour upon all those whose Avarice impels them to countenance and help forward tile Calamities of their fellow Creatures. This I desire not for their Hurt, but to convince them of the strange Absurdity of their Conduct whose Words and Actions are so diametrically, opposite. How well the Cry for Liberty, and the reverse Disposition for the exercise of oppressive Power over others agree....”

John Wesley, Anglican clergyman, evangelist, and co-founder of Methodism, in the Providence Journal, 1774

“Are you a man? Then you should have an human heart. But have you indeed?...Do you never feel another’s pain?...When you saw the flowing eyes, the heaving breasts, or the bleeding sides and tortured limbs of your fellow creatures, was you a stone or a brute?...When you squeezed the agonizing creatures down in the ship, or when you threw their poor mangled remains into the sea, had you no relenting? Did not one tear drop from your eye, one sigh escape from your breast?”

The Declaration of Independence, 1776

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienably Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Prime and Prince X, slaves, on behalf of themselves and other petitioners, May 11, 1779

“To the Honbl. General Assembly of the State of Connecticut...

“That many of your Petitioners, were (as they verily believe) most unjustly torn, from the Bosom of their dear Parents, and Friends, and without any Crime, by them committed, doomed, and bound down, to perpetual Slavery; and as if the Perpetrators of this horrid

Wickedness, were conscious (that we poor Ignorant Africans, upon the least Glimmering Sight, derived from a Knowledge of the Sense and Practice of civilized Nations) should Convince them of their Sin, they have added another dreadful Evil, that of holding us in gross Ignorance, so as to render Our Subjection more easy and tolerable.”

“...Your Honours who are nobly contending, in the Cause of Liberty, whose Conduct excites the Admiration, and Reverence, of all the great Empires of the World; will not resent, our thus freely animadverting, on this detestable Practice; altho our Skins are different in Colour, from those whom we serve, Yet Reason and Revelation join to declare, that we are the Creatures of that God, who made of one Blood, and Kindred, all the Nations of the Earth; we perceive by our own Reflection, that we are endowed with the same Faculties with our masters, and there is nothing that leads us to a Belief, or Suspicion, that we are any more obliged to serve them, than they us, and the more we Consider of this matter, the more we are Convinced of our Right (by the Laws of Nature and by the whole Tenor of Christian Religion, so far as we have been taught) to be free; we have endeavoured rightly to understand what is our Right, and what is our Duty, and can never be convinced that we were made to be Slaves.”

Abbe Raynal, French philosopher, in The Providence Gazette August 30, 1783

“...whoever justifies so odious a system [slavery] deserves the utmost contempt.

“Let us proceed a step farther; the right of slavery is a right to perpetrate all sorts of crimes, those crimes which invade property; for slaves are not suffered to have any, even in their own persons; those crimes which destroy personal safety, for the slave may be sacrificed to the caprice of his master; those crimes which make modesty shudder; my blood rises at those horrid images.”

Option 4: Send Africans Back to Africa

It is very unlikely that Africans and whites will be able to live together in harmony. Africans will never be able to assimilate into white society because the two groups are too different from one another. The memory of years of slavery will make free blacks bitter, while whites, having been taught to see Africans as their inferiors, will never accept them as fellow citizens. Sending Africans back to Africa will eliminate potential problems with free Africans and whites living together. There will be no opportunity for interracial marriage, and free Africans will not become a burden on society. It is much better for Africans and for the country to send them away.

There are other benefits to this policy. By establishing a group of former American slaves in Africa we will be able to benefit from increased trade. We will also be helping to lift up Africans through such trading ventures. If we provide new forms of commerce to Africa, perhaps her peoples can be diverted from the trade in slaves. Additionally, sending Africans back to Africa will help us to atone for the sins of slavery. We will be able to spread Christianity through the region and thereby assist the native Africans to find salvation. Such activities will greatly benefit the native African people. By introducing Africans to the word of God we will be engaging in a universal good, ensuring that any negative effects of slavery will be washed away.

Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 4

1. Free Africans and whites cannot live together peacefully in New England.
2. Africans will be happier in Africa among their brethren.

3. Both Africans and whites will support this plan.
4. The sins of slavery will be washed away by the introduction of Christianity to Africa.

Supporting Arguments for Option 4

1. Sending former slaves to Africa will reassure masters who fear the presence of free blacks, thus encouraging the emancipation process.
2. Removing freed slaves from Rhode Island will reduce the likelihood of

- disruptions and violence in Rhode Island.
3. Freed slaves will bring trade and Christianity to Africa, thereby exposing native Africans to American ideals and uplifting them.

What should we do?

1. Educate others about our ideas in order to gain more support.
2. Engage in exploration activities to determine where in Africa freed slaves should go.

3. Raise funds to send free Africans back to Africa.
4. Secure titles to the land we purchase there so that returning Africans and their heirs may be certain of ownership.

From the Historical Record

Rev. Ezra Stiles, in his diary, April 8, 1773

“Yesterday Mr. [Rev.] Hopkins came to see me and discourse with me on a Design he is meditating to make some Negro Ministers and send them into Guinea.... There are two Negro Men Communicants in his Church that he is disposed to train up for this End. The one is Quaumino a free Negro, and the other Yamma a Servant. Now if he could engage some respectable person to join in forwarding this Affair, he thinks it would lay a Foundation of Christianizing the Africans on Principles to his Mind. He wants therefore to contrive that these two Negroes would be taken under Tuitien, perfected in reading and Scriptures... and so be ordained and sent forth. I told him that if 30 or 40 proper and well instructed Negroes could be procured, true Christians and inspired with the Spirit of Martyrdom and go forth...there might be a hopeful prospect.”

Peter Bestes, Sambo Freeman, Felix Holbrook, and Chester Joie, slaves, in a petition to Massachusetts to allow the men to work for their own wages one day a week, April 20, 1773

“The efforts made by the legislative of this province in their last sessions to free themselves from slavery, gave us, who are in that deplorable state, a high degree of satisfaction. We expect great things from men who have made such a noble stand against the designs of their *fellow-men* to enslave them....

“But since the wise and righteous governor of the universe, has permitted our fellow men to make us slaves, we bow in submission to him, and determine to behave in such a manner that we may have reason to expect the divine approbation of, and assistance in, our peaceable and lawful attempts to gain our freedom.

“We are willing to submit to such regulations and laws, as may be made relative to us, until we leave the province, which we deter-

mine to do as soon as we can, from our joint labours procure money to transport ourselves to some part of the Coast of *Africa*, where we propose a settlement.”

Rev. Samuel Hopkins, 1773

“We may hope that all this dark and dreadful scene will not only have an end, but is designed by the Most High to be the means of introducing the gospel among the nations of Africa.”

Phillis Wheatley, slave, in a letter to Rev. Samuel Hopkins, February 9, 1774

“...I understand there are two Negro men who are desirous of returning to their native Country, to preach the Gospel.... What I can do in influencing my Christian friends and acquaintance, to promote its laudable design shall not be wanting.... This is the beginning of that happy period foretold by the Prophets.... Africa is perishing with a Spiritual famine. O that they could partake of the crumbs, the precious crumbs, Which fall from the table, of these distinguished children of the Kingdom.”

Thomas Jefferson, Notes on The State of Virginia, 1782

“Why not retain and incorporate the blacks into the state...? Deep-rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; the thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into partism and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race.... Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate, than that these people are to be free, nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government.”

Epilogue: The Struggle of Freedom

The bill Moses Brown and others submitted in December 1783, for a gradual abolition of slavery and an immediate end to the slave trade, did not pass in February 1784. The legislature rejected it by two-to-one. However, the legislature did pass a different bill which allowed for gradual emancipation without addressing the slave trade. The law said that all black children born after March 1, 1784 would spend one year supported by their mothers' masters. Thereafter the costs of raising the children would be the responsibility of individual towns. When boys turned twenty-one and girls turned eighteen, they would become full citizens. The law also made it easier for masters to free slaves between twenty-one and forty by removing the requirement that masters post a bond in case of those individuals' future financial difficulties. Masters were not required to free any slaves they already owned.

The law met with great opposition from town governments, which did not want to be made financially responsible for the upkeep of numerous black children. As a result, seven months later the assembly amended the law. It removed the provision that towns would have to care for children and returned the burden to their former masters. In exchange for supporting the children, masters received the benefit of their labor until they turned eighteen (for girls) or twenty-one (for boys). Thus the first slaves to be completely free would not gain that freedom until 1802 (girls) and 1805 (boys).

What was the result of the law?

The passing of the law was an important turning point in the decline of slavery in Rhode Island. Public opinion had, for the most part, shifted against slavery. Many masters chose to free their slaves without waiting for the law to take effect.

Other masters, however, tried to hold onto their slaves for as long as the law allowed. Those who still had slaves at this point were generally unapologetic and unwilling to give up the financial advantage they had by own-

ing slaves. It was only as slavery became less profitable that the last hold-outs began to give up their slaves.

As a result of the gradual abolition laws passed in New England and other Northern states, as well as of the growing number of private manumissions, the number of slaves declined rapidly. It is important to note, however, that slavery did not end with the passage of gradual abolition acts, and that the road to freedom for many blacks remained long and difficult. The 1790 federal census reported 3,763 slaves in New England out of 16,882 black people. By 1810 the federal census recorded 418 slaves out of a black population of almost 20,000. By 1820 145 slaves were still living in New England. The last vestiges of slavery in Rhode Island were finally eliminated in 1842 with the passage of a new state constitution.

The End of the Slave Trade

Having failed to persuade the Rhode Island legislature to abolish the slave trade in 1784, Moses Brown and his abolitionist companions introduced another bill in 1787. That bill, which prohibited Rhode Islanders from participating in the trade, passed with little opposition. Much to the surprise of its supporters, the first anti-slave trading law in the new United States had passed in the same state which had seen the greatest amount of slave trading.

“Is it not extraordinary, that this State, which has exceeded the rest of the States in carrying on this trade, should be the first Legislature on this globe which has prohibited that trade?”

—Samuel Hopkins to Levi Hart,
November 27, 1787

Following his success in Rhode Island, Moses Brown organized the Providence Society for Abolishing the Slave Trade in 1789.

He and his colleagues attempted to influence federal law on slavery issues and even submitted an anti-slavery petition to the U.S. Congress. The society met with most members of Congress and even President George Washington. In March 1794 Congress passed a law prohibiting Americans from carrying slaves to foreign ports, such as the islands of the Caribbean. In 1800 Congress passed a second anti-slave trade act tightening the 1794 law. John Brown, representing Rhode Island in the House of Representatives, was one of five men who voted against that bill.

While opponents to the trade succeeded in restricting it elsewhere, they were initially unable to ban completely the slave trade into the United States. Because of a compromise between Northern and Southern states at the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Congress had no authority to enact any law prohibiting slave trading in American ports until twenty years after the Constitution's enactment—that is, until 1807.

What effect did new state and federal laws have on the slave trade?

Given the lucrative nature of the slave trade, it is not surprising that traders continued to traffic in slaves, undeterred by the passage of new laws. Indeed, the number of ships leaving Rhode Island to trade in slaves actually *increased* in the 1790s, and did so dramatically. In fact, 43 percent of the voyages to Africa which left Rhode Island between 1709 and 1807 did so after Rhode Island passed its 1787 law. The year 1805 alone saw fifty-one vessels leave Rhode Island, more than any other year. Many of these ships were owned or captained by the DeWolfs, a prominent Bristol, Rhode Island family. In 1804 the DeWolfs successfully lobbied President Jefferson to declare Bristol a separate customs district to ensure that they could continue their trading without interference.

In Providence, the growing controversy over slave trading brought Moses and John Brown to opposite sides of the political fence again. Upon learning of John's intention to launch a slave ship in 1796, Moses and the

Abolitionist Society took John to court under the federal law. Letters flew in the newspapers supporting one or the other brother in turn. The case eventually went to U.S. District Court in Newport, where John was acquitted. It is not clear why, though some speculate it may have been because the charges were too narrow for the jury to convict. Others think it may have had to do with John's numerous friends and supporters in Newport and his convincing arguments about free trade and individual rights.

“We want money, we want a navy, we ought therefore to use the means to obtain it.... Why should we see Great Britain getting all the slave trade to themselves; why may not our country be enriched by that lucrative traffic?”

John Brown, to the U.S. House of Representatives, 1799

When did Atlantic slave trading finally stop?

Over the next few years other violations of the law were ignored. Slave traders, especially the DeWolfs, managed to intimidate the public and to install government officials who supported them. When traders were prosecuted, they paid their fines but continued trading.

In 1807 the tide began to turn. In that year, the federal government passed sweeping anti-slave trading legislation which outlawed the trade entirely and instituted heavy fines for breaking the law. Official records seem to indicate that Rhode Island traders stopped sailing to Africa, and instead switched to the Caribbean, moving molasses and other goods up and down the coast. There is some evidence, however, that once in the Caribbean these ships took on fake papers, flew Spanish flags, and headed to Africa.

On the whole, maritime business declined significantly in Rhode Island after the Revolution, as merchants sought to diversify their activities. Newport, once the bustling metropolis, had become a “poor distressed fishing village,” in the words of one inhabitant, after the British occupation during the Revolutionary War. In the early nineteenth century, many

Rhode Islanders entered the textile business, and a massive shift from sea commerce to cotton manufacturing occurred. Among the leading proponents of this shift was Moses Brown, the ardent abolitionist. Ironically, the rise of textile manufacturing further entangled New Englanders with slavery, since it was Southern slaves who produced the cotton woven in Northern textile mills.

How did the British suppress the slave trade?

Although New England essentially left the Atlantic slave trade by the early nineteenth century, other merchants around the world increased their involvement. Following pressure from abolition groups and a growing distaste for the trade in England, the British government called for an end to all slave trading beginning January 1, 1808.

In contrast to American laws, the British anti-slave trading law was vigorously enforced. The British government financed a squadron of navy ships to patrol the African and Latin American coasts and bring traders from many European nations to justice. At times Britain allotted 10 percent of its navy to the suppression of the trade. As many as five thousand sailors died in the efforts, mostly from malaria contracted along the African coast.

While the efforts of the British Navy reduced the traffic of slaves, the trade continued. Indeed, with suppression, the price of slaves increased, so that traders had greater incentives to continue the traffic. Some estimates suggest that between 1856 and 1865 traders heading to Cuba averaged as much as 90 percent in profit.

In addition to patrolling the waters, the British government signed treaties with other European powers, permitting British officers to stop ships and search them for slaves. Additionally, Britain created and funded courts to try slave traders in Sierra Leone, South Africa, Cuba, Brazil, and New York. This kind of international cooperation was the first example of an international court system. The financial burden Britain assumed to engage in all these activities was high. While there were certainly

opponents in Parliament to these expenses, the dedication required indicated that many in Britain believed that ending the slave trade was right and just.

“Freedom” in the North

Once black people in New England became free they worked hard to find employment, unite their families, and establish supportive communities. Many moved to cities in search of work. The black population in Boston increased 125 percent between 1790 and 1820. Some free blacks set up shop as barbers, bakers, or undertakers. A fortunate few became lawyers, teachers, or other professionals. These skilled and professional blacks were the first members of a small but growing middle class of blacks in the North.

One celebrated example of the professional class was Lemuel Haynes, the first ordained black minister in America. Haynes served as pastor of a predominantly white congregation in Vermont for thirty years. In 1818, however, his parish dismissed him.

For most free blacks, survival was a daily struggle. Whites placed many obstacles in their paths. Many skilled occupations were now closed to black people, even those they had done as slaves. As new immigrants came to the area it became increasingly difficult for black people to find anything but menial employment.

Some blacks were taunted or beaten while looking for jobs. A new kind of subordination developed in which most blacks in the early nineteenth century occupied the lowest levels of society.

“Daily insults you meet with in the streets of Boston; much more on public days of recreation, how are you shamefully abus’d, and that at such a degree, that you may truly be said to carry your lives in your hands; and the arrows of death are flying about your heads....”

—Prince Hall, address to the African Masonic Lodge, 1797

Why did some blacks want to return to Africa?

Some whites and blacks felt that the two races would never be able to live together in peace. They saw as the solution the return of black people to their ancestral continent. Such dreams received encouragement in 1787, when British abolitionists sponsored the creation of a black colony in Sierra Leone, on the west coast of Africa.

News of Sierra Leone’s founding galvanized the New England black community. In 1787, a group of seventy-five Boston blacks applied to the Massachusetts General Court for assistance in returning to Africa.

“...[There] we shall live among our equals and be more comfortable and happy, then we can be in our present situation.”

—Black Bostonians, 1787

Similar appeals came from Rhode Island. The Newport Free African Union Society produced several letters and circulars advocating a return to Africa.

“A number of Men from among Ourselves shall be sent to Affrica [sic] to see if they can obtain...Lands proper and sufficient to settle upon.”

—Free African Union Society, 1787

Newport Gardner, one of the leaders of the Free African Union Society, continued to argue that black people would never be more than outcasts in the United States. Gardner eventually returned to Africa, but only in 1826, when he was in his eighties.

Black interest in returning to Africa reached a peak in the 1810s. Paul Cuffe, a Massachusetts ship captain of mixed African and Native American descent, transported thirty-eight blacks on his ship to Freetown, Sierra Leone in 1816. Cuffe had convinced the British government that it would need “good sober steady characters” to help its colony

there prosper. He used his own money to fund the trip.

What was the American Colonization Society?

The early back-to-Africa ventures were sponsored by black people or by sympathetic whites. Advocates saw African repatriation as a way for black people to improve their condition. In the late 1810s, however, the back-to-Africa cause was adopted by whites who had little interest in black welfare.

In 1816, the American Colonization Society (ACS) formed. This group was made up entirely of white men, and included in its founding members future President Andrew Jackson, Speaker of the House Henry Clay, and Francis Scott Key, author of *The Star Spangled Banner*. Many of its supporters were wealthy slave holders from the South, who wanted a way to get rid of free blacks.

“Can there be a nobler cause than that which, while it proposes to rid our country of a useless and pernicious, if not a dangerous, portion of its population, contemplates the spreading of the arts of civilized life, and the possibility of redemption from ignorance and barbarism of a benighted portion of the globe?”

—Henry Clay, December 1816, at the inaugural meeting of the ACS

With the appearance of the ACS, black support for African repatriation plummeted. To blacks, the society seemed to be a way for racist whites to remove the free people of color who were most committed to slavery’s abolition. In this way, the ACS would help to preserve slavery, rather than help to abolish it. Others blacks who opposed the ACS did not want to leave their homes in America. They considered themselves American. In 1817, more than three thousand blacks gathered in Philadelphia to protest the colonization movement.

Broadside Collection, John Hay Library, Brown University. Used with permission.



An 1827 poster, called a broadside, a racist caricature mocking free people of color. The blacks are pictured drinking heavily and cavorting around a table.

“Whereas our ancestors (not of choice) were the first cultivators of the wilds of America, we their descendents feel ourselves entitled to participate in the blessings of her luxuriant soil.... Resolved, That we never will separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population in this country; they are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering, and of wrongs....”

—Philadelphia blacks, 1817

Despite widespread opposition, colonizationists succeeded in recruiting some black settlers. The first contingent sailed for what would become the country of Liberia in 1820. Officials from the American Colonization Society secured an area of land from a local chief. When the chief initially refused to sign the agreement, a U.S. Naval officer held a pistol to his head. The new United States president, James Monroe, supported the movement, and even convinced Congress to provide \$100,000 to the cause. The colonists named their settlement Monrovia as a tribute to the president’s assistance.

In 1847 the American colony gained independence as the new nation of Liberia. While black opposition to colonization remained strong, the ACS succeeded in transporting about 15,000 black settlers to Liberia in the decades before the American Civil War. Some were free people of color who went voluntarily; others were slaves who accepted colonization in exchange for freedom.

Why was Northern slavery forgotten?

One of the most remarkable aspects of the long history of slavery and slave trading in New England is how thoroughly it would be forgotten by future generations. As the nineteenth century progressed, Northern whites would develop a romanticized version of their past, celebrating their abolitionist heritage and ignoring their involvement with slavery and the trade. In the years before and after the Civil War, many whites in New England looked at white people in the South with scorn, claiming a moral superiority over them. This attitude further distanced them from their slave-owning past.

Having erased their region’s history of slavery and slave trading, white New Englanders would come to imagine themselves as liberators who had made it possible for black people to be free, independent, and successful. This view would make it difficult for many New Englanders to understand the sources of black people’s plight, making it all too easy to attribute their condition to inferiority or laziness. By the end of the nineteenth century, the idea that “blackness” meant inferior would permeate society.

What happened to “all men are created equal?”

Although blacks in the North gained freedom in the decades after the American Revolution, none gained complete equality with whites, despite the Declaration of Independence’s claim that “all men are created equal.” On the contrary, the growing population of free people of color provoked fear and uneasiness among many whites, leading to the enactment of exclusionary laws. Most Northern states denied free blacks the right to vote or to sit on juries. By both law and custom, black people were segregated in churches and schools, public parks, even cemeteries. In the 1820s and 30s violent riots against blacks in the North aimed to “put blacks in their place.” Providence, Rhode Island was the site of two major race riots. The language of the Declaration of Independence did not extend to blacks. Black author David Walker angrily denounced the situation in his famous 1829 “Appeal.”

“But we (colored people) and our children are brutes!! and of course are, and ought to be SLAVES to the American people and their children forever!!... We (colored people of these United States of America) are the most wretched, degraded, and abject set of beings that ever lived since the world began....”

—David Walker, Bostonian

Whites’ contempt for black people was revealed in the appearance of cartoons, poems, and posters, called broadsides, that mocked black people’s appearance, activities, and language. One type of poster was displayed all over Boston every year in July. On July

14th each year blacks in Boston celebrated the end of the Atlantic slave trade. The posters, in response, made fun of the celebrations and imitated black dialect in a demeaning way.

In instances where blacks and whites were integrated, prejudice plagued relationships. For instance, a wealthy black family sent their daughter Charlotte to an integrated school in Salem, Massachusetts. She found that the experience of daily discrimination made her distrust whites.

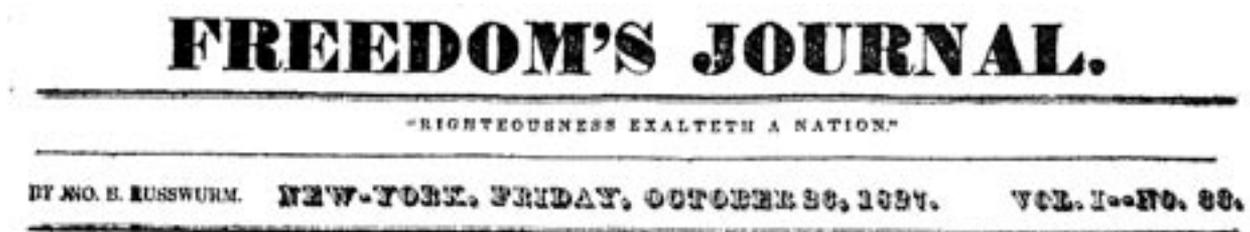
“It is hard to go through life meeting contempt with contempt, hatred with hatred, fearing with too good reason, to love and trust hardly any one whose skin is white.”

—Charlotte Forten, in her diary

How did free blacks promote their interests?

Excluded from public facilities, including public schools, black New Englanders responded by creating their own churches, self-help organizations, and schools. Organizations like the Newport Free African Union Society strove to uplift black people and thereby to help dispel ideas that they were lazy or incapable.

In 1827, blacks in New York established *Freedom’s Journal*, the nation’s first black newspaper. As more blacks became literate following emancipation (about two thirds of blacks living in Northern cities could read in the mid-1800s), readership grew. Although it was published in New York, people in most cities and towns in the mid-Atlantic, New England, and the Midwest had access to *Freedom’s Journal*. Other newspapers sprung up as well.



The top of the page of the October 26, 1827 edition of *Freedom’s Journal*.

With the increase in the number of blacks who could read, as well as the wide circulation of newspapers, national organizations of blacks began. One organization, the American Society for Free Persons of Color, met annually for several years in Philadelphia. Members of this group discussed ways to abolish slavery in the South, responded to calls for colonization in Africa, and addressed issues of civil rights. They even considered a migration movement to Canada.

Groups like these helped blacks in the North—mostly poor, disenfranchised, and discouraged—to find ways to work together to solve problems despite prejudice and racism. Like the leaders of the Free African Union Society of Newport, leaders in national black communities told followers to be industrious.

“My brethren...walk worthy of the name you bear, cling closely to the paths of virtue and morality, cherish the plants of peace and temperance; by doing this you shall not only shine as the first stars in the firmament... but immortalize your names. Be zealous and vigilant...then shall providence shower down her blessing upon your heads, and crown your labors with success.”

—George Lawrence, 1813

Why did many Northern blacks feel the Civil War would help their struggle?

Many people in the North, both blacks and whites, were involved in peaceful organizations that tried to end slavery in the South. These people made speeches, petitioned government leaders, and assisted runaways

on the Underground Railroad. Former slaves and free blacks in the North were some of the most outspoken advocates of emancipation. Despite their experiences of slavery and violent prejudice, many black people remained hopeful that America might yet live up to the principles of freedom and equality enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. That dedication led many Northern blacks to believe that the coming war between the North and the South was a way for the country finally to fulfill its promise.

As the war began, tens of thousands of African American men responded to President Abraham Lincoln’s call for black volunteers. The most enthusiastic response came from black people in New England, who saw service in the Union Army of the North as a continuation of their long struggle for freedom. All-black units such as the Fourteenth Rhode Island Heavy Artillery and the 54th Massachusetts Regiment served with distinction in the war, playing an important role in the eventual Union victory. By the end of the conflict, about ten percent of the Union Army was black.

The Thirteenth Amendment to the American Constitution, ratified on December 6, 1865, abolished slavery in the United States. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments soon followed, extending to freed people the equal protection of the laws and (for men, at least) the right to vote. But the passage of Constitutional amendments did not in itself ensure racial equality in the United States. Making the promise of freedom real for all of America’s citizens would require long years of struggle, struggle that continues into our own time.

Supplementary Documents

Letter from Moses Brown to Clarke and Nightingale Company

Providence, 26th August, 11:00, 1783

Respected Friends,
Being informed yesterday that you had in Contemplation sending a Vessel to Africa for the purpose of getting Negroes and selling them as slaves in the West Indies; and as I have eve[r] entertained a respectful Opinion of your humanity, as well as integrity as Merchants, and remembering how it was with me when our Company were engaging in that traffick, that although the convictions of my own Conscience were such as to be averse to the Voyage, yet in reasoning upon that Subject with those who were for pursuing it, my holding slaves at that time so weakened my argument, that I suffered myself rather than break my Connections, to be Concerned, but as I have many times since thought that if I had known the Sentiments of others, or had their concurring Testimonies to those Scruples, I then had, I should have been preserved from an Evil, which has given me the most uneasiness, and has left the greatest impression and stain upon my own mind of any, if not all my other Conduct in life, and it appears particularly so when I am favoured with a quiet retrospection & arraign it before the righteous judge of all men; Under these considerations I felt some engagement for your preservation from so great an evil as I have found that Trade to be, and with a view to dissuade & discourage your pursuing the Voyage, that you may avoid the unhappy reflections which I have had I am induced to write you and desire your serious consideration on the Subject, when you feel your minds calmly disposed for pursuing such a course of life, as will preserve your characters as Men of Humanity and feelings for the distresses & afflictions of others, which I have observed with much Satisfaction, on some occasions to be very Conspicuous.

One of your slaves applied to me, some time past to afford him relief under the burden of Slaves, which he seemed sensibly affected

with, and much desirous of being released from. I advised him as he had a kind Master & lived well to return & patiently endure his situation, till way for his relief opened. I mention those to help your conception of the State of mind those must be in, under the usage of the West Indies, for if your sensible Domestic Servants under your treatment and living, still have a part of what inspires us to love of Liberty, remaining, what anxiety must their Wretched States afford.

The evils of the Slave Trade, have been gradually opening more & more for some Years, and that Trade is now generally acknowledged to be unwarrantable upon my just Principle, You are Men of Feelings, & abilities to live without this Trade; why then should you be concerned in it against your own— against the feelings of your Friends?

I rest in hope, that my last has been a mistaken information, for when I delivered Clarke the Pamphlet on this Subject, I understood your intention was not to Trade in Slaves, but in Ivory, Wax, Gold Dust, etc. If this is the Case and you should give Orders to the Captain not to Suffer any Negroes on board, it would be grateful to many of your Connections in Town, as well as your Friend.

N.B. Your frequent engagements & want of opportunity of meeting you at leisure together, induced me to prefer Writing to Conference on this Subject, & hope it may be as well taken as it is meant.

1784 Rhode Island Gradual Emancipation Bill

An ACT authorizing the manumission of Negroes, Mulattos, and others, and for the gradual abolition of slavery.

Whereas all men are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and the holding mankind in a state of slavery, as private property, which has gradually obtained by unrestrained custom and the permission of the laws, is repugnant to this principle, and

subversive of the happiness of mankind, the great end of all civil government:

Be it therefore enacted by this General Assembly, and by the authority thereof it is enacted, That no person or persons, whether Negroes, Mulattos or others, who shall be born within the limits of this State, on or after the first day of March, A.D. 1784, shall be deemed or considered as servants for life, or slaves; and that all servitude for life, or slavery of children, to be born aforesaid, in consequence of the condition of their mothers, be and the same is hereby taken away, extinguished and forever abolished.

And whereas humanity requires, that children declared free as aforesaid remain with their mothers a convenient time from and after their birth; to enable therefore those who claim the services of such mothers to maintain and support such children in a becoming manner, *It is further enacted by the authority aforesaid,* That such support and maintenance be at the expense of the respective towns where those reside and are settled: *Provided however,* That the respective Town-Councils may bind out such children as apprentices, or otherwise provide for their support and maintenance, at any time after they arrive to the age of one year, and before they arrive to their respective

ages of twenty-one, if males, and eighteen, if females.

And whereas it is the earnest desire of this Assembly, that such children be educated in the principles of morality and religion, and instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic: *Be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid,* That due and adequate satisfaction be made as aforesaid for such education and instruction. And for ascertaining the allowance for such support, maintenance, education and instruction, the respective Town-Councils are hereby required to adjust and settle the accounts in this behalf from time to time, as the same shall be exhibited to them: Which settlement so made shall be final; and the respective towns by virtue thereof shall become liable to pay the sums therein specified and allowed.

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That all persons held in servitude or slavery, who shall be hereafter emancipated by those who claim them, shall be supported as other paupers, and not at the separate expense of the claimants, if these become chargeable; provided they shall be between the ages of twenty and forty years, and are of sound body and mind; which shall be judged of and determined by the Town Councils aforesaid.

Supplementary Resources

Books

Coughtry, Jay. *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1807* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981) 285 pages.

Greene, Lorenzo J. *The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620-1776* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1966) 404 pages.

Melish, Joanne Pope. *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998) 285 pages.

Sweet, John Wood. *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730-1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003) 409 pages.

Zilversmit, Arthur. *The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967) 243 pages.

World Wide Web

The African-American Mosaic
<<http://www.locweb.loc.gov/exhibits/african/intro.html>> A Library of Congress online exhibition with graphics, primary sources, and historical narrative.

The Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice
<http://www.brown.edu/research/slavery_justice/> Brown University's research and education committee investigating the university's ties to slave trading and other topics.

Eyes of Glory
<<http://www.eyesofglory.com/mainframe.htm>> Explores the history of blacks in Newport, Rhode Island.

Slavery and the Making of America
<<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/index.html>> Timelines, resources, narratives, and lesson plans associated with the PBS television series.

The Choices Program
<<http://www.choices.edu/slavery.cfm>> Additional resources and links to new research and programs will be posted as they become available.

Our units are always up to date.

Are yours?

Our world is constantly changing.

So CHOICES continually reviews and updates our classroom units to keep pace with the changes in our world; and as new challenges and questions arise, we're developing new units to address them.

And while history may never change, our knowledge and understanding of it are constantly changing. So even our units addressing "moments" in history undergo a continual process of revision and reinterpretation.

If you've been using the same CHOICES units for two or more years, now is the time to visit our website - learn whether your units have been updated and see what new units have been added to our catalog.

CHOICES currently has units addressing the following:

U.S. Role in a Changing World ■ Immigration ■ Terrorism
Genocide ■ Foreign Aid ■ Trade ■ Environment
Middle East ■ Russia ■ South Africa
India & Pakistan ■ Brazil's Transition ■ Mexico
Colonialism in Africa ■ Weimar Germany ■ China
U.S. Constitutional Convention ■ American Slave Trade
War of 1812 ■ Spanish American War ■ Hiroshima
League of Nations ■ Cuban Missile Crisis
Origins of the Cold War ■ Vietnam War

And watch for new units coming soon:

UN Reform ■ Nuclear Proliferation

THE CHOICES PROGRAM

Explore the Past... Shape the Future

History and Current Issues for the Classroom

Teacher sets (consisting of a student text and a teacher resource book) are available for \$15 each. Permission is granted to duplicate and distribute the student text and handouts for classroom use with appropriate credit given. Duplicates may not be resold. Classroom sets (15 or more student texts) may be ordered at \$7 per copy. A teacher resource book is included free with each classroom set. Orders should be addressed to:

Choices Education Program

Watson Institute for International Studies

Box 1948, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912

Please visit our website at <www.choices.edu>.



A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England

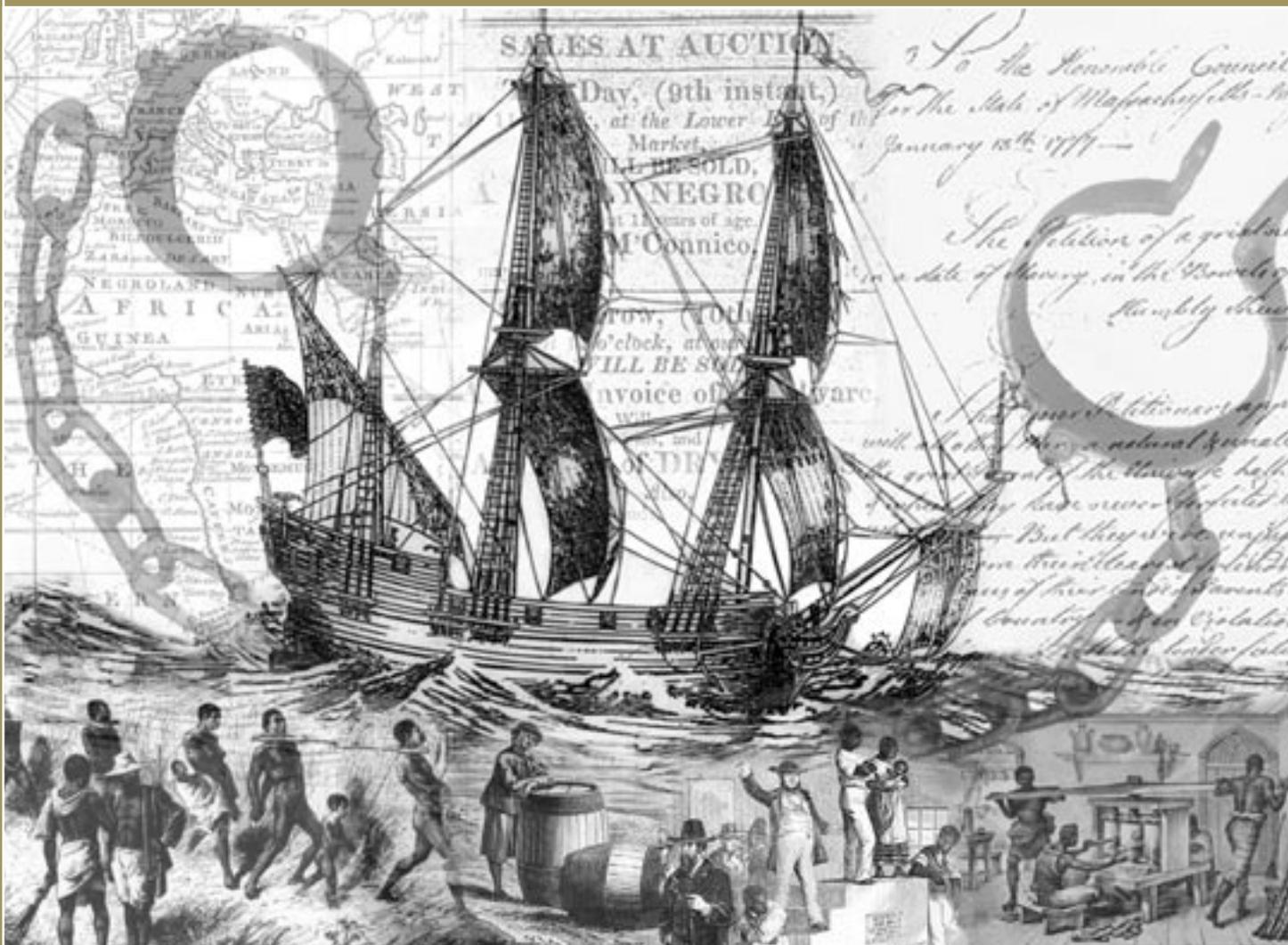
A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England explores New England's economic growth as a result of slavery and the slave trade during the colonial era, the experiences of enslaved people, and the attempts of Quakers and others to abolish slavery. Students examine the effects of slavery, emancipation, and historical memory on New England.

A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England is part of a continuing series on current and historical international issues published by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Program at Brown University. Choices materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

THE CHOICES PROGRAM

Choices for the 21st Century Education Program
WATSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
BROWN UNIVERSITY, BOX 1948, PROVIDENCE, RI 02912
WWW.CHOICES.EDU

A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England



THE CHOICES PROGRAM

Explore the Past... Shape the Future

History and Current Issues for the Classroom

WATSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
BROWN UNIVERSITY WWW.CHOICES.EDU

CHOICES for the 21st Century Education Program

June 2005

Director
Susan Graseck

Curriculum Developer
Andy Blackadar

Curriculum Writer
Sarah Cleveland Fox

International Education Intern
Rebecca Leaphart

Office Assistant
Dan Devine

Outreach Coordinator
Bill Bordac

Professional Development Coordinator
Lucy Mueller

Program Coordinator for Capitol Forum
Barbara Shema

Program Associate
Madeline Otis

Staff Associate
Anne Campau Prout

The Choices for the 21st Century Education Program develops curricula on current and historical international issues and offers workshops, institutes, and in-service programs for high school teachers. Course materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

The Choices for the 21st Century Education Program is a program of the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies at Brown University.

Thomas J. Biersteker
*Director, Watson Institute for
International Studies*

Acknowledgments

A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England was developed by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Program with the assistance of the research staff at the Watson Institute for International Studies, scholars at Brown University, and other experts in the field. We wish to thank the following researchers for their invaluable input:

James Campbell
Associate Professor of Africana Studies and American Civilization
Brown University

Neta C. Crawford
Associate Professor (Research)
Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University

Christiana Morgan Grefe
Director of Education and Public Programming
Rhode Island Historical Society

Steven Lubar
Professor of American Civilization, Brown University
Director, John Nicholas Brown Center for the Study of American Civilization

Joanne Pope Melish
Associate Professor of History, University of Kentucky

Joseph Opala
Adjunct Professor of History, James Madison University

Seth Rockman
Assistant Professor of History, Brown University

Keith Stokes
Director, Newport, Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce

John Wood Sweet
Assistant Professor of History, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Michael Vorenberg
Associate Professor of History, Brown University

Special thanks to Tim Bickford and Barry Marshall of Moses Brown School in Providence, Rhode Island for conceiving of this unit, contributing to its development, and writing the Day One lesson plan. Thanks also to Merrill D'Arezzo, Viki Rasmunsen, Felicia Ricci, and Benjamin Zimmer for their research assistance.

We also wish to thank the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice.

A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England is part of a continuing series on international public policy issues. New units are published each academic year and all units are updated regularly.

Visit us on the World Wide Web — www.choices.edu

Contents

About the Choices Approach	ii
Note To Teachers	1
Integrating this Unit into Your Curriculum	2
Day One: Creating a Living Museum	3
Day One Alternative: Slavery Connects the North and the South	10
Day Two: Enslaved People’s Experiences	15
Day Three: Role Playing the Four Options: Organization and Preparation	29
Day Four: Role Playing the Four Options: Debate and Discussion	34
Day Five: Making History	36
Key Terms	41
Issues Toolbox	42
Making Choices Work in Your Classroom	43
Assessment Guide for Oral Presentations	45
Alternative Three-Day Lesson Plan	46

THE CHOICES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION PROGRAM is a program of the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. CHOICES was established to help citizens think constructively about foreign policy issues, to improve participatory citizenship skills, and to encourage public judgement on policy issues.



The Watson Institute for International Studies was established at Brown University in 1986 to serve as a forum for students, faculty, visiting scholars, and policy practitioners who are committed to analyzing contemporary global problems and developing initiatives to address them.

© Copyright June 2005. First edition. Choices for the 21st Century Education Program. All rights reserved. ISBN 1-891306-83-6-TRB.

About the Choices Approach

Choices for the 21st Century curricula are designed to make complex international issues understandable and meaningful for students. Using an innovative approach to student-centered instruction, Choices units develop critical thinking and civic judgment—essential ingredients of responsible citizenship.

Understanding the Significance of History: Each Choices unit provides students with a thorough introduction to the topic under consideration. Students gain an understanding of the historical background and the status of current issues. In this way, they see how history has shaped our world. With this foundation, students are prepared to thoughtfully consider a variety of perspectives on public policy.

Exploring Policy Alternatives: Each Choices unit is built around a framework of alternative policy options that challenges students to consider multiple perspectives and to think critically about the issue at hand. Students are best able to understand and analyze the options through a cooperative learning/role-play activity. In groups, students explore their assigned options and plan short presentations. The setting of the role play may be a Congressional hearing, meeting of the National Security Council, or an election campaign forum. Student groups defend their policy options and, in turn, are challenged with questions from their classmates. The ensuing debate demands analysis and evaluation of the many conflicting values, interests, and priorities reflected in the options.

Why Use the Choices Approach? Choices curricula are informed by current educational research about how students learn best. Studies have consistently demonstrated that students of all abilities learn best when they are actively engaged with the material rather than listening passively to a lecture. Student-centered instructional activities motivate students and develop higher-order thinking skills. However, some high school educators

find the transition from lecture format to student-centered instruction difficult. Lecture is often viewed as the most efficient way to cover the required material. Choices curricula offer teachers a flexible resource for covering course material while actively engaging students and developing skills in critical thinking, persuasive writing, and informed citizenship. The instructional activities that are central to Choices units can be valuable components in any teacher's repertoire of effective teaching strategies. Each Choices unit includes student readings, a framework of policy options, suggested lesson plans, and resources for structuring cooperative learning, role plays, and simulations. Students are challenged to:

- recognize relationships between history and current issues
- analyze and evaluate multiple perspectives on an issue
- understand the internal logic of a viewpoint
- engage in informed debate
- identify and weigh the conflicting values represented by different points of view
- reflect upon personal values and priorities surrounding an issue
- communicate in written and oral presentations
- collaborate with peers

Teachers who use Choices units say the collaboration and interaction that take place are highly motivating for students. Opportunities abound for students to contribute their individual talents to the group presentations in the form of political cartoons, slogans, posters, or characterizations. These cooperative learning lessons invite students to take pride in their own contributions and the group product, enhancing students' self-esteem and confidence as learners. Choices units offer students with diverse abilities and learning styles the opportunity to contribute, collaborate, and achieve.

Note To Teachers

The fact that thousands of enslaved people lived in New England during and immediately after the colonial era rarely makes it into American history textbooks. While often the triangular trade is mentioned, the role of New Englanders in the trade or the experience of enslaved people in the North is glossed over. *A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England* seeks to inform students of the economic and social impact of slavery and the slave trade in the North and to introduce students to enslaved people who lived at the time.

Historians comment that New England has “forgotten” its slave-owning past, and that such a narrative—one that remembers abolition but not enslavement—has had far-reaching consequences for black-white relations and the nature of race in the United States. This unit explores the nature of the triangular trade and the extent of slavery in New England. It discusses the effects of the trade in slaves and slavery itself for the new Americans of the time and will help students to understand how history, and the telling of history, affects us today.

Part I of *A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England* addresses the economy of the slave trade, the merchants and sailors who made trips to Africa and the Caribbean, and the slaves they bought. It emphasizes Rhode Island because it was the largest slave trading colony. Part II explores slavery in New England and the various groups that argued for its continuation or abolition. Students will take part in a role play that mimics the debate about slavery within the Rhode Island community in 1783-84. The Epilogue explores the outcome of the Rhode Island state legislature’s decision, and explains how white New Englanders were able to forget their past and how black New Englanders fared after abolition.

Suggested Five-Day Lesson Plan: The Teacher Resource Book accompanying this

unit contains a day-by-day lesson plan and student activities. The first day of the lesson plan invites students to participate in a “living history museum” activity that helps to explain the triangular trade. An alternative lesson explores connections between the North and the South by tracing the route of a slave ship. On the second day, students use primary sources to understand the experiences of slaves. On the third and fourth days, students engage in a simulation in which they assume the roles of advocates for the four options the community considered, or take on the roles of individuals—enslaved people, slave owners, merchants, clergy, free blacks, and others—who lived at the time. On the fifth day, students construct a museum exhibit on New England slavery and the slave trade, and consider how societies remember history.

- **Alternative Study Guides:** Each section of background reading is accompanied by two distinct study guides. The standard study guide is designed to help students harvest the information provided in the background readings in preparation for tackling analysis and synthesis within classroom activities. The advanced study guide requires the student to tackle analysis and synthesis prior to class activities.

- **Vocabulary and Concepts:** The background reading in *A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England* addresses subjects that are complex and challenging. To help your students get the most out of the text, you may want to review with them “Key Terms” found in the Teacher Resource Book on page TRB-41 before they begin their assignment. An “Issues Toolbox” is also included on page TRB-42. This provides additional information on key concepts of particular importance.

The lesson plans offered in *A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England* are a guide. Many teachers choose to devote additional time to certain activities. We hope that these suggestions help you in tailoring the unit to fit the needs of your classroom.

Integrating this Unit into Your Curriculum

Units produced by the Choices Education Program are designed to be integrated into a variety of social studies courses. Below are a few ideas about where *A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England* might fit into your curriculum.

United States History: Most U.S. history courses address colonial New England. Including a unit on the triangular trade and slavery in New England helps to enrich the discussion of early Americans and helps students to understand the later split between the North and South over slavery. It also provides a foundation for discussions about race relations in the nineteenth century North.

World History: The triangular trade spanned the Atlantic ocean and involved numerous nations. Millions of people made the journey across the sea, most of them as captives. This massive commercial effort had profound and lasting effects on Europe, Africa,

and the Americas. After reading this unit students of African history will be more prepared to investigate the effects of the slave trade on African populations and history. Students of European history will have a better understanding of the relationship between colonies and their mother countries. Finally, all world history students will have a better understanding of the impact of the slave trade on the wealth of the West.

Economics: Economic historians have concluded that slavery in the northern United States helped the colonies to move beyond subsistence towards sustained, diversified growth. The trade in slaves and its offshoots, such as rum manufacturing, provided Rhode Islanders in particular a base on which to build wealth in their colony. The institution of slavery itself also allowed individual merchants and others to develop their businesses. This unit will help students of economics to understand the development of the New England colonial economy.

Creating a Living Museum

Objective:

Students will: Understand the variety of people involved in the triangular trade.

Work cooperatively in pairs.

Use drama and performance to demonstrate historical knowledge.

Required Reading:

Students should have read Part I of the student text (pages 1-9) and completed “Study Guide—Part I” (TRB 5-6) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Part I” (TRB-7).

Handouts:

“Triangular trade Map” (student text ii)

“Triangular Trade Statistics” (TRB-8)

“Triangular Trade Characters” (TRB-9)

In the Classroom:

1. Planning for work—Before class, set up the room so that there is a large open space in the middle. With twine or string, mark a triangle about shoulder high (if possible) around the room. Make a sign for each angle of the triangle: African west coast, Caribbean, and New England. If possible, allow for each leg of the triangle to represent the actual distance to scale. You will also need index cards and clothespins or paperclips for this exercise.

2. Introducing the Topic—Place the map of the triangular trade on an overhead projector. Review with students the route most American slave ships took, pointing out their home ports and destinations. Review the dangers of the trade for all involved. Next, place the statistics handout on the projector, and review the length of a typical American slave trading journey and its cargo at each leg. Finally, describe to students the lesson for the day: they will create characters in a living history museum and have the opportunity to reenact the history they have been learning. Brainstorm with students what types of characters could be developed for this exercise.

3. Developing Characters—Assign students to groups of two and direct each pair to one of the locations along the triangle described in the handout. More than one pair may work at each station. Distribute “Triangular Trade Characters” to each student. Provide 2-3 index cards and a paperclip to each pair, and ask students to create a character according to the directions on the handout.

4. Becoming History—After about ten minutes (or longer, if you have more time to devote to this activity), ask students to return to their locations on the triangle and have them attach their index cards to the twine. One student from each pair should read the character’s card while the other becomes a statue of the character. Once each pair has completed its presentation, other students may be invited to ask questions. Pairs should respond in character.

Alternatively, if you feel your students might be overly challenged by the drama element, have students develop characters individually and read their cards rather than acting them out.

5. Debriefing—After all pairs have finished their presentations, return students to the large-group setting to discuss the outcome of their museum. What were some of the difficulties they encountered? What did they learn about the people who made up the triangular trade? What more would they like to learn about different types of jobs or experiences people had? Be sure to address the question of proportionality. What proportion of people in the class chose to be slaves? During the era of the trade, what proportion of the people involved were slaves? If more students chose to create merchants or traders than slaves, investigate why. How many students chose to be women vs. men? Or children vs. adults? What do these choices tell us about our understanding and interpretation of history?

Suggestions:

Be sure that your students have enough

information to do this activity. You may wish to show them sections of a film or documentary, or have them read accounts of the Middle Passage before they create characters.

Provide students time to do library or internet research to develop their characters. Ask them to design illustrations to go with their paragraphs.

For an extended activity, ask students to respond to each other in writing, as their characters. You might create an area of the classroom where students can post and respond to each other's messages or have students write letters to each other.

Finally, know your students well before attempting this exercise. If you have doubts about whether your students have the maturity and sensitivity to act out the roles of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders in the Atlantic slave trade, you may want to try the alternative lesson on TRB 10-14 instead.

Homework:

Students should read Part II of the student text (pages 10-19) and complete "Study Guide—Part II" (TRB 16-17) or the "Advanced Study Guide—Part II" (TRB-18).

Study Guide—Part I

1. Why did New Englanders choose to purchase slaves?
2. List four risks slave traders faced while on a voyage of the triangular trade.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
3. Upwards of _____ slave ships set sail from Rhode Island per year during the slave trade.
4. The first enslaved people in the Caribbean and South America of the sixteenth century were _____.
5. What was the average life span of an enslaved person once he or she arrived in the Caribbean?
6. More than _____ percent of all North American vessels involved in the slave trade were based in Rhode Island.
7. Name four jobs in New England that directly or indirectly supported the slave trade.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
8. Describe the living conditions for an enslaved person on the Middle Passage.

9. List two arguments that many slave traders used to defend their actions.

a.

b.

10. How did African merchants view the slaves they sold to the Europeans and Americans?

11a. What did Europeans trade for slaves?

11b. How did this trade produce more slaves? Make a flow chart below showing cause and effect.

12. Venture Smith come from what is now the country of _____.

13. Why were colonial American slave traders known as “rum men?”

14. Why did the Browns become involved in the slave trade?

15. What proportion of slaves whom Captain Hopkins bought survived the trip across the Atlantic on the *Sally*?

Name: _____

Advanced Study Guide—Part I

1. Why did New Englanders become “middle men” in the trade of slaves? Were there other economic options available to colonists? Explain.
2. Describe the living conditions for enslaved people while on the Middle Passage.
3. Why was the slave trade not considered morally wrong in early New England culture?
4. Why did some West African leaders become involved in the Atlantic slave trade?
5. Why might the Browns have been more concerned about their ship’s captain, Esek Hopkins, than the slaves who died on the *Sally*? Why would their letter speak of gladness about his good health?

Triangular Trade Statistics

Timeline for a typical slave voyage from Rhode Island:

Sept. 1, 1764	Leave Rhode Island with rum for Africa
Nov. 1, 1764	Arrive on coast of West Africa and begin to trade
Dec. 1, 1764	Leave Africa with slaves for the West Indies
Jan. 15, 1765	Arrive in Caribbean and spend two months trading
March 15, 1765	Leave Caribbean with molasses and sugar for Rhode Island
May 1, 1765	Arrive in Rhode Island after eight months

Cargo used for trade on a typical voyage:

From Rhode Island to Africa	From Africa to Caribbean	From Caribbean to Rhode Island
about 17,000 gallons of rum	slaves elephants tusks gold dust camwood (used to make red dye)	paper money molasses sugar a few slaves

Arms on board:

7 swivel guns	8 small arms
1 cask of powder	15 cutlasses (swords)
40 handcuffs	1 dozen padlocks
40 shackles	1 pair blunderbusses
3 chains	(a type of gun)
2 pairs pistols	

Triangular Trade Characters

Instructions: Your teacher has assigned you one of the locations below on a typical journey of the triangular trade. With your partner, choose one character from the list that corresponds to the location, or make up another that fits the location. Your character can be male or female, child or adult, white or black, as appropriate. Develop a personality for your character. On an index card, write a few sentences from the point of view of your character that captures some aspect of your life or the trade. It can be in the form of a letter or diary entry. The content and tone of your paragraph can include anything you think realistically portrays your character. They can be thoughts, reflections, anecdotes, observations, business reports, or summaries. They can be dramatic retellings of events or they can be descriptions. Use your imagination. The questions below will help you to get started. After you have finished your card, be prepared to act out your character. If you have time, make props or costumes out of available materials.

Triangular Trade Locations and Characters

Leaving Newport, Rhode Island	Arriving at the Coast of Guinea	At a Coastal Slave Fortress	After One Month at Sea	Arriving in Barbados	At the Auction Block in Barbados	Upon Return to Newport
Rum Manufacturer	Captain	Fortress Governor	Captain	Captain	Auctioneer	Slave From Ship
Ship Owner	Sailor	African Leader	Sailor	Sailor	Purchasing Agent	Slave Distillery Worker
Free Black Artisan		African Merchant	Male Slave	Slave	Slave	White School Child
Slave Rope maker		European Trader	Female Slave	White Dockhand	Plantation Owner	White School Child
Providence Merchant		Captain	Captain's Assistant		Wealthy White Woman	Ship Owner
Clergyman		Slave				White Farmer

Questions to consider:

1. What is your character's name?
2. What is your character's age?
3. Marital status?
4. Economic status or job held?
5. Religious views?
6. Political views?
7. To whom are you writing? Who is your audience?

Slavery Connects the North and the South

Objective:

Students will: Trace the route of a Newport slave ship.

Examine connections the slave trade created between the North and the South.

Required Reading:

Students should have read Part I of the student text (pages 1-9) and completed “Study Guide—Part I” (TRB 5-6) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Part I” (TRB-7).

Handouts:

“Triangular Trade Map” (TRB-11)

“Voyage of the *Hare*” (TRB 12-14)

In the Classroom:

1. “The Wall”—Begin the class by writing the word “slave trade” on the center of the blackboard. Give students 5-10 minutes to approach the board and write whatever comes to mind when they think of the slaver trade—statements, words, questions, etc. Instruct the class to do the exercise in silence. Encourage students to add to each other’s postings as well as to write their own independent postings.

2. Exploring Preconceptions—In the large group setting, ask students to comment on the wall they developed. Can the entries be categorized? What do they know about the slave trade? Next, ask students what it was like to construct the wall. Did they have any fears about what the effect of their postings might be? Finally, ask students about their experiences learning about the slave trade. Why do we rarely hear about the North’s involvement in slavery? How is slavery usually taught in schools?

3. Investigating Primary Sources—Divide students into groups of three or four and distribute “Triangular Trade Map,” (TRB-11) and the “Voyage of the *Hare*” (TRB 12-14). Ask students to follow the directions on the handout. They will be tracing the *Hare*’s journey from Rhode Island to South Carolina.

4. Making Connections—Return to the large group setting. Review the students’ findings. Ask students why they think history is sometimes forgotten, and how we remember history. How is our understanding of history affected by the time period in which we live? As a final question, ask students whether their new understanding of New England’s involvement in the slave trade changes their view of history or of the United States. What lessons will they carry with them as they continue to read the unit?

Extra Challenge:

Ask students to investigate missing pieces of their local history. Are there stories about their towns and cities that are not told? Why might these stories have been overlooked? How could students rectify those and fill in those holes? Is it helpful or hurtful to do so?

Homework:

Students should read Part II of the student text (pages 10-19) and completed “Study Guide—Part II” (TRB 16-17) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Part II” (TRB-18).

Note:

The voyage of the *Hare* sold seventy-one slaves in Charleston, South Carolina. One slave, age ten, was named Priscilla by her new owner, Elias Ball. One of the men who owned the ship that brought Priscilla to America, William Vernon, was a Northern merchant who later played a leading role in establishing the Continental Navy. The man who sold Priscilla into slavery in South Carolina, Henry Laurens, was a Southern merchant who later became President of the Continental Congress and was one of the four U.S. Peace Commissioners who negotiated American Independence under the Treaty of Paris. Teachers and students can find out more about Priscilla, her descendants, and the connections among Newport, Charleston, and Sierra Leone at <<http://www.yale.edu/glc/priscilla/index.htm>>.

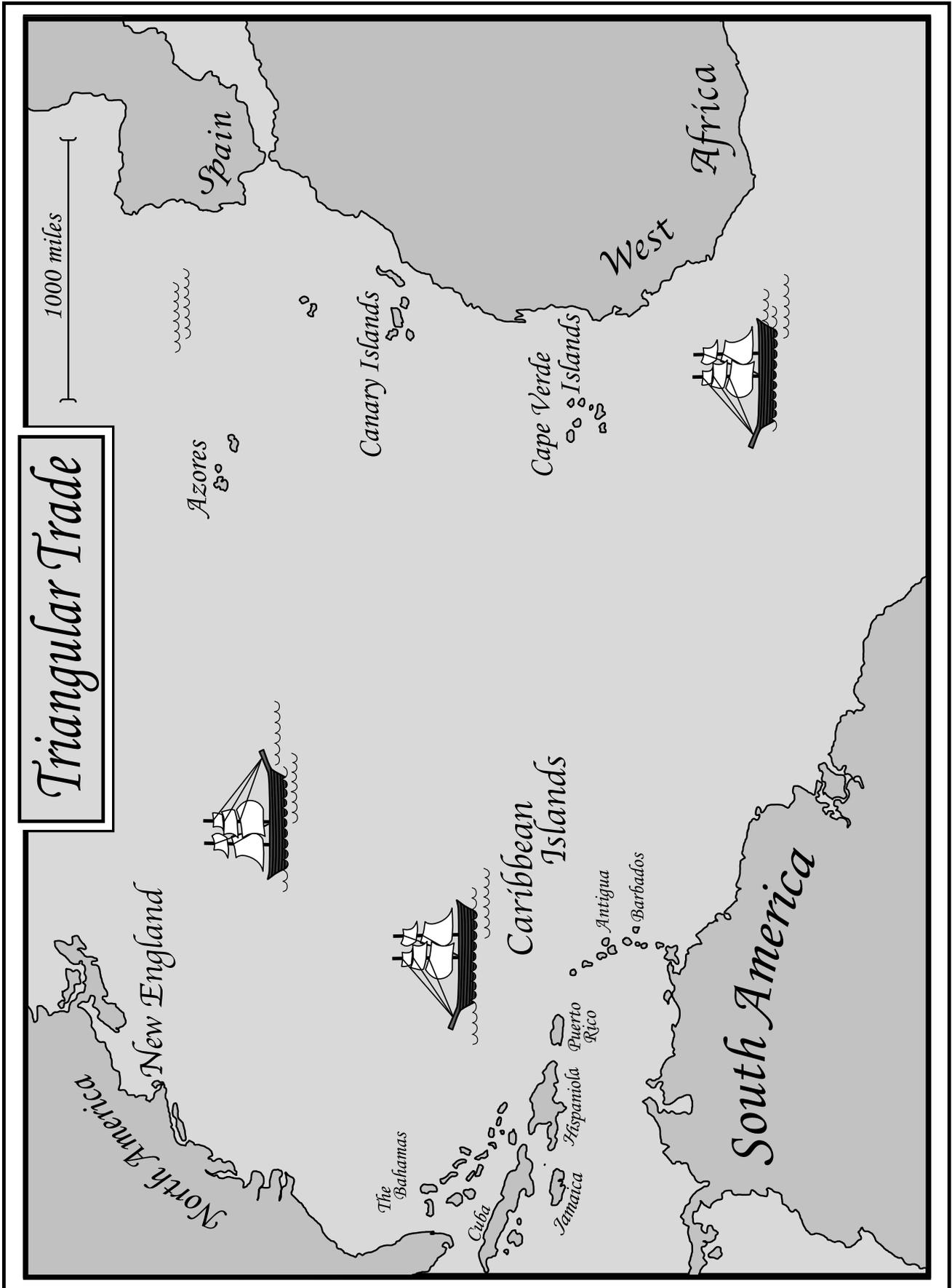


Image courtesy of V. Estabrook.

The Voyage of the Hare

Instructions: You and your group will use the documents below to trace the route of a slave ship. Look at the documents, and read their transcriptions (they have been transcribed with modern spelling and punctuation to make them easier to read). You may need an atlas to complete this exercise. On the map, do the following:

1. Mark the location from which the ship left the United States. Indicate who was the owner of the ship.
2. Mark the location on the map from which the captain of the ship wrote his letter to the owners. Indicate the name of the captain.
3. Mark the location on the map where the slaves were sold. Indicate how many were sold, and who the selling agent was.

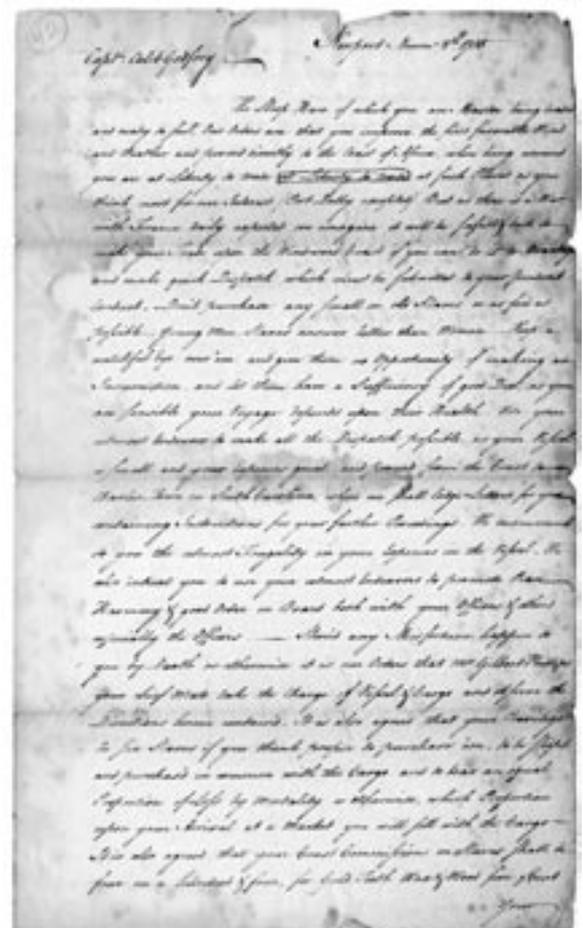
The Vernons' letter of instructions to Captain Godfrey

Newport, November 8th, 1755

Captn. Caleb Godfrey—

The Sloop Hare of which you are Master being loaded and ready to sail, Our Orders are that you improve the first favorable Wind and Weather and proceed directly to the Coast of Africa, where being arrived you are at Liberty to trade *at Liberty to trade* at such Places as you think most for our Interest.... Don't purchase any small or old Slaves or as far as possible—Young Men Slaves answer better than Women—Keep a watchful Eye over 'em and give them no Opportunity of making an Insurrection, and let them have a Sufficiency of good Diet, as you are Sensible your Voyage depends upon their Health. Use your utmost Endeavors to make all the Dispatch possible, as your Vessel is small and your Expenses great, and proceed from the Coast to—Charleston in South Carolina, where we shall lodge Letters for you containing Instructions for your farther Proceedings. We recommend to you the utmost Frugality in your Expenses on the Vessel. We also entreat you to use your utmost Endeavors to promote Peace—Harmony and good Order on Board both with your Officers and others, especially the Officers.... Don't omit writing us by all Opportunities we wish you Health and a prosperous Voyage who are your Friends,

Sam. & Wm Vernon



This is the first page of the Vernons' letter.

Collection of the New York Historical Society. Used with permission.

Name: _____



Courtesy of The John Carter Brown Library at Brown University.

Plan of "Bense Island"

Now called Bunce Island, this island housed a slave fortress owned by the British. It is in the country of Sierra Leone. It was one of the stops the *Hare* made on her journey. This drawing was originally published in 1726.

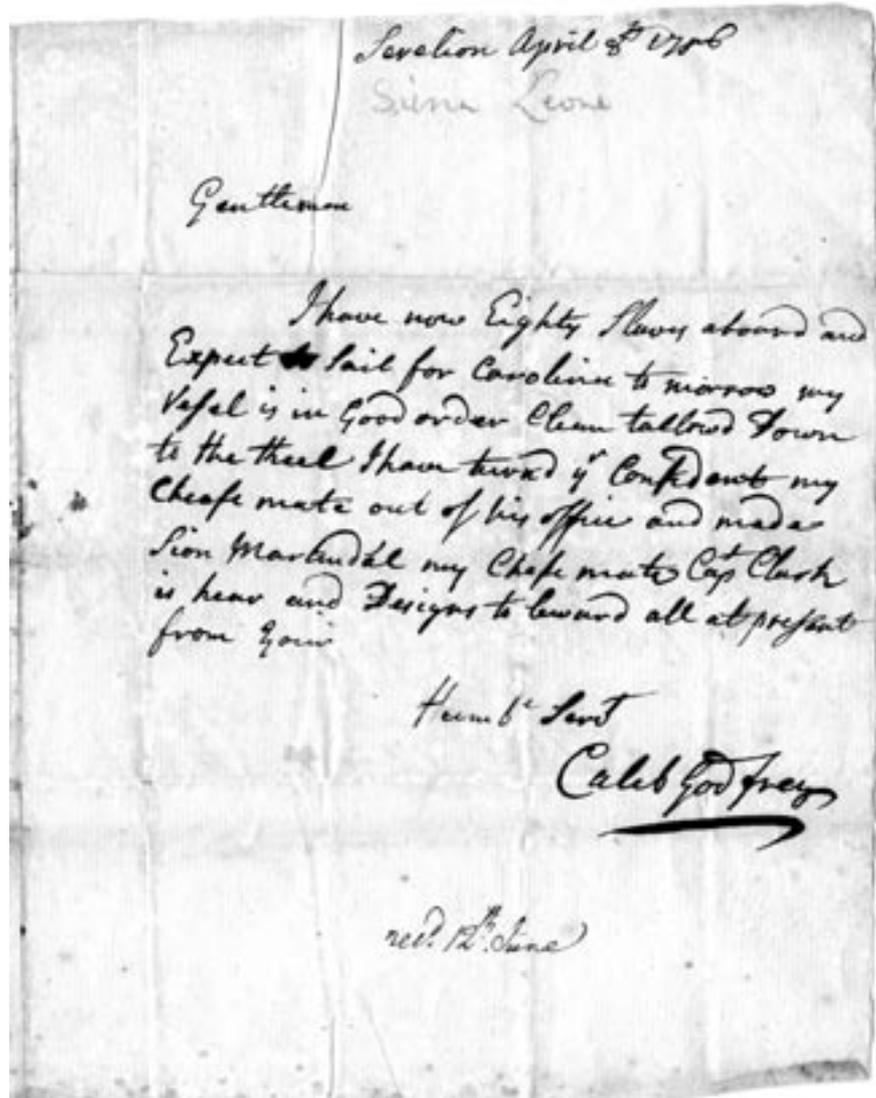
Captain Godfrey's letter to the Vernons, Sierra Leone April 8, 1756

Serelion, April 8th, 1756

Gentlemen

I have now Eighty Slaves aboard and Expect to Sail for Carolina tomorrow. My Vessel is in Good order, Clean, tallow'd down to the Keel. I have turned your Confidant, my Chief mate, out of his office and made Lion Martindal my Chief mate. Capt. Clark is here and Designs to leeward all at present.

From your
Humble Servant,
Caleb Godfrey



Collection of the New York Historical Society. Used with permission.

Advertisement for slaves from the *Hare, South-Carolina Gazette*, June 17, 1756

JUST imported in the *Hare*, Capt. Caleb Godfrey, directly from *Sier-ra-Leon*, a Cargo of Likely and Healthy **SLAVES**, To be sold upon easy Terms, on *Tuesday* the 29th Instant *June*, by **AUSTIN & LAURENS**.

Courtesy of the Charleston Library Society, Charleston, South Carolina.

Henry Laurens' record of the sale of slaves from the *Hare*, June 29 to July 9, 1756

Acc^t. Sale of 29 Slaves from the Hare Capt. Caleb Godfrey June 29 1756

Particulars	Amount	Balance
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	2000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	4000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	6000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	8000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	10000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	12000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	14000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	16000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	18000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	20000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	22000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	24000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	26000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	28000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	30000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	32000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	34000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	36000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	38000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	40000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	42000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	44000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	46000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	48000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	50000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	52000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	54000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	56000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	58000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	60000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	62000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	64000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	66000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	68000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	70000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	72000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	74000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	76000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	78000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	80000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	82000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	84000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	86000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	88000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	90000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	92000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	94000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	96000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	98000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	100000

Henry Laurens

Collection of the New York Historical Society. Used with permission.

Acc^t. Sale of 29 Slaves from the Hare Capt. Caleb Godfrey June 29 1756

Particulars	Amount	Balance
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	2000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	4000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	6000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	8000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	10000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	12000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	14000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	16000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	18000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	20000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	22000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	24000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	26000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	28000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	30000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	32000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	34000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	36000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	38000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	40000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	42000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	44000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	46000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	48000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	50000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	52000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	54000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	56000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	58000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	60000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	62000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	64000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	66000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	68000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	70000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	72000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	74000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	76000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	78000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	80000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	82000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	84000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	86000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	88000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	90000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	92000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	94000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	96000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	98000
Received of James O'Connell for 10 Slaves	2000	100000

Henry Laurens

Collection of the New York Historical Society. Used with permission.

Enslaved People’s Experiences

Objective:

Students will: Use primary source material to develop a clearer understanding of the experiences of enslaved people in New England.

Work in groups to answer directed questions.

Make comparisons between Northern and Southern slavery.

Required Reading:

Students should have read Part II of the student text (pages 10-19) and completed “Study Guide—Part II” (TRB 16-17) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Part II” (TRB-18).

Handouts:

“Enslaved People’s Experiences 1-7” (TRB 19-28), one handout for each student; a different “experience” for each group.

In the Classroom:

1. Getting Started—In the large group setting, review the previous night’s reading with students. Students might be especially interested in discussing why some people fought hard for abolition at the same time others fought hard for maintaining slavery.

2. Using Primary Source Material—Divide students into seven groups and distribute one handout of “Enslaved People’s Experiences 1-7” (TRB 19-28) to each group. Ask students to follow the directions on their handout. Note

that each handout looks at a different element of enslaved people’s lives through a different lens: literature, architecture, statistics, etc. You may wish to divide your groups by interest or skill.

3. Drawing Connections—Return students to the large group setting. Ask groups to summarize what they learned from their handouts. Record responses on the board. You might wish to try to categorize responses with headings such as “daily life,” or “what enslaved people thought of their position,” or “how enslaved people were viewed by whites.” Constructing categories will help students to see trends in the disparate types of material they investigated. After students have listed some similarities, challenge them to note differences between slavery in the North and what they know about slavery in the South.

Extra Challenge:

Encourage students to research additional individual enslaved people and report on their experiences in New England. How did those individual enslaved people deal with their situations?

Homework:

Students should read “Winter 1783: Rhode Island’s Moment of Decision” in the student text (page 20) and the “Options in Brief” (page 21).

Study Guide—Part II

1. How was the status of an enslaved person different from an indentured servant?
2. List three characteristics that whites used to describe enslaved people in New England.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
3. How did enslaved people resist slavery?
4. Enslaved people in New England did not all live in the same place. Where did most enslaved people live?
5. Name five jobs enslaved people did in towns, and three that they did on farms.

towns:	farms:
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	
5.	
6. Why was it difficult for enslaved people in New England to establish and maintain families?
7. By the end of the seventeenth century, many owners in New England—of all faiths— thought of _____ of their slaves as a _____.

Name: _____

8. What central belief did Quakers hold?

9. What arguments did some Quakers use to continue owning slaves after the Yearly Meeting of Friends denounced the practice?

10. What new ideas did the Revolution bring to people's minds? Name three.
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

11. Why did some enslaved people fight for the British during the Revolution?

12. How did the Revolutionary War help some enslaved people to gain freedom? Explain two ways.
 - a.

 - b.

13. Many people thought that because of _____, blacks would be happier in _____.

14. Many New Englanders shifted away from acceptance of slavery in the late 1700s. Why do you think people changed their minds?

Advanced Study Guide—Part II

1. How did white New Englanders' views of slaves and slavery differ from those of black New Englanders?
2. Describe the impact of enslaved people's jobs on the economy of colonial New England.
3. How did enslaved people overcome difficulties to establish families and communities?
4. How did Quakers influence the abolition movement?
5. How did the revolutionary rhetoric propel the issue of slavery into everyday conversation in the North?
6. Why did some blacks advocate African colonization?
7. Many New Englanders shifted away from acceptance of slavery in the late 1700s. Why do you think people changed their minds? In general, why do you think societies change?

Enslaved People's Experiences 1—Phillis Wheatley

Introduction: Phillis Wheatley was stolen from her home in West Africa and taken to Boston in 1761, where she was purchased by John Wheatley. Mr. Wheatley had originally bought Phillis Wheatley with the idea that she would become a servant for his wife, Susannah, but that never happened.

As it turned out, Phillis learned English quickly and began right away to read the Bible. The Wheatleys recognized her intelligence and because she was also of very poor health, they never trained her as a servant. Instead, the couple encouraged Phillis to take up academic subjects, such as religion and literature.

In 1767, Phillis Wheatley published her first poem. Six years later, Wheatley became the first African American, the first enslaved person, and the third woman in the United States to publish her own poetry book. She titled it *Poems on Various Subjects*.

The same year that her book was released, Wheatley was released from slavery by her owners. With her emancipation, she immediately began to travel in order to promote her book and even went as far as London. She drew international attention and world leaders and writers recognized her work.

Eventually, Wheatley settled with a free black Boston man, John Peters, and the two were married in 1778. She was not able to find a publisher for her second book, and died in poverty in 1784.

Read the poem below and answer the questions which follow. Be prepared to share your group's findings with the class.

On Being Brought from Africa to America

'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
"Their colour is a diabolic die"
Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain,
May be resin'd and join th' angelic train.



Courtesy New York Public Library. Used with permission.

This portrait of Phillis Wheatley appeared in Paris in the early nineteenth century.

Questions:

1. What do you notice about the picture? Does it tell you anything about Phillis Wheatley?
2. What do you think the first line of the poem means? To what "Pagan land" is she referring? Why do you think she says mercy brought her from that land?
3. What do you think the line, "Their colour is a diabolic die" means? Who are the people who say this?
4. What do you think the point of this poem is? Who or what might have encouraged her to think this way?

Enslaved People's Experiences 2—Crispus Attucks

Introduction: Crispus Attucks was born into slavery around 1723 as the son of an African father and a Native American mother. He lived as a slave of William Brown, in Framingham, Massachusetts. He became known for his skill in buying and selling horses and cattle for his master.

In about 1750, Attucks apparently ran away from William Brown. An ad in the *Boston Gazette and Weekly Journal* sought his return to Framingham: “Ran away from his Master William Brown from Framingham, on the 30th of Sept. last, a Molatto Fellow, about 27 Years of age, named Crispas, 6 Feet two Inches high, short curl'd Hair, his Knees nearer together than common: had on a light colour'd Bearskin Coat.”

There is little known of the life of Crispus Attucks for the next twenty years. Historians speculate that he worked on whaling ships and as a rope maker around Boston.

In 1770, tension arose in Boston between British troops and American colonists. On March 5th, 1770, a group of American sailors and eight British soldiers took their hostility to the streets. Historians debate who was the instigator of the interaction, but there is little question that Crispus Attucks led the Americans. Attucks was the first killed by the British in the event that was later coined the Boston Massacre. Some consider it the first act of the American Revolution.

Many have proclaimed Crispus Attucks to be the first martyr for the American cause, while others have declared him to be a rabble-rousing villain. Still others consider him to be of no importance to American history.

Look at the two contemporary paintings of the Boston Massacre on the next page, one by Paul Revere and the other by John Bufford. Discuss the questions with your group and be prepared to share your responses with the class.

Questions:

1. Who was Crispus Attucks?
2. What are the major differences and similarities between the two images?
3. What part does Crispus Attucks play in each of the two images?
4. These two paintings of the same event tell us different stories about American history. How does the telling of history affect our understanding of events in the past?

Enslaved People's Experiences 2—Crispus Attacks



Courtesy of Archiving Early America. <http://earlyamerica.com>. Used with permission.

The Bloody Massacre, by Paul Revere.



Copy of chromolithograph Courtesy of The History Place (www.historyplace.com)

Boston Massacre, March 5, 1770, by John Bufford.

Enslaved People’s Experiences 3—Renaming

Introduction: Throughout the eighteenth century, most owners renamed the slaves they brought to the New World. This practice was a way for masters to assert control over their slaves and attempt to erase their previous identities. Even when slaves were bought and sold within the colonies, new masters would often give slaves new names in order to demonstrate how little the slaves’ previous lives mattered. There were various types of names slave owners often used, including the following:

Classical names, such as Jupiter, Caesar, Pharaoh: Masters used these types of names in order to display their social status. By renaming slaves after classical heroes, they demonstrated their own level of education—only the well-educated were familiar with classical names.

Place names: Slaves were occasionally named after the place they resided in the colonies, such as Newport, Bristol, or Boston.

Both place names and classical names were also commonly used for naming cattle. This shows how masters purposefully de-humanized slaves by putting them at the same level as their livestock.

Occupational names: Masters also named slaves after whatever work they were involved in, such as Handsaw, which demonstrates that masters associated their slaves with their economic purposes rather than their personality.

Nicknames, such as Joe, Tom, Jenny, Peg: In eighteenth century society, using proper names showed respect, while shortened names, or nicknames, were used for children. The fact that slaves were often called by nicknames showed how little respect masters had for their slaves—of any age.

Many enslaved people rebelled against this renaming. Some slaves took ownership over their given names by naming their children the same thing, therefore attempting to take the power out of the master’s hand. Others used two first names—one African name in private and their given name only in their master’s presence. And still others refused to answer to their master’s assigned name. These enslaved people kept their original African names, such as Cudjo, Cuff, Mingo, and Bina.

The chart below shows the percentage of enslaved people in Narragansett, Rhode Island who were given each type of name described above. Using the information above and the chart below, discuss the questions in your group. Be prepared to share your conclusions with the class.

Enslaved People’s Names in Narragansett, Rhode Island

	1692-1724	1725-1749	1750-1774	1775-1799	Total
Classical names	13%	9%	9%	13%	10%
Place names	—	4%	6%	7%	5%
Occupational names	—	1%	—	2%	1%
Nicknames	31%	32%	23%	18%	25%

data from Fitts, Robert K. *Inventing New England’s Slave Paradise: Master/Slave Relations in Eighteenth Century Narragansett, Rhode Island.*

Questions

1. Why are names important to a person’s identity? What do names symbolize?
2. Why would masters rename slaves?
3. How did enslaved people rebel against their masters’ forced names?
4. Why would rebellion have been risky?
5. Why might it have been worth the risk?

Enslaved People's Experiences 4—Runaway Ads

Introduction: Below are examples of two ads placed in newspapers for runaway slaves, and a small poster ad placed in Newport seeking the return of a slave. Two of the ads were placed by masters of runaway slaves, the other by a person who captured a runaway slave and who was looking for his owner. Several of these types of ads appeared each month in the newspapers in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and colonies further south. Read the questions with your groupmates and be prepared to share your responses with the class.

Date: 7.11.1763 Master: James Richardson Source: *Newport Mercury*

Runaway from James Richardson of Stonington, Connecticut, a mulatto servant man named Joseph Smith alias Joseph Mingore passes as a soldier. He says that he was brought up with Stephen Cottril of South Kingstown is about 6 feet high, 24 years old, much pock-broken, talks good English. Had when he ran away 2 suits of broad cloth clothes: 1 blue, 1 a light color; red waistcoat; calico waistcoat; dussil great coat; pair buckskin breeches; and a leather jockey-hat. 10 dollar reward.

Date: 10.17.1767 Master: Unknown Source: *Providence Gazette*

Taken up strolling in Warwick, a runaway slave Negro male, thirty-nine years old, five feet ten inches tall. Talks in broken English. Had on old blue great coat, old leather breeches, grey yarn stockings, a linen shirt and cap, and a small felt hat. He is much cut and marked on each side of his face. Found him on October Third.



Questions

1. How are the enslaved people described in these ads?
2. In what ways do these ads demonstrate that slaves were treated as property?
3. Why do the ads mention the slave's level of English? Why might a slave not be fluent in English?
4. What does the advertisement for a "found" slave tell us about the values of the society at that time?
6. How would a person who "found" a slave know he or she was a slave?
7. How are the enslaved people described physically? What might that tell us about the slaves' masters or the slaves themselves?
8. Why would an enslaved person run away? What risks might be involved?

Enslaved People’s Experiences 5—Newport Gardner

Introduction: Occramer Marycoo, commonly known as Newport Gardner, was fourteen years old when he was taken from his home in West Africa and brought to Newport, Rhode Island. Stories passed on through generations, called oral traditions, have maintained that he was given up by his mother only on the condition that he be taken to America in order to receive an education, as he was remarkably intelligent. The captain of the ship who had made this promise sold the young scholar into slavery upon arrival in Newport. The boy was bought by Caleb Gardner, whose wife became impressed by his intelligence and as a result, did in fact give him an education.

The young Newport impressed everyone by his ability to learn both French and English while still retaining his native language. One of his teachers introduced Newport to Western music and soon Newport Gardner, still an enslaved person, became a distinguished musician and composer—he even began to teach white students from Newport. When, in 1780, the Free African Union Society of Newport was established, he became the first teacher of their school for blacks.

Newport Gardner also became a supporter of sending Africans back to Africa, called repatriation, and believed strongly in the need to spread Christianity through his homeland. Eventually, after purchasing his freedom and earning a living from teaching music for many years, Newport Gardner returned to Africa.

Discuss the questions below with your group. Be prepared to share your responses with the class.

Questions

1. Who was Newport Gardner?
2. What strikes you about the story of his life?
3. Does Gardner fit into your image of what enslaved people’s experiences were like?
Why or why not?
4. Why would Gardner think it important to spread Christianity through Africa?
5. Why do you think Gardner wanted to return to Africa?

Crooked Shanks, by Newport Gardner



Image courtesy of the Newport Historical Society

Enslaved People's Experiences 6—Homes in Newport

Introduction: On the following page are images of three houses in Newport, Rhode Island which were homes to enslaved people. Enslaved people most likely lived in the attics or garrets of these homes. Look carefully at the images and then discuss the questions with your group. Be prepared to report your findings to the class.

Questions

1. Describe the homes where enslaved people lived.
2. How do these images of where enslaved people lived in Newport differ from how you normally think of enslaved people's quarters? How are they similar?
3. How might enslaved New Englanders' lives have been different, based on their living situations, from enslaved people's lives in the South?
4. Do you think living so close to their masters made their lives harder or easier? Why?
5. Do these images change your view of slavery in New England? If so, how?

Enslaved People's Experiences 6—Homes in Newport

The Vernon House (*right*) was owned by William Vernon and his son Samuel. All told, the Vernons were involved in thirty-four slave trading voyages and had part ownership in twenty slave ships. They also owned ten slaves who are likely to have lived in the garret.

The Mawdsley House (*bottom right*) was purchased by Caleb Gardner following John Mawdsley's death. Caleb Gardner owned Newport Gardner. Both the Mawdsley and Gardner slaves are presumed to have lived in the garret.

The Rivera House (*bottom left*) was owned by Jacob Rodriguez Rivera, who, with his son-in-law Aaron Lopez, invested in many slave-trading voyages. In 1774 twelve slaves lived here, some in the attic.

Images courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.



Enslaved People's Experiences 7—Gravestones

Introduction: On the following page are photographs from a burial ground for free and enslaved people in Newport, Rhode Island. Dozens of gravemarkers still exist, which help historians and other citizens to understand the lives of blacks in Newport. In fact, this burial ground is the oldest and perhaps the largest burial ground for blacks in the country. Many of the graves in this cemetery were carved by Zingo (Pompey) Stevens, who was an enslaved person who worked in the John Stevens stone shop. Many historians consider Stevens to have been the first black folk artist in the United States.

Violet Hammond, the first stone on the next page, was married to a man from the “Cape Coast” of Africa. Juber Tillinghast, the middle stone, was born in Africa and owned by a Rhode Island governor. Silva Gardner, the child described in the right-hand stone, was born free to former slaves. Note that these stones have intricate carvings on them. Not all stones—particularly those for slaves—did. Discuss the questions below with your group, and be able to report your findings back to the class. More of the gravestones can be viewed at <http://colonialcemetery.com>.

Questions

1. Describe the gravestones.
2. Describe the facial characteristics on the gravestones.
3. What do the gravestones say? Who were they for?
4. What can we learn about the lives of the enslaved and free people of color buried in this cemetery, based on what the gravestones look like?
5. Are they different than what you expected gravestones of enslaved and free people of color to be? Explain.

Enslaved People's Experiences 7—Gravestones



IN MEMORY OF
 VIOLET
 HAMMOND the
 Wife of CAPE-
 COAST JAMES
 who died Sep
 the 3rd 1772
 aged 26 Years

In Memory of
 JUBER TILLING
 HAST who
 died May 16th
 1773 Aged
 about 50
 Years



In Memory of
 Silva, daughter of
 Newport Gardner,
 & Limas his Wife,
 who died Aug. 18th
 1784 aged 16 mon.
 & 16 Days

Images in the collection of Keith and Theresa Stokes. Used with permission.

Role Playing the Four Options: Organization and Preparation

Objectives:

Students will: Analyze the issues that framed the 1783-84 debate in Rhode Island about the future of slavery.

Identify the core assumptions underlying the options.

Integrate the arguments and beliefs of the options into a persuasive, coherent presentation.

Work cooperatively within groups to organize effective presentations.

Required Reading:

Students should have read “Winter 1783: Rhode Island’s Moment of Decision” in the student text (page 20) and “Options in Brief” (page 21).

Handouts:

“Presenting Your Option” (TRB-30) for option groups

Options from student text (pages 22-32), one option for each group

“Townsppeople” (TRB 31-33) for remaining students

In the Classroom:

1. Planning for Group Work—In order to save time in the classroom, form student groups before beginning Day Three. During the class period, students will be preparing for the Day Four simulation. Remind them to incorporate the background reading into their presentations and questions.

2a. Option Groups—Form four groups of four to five students each. Assign an option to each group. Inform students that each option group will be called upon on Day Four to present the case for its assigned option to the townsfolk. Explain that the option groups should follow the instructions in “Presenting Your Option.” Note that the option groups should begin by assigning each member a role (students may double up).

2b. Townsppeople—Distribute “Townsppeople” to the remaining students. All the characters described were real people. While the options groups are preparing their presentations, these students should develop cross-examination questions for Day Four. Remind these students that they are expected to turn in their questions at the end of the simulation.

Suggestion:

Ask the option groups to design a poster illustrating the best case for their options.

Ask students playing townsppeople to write a journal entry describing their approach to the question of slavery and the slave trade before working together to design questions for the option groups.

Homework:

Students should complete preparations for the simulation.

Note:

Option 3 has significantly more primary sources as more people at the time were writing about this option. You may want to discuss with students why people might be more likely to write about some options than others. Because more people wrote or spoke publicly to challenge prevailing opinion, there are more resources available for Option 3 than other options. Those who supported Option 1 were less likely to feel the need to share their thoughts in public, since they sought no change to the system. Option 4 represented a smaller group of people, so there are fewer sources.

Blacks are referred to as “African” in the options descriptions as was common at the time. Many of the primary sources use the term “Negro” as well.

Presenting Your Option

The Setting: It is February, 1784. The state of Rhode Island is considering a bill to allow gradual emancipation of the slaves in Rhode Island, with the long-term effect of ending slavery in the state. People in Rhode Island, both slaves and free people alike, have been talking about this subject recently.

Your Assignment: Your group represents one of four factions that has evolved during the past several months. Your assignment is to persuade the townspeople that your option is the best for the state of Rhode Island. On Day Four, your group will be called upon to present a persuasive three-to-five minute summary of your option to the townspeople. You will be judged on how well you present your option. This worksheet will help you prepare.

Organizing Your Group: Each member of your group will take a specific role. Below is a brief explanation of the responsibility of each role. Before preparing your sections of the presentation, work together to address the questions below. The **group director** is responsible for organizing the presentation of your group's option to the townspeople. The **historian** is responsible for explaining why your option is most appropriate in light of the history of Rhode Island and of New England. The **economist** is responsible for explaining why your option takes Rhode Island in the most prudent economic direction. The **spiritual advisor** is responsible for explaining why your group's option offers the best route in terms of moral and spiritual matters.

Consider the following questions as you prepare your presentation:

1. What will be the impact of your option on the Rhode Island economy?
2. What does your option say should be the relationship between blacks and whites?
3. How will your option define what it is to be an American citizen?
4. What values lie at the root of your option?

Townspeople

Your Role: As a person living in or near Rhode Island, you have a stake in the outcome of this decision. Whether or not Rhode Island continues to accept slavery and the slave trade will affect the economy of the state and will contribute to our understanding of the definition of citizen in our new country. Your opinion is important to the discussion.

Your Assignment: While the four option groups are organizing their presentations, each of you should prepare two questions regarding each of the options. The questions should reflect the values, concerns, and interests of your character. Your teacher will collect these questions at the end of Day Four.

Your questions should be challenging and critical. For example, a good question for Option 3 from Esek Hopkins might be:

How can we, who fought a war to protect property rights from a tyrannical government, accept a government plan to remove our property from us?

On Day Four, the four option groups will present their positions. After their presentations are completed, your teacher will call on you and the other townspeople to ask questions. The “Evaluation Form” you will receive is designed for you to record your impressions of the options. After this activity is concluded, you and your classmates may be called upon to tell the legislature what you think they should do.

Abigail: In 1779, when the British were raiding Connecticut’s shores and burning towns, your master and his family loaded up their belongings into wagons to move to a safer area. Taking advantage of the disruption, you loaded your children into another wagon and took them to a different place. Although your master tried to reclaim you several times, you maintained your status as a free black woman. In fact, in 1781, a South Carolina slave-holder bought you by claiming to be from Connecticut, and tried to steal you south. While you

had agreed to move to Connecticut, you did not wish to move south, so you escaped. Later that year your case came before the Connecticut legislature and a law was passed as a result that prevented slaves from being sold out of state.

John Brown: You have advocated the legality and righteousness of the African slave trade since the 1760s. For you, the trade is a matter of property rights and free trade—and the freedom to do whatever you want. After your brothers stopped sending ships to Africa, you continued. You think government should stay out of regulation of private businesses, regulation which limits the freedom of individuals. You believe it is unfair to deny Americans the benefits of a trade which is allowed Europeans, and morally wrong to leave Africans in Africa, because bringing them to the Caribbean or the United States will improve their condition. Additionally, you believe that the trade is a financially prudent activity and assists the United States Treasury.

Moses Brown: After your wife Anna’s death in 1773 you became a Quaker and began a lengthy anti-slavery effort. You believe Anna’s death was a punishment for your previous slave-trading and owning years, and you freed your slaves when she died. Since then you have been working to end slavery in Rhode Island. The bill now before the legislature was partly written by you. Slavery, in your mind, is ungodly and goes against the rights of man as newly laid out in the Declaration of Independence. You believe black people need help to become full and useful members of society, and it is your duty as an educated and powerful person to assist them.

Paul Cuffe: Half black and half Indian, you are a Quaker. Your father was a slave who was freed, and you were born in Massachusetts in 1759. Your father had purchased a considerable amount of land, but it was not productive

enough to support your family. You therefore started to work on whaling vessels and you have worked your way up since then, earning good money on boats. You believe that blacks and whites will never be able to live together in peace in this country.

Mark Anthony DeWolf: You have been a slave ship captain since 1769. In the last ten years you have been instructing your son in the tricks of the trade and have taken him along on at least seven voyages. You sail these ships from Bristol, Rhode Island to the coast of Africa and then to Cuba, where you own a plantation. The plantation grows sugar cane, which you eventually turn in to rum in your distillery in Bristol. The rum then goes back to Africa to be traded for slaves. You plan to accumulate great wealth in this business, and think that the idea of emancipating slaves or prohibiting the slave trade would hinder the progress of your family and of Bristol. It appears to you that your son James has particular aptitude for slave voyages.

Margaret (Peggy) Harrison: A former slave of Moses Brown, you attended church with him and continued to be a member of the Baptist church after Moses converted to Quakerism and freed you in 1774. You recently moved to Boston but keep in regular touch with Moses. Despite your freedom, you always address your letters to him “Dear Master.” As a devout Christian, you follow the guidelines of servitude and believe that hardship is a part of life that must be endured, not overcome.

Levi Hart: You are a member of the clergy in nearby Connecticut. You communicate frequently with people in Rhode Island. You believe slavery is a violation of natural law, but that freeing slaves without compensating their masters or providing for the slaves’ welfare would be unfair. You believe that the entire community—those who have owned slaves and those who have not—are guilty of participation in slavery because the elected legislature allowed it. Therefore the government should compensate the owners of slaves

for the work that would be lost to owners when the slaves were freed. You also believe that the community will have a responsibility to support and assist former slaves once they become free, because slavery breaks the spirit.

Lemuel Haynes: The son of a white mother and a black father, you were abandoned as an infant. A few months later you were bound to service until the age of twenty-one to a man in Connecticut. Following your service you entered the militia to fight in the Revolution. Later, you trained to become a minister and preached in a white congregation in southwestern Massachusetts. You greatly admired George Washington and the ideals for which he fought. In 1776, you wrote a manuscript in which you condemned slavery and noted the irony of slave-holders’ fights for freedom from Britain when they did not provide it to others.

Esek Hopkins: A white Providence native, brother of Governor Stephen Hopkins, you were Commander-in-Chief of the continental navy during the Revolution. Before that, you were a sea captain who took many voyages on behalf of the Brown family business. You are skilled in the West Indies trade which brings tobacco, candles, lumber, fish, farm goods, and animals to the West Indies in exchange for molasses and indigo. The brothers entrusted you with much responsibility for purchase and trade and you proved reliable and loyal. Because of their trust in you, the Browns chose you as Captain of the *Sally* against the advice of more experienced slave traders who advised against sending a captain who had no experience in the Guinea trade.

Stephen Hopkins: At seventy-six, you have had a long career in public service. You have been a governor of Rhode Island, a member of the Continental Congress, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. A descendant of Benedict Arnold, you were one of the earliest to protest British actions to limit the colonies’ rights before the war. You helped to found the *Providence Gazette*, and were the first chancellor of Rhode Island College, which

Name: _____

was founded in 1764. In 1773, you freed your slaves and supported the measure in the Rhode Island legislature a year later to ban the importation of slaves into the colony.

Cesar Lyndon: You are the slave to Mary Lyndon, widow of the former governor of Rhode Island. When your master was alive you served as his secretary and clerk. You are a very good manager and investor. You earn money and spend it on extravagant and beautiful things like ivory-handled knives, silver, and china. You have many friends in the area, both slaves and free blacks, and you enjoy entertaining when you can. You are very careful to respect the hierarchical system of slavery and always sign letters with such words as “your obedient servant.” You believe that continued work will gain you your freedom.

Sarah Osborne: Devoted to Scripture, you pray for several hours a day and believe in predestination. You live in Newport, Rhode Island, and you run religious services for slaves and free blacks with your friend Susanna Anthony. Normally it would be unheard of for a woman to preach publicly, but since, as you’ve said, “the servants appear to me no otherwise...than children,” you are generally left alone to attend to the religious and spiritual needs of the blacks in your community. Your own slave’s mother attends your services. You believe in the concept of a strict social order and do not wish to disrupt the norm. While slaves appreciate the opportunity you provide them to meet together as they are often isolated in households, you require them to ask their masters’ permission to attend.

Venture Smith: Born in West Africa, you were brought to America when you were about seven years old. You have been bought and sold three times in New England and New York, and in the interim have married and had several children. While with your third master you were able to hire yourself out on occasion and earn money to put toward your freedom. It took many years to free yourself (you were thirty-six when you gained your freedom), your wife, your children, and two other acquaintances. You have since been fortunate to gain some wealth and land in Connecticut, but have been treated poorly and unjustly several times by both blacks and whites. You resent having had to buy your freedom.

Lodowick Updike: Your family has lived on its three thousand-acre plantation in North Kingstown, Rhode Island, for three generations. You have had a dairy on the farm and you sell the cheese widely. The horses you breed, called Narragansett Pacers, are in demand in the West Indies and the Southern states. You also grow crops, including various grains which you both export to distant parts and use locally. Your land is divided up into several plots and managed by different people. You are one of the largest slave owners in the Narragansett area. During the Revolutionary War your son Daniel (one of eleven children) enlisted, though you were not a supporter of the war as it disrupted trade routes. You fear that a movement toward emancipation will cripple your farm, rid you and your family of its livelihood, and prevent Rhode Island from becoming prosperous in the future. Even now, heavy taxes on land have you worried about your ability to survive.

Role Playing the Four Options: Debate and Discussion

Objectives:

Students will: Analyze the issues that framed the 1784 debate in Rhode Island about the future of slavery in the new state.

Sharpen rhetorical skills through debate and discussion.

Cooperate with classmates in staging a persuasive presentation.

Handouts:

“Townspeople Evaluation Form” (TRB-35)

In the Classroom:

1. Setting the Stage—Organize the room so that the four option groups face a row of desks reserved for the townspeople.

2. Managing the Simulation—Explain that the simulation will begin with three-to-five minute presentations by each option group. Encourage all to speak clearly and convincingly.

3. Guiding Discussion—Following the presentations, invite townspeople to ask cross-examination questions. Make sure that each member of this group has an opportunity to ask at least one question. If time permits, encourage members of the option groups to challenge the positions of the other groups. During cross-examination, allow any member of the option group to respond. (As an alternative approach, permit cross-examination following the presentation of each option.) Finally, students may be interested in discussing why more primary sources are available for some options than others.

Homework:

Students should read the Epilogue in the student text (pages 33-39) and complete the “Study Guide—Epilogue” (TRB 37-38) or the “Advanced Study Guide—Epilogue” (TRB-39).

Name: _____

Townspeople Evaluation Form

Instructions: Answer the questions below following the simulation.

1. According to each option, what should the legislature do?

Option 1:

Option 2:

Option 3:

Option 4:

2. According to each option, what should be the relationship between blacks and whites?

Option 1:

Option 2:

Option 3:

Option 4:

3. According to each option, what effect would emancipation have on Rhode Island's economy?

Option 1:

Option 2:

Option 3:

Option 4:

4. Which of the four options would your character support most strongly? Explain your reasoning.

Making History

Objectives:

Students will: Work in groups to design a museum exhibit.

Review concepts and facts presented in the background readings.

Reflect on the impact of New England slavery and how people think about it today.

Required Reading:

Students should have read “Epilogue” in the student text (pages 33-39) and completed “Study Guide—Epilogue” in the Teacher Resource Book (TRB 37-38) or “Advanced Study Guide” (TRB-39).

Handout:

“Designing a Museum Exhibit” (TRB-40)

In the Classroom:

1. Initial Discussion—Write the following focus question on the board: What are museums for? Ask students to think about the nature of museums. What kinds of events or people are displayed in museums? Are there museums they can think of that they like to visit? When students consider New England slavery, why would it be important to share that topic with the wider public? Or is a museum about this topic necessary at all? Why haven’t there been museums focused on learning this history?

2. Introducing the Topic—Divide students into groups of three or four. Students will be constructing a plan for a museum exhibit on New England slavery and/or the Atlantic slave trade. You may wish to assign students to groups based on interest or skill so that each

group has a balance of different skills and talents. Distribute the handout.

3. Designing a Museum—Ask students to begin the process of designing their exhibits. (See the handout for questions for students to consider.) You may wish to provide extra time for this activity. If that is not available, the discussion of the questions alone is also valuable.

4. Debriefing—After students have designed their museum exhibits, spend some time discussing the experience and the questions raised. It might be important for your students to consider how their new knowledge of this history can apply to other historical and current issues and topics.

Suggestions:

Provide students with concrete parameters for the museum, such as space allowance. If you are able, have students actually create their exhibits and display them in school or elsewhere in the community.

Ask students to write “gallery guides,” explanatory text, or an introduction and conclusion to the exhibit that would be included in the exhibit display.

Ask students to create an “artist’s statement” that explains the choices they made while designing the exhibit.

Think about the product you wish students to create. If students cannot create an actual exhibit, what will they turn in? A poster? blueprint? narrative? performance or presentation of some kind?

Additional resources—books, websites, and films—for students are available at <http://www.choices.edu/slavery/cfm>.

Study Guide—Epilogue

1. The Rhode Island bill passed in 1784 said all black _____ born after _____, 1784 would spend _____ supported by their mothers' masters. Thereafter, the costs would be the responsibility of individual _____ until boys turned _____ and girls turned _____.
2. In 1820, there were _____ enslaved people living in New England.
3. In what year was slavery abolished in Rhode Island?
4. _____ percent of the ships that left Rhode Island for the Atlantic slave trade between _____ and _____ did so _____ Rhode Island abolished the trade.
5. Why did the British government call for an end to slave trading in 1808?
6.
 - a. Why did many free blacks move to cities at the turn of the nineteenth century?
 - b. Give five examples of jobs blacks held in cities.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
7. Who was Paul Cuffe? What action did he advocate for blacks?

8. How did many Northern whites view their Southern counterparts in the nineteenth century?
9. Give three pieces of evidence to support the idea that blacks were discriminated against in the nineteenth century.
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
10. What types of organizations did blacks create to dispel white racism? Give three examples.
- a.
 - b.
 - c.
11. The dedication of many _____ blacks led them to believe that the coming _____ between the _____ and the _____ was a way for the country finally to fulfill its _____.

Advanced Study Guide—Epilogue

1. Why might Rhode Island have voted to gradually emancipate its enslaved people, but not to end the slave trade in 1784? What might have changed so that in 1787 Rhode Island was the first state to abolish the trade?
2. Offer an explanation as to why slave trading would increase after such activities were outlawed.
3. Some historians say that Rhode Island and other Northern states were still heavily supportive of the institution of slavery after abolition in the North. Why?
4. What measures did Britain take to abolish the slave trade?
5. Describe the economic conditions for free blacks in the nineteenth century.
6. What arguments did many blacks give against the ACS?
7. Why do some historians say that racism in the North was partly a product of forgetting history?

Designing a Museum Exhibit

Introduction: Museums exist to educate people about a period in history, a type of art or science, an event, or a group of people, among other things. Museum curators have to consider many factors and ideas when designing their museum exhibits. They need to think about what specific topics they want to share with the public among all the choices they have, what kind of space they have available, and who will come to see the exhibits.

If you have visited a museum, think about what makes you want to return to specific exhibits. If you have not been to a museum, what would make you want to go? Is it the topics that interest you? The layout or design of the exhibit? The interactive nature of it? Questions you might want answered? Conversely, what types of things prevent you from enjoying a museum exhibit?

Your group will design a museum exhibit based on what you learned about New England slavery and/or the slave trade. Your teacher may assign additional parameters. When thinking about your exhibit, be creative. Go beyond the idea of a painting on a wall. Use the talent your groupmates bring in order to develop creative ideas. Think about the following questions with your group as you plan your exhibit.

Questions to consider:

1. What specific information or topic will go into your museum? For instance, you might start by thinking about a particular event, a place, or a person. What will you leave out?
2. Does your group have a particular point of view or a bias about what story should be told in your exhibit? Does that matter? How will you address that? Will you make it known to your audience that you have a point of view?
3. How will your exhibit be organized? What documents, portraits, artifacts, stories, etc. do you want to include? How will you arrange them?
4. How will you make your exhibit interesting? What lighting, sound, performance, or multimedia will you include, if any? What will the exhibit look like?
5. How will you introduce and conclude the exhibit? What do you want visitors to take away from their visit? Why is it important to learn about New England slavery and the slave trade?
6. What kind of space will you use? Do you imagine something the size of your classroom? A whole building? A single table or wall space?
7. How will you get your visitors to think reflectively about slavery and the slave trade?
8. Think about the implications of your exhibit. For instance, you know from the reading that a lot of information exists about slave ship captains but there is little about individual slaves on those ships. How do you represent different perspectives in your exhibit? What might it mean to represent one and not others?
9. Who will be the audience for your exhibit? Who will visit? How should you adjust the exhibit to draw different people to visit it?

Key Terms

Introduction and Part I

colonies	mercantilism
transatlantic	sea-borne commerce
global industry	trafficking
commercial farming	distilling
plantation colonies	financial risks
indentured servants	purchase price
fleet	invest
abolition	servitude

Part II

subsistence economy	coopers
servitude	manumission
indentured	bondage
prejudice	bond
discrimination	remonstrance
degraded	emancipation
confrontation	compensation
subversive	duties
plight	compensate
artisans	petitioned

Epilogue

gradual emancipation
 customs district
 suppression
 subordination
 repatriation
 exclusionary
 segregated
 integrated
 disenfranchised
 racism

Issues Toolbox

Federalism

At the time of the Constitutional Convention, Federalism was the advocacy for a stronger system of national government. While delegates to the Constitutional Convention agreed that this was necessary, the division of powers and responsibilities between the national government and the state governments was no simple task. Delegates eventually agreed on four broad principles. First, all laws passed by the federal government would apply equally to every citizen within the union. Second, certain powers were the responsibility of the federal government. These powers included the ability to print money, to regulate commerce with foreign nations, and to raise and support a military. Third, powers that were not assigned to the federal government or prohibited to the states were reserved to the states or the people. These powers of the states came to be known as the reserved powers. Fourth, certain powers needed to be shared by the federal government and state government. These included court systems and police forces. Thus both federal and state laws could apply to slave trading and slave holding.

Mercantilism

Mercantilism is the theory that money is what makes a nation powerful. This theory led European nations from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century to view their colonies as a source of income. Mercantilism helped to provide European countries with a favorable trade balance. England passed laws based on this theory that prevented colonists in the Americas from trading with other countries or from manufacturing goods of their own. Such

laws built up the wealth of mother countries, though often with the effect of alienating or angering colonists. In the British colonies of North America, mercantilist laws were circumvented by widespread smuggling.

Race

The idea that humans are divided into biologically distinct “races” that are identifiable by physical characteristics and innate behaviors is challenged by historians and anthropologists. Scholars today refer to the term “race” as the meanings that have been given to physical and cultural differences at particular historical moments. The concept of distinct and unchanging “races” did not become common in the United States until the late eighteenth century. Until that time, the physical differences and behaviors associated with particular groups were believed to result from the distinctive climates, foods, and cultural practices associated with their geographic origins. While physical and behavioral characteristics were understood to be inherited at least in part, it was also believed that over long periods of time in new environments, these characteristics could change. By the late eighteenth century, this “environmental” explanation of difference had given way to the idea that “races” have distinct, innate, and unchanging differences. The concept of “race” emerged in part out of new scientific beliefs that all natural phenomena could be organized into fixed categories. Another factor was the desire of Anglo-Europeans to distinguish themselves as citizens from the growing numbers of free people of color in the new American nation.

Making Choices Work in Your Classroom

This section of the Teacher Resource Book offers suggestions for teachers as they adapt Choices curricula to their classrooms. They are drawn from the experiences of teachers who have used Choices curricula successfully in their classrooms and from educational research on student-centered instruction.

Managing the Choices Simulation

Recognize Time Limitations: At the heart of the Choices approach is the role-play simulation in which students advocate different options, question each other, and debate. Just as thoughtful preparation is necessary to set the stage for cooperative group learning, careful planning for the presentations and debate can increase the effectiveness of the simulation. Time is the essential ingredient to keep in mind. A minimum of 45 to 50 minutes is necessary for the presentations and debate. Hence, if only one class period is available, student groups must be ready as soon as class begins. Teachers who have been able to schedule a double period or extend the length of class to one hour report that the extra time is beneficial. When necessary, the role-play simulation can be run over two days, but this disrupts the momentum of the debate. The best strategy for managing the role-play is to establish and enforce strict time limits, such as five minutes for each option presentation, ten minutes for questions and challenges, and the final five minutes of class for wrapping up the debate. It is crucial to make students aware of strict time limits as they prepare their presentations.

Adjusting for Large and Small Classes

Choices units are designed for an average class of twenty-five students. In larger classes, additional roles, such as those of newspaper reporter or member of a special interest group, can be assigned to increase student participation in the simulation. With larger option groups, additional tasks might be to create a

poster, political cartoon, or public service announcement that represents the viewpoint of an option. In smaller classes, the teacher can serve as the moderator of the debate, and administrators, parents, or faculty can be invited to play the roles of congressional leaders. Another option is to combine two small classes.

Assessing Student Achievement

Grading Group Assignments: Research suggests that it is counterproductive to give students individual grades on cooperative group assignments. A significant part of the assignment given to the group is to cooperate in achieving a common goal, as opposed to looking out for individual interests. Telling students in advance that the group will receive one grade often motivates group members to hold each other accountable. This can foster group cohesion and lead to better group results. It may be useful to note that in addition to the cooperative group assignments, students complete individual assignments as well in every Choices unit. The “Assessment Guide for Oral Presentations” on the following page is designed to help teachers evaluate group presentations.

Requiring Self-Evaluation: Having students complete self-evaluations is an extremely effective way to make them think about their own learning. Self-evaluations can take many forms and are useful in a variety of circumstances. They are particularly helpful in getting students to think constructively about group collaboration. In developing a self-evaluation tool for students, teachers need to pose clear and direct questions to students. Two key benefits of student self-evaluation are that it involves students in the assessment process, and that it provides teachers with valuable insights into the contributions of individual students and the dynamics of different groups. These insights can help teachers to organize groups for future cooperative assignments.

Testing: In a formal evaluation of the Choices approach, it was demonstrated that students using Choices learned the factual information presented as well as or better than students who were taught in a more traditional lecture-discussion format. However, the larger benefits of the Choices approach were evident when students using Choices demonstrated significantly higher ability to think critically, analyze multiple perspectives, and articulate original viewpoints, compared to students who did not use this approach. Teachers

should hold students accountable for learning historical information, concepts, and current events presented in Choices units. However, a simple multiple-choice examination will not allow students to demonstrate the critical thinking and communication skills developed through the Choices unit. If teachers choose to test students, they may wish to explore new models of test design that require students to do more than recognize correct answers. Tests should not replace the development of student options.

Assessment Guide for Oral Presentations

Group assignment: _____

Group members: _____

Group Assessment	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Needs Improvement</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>
1. The group made good use of its preparation time	5	4	3	2	1
2. The presentation reflected analysis of the issues under consideration	5	4	3	2	1
3. The presentation was coherent and persuasive	5	4	3	2	1
4. The group incorporated relevant sections of the background reading into its presentation	5	4	3	2	1
5. The group's presenters spoke clearly, maintained eye contact, and made an effort to hold the attention of their audience	5	4	3	2	1
6. The presentation incorporated contributions from all the members of the group	5	4	3	2	1
 Individual Assessment					
1. The student cooperated with other group members	5	4	3	2	1
2. The student was well-prepared to meet his or her responsibilities	5	4	3	2	1
3. The student made a significant contribution to the group's presentation	5	4	3	2	1

Alternative Three-Day Lesson Plan

Day 1:

See Day Two of the Suggested Five-Day Lesson Plan.

Homework (before the lesson): Students should read “Part II: Slavery and Abolitionism in New England.”

Homework: Students should read “Winter 1783: Rhode Island’s Moment of Decision.”

Day 2:

Assign each student one of the four options, and allow students a few minutes to familiarize themselves with the mindsets of the options. Call on students to evaluate the benefits and trade-offs of their assigned options. How do the options differ? What are their assumptions about the impact of emancipation on Rhode Island?

Homework: Students should read the “Epilogue.”

Day 3:

See Day Five of the Suggested Five-Day Lesson Plan.

Our units are always up to date.

Are yours?

Our world is constantly changing.

So CHOICES continually reviews and updates our classroom units to keep pace with the changes in our world; and as new challenges and questions arise, we're developing new units to address them.

And while history may never change, our knowledge and understanding of it are constantly changing. So even our units addressing "moments" in history undergo a continual process of revision and reinterpretation.

If you've been using the same CHOICES units for two or more years, now is the time to visit our website - learn whether your units have been updated and see what new units have been added to our catalog.

CHOICES currently has units addressing the following:

U.S. Role in a Changing World ■ Immigration ■ Terrorism
Genocide ■ Foreign Aid ■ Trade ■ Environment
Middle East ■ Russia ■ South Africa
India & Pakistan ■ Brazil's Transition ■ Mexico
Colonialism in Africa ■ Weimar Germany ■ China
U.S. Constitutional Convention
War of 1812 ■ Spanish American War ■ Hiroshima
League of Nations ■ Cuban Missile Crisis
Origins of the Cold War ■ Vietnam War

And watch for new units coming soon:

UN Reform ■ Nuclear Proliferation

THE CHOICES PROGRAM

Explore the Past... Shape the Future

History and Current Issues for the Classroom

Teacher sets (consisting of a student text and a teacher resource book) are available for \$15 each. Permission is granted to duplicate and distribute the student text and handouts for classroom use with appropriate credit given. Duplicates may not be resold. Classroom sets (15 or more student texts) may be ordered at \$7 per copy. A teacher resource book is included free with each classroom set. Orders should be addressed to:

Choices Education Program
Watson Institute for International Studies
Box 1948, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912

Please visit our website at <www.choices.edu>.



A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England

A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England explores New England's economic growth as a result of slavery and the slave trade during the colonial era, the experiences of enslaved people, and the attempts of Quakers and others to abolish slavery. Students examine the effects of slavery, emancipation, and historical memory on New England.

A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England is part of a continuing series on current and historical international issues published by the Choices for the 21st Century Education Program at Brown University. Choices materials place special emphasis on the importance of educating students in their participatory role as citizens.

THE CHOICES PROGRAM

Choices for the 21st Century Education Program
WATSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
BROWN UNIVERSITY, BOX 1948, PROVIDENCE, RI 02912
WWW.CHOICES.EDU