



## **What Was Work Life Like for Indentured Servants and Slaves in the South Before the Civil War? A Comparison/Contrast Exercise**

### **A Lesson-Plan Sequence for 8<sup>th</sup> Graders**

by

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#### **Georgia State Social Studies Standard**

SS8H2. The students will analyze the colonial period of Georgia's history.

- a. Explain the importance of James Oglethorpe, the Charter of 1732, reasons for settlement (charity, economics, and defense), Tomochichi, Mary Musgrove, and the city of Savannah.
- b. Evaluate the Trustee Period of Georgia's colonial history, emphasizing the role of the Salzburgers, Highland Scots, malcontents, and the Spanish threat from Florida.
- c. Explain the development of Georgia as a royal colony with regard to land ownership, slavery, government, and the impact of the royal governors.

#### **Lesson Plan Background**

The workforce of early colonial Georgia was crucial to the success of the colony. Early workers included indentured servants, Indians, and African slaves (after 1750). This lesson allows students to examine closely the costs, expectations, and realities of those who were indentured servants and slaves during this early colonial period. Using an indenture contract and slave bill of sale allows the students an opportunity to compare and contrast the two documents, as well as examine the actual contracts for those who were the colonial workforce. The primary source documents generate more student interest and active participation in the lesson. This lesson may take about two class periods to complete.

## **Suggested Sequence**

Brainstorm/discuss with students what type of work, jobs, and labor would be needed to create a successful, profitable colony. Ask students what specific kinds of jobs would need to be done and who would provide that type of colonial labor.

Using two texts (see Documents #1 and #2 below), have students read about the early use of indentured servants in Virginia and the introduction of African slaves into the workforce in Georgia. Discuss the pros and cons of each. Speculate and discuss with students the differences in the type of work an indentured servant or slave might do in Georgia as compared to work in Virginia.

Give students a copy of Document #3 (see link below), the “Contract of Indenture from Michael Gyger to Culcheth Golightly.” Have students examine the indenture and discuss the requirements for both parties bound by that indenture.

Next, give students a copy of a slave bill of sale (see Document #4 below) and “An Example of Slave Work in the South” (Document #5). Discuss the provisions and requirements of slavery (e.g., slave for life, property of the purchaser, works free, supplied shelter, food, and clothing).

Guide students in comparing and contrasting the different provisions of indenture and slavery. This can be done as a whole class activity, a group activity, or individual activity using Thinking Maps (Graphic Organizers). A Venn diagram or Double Bubble Map, which often works best.

## **Options for Concluding the Lesson**

Have students write a journal entry stating which system of labor they would use if they were a planter in the early colonial period. Ask students to be specific as to why they chose that system, how it would be a positive labor system for them, and what would they receive in return for using this labor force.

Put students in groups of 3 to 4 each and have them discuss the following question based upon their knowledge, examinations of documents, reading, and discussion of the early colonial labor force. Have them write down their answers as a group and share them with the class.

QUESTION: Why do you think that the system of using indentured servants for labor eventually ended in the colonial period, yet the use of slaves continued for many years?

Have students create an indenture contract for services to be rendered, or a slave bill of sale for the purchase of one or more slaves. (This activity can be assigned as a project or special assignment)

## Document #1

### **Indentured Servants in Colonial Virginia**

Contributed by Brendan Wolfe and Martha McCartney

Indentured servants were men and women who signed a contract (also known as an indenture or a covenant) by which they agreed to work for a certain number of years in exchange for transportation to **Virginia** and, once they arrived, food, clothing, and shelter. Adults usually served for four to seven years and children sometimes for much longer, with most working in the colony's **tobacco** fields. With a long history in England, indentured servitude became, during most of the seventeenth century, the primary means by which Virginia planters filled their nearly inexhaustible need for labor. At first, the **Virginia Company of London** paid to transport servants across the Atlantic, but with the institution of the “headright system” in 1618, the company enticed planters and merchants to incur the cost with the promise of land. As a result, servants flooded into the colony, where they were greeted by deadly diseases and often-harsh conditions that killed a majority of newcomers and left the rest to the mercy of sometimes cruel masters. The General Assembly passed laws regulating contract terms, as well as the behavior and treatment of servants. Besides benefiting masters with long indentures, these laws limited servant rights while still allowing servants to present any complaints in court. By the end of the seventeenth century, the number of new servants in Virginia had dwindled, and the colony's labor needs were largely met by enslaved Africans.

Source:

[http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/indentured\\_servants\\_in\\_colonial\\_virginia](http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/indentured_servants_in_colonial_virginia)

## Document #2

### **Slavery Banned**

General James Oglethorpe, the earl of Egmont, and the other [Trustees of Georgia] were not opposed to the enslavement of Africans as a matter of principle. They banned slavery in Georgia because it was inconsistent with their social and economic intentions. Given the Spanish presence in Florida, slavery also seemed certain to threaten the military security of the colony. Spain offered freedom in exchange for military service, so any slaves brought to Georgia could be expected to [seek their freedom by] help[ing] the Spanish in their efforts to destroy the still-fragile English colony.

### **Slavery Demanded**

Georgians' campaign to overturn the ban on slavery was soon under way and grew in intensity during the late 1730s. Its two most important leaders were a Lowland Scotsman named Patrick Tailfer and Thomas Stephens, the son of William Stephens, the Trustees' secretary in Georgia. They and their band of supporters bombarded the Trustees with letters and petitions demanding that slavery be permitted in Georgia. They also wrote pamphlets in which they set out their case in more detail.

### **Slavery Permitted**

The lifting of the Trustees' ban [on slavery in 1751] opened the way for Carolina planters to fulfill the dream of expanding their slave-based rice economy into the Georgia Lowcountry. The planters and their slaves flooded into Georgia and soon dominated the colony's government. In 1755 they replaced the slave code agreed to by the Trustees with one that was virtually identical to South Carolina's. This code was amended in 1765 and again in 1770.

### **Excerpts on the history of slavery in Georgia**

Source: <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/slavery-colonial-georgia>

### Document #3

## Contract of Indenture for Michael Gyger to Culchetch Golightly, January 1744

To view the Contract in the original, go to:

<http://www.teachingushistory.org/documents/Gyger.pdf>

### **Document Description:**

This document is a contract of indenture for a man, Michael Gyger, to Culchetch Golightly. The period of indenture is three years, during which time Gyger was to be obedient and faithful in all things. Documents like this are less common in South Carolina, as it relied more heavily on slave labor, rather than the labor of indentured men and women.

### **Source:**

Rutledge, Benjamin H. "Indenture of Michael Gyger to Culchetch Golightly, 1744." Benjamin H. Rutledge Family Papers 1675-1867. Call #1097.00. South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina.

Document #4

CHARLESTON, S. C., \_\_\_\_\_ 1864.

We have carefully examined the following named Slaves, furnished the Confederate States for service on the Coast, and estimate their value as follows:

NAME OF OWNER.	DISTRICT.	NAME OF SLAVE.	VALUE.
Mrs C. Crook	Greenville	Jerry	3100
		John	\$ 4000
		Polly	3500
		Saul	4200

Signed duplicates.

*A. B. Johnson*  
Adj't of the State.

*Thos P. Nipson*  
For Confederate Authorities.

*T. Nipson*  
For Owners.

(5)

Slave Bill of Sale, Charleston, S.C., 1864

Source: Located at <http://stampauctionnetwork.com/f/121/913.jpg>

## Document #6

### An Example of the Nature of Slave Work in the South

## Louisiana Slave to the Commander of the Department of the Gulf

New Orleans March 4 [1863]

To Your Honour Major General Banks I earnestly request of your honour to grant a hearing in behalf of myself an<sup>d</sup> husban<sup>d</sup>, My mistress has hired me out at the rate of ten dollars a month an<sup>d</sup> times are so dull that I proposed giving my ma<sup>d</sup>ame eight dollars a month she would not accept of it an<sup>d</sup> said I should come home an<sup>d</sup> she would find a place for me in the work house or in the parish prison where she has my husband Charley Jones for five months I have a son who is home with my ma<sup>d</sup>ame an<sup>d</sup> I dont want to go home but I am willing to pay a liberal price until so times get better So I entreat of your honour to look an<sup>d</sup> examine my case for I shall do whatever you a<sup>d</sup>vised me to do anything that is just an<sup>d</sup> right I earnestly request of you to ansure this an<sup>d</sup> lete me [*know*] what I should do for to releive my mind for I am afraid she may come an<sup>d</sup> deman<sup>d</sup> me an<sup>d</sup> take me to prison any moment when I am willing to give my ma<sup>d</sup>am a liberal amount for my time Receive this an<sup>d</sup> tele me what I shal do I remain your Obeden<sup>t</sup> Servant

Edith Jones

Edith Jones to Your Honour Major General Banks, 4 Mar. [1863], J-21 1863, Letters Received, series 1920, Civil Affairs, Department of the Gulf, U.S. Army Continental Commands, Record Group 393 Pt. 1, National Archives. No reply has been found in the letters-sent volumes of the Department of the Gulf.

Source: <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/EJones.html>