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AMERICAN HISTORY ACTIVATORS

**FIRST
AMERICANS
THROUGH
THE CONSTITUTION**



Brief, Engaging Historical Experiences

American History Activators

First Americans through the Constitution

By Bill Lacey





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Printed in the United States of America

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ISBN: 978-1-57596-449-2
e-book ISBN: 978-1-57596-450-8
Product Code: INT385 v1.0

Welcome to American History Activators

First Americans through the Constitution

Immerse students in living history as you introduce seven major milestones in American history. Whether used as lead-ins to upcoming lessons or as wrap-up activities, these mini-simulations provide your students with experiences that will shape their historical perceptions and positively enhance their understanding of past, current, and future events. Each of the seven units is brief, requires little preparation, and includes a ready-to-use lesson, background essay, narration, and postscript. Each unit concludes with a corresponding Common Core–based historical investigation activity, which utilizes students’ historical thinking skills and provides a driving question with primary and secondary sources for analysis.



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Introduction

Purpose

These simple-to-use Activators supplement your U.S. history classes and immerse your students in “living history” situations. Students get up from their desks, move around in different classroom configurations, and find themselves drawn into history that becomes compellingly real. For a variety of reasons, students seem to function better and learn more when actively engaged. American History Activators provide brief, clever, and exciting experiences for your students.

What Are Activators?

Activators possess three common elements, which embody a philosophical foundation.

1. Activators are simple and brief and require little background reading or preparation. Most Activators take one to two class periods.
2. Duplication requirements are minimal. Brief essays read and visual schematics displayed can provide all the background information students need.
3. Activators involve most, if not all, of your students, even those of limited English fluency.

Special Lessons

American History Activators provide experiences that shape students’ historical perceptions and positively enhance their understanding of past, current, and future events. As you introduce the units to your students, help them understand that we re-create history because doing so has an inherent value.

- **Be Prepared.** Be sure to read the **Setup, Directions, and Lesson Plan** options thoroughly before introducing the Activator to your students. Enlist students’ help in setting the scene within the classroom.
- **Reinforce Student Response.** During the action of an Activator, your students are involved in issues and events. When students make personal comments, either in class or during the **Debriefing**, praise them for their astute remarks. Your reinforcement of their experiences emphasizes for all students that history is real because it touches them. Above all, express your pleasure that students are so involved.



Teaching tip

Every student in your class will be standing, walking, marching, crawling, lying down, negotiating, plotting, and perhaps even “sailing” as participants at crucial turning points in the development of our country.



Teaching tip

An Activator provides memorable experiences that your students will retain long after other school events fade.

Activating History

Lessons in the traditional social studies classroom embody mainly visual and auditory learning. However, many students learn more effectively in kinesthetic situations. Activators emphasize the use of body movement, or the kinesthetic learning style often seen in skilled athletes, dancers, and actors. Perhaps students respond so positively and energetically to classes in physical education, shop, art, or home economics, not to mention extracurricular activities, because they can move around and socialize as they learn. Kinesthetic learning can be underutilized in social studies, yet this form of active learning generates highly effective and often indelible lessons.

Ability Levels

Activators are appropriate to use for various grade and ability levels and appeal to a wide variety of student learning styles. Activators follow the thesis: "Keep it simple and get kids up and moving."

Gifted Students. Most gifted students love to play roles. They will probably ad lib dialogue with great success. Some gifted students are natural directors.

Drama Students. Tap your drama students to play the pivotal roles. Allow them time to rehearse, and document the performance by filming it.

Middle School Students. Spend some time before and after the action of the Activator explaining the whys of the event dramatized. Also, it is suggested that you tap your best and brightest to perform the key roles.

Lower Ability and Limited English Students. These two groups of students appreciate and respond well to the kinesthetic learning of Activators. Rehearse two or more times. Do not proceed with the action of the Activator until everyone knows exactly what will occur and when.

Grouping Students

Activators promote the concept of "students as workers and teachers as managers and facilitators." Activators allow students to participate in their learning in ways that are often unfamiliar to them. Consider the following when planning the action of an Activator:

- **Student Directors.** You may select four or five student directors early in the school year to rotate responsibilities for a series of Activators. Allow each director three or four days to prepare for his or her Activator. Meet with the cadre before and after the action of the first Activator. Review your standards and expectations for the Activators. Grant enough latitude so they may apply their talents—and their time—fully.

- **Small Group Responsibility.** Divide your students into six groups of five or six. Put each group in charge of an Activator scheduled during the academic year. Allow each group three or four days to prepare for their Activator. Meet with the class before and after the action of the first Activator. Review your standards and expectations for the Activators. Select, or allow each group to select, the director.

Time Allotment

Activators vary somewhat in length—from one to two or more class periods, depending on how extensive your preparations and **Debriefing**. Other variables include class ability, grade level, the Activator itself, which Lesson Plan option you choose to use, and time for rehearsals. Whatever you decide, Activator lessons are worth the time spent and pay dividends later.

Room Arrangement

Most Activators require that you move your classroom furniture around to accommodate the action. Experience proves that changing the room's configuration offers students a fresh perspective and provides a welcome change to the daily routine. If you are a teacher who uses cooperative learning teams, your students are probably veteran furniture movers. Project the provided **Schematic** as a guide, and have students quickly move the desks, tables, and chairs.

Teaching Options

Most Activators include two or more options for how to conduct each **Lesson Plan**. Study the options carefully, and decide which one or combination will work best with your students, time constraints, classroom configuration, and administrative support.

Debriefing

A debriefing discussion of the action of the Activator is crucial to help students place the Activator lesson in the context of your course content and to ensure that they grasp the relevance of their experiences. Each Activator includes short and long debriefing suggestions. Study these options carefully and select one or more that reinforce your teaching objectives, or develop your own debriefing topics.

- Consider dividing your class into cooperative learning groups to sort out the debriefing points you decide are appropriate.
- For closure to the Activator lesson, an essay encompassing the event would be appropriate.

Learning Logs

A **Learning Log** is a special section of students' notebooks. Teachers using the Learning Log process in their classes often set aside five minutes at the end of certain—sometimes all—class periods.

- Students may write down exactly what happened in class, what they specifically did, and how they felt about what happened.
- Students may write in response to a writing prompt that you devise or that is provided in the **Debriefing**.

Visual History

Note the suggestions found in the **Resources to consult** section of the **Lesson Plan**. Commercial films or television programs sometimes include memorable scenes re-created from history. Even without an overall story line, these scenes can effectively communicate complex and compelling history. When you know of such a scene in a film or documentary, consider obtaining the film and sharing the experience with your students. Limit the time involved to less than fifteen minutes.

Flourishes

Activators themselves might be considered flourishes that supplement regular classroom lectures and reading. Yet, additional touches can enhance each Activator **Lesson Plan**. Students tend to forget most of what we think are teacher gems; instead they latch on to some strange and clever magical moments. Consider the following suggestions:

1. Find some music representative of the historical era to play as the students arrange the classroom for the action of the Activator.
2. Provide a glossary of words from the **Background Essay**, the **Narration**, or the **Postscript**. Ask for definitions after the activity.
3. If you have time, you or your students may create some historical ambiance with posters or graphics.
4. Assign one group to create an alternative scenario based on the events of the Activator.
 - Assume the opposite happened (e.g., America never became inhabited, the Constitution was never written, etc.)
 - Change history and explore a series of “what ifs?”
 - Require that students present a different version of the **Postscript**.

5. If possible, dim the lights and use a bright light source—like a spotlight—to focus on the main participants during the action. Later, focus the light on the individual history-makers as you read and discuss the **Postscript**.
6. Find images dealing with the event in books or on the Internet, and project five to ten of these during the **Debriefing**.

Evaluation

Although your students may expect to earn incentive certificates, classroom money, or grades, it is suggested that you focus on these subtler means of assessing student achievements:

- **Comments during Debriefing.** When your students make personal comments during the **Debriefing** about their anger, compassion, or perception, other students will hear and usually respond. History becomes immediate and personal, not distant and impersonal.
- **Learning Logs.** Require, or make it an extra credit option, that students write in their Learning Logs at the end of each Activator experience.

When to Use Activators

Many experts in educational motivation believe that enrichment or experiential activity should happen after students study and “master” the material. Others believe that enrichment activity can be an effective motivator, stimulating students’ interest and generating enthusiasm prior to introducing material.

Every lesson presents its own demands for the appropriate dramatic and relevant moment for introducing a related Activator. Some Activators serve as review units to sum up major events of a particular historical era. Other Activators serve to crystallize national or individual motivations that had a significant impact on the historical era.

In any case, these simple and easy-to-use American History Activators will spark your other lessons, enthuse your students, and break up the routine of an academic classroom without requiring a large commitment of your preparation time or actual classroom time.

Historical Investigation Activities

This last component affords opportunities for students to utilize historical thinking skills—as part of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)—and is an excellent way to fashion an appropriate and effective closer to each Activator. You will find at the end of each Activator a **Historical Investigation Activity** lesson that requires your students to become history detectives, sorting out facts and points of view from brief but carefully selected primary- and secondary-source documents. A **Focus Question** drives student inquiry

(e.g., “Christopher Columbus: Should he be singled out for the murder and enslavement of Native Americans after 1492?”).

This valuable coda to the Activators allows you and your students to go beyond textbooks and the short essays and dramatizations of events by examining the “raw materials” of history. Examining the documents, students delve into thought-provoking controversies and at the same time sharpen the tools that are the staples of historical investigation: evaluating evidence and making well-reasoned arguments while drawing conclusions about events in U.S. history.

By reading like historians through letters, speeches, diaries, communiqués, etc., students confront a “rich diet” of conflicting interpretations in sources that can only help advance their literacy and promote healthy skepticism. Hopefully, this practice will generate a set of transferable critical-thinking skills for students, who by using these skills can withstand throughout their lives the bombardment of the ploys of various “snake-oil salesmen.”

First Americans Arrive c. 11,000 BCE

Bill Lacey



Lesson Plan

Overview

This Activator will involve your students in one of the world's greatest migrations. Perhaps fifty thousand years ago or more, nomadic Asians crossed a land bridge connecting Asia and North America and discovered the New World long before Europeans touched upon the continent's soil. These first "Americans" gradually fanned out all over a vast continent never before inhabited by humans. Your students' wandering band will cross Beringia's bridge and explore this new land. Many of them will be persuaded by others to settle in a certain region. As they do, they will learn about America's original immigrants, their diversity, and the geography of the regions in which they settled just before the Europeans arrived.

Setup

1. Duplication

- **Background Essay**—*class set*
- **Postscript**—*class set*
- **Regional Information Sheets**—*one for each member of the eight (or less) groups*
- **Second Wavers' Notes**—*enough for all the students who cross the land bridge in the second wave of Siberian immigrants (They use these sheets for note-taking)*
- **Roster of the People**—*one copy to divide your class (see #4)*

2. **Schematic, props, costumes:** First, make your **Schematic** choice (see **Directions**) and study it carefully. Bring to your classroom props or costume pieces to create the setting of pre-Columbian America. (Examples: fake spears, headbands, colored beads, bracelets, drums, recorder, flutelike instruments, etc.)

3. **Roles:** Since there will be three students in each of the eight groups, some ten to twelve of your students will be in the second wave of arrivals. This means you should place your most responsible and articulate students in the first-wave groups. All remaining students are second wavers who wander from region to region to hear recruiting pitches from regional spokespersons.

Teaching tip

Consider having students from another class serve as second wavers.



Teaching tip

If you have a small class, you may wish to eliminate one of the regions.



Directions

1. To get the best from your students in this Activator, advanced preparation is essential. By this, we mean that students should be put into first-wave and second-wave groups a few days before. First wavers need a class period to prepare their presentations. Perhaps while the first-wave presenters meet and prepare, you could show the second wavers a video on the First Americans (see **Resources to consult**).
2. Ensure that your students learn the historical background. To augment what is contained in your history textbook, choose one of these options: 1) hand out the **Background Essay** either the day before the class as homework or pass it out to be read in class; 2) give a formal lecture based on what is in the essay plus your own knowledge of the subject; 3) show a video or video snippet, using the suggestions in the **Resources to consult** section.
3. After the **Background Essay** is reviewed and discussed, display the **Schematic** and go over which option (A or B) you plan to carry out. Emphasize what will happen under the option you've selected and for which you have made preparations.
4. Have students bury their backpacks in a corner of the classroom, don any costume pieces they've created and brought in, and then go outside to be led on a five- to fifteen-minute trip (this simulates the long trek from Siberia to the land bridge). Next, before they reenter the classroom (crossing Beringia), separate the first wavers and second wavers. Allow the first wavers to come through the door (the land bridge) and set up for their presentations (if you are using Option A, a similar kind of bridge or door should be simulated outside). To give first wavers more time, take the second wavers on another short hike before reentering the classroom.

After this, you have at least three different options for running the Activator:

Option A

1. See **Option A Schematic**.
2. After their "Siberian trek," pass out the **Second Wavers' Notes** sheets and explain what you expect from them.
3. Students play out the Activator in a large venue (preferably outside the classroom), where each of the eight regional peoples sets up a kind of booth and "pitches" its region to second wavers who roam from region to region, listening and taking notes.



Teaching tip

Elementary teachers: You may want to extend this Activator to three or four days.



Teaching tip

You may want your students to carry all their belongings with them as they make their trip from Siberia to America across the Bering Land Bridge.

First Americans Arrive: c. 11,000 BCE

Lesson Plan

Teaching tip

Make sure you emphasize that



second wavers vote for the best presentation, not the region with the best surf and beaches, tastiest food, etc. Even the subarctic region should have a chance to win!

Teaching tip

Perhaps you could pass out



some "wampum" to the victorious regional group. Maybe a certificate, too?

Teaching tip

This mini-event could be an exciting and thought-provoking climax to the presentations and voting.



4. Once all presentations are completed, ask several individual students which region impressed them the most and to which region they would immigrate.
5. After students have heard pitches outside by roaming from region to region, return to the classroom and allow the regions a one-minute last-ditch pitch to convince possible recruits to come to their particular region.
6. Call on individual second wavers to vote for their personal choice of the region to which they will immigrate. The winning region is the one that receives the most single votes.

Option B

1. See **Option B Schematic**.
2. This option would appeal to you if you cannot leave your classroom for more than a few minutes. In this option, the regional groups set up displays/booths around the classroom at the beginning of the period. Then they, as first wavers, come through the door first (the Asian American land bridge) and set up. After the second wavers cross the land bridge to the new continent, each first-wave group will then individually pitch the achievements and virtues of their regions. Second wavers sit/stand in the middle of the room and revolve to hear the individual pitches as they take place. Second wavers, as in **Option A**, take brief notes.
3. If you have time, allow each region one minute to have a last-ditch pitch to recruit settlers.
4. Determine a winning region, as in **Option A**.

Option C (Not on the Schematic)

1. Under this option, all students are assigned to one of the eight regions. Then they prepare to present their people and region's best side as the rest of the regions listen and take notes.
2. After all presentations, have a vote to see which group did the best job showcasing their people and region.

As a further option, at the end of the voting, you could stage the arrival of the Europeans. Select three to four students beforehand, and at an appropriate time, after the voting and just before the Debriefing, have them burst into the classroom. They then threaten the natives, capture a chief or two, and demand that the natives sign the treaties they hold in their hands. Perhaps the Europeans could use a long rope to chain-tie some Native Americans. All this action would serve as a prelude to the next five hundred years.

Debriefing

Decide whether you wish to use a short or long debriefing. Here are possible ways to make meaningful what happened, presumably, as Siberian immigrants made their way to the American continents.

Short Debriefing

1. Pass out the **Postscript**. Either read this to your students or summarize the main points of each paragraph before going on. Discuss points #2 and #3. These points discuss the reality of Siberian migration, archaeology, and stereotyping Native Americans.
2. At this point it might be appropriate to clarify a misconception some students may have. The Siberians who crossed the Bering Land Bridge bridge and fanned out over the two American continents did so over thousands of years, as far back in prehistory as perhaps thirty thousand to fifty thousand years ago. Archaeologists using carbon dating are still seeking to push the arrival date past the remains found at Folsom, New Mexico, which date from eleven thousand years ago. This Activator simplifies reality. Your students come in two waves, whereas immigration across the land bridge was continuous. Furthermore, it took maybe a millennium or more for those wanderers to penetrate the southern hemisphere. Again, movement was gradual. Teams of regional natives didn't act like a local chamber of commerce, trying to recruit settlers to their area. This technique is utilized to help students understand in an entertaining way where Native Americans came from, the diversity of regional cultures, and the geographic differences of regional America.
3. Try this: ask students how an adult "on the street" might visualize an "Indian." What's the Indian's mode of transportation? (Horse). What's his weapon? (Tomahawk, bow & arrow). What kind of dwelling does he live in? (Teepee). What animal is most important to his survival? (Buffalo). Is he warlike or peaceful? (Warlike). What's he wearing on his face? (Warpaint). What's he wearing on his feet? (Moccasins). Next, ask students what they would say to the "man on the street" about the stereotyped Great Plains Indian he probably described.
4. Ask students to discuss what they learned and what they felt as they played their roles as the first Native Americans on the continent.
5. Consider having students write a Learning Log entry following the short debriefing.



Teaching tip

The information in the regional handouts describe life and culture of each continent's peoples before Europeans arrived in 1500. For example, note how the Plains Indians were a horseless culture at this time.

Long Debriefing

Use one or more of the following debriefing activities:

1. Pass out the **Postscript**. Either read this sad chronicle of post-ninth-century Native Americans to your students or summarize the main points of each paragraph before going on.
2. **Discuss:** What does the average American think of Native Americans today? If you think it is a false perception, how would you change this image?
3. Have students make a book jacket of a bestselling nonfiction book on Native American history. **Ask:** *What would your title and subtitle be for this historically accurate history of Native Americans up to 1500?*
4. Recently, sports teams who have mascots reflecting Native American names have come under fire from various groups, including Native Americans. Do the Atlanta Braves (whose fans make a tomahawk chop), Florida State Seminoles, Washington Redskins, and other professional, college, and public school teams denigrate Native American people? Many sports teams that share Native American names reflect an inaccurate "savage" or aggressive side of Native Americans.
5. Have students come up with names of rivers, lakes, mountains, towns, cities, states, food, articles, etc., that reflect Native American origins. Build a list on the whiteboards in the classroom.
6. Have some students make pemmican or succotash and bring them in to share.
7. Have students consider what happened to the Native Americans from 1500 to 1900. **Ask them:** *What do you think America would be like today if the Europeans had never sailed across the Atlantic, conquered, settled, and dominated this land?* Have students briefly describe in a paragraph how America would be different.
8. What values generally held by Native Americans do you think Europeans / white Americans of the 1500–1900 era found unappealing, backward, and even objectionable?
9. Briefly construct a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting Native American beliefs with those held by Americans of European ancestry. If you face a time constraint, have students compare one value difference: nature.

Teaching tip

Ask your students this question:
"Should a high school in this decade use this mascot?"



Teaching tip

Consider topics such as these:
family, personal property, nature, work, religion, child-raising, and the concept of time.



10. Consider showing one early episode from the 1995 CBS documentary, *500 Nations*, or one of the excellent PBS specials listed in the **Visual history** section.
11. Have students come up with reasons why there is more poverty, alcoholism, youth suicides, and infant deaths among today's Native American population than the rest of Americans.
12. Show students portraits of Indian chiefs and warriors. Have them note what the faces of these people exhibit.
13. Ask students if Columbus or the Norsemen should be given credit for the discovery of America if Siberians came here thousands of years before.
14. Consider having students write a Learning Log entry following this long debriefing.

Write a Learning Log ...

Learning Log	
●	Wow! What a way to start this history course.
	Mr. Walker caught my attention right away. Oh, the
	Activator wasn't really accurate about how "first
	Americans" likely got here, but this experience really
	did start us discussing during the debriefing. We
	immediately began realizing how hard it is to know
	what really happened in history and how difficult it is
	to write. Then, too, our stereotypes about Indians
	and Native Americans were brought into the open.
	Several students said they realize how little they
●	really know about what happened on this continent
	years and years ago. And ...

Resources to consult

America's Fascinating Indian Heritage. Pleasantville, NY: The Reader's Digest Association, 1978. (This book is a fine survey of regional Native American diversity.)

Debelius, Maggie. *The First Americans*. The American Indians Series. Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1992.

Do All Indians Live in Tipis? Questions and Answers from the National Museum of the American Indian. New York: Smithsonian Institution, 2007.

Faber, Harold. *The Discoverers of America*. New York: Scribner, 1992.

Hakim, Joy. *A History of US: The First Americans*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Hassrick, Royal B. *The Colorful Story of North American Indians*. London: Octopus Books, 1974.

Josephy, Alvin M. *500 Nations: An Illustrated History of North American Indians*. New York: Gramercy Books, 1994.

Mann, Charles C. *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005.

Oakley, Ruth. *The Marshall Cavendish Illustrated History of the North American Indians: In the Beginning*. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1991.

Treuer, Anton. *Atlas of Indian Nations*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2014.

Weatherford, Jack. *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1989.

Visual history

Documentaries: *500 Nations* (Episode 2 deals with First Americans) shown on CBS in April 1995 (50 minutes); *The Infinite Voyage: The Search for Ancient Americans*, shown on PBS in April 1995; *Native Americans 1994–95*, Scholastic/ NBC News Video.

Film: *A Man Called Horse* (1970) starring Richard Harris. In one 15-minute segment, an Englishman goes through the pain of hanging by his pectorals in an Indian ritual common to the people of the Plains.

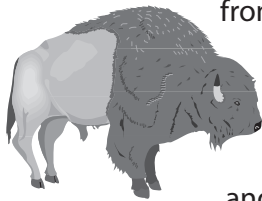
Background Essay

Place: Bering Land Bridge and North America

Time: c. 28,000 to 11,000 BCE

Breaking the stereotype

Many people think of Native Americans inaccurately, visualizing Indians as horse-riding, red-skinned warriors with face paint and feathers. These stereotyped figures probably fire arrows



from a bow, throw tomahawks, wear moccasins, and, when in camp, live in tepees. They use the American buffalo for implements, utensils, food, and clothing. The reality is that

parts of this description fit historical American "Indians" in only one particular region: the Great Plains. Plains Indians, the Comanche, Sioux, and Cheyenne, have played major roles in our movies and TV "horse operas"—helping perpetuate an inaccurate and narrow stereotype.

Native Americans

Many people have not only stereotyped Indians, but they have also incorrectly labeled them. Early European discoverers, convinced they had touched upon the East Indies of Asia, misnamed the native peoples "Indians." This created a problem as "Indians" also referred to people from India. Anthropologists today refer to Indians as Amerinds or Amerindians. More widespread for today's population is the term Native Americans. Over the centuries, Indians were also called "redmen" or "redskins," an incorrect reference to their skin color. Certainly, with Asian characteristics, the skin color is a shade or two darker than whites from Europe, yet the designation "red" clearly is as inappropriate as it is offensive.

Asian origins

Scientists, anthropologists, archaeologists, and geologists keep pushing back the time when Asians arrived in "America." What is certain is that evidence (blood type, ear wax, and many physical

similarities to the mongoloid race) shows that the forebears of this immigration into the North American continent once lived on the Siberian tundra, hunting animals with primitive weapons, living in near-freezing conditions, and wearing clothes fashioned from caribou fur. This simple but hard life had one rule: follow the herds of life-sustaining animals or perish. While this pattern of Siberian life took place, the world was in the midst of the last ice age when great glaciers covered the lands of the Northern Hemisphere.

Beringia

The last ice age had profound implications for migration from the Old World to the New World. With the drop in sea levels, Beringia, a land bridge between Asia and America, appeared. Its existence invited Asians eager to leave the difficult nomadic life of Eastern Siberia to risk the journey across the wide and long "highway" to what is now Alaska. Off and on over the next millennia, 34,000 BCE to 30,000 BCE and 26,000 BCE to 11,000 BCE, migrating Asian hunter-gatherers braved the stark, forbidding Beringia (now the Bering Strait) and the ice sheets that lay across southern Alaska and Canada to travel through the uncharted ice-free corridors of the North American continent. The Asians who survived such ordeals eventually came upon wondrous sights in a semi-Eden land thick with vegetation and swarming with animal life.



Descendants

The descendants of these intrepid First Americans would populate the two continents from Alaska to the tip of South America. These peoples would eventually be called Native Americans. As these new immigrants reached a

new region, they decided to stay or move on. Over the centuries, they came upon many different geographic regions with great varieties of animal and plant life, most of which these hunters had never seen before in their largely barren ancestral Asian homelands.

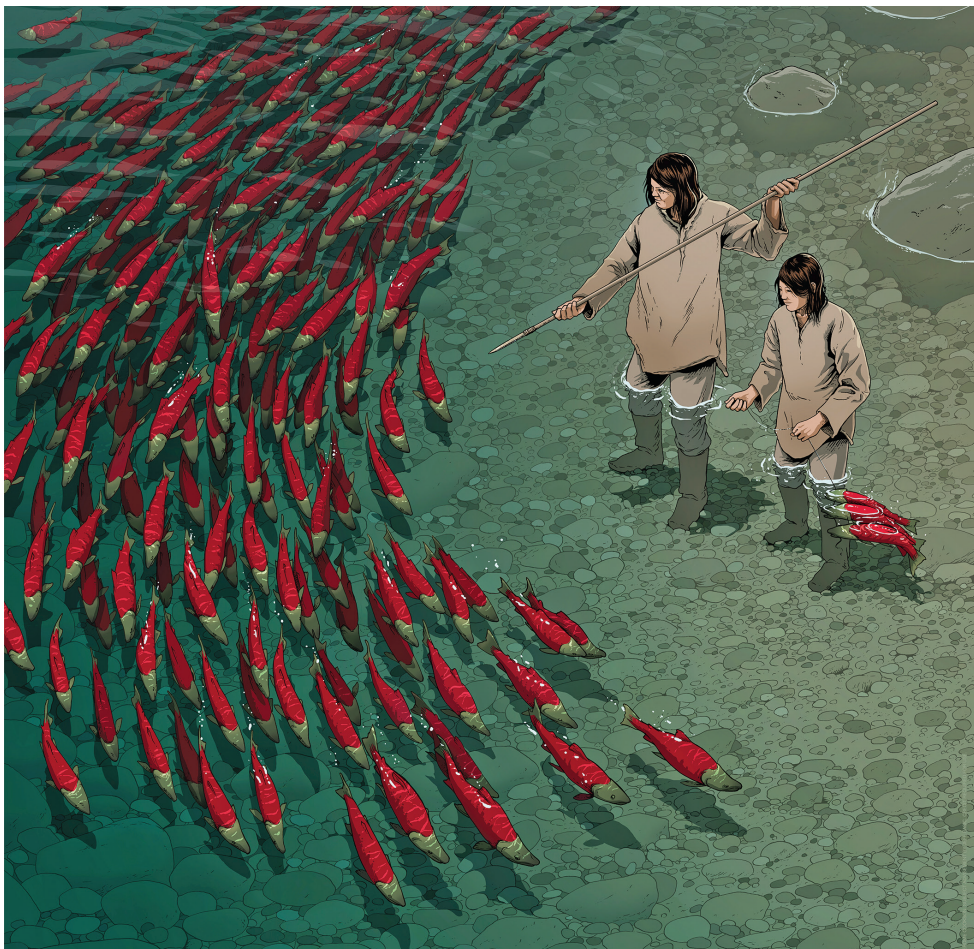
Diversity

The descendants of the prehistoric pioneers, despite being related in some ways, would become mostly diverse. Many tribes were still simple nomads; others were forest-dwellers surviving as hunters and fishermen. Still other tribes practiced agriculture. Many lived in adobe cities; others lived in tepees and wooden longhouses. Thus, the millennia before 1500 produced great variations

in customs, traditions, foods, tribal organization, shelters, weapons, and languages. Most of these differences were dictated by geography and environment.

Cross Beringia and settle down

Now it is time for your tribe to decide to settle in one of the continent's many regions. If you are one of the first immigrants to arrive, you will try to persuade later arrivals to immigrate to your region. If chosen to be a part of the second "wave" of Siberian immigrants, listen carefully to the "natives" who want you and your tribe to settle with them. First, however, put on an extra caribou cape, load up your dogs, and brave the elements of the Bering Land Bridge to America!

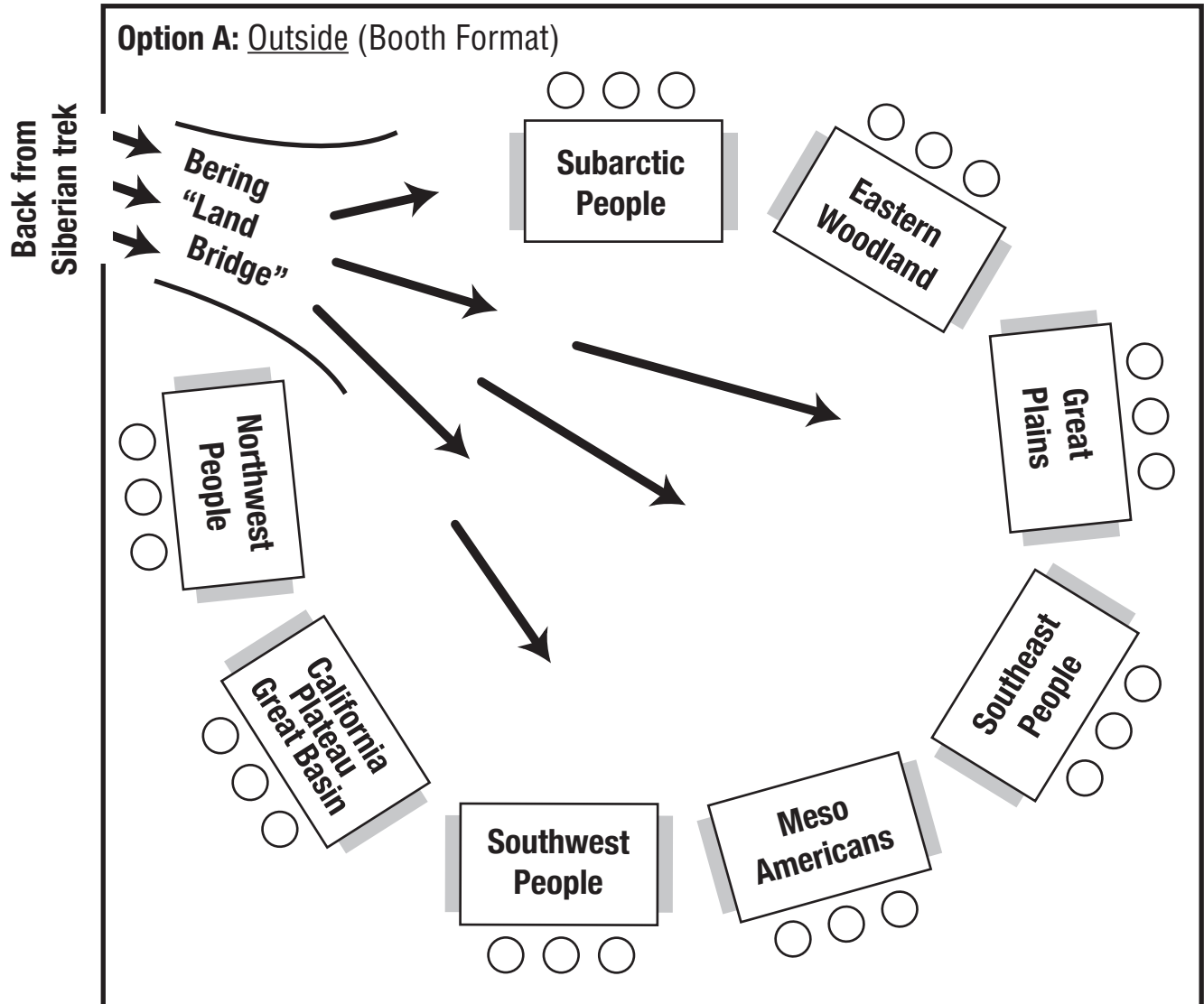


Creek Caves in Bering Land Bridge National Preserve

Image source: Illustration by Matt Twombly. Courtesy of National Park Service.

Schematic

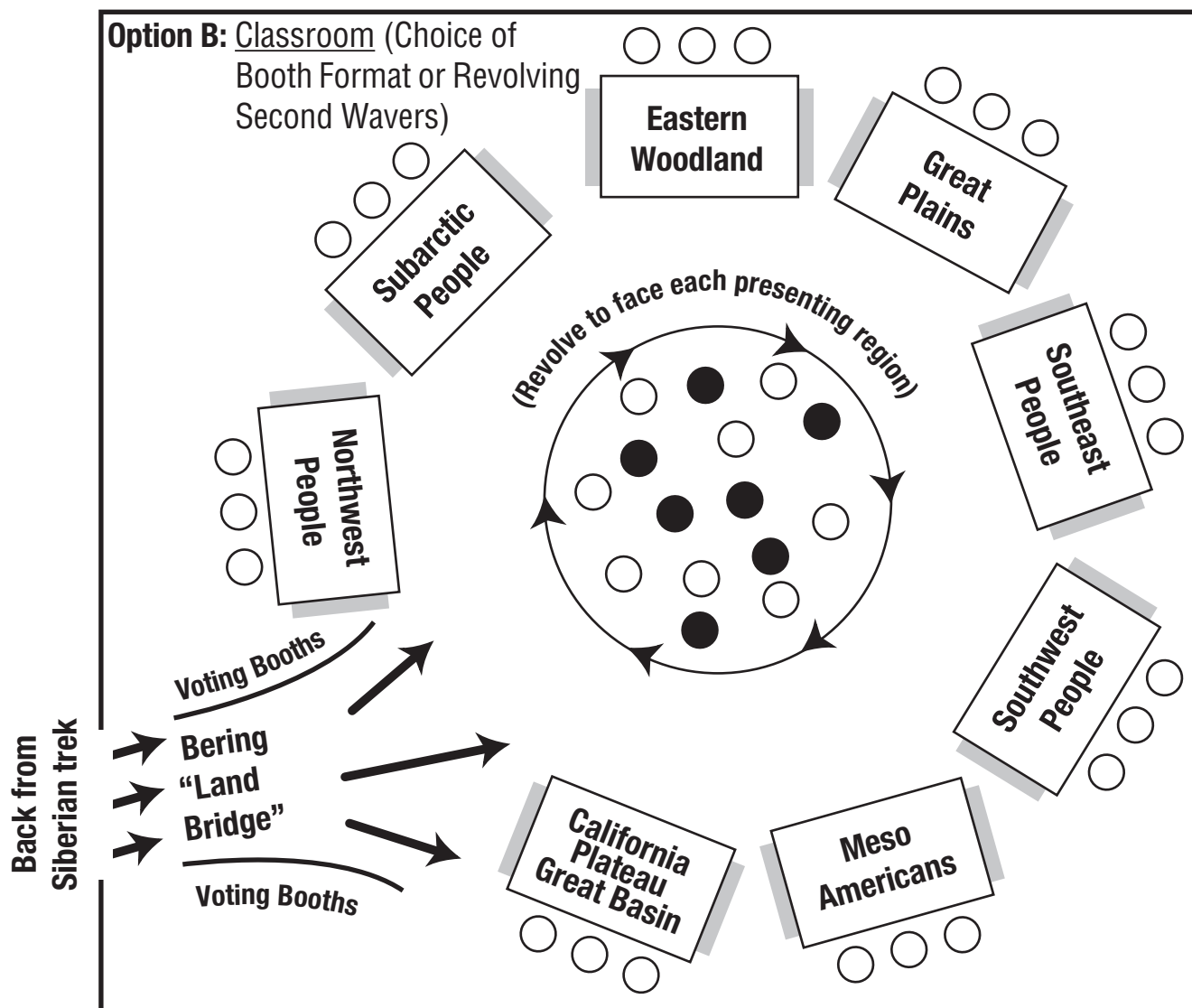
Option A



Suggestions

- Have some sort of bridge or passageway to simulate Beringia.
- Give first wavers a day or more to prepare, including audio/visual flourishes.
- Play drum and recorder music or live "Native American" music throughout Activator.
- Have second wavers take notes as they roam from booth to booth.
- Return to the classroom for "last-ditch pitches" from presenters.
- Encourage first wavers to make regional headbands.

Option B



Suggestions

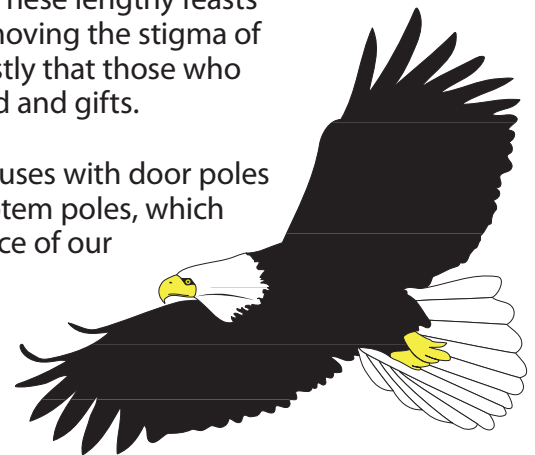
- Same as **Option A** (Bering Land Bridge entry)
- Have students revolve to face each presenting region.
- Allow time for "last-ditch pitches" to recruit settlers.
- Encourage first wavers to make regional headbands.

The Northwest Pacific Coast

Our People of the Northwest Pacific Coast

You may wish to embellish the information below with outside research.

- **Climate/Environment:** We live along the waters of the Pacific Ocean on the northwest region of the continent. Our days are cool and damp, and many trees grow very tall. Our winters are mild; our summers never get hot.
- **Food:** Our staple is fish, including halibut, salmon, cod, and shellfish. Our diet is supplemented with small forest animals, berries, and nuts.
- **Tribes:** We will be called Haida, Bella Coola, Tillamook, Nootka, Coos, Karuk, Hupa, Yurok, and Chinook.
- **Special attractions:** We pride ourselves on our great baskets, carved wooden boxes, canoes, decorated hides, and pieces of hammered copper. Our totem poles are famous among our people in other nearby regions. Most of all, our potlatches will lure fun-loving people to our region. These lengthy feasts and celebrations of weddings, naming an heir, or removing the stigma of a shameful accident, are big, expensive parties so costly that those who sponsor them squander their fortunes providing food and gifts.
- **Living conditions:** We live in large, gabled, plank houses with door poles that have large and colorful family crests on them. Totem poles, which have no religious significance, add to the magnificence of our communities.
- **Religion:** We believe in many spiritual beings—ravens, bears, whales, eagles, and beaver. We have shamans who use magic to deceive and to enhance their prestige.
- **Appearance and fashion:** We wear simple, rough shirts or robes of fur or shredded bark. Sometimes in summer our men wear nothing or don breechcloths. Our women always wear plant-fiber skirts. When the weather is cold, furs and hides suffice as cloaks or capes. We rarely wear moccasins, but we do put on hats in rainy season. Interestingly, we pierce our noses to hold ornaments, and some men of our tribes grow mustaches and even beards. Many of our men and women wear beautiful tattoos.
- **Behavior/War:** We try to avoid making war, but if war happens we use clubs, daggers, spears, and bow and arrows. We usually make slaves of our enemies.
- **Transportation:** We travel mostly by water, in large, impressive canoes called dugouts, some up to sixty feet long hollowed from one single tree. Occasionally, we use longer ships to harpoon whales far from shore.



Demonstration: Beforehand, research totem poles and make an abbreviated pole using covered up cylinder cartons from oatmeal products, rolled tagboard, or cardboard tubes from paper products.

Presentation suggestions: Pretend you are members of the local chamber of commerce, eager and proud to convince people to visit and settle in your community. Work to turn every flaw into an advantage or asset. Occasionally, use modern slang. ("This is a really 'cool' place to live," "Moving here will be a decision you'll never regret," etc.) Do extra research on your region and tribe. Have "audience" members whom you are recruiting come forward to assist you during your presentation. Use audiovisual aids (a drum beat along with a recorder instrument). Use a map to explain visual statistics. Keep your presentation within the time limit given to you.

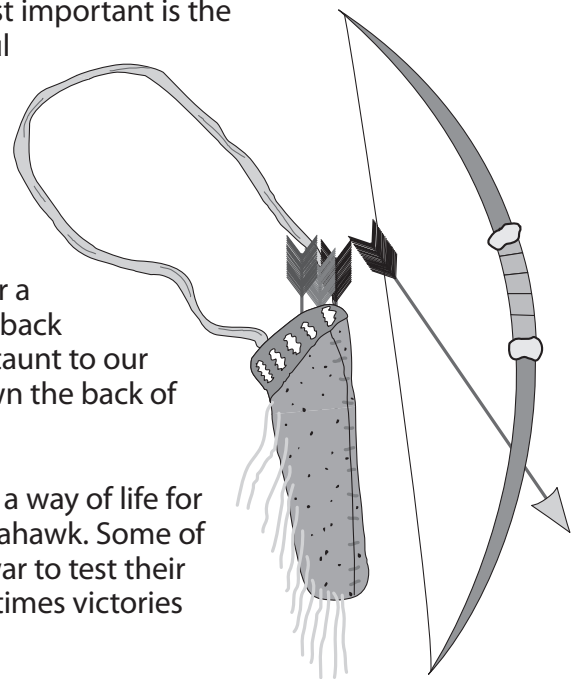


The Northeast and Eastern Woodlands

Our People of the Northeast and Eastern Woodlands

You may wish to embellish the information below with outside research.

- **Climate/Environment:** Our influence stretches over a land between the Atlantic coast and the Mississippi River. We experience all seasons in our mostly forested region.
- **Food:** We eat a great variety of foods, including deer, bear, nuts, rabbit, woodchucks, geese, partridge, duck, corn, beans, squash, and lots of fish and shellfish. Specialties are corn dumplings and real maple syrup, baked apples, and smoked meat.
- **Tribes:** We will be called Iroquois, Powhatan, Delaware, Kickapoo, Huron, Mohawk, Algonquin, Winnebago, Shawnee, Seneca, and Tobacco.
- **Special attractions:** We have given to language several important words: "hickory," "hominy," "moccasin," "wigwam," and "wampum" (beads or shells used as money). We have created the most powerful and sophisticated tribes north of Mesoamerica. We invented the idea of a confederacy. We are fierce warriors and great hunters of moose. We make marvelous false face masks, some with horse hair. Members of the False Face Society wear these masks during healing rituals. We are very skilled with the bow and arrow.
- **Living conditions:** Some of us live in tents made of animal skins. These wigwams are easily portable, but most of us live in wooden longhouses, which are rectangular buildings with barrel-shaped roofs within a stockade.
- **Religion:** We worship numerous spirits, but the most important is the Master of Life, the Supreme Being. We have powerful shamans, some of whom practice magic. We revere old age, and death releases us into a world without pain, illness, or sadness.
- **Appearance and fashion:** Men wear really comfortable breechcloths, leggings, shirts, and moccasins. We shave or pluck out our hair, except for a strip of hair that stands up from the forehead to the back of the head (called much later, "the mohawk"). As a taunt to our enemy, some of us grow a scalplock, that hangs down the back of the head.
- **Behavior/War:** We are masters in the art of war. It is a way of life for us. We are experts with the bow and arrow and tomahawk. Some of us, notably the Iroquois, cruelly torture captives in war to test their courage. Rarely do we lapse into cannibalism. Sometimes victories are celebrated with scalp dances.



- **Transportation:** Mostly we walk and run; or we paddle canoes to get from place to place along the many beautiful rivers in our region.

Demonstration: You could demonstrate any of these: making and displaying a wampum belt, using a bow and arrow, or throwing a tomahawk effectively. The Seneca game of “Snowflakes” would also be a nice show-and-tell activity. This interesting winter game is explained in detail on page 137 of *America’s Fascinating Indian Heritage*.

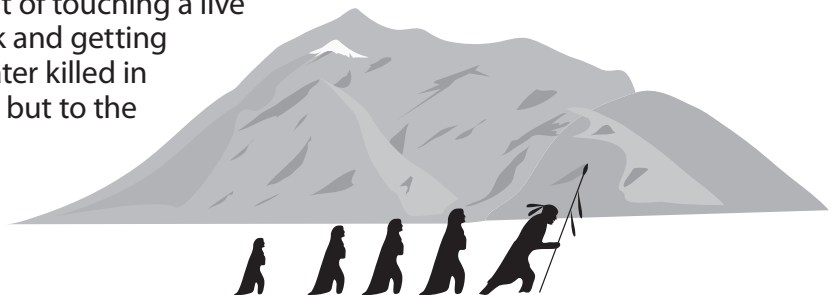
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The Great Plains

Our People of the Great Plains

You may wish to embellish the information below with outside research.

- **Climate/Environment:** We dominate the region from the Mississippi River to the Shining Mountains, and from Canada to Texas. Open to the Canadian winds and blizzards, we experience cold winters and hot summers. Fall and spring are gifts from the earth father.
- **Food:** We eat small game, corn, beans, squash, deer, elk, and the greatest protein source of all, buffalo, which gives us food, clothing, utensils, and weapons.
- **Tribes:** We will be called the Sioux, Pawnee, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Kiowa, Comanche, Otoe, Kansa, Crow, and Blackfoot.
- **Special attractions:** The buffalo is our sustenance, so we tend to be nomadic. We sing and dance in our ceremonies. The tepee and the travois are somewhat unique to our region.
- **Living conditions:** We live primarily in tepees, conical-shaped dwellings covered with skins. We think the tepee is one of the most ingeniously devised human habitats ever. It is warm in winter and cool in summer. Rain never comes in and smoke always goes out. Some plains people live in earth-covered lodges.
- **Religion:** We have a famous sun dance. Sometimes we endure great physical torture (staring at the sun or hanging from a tall pole with hooks in our chests). Our religion centers around spiritual power. Every one of our people has a personal spiritual guardian (bird, dwarf, mosquito, etc.) taken on following a vision while fasting and being tortured.
- **Appearance and fashion:** We wear breechcloths, pants, and shirts made of buckskin, with quills. Frequently, we wear feathered headdresses to show prowess in the arts of war.
- **Behavior/War:** We raid other tribes for goods and loot to show daring and bravery. War dances often precede raids and scalp dances follow raids. Scalps are seen as war trophies. We boast about deeds in war: "counting coup" is special to our people. This is an act of touching a live enemy with a hand or special stick and getting away unharmed. If the enemy is later killed in battle, credit goes not to the killer but to the one who counted coup.
- **Transportation:** We walk everywhere. This will no doubt change someday if we find a

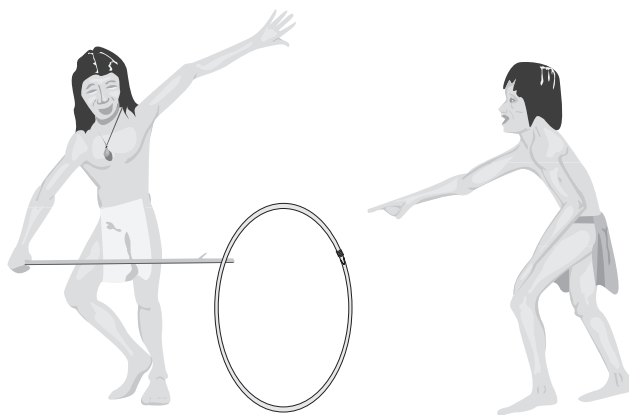


We walk everywhere . . .

large animal to ride. (The Plains Indians would utilize the horse effectively after 1500.) Some paddle canoes. If we have a load to carry, we use the travois, a frame made from poles and skins, that is dragged along by dogs.

Demonstration: Consider researching sign language and then demonstrate how it is used by your people on the Plains or show pictures of tepees and make one as a demonstration. Reenact a "counting coup" scenario as another suggestion. Play the game of hoops and poles (throw spears through hoops sticking out of the ground, or through a rolling hoop.) Another game: the game of hand, a sleight of hand exercise with two small objects, one marked, the other plain.

Presentation suggestions: Pretend you are members of the local chamber of commerce, eager and proud to convince people to visit and settle in your community. Work to turn every flaw into an advantage or asset. Occasionally, use modern slang. ("This is a really 'cool' place to live," "Moving here will be a decision you'll never regret," etc.) Do extra research on your region and tribe. Have "audience" members whom you are recruiting come forward to assist you during your presentation. Use audiovisual aids (a drum beat along with a recorder instrument). Use a map to explain visual statistics. Keep your presentation within the time limit given to you.



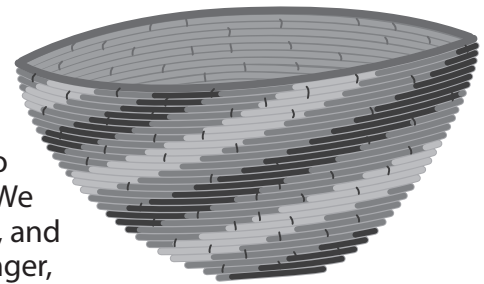
Play the game of hoops and poles

The Southeast

Our People of the Southeast

You may wish to embellish the information below with outside research.

- **Climate/Environment:** We occupy the region from the Atlantic coast west to the lower Mississippi Valley. Rich in flora and fauna, the land is beautiful and has a moderate climate. The sun shines most days of the year. Everything grows in our soil.
- **Food:** We live mostly by farming, hunting, and fishing, so we eat corn, nuts, beans, berries, deer, fish, turkey, and dog meat. We make a terrific corn soup and corn cakes. Our root jelly and hominy dishes are mouthwatering.
- **Tribes:** Greatest among us are tribes that will be called Creek, Choctaw, Seminole, Cherokee, and Chickasaw—the five civilized tribes.
- **Special attractions:** We make beautiful plaited baskets with diagonal and zigzag designs. We have a terrific Green Corn ceremony every year, when the corn is ready to eat and life seems to be renewed. Another ceremony is the “Black Drink,” a brew drunk to cleanse our systems and strengthen us as individuals. We use tobacco to give us supernatural powers, to heal us, and to bring us good fortune. Tobacco also suppresses hunger, wards off evil spirits, and helps the marriage bond between men and women. We smoke it during councils and offer tobacco pipes to visitors as a gesture of hospitality. We use caffeine, aspirin, and herbal medicines.
- **Living conditions:** Our dwellings are usually stockades with perhaps a hundred rectangular houses around a village square. These homes are often covered with mud plaster, grass, or thatch.
- **Religion:** The sun is our deity, and red is our sacred color. Red is also the color of success and war. We practice monogamy mostly, but men can have two to three wives. We revere old age, and death is often welcome to free us from pain.
- **Appearance and fashion:** Men wear breechcloths, leggings, sleeveless shirts, and moccasins. In the warm and sometimes wet summers, we mostly wear nothing at all.
- **Behavior/War:** We go to war against others when we have to. Our universal symbol of war is the military club, and red is the color warriors wear into battle. Interestingly, before going into war, we fast for three days, drink a powerful snakeroot potion, and then vomit to purify our bodies’ spirits. We also excel in the use of the blowgun and dart to confound our enemies.



- **Transportation:** We get around in dugout canoes or cane rafts to navigate our abundant river systems and swampy areas. In most cases, however, we walk or run.

Demonstration: Consider demonstrating the use of a blowgun and dart. Call on a few volunteers to explain the game of Chenco, a violent kind of field hockey where many players break legs and even die after extreme play.

Presentation suggestions: Pretend you are members of the local chamber of commerce, eager and proud to convince people to visit and settle in your community. Work to turn every flaw into an advantage or asset. Occasionally, use modern slang. ("This is a really 'cool' place to live," "Moving here will be a decision you'll never regret," etc.) Do extra research on your region and tribe. Have "audience" members whom you are recruiting come forward to assist you during your presentation. Use audiovisual aids (a drum beat along with a recorder instrument). Use a map to explain visual statistics. Keep your presentation within the time limit given to you.



The Subarctic

Our People of the Subarctic

You may wish to embellish the information below with outside research.

- **Climate/Environment:** It's cold here, but that's what our people who came from Siberia were used to. Your homeland was cold, right? Come, join us. Overlook the fact that our region is virtually treeless (some forests are in the southern portion of our region). We'd like to think that our environment challenges our people to great feats of courage and ingenuity. This region, the far north, stretches from Alaska across Canada to the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Food:** We have the caribou, elk, musk-ox, and moose as our staples. We also eat birds, shellfish, salmon, cod, plants, berries, and nuts. Farming is almost impossible in the north because of the short growing season. One of our specialties is pemmican, a dried, concentrated food consisting of buffalo/caribou/moose meat and crushed berries.
- **Tribes:** We will be called the Ahtena, Tahltan, Tanana, Deg Hit'an, Beaver, Han, Dogrib, Yellowknife, Cree, Algonquin, and Athabaskan.
- **Special attractions:** We are most like our ancestors, living a lifestyle similar to how our people lived thousands of years ago. We are very proud of our rock paintings, ceremonial masks, copper knives, arrowheads, and scraping tools. Attractive porcupine quills decorate our clothing. As cold, bleak, and monotonous as our region appears to be, and as hard as our existence seems, we do have some wonders. In the spring, the tundra burst into glorious color. South of the tundra is a forested area. Don't believe what you hear about the windigos, those twenty-foot-tall "monsters" of the forest who are made of ice, devour their victims, and can disembowel a man with a sweep of their claw-like hand. Not true. Rumors. The mosquitoes and blackflies aren't that bad either. Really!
- **Living conditions:** We live in houses that resemble a tepee, covered with bark or skins. Most of the time we're nomads, following herds of caribou and moose.
- **Religion:** We believe deeply in magic and the supernatural. Shamans help us get rid of evil and foretell the future. Some of our tribes feel a supernatural association with fish, so they bless nets, poles, and fishhooks with charms that help us catch many fish.
- **Appearance and fashion:** We wear animal skins as clothes. Rabbit skin robes are also worn, along with moccasins, mittens, and fur caps.



- **Behavior/War:** We are not necessarily warlike, but we do have weapons of war, usually bows and arrows, spears, clubs, and knives. Our time is better spent finding food for survival than making war.
- **Transportation:** We get around by foot (mostly snowshoes). Our heavy loads are carried on toboggans drawn by dogs or pulled by hand. In a few areas, we paddle birchbark canoes, the ultimate technology of our people.

Demonstration: Consider demonstrating how to make pemmican, how to walk on snowshoes, or the beauty of rock paintings (see page 330 in *America's Fascinating Indian Heritage*). Perhaps explain how the caribou was used by your people for meat, weapons, utensils, and clothes. Use visuals.

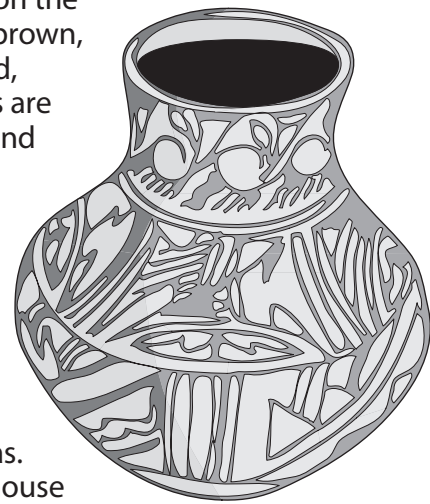
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The Southwest

Our People of the Southwest

You may wish to embellish the information below with outside research.

- **Climate/Environment:** Stretching from Texas to western Arizona, the country we live in is a beautiful, but sometimes harsh, land. It's a place of contrasts—mountains and canyons, deserts and forests, rocks and groves, hot days and bone-chilling nights. Usually we have crystal-clear skies with unlimited vistas across the vast landscapes. Our mesas and buttes are unique on the continent.
- **Food:** We eat lots of corn and corn dishes. We even sprinkle cornmeal on newborns. We also eat beans and squash. Sometimes we eat deer, antelope, rabbit, fruits, and pinion nuts.
- **Tribes:** We will be called Navajo, Pima, Apache, Hopi, Zuni, and Anasazi.
- **Special attractions:** We have many attractions in the southwest, including the most skilled potters. We have the best painted ware on the continent: bowls, plates, and pots, in designs of red, brown, and black on yellow-brown clay. These wares are bold, lively, and rich with symbolism. Our baskets and trays are magnificent, as are our sand paintings, woven rugs, and kachina dolls.
- **Living conditions:** Some of our people live in pueblos. For defensive purposes, our stone houses are perched atop rock cliffs. One of our tribes, the Navajo, live in mud-covered structures called hogans.
- **Religion:** Many of our religious societies meet in kivas. Kivas are round rooms dug into the ground of each house that serve the function of being a kind of a men's club where important decisions are made and religious ceremonies are held. During these ceremonies, we do some chanting and masked dancing. Hopi people have a snake ceremonial rite to guarantee a good harvest. Part of the rite involves capturing both poisonous and nonpoisonous snakes.
- **Appearance and fashion:** We generally wear thin garments, the lighter the better, since we live in warm temperatures with bright sunshine. On our feet, we wear the traditional moccasins.
- **Behavior/War:** Most of us are peaceful; we only fight when attacked. If one of us kills another, he must purify himself. Our people who will become the Apache, and some Navajo, are brave and fierce warriors.



- **Transportation:** When we leave our pueblos, we use our feet as transportation. We do not usually have canoes because our land has few rivers.

Demonstration: You might consider demonstrating the snake ceremonial rite (see pages 212–213 in *America's Fascinating Indian Heritage*, or other convenient sources). Certainly worth displaying are examples of sand painting and pottery. Also, consider explaining with colorful posters the interesting history of Chaco Canyon, a vast community in the southwest rivaling the pyramids of other cultures. This complex housed at least fifty thousand citizens and had highways linking communities miles away. These people, however, had no writing, no metals, and no plow. They did have a calendar, an irrigation system, and an understanding of engineering.



Another idea to demonstrate: Find or create a few arrows or spearheads, and use the pieces while you inform your audience of the importance of the Folsom, New Mexico, archaeological find, which proved to be one of the oldest human campsites in the Americas.

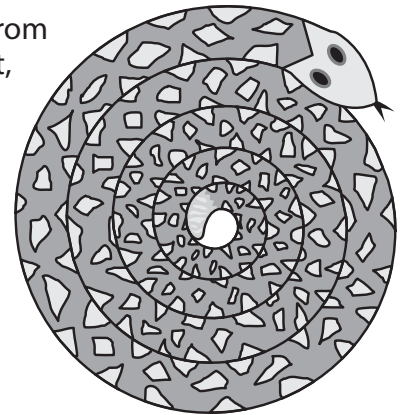
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The Plateau, Great Basin, and California

Our People of the Plateau, Great Basin, and California

You may wish to embellish the information below with outside research.

- **Climate/Environment:** Our region is large, covering land from the Rocky Mountains west to California. It is a land of desert, salt flats, mountains, and plateaus.
- **Food:** Most of us have a varied and abundant diet, as varied as the landscape in our region. We eat fish, small game, corn, fruit, nuts, and berries. In California, acorns are a staple of the diet. Occasionally, we cook and eat prairie dogs, rats, snakes, grasshoppers, grub, and roots (the so-called Digger Indians).
- **Tribes:** We will be called Paiute, Ute, Shoshone, Bannock, Chumash, Mohave, Shasta, Pomo, Hupa, Wiyot, Yokut, Flathead, and Nez Perce.
- **Special attractions:** We are basket makers, par excellence. The Pomo, especially, make some of the finest baskets anywhere. Conical baskets made by the Yokut are so tightly woven that they can be used to carry water.
- **Living conditions:** Our homes vary from tepees and lodges in the mountains to structures built partly underground and primitive dwellings covered with mats, rushes, or bark. Others choose to live in lean-tos called wickiups.
- **Religion:** Like most of the tribes on the continent, we are very religious. In fact, we believe in a supernatural power, and our ceremonies may last for days. One tribe drinks crushed jimsonweed, a narcotic plant. Some of our people make much of dreams and believe the words of our shamans.
- **Appearance and fashion:** Depending on which geographic region our people live in, men and women wear clothing appropriate to their own area. In California, where the climate is very pleasant, our people wear loincloths and skirts or go naked.
- **Behavior/War:** Our people in the mountains tend to be more warlike than the usually peaceful and docile basket makers of California. More than most other tribes, those in California love to gamble.
- **Transportation:** As with other aspects of tribal life, our people's way of getting around varies with the geography. Some of us paddle canoes, but most of us walk.



Demonstration: Consider demonstrating the basket-making skills of the California Indians. You could explain braiding and twining techniques (see pages 268–269 in *America's Fascinating Indian Heritage*). You could demonstrate how the Flathead Indians flattened the skulls of babies to achieve this unique human characteristic. You could demonstrate the sequence of taking sweat baths used by Indians in California.

Presentation suggestions: Pretend you are members of the local chamber of commerce, eager and proud to convince people to visit and settle in your community. Work to turn every flaw into an advantage or asset. Occasionally, use modern slang. ("This is a really 'cool' place to live," "Moving here will be a decision you'll never regret," etc.) Do extra research on your region and tribe. Have "audience" members whom you are recruiting come forward to assist you during your presentation. Use audiovisual aids (a drum beat along with a recorder instrument). Use a map to explain visual statistics. Keep your presentation within the time limit given to you.

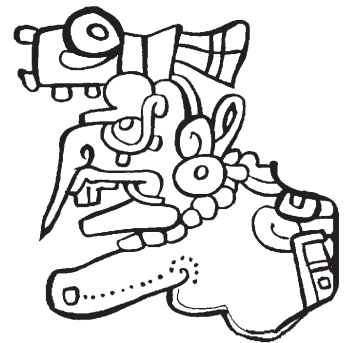


Mesoamerica

Our People of Mesoamerica

You may wish to embellish the information below with outside research.

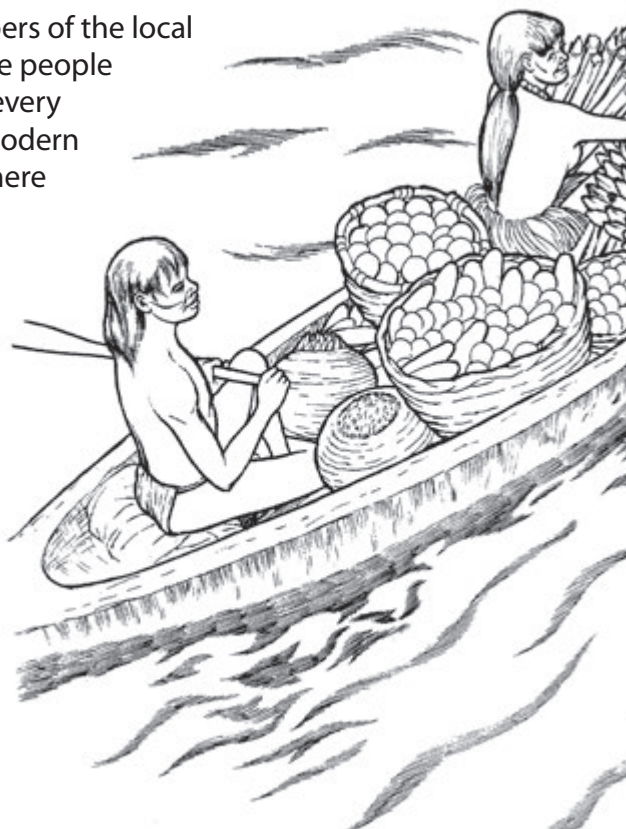
- **Climate/Environment:** We live in middle America, between the people of the Southwest and the tip of South America. It is a warm, yet invigorating climate, where a man can work and play all year long and not have to struggle to find a food supply. It is rarely cold. We have deserts, flatlands, mountains, and jungles.
- **Food:** Many of us cultivate maize (corn) and beans. Along with squash, these make up the staples of our diet. We also eat other foods. Chocolate is a nectar from the gods, but corn is our sustenance.
- **Tribes:** We will be called Olmec, Toltec, Aztec, Chibcha, Inca, and Maya.
- **Special attractions:** We consider ourselves the most advanced and sophisticated people on both continents. We have built huge stone figures, pyramids, and cities. We have developed a system of writing, invented a calendar, and created beautiful pottery, gardens, baths, and, in one area, a well-stocked zoo. Clearly, we have built empires, stretching through vast portions of Central America and South America. None of the achievements of the people north of us come close to what we have achieved.
- **Living conditions:** Most of us live in farming villages, but many dwell in cities near ceremonial centers. We spend so much time outside that our houses don't need to be elaborate or fancy.
- **Religion:** We worship many gods, such as the god of rain, the god of sun, and the god of corn. We have a special priesthood that guides our people spiritually. In some cases, we use animals and humans to sacrifice to the gods in hopes of fortune in weather, agriculture, or war.
- **Appearance and fashion:** Both men and women wear a coat-like top garment. We men wear a breechcloth under the coat. Women wear a wrap-around skirt, usually made out of cotton or, in the case of poorer people, made out of plant fiber. Priests and some officials wear elaborate jewelry. Their feathered headpieces are incredibly colorful.
- **Behavior/War:** Warfare is important to our people as our empires spread great distances. We usually wage war for political and economic reasons. Sometimes we wage war to take captives to sacrifice in religious ceremonies, as well as to work as slaves. Our armies are led by kings or by others specifically trained in the arts of war.



- **Transportation:** We usually walk from community to community along highways connected to our large cities. Sometimes we paddle canoes and boats along major canals in and around cities.

Demonstration: Consider several possibilities or demonstrations. You could research the history of chocolate (and serve hot chocolate), its medicinal qualities, etc. A few tribes in Mesoamerica played a game that resembled basketball. They played this game on huge courts near the cities' temples. Research it and demonstrate how it was played. Research the Mayan calendar and explain it with visual aids, or explain visually how Inca stonemasons cut stones and built great structures without using any mortar. These buildings still stand despite time and the frequency of earthquakes. Last, demonstrate how corn was grown and how many foods your people made from this "food of the gods."

Presentation suggestions: Pretend you are members of the local chamber of commerce, eager and proud to convince people to visit and settle in your community. Work to turn every flaw into an advantage or asset. Occasionally, use modern slang. ("This is a really 'cool' place to live," "Moving here will be a decision you'll never regret," etc.) Do extra research on your region and tribe. Have "audience" members whom you are recruiting come forward to assist you during your presentation. Use audiovisual aids (a drum beat along with a recorder instrument). Use a map to explain visual statistics. Keep your presentation within the time limit given to you.



Name _____ Date: _____

Roster of the People

Northwest Pacific Coast

Northeast and Eastern Woodlands

Great Plains

Southeast

Subarctic

Southwest

Plateau, Great Basin, and California

Mesoamerica

Name _____ Date: _____

Second Wavers' Notes

Instructions:

Please jot down essential information from the regional presentations you will hear and see. From these notes, you will determine where you will migrate to and settle down. At the end of this Activator, vote for the region that impresses you the most with their convincing data and delivery, not the region with the best beaches, tastiest grub, or swiftest canoes. Please ask hard questions of the regional reps (e.g., Why should we choose your region over all the others?).

Region and people: NORTHWEST PACIFIC COAST	Region and people: NORTHEAST AND EASTERN WOODLANDS
Region and people: GREAT PLAINS	Region and people: SOUTHEAST

Region and people: SUBARCTIC	Region and people: SOUTHWEST
Region and people: PLATEAU, GREAT BASIN, AND CALIFORNIA	Region and people: MESOAMERICA

After note-taking and careful consideration, I have decided to migrate to and settle down in the _____ region because (list 3–4 reasons):

Postscript

The prehistoric bands that left Beringia and fanned out over North America and South America became the peoples we now call Native Americans or American Indians. Regardless of the exact time they arrived, the fact remains that Native Americans had two vast continents to themselves. Then, in the 1500s, the Europeans came to these shores and forever altered the different cultures and societies that had developed over thousands of years.

The Norse, according to the sagas and physical evidence, came before the 1500s. Around 1,000 CE, Leif Erickson most likely led a small expedition from Greenland to Newfoundland. A later expedition of Greenlanders quarreled with local Indians. This skirmish was first recorded in a saga of two cultures in conflict. Next, Christopher Columbus, an Italian sailing under the flag of Spain, came to the New World and touched on islands in the Caribbean and on mainland South America. Following Columbus came a flood of explorers and settlers from Spain, France, the Netherlands, and, especially, England. Most Europeans treated Native Americans poorly, ready to dispose of them, or exploit them, rather than see them as equals or “noble savages.” Thus, the world of the Indian began to crumble as Europeans and their descendants swept into the interior of the continents.



Eventually, the Spanish colonized and ruled Central America and South America. They attempted to convert the Native Americans to Christianity. In most cases, they never really accepted Native American culture and society. American Indians, including advanced civilizations such as the Aztecs and Incas, were conquered (or annihilated), converted, and often enslaved.

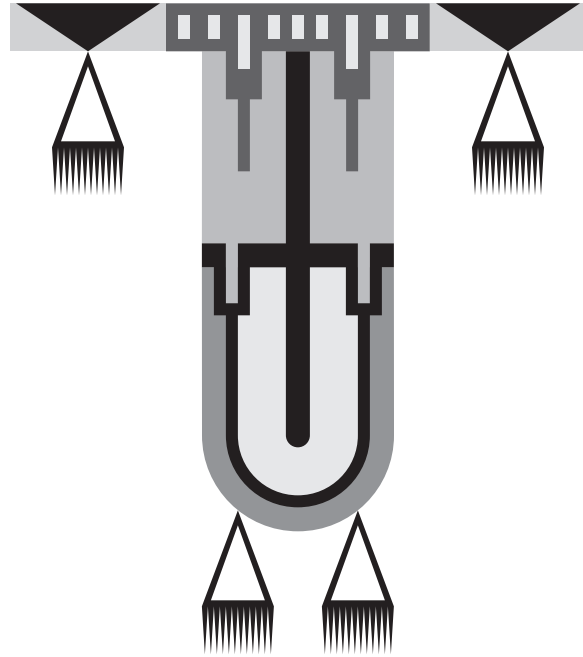
The Indians fared no better in North America. The English colonists, as early as the Puritans in the seventeenth century, perceived the natives to be savages and children of Satan. Over the next two and a half centuries, until 1900, the history of Native Americans was a tragic chronicle of conquest, deceit, and betrayal by the English and later by white Americans. One historian estimates, as an example of this deceit, that more than four hundred treaties, perhaps signed in “good faith” by U.S. government officials, were broken.

Additionally, many tribes were wiped out by “white man’s diseases,” most likely smallpox and cholera. Even more tribes were removed, often at bayonet point, from their ancestral lands to make way for land-hungry farmers, railroaders, or gold-seeking miners. By the late nineteenth century, Indians became wards of the U.S. government, which was now responsible for the social and economic welfare of its earliest peoples. Many were put on reservations: uninviting plots of land in mostly undesirable regions of the country.

As European and North American civilizations met, the so-called “Columbian exchange” also began: a hemispheric “swap” of peoples, plants, animals, and diseases that, starting in 1493, altered the world. To North America: horses, cows, sheep, coffee, oranges, bananas, daisies, carnations, chickens, honey bees, small pox, and measles. To Europe: corn, potatoes, tomatoes, chili peppers, squash, pumpkin, peanut, pecans, cashews, pineapples, turkeys, petunias, tobacco, and syphilis.

What appears to be a “bad deal at the trading post” may require a second look to see a more positive Native American legacy. True, some of today’s Native Americans live in poverty, face a continuing problem of alcoholism, and see their youth torn between two distinct societies. Nevertheless, the impact of their overall legacy is immense. Indian place names (e.g., Illinois, Wisconsin, Mississippi River), foods (corn, potatoes, tomatoes, chocolate, pumpkin), essential medicines (ipecac, petroleum jelly, quinine), and a living-within-nature value system have enriched the history of not only the United States but also the world.

The descendants of the “First Americans” have a mixed legacy. A recent history of discrimination, pain, struggle, and identity is countered with a proud heritage of cultural achievements and a simple lifestyle that many people today acknowledge and admire.



Historical Investigation Activity

First Americans Arrive (11,000 BCE)

Bill Lacey



Focus Question

Discoverer Christopher Columbus: Should he be singled out for the murder and enslavement of Native Americans after 1492?

Materials Needed for This Historical Investigation

- **Documents A–H**—*class set*
- **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**—*class set*

Lesson Plan

1. Getting Started

- Whether or not you did the Activator on the arrival of the First Americans, review or find out what students know about this particular topic. Put responses on the board as spokes emanating from a hub/circle of a wheel labeled “First Americans Arrive.” The discussion could include what students know about “Indians” in general. Whatever the case, this discussion could serve to augment the backstory that follows and get students to start thinking about the **Focus Question** and the documents they will analyze shortly.

2. Backstory to Use as Instruction

- For centuries, the history of European discovery and exploration started with Christopher Columbus (born Cristoforo Colombo). Universally praised almost without criticism for his navigational skills, leadership, and the subsequent mass migration to America he initiated, Admiral Columbus, to many, was an inspiring icon.
- His four voyages to the New World (1492–1504) remain pivotal events in World History and jump-started the modern era, despite the historical record that his “discovery” was, in fact, preceded in time by several groups of people, sailors, and captains as early as 11,000 BCE, when Siberians began crossing the Bering Strait.
- Most important, Columbus’s epic voyages were only chronicled by white Europeans, never Indians, and were slanted toward Eurocentrism, a belief that everyone not European was inferior. One wonders what contemporary Indian “histories” would make of the encounters.
- This Eurocentrism and the enormity of Columbus’s discovery took a beating as the 500th anniversary came and went in 1992, and a virtual

First Americans Arrive: c. 11,000 BCE

Historical Investigation Activity



tsunami of rage by Native Americans and supporters dampened festivities on the Italian seafarer: why celebrate a man and an event that led to the near annihilation of the natives he encountered (conquered) and perpetuated a belief that nonwhites were inferior, worthy of being only slaves, servants, or dead?

- Few would or could deny the Admiral of the Ocean Sea's boldness and skills as a mariner/navigator, even perhaps a visionary, and the importance of his "discovery," impacting the world as few events have, before or since.
 - The so-called Columbian Exchange, the crossing of crops, animals, ideas, and diseases across the Atlantic in both directions regularly after 1492, did alter the planet in so many ways. Unfortunately, one disease, smallpox, brought to the New World by Europeans, killed off thousands of Indians who had no immunity to the contagion.
 - This "clash of cultures" has from that day—October 12, 1492—echoed down the centuries. The modern perception of Columbus has, for many, changed from hero/icon to villain/murderer. Was he solely responsible for the documented cruelty toward the natives, destroying at the same time an ecosystem and a culture? What other factors, human or otherwise, besides Columbus, played a role in the "invasion" and its consequences? Were Columbus's beliefs and actions merely a mirror of his times?
3. Say, "From this backstory and the Activator you have experienced, before we examine the documents on this subject, do you think the recent criticism of Columbus is fair and that his status in world history should be downgraded?" Pass out the **Points to Ponder Response Sheet** so students can write their opinions for question 1.
 4. After a few minutes, stop your students and poll them with a show of hands, giving you a working hypothesis. Discuss responses if you have time. Say, "Our working hypothesis, before we analyze the documents, is . . ."
 5. Pass out the package of **Documents A–H**. Say, "What do the documents tell us, and what can we conclude? That's our task." It may be wise to read the first document or two aloud and go over what they say. Remind students to work through the documents carefully, and tell them there is no order or sequence to the documents. Perhaps the first task might be to have students put the documents in chronological order. Once done, release students (in pairs or small groups) to work.
 6. Allow 30–40 minutes for students to work and fill out the **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**.
 7. Discuss thoroughly and have students write their answers to the **Focus Question** (#13) as a closure. Have volunteers read their answers aloud to conclude the activity.

Name _____ Date: _____

Points to Ponder Response Sheet

Focus Question: Discoverer Christopher Columbus: Should he be singled out for the murder and enslavement of Native Americans after 1492?

1. Your first reaction to the **Focus Question** before analyzing the documents:

2. After reading all the sources, do you think the “clash of cultures” was inevitable? Which sources make this argument?

3. Which sources have the most doubt that Columbus was to blame for what happened to the Indians? Quote their words briefly to support this argument.

4. What beliefs of that era do some of the sources mention to explain why Indians were mistreated and even killed?

5. Do prevailing religious beliefs of Europeans of that era excuse the policies of Columbus and others who followed him? Why or why not?

6. For nearly five centuries following Columbus’s epic voyages, he was portrayed as a hero, a historic icon, one who “discovered” and opened up new continents for settlement. Why do you think, as Americans approached the 500th year anniversary of 1492, did this belief change so suddenly?

7. Why might Columbus be called a victim or a scapegoat in placing blame for the “genocide” perpetrated on the Native population?

8. Historians often differ about Columbus's legacy. Historians Howard Zinn and Samuel Morison have different views on the Admiral's legacy. Summarize each historian's view:

Morison: _____

Zinn: _____

9. How is it possible to describe Columbus as a brilliant mariner, intrepid, courageous, brave, glorious, iconic, a visionary, and outstanding, yet at the same time a murderous, cruel, greedy, cowardly rogue? Can both assessments be accurate? Explain.

10. Assessing blame for Indian genocide: After analyzing all the documents, how would you parcel out this blame? (Out of 100 percent)

Columbus: _____ percent. Why? _____

Prevailing Beliefs (i.e., slavery accepted, capitalism, Christianity, economic imperialism, Eurocentrism): _____ percent. Why? _____

Greed: _____ percent. Why? _____

Other: _____ percent. Why? _____

11. Historians have only a few primary sources to document this initial "clash of cultures" between Europeans and Native Americans: Columbus's diary (translated by his critic Bartolomé de Las Casas), a few letters by passengers on the voyages, and de Las Casas's two works. How would accounts of these encounters change in interpretation if Indian witnesses wrote down their views? What would they write about?

12. If you could ask Admiral Columbus one question, what would it be?

How might he answer your question?

13. In one lengthy paragraph of about five sentences, answer the **Focus Question**, using references to the documents to support your point of view.

[illegible]

Document A

Historian Howard Zinn on the Columbian Legacy

Like other states [in 1492] . . . Spain sought gold, which was becoming the new mark of wealth. . . .

In return for bringing back gold and spices, Ferdinand and Isabella promised Columbus 10 percent of the profits, governorship over new-found lands, and the fame that would go with a new title: Admiral of the Ocean Sea. . . .

. . . And so Columbus, desperate to pay back dividends to those who had invested, had to make good his promise to fill the ships with gold.

. . . The only gold around was bits of dust garnered from the streams. So [the Indians given the task of finding gold] fled, were hunted down with dogs, and were killed.

. . . When the Spaniards took prisoners, they hanged them or burned them to death. Among the Arawaks, mass suicides began . . .

When it became clear that there was no gold left, the Indians were taken as slave labor on huge estates. . . . They were worked at a ferocious pace, and died by the thousands.

Source: Howard Zinn, A People's History of United States (New York: Harper Collins, 1980).

Document B

Columbus Defended

The five-hundred-year anniversary of Columbus's discovery was marked by unusual and strident controversy. Rising up to challenge the intrepid voyager's courage and vision—as well as the establishment of European civilization in the New World—was a crescendo of damnation, which posited that the Genoese navigator was a mass murderer akin to Adolf Hitler. Even the establishment of European outposts was, according to the revisionist critique, a regrettable development. . . . [D]id the esteemed Admiral of the Ocean Sea kill almost all the Indians? A number of recent scholarly studies have dispelled or at least substantially modified many of the numbers generated by the anti-Columbus groups. . . .

It is also meaningless to employ terms like ecological imperialism to describe the interaction of the Europeans and the Indians. . . . To invoke such language is an attempt to reattach blame to Columbus and capitalism after anthropologists and historians have discovered that North American Indians had choices in how their world was shaped, and made no greater share of right—or wrong—choices than the new arrivals from Europe.

Source: Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen, *A Patriot's History of the United States* (New York: Sentinel, 2004).

Document C

Renowned Historian Samuel Eliot Morison Sizes Up the Admiral's Legacy

For decades, the Columbus biography written by Harvard historian Morison was the classic work on the admiral. Many view his assessment here as refreshingly honest.

Slavery was so taken for granted in those days . . . that Columbus never gave a thought to the morality of this proposal. If he had, he would doubtless have reflected that the Indians enslaved each other, so why should we not enslave them, particularly if we convert them, too, and save their souls alive? . . . [Queen] Isabella eventually forbade it [slavery], but not until it had proved to be unprofitable. . . .

. . . [The gold tribute system] initiated by Columbus and pursued by his successors resulted in complete genocide.

[Columbus] had his faults and his defects, but . . . there was no flaw, no dark side to the most outstanding and essential of all his qualities—his seamanship. As a master mariner and navigator, Columbus was supreme in his generation.

Source: Samuel Eliot Morison, *Christopher Columbus, Mariner* (New York: New American Library, 1955).

Document D

Columbus: A Twenty-First Century Assessment

The drastic devaluation of Columbus seems a recent phenomenon. . . . The most lasting damage to Columbus's reputation came from the pen of Bartolomé de Las Casas . . . in his influential jeremiad*, **A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies** written in 1542. . . . [H]e laid out the torture and genocidal practices of the Spanish colonists who followed Columbus. . . .

And the reason for this tragedy? In his words, "Purely and simply greed."

Source: Laurence Bergreen, *Columbus: The Four Voyages* (New York: Viking, 2011).

*Jeremiad—a prolonged lamentation or complaint

Document E

Las Casas: Eyewitness to Spanish Genocide of Indians

Excerpt 1

In this time, the greatest outrages and slaughterings of people were perpetrated, whole villages being depopulated. . . . I believe that because of these . . . criminal . . . acts, perpetrated unjustly, tyrannously, and barbarously upon them [the Tainos], God will visit His wrath . . . upon Spain for her share, great or small, in the blood-stained riches, obtained by theft and usurpation, accompanied by slaughter and annihilation of these people—unless she does much penance. . . .

I saw all the above things. All these did my own eyes witness.

Source: Bartolomé de Las Casas, *History of the Indies*, as quoted in Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise* (New York: Penguin, 1990).

Excerpt 2

[T]he Indians were totally deprived of their freedom and were put in the harshest, fiercest, most horrible servitude and captivity which no one who has not seen it can understand. Even beasts enjoy more freedom which they are allowed to graze in the fields. When they were allowed to go home, they often found it deserted and had no other recourse than to go out into the woods to find food and to die. When they fell ill, which was very frequently because they are a delicate people unaccustomed to such work, the Spaniards did not believe them and pitilessly called them lazy dogs, and kicked and beat them; and when illness was apparent they sent them home as useless.

Source: Bartolomé de Las Casas, *History of the Indies* (originally published in 1510).

(Note: Las Casas witnessed most of what he chronicled in his works. He also transcribed Columbus's journal.)

Document F

Was America an Eden before 1492?

Europeans first came to the Western Hemisphere armed with guns, the cross and, unknowingly, pathogens [germs]. Against the alien agents of disease, the indigenous people never had a chance. Their immune systems were unprepared to fight smallpox and measles, malaria and yellow fever.

The epidemics that resulted have been well documented. What had not been clearly recognized until now, though, is that the general health of Native Americans had apparently been deteriorating for centuries before 1492.

That is the conclusion of a team of anthropologists, economists and paleopathologists who have completed a wide-ranging study of the health of people living in the Western Hemisphere in the last 7,000 years.

. . . [T]heir findings in no way diminish the dreadful impact Old World diseases had on the people of the New World. But it suggests that the New World was hardly a healthful Eden.

Source: John Noble Wilford, "Don't Blame Columbus for All the Indians' Ills," *The New York Times*, October 29, 2002.

Document G

Was Slavery Justified?

"Bill" Bennett, a conservative writer and radio personality, wrote and published a two volume patriotic view of American history in which he often defended traditional heroes like Columbus.

*Slavery was a pervasive fact of life among the Europeans, but also particularly among the Arabs, the Africans, and the Indians themselves. In Asia, slavery had always existed. It seems hard to credit an attack on Columbus that singles him out for what was then a fairly universal practice. . . . A counter-challenge might be offered: Who, in Columbus's time, **did** not practice slavery? One might conclude that far from being slavery's **worst** practitioners, westerners led the world to end the practice.*

Source: William J. Bennett, *America: The Last Best Hope* Vol. I (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006).

Document H

The Columbus Legacy for Younger Readers

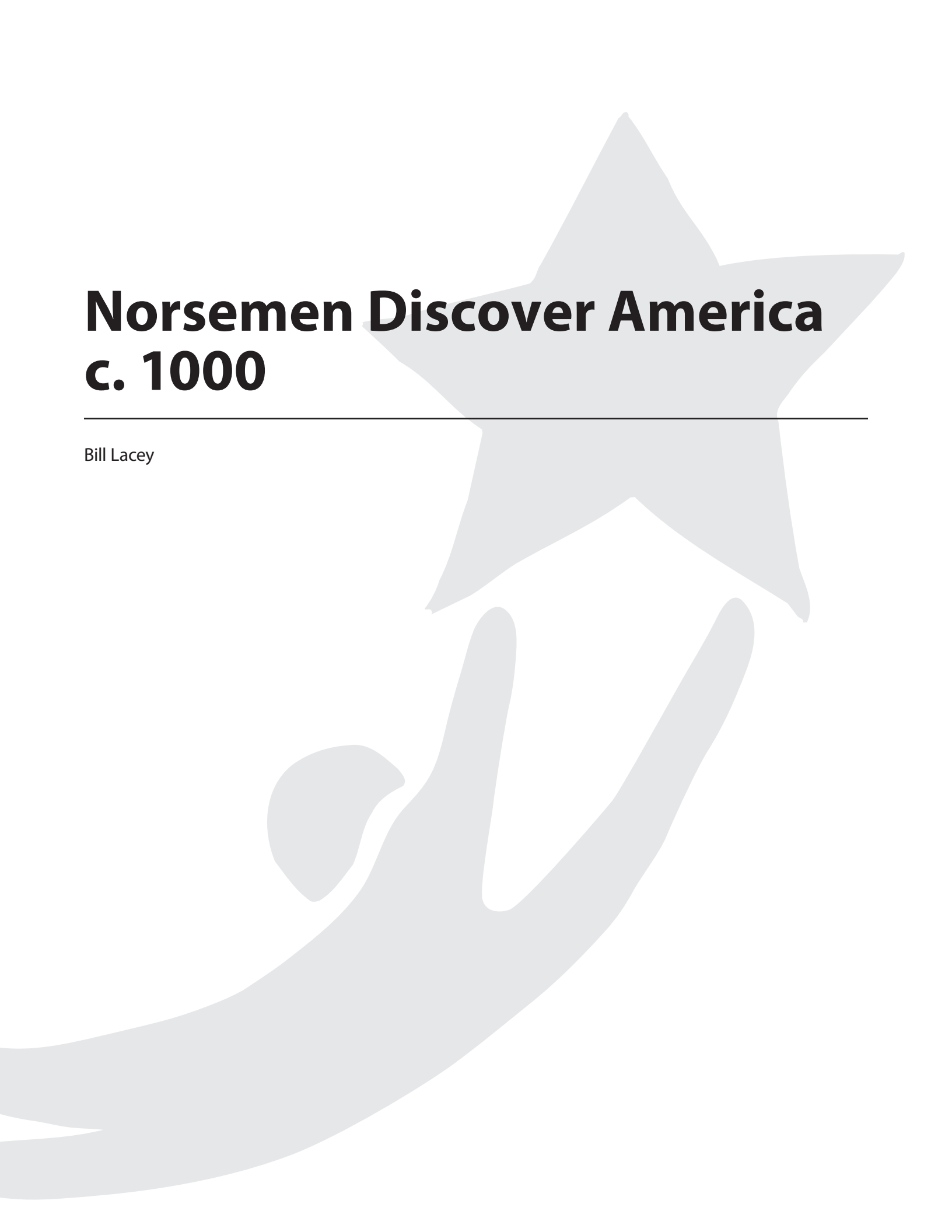
Sometimes books written for younger readers not only make history easier to understand but also zero in on current historical research and interpretation. The apparent contradictions of Columbus are summed up in one brief paragraph, “warts and all.”

He was a man of many contradictions—a brilliant mariner and admiral on the ocean but a poor governor and leader on land; a courageous explorer . . . but a cowardly rogue who resorted to murder and torture to obtain wealth. In spite of these contradictions—or perhaps, because of them—Columbus opened the routes to exploration and settlement of the Americas, helping to create the world we know today.

Source: Emma Carlson Berne, *Christopher Columbus: The Voyage that Changed the World* (New York: Sterling, 2008).

Norsemen Discover America c. 1000

Bill Lacey



Lesson Plan

Overview

Norsemen Discover America drops your students into the medieval world of Vikings, or Norse. As Norsemen, they will take a daring transatlantic voyage, rank navigation instruments, and select a location for a new colony as they “discover” North America. Participation in this Activator will help them appreciate and learn about Norse bravery, ingenuity, and decision making while they role-play sea captains and crews to become the first Europeans to sight and briefly settle in North America—five hundred years before Columbus set sail!

Setup

1. Duplication

- **Background Essay**—*class set, or one copy per group/crew*
- **Postscript**—*class set or one copy per group/crew*

Phase I Duplication

- **Crossing the North Atlantic** is for your use only unless you want to have students see or hear you read “The Situation” narrative and “Guidelines/Rules” pages.

Phase II Duplication

- **Norse Navigational Instruments**—*one full set of eight cards (cut up into a small “deck”) for each group/crew of six. (Suggestion: Laminate cards for future years.)*
- **The Norse at Sea** (bonus essay)—*class set or one copy per group/crew*

Phase III Duplication

- **Landfall Situation Sheet**—*one copy per group/crew*
- **Landfall Decision Sheet**—*one copy per group/crew*
- **Landing Party Observations Slips**—*one copy per group/crew (cut into six separate half-sheets)*
- **Vinland the Good Map**—*one copy per group/crew*

2. **Schematic, costumes, props:** Study the **Schematic** carefully. There is no need to find or encourage students to bring in costumes or props. The only “props” you will need are various books, book bags, etc., that will be placed on the classroom floor as obstacles to simulate a North Atlantic crossing by the six sea captains in **Phase I**.

3. **Roles:** The roles of the six sea captains are important enough to select students who have leadership traits to lead their crews. Give some thought to this task before you fill out a sheet listing the captains and crews a day or two before you start **Phase I**.
4. **Flourishes:** Depending on your time constraints, student abilities and available resources, use one or more of the following to add to the reality and ambience of this Activator:
 - In **Phase I**, make some signs that indicate "ICELAND" and "GREENLAND" to let students visualize the watery journey as six blindfolded sea captains attempt the North Atlantic crossing.
 - Also for **Phase I**, make signs to indicate where the six crews will gather for the activities. A sample placard to be stapled on strips of furring wood establishes each crew's territory.



*Other Norse names: Lars, Bjarni, Sax, Kon, Thane, Flicki, Ragnar

- Find and play some "Viking" music. This might mean locating the theme music from the 1958 Kirk Douglas film, *The Vikings* or music from History Channel's *Vikings* TV series.
- Learn to say a few phrases in Norwegian, (hello, goodbye, good luck, farewell, be brave, etc.,) and use them appropriately.

Directions

1. Hand out the **Background Essay** either the day before as homework or pass it out now. If you have given it as homework, conduct an informal discussion of the main points brought out in the essay. If you are passing it out now, read the essay aloud to the students as they read with you, pausing to explain the main points. You could also have students read it aloud to each other after they have been put into their ship's crew.
2. Whatever phase you are starting with, display the appropriate **Schematic**, explain it, and then have the students rearrange the classroom to create the setting.
3. Fill in some sort of roster of the six captains and their crews, dividing the class into six distinct crews on board six Viking ships (e.g., "The Swan") with a sea captain in each crew. Other ships' names: Long Serpent, Wooden Whale, Sea Wolf, Wave Skipper, Sea Dragon. Make sure all students are placed in one of the six Norse ships with a capable, responsible student leading each crew as a sea captain, drottin, or Jarl. A drottin, or Jarl (yarl), of that era was a warlord, chieftain, master, king, or military leader in the Old Norse language.

You have three options for running the Activator:

Option A: Implement All Three Phases

1. Decide if you want to do either **Phase I**, **II**, or **III** or all three phases of this Activator. **Phase II** is the easiest, requiring students to merely rank navigational "instruments" available to Norse sailors in the Viking Age. However, this phase will make more sense if attached to the other two. Therefore, we recommend doing all three. Reading the bonus essay **The Norse at Sea** will enrich this activity.
2. If you choose to do all three, follow the suggestions below after you have had students read the **Background Essay** and put them into their groups of six.

Phase I

1. Have all six sea captains (one from each ship) go outside / into the hall / adjacent room—somewhere they can't see or hear you. Then have the rest of your students listen to your explanation of why you are setting up obstacles in the "ocean"—to simulate the dangers of the North Atlantic voyage. Next, allow several students to place obstacles (books on end, book bags, jackets, etc.) strewn throughout the front of the room.

2. Once done, go back into the hallway/adjacent room where the sea captains are and blindfold the first explorer. Bring him/her into the room, a process you will do with the remaining five—one at a time—in a few minutes.
3. From the sheet **Crossing the North Atlantic**, read “The Situation” narrative. It would take less time if you can paraphrase this reading and the “Guidelines/Rules”. Emphasize this simple goal: You are trying to sail from Iceland to Greenland and avoid obstacles that simulate the voyage’s dangers. Before you have the blindfolded captains separately embark on the voyage, spin them around once and release them out onto the “ocean.” **Note:** You may want to put a time limit on each navigator; a slow shuffle may not knock over any obstacle! This procedure is then followed until all six have “sailed” across the ocean.
4. After all six captains have completed their voyages, have a discussion of the real disasters Norse sea captains faced:
 - Fear of falling off the earth
 - Icebergs, high waves, ice-cold water, ice chunks, storms
 - Shortages of food / fresh water
 - Sickness on board
 - Leaks in ships

Complete this phase with a discussion about why people seek adventure and risk their lives to explore and discover, especially at sea. Note which sea captain had the most success (fewest knock-overs).

Phase II

1. If necessary, configure your classroom desks to conform to **Schematic II**’s cooperative group model, using the same crews and captains as **Phase I**.
2. Hand out the eight-card set of **Norse Navigational Instruments** and tell students to read, work, and decide cooperatively which instruments they think were the most valuable and effective for transoceanic crossings. They should shift the cards around until all eight are ranked/prioritized in order of importance. Tell them to be prepared to defend their choices, even the instruments they ranked numbers 6, 7, and 8. Then have a class discussion from the responses.



Teaching tip

Caution: Take special care during the Crossing the North Atlantic activity that students do not hurt themselves.

Phase III

1. The classroom desk configuration can remain from **Phase II**, but make sure you've left room for each group to come to the front to explain their choices for their colony/settlement.
2. Pass out these key sheets:
 - a. **Vinland the Good Map**—*two copies to each group/crew*
 - b. **Landfall Situation Sheet**—*one copy to each group/crew*
 - c. **Landfall Decision Sheet**—*one copy to each group/crew*
 - d. **Landing Party Observation Slips**—*one set of the six half-slips to each group/crew*
3. Motivate students by displaying the **Vinland the Good Map** and ask, "Where would you establish a colony on this map if you were off the coast and winter was coming?" Have two or three students respond in a brief discussion.
4. Read and explain the **Landfall Situation Sheet**. Then refer to the **Landfall Decision Sheet**. Have groups fill in the top one-third and then explain that the remainder of the sheet will be filled out as they make decisions on where they will establish their colony, the best and worst sites on the map, and why these sites were chosen. Emphasize that they may select their own site, not one suggested by the landing party (sites A–H). Make sure students pay heed to the sea captain's six concerns and that while they are in their discussions, each member of the group fills in their **Observation** slip.
5. Allow ten minutes for students to make summaries in three statements, present within the group their **Observations**, and complete the rest of the **Decision Sheet**.
6. Have groups volunteer to present (or appoint them). A flourish: have each group place a symbol on the illuminated map (star, triangle, square, circle, rectangle, etc.) on the exact spot they've chosen, and make sure they give a name to their new colony fitting a Norse settlement. This personalizes their efforts. It is important that their reasoning is just as vital as the selected sites. Did each group really consider the captain's concerns? Repeat/read the concerns from the "Situation" narrative.
7. In the **Debriefing**, point out that "F" is really where Leif Eriksson's house-sites and smithy were built. Centuries later, the area would be called L'Anse aux Meadows, located on the northernmost tip of the Canadian island province of Newfoundland. The Norse, of course, could very well have survived at other sites on the map as well, but "F" offered

solutions to most of the concerns any leaders would have. Leif's brief stay (one winter and spring) did not include any encounter with the natives. His brother, Thorvald, a few years later, would have skirmishes with some fatalities.

Option B

1. A less verbal class might have more success with **Phase II**, a more group-oriented, cooperative activity. It is recommended that you utilize the bonus essay, **The Norse at Sea**, for this phase's activity.
2. A more active class would feel comfortable, perhaps, participating in **Phase I**—the **Crossing the North Atlantic** activity. Even **Phase III** would suit this kind of class as they discuss vigorously and then come forward to present.

Option C

1. A third option is also proffered: Demo **Phase I** with one or two blindfolded students and then display the map, refer to the captain's concerns, and have three or four individual students come up and explain where and why each would establish a Norse colony at **Vinland**. This option is less active and seems contrary to the purpose of the Activator series concept, but it would accommodate any time constraints and pacing guide requirements. Whatever you choose, enjoy the moments!

Debriefing

Decide whether you wish to use a short or long debriefing. Here are some possible ways to make meaningful what might have happened when intrepid Norse sailors anchored off the coast of eastern Canada about 1000 CE.

Short Debriefing

1. Pass out the **Postscript**. Either read it aloud or have several students read each paragraph.
2. Ask students to discuss what they learned and what they felt as they played medieval Norse/Viking navigators and sailors discovering and establishing a colony on North America.
3. Consider having students write a Learning Log entry. Also, as a companion to the Log, have students reflect on what kind of thinking went into making the decision to colonize at a specific location. What consequences would there be if poor decisions were made in this case? Discuss responses.

Long Debriefing

1. Pass out the **Postscript**. Either read it yourself or have several students read aloud. Elaborate on key points.
2. **Ask students:** *Should the Norse be given credit for being the first European discoverers of America if they spent only a brief time colonizing and nothing came of it?* It was a “dead end”—Europeans weren’t ready to sail in large numbers until after Columbus’s epic voyage. How much credit do we give the Norse? Would we be willing to give more recognition if they had colonized on land later to be the United States—say Massachusetts? Likewise, some scholars are willing to believe that Vinland could be in Massachusetts—where vines (grapes) grow—not in Newfoundland, where other berries, but not grapes, grow.
3. Have students create a metaphor or simile about the Norse in America. “The Norse in America were like _____.”
4. At this writing, there have been few if any feature films on the Norse discovery of and settlement on North America. Any visual rendering of this event would add immeasurably to the learning here. There are several documentaries of varying quality and length. Some titles: *The Vikings in America*; *The Vikings: Voyage to America*; *The Vinland Mystery*; and a two-part biography on Leif Eriksson originally broadcast on the History Channel. Go online, make a decision, and let your students visually get acquainted with the Vikings in America.
5. Using poetry in the history classroom can be a vivid and dramatic way to extend and enhance any historical topic, even the Norse in America. It is recommended that you have each student compose a poem dealing with an array of different topics surrounding the Norse voyages and settlement in Greenland and North America, Erik the Red, Leif Eriksson, Bjarni Herjólfsson, Vinland, or any subtopic in the **Background Essay, Postscript**, or in the Activator itself.
6. Someone wrote that “poetry is the use of language with the most possibilities.” And so it is. There are at least a hundred poetry formats to suggest. The Norse had their own Scaldic poetry, often based on metaphors, called “kennings.” Research this and write a poem based on this style. Two others, Cinquain and Haiku, follow.

CINQUAIN

Pattern

- First Line (One word giving the title)
- Second Line (Two words that describe the title)
- Third Line (Three words that express action)
- Fourth Line (Four words that express feelings)
- Fifth Line (One word — a synonym for the title)

Example

NORSE

Fearless, Adventuresome
Exploring, Discovering, Colonizing
Spirited, Curious, Brave, Aggressive
VIKINGS!

HAIKU—"One Breath Poetry"

Tells a story in three lines with the last line being somewhat ironic.

Line 1—5 Syllables

Line 2—7 Syllables

Line 3—5 Syllables

Example

Norse Navigators

Exploring America

Hey! They were here first!

7. Pass out **Evidence from the Earth: Drawing Conclusions from Artifacts Found at a Newfoundland Dig**. Read the text, discuss and have students write out three or four conclusions in statement form that sum up life in Vinland circa 1000 CE.

Resources to consult

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Holand, Hjalmar. *Norse Discoveries and Explorations, 982–1362: Leif Erikson to the Kensington Stone*. New York: Dover Publications, 1968.

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Ingstad, Helge, and Anne Stine Ingstad. *The Viking Discovery of America*. London: Breakwater Books, 2000.

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Lemonick, Michael D., and Andrea Dorfman. "The Amazing Vikings." *Time* 155, no. 19 (May 8, 2000): 68–78.

Magnusson, Magnus. *Viking Expansion Westwards*. New York: Henry Z. Walck, 1973.

Wahlgren, Erik. *The Vikings and America*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1985.

Wallace, Brigitta L. *Westward Vikings: The Saga of L'Anse aux Meadows*. St. John's, Newfoundland: Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2006.

Wernick, Robert. *The Vikings*, *Seafarers* series. Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1979.

Visual history

There has not been a plethora of Hollywood features or documentaries on the topic of the Norse discovery of America. One documentary can be recommended: History Channel's *Digging for the Truth: The Vikings—Voyage to America* hosted by anthropologist, journalist, and survival expert Josh Bernstein. In a forty-five-minute program, he takes the viewer from Iceland and Greenland to North America—at one point on a ship captained by a descendent of Erik the Red. The last seven minutes cover Leif Eriksson's voyage and colonizing efforts on Newfoundland, where a docent explains the discovered artifacts and walks Bernstein through the grassy lodges at L'Anse aux Meadows.

Background Essay

Place: North Atlantic Ocean, North America—Eastern Canada

Time: 980s–1020 CE

This Activator will involve you in a daring transatlantic voyage to “discover” North America and in your bold selection of a site on which to build the first documented European settlement in America. As you recreate this epic voyage and colonizing attempt, you will learn about these Norse adventures and the skills it required not only to complete the voyage but to build a successful colony as well. Get ready to experience a sea-going adventure just like intrepid Norse sea captains (and sailors) like Bjarni Herjólfsson, Leif Eriksson, and Erik the Red did, braving watery dangers and exploring new lands about 985 through 1020 CE—all this five hundred years before Columbus sailed!

Who were the Vikings?

The Vikings, Norse, Norsemen, or Northmen, who appeared like a bolt from the blue in the late eighth century were fair-haired Germanic tribes who lived in Scandinavia (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and eventually Iceland). Mostly farmers and herdsman, some Norse left their homes and families to sail to other distant shores to explore, often to colonize, but in some cases, to raid, pillage, and kill. Theirs was a pagan religion (before they converted to Christianity) with a bloodlust warrior code, generating violence, cruelty, and fear among their victims. One of these victims wrote, “Deliver us, O Lord, from the wrath of the Northmen.”

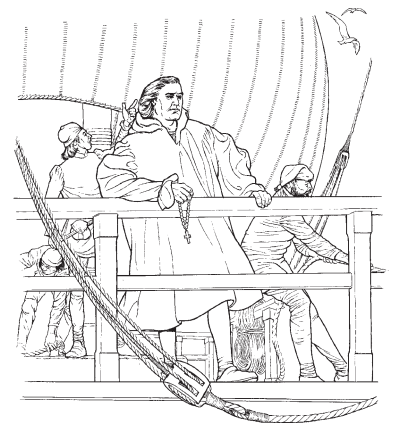
Exploding myths

Actually, the ongoing myth of Norse barbarism needs to be abandoned, or at least toned down. Some Norsemen went viking occasionally; these warrior-raiders were usually omitted from their family’s first-born-son inheritance tradition. Hence these Norsemen were left with little to do and an abundance of energy. Travel and adventure were outlets for them. Most revealing, Viking culture, at the same time as their conquests, produced remarkable literature (eddas, sagas,

poetry) and fine art (furniture, jewelry, designs). In addition, Norse communities, especially in Iceland, practiced a democracy rare among medieval societies, where women, if not men’s equals, were granted more rights (e.g., property rights) than other contemporary European women and enjoyed higher status. What seems to stick in our modern minds is the blood-soaked history of the Vikings and their supreme sea-going skills that enabled them to sail all over the known world of c. 1000 CE. As they did, they traded, explored, and settled in far-flung places like Russia, the eastern Mediterranean, coastal France, England, Scotland, Iceland, Greenland, and even North America!

The Norse and Columbus

For many decades, perhaps centuries, scholars gave little credit to the Norse as the true European discoverers of America. After all, this “discovery” leading to a few Norse outposts briefly colonizing North America in about 1000, didn’t alter world events very much. To be honest, the largest transformation occurred after the voyages of Columbus, in about 1500, initiating the so-called Columbian Exchange, a transoceanic two-way transfer of plants, animals, peoples, diseases, and culture between Europe and America. The Vikings had little to do with this particular exchange. What they did do as Europeans, however, is “discover” America five hundred years before Columbus set sail. Transformational or not, the Norse, it is now conceded by scholars of the subject, were the first Europeans here!



Sources and sagas

We now can verify this Norse achievement from slim but mostly reliable sources. Most secondary accounts—textbooks included—of the Norse sea-going adventures are taken from four basic sources:

- The sagas
- The writings of their enemies or victims (which tended to be harsh)
- Their own legends, poems, and inscriptions
- The artifacts dug up by archaeologists over the years in Scandinavia, Russia, France, England and, in the mid and late twentieth century, in North America (eastern Canada)

Unearthed relics/artifacts of Norse habitation and the written sagas tend to be the most reliable and trustworthy evidence, although the Norse sagas tend to be exaggerated and embellished as well as colorful and poetic. Sagas are tales of Viking heroes (real or not) and their deeds, in our case of exploring unknown lands. Surprisingly, some of the sagas' information has basis in solid fact. Once told orally during cold winters in fire-warmed lodges, sagas were finally written down a century or two later.

Archaeological proof

The best way to prove the accuracy of the sagas is to find Norse habitations and dig up the evidence. This is what two Norwegian archaeologists, Helge and Anne Ingstad, did in the 1960s. They worked tirelessly, digging at a site on the northern tip of Newfoundland. Finding iron rivets and other evidence of metal working, a bronze ring-headed pin, a spindle whorl, and a cluster of buried turf houses and workshops—all associated with medieval European carpentry and ship repair—

gave dramatic confirmation, once carbon dated, that the saga accounts of Norse voyages were not simply romantic, heroic myths about imaginary lands to the west.

A second Norse outpost?

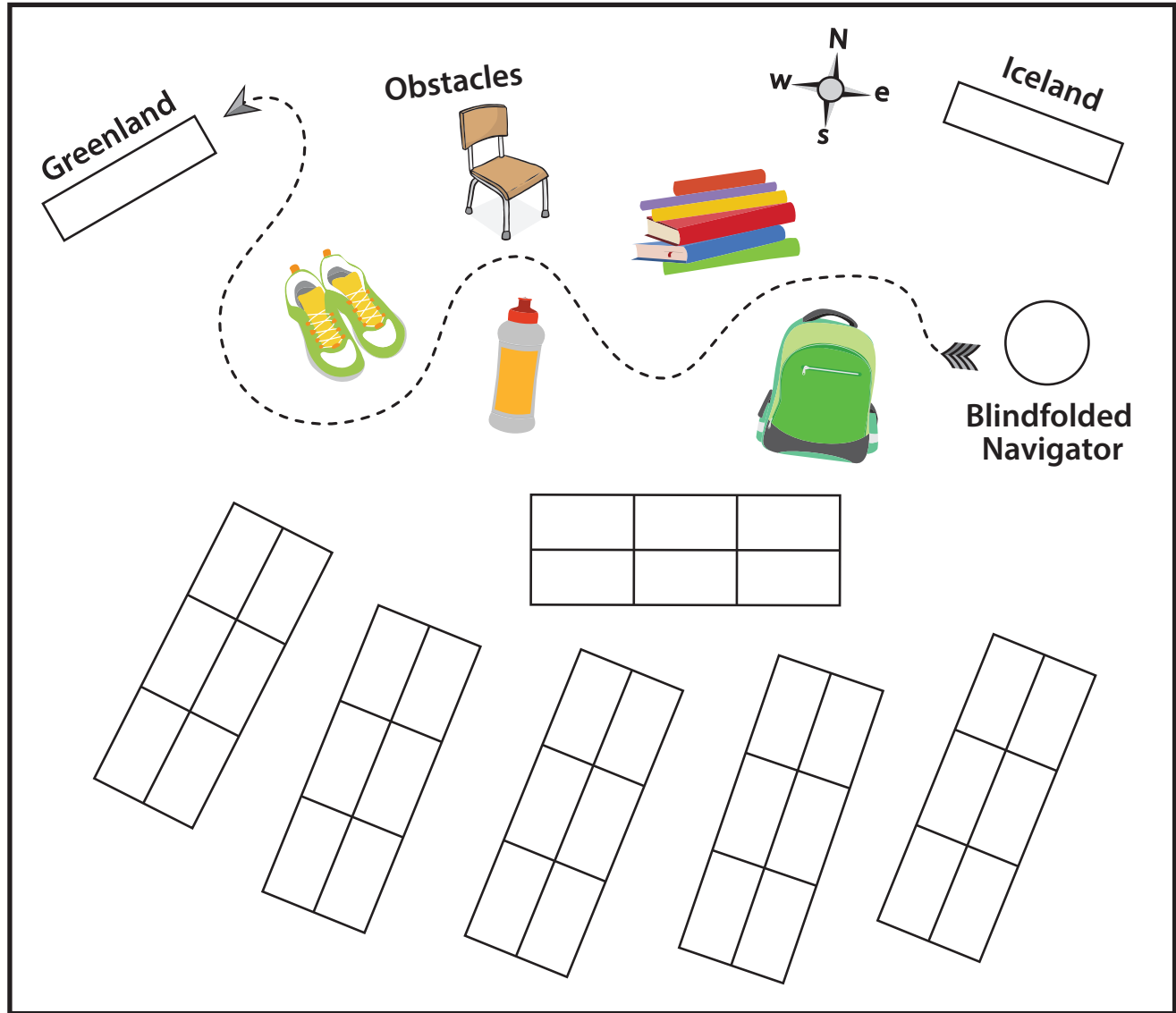
In the spring of 2016, it was revealed that there might be a second Norse settlement in North America. Using images from satellite technology four hundred miles above the earth's surface, archaeologists, notably Sarah Parcak, were intrigued and excited about the images they saw on Newfoundland. Soon they began digging at Point Rosee, a peninsula jutting out from the southwestern tip of Newfoundland, some three hundred miles from L'Anse aux Meadows, the first excavation site, on the northern tip of the large Canadian island. This new satellite technology exposed turf wall outlines on the site, which was enough to encourage further excavation. What was uncovered in digs was twenty-eight pounds of iron slag, an iron bog "roasting" hearth, and turf walls similar to Norse dwellings elsewhere. These findings and further excavations seem promising, but until further conclusive evidence is unearthed, no one connected to the project is ready to proclaim the site at Point Rosee to be the second Norse settlement in North America. Perhaps soon a new chapter of the Norse in America will be written.

Now be a Norse navigator/sea captain and colonizer!

You and your classmates will soon test your mettle as you role-play Viking explorers, crossing the unpredictable and stormy North Atlantic. Then you will rank Norse navigational instruments of that time, and, after making landfall in North America, decide where to establish your new colony of Vinland.

Schematic

Phase I: Crossing the North Atlantic



Suggestions:

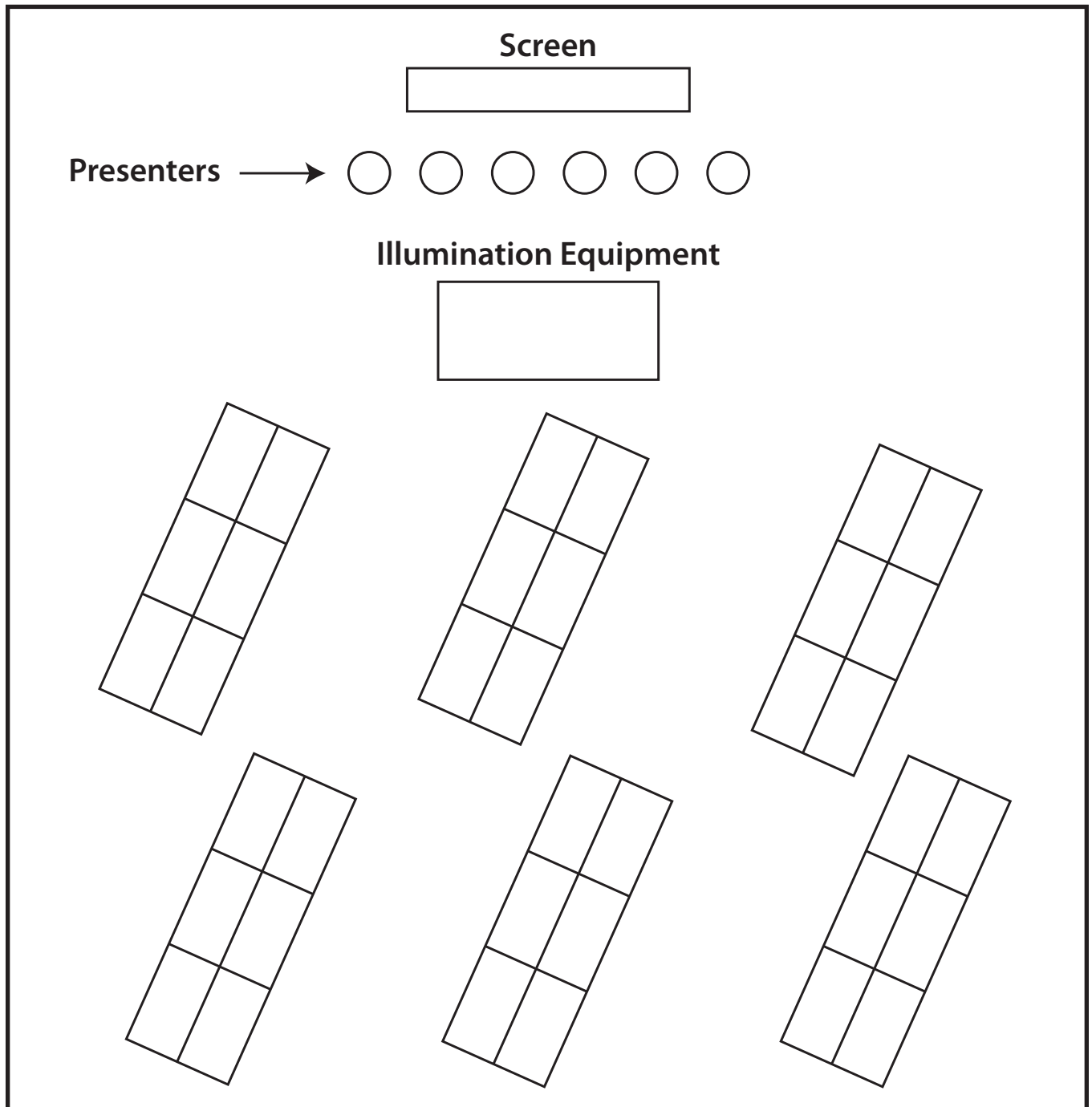
- All navigator captains are in the hall or outside. One at a time, they come in to hear "The Situation" read to them. They are blindfolded before they enter the classroom.
- For obstacles (10–12) use backpacks, jackets, books on end, a water bottle, etc.
- Before embarking from "Iceland," turn the navigator around a few times.
- Time each navigator with a watch. Winner: Fastest time with fewest knock-downs touches.

Phase II: Ranking Norse Sailing Instruments

Suggestions:

- Let this phase play out as a cooperative group activity (students at desks in groups of six)—the eight instruments should be debated and some consensus reached in ranking them from most important to least.
- Discussion should follow.
- To create a team relationship, label each group from names on the **Personnel Sheet**.

Phase III: Landfall and Founding a Norse Colony



Suggestions:

- Have each group present its decision after thoroughly discussing all aspects and data found on the **Landfall Situation Sheet** and **Observation** slips, using the **Vinland Map** and **Landfall Decision Sheet**.

Crossing the North Atlantic

(Read this dramatically.)

The Situation

"Three years ago, you, Erik 'the Red' Thorvaldsson, were banished from Norway and Iceland for a series of quarrels and manslaughter charges. Without many options left, you decided to sail west and start a new colony across the North Atlantic. You will spend about three years there, exploring the land. Now, three years later, in 985 your sentence for 'outlawing' is over, and so you sail east, back to Iceland with a glowing (and exaggerated) tale of adventure to the west and anticipated prosperity for all in a 'promised land,' that you have named Greenland.

Bragging about the new land, you now recruit and gather up colonists from Iceland—twenty-five ships full, about five hundred people—to sail to Greenland. Your fleet has to sail across a dangerous, hazardous stretch of the North Atlantic—no easy task as its waters are choppy and ice cold, with waves that threaten to capsize ships; drift-ice, large glacier pieces, with a stormy sea and violent winds plague these voyages as well.

You and the other five hundred or so colonists are determined, as well as excited about the journey. And you, Erik the Red, will lead them!"

Guidelines/Rules

Up to six Norse captain-navigators will soon simulate the North Atlantic voyage from Iceland to Greenland (approx. 767 miles).

One at a time, each navigator will try to conquer the North Atlantic without knocking down any obstacles, representing the difficulties of such a voyage. These voyages will simulate the dangers of transoceanic sailing in the year 1000 CE. You must cross the North Atlantic in less than _____ seconds. The following penalties apply:

- If the navigator *touches* one obstacle—two ships are sunk along with all the passengers on these two ships.
- If the navigator *touches* two obstacles—five ships are sunk.
- If the navigator *knocks down* one or two obstacles—ten ships are sunk.
- If the navigator *knocks down* three or more obstacles—the entire fleet is sunk and all the passengers on all twenty-five ships are lost at sea.

Norse Navigational Instruments



Sunboard/Sundial

- Done at midday to correct course
- It measured the height of the sun
- It was unreliable in cloudy weather
- Making a course change in open sea could be risky



Weather Vane

- Found on every Norse ship
- Showed wind direction after losing sight of land
- Wind could change direction and current could send ship off course
- If unreliable, use other instruments



Bearing Circle

- Based on information about the sun's position at sunrise/sunset
- Found latitude with help of a shadow from a vertical pin and the course was marked by a pointer at the North Star on clear nights



Plumb Bob

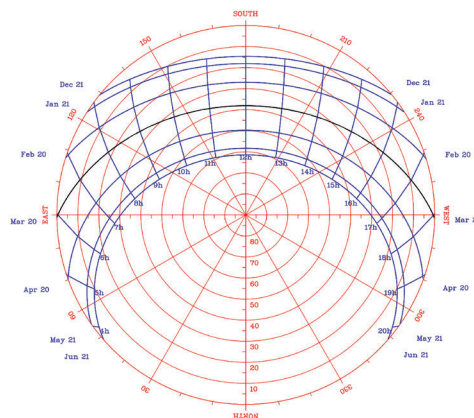
- Usually on every Norse vessel
- Used to assess depth of water and collect samples of the seabed plants
- Types of seabed plants informed sailors of how close to land they were

Image Source: ©The Portable Antiquities Scheme/ The Trustees of the British Museum/CC BY SA 2.0
 Unartoq disc, Danish National Museum, Copenhagen
 ©Berig/CC BY SA 4.0



Instincts/Experience

- Early version of “dead reckoning” based on the mariner’s gut feelings from experience
- Sightings of birds and sea life helped determine how far away from land the ship was (especially whales)
- Smell, hearing (especially in fog) helped also (waves breaking on shore)
- Direction of winds, currents



Semi-Wheel

- All information about the sun’s path for all seasons put on a table that gives the height of the sun for the entire year—almanac-like



Landmarks

- Experienced Norse sailors used objects on land as they sailed along coasts to identify location—rocks, hilltops, mountains, peninsular outcrops, forests, etc.
- Was not effective in open water



Sunstone

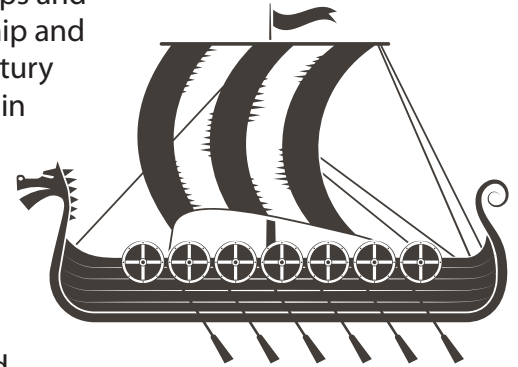
- Scholars disagree on its existence
- It was used to find the sun on overcast days, since it was made of cordierite / Iceland spar, a mineral that could show the direction of the sun on cloudy days by changing color
- Needed only a patch of blue sky to indicate polarization

Bonus Essay

The Norse at Sea: Ships, Navigation, and Famous Viking Explorers

Viking Ships

To be able to cross the North Atlantic, Vikings relied on their ships and navigational skills. The Norse were experts in naval craftsmanship and had several kinds of ships for different purposes. Twentieth-century statesman Winston Churchill wrote, "The soul of the Vikings lay in the long ship." The drekar, dragon or long ship, seen in movies about Vikings, tended to be troop carriers for fast hit-and-run raids. The knarr was a cargo vessel. The karve was a smaller version of a long ship that could be used for both war and trade and could navigate in shallow waters. For transatlantic crossings, the knarr was probably used. Many scholars believe that the secret of the Viking ships lay in their unique overlapped planking secured by iron nails, ensuring resistance and flexibility. Sturdy oak crossbeams and one massive beam along the keel gave increased support to the mast.



Norse Navigation

Expert navigation skills were required to sail these ships. Navigators (called "Drottins") during the Viking Age (800–1100) didn't have the instruments their sailing counterparts would have after 1500: the magnetic compass, astrolabe, sextant, and cross-staff, to name a few. Nor did Norse sailors have maps or charts. Yet, Viking captains made use of weather vanes, bearing circles, sunboards, their own sailing experience, and knowledge of the sea, its weather patterns, and sea life. Some believe the Norse made use of a sunstone, an object made from the mineral cordierite that could detect the direction of the sun on cloudy days.

Norse Navigators: Erik the Red

All the skills of navigating across the North Atlantic were certainly possessed by at least a trio of brave Norse, who are now famous in history. Sailing westward from Iceland first, as the sagas tell us, was Erik Torvaldsson, later known to us as Erik the Red for his red hair (most Scandinavians have blond or light brown hair). After his own father was banished from Norway to Iceland, Erik himself was also branded an outlaw for a manslaughter charge in Iceland. Exiled, he sailed to the west seeking a safer and more hospitable haven. Around 983, he and a small fleet of ships reached Greenland. Erik found the western side to be a sheltered coast of ice-free fjords and, seeing a reasonable amount of pastureland, established a colony there. Three years later, he returned to Iceland and persuaded others to follow him. Of the twenty-five ships that embarked for Greenland, only fourteen ships survived the voyage. Once settled in Greenland, Erik ruled over his colony at Brattahlid and held court in his great hall used for community members and visitors.

Bjarni—The Accidental Discoverer

The sagas tell us that at least one important visitor to Brattahlid was late, but for good reason. Bjarni Herjólfsson, a Norse merchant-trader, sailed from Norway in about 985–986 to find his father, who had earlier migrated to Greenland with Erik the Red. On the voyage to Greenland, Bjarni's ship was driven off course in bad weather. Soon he found himself off the coast of a low-forested land (probably the Canadian province of Labrador). Then, sailing north, he sighted a mountainous, glaciated, and barren land, which was probably Baffin Island. Not landing on these shores—he was not an explorer, but a trader—Bjarni finally sailed east and made landfall at Brattahlid. Once his story was told in Erik's great hall, Bjarni was criticized for not landing and investigating—Viking style—his sighted discoveries. Still, if the sagas have in them a kernel of truth about this man and his deed, as most scholars agree, Bjarni is the first (if accidental) European discoverer of America; he had the first glimpse of North America's shore.

Leif Eriksson—Like Father, Like Son

Present at his father's Brattahlid court when Bjarni's story was told, Leif Eriksson (he was in fact Erik's son) and the Greenland community assumed Erik would eventually embark on a voyage to retrace Bjarni's journey and explore the new lands he originally sighted. One saga tells us that Erik, as he rode to the dock to board ship, fell off his horse, was injured, and then told Leif to complete the expedition. According to the *Greenlanders' Saga*, Leif (pronounced "lave") sailed west in about the year 1000 and made landfall on a rocky, barren land he called Helluland ("Slab Land")—probably Baffin Island. From there he sailed south and encountered Markland ("forested lands"—probably Labrador). Continuing south, Leif made another landfall and spent the winter in a milder climate in a land he called Vinland ("meadowland" or "land of vines" [grapes/berries]—probably Newfoundland). This last stop at Vinland was somewhere between the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Cape Cod; many believe it was at the northern tip of Newfoundland, later called L'Anse aux Meadows. The next spring, Leif sailed back to Greenland to become, upon Erik's death, leader of the colony.

Landfall Situation Sheet

Situation

You are part of a crew of thirty-five Norsemen who have been on a knarr merchant ship for several days, sailing from Erik the Red's Brattahlid settlement in Greenland. Your intent is to explore new lands to the west and south of Greenland. It is late autumn, and your drottin (captain) feels it is time to make landfall to explore the shoreline and interior. You want to find the best possible site on which to establish a Norse colony, however long the settlement may last—at least through the coming winter into spring.

You are presently anchored about one hundred yards off the coast of what appears to be a large island. The voyage your ship took from Eriksfjord had a few rough days, with stiff breezes, one strong storm, and, even as you approached this island, drift-ice from more northern latitudes. You have been told that the ship's supply of water and food is low, so colonizing this unfamiliar land in the next few days is vital for survival.

It is hoped that the area around the colony will provide animal life and fresh water for the winter and spring months. Hunting, fishing, and harvesting plants, along with the construction of some houses/cabins will be the tasks over the next several days, maybe weeks. Just a few days ago, the drottin sent out an advance landing party to map the area and make notes about the flora and fauna and other essential resources that hopefully will provide the needed sustenance for the entire crew.

The captain also told everyone about his concerns that will determine the success or failure of the colony and what should be considered before everyone decides on exactly where to establish this colony.

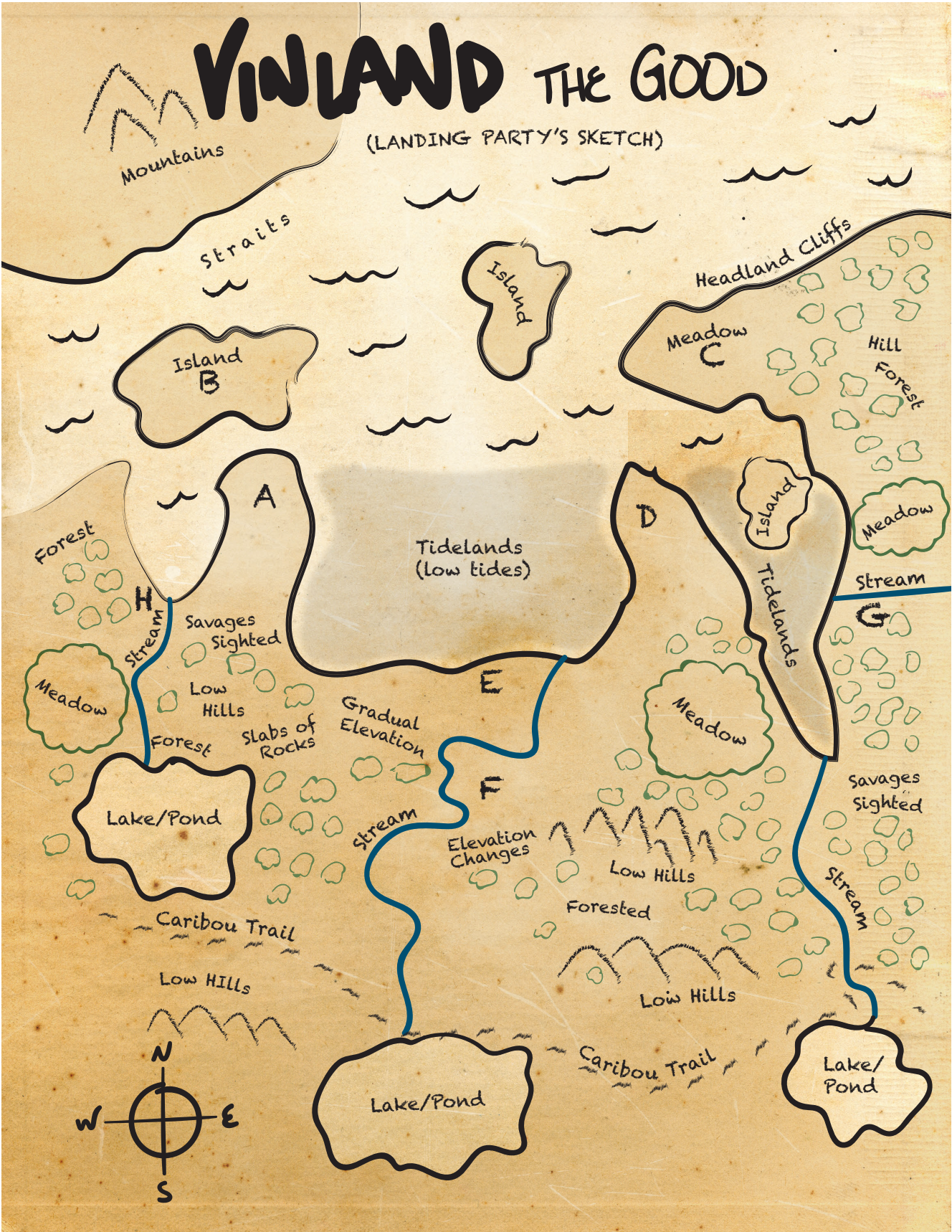
Your Captain's Concerns

- Fresh water sources
- Building materials (wood and sod)
- Fire wood
- Edible plants
- Animal life (land and sea)
- Defense of the colony against the native savages (who have been sighted—note map!)

The advance landing party consisted of you six worthy sailors, who were assigned different areas of concerns. Each of you will address your group to inform them of your observations of the new land and to help the entire crew make the ultimate decision—where to establish a colony.

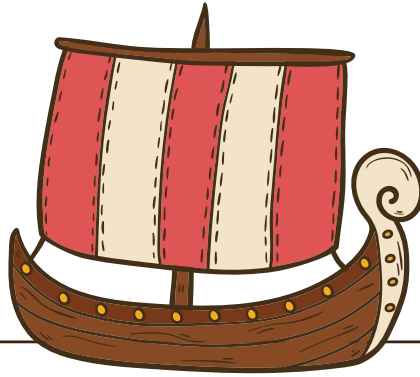
The map, crude as it is, provides most landforms (bays, inlets, lakes, streams, rocks, hills, etc.) and where the savages were sighted. Awareness of the latter, especially, is vital for the survival of the colony.

Your task as crew members is to study the map, listen to all the observational information from other Norse sailors in your group, and then—as a crew—choose the best site from the recommendations offered by the landing party or select a site of your own choosing (to be located on the map and marked "I"). Be sure to name your colony after you choose. Your captain wants to call it "Vinland," since the landing party returned with grape-like berries. Be prepared to present your choice for the best site and the worst possible site (and reasons for both choices) to everyone on the expedition.



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Landfall Decision Sheet



Ship's Name:

Sea Captain/Drottin: _____

Crew Members: _____

After careful analysis, we choose as the best site to establish our colony

Site:

Because:

☐

Likewise, we choose as the worst site

☐

Because:



Our new Norse colony's name is

Landing Party Observation Slips

My observations on LAND ANIMALS (Read over carefully, summarize in three brief sentences, and present your summary to your group.)

In my two-day journey around the region, I found or saw a multitude of wild animals, some familiar, some not. Most important were caribou (deer), a fairly large beast whose flesh can be eaten and whose skin offers fur for warm clothing. Other animals include: beaver, black bears, fox, lynx, wolves, hare, ducks, sable, and mosquitoes!

Summarize in your own words:

My observations on MARINE LIFE (Read over carefully, summarize in three brief sentences, and present your summary to your group.)

I searched the shoreline and beaches carefully and found plenty of sea life to hunt so we can survive the winter, spring, and perhaps summer. Despite the fog and possible heavy storms from the north, there is good news: sea life was observed in abundance. I found whales in the bays and inlets; seals and walrus in the sea; and cod fish, salmon, and trout in the lakes, rivers, and streams—perfect for a Greenlanders' diet.

Summarize in your own words:

My observations on PLANTS/VEGETATION (Read over carefully, summarize in three brief sentences, and present your summary to your group.)

It would be difficult not to see the abundant plants and vegetation here. We sighted, and in some cases tasted, a multitude of edible plants. We especially enjoyed the berries. Cloudberries, gooseberries, and squashberries were eaten, and we know these berries will make wonderful wine to help warm our bodies over the months we are in Vinland. We see no grapes yet—probably too short of a growing season and too cold. There are tall grasses and large meadowlands for cattle and sheep if future colonists come to settle a more permanent colony.

Summarize in your own words:

My observations on TIMBER/FRESH WATER (Read over carefully, summarize in three brief sentences and present your summary to your group.)

In this region of low hills, the abundant forests grow nearly to the shoreline and, when cut down, will provide building materials for our longhouses. We can cover these houses with chunks of meadow sod and live comfortably in our new shelters, cabins, and great hall. Fresh water, I am pleased to report, seems plentiful: lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams are everywhere and seem to be—at the moment—ice free.

Summarize in your own words:

My observations on FIREWOOD (Read over carefully, summarize in three brief sentences and present your summary to your group.)

Wet, fresh timber does not make good firewood—it won't burn! During the winter here in Vinland, we need an ample supply of dry wood to keep our inside fires and smithy fires burning throughout the winter when it is near freezing outside our longhouses. Fortunately, there is an abundance of driftwood piled up along the beaches. It has been accumulating for years and is dry enough to burn as firewood. Some driftwood pieces are large enough for use in construction of our houses. But we need to gather driftwood now!

Summarize in your own words:

My observations on THE NATIVES (SKRAELINGS) (Read over carefully, summarize in three brief sentences, and present your summary to your group.)

At first, we saw no signs of human habitation other than ourselves. Then they slowly appeared, the Skraelings, the savages. They remained hidden for the most part. When they were observed in small birchbark canoe-boats in the bay, we took notice of their weapons—bows and arrows, spears, and knives made of bone. They appear to follow the caribou trail and they also fish frequently. In numbers, they appear to be small, perhaps less than a hundred. We are thirty-five, so we are watchful for hostile signs. Setting up a colony for defense seems prudent, even wise.

Summarize in your own words:

Evidence from the Earth

Drawing Conclusions from Artifacts Found at a Newfoundland Dig Excavations ("Digs")

During the early 1960s, at selected sites near L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, archaeologists uncovered several key artifacts that not only authenticate the Norse "discovery" of North America but also reveal what life might have been like in the short-lived Norse colony at the turn of the first millennium (c. 1000 CE).



Aerial view of L'Anse aux Meadows

List of Artifacts Found

- A cooking pit with charcoal remnants (z)
- Several house-sites; one in particular was a large house-site about 33'x15' and found next to a hearth inside was a small box-shaped ember pit made of slate (A–F)
- A bone needle
- An iron-bog pit close by (v)
- Several rusty nails, fragments of iron, a small piece of smelted copper, a whet stone for needles
- A spindle-whorl made of soapstone similar to those found in medieval Scandinavia, 1½" in diameter, used to spin wool

(All metal objects were tested by carbon 14 analysis and were dated between 910–1090 CE.)

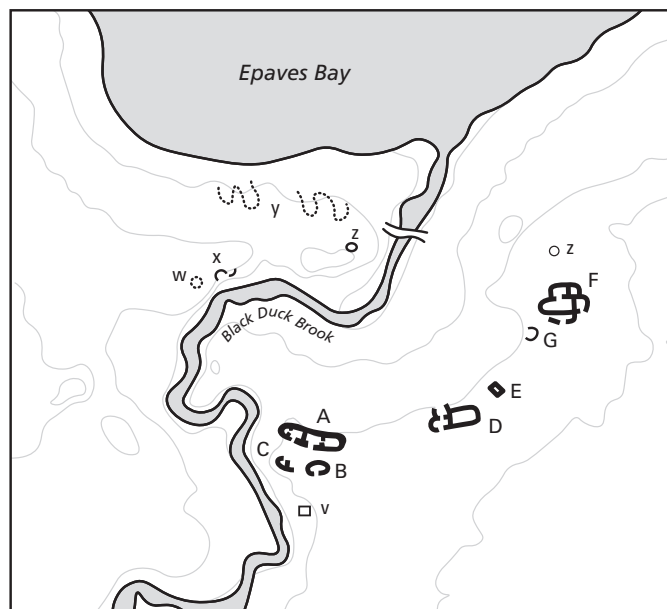


Image source: © Gregory Matthews, 2005; CC BY-SA 3.0
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From these found objects, what conclusions can you draw (in statement form) about life lived by the Norse in Newfoundland in the medieval era?

Conclusion 1:

Conclusion 2:

Conclusion 3:

Conclusion 4:

Postscript

Leif Eriksson's voyage back to Greenland from the colony at Vinland no doubt led to much discussion at his father's settlement Eriksfjord at Brattahlid. Did he arrive in time to see his father before the settlement's founder died? We simply don't know. With Erik gone and Leif as the new leader, others were now anxious to retrace Leif's voyage, much as Leif had retraced Bjarni's journey earlier. Whatever the case, descriptions of Vinland, even though it was only a brief stay at Leif's "house-sites," generated excitement at Brattahlid.

According to the *Greenlanders' Saga*, there were at least four more voyages to Vinland after Bjarni's original sightings and Leif's colonizing efforts. The next voyage was made presumably several years later (so much for excitement and immediate reaction) by Leif's brother, Thorvald Eriksson, with a crew of thirty. Thorvald found Leifsbudir (Leif's property, buildings, house-sites) on Vinland and wintered there, and perhaps even spent a summer or two exploring the region. Notable was the first recorded (in the sagas) Norse encounter with the natives (the Norse call them Skraelings), eight of whom were killed in a skirmish with the Norse. In another attack, Thorvald himself was killed by an arrow and eventually buried in Vinland.

Later, Leif's other step brother, Thorstein, set sail for Vinland, but never made landfall. He eventually died in an epidemic. His widow, Gudrid, then married a wealthy merchant, Thorfinn Karlsefni, who decided to fund an expedition and colonize Vinland, and Gudrid accompanied her husband on the next voyage. Once in Vinland, Gudrid gave birth to a son, Snorri, purported to be the first European child born in North America. Again, the Skraelings and Norse went to war, and this conflict convinced the Norse to consider evacuating from Vinland and retiring to a safer Greenland.

The sixth and last voyage chronicled by the sagas was made by Leif's illegitimate half-sister, the treacherous Freydis. A tale of murder and an unsuccessful commercial venture in Vinland ended this last Viking attempt to establish a more permanent colony in America. Even Greenland in the 1400s was abandoned by the Norse. Thus, the Norse discovery and colonization in North America became a dead end, eventually forgotten. Five hundred years later, an Italian navigator, Cristoforo Colombo, sailing under the flag of Spain, "rediscovered" America and changed the world.

Still, the Norse discovery is a remarkable achievement, both fascinating and romantic. Involving probably no more than a hundred Norsemen and women over a period of ten years, the Norse explorations of the new land over time drifted from legend into reality with the archaeological proof found in the 1960s. Even more intriguing, perhaps, is the possibility of a second Norse outpost at Point Rosee on the southern tip of Newfoundland. In any case, the fact that a small band of medieval Scandinavians could and did navigate the North Atlantic and explore the edges of a vast and unknown continent stirs our imaginations like few events have in early American history.



Leif Eriksson discovers North America

Image source: Leif Eriksson discovers North America. By Christian Krohg, 1893, National Gallery, Norway



Historical Investigation Activity

Norsemen Discover America (1000)

Bill Lacey

Focus Question

The Kensington Runestone: authentic artifact or forgery?

Materials Needed for This Historical Investigation

- **Documents A–G**—class set
- **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**—class set

Lesson Plan

1. Getting Started

- Ask students, “What can you tell me about pre-Columbian European explorers of North America? What specific names (or events) can you recall who might deserve credit for the discovery and exploration of America before Columbus sailed in 1492?” Write responses on a board and any additional data you supply. Perhaps the responses could be written as spokes emanating from a hub/circle. Discuss thoroughly.

2. Backstory to Use as Instruction

- Evidence used to prove a claim in history can vary widely—laws, personal letters, coins, buildings, journals, newspapers, and magazine articles, even government forms, posters, ads, music, TV / radio broadcasts, bones, jewelry, speeches, banners, tools, clothing, cartoons—the list is endless. All these qualify as primary sources, which historians use to document and draw conclusions about people, events, culture, and ideas of the past.
- How about a rock as a primary source? Actually, a slab of stone with carved, incised letters and numbers on it. One famous rock or stone was found wedged into the roots of an old poplar or spruce tree stump by a Swedish-born Minnesota farmer in 1898. It had runic letter and number inscriptions on it that, when accurately translated, told of a Scandinavian expedition into territory later to be the state of Minnesota, in the heartland of North America. The date on this rock—the Kensington Runestone—was 1362.
- Most Americans in 1900 didn’t really think deeply about discoverers or explorers of America before Columbus, much less Vikings in America’s heartland. The main sources about Vikings were the sagas, written about 1150. These sagas contained heroic stories of Viking voyages to Greenland and a place called Vinland; these stories were thought to be



merely fanciful tales, myths, and legends told by medieval Scandinavians on dark, cold nights in their longhouses.

- Slowly, however, and because of archaeological evidence, some of these Norse “myths” have become believable history, documented by artifacts found in the 1960s by two Norwegian archaeologists at L’Anse aux Meadows at the northern tip of Newfoundland. In 1898, no one knew that these archaeological revelations lay ahead. These particular archaeological finds did motivate scholars to look once again at the sagas. Mostly ignored in the first years of the twentieth century, the Kensington Runestone has, since the 1930s, generated endless debate about its authenticity (could Vikings have really been in Minnesota in 1362?), and a fierce discussion in academia and among members of clubs and organizations identifying as mostly Scandinavian. To many of these academics—rune experts and the like—the stone is clearly a forgery, perpetrated to enhance Scandinavian culture, ancestral pride, and tourism. At this time, the story of Leif Eriksson was being celebrated in Minnesota for the 900th year anniversary of his voyage, as told in the sagas. To others, the stone was exciting evidence that brave Norsemen penetrated the interior heartland of North America (far from eastern Canada), interestingly, to the very region where Scandinavian immigrants, descendants of the medieval Norse, would later come and settle.
- Doubters of the stone’s authenticity are just as skeptical about other so-called “evidence” of Norse voyages to and settlement in North America. Examples of this include the Vinland Map and the Newport Tower in Rhode Island. Both have been scrutinized by scholars and left wanting. Dividing to this day its supporters and detractors—historians, linguists, runeologists, geologists, and amateurs alike—and eliciting strong opinions on both sides, the Kensington Runestone mystery hangs on.
- In 1907, nine years after its discovery, the stone was sold to Hjalmar Holand whose subsequent writings rejuvenated interest in the stone’s legacy and helped stoke the fires of contention and controversy over the years since the 1930s. As a result of Holand’s “crusade,” many, especially outside the groves of academia, found Holand’s arguments persuasive.
- So is the Kensington Runestone genuine, or is it a hoax and a forgery? The documents we will analyze will help us answer this perplexing question.
- Ask students, “From this **Backstory** and in your opinion, before we look at the documents, let’s predict what kind of arguments both supporters and critics will make in defending and attacking the Kensington Runestone.” Pass out and have students write on the **Points to Ponders Response Sheet**. After allowing about five minutes to write, discuss their responses.

Norsemen Discover America: c. 1000

Historical Investigation Activity



3. Say, "So some of you think the defenders will argue . . . , and the critics will argue . . . Let's now analyze the documents and see if the arguments match up with what we just discussed."
4. Pass out the package of **Documents A–F** and explain what students are to do.
5. Allow 40–45 minutes for students (perhaps in pairs or trios) to read and analyze the documents, responding to the questions on the **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**. Perhaps you or a student should read aloud **Document A** and discuss the gist of it. Remind students to read and analyze the documents carefully. The documents are not necessarily in sequence.

Name _____ Date: _____

Points to Ponder Response Sheet

Focus Question: The Kensington Runestone—authentic artifact or forgery?

1. **Predict:** What kind of arguments do you think supporters and critics will use to defend and attack the Runestone?

Arguments for authenticity

- _____
- _____
- _____

Arguments for being a forgery

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. **Document A (excerpt 1):** Your first reaction upon seeing the Runestone:

(excerpt 2): In fifteen words, summarize the translation of the words on the Runestone.

3. **Document B:** What kind of documents are these? Why are they important to supporters of the stone's "authenticity"?

Why do you suppose there was very little reaction from 1898 to 1907, when the stone was found, to when Ohman sold it to Hjalmar Holand?

Why is Nils Flaten's affidavit important?

4. **Document C:** What are Holand's two strongest arguments in defense of the Kensington Runestone's authenticity?

Why would Holand go against the opinions of community of scholars, linguists, and geologists in defense of the Runestone?

5. **Document D:** For years the Kensington Runestone's most outspoken opponent and critic was probably Professor Erik Wahlgren. What are his two strongest arguments against the stone's authenticity?

How does he treat Hjalmar Holand, the stone's passionate champion?

6. **Document E:** Morison suggests using "common sense" to judge the Runestone. Do you think there are any flaws in this suggestion? Are most problems solved and questions answered by "common sense"?

What two or three points does Morison make to doubt the authenticity of the stone?

From historian Morison's bio, which of his achievements might give him the most credibility to judge the stone's merit as a genuine or fake artifact?

Whom does Morison mostly blame for the fraud/forgery? Why and how?

7. Based on the documents you analyzed, write a lengthy paragraph answering the **Focus Question** at the top of this sheet. Make at least three major points to substantiate your position.

[illegible]

Document A

The Kensington Rune Stone

The controversial stone/rock that emerged from a tangled root system of a stunted poplar tree, a tree estimated to be between thirty or forty years old, is a large slab, thirty inches by sixteen inches by six inches, and weighs about two hundred pounds. It is on display today at the Runestone Museum in Alexandria, Minnesota. The stone's finder and original owner, farmer Olof Ohman, who faced scorn and ridicule for the rest of his life, eventually sold it in 1907 for ten dollars to Hjalmar Holand, who at the time was a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin.

Excerpt 1



The Kensington Runestone: front and side views

Excerpt 2: Translation of what is written on the front and side of the stone.

Eight Swedes and twenty-two Norwegians on a discovery voyage from Vinland westward, we had anchored by two rocky islets one day's voyage north from this stone. We had fished a day, after we came home, [we] found 10 men red with blood and dead. Ave Maria deliver from evil.

(side of stone) We have ten men at sea to look after our ship fourteen day's voyage from this island. Year 1362

Note: Runes are angular letters used in earlier times by Germanic/Scandinavian peoples that (in this case) were carved as inscriptions onto stone tablets, often used as gravestones. Proponents of the stone's authenticity claim the rune script is ancient Norse.

Source: Keith Massey and Kevin Massey, "Authentic Medieval Elements in the Kensington Stone," *Epigraphical Society Occasional Publications* (2000).

Image source: Louise Lund Larsen, 1910 from Flom, George T., "The Kensington Rune-Stone: An Address," Illinois State Historical Society, 1910.

Document B

The Affidavits of Olof Ohman, Finder of the Kensington Rune Stone, and His Neighbor Nils Flaten

Excerpt 1

I, Olof Ohman, of the town of Solem, Douglas County, State of Minnesota, being duly sworn, make the following statement:

I am fifty-four years of age, and was born in Helsingeland, Sweden, from where I emigrated to America in the year 1881, and settled upon my farm in Section Fourteen, Township of Solem, in 1891. In the month of August, 1898, while accompanied by my son, Edward, I was engaged in grubbing upon a timbered elevation, surrounded by marshes, in the southeast corner of my land, about 500 feet west of my neighbor's, Nils Flaten's, house, and in the full view thereof. . . . I discovered a flat stone inscribed with characters, to me unintelligible. The stone lay just beneath the surface of the ground in a slightly slanting position, with one corner almost protruding. The two largest roots of the tree clasped the stone in such a manner that the stone must have been there at least as long as the tree. . . . Upon washing off the surface dirt, the inscription presented a weathered appearance, which to me appeared just as old as the untouched parts of the stone. I immediately called my neighbor's, Nils Flaten's, attention to the discovery, and he came over the same afternoon and inspected the stone and the stump under which it was found.

I kept the stone in my possession for a few days; and then left it in the Bank of Kensington, where it remained for inspection for several months. During this interval, it was sent to Chicago for inspection and soon returned in the same state in which it was sent. Since then I kept it at my farm until August, 1907, when I presented the stone to H. R. Holand.

(Signed) OLOF OHMAN.

Witness:

R. J. RASMUSSEN

GEORGE H. MERHES.

Excerpt 2

I, Nils Flaten, of the town of Solem, Douglas County, Minn., being duly sworn, make the following statement:

I am sixty-five years of age, and was born in Tinn, Telemarken, Norway, and settled at my present home in the town of Solem in 1884. One day in August, 1898, my neighbor, Olof Ohman, who was engaged in grubbing timber about 500 feet west of my house, and in full view of same, came to me and told me he had discovered a stone inscribed with ancient characters. I accompanied him to the alleged place of discovery and saw a stone about 30 inches long, 16 inches wide and 6 inches thick, which was covered with strange characters upon two sides and for more than half their length. The inscription presented a very ancient and weathered appearance. . . . The two largest roots . . . were flattened on their inner surface and bent by nature in such a way as to exactly conform to the outlines of the stone. I inspected this hole and can testify to the fact that the stone had been there prior to the growth of the tree, as the spot was in close proximity to my house.

(signed) NILS FLATEN.

Witness:

R. J. RASMUSSEN.

GEORGE H. MERHES.

Note: An affidavit is a written declaration made under oath before an authorized official. These two affidavits were executed in 1907.

Source: Mr. Ohman's original affidavit was printed in *The Journal of American History*, IV, 178 (1910) and reprinted, along with Flaten's affidavit, in Hjalmar Holand, *Norse Discoveries & Explorations in America*, 982–1362 (New York: Dover Publications, 1968).

Document C

The Improbability of Forgery

For over fifty years, Hjalmar Holand, who at one time actually owned the Kensington Rune Stone, was a passionate champion of the stone's authenticity, using arguments like the ones below from his book.

The improbability of a modern fabrication is greatly increased by the fact that it is almost impossible to think of anyone who could have perpetrated it. Considered as a modern product, this lengthy inscription written in the difficult and little understood language and runic symbols of the fourteenth century is a literary marvel. . . . Where could such erudition be found among the early pioneer Scandinavians of America? . . . The stone was found by Mr. Ohman directly in front of Nils Flaten's house and in plain view of it. As we have an affidavit from Mr. Flaten that he has continuously occupied this house since the spring of 1884 without having ever observed any suspicious activities. . . .

As the stone could not have been carved while Mr. Flaten's house was occupied, the alleged forgery must have been made before 1884. This brings us back to the early pioneers of the region, the very first of whom came in 1864. All these pioneers are well known and wholly above suspicion. . . .

Finally there is an improbability which grows bigger, the more one looks at it. This improbability is concerned with the entire lack of motive for any such forgery. Crimes and deceptions are motivated by greed, lust, revenge and kindred impulses, but what could have been a sufficient motive to prompt a learned scholar to go far out into the wilderness and there sit for days, chiseling on a stone that would bring him neither honor nor riches, all the time exposed to hardships and probable death at the hands of savage Indians? It is true that archeological frauds are not infrequent, but they are usually copies of ancient artifacts that have a recognized commercial value. . . .

But whoever was the author of this long and circumstantial inscription, he was certainly not a clumsy forger, for his work has withstood the criticism of keen scholars for more than forty years. Nor is it conceivable how its assumed author could have profited by it. Such a hope would demand the energetic assistance of a fellow conspirator, presumably the finder, on whom the burden of publicity would rest. But Mr. Ohman, the finder, proved to be an exceptionally stolid individual, and neither he nor anyone else around Kensington has endeavored to exploit the stone.

These improbabilities are fully vindicated when we consider the circumstances of the finding of the stone. The stone was found gripped between the largest roots of a tree in such manner that it must have lain in its finding place at least as long as the tree had stood there. . . . [I]t is shown

that this tree was about seventy years old. Seventy years anterior to 1898, when the stone was found, brings us back to 1828, which is more than twenty years before Minnesota was settled by white people and thirty-six years before the first Scandinavian reached Douglas County, where the stone was found. The earliest Scandinavians did not penetrate as far west as Chicago until 1834. If there were no Swedes or Norwegians in the Northwest at that early date (1828), the theory of a forgery is manifestly impossible. . . .

In the absence of tenable arguments against the authenticity of the inscription, and in view of the preponderance of evidence in its favor, only one conclusion seems possible: That the Kensington rune stone is a genuine record left by Norse explorers in Minnesota about 1362.

Source: Hjalmar R. Holand, *Norse Discoveries and Explorations in America, 982–1362* (New York: Dover Publications, 1969—originally published in 1940).

Document D

An Expert Takes Aim at the Kensington Rune Stone

Erik Wahlgren, Ph.D., was a long-time professor of Scandinavian and Germanic languages at UCLA and has written extensively on the Kensington Rune Stone.

When the present writer obtained permission (1953) to interview the Kensington stone, it was hiding in the basement of the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, the subject of an unadjudicated lawsuit. But now it is boldly on exhibit in Alexandria's Rune Stone Museum. In 1964–5 it was exhibited in a tent at the New York World's Fair.

The inscription purports to record a disastrous expedition to the future Minnesota in 1362, several hundred years after the close of the Viking Age. There is an attempt to touch up the writing with medieval features derived from the misunderstood reading of implied 'recipes' for 14th-century Scandinavian texts. These were found in the little private library of the Swedish immigrant farmer Olof Ohman, who claimed to have made the discovery. Furthermore, the grammar and vocabulary are curiously modern and indeed quite reminiscent of the colloquial Norwegian-Swedish lingo formerly heard among immigrants to Minnesota. In translation it reads as follows:

*8 Swedes and 22 Norwegians on exploration journey from Vinland
westward. We had camp by 2 rocky islets one day's journey north
from this stone. We were out and fished one day. After we came
home found 10 men red with blood and dead. AVM save from evil.
Have 10 men by the sea to look after our ships 14 days' journey
from this island. Year 1362. **

This expression of a date in terms of calendar years is out of place in runic inscriptions. Where dating occurs it is anchored to important events like the reigns of kings. Numerals, in the rare cases in which they appear at all, are cumbrously written out or, in late times, expressed in Roman style. The astonishing thing here is the use of seven numerals or sets of numerals, including the date, all expressed through symbols purporting to be runes but with place value based on the Hindu-Arabic system of notation, a system that could not possibly mix with runes. . . .

Unlike genuine medieval rune stones, this one presents a smooth and relatively unweathered face. A puzzled and reluctant geologist was induced to conclude in 1909 that the inscription was ancient because he was told that the language on it was medieval, and that it had been dug out of the roots of a very large, hence rather old, tree. But to judge by geological criteria alone, he wrote, the inscription was carved no more than thirty, and perhaps no more than fifteen, years anterior to his own inspection of it that year. Most damning of all were several contemporary paper texts purporting to be copies from the stone, but comparative study of which indicates that they are experimental variants, or rough drafts, of a proposed inscription, made by one or more persons involved in promoting the hoax. In brief, they anteceded the actual carving. Anything as time-consuming (and expensive) as carving in stone calls for preliminary preparation that includes line arrangement, calculations of space, etc. Lacking paper, the ancient Scandinavians made charcoal tracings or scratched their preliminary copy onto boards or the inner side of bark. At Kensington, either out of pure, naïve carelessness, or in a deliberate attempt to impede scrupulous investigation, the conflicting versions were released by persons unaware of the investigative resources of textual research.

From the very beginning the Kensington inscription was recognized by linguistic scholars on both sides of the Atlantic as a simple, though certainly humorous, modern forgery. The stone and the writing on it would have been forgotten long ago save for its resurrection in 1907 by a Norwegian-American resident of Wisconsin, Hjalmar Rued Holand (1872–1963). . . . Holand sized up its potential at once. For more than half a century he piloted the gray slab and himself to international fame as an ancient monument and its official keeper. . . . Holand understood little and cared nothing for linguistic and historical methodology. Scholarly responsibility he disdained as ‘the consistency of petty minds.’

*This translation differs significantly from the one given in **Document A**

Source: Erik Wahlgren, *The Vikings and America* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986).

Document E

American Historian S.E. Morison on the Kensington Rune Stone

To be fair, an imminent historian's point of view is appropriate at this juncture. The following excerpt on the Kensington Rune Stone was written by one of America's most distinguished and honored historians of the twentieth century, Dr./Prof. Samuel Eliot Morison. Harvard, Columbia, and Yale educated, Morison was an expert on maritime/naval history, seamanship, a biographer of Columbus and John Paul Jones, a Harvard professor (for forty years), a winner of two Pulitzer and two Bancroft Prizes, a Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient, a friend of FDR, and even had a naval frigate named for him—the USS Samuel Eliot Morison (commissioned in 1979).

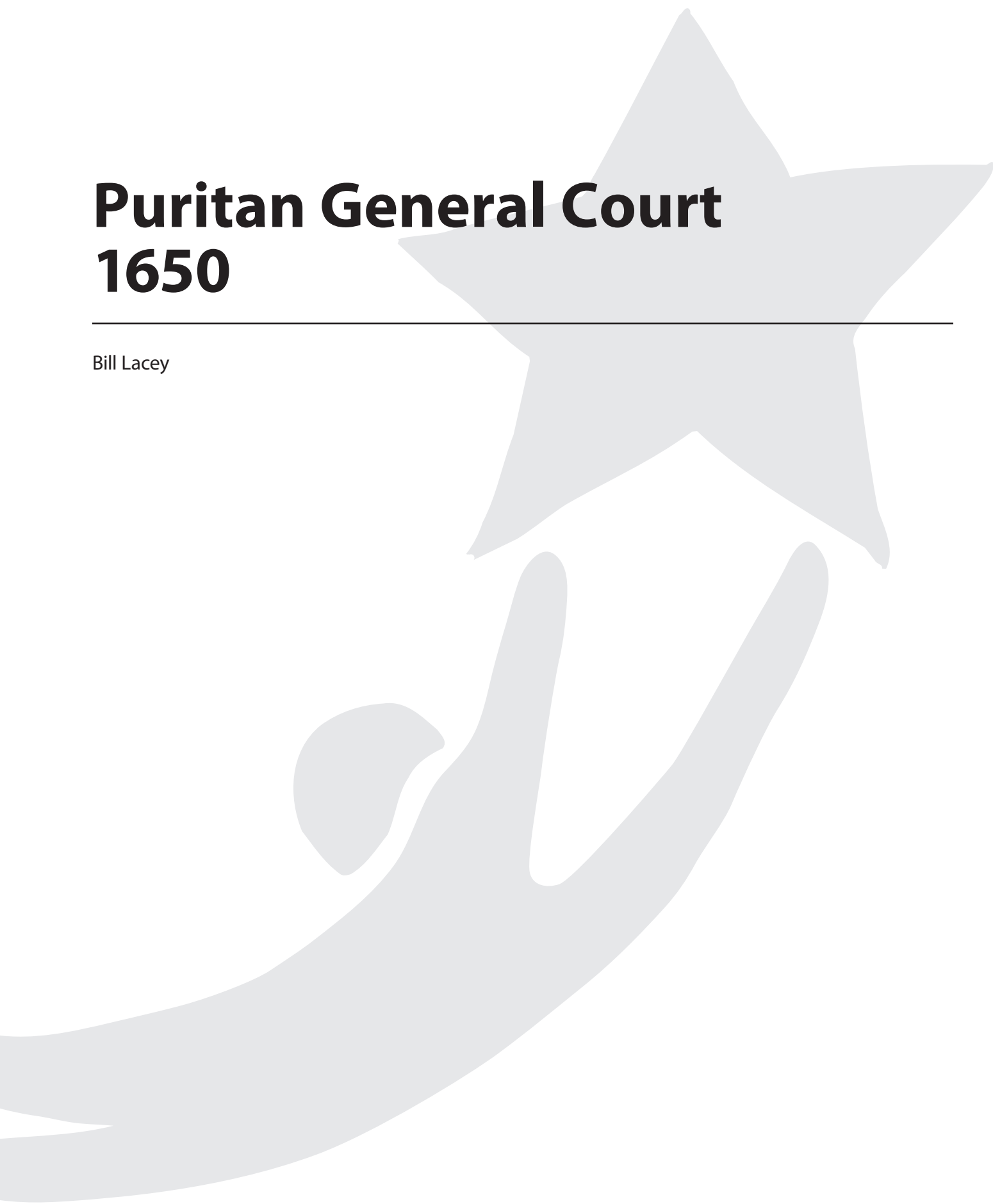
Common sense should have dismissed [the Kensington Rune Stone] as a hoax. If you dig up a "Greek vase" resting on a telephone book, it is a waste of time to try to prove the vase genuine. The Kensington story is preposterous. Norsemen were sea discoverers, not land explorers; what possible object could they have had in sailing into Hudson Bay, or through Lake Superior to the Portage, and striking out into the wilderness? Common sense did consider the stone as a joke until 1908 when it was taken up by a local furniture salesman named Hjalmar R. Holand, who for over half a century has been attempting to prove the inscription authentic. The controversy shows no sign of abating after creating a bibliography of hundreds of items. Holand took the stone to the Norse Millenary Congress at Rouen [France] in 1911, hoping for support from the assembled Scandinavian scholars, and got none. Every leading runologist of Scandinavia and Germany who has deigned to examine the inscription has called it a clumsy forgery. One word alone, *opdagelsefard* (voyage of discovery), which did not occur in Scandinavian language for several centuries after 1362, gives it away.

. . . [Erik] Wahlgren points out that all school children in Norway and Sweden in the period 1870–1900 learned runes as part of their cultural education; the schoolteachers, hundreds of whom emigrated to the American Northwest, taught runes and, just as American and English schoolboys a century ago liked to write their names or messages in Greek letters, so Scandinavian schoolboys found it amusing to write short notes, inscriptions, etc. in runes. [Professor Theodore] Blegen points the finger of suspicion at one Sven Fogelblad (1829–97), brought up in a Swedish area rich in runic inscriptions, a graduate of Upsala, co-minister in Sweden with a noted runologist who wrote a popular book on runes. He emigrated to Minnesota and taught school; he was well known as a joker, and an intimate friend of Ohman's. It is probable that he wrote the inscription (it contains Ohman's name—Oh for island and man for near, both anachronisms); and that Ohman carved it and buried it as well as dug it up.

Source: Samuel Eliot Morison, *The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

Puritan General Court 1650

Bill Lacey



Lesson Plan

Overview

This Activator will involve your students in an imaginary trial of those who were accused of inappropriate behavior in mid-seventeenth-century Puritan society. Establishing “a Zion in the wilderness” along New England’s shores, these self-righteous Puritans chose to devise a rigid behavior code enforcing conformity few human beings could ever follow. Convicted wrongdoers and dissenters were brutally punished, imprisoned, fined, exiled, or executed. Your students will role-play magistrates, snoops, transgressors, and witnesses alike in this lively re-creation of Puritan justice more than 350 years ago.

Setup

1. Duplication

- **Background Essay**—*class set*
- **Postscript**—*class set*
- **Sign-Up Sheet**—*one copy per class*
- **Puritan Punishment: Magistrate Guidelines**—*three to five copies*
- **Pick a Puritan Name**—*class set or one copy displayed*
- **Puritan Court Cases**—*at least five copies of each of the three pages (cut apart the cases and give to each appropriate group of three students and to the magistrates)*

2. **Schematic, props, costumes:** Study the **Schematic** carefully. Find and bring into your classroom any props or costume pieces that will help create the setting and the mood of a Puritan meeting house in 1650. (Perhaps students could help by bringing in black robes, tall hats, and white nurse caps, bonnets, or aprons.)

3. **Roles:** Some students have major roles, but all will have responsibilities. Specifically, you will need to select three to five students to be magistrates (theocrats in the theocracy). Then select eight to twelve other students to be those “on trial.” The rest of the class will assist the defendants in preparing their cases and then get involved in the testimony as defense and prosecution witnesses. In groups of three, one is the accused, another defends the accused, and the last is a witness against the accused. One last role to be filled: a bailiff, who escorts defendants and maintains order.

- a. Select magistrates and defendants from your cadre of dramatic students. Allow each group of three to choose its defendant from

Teaching tip

Picking Puritan names is important to the students; doing so gives them a sense of identity.



Teaching tip

Make this clear: each trial trio has the responsibility of preparing the defendant and both witnesses for and against the accused before the case is called up by the magistrates.



the group. The remaining two group members will testify on the two opposing sides.

4. **Narrator(s):** There are no narrators in this Activator. Nor is there a formal script. What is crucial are the directions given to the magistrates.

Directions

1. Hand out the **Background Essay** either the day before this class as homework or pass it out now. If you have given it as homework, conduct an informal discussion of the main points brought out in the essay. If you are passing it out now, read the essay aloud to the students, pausing to explain the main points. (The choice is, of course, determined by your students' ability level and age.)
2. Display the **Schematic** and explain it. Then, after selecting four or five magistrates, divide the remaining students into groups of three. While magistrates read over the **Role-Playing Profile, Puritan Punishment, Magistrates Guideline**, and the **Puritan Court Cases**, give the groups an individual case slip to analyze, along with defendant and witness profile slips. Allow 15–30 minutes for preparation—perhaps the day before actual court convenes.
3. Once students are ready, have them help rearrange the room to reflect what is on the **Schematic**.

You have at least two different ways you can conduct the actual Activator:

Option A

1. Assign all roles as directed in **Setup #3**.
2. Have the magistrates begin the session of the general court with a brief introduction of why the session has been called. Then one of the magistrates calls forth the accused of one case, to be followed by subsequent cases until all have been heard and resolved. The court should proceed as follows:
 - hear cases' facts clearly read to all
 - hear a response from the accused
 - hear testimony from each side's witnesses
 - give the magistrates' verdict and decision about punishment
3. If possible, plan to film this option and use it during **Debriefing**.



Teaching tip

Depending upon your magistrates' ability, you may wish to give them their handouts two or three days in advance.



Teaching tip

You or your brightest magistrate could write an introduction justifying the court's existence and explaining its purpose.

Option B

1. Assign roles as directed in **Setup** #3.
2. You, or a student director, slowly guides students through the session of a Puritan General Court, stopping often to add information, explain strategy, interject wisdom, or smooth over rough spots. If using a student director, make sure they have several days to prepare.
3. In this version of the Activator, you are afforded opportunities to improvise action, change personnel, and ask/answer key questions of role players during the Puritan Court proceedings.

Debriefing

Decide whether you wish to use a short or long debriefing. Here are possible ways to make meaningful what happened during this Activator on a Puritan General Court in 1650:

Short Debriefing

1. Pass out the **Postscript**. Either read this to your students or summarize the main points of each paragraph before going on.
2. Ask students to discuss what they learned and what they felt as they played their roles as either magistrate, court officials, the accused, or as witnesses.

Long Debriefing

Use one or more of the following debriefing activities:

1. Pass out the **Postscript**. Either read this to your students or summarize the main points of each paragraph before going on.
2. **Ask these questions:** *Which of the so-called crimes in this Activator are not crimes today? Should any of them be considered crimes today? Is anything considered "sinful" today?*
3. **Ask these questions:** *Is/was public humiliation or punishment a deterrent to crime? Should corporal punishment (swatting with a paddle) be allowed in public schools today? Would you watch your p's and q's if threatened with, say, time in a pillory?*
4. The Massachusetts Bay Colony actually had a law (1633) that stated: "No one could spend time idly or unprofitably." **Ask students:** *Is idleness in any society bad for its people? Suggestions for today's stress management usually include "doing nothing" and enjoying it. Is there danger in idleness?*

5. **Ask this question:** *Could we use more “old-fashioned” restraint, modesty, and temperance in our society today?*
6. The U.S. Constitution, written nearly 150 years after this Activator takes place, forbids punishment carried out by the Puritans for crimes and sins. Find a copy of the Constitution and have students peruse the amendments to see which specific amendments forbid unusual punishment and guarantee a due process of law. **Ask:** *Are any of these “cruel and unusual punishment”?*
 - the death penalty
 - the ducking stool
 - branding
 - the pillory
7. In 1993, an American eighteen-year-old was caned as punishment for crimes committed in Singapore. **Ask these questions:** *Was being beaten with a cane “cruel and unusual punishment” for his crime of spray painting several expensive cars? Was the U.S. Government justified in asking that the young man not be caned because he is a U.S. citizen?*
8. **Ask this question:** *What disadvantages would you see if the Sabbath (Sunday) was set aside for meditation and renewal, with athletic events forbidden, movie theaters and shopping malls closed, etc.?*
9. Puritans made sixteen the age when youth could be put to death for irresponsibility, cursing, or general rebelliousness. **Ask these questions:** *Would the behavior of sixteen-year-old individuals change dramatically if this particular law were enforced today? What if school administrators utilized the stocks, pillory, or ducking stool on secondary campuses, instead of detention or suspension?*
10. **Ask this question:** *Are people you talk about for being “Puritanical” laughable old fuddy-duddies, or are they just better, superior, and more civilized than the rest of our society?*
11. Since the Biblical method of stoning was considered cruel punishment, the Puritans adopted hanging as a common form of execution. At these hangings, large crowds gathered to witness criminals and heretics die by the noose. **Ask students:** *Do people today flock to scenes of car accidents in much the same way? What attracts human beings to death and suffering?*
12. Show a snippet from one of the films suggested in the **Visual history** section.

**Teaching tip**

#7: Michael Fay's punishment was a major topic in the early 1990s. You or assigned students may wish to research details in order to amplify and structure any discussion.

**Teaching tip**

Ask students what they would do if there were such a ban. Also: Should all entertainment TV be turned off on Sundays and other religious days?

Teaching tip

Question: Can any government legislate morality?



13. During a ten-year period in Massachusetts (1633–1643), the crimes for which people were most often punished were: fornication (sex between unmarried individuals); drunkenness; lewd, lascivious, and wanton behavior; vilifying authorities; and breaking liquor laws. **Ask students:** *Knowing the Puritans’ harsh moral code and the repression of sexual behavior, does this list surprise you?*

14. The Puritans paid heed to their “twelve good rules.” Here are some of these twelve rules:

- Urge no ill health
- Pick no quarrels
- Encourage no vice
- Repeat no grievances
- Reveal no secrets
- Maintain no ill opinions
- Keep no bad company
- Make no long meals
- Lay no wagers

Have students create six to eight rules they feel would improve society today if most Americans obeyed them.

15. **Ask this question:** *What would a seventeenth-century Puritan and a modern rock star talk about if they met and walked down the streets of Las Vegas at midnight in this decade?*

Regardless of whether you used a short or long debriefing, have students write a Learning Log entry presenting their thoughts and feelings about participating in this Activator. Here is a student example of such a Learning Log.

Write a Learning Log ...

Learning Log	
●	When we began this Activator, I had never heard the word “Puritan” in my life. At first I was horrified by the way this small group of religious zealots treated one another. And during the Activator, I smarted under the terrible things they said about me because I had talked back to the elders. (I didn’t like the punishment they gave me either.) Then during the debriefing, the questions Ms. Willardson had us discussing made me realize that this dedicated group, although too intense, really were trying to make a better world ...
●	

Teaching tip

At Interact, we are really devoted to having students write every day in all their classes. Notice in this Learning Log, which took only a few minutes for the student to write, how she is working her way to her own meaning by reflecting upon her classroom Activator experience.



Resources to consult

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- Hall, David D. *Reforming People: Puritanism & the Transformation of Public Life in New England*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
- Miller, Perry, ed. *The American Puritans: Their Prose and Poetry*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1956. (This little volume addresses the literacy and intellectual accomplishments of the Puritans.)
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- Newcomb, Wellington. "Anne Hutchinson Versus Massachusetts." *American Heritage* 25, no. 4 (June 1974): 12–15, 78–81.
- Pomfret, John E., and Floyd M. Shumay. *Founding the American Colonies*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970, especially pages 149–209.
- Slavicek, Louise C. *Life Among the Puritans*. The Way People Live Series. San Diego, CA: Lucent Books, 2001.
- Wertenbaker, Thomas Jefferson. *The First Americans, 1607–1690*. Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1971.
- . *The Puritan Oligarchy: The Founding of American Civilization*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1947, especially pages 159–182.

Visual history

Feature films: *The Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's classic novel, has been made into a film several times, most recently in 1995. This version stars Demi Moore as Hester Prynne with Gary Oldman and Robert Duvall as prominent Puritans in the Massachusetts Bay Colony dealing with the strict moral code against adultery.

TV mini-series: An early 1980s TV miniseries of *The Scarlet Letter* starred Meg Foster as Hester. *Three Sovereigns for Sarah* (1985) with Vanessa Redgrave centers around the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692. It is worthy of your consideration for its portrayal of people living in a pressure cooker of intolerance.



Teaching tip

You might mention the 1995 version of *The Scarlet Letter*, but you should probably not show it in class because of its R rating.

Background Essay

Place: Massachusetts Bay Colony

Time: March 1650

English origins

The first permanent English colony in America was established in 1607 at Jamestown, Virginia. Thirteen years later, more English settlers colonized New England at Plymouth, Massachusetts. When these Pilgrims (the first group of extreme Puritans) came to America in the 1620s, they, too, chose to settle in New England in what is now the state of Massachusetts. While neither Jamestown nor Plymouth brought many settlers to their villages, the 1630s Puritan migration to New England certainly did. For this reason and others, the Puritans had greater influence upon American history. The Puritans' decision to leave England, like the Pilgrims', was a religious one. England Puritans could no longer abide the laxness, corruption, superstitions, and artificial ceremonies that bloated the Church of England at that time. They called themselves "Separatists," wanting to cleanse, or purify, the church. Eventually considering this goal impossible, they then chose to sail to a new-world haven to start a new society.

Harvard scholar Perry Miller describes "Puritanism" as a serious code of values carried from England to Massachusetts Bay Colony by dedicated Calvinist Protestants. Puritans definitely valued seriousness over pleasure. Life was a continuous struggle between good and evil. This group of religious zealots embraced "old-fashioned values," which did not emphasize fun and pleasure.

Massachusetts Bay Colony

Once in New England, the Puritans put into practice a unique experiment in their Massachusetts Bay Colony. Making Boston the hub, the Puritans instituted a political and legal system. While democratic, it nevertheless gave favorable status to adult male church members who owned property. Because Puritan religion was intertwined

with government and law, the colony was really a theocracy (literally defined as "a government by God"). This single fact added a different dimension to this colony's experiment.

Religion

The Puritans followed the religious teachings of John Calvin, a French theologian. According to Calvin, God was a stern, punishing judge who meted out swift justice upon those who sinned. Since the Puritans believed man was born in sin, the Massachusetts Bay Colony was a fertile ground for sinners and punishment. So religious were the Puritans that they believed their purpose on earth, now American soil, was to glorify God by establishing a near-perfect society, "a city on a hill," to serve as a beacon and model for future generations.

Predestination

Puritans also believed that all persons were destined before birth to be sent to heaven or hell. Never really knowing who were among the "elect" en route to heaven, individuals in the Massachusetts Bay Colony looked for "signs" of God's favor or disfavor. By doing this, they could calculate their chances. Interestingly, if an individual and his family prospered, followed society's rules, and avoided life's pitfalls and natural disasters (plague, drought), these endeavors could be viewed as a "sign" of God's favor and their guarantee of going to heaven.

Work ethic

One way Puritans sought God's favor was to devote their waking hours to hard work, both mental and physical. Puritans believed that all members of their society should carry their own load by working hard on their many endeavors without complaint and with enthusiasm. To their children, they preached that "work is good for you. There is

no gain without pain.” Moreover, they stressed that work will bring necessities and perhaps prosperity. Most important, work will develop strong, moral character—a quality prized by the Puritans. Moral character included self-reliance, frugality, and resourcefulness; it resulted in individuals making the “right” decisions.

Education

Much of the moral character, or moral fiber, deemed so worthy by Puritans, was taught in the close-knit families and in school. Puritan children were taught to “use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.” Schools in the Massachusetts Bay Colony were founded to teach children to read the Bible, a skill used to fight off the pervasiveness of Satan. The Old Deluder Law of 1647 required all communities to set up public schools for all children. In these elementary schools, students used New England primers to learn the basics of reading, mathematics, and religious values. To train teachers for these first schools in America, the Puritans established Harvard, America’s first college, in the 1640s thanks to a contribution from benefactor John Harvard.

Justice

So that their society could function with so many admirable goals and high standards, Puritan leaders (called theocrats) required their citizens to obey and to keep one eye on those who did not obey. Of course, there were many in the Massachusetts Bay Colony who just couldn’t walk the narrow path or snoop on another as well or as often as they should. For some Puritans, breaking the religious law was common and frequent. These wrongdoers experienced one miserable episode after another. Since the Puritans had laws against most human behaviors, the magistrates often handed out Biblical punishment for a multitude of sins. Since they believed Satan was continually tempting them to sin, they must punish any community members who gave in to the human tendency to do evil.

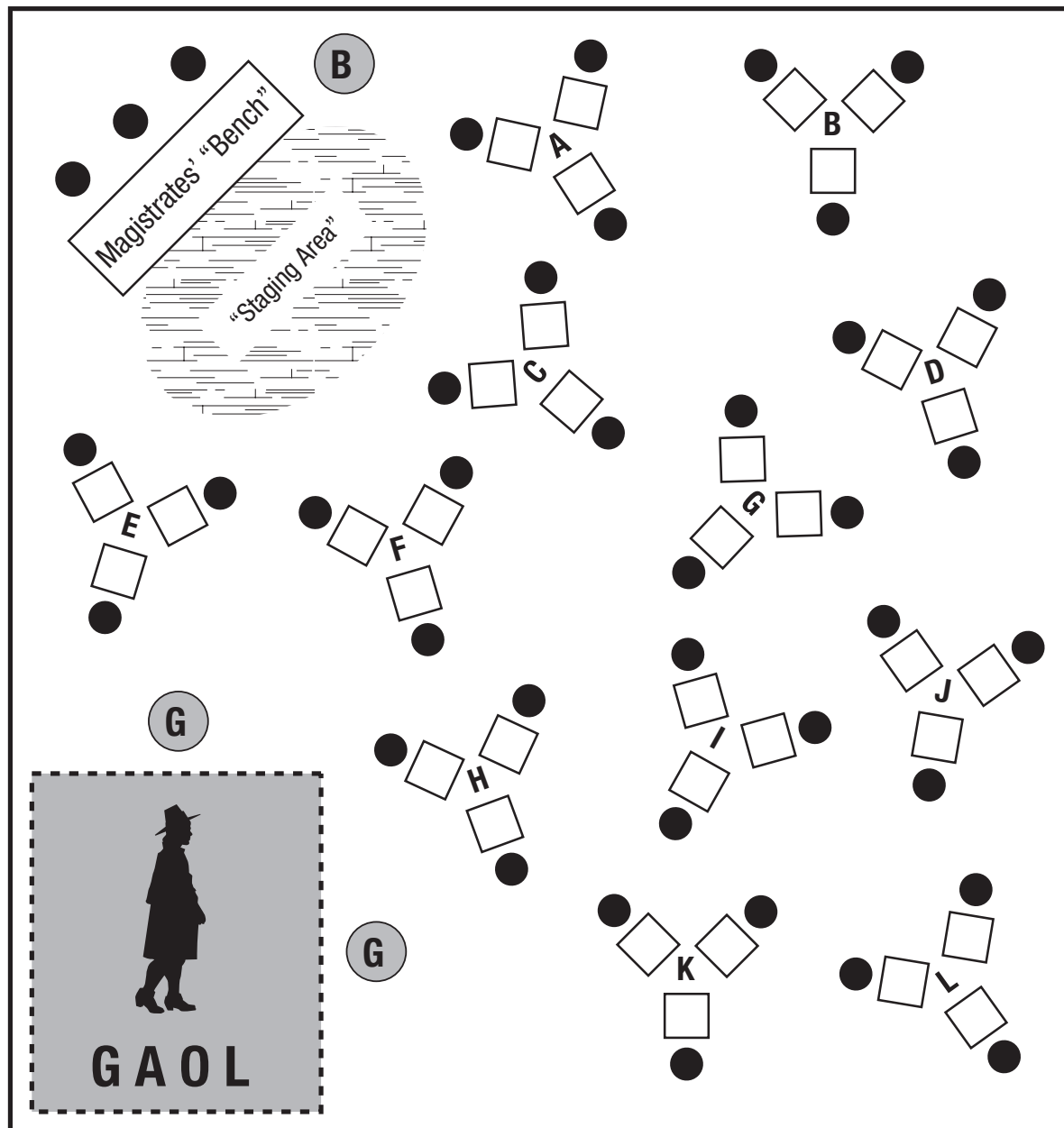
Public punishment

Here are a few of the many transgressions that would put you in hot water: breaking the Sabbath by traveling, cooking, shaving, or laughing; swearing; getting drunk; being unfaithful to your spouse; beating your spouse; stealing from your neighbor; lying; cheating; loitering too long; refusing to obey church elders; challenging religious beliefs; remaining idle; and choosing not to work. The punishment for breaking Puritan law ranged from paying a small fine to banishment and death. Those guilty of “petty” crimes were transgressors. These poor souls suffered gaol (jail) time, whippings, time in the stocks or pillories, or having to wear a large letter on their clothing to bring attention to their moral infraction. (For example, Hester Prynne in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* wore an “A” to indicate she was an adulteress.) Severing fingers, ears, hands—along with using hot irons and ducking stools for gossipy women—were also common. Thus, public humiliation was the basis of Puritan punishment for wrongdoers. Nevertheless, powerful dissenters such as Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson chose to challenge the Puritan colony’s entire theology; but when both were tried, their arguments were ignored, and they were banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Your day in court

Just how humiliating and how difficult it was to defend yourself before the community and in front of several magistrates will be agonizingly real as you and your classmates now role-play Puritans in court. Those who sit in judgment on the rest will have the responsibility to let no sin or crime go unpunished, for Puritans believed that if one transgressor was not properly punished, the entire community would suffer some calamity sent from God. So accept your fate as a magistrate, transgressor, or court witness. Prepare to learn about a dedicated group of early Americans who left a mixed legacy of positively influencing the future American character and of barbarously and publicly torturing its nonconformists. Good luck!

Schematic



Suggestions

- Place the magistrates' bench at a higher level. Use risers if your school has them.
- Group students into case trios.
- Encourage students to dress up in Puritan costumes from the seventeenth century.
- Have all students wear name tags with their Puritan names on them.
- Have magistrates hear all cases and then mete out punishment in the "Staging Area."

B = bailiff **G** = guard

Characters needed

- 3–5 magistrates
- 12 accused
- 2 witnesses for each accused (up to a total of 24)
- 2 guards (optional)

Pick a Puritan Name

Men

Cotton Corwin
Dudley Duxbury
John Wigglesworth
Niles Woodbridge
William Banks
Henry Ashton
Martin Dorchester
Josiah Willard
Miles Merton
Cotton Endicott
Eddison Phips
Harris Fairbanks
Charles Danforth
Christopher Greenwood
Robinson Seward
Edward Saltonstall
John Vane
Ebenezer Wilson
Daniel Duffington
Aaron Goddard
Uriah Oaks
Oliver English
Ezra Eagleston
Giles Newbury
Increase Bennett
Cotton Carter
Caleb Parker
John Porter
Fisher Tompkins
Reggie Roxbury
Winthrop Bobbins
Proctor Parris
Thomas Osborne
Jacob Heath
Francis Harvey
Josha Able

Women

Anne Hubbard
Arbella Ames
Deborah Whipple
Mercy Moody
Sarah Groton
Mary Carver
Edwina Butterfield
Charity Hull
Trinity Bacon
Elizabeth Dunton
Hope Hathaway
Mary Bradstreet
Mary Lechford
Tabitha Townsend
Georgina Grant
Margaret Attlee
Caroline Bell
Gwendolyn Dyer
Cecily Cuthbert
Anne Empson
Eleanor Adams
Millicent Maybury
Eve Eastbourne
Mary Durham
Gillian Gilroy
Jane Gray
Mercy Hill
Sarah Seymore
Ruth Farnsworth
Charity Putnam
Hope Rutherford
Martha Good
Goody Williams
Anne Warren
Priscilla Gedney
Abigail Alden



Puritan Punishment

Magistrates Guideline

As you prepare to be a magistrate, keep in mind your role as an authority on the law. (If possible, wear a black robe!) As each case comes before you, act and look like a Puritan judge:

1. Call the accused forward.
2. Read the facts of each case and the charge against the accused aloud to the entire court.
3. Ask the accused for a plea: "Guilty or not guilty, what say ye?"
4. If "not guilty," have the accused elaborate and explain the plea.
5. Call forward a witness to defend the accused with supporting testimony. Ask questions.
6. Call forward a witness to contradict the testimony of the previous witness and the testimony of the accused. Ask questions.
7. Confer with other magistrates until you all agree on a verdict and a punishment/fine.
8. Announce to the court the verdict and punishment/fine.
9. Have the bailiff or other court official take the guilty to be punished in front of the public.

Obviously, the need to punish sinners and other nonconformists in the Massachusetts Bay Colony stemmed from a desire to establish law and order in their new homeland, and to enforce their strict moral code, which, if broken by one unpunished transgressor, could doom the entire community to face an angry God's wrathful vengeance.

On the next page, you will find a list of actual punishments meted out over the years in New England and a list of possible punishments you can use to simulate those horrid actions inflicted on humans in the 1600s. Keep in mind that most lawbreakers (they had broken the legal or religious moral code) could plead "benefit of clergy." This plea meant that if they could read the Bible in open court without one error, the crime's punishment was reduced. Example: Their punishment would be that they had to have only their left thumb branded with a hot iron letter: (**T**=thief, **B**=blasphemer, **D**=drunkard).

Remember: The basis of Puritan punishment is public humiliation. Nevertheless, be careful.

Actual Punishments	Substitute Punishments
Benefit of clergy: reading of the Bible without one error	"Benefit of clergy": reciting: "Mary Had a Little Lamb," the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance, "Ring Around the Rosy," "Humpty Dumpty," your school song, a paragraph from your history textbook, U.S. Constitution preamble, "Itsy-Bitsy Spider," etc.
Stocks or pillory	Sit on a desk edge with arms fully extended; or stand on one leg with arms extended
Fines	Collect and sharpen class pencils, pick up every bit of paper and debris on the floor, whisper while on knees "I'm sorry" to every classmate individually
Jail time (gaol)	Put lawbreakers in a "jail" classroom section
Wearing a sign	Wear a sign around neck or a bad bag over head (large brown shopping bag)
Whipping (lashes or "stripes" with a whip)	All students wad up paper into balls and toss at transgressor who is immobile and whose backside faces the class
Branding/wearing letters	Stamp on hand a letter representing the infraction, cut out large capital letter for transgressor to wear on shirt or blouse, put paper bag over transgressor's head (bag reads, "Bad Bag—Heretic")
Public shaming	Entire class points finger at transgressor and transgressor is pulled around classroom with a rope around their waist while being pelted with paper balls
Ducking stool	Spray water on guilty (you can put a towel around them so their clothes don't get ruined)

Sign-Up Sheet

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I. Court Officials		
Chief Magistrate: _____		
Magistrates (4): _____		

Governor: _____		
Court Crier and Keeper of Order: _____		
II. Defendants in Court	Student	
Case of		
Case of		
Case of		
Case of		
Case of		
Case of		
Case of		
Case of		
Case of		
Case of		
Case of		
Case of		
Case of		
III. Witnesses	For	Against
Case A		
Case B		
Case C		
Case D		
Case E		
Case F		
Case G		
Case H		
Case I		
Case J		
Case K		
Case L		

Role-Playing Profiles

Magistrates (four to five)

1. The group of you have been selected to act as magistrates (i.e., judges and prosecutors) in the cases before the general court.
2. Act authoritatively and use language appropriate to a court of law and Puritan times.
3. Open court with a brief legal introduction. Then proceed through the cases, making sure that each case's facts are presented.
4. Call the accused forward and read the charge. Then ask: "What is your name? (*Pause*) What say you in defense of the charges?"
5. Ask for testimony from two witnesses.
6. Deliberate together to decide on a verdict. Consult the **Puritan Punishment: Magistrates Guidelines** sheet for suggestions and wisdom.
7. Be somewhat hostile toward the accused in your role as judges and prosecutors.

Witnesses (two per group)

1. You will be given some details of the case in which you will either testify against or for the accused.
2. In your group of three, it will be decided which side you are on, and, accordingly, you will prepare, with the aid of the other two in the group, details to use when you testify information in your particular case.
3. Fabricate details within the context of the case, and then be clever in the presentation of your testimony. Use events, names, places, dates, or even props to bolster the "facts" of the story that are consistent with the case.

Defendant (one per group)

1. You will be given some details of the charge against you.
2. Prepare a clever performance to include a defense of your actions.
3. Read the details of the case very carefully, and then think of ways to fend off the prosecution's case against your particular sin or transgression.
4. Decide, too, whether you will be a defiant or compliant defendant. If you are defiant and are then found guilty, the severity of the punishment might increase.
5. When the punishment is carried out, be a good sport and go along and "suffer" for your wrongdoing.
6. Help both witnesses in your group prepare their testimony.

Puritan Court Cases

CASE A: Breaking the Sabbath

Facts: In Puritan life, Sundays are set aside as a serious day of communion between man and his maker—a day of worship, sacrifice, and prayer. Breaking the Sabbath is everybody’s business in Massachusetts Bay Colony. The accused was caught violating the Lord’s Day by chopping wood to heat his house and to cook food for his family. His wife, on the same day, sang and danced under the trees in the brilliant sunshine. She said she was doing it “to celebrate her happiness.” Several of her children were seen dancing and laughing with her. The husband should control himself, as well as his wife and children.

Usual punishment: A ten-shilling fine or five lashes with a whip.

.....

CASE B: Gambling

Facts: In Puritan society, gambling—in any form—is strictly forbidden. It is a sinful violation of the law of honesty and industry. A man’s work, not chance, should determine his success in life. The accused was caught with a deck of cards he brought from England and kept hidden. He had asked several friends from Salem Village to join him in games of cards involving money. Dice were even seen at one such gathering. Just to possess dice or cards is illegal.

Usual punishment: Wearing a “G” on chest, a fine of twenty shillings, or ten “stripes.”

.....

CASE C: Theft

Facts: In one of the Bible’s Ten Commandments, stealing is condemned. The accused, during a brief “starving time” last February, stole bacon, ham, and venison from the smokehouse belonging to the community’s blacksmith, John Armstrong. He also took several pints of oatmeal from the entryway. The Armstrong family could ill afford the loss of food from its larder as the wife expects their fourth child in June. The nefarious act of thievery shows a lack of discipline and self-reliance, to say little of the absence of good work habits and self-respect.

Usual punishment: Branding “HT” (hog thief) on forehead with a hot iron, five lashes with a whip, or cutting off one hand.

.....

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CASE D: Idleness

Facts: Idleness is scorned in our Puritan community. It is like quicksand waiting to devour the weak and lazy. Devoted Puritans must carry their own load in society. As the Bible's book of Proverbs says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard. Consider her ways and be wise." After his crops failed, the accused has refused to work at jobs cleaning out privies offered by townspeople. He said, "Such degrading tasks are beneath me, for I have spent two years studying at Harvard College." Recently he has lived off relatives for six months, a real burden for that family. Any money he earns now seems to go for grog and cards.

Usual punishment: Three days in the pillory or gaol time until he finds a full-time job.

.....

CASE E: Selling guns to Indians

Facts: Relations with the local Indians have not always been good, especially the Pequot tribe. Nevertheless, the accused did, in fact, store up excess gunpowder and guns and decided to sell, at a profit, both these materials to a potential enemy of this holy community. The savages have little respect for rules of war or for the Christian society that we Puritans represent. This is a second offense for this crime, and this amoral man must be severely punished as an example for the whole community.

Usual punishment: Gaol time or branding an "I" (Indians) on his cheek with a hot iron.

.....

CASE F: Rebellion against parents

Facts: We Puritans have a law that states if any child above age sixteen curses, smites, or is rebellious toward his father or mother, or does not obey his parents' command, such a child may be put to death by his natural parents. The accused has run away to another village after refusing to obey his father's command to clean up the animal pens near the barn. This time, the child brandished a hoe and threatened his father before running off. What will our community's youth think and do if the accused gets away with behavior such as this, which undermines family authority in our society?

Usual punishment: If guilty, parent could put him to death. Minimally, the youth must receive a whipping and considerable time in the stocks.

.....

CASE G: Use of blasphemy or vulgar language

Facts: There is no more certain sign that a person's moral code has weakened than the use of profanity. Cursing in oaths, using the Lord's name in vain, and anger are abominations. The fourteen-year-old accused has used a profane tongue both in and outside the school within the ears of other youth. The elders have reprimanded his parents, but to no avail. In retaliation, the youth was seen throwing two stones at the windows of one elder's home. The child even sent an obscene note to the elder's wife with twenty-four words of blasphemy.

Usual punishment: Five "stripes" with a whip or pins stuck through the tongue.

.....

CASE H: Drunkenness

Facts: All Puritans, especially the church elders, are deeply concerned about excessive drinking in our community taverns and inns. The sin is drinking in excess, when words are slurred and behavior—vomiting and lisp—ing—is outrageous. Our community must always remember the Bible's warning: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." The accused spends much of his time in the Leaning Tree Tavern and imbibes copious amounts of beer and alcohol, and not for reasons of body warmth in winter. He wastes several shillings a week on grog, money that would be better spent on his family.

Usual punishment: A ten-shilling fine or ten lashes with a whip. Time in the stocks until sober.

.....

CASE I: Adultery

Facts: Adultery, when one of our members has sexual relations with another person outside his or her Christian marriage, is a dreadful sin. This immoral act surely dissolves the trust between man and wife. The two accused—both of them from two separate marriages—have known one another in the Biblical sense. The accused woman is now three months with child by the male accused. The death of his wife a year ago does not release him from this unpardonable and embarrassing sin of the flesh. The woman accused tempted the male just as the snake tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Usual punishment: Both must wear a large letter "A" on their clothing at all times for at least a year; they must marry within two weeks.

.....

CASE J: Immodesty, dancing, and long hair

Facts: Wickedness abounds in one house in particular. The accused wears loose clothing and short dresses so that she continually displays her flesh (her arms are often bare). She also wears adornments such as lace embroidery and sashes. She is a mountain of vanity violating the Seventh Commandment. She even dances in the Leaning Tree Tavern with a long-haired sailor.

Usual punishment: Public reprimand, time in the stocks, or cutting hair short.

.....

CASE K: Heresy

Facts: No crime within the Puritan religion is worse or more dangerous than heresy—challenging the orthodox church doctrine with false and Satanic ideas. Such is the case of the accused. She has defended the Catholic faith, attacked the Church of England, and currently harbors two Quaker youth within the home. At times witnesses have seen the accused making faces during sermons on Sunday. Once she is said to have taken coins out of the collection plate. She stares right in the eyes of the elders and others, showing no shame.

Usual punishment: Banishment from the community or hanging for heretical ideas.

.....

CASE L: Gossiping

Facts: A Puritan who spreads malicious rumors does the community no good. Our Twelve Good Rules state that we should “repeat no grievances, reveal no secrets, and maintain no ill opinions.” The accused has continually been gossiping, even in the company of those outside her family. She is causing all our community to snoop into everyone’s lives from dawn to dusk. Fires of rumors are burning all of us, and suspicion is loose in the land.

Usual punishment: Banishment from the community, branding a “G” on the tongue, or several dips into the village pond while sitting on a ducking stool.

.....

Postscript

The tight grip Puritanism had on its people in the Massachusetts Bay Colony could not last forever. As the seventeenth century was ending, an increasing number could no longer live up to all the strict codes and restrictions. When the hysteria of the Salem witch trials of 1692 subsided, the influence of their leaders—"theocrats" who had been elected rulers to carry out the will of God—was continuing to decline. The witch trials had shown how far to extremes a society could go to punish its citizens. Nineteen people and two dogs had been hanged, and one man, brave Giles Corey, had been pressed to death with heavy stones because he did not admit to being a male witch (a warlock). All these unnecessary victims resulted from too much focus on conformity and too little acceptance of human imperfection. After these tragic events, Puritanism in its harshest form became diluted as it spread across the colonies and as other more tolerant colonists continued migrating to New England.



While it is true that the Puritan behavior code restricted the freedom that many humans need to create and live full lives, nevertheless the positive side of the Puritan legacy ledger is undeniably impressive. As historian Thomas Bailey wrote, just about everything the Puritans left added to the "fiber and backbone" of the American character, if not to the enrichment of life itself.



Repulsed by a rocky, infertile soil, New Englanders were attracted to the sea, and in doing so, they became the sailors, whalers, shipbuilders, and sea captains of America. The cod became New England's "crop." The influence of this tiny section spread as its ships sailed the oceans in commercial enterprises that brought wealth to American banks to finance other business ventures.

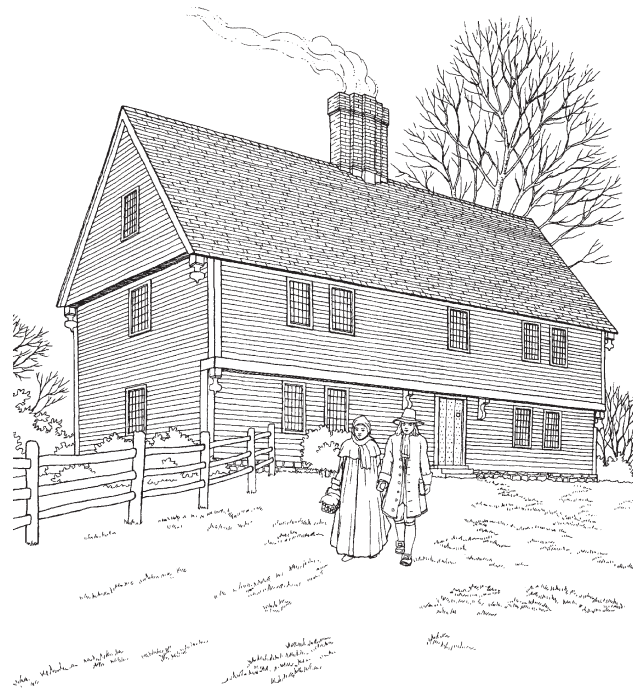
While we often laugh at the jokes and stereotypes that broadly paint the character of the flinty and narrow-minded New Englander, their respect for thrift, frugality, practicality, self-reliance, and high-moral standards may be lacking in some of us today who are often accused of being overly self-centered, extravagant, wasteful, impractical, or dependent upon others for help. We should never forget that the early Puritans did not feel like victims. They felt that they themselves were responsible for determining their own future.

Public schools, often under attack today, remain an important part of American democracy, the latter being an extension of the town meetings of the seventeenth century. Schools enlighten each generation of young people and prepare them for careers that require hard work, sacrifice, and thought. Moreover, intellectualism and profound literature, byproducts of a superior school system, bloomed in nineteenth-century New England. Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau wrote classic American novels and essays that were certainly

influenced by the forefathers of Boston, who established the schools and colleges these writers would eventually attend. Not surprisingly, Harvard University remains one of the world's finest institutions of higher learning.

Perhaps the most important legacy of the seventeenth-century Puritans, however, was their moral conscience, permeating humanitarian causes over succeeding centuries. New Englanders exhibited military zeal in championing causes ranging from more humane treatment of the insane to women's rights and the abolition of slavery. The Biblical advice that "you are your brother's keeper" was taken to heart by New England abolitionists who crusaded against slavery. The financial contributions, persuasive writings and speeches, and their direct involvement in the movement struck an enormous blow against American slavery.

So let us not judge too harshly the seventeenth-century Puritans' episodes of intolerance and self-righteousness presented in this Activator. Clearly, there is another side to these fervent people. American Puritans were more complex than most Americans realize. We need to remember that their society nurtured both the sensitive poetry of Anne Bradstreet and the sparse but handsome architecture of their homes and churches.





Historical Investigation Activity

Puritan General Court (1650)

Bill Lacey

Focus Question

Puritan pioneer and poet Anne Bradstreet: Was she a rebel and America's first feminist?

Materials Needed for This Historical Investigation

- **Documents A–E**—*class set*
- **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**—*class set*

Lesson Plan

1. Getting Started

- Whether you did the Puritan General Court Activator or not, review or find out what students know about Puritans in general and especially what their society and values were like. Put responses on the board as spokes of a wheel with the hub labeled "Puritans." It is suggested that you break down various subtopics as different "spokes." The discussion that follows should serve as a backstory to the **Focus Question** and the documents the students will soon analyze.

2. Backstory to Use as Instruction

- Few early immigrant groups have had the impact on the American character, thought, religion, government, and morality that the seventeenth-century Puritans had, who settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony with Boston as its epicenter.
- Being a strict religious society from the start allowed Puritan elders to maintain a rigid code of laws dictating behavior. Satan was ever-present, and odd behavior was watched carefully. Conformity to the community's moral code and laws went along with the other virtues of frugality, self-reliance, hard work, and resourcefulness. The devil's behavior was rooted out with fines and punishment.
- This society was a theocracy run by men; it was a man's world in Boston and the towns and villages in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Women followed the lead of their men as dictated by Biblical scripture. Women were taught to read so they too could read the Bible's verses on the saintly life of near perfection that all, women especially, were fated to live. Silence for women was also a virtue.
- Yet, in the first few decades of this Puritan "city on a shining hill," a few women did buck the system, notably Anne Hutchinson, Mary Dyer, and Anne Hopkins, to name a few. Should one more name be added to this



brief list of female rebels? While the other three women found fault with church dogma and wouldn't be silent about it, perhaps Anne Bradstreet quietly expressed her "rebellion" in poetry.

- Anne Bradstreet arrived in the Bay Colony with the first wave of Puritans in 1630. About eighteen years old and recently married, Anne seemed unlikely to challenge the position of women in the male-dominated society she found herself in. Yet, some modern scholars have suggested that she, too, was a rebel, even a heretic, whose written words (mostly poetry) and themes voiced her religious doubt and her desire for some gender equality. Women in that time and place weren't supposed to express personal feelings about colonial life, their families, or their husbands. Anne did.
 - Was Anne Bradstreet, Puritan mother and wife, a rebel and a dissenter? Could her literary output qualify her as an early feminist? Was she Anne Hutchinson with a pen and in verse? Did her poetry have deeper meaning?
3. Ask students, "From this backstory (and the Activator you have experienced), before you analyze the documents on this subject, do you think that this woman, who went against the beliefs of a male-dominated society using her clever verse as a 'weapon' to showcase feminine issues, should be considered, at some level, a rebel and a feminist?" Pass out the **Points to Ponder Response Sheet** so students can write their opinions for question #1.
 4. After five minutes of writing, stop students and survey their responses with a show of hands, giving you a working hypothesis. Discuss responses. Then say, "Our working hypothesis at this early stage, seems to be: Anne Bradstreet, through her poetry, was . . ."
 5. Pass out the package of **Documents A–E**. Say, "What do the documents tell us and what can we conclude? That's our task." It may be wise to read the first one or two documents aloud and go over what they say. Remind students to work through the documents carefully, and tell them that there is no order or sequence to the documents. Perhaps the first task might be to have students put the documents in chronological order. (Although, in this particular investigation on the poetry of Anne Bradstreet, sorting out the chronology may not affect the conclusion.) Once done, release students (in pairs or small groups) to work.
 6. Allow 35–40 minutes for students to work on the document package, including filling in the **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**.
 7. Afterward, discuss thoroughly and have some students read aloud their responses to the **Focus Question**. This will conclude the activity. However, as a finale, you could have some students discuss what question they would ask Anne Bradstreet if they had the chance.

Name _____ Date: _____

Points to Ponder Response Sheet

Focus Question: Puritan pioneer and poet Anne Bradstreet: Was she a rebel and America's first feminist?

1. Your initial reaction to the **Focus Question:** Anne Bradstreet, through her poetry, was / was not a rebel or early feminist because . . .

2. Which of the documents seem critical of Bradstreet, her work, and women who might hold similar opinions?

3. What specific words or phrases do these critics use to support their point of view?

4. What themes present in the selected poems of Bradstreet might critics use to give evidence of her "rebellion" or corruption of other women?

5. Why don't these particular themes of Bradstreet's upset or rile readers of her poetry today?

6. Likewise, why do you think historians and critics since 1650 have been positive toward and appreciative of Bradstreet's life and work?

7. Most people—including women—who could read in the seventeenth century read poetry. Could we say the same for literate people today? Why or why not?

8. What aspects of colonial Puritan life does Bradstreet illuminate for us in her poetry?

9. Which of these options would you choose to approximate your assessment of the **Focus Question** (circle your choice):
- a. Bradstreet was in fact a dangerous rebel-dissenter, threatening the Bible Commonwealth's existence (similar to Anne Hutchinson).
 - b. Certainly a rebel, Bradstreet probably emboldened some women to think beyond their daily existence, and question church doctrine and their place in Puritan society, but she is not dangerous.
 - c. Bradstreet is a heretic-rebel lite, her poems merely expressing feelings of a woman, unlike Anne Hutchinson, and her views on everyday life in that time. These views were not exactly punishable offenses.
10. Based on the documents you analyzed, write a lengthy paragraph answering the **Focus Question** at the top of this sheet. Make at least three major points to substantiate your point of view.

Document A

John Winthrop on the Proper Roles of a Puritan Woman

John Winthrop, one of the Bay Colony's famous leaders, had strong opinions on the role one particular woman, Anne Hopkins, should play in Puritan life. Hopkins was a contemporary of Anne Bradstreet. What follows is an entry in his journal, dated April 13, 1645.

Mr. Hopkins, the governor of Hartford upon Connecticut, came to Boston, and brought his wife [Anne] with him (a godly young woman and of special parts,) who was fallen into a sad infirmity, the loss of her understanding and reason, which had been growing upon her divers [diverse] years by occasion of her giving herself wholly to reading and writing, and had written many books. Her husband being very loving and tender of her was loath to grieve her, but he saw his error when it was too late, for if she had attended her household affairs and such things as belong to women, and not gone out of her way and calling to meddle in such things as are proper for men, whose minds are stronger, etc., she had kept her wits and might have improved them usefully and honorably in the place God had set her.

Source: Richard S. Dunn and Laetitia Yeandle, eds., *The Journal of John Winthrop: 1630–1649* (Cambridge, MS: Belknap Press, 1996).

Document B

Rev. John Woolbridge on His Sister-in-Law, Anne Bradstreet

Woolbridge helped Bradstreet publish her poems in London. The excerpt below appeared on the title page of her work.

[This] is the Work of a Woman, honoured, and esteemed where she lives, for her gracious demeanour, her eminent parts, her pious conversation, her courteous disposition, her exact diligence in her place, and discreet managing of her Family occasions, and more than so, these Poems are but the fruit of some few houres, curtailed from her sleepe and other refreshments.

Source: Rev. John Woolbridge, foreword from Anne Bradstreet's *The Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung Up in America* (1650).

Document C

Poems of Anne Bradstreet

In many ways, these poems offer a contrast to the stereotypical Puritan woman.

Excerpt from “In Honour of that High and Mighty Princess Queen Elizabeth of Happy Memory”

Now say, have women worth? or have they none?
Or had they some, but with our Queen is't gone?
Nay Masculines, you have thus taxt us long,
But she, though dead, will vindicate our wrong.
Let such as say our Sex is void of Reason,
Know tis a Slander now, but once was Treason.

Excerpt from “The Prologue”

To sing of Wars, of Captains, and of Kings,
Of Cities founded, Common-wealths begun,
For my mean pen are too superiour things:
Or how they all, or each their dates have run
Let Poets and Historians set these forth,
My obscure Lines shall not so dim their worth.
.....

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
Who says my hand a needle better fits,
A Poets pen all scorn I should thus wrong,
For such despite they cast on Female wits:
If what I do prove well, it won't advance,
They'l say it's stoln, or else it was by chance.
.....

Let Greeks be Greeks, and women what they are
Men have precedency and still excell,
It is but vain unjustly to wage warre;
Men can do best, and women know it well
Preheminence in all and each is yours;
Yet grant some small acknowledgement of ours.

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Excerpt from “Of the Four Humours in Mans Constitution”

Who is't that dare, or can, compare with me,
My excellencies are so great, so many,
I am confounded; fore I speak of any.

Excerpt from “To My Dear and Loving Husband”

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee;
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me ye women if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that Rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee give recompense.*
Thy love is such I can no way repay,
The heavens reward thee manifold I pray.
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere,
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

*payment in return for something

Source: Anne Bradstreet, as printed in John Harvard Ellis, ed., *The Works of Anne Bradstreet* (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1867).

Document D

Obstacles to Writing

Another Anne, Anne Hutchinson, inflamed the Massachusetts Bay Colony with her nonconformist and rebellious ways, making it difficult, among other reasons, for Bradstreet to carry on with her writing.

Anne [Bradstreet] set her mind to starting her poetry career in a serious manner, despite the fact that her days were spent with a baby daughter and a little boy who could race into any number of threatening situations.

Her duties were seemingly endless; she had to convert her rough frontier household into a safe and civilized home, and oversee the servants, the health of the livestock, and the crops—which meant everything from monitoring the size of the pigs to making cheese and pressing cider apples—and so Anne did not have much opportunity for leisure or for time to herself. Indeed, the idea of reading, writing, or poring over literature of any kind must have seemed an unlikely dream to this young mother. But when life on the frontier felt unbearable, she would discover that it was poetry that enabled her to survive without falling into depression. . . .

. . . Of more personal concern to Anne, the Hutchinson dilemma had directed everyone's attention more pointedly than ever to the question of the proper role for women in society and what should be done to those who had stepped out of bounds. The debate over the limits that should be placed on female behavior was alarmingly linked to the problem of being a woman and setting pen to paper. Anne had heard cautionary tales such as Winthrop's declaration that one writing woman had committed suicide by throwing herself down a well because she had addled her wits by reading and thinking too much. Women were too frail in both body and mind to engage in much intellectual activity, or so most people believed, and Mistress Hutchinson was the proof.

Source: Charlotte Gordon, *Mistress Bradstreet: The Untold Life of America's First Poet* (New York: Little, Brown, 2005).

Document E

“The Pleasures of a Country Life” by Ruth Belknap

This work was written by colonial poet Ruth Belknap in 1782 and depicts her rural life as a housewife of a minister. Although Belknap lived over a hundred years after Bradstreet, this poem reflects a workload similar to Anne Bradstreet’s. Like Bradstreet, Belknap injects a bit of sarcasm into her poem.

All summer long I toil & sweat,
Blister my hands, and scold & fret.
And when the summer’s work is o’er,
New toils arise from Autumn’s store.
Corn must be husk’d and pork be kill’d,
The house with all confusion fill’d.
O could you see the grand display
Upon our annual butchering day,
See me look like ten thousand sluts,*
My kitchen spread with grease & guts.
*untidy or messy woman

Source: Ruth Belknap, “The Pleasures of a Country Life” as printed in Susan Ostberg, *William Wentworth: Puritan Preacher* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2006).

New England Town Meeting 1738



Bill Lacey

Lesson Plan

Overview

Of all the positive accomplishments and contributions made by the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one, many believe, remains the most notable: the New England town meeting. These annual assemblies of adult white males were, as one historian phrased it, “the most important school of self-government” in British America and later the United States. For in these democratic town meetings, citizens aired their opinions, discussed motions and proposals, and voted on issues that truly affected their daily lives. In this lively Activator, there are two activities: students first role-play New Englanders in 1738 with different occupations in a social setting, defending what they do, before going to a meeting to express diverse and passionate points of view while regulated by a chairman. As they participate, students will begin to understand and gain practical experience with the origins of U.S. democracy.

Setup

1. Duplication

- **Background Essay**—*class set*
- **Postscript**—*class set*
- **Colonial Occupations**—*class set* (write/print all separate colonial occupations [titles and descriptions] on thirty-five slips of paper to be drawn out of a box or hat before the **Meet and Greet**)
- **Meet and Greet Fill-in Sheet**—*one copy per student*
- **Town Meeting Sign-Up Sheet**—*one copy per class*
- **Town Meeting Procedure**—*class set*
- **Town Meeting Issues**—*class set*
- **Motions to Be Presented**—*one copy* (cut into cards and hand out to Attendees 1–8 for consideration)
- **Town Meeting Point of View**—*one copy per student*
- **Scripted Town Meeting**—*class set*
- *Optional: Robert’s Rules of Order*—*class set* (could be taped to each desk for reference)

2. Schematics, props, costumes

- a. **Activity #1: Meet and Greet:** For this activity, all students need is a fairly large area in which to roam around as they try to convince

their classmates that their occupation is vital to the community. Since this activity is brief—maybe fifteen or twenty minutes—it may not be worth the effort to do a major reconfiguration of desks to facilitate this activity. Use your judgment on this matter.

- b. **Activity #2 : The Town Meeting:** The set-up should resemble a city council meeting format, with three to five selectmen in front and the rest of the class in front-facing rows of desks or chairs.
- c. Dressing up in eighteenth-century Puritan garb can be encouraged but it is not essential to the activity's success.
- d. Props could play a role in the **Meet and Greet**, where students roam around the room trying to convince their fellow citizens of the importance of their occupation. Individuals may want to do their convincing with an occupational prop (for example, a "hatter" with colonial hats; "wig maker" with a stylish wig or two).

3. Roles

- a. There are thirty-five occupations to hand out in the first activity, **Meet and Greet**. If you have more than thirty-five students in class, two students can have the same occupation.
- b. For the **Town Meeting**, select three to five reliable and dramatic students to be selectmen. They will carry out the leadership roles in the **Town Meeting** activity, guiding the entire class through the script. They can share the responsibility of being "chairman" and, if you so decide, do the same for a second rendition of the script using a different issue selected from the **Town Meeting Issues** handout. If you choose to use the script outline a second time—with a different issue—it is recommended that you fill every role required in the script with an entirely different set of students in the second rendering. That way, more students are actively involved.
- c. Other roles in the script include a secretary (which could be filled by one of the selectmen) and eight different "attendees." Fill these roles with some care. The rest of the class, hopefully, will choose to be speakers midway through the script using their **Point of View** slips.

Directions

- 1. Hand out the **Background Essay** either the day before this class as homework or pass it out now. It is very possible that the actual **Meet and Greet** activity and the **Town Meeting** simulation will take more than one full period. If this is the case, allow two periods for all handouts to be read in class and for both activities to play out. The **Background Essay** will give students the backstory to their 1738 community situation as well as information about colonial towns and their development, along with the significance of the town meeting in American history. Recommended: Have several students read the

Background Essay aloud while you amplify and clarify various points in the essay.

2. The **Schematic** graphic may not be necessary as both activities require little desk movement. In Activity 1 (**Meet and Greet**) students need plenty of open space to interact and make short persuasive speeches to other students to convince them of their occupation's importance. Activity 2 (**Town Meeting**) requires rows of desks facing a large table where three to five selectmen are seated (much like a city council meeting). If the **Schematic** page is needed for clarity, display and explain it.
3. Either the day before or on the day, assign roles and make note of who's who on the **Sign-up Sheet**. On sign-up day, emphasize that students be responsible in their preparation and perform convincingly and with drama.

You have two options for running the Activator:

Option A

Activity #1 (Meet and Greet)

1. Assign all roles as directed in **Setup** #3a. Place thirty-five slips of half-folded paper with one occupation and its description on each in a box. Read over each occupation and its brief description from the full sheet as students read along.
2. Have students draw the folded slips from the box, and allow ten minutes for them to fill in their **Meet and Greet Fill-in Sheet**, with the purpose of persuading their classmates of the worth of their own occupation in a colonial town in 1738.
3. Once students have completed their fill-in sheets, check for understanding and then release them to circulate around the room on their personal quests: to persuade as many as possible that their occupation has worth, value, and adds vitality to the town. Allow fifteen minutes for this cocktailesque social activity to play out. Then discuss the activity and the merits of certain occupations. Ask students which occupations were the easiest and hardest to convince classmates of their importance.

Activity #2 (Town Meeting)

1. Reconfigure the classroom desks for the town meeting using the **Schematic**. Essentially, it should resemble a modern city council meeting set up.
2. Explain the purpose of each handout and explain how the activity will play out. If you have not selected the meeting's participants, tell

students, "We are going to simulate a New England town meeting in 1738. We need volunteers to role play the selectmen who help guide the proceedings, and eight meeting attendees to say key words of **Robert's Rules of Order** to keep the meeting organized and smooth. Everyone else will hopefully voice their opinions about the issues discussed at the appropriate time using the words they filled in on the **Town Meeting Point of View** slips."

3. Be especially aware of the activity's sequence. The names called out by the secretary at the beginning of the script should be given to the eight attendees, at least to use during roll call and when these eight seek recognition by the chairman.
4. Recommended: a run-through of the script.
5. For each subsequent issue, have all students fill in a new **Town Meeting Point of View** slip and reassign the roles of chairman, secretary, and the eight attendees. A **Sign-Up Sheet** is provided for two separate issues. To settle any arguments or disputes regarding procedure or meeting etiquette, refer to **Robert's Rules of Order**. (Note: Town meetings up to this day continue to use **Robert's Rules of Order**.)
6. Proceed with the **Town Meeting** activity. Follow up with a discussion on how well the activity went and what students learned from it.

Option B

1. Conduct the **Meet and Greet** activity as described in **Option A**.
2. Shorten the **Town Meeting** activity to one issue, using the **Scripted Town Meeting** and selecting an issue from the **Town Meeting Issues** sheet.
3. You may want to encourage more student improvisation, yet still let students use their **Town Meeting Point of View** slips for reference.

Debriefing

Decide whether you wish to use a short or long debriefing as closure to this Activator. Here are some possible ways to make meaningful what happened during this New England Town Meeting of 1738.

Short Debriefing

1. Pass out the **Postscript**. Either read this to your students and have them read along, or summarize the main points of each paragraph before moving on.

- 2. Ask students what they remembered and learned from the activities, which one they liked the most, what they specifically took away from the **Town Meeting**, and what conclusions they can draw about colonial life from these activities.
- 3. Consider having students write a Learning Log entry following this short debriefing.

Long Debriefing

Use one or more of the following debriefing activities:

- 1. Pass out the **Postscript**. Either read it aloud or share reading responsibility with several students.
- 2. **Discuss:** What thoughts do you have about colonial life in British America after participating in these two activities? What specific occupations would you personally like to work at in those times? Why? What was missing from the New England town meeting in the eighteenth century that is present in today’s city council meetings? What has not changed? Why?
- 3. Many observers—foreigners included—over the years have commented on the town meeting’s legacy, some praising it and others criticizing aspects of the institution. Have students come up with a few arguments each side might use in a heated debate about the legacies of the town meeting. Write these arguments on the board using a T-chart.

Praise	Criticism

- 4. At the historical beginnings of town meetings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there were restrictions on who could attend, speak, and vote. Yet historians lavish praise on the town meetings as “grassroots” democracy, direct democracy, and “in-your-face,” “hands-on” democracy. **Ask students:** *What would you say to those supporters, knowing that women, minorities, non-church members, and serious lawbreakers could not participate in most of the proceedings at the annual gatherings?*

5. **Discuss:** Vermont has established a town meeting day for the entire state, often the first Monday or Tuesday of the month. Why would they (state legislators) do this, do you think? What would be the positive and negatives of having hundreds of town meetings at the same time throughout the state?
6. **Discuss:** For years, New Englanders have quietly debated whether to have their annual town meetings at night or in the daytime. Why would one time be better than another?
7. **Ask students:** *If and when you attend a local city council meeting one day, how different do you think it will be from a town meeting of 150 years ago?*

Comparison Chart	
Similarities	Differences

8. Have students write a Learning Log entry presenting their thoughts and feelings about participating in this simulated New England town meeting.

Resources to consult

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Visual history

Unique New England institution that it was and is, there seem to be few visual renderings available of a town meeting to recommend. One option: Have students go online and watch a current town meeting play out (the duration is usually one to one and half hours). You could also send students to a local city council or school board meeting, both of which would resemble the pace, flow, and interaction seen in the meetings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some of these may showcase familiar issues and topics.

Background Essay

Place: Newton, Massachusetts Bay Colony

Time: May 1738

This Activator will involve you in one of America's most cherished and important institutions: the New England town meeting. Soon you will participate in, and experience firsthand, a lively "democratic" debate of issues that confronted citizens of small towns and communities in northeast British America in the 1700s. Get ready to defend your newly-acquired colonial occupation in a warm-up meet-and-greet activity and contribute to a discussion confronting your own town in a town meeting.

Early American towns

As the Puritans migrated to New England in the early 1600s, Boston became the hub of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Starting as a mere village, it soon grew into a town populated by "earthly saints" (the Puritans), devout families in a communal situation worshipping and working side by side, whatever one's occupation or station in life. Carpenter or cobbler, farmer or wigmaker, eggler or elder, the Puritans in the colony's towns were in their "Zion in the wilderness" together.

A variety of occupations

Every town in early New England, as well as in the Middle and Southern colonies, relied on a variety of skilled and unskilled workers to sustain a moderately comfortable life for its citizens. To be sure, most every town had a "doctor" or two (though many doctors might "moonlight" as barbers), a lawyer, judge, blacksmith, and a few millers to run the gristmills. Less familiar to later generations of Americans might be masters, journeymen, and apprentices in occupations like barrel maker (cooper), wigmaker, cabinetmaker, undertaker, mason-bricklayer, farmer, shopkeeper, bookbinder, and metalworker. As towns grew, citizens might also enjoy the fruits of the labors of inn keepers, printers, butchers, bakers, plumbers,

jailors, milliners (hat makers), cobblers, tanners, and even glass blowers. Some of these occupations required craftsmen, skilled and trained experts; grunt work, like farming and hunting, fed the colony. The list of occupations in even small towns could be endless.

Governing a town

Town leaders in colonial New England wanted a God-centered, moral community. This was reflected in the ways townspeople ran their local governments. These governments were operated by those who attended church and town meetings regularly. This important development still exists. While colonial towns met annually to choose their tax collectors and clerks, they also chose certain white males to be selectmen. Selectmen were officials whose duties would include supervising the work of lesser officials, ensuring that the town's infrastructure (roads, bridges) was maintained, and settling the town's inevitable disputes. Usually the selectmen (three to five men) met at least once a year to hear complaints and generally conduct routine business of the town.

The town meeting

Eminent Massachusetts historian Samuel Eliot Morison has called the town meeting the "most important school of self-government in . . . the United States." Perhaps the formal beginnings of town meetings were in 1633, when the towns of Watertown, Dorchester, and Newton



Puritans of Massachusetts Bay Colony

Image source: Markham, Richard. *Colonial Days: Being Stories and Ballads for Young Patriots*. New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1881.

(all in Massachusetts) spontaneously formed governments at the town level where, it was noted, decisions could be made that touched the daily lives of the towns' citizens. As it then developed in these town meetings, all white males were given the opportunity to voice, in a meaningful way, their opinions, and to serve on local committees to express these opinions—individually or in a group—about taxes, roads, construction, expansion of the town, schools, and even how many taverns to license in town. Even those townsmen who could not vote were expected to be present; women could attend but not speak or vote. Politics were for men only. The selectmen, chosen at these meetings, were then responsible for implementing the wishes of the majority.

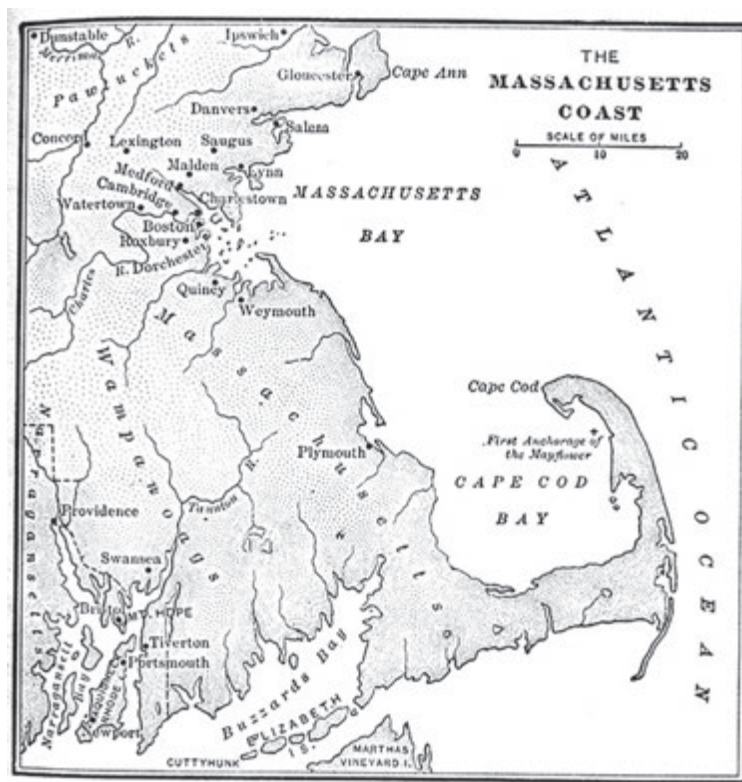
"Grassroots" democracy

The New England town meeting, with much justification, can be called "the true beginning of

grassroots democracy in America." Henry David Thoreau, a resident of small-town Concord—and one of New England's most famous sons—called the town meeting "the most respected [legislative body] ever assembled in the United States, more than the U.S. Congress."

Participate in democracy

You are going to participate in a colonial town occupation meet-and-greet activity, then you and your class will recreate a New England town meeting in 1738. Both activities will help you learn about living in colonial times and about how democracy developed in early America before the Revolutionary War. Your creative and eager participation will enhance the learning, so "dive in" by convincing your fellow townspeople that your occupation is vital to the community and that the town doesn't need another tavern!

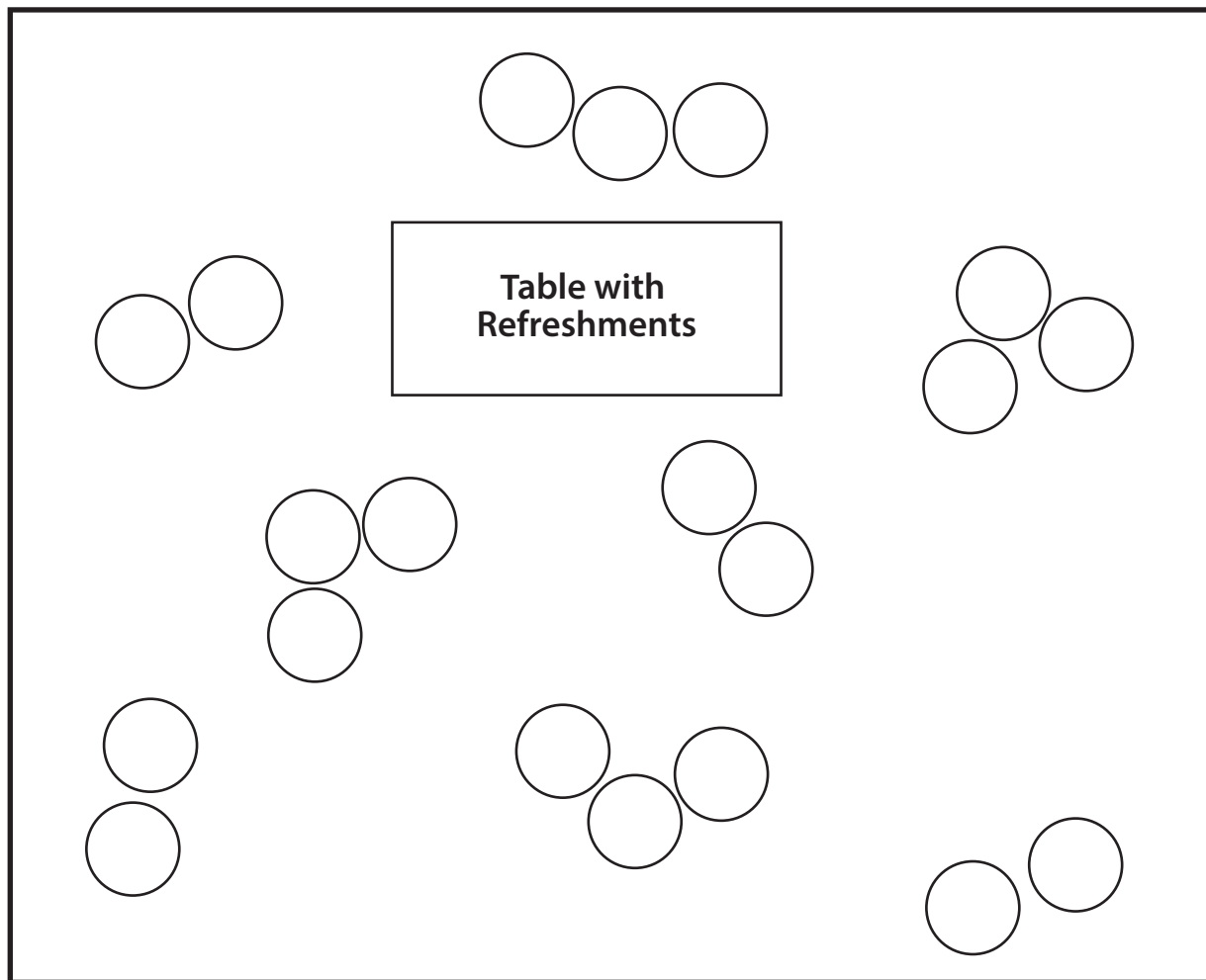


Map of Massachusetts Coast

Image source: McMaster, John Bach. *A School History of the United States*. New York: American Book Company, 1897.

Schematic

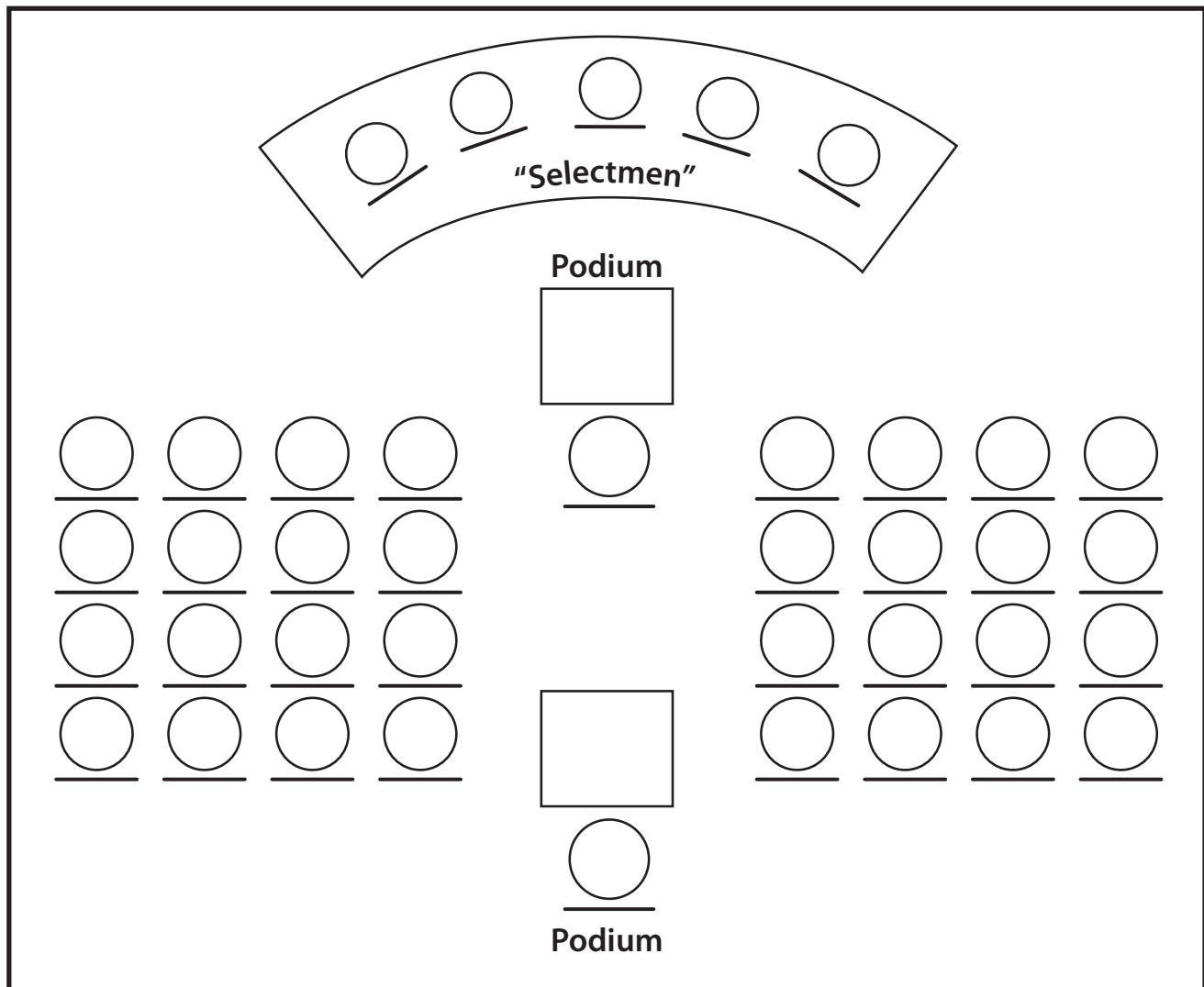
Meet and Greet



Suggestions

- Encourage students to get “inside” their character’s occupation and write details about why their job is essential and more important than other occupations.
- Serve refreshments on a table in the center of the classroom.
- Let students roam at will and interact with as many others as possible.
- Allow about fifteen to twenty minutes for this social time.
- Afterward, have a discussion about really essential/vital jobs, unusual jobs not seen today, and the most important job in a colonial town.

Town Meeting



Suggestions

- If desks and chairs are separate, use chairs only, except for the selectmen.
- Encourage speakers to be passionate and dramatic.
- Insist that speakers fill in **Town Meeting Point of View** slips before speaking about an issue.
- Tape **Robert's Rules of Order** to each desk, or supply each student with a copy to hold.
- Select responsible and dramatic students to be selectmen and speakers.
- Speakers who want to deliver longer arguments could stand at a podium.

Colonial Occupations

SCRIVENER (clerk notary, money lender)

BLACKSMITH (works with hot metals, also known as a “forger”)

COOPER (barrel maker)

CHANDLER (makes/sells candles)

MILLER (owns/operates flour mill)

TAILOR (makes/repairs clothing)

COBBLER (makes/repairs shoes)

CONSTABLE (policeman, law enforcer)

GOVERNOR OF COLONY

HATTER (makes/sells head wear)

POTTER (makes/sells pottery/earthenware)

SMUGGLER (sells illegal goods cheaply)

INN/TAVERN KEEPER (Owner of the inn, also known as a piper, hosteler, or taverner)

FARMER (grows/sells produce)

GRAZIER (tends/sells cows/cattle)

MINISTER (tends to town’s souls)

PLANTER (owns/operates large estate in the South)

ICEMAN (makes/sells blocks of ice)

CARTWRIGHT (makes/repairs carts and wagons)

BREWER (also known as a “tippler”—makes/sells beers and ales)

FISH FAG (sells fish and seafood)

TOWN CRIER (usually a town official who shouts both vital and trivial announcements to the public)

BAKER (also known as a “baxter”—makes/sells products from local grains, including pastries/bread)

EGGLER (deals with eggs and poultry)

JAILER/GAOLER (locks up and watches the accused until trial)

CARPENTER (also known as a “boardwright”)

SUCKSMITH (makes plowshares for digging farm trenches)

RAG AND BONE MAN (goes street to street collecting rubbish)

SCHOOLMASTER (teaches many subjects and tends to misbehaving students)

SAWYER (cuts timber into logs/boards)

STREAKER (prepares the dead for burial)

WIGMAKER (makes stylish but essential hair pieces)

PRINTER (prints newspapers, pamphlets, broadsides, and books)

LAWYER (draws up legal contracts and attends clients in court disputes)

HOUSEHOLD SERVANT (does small chores around the house)

Meet & Greet

Colonial Occupations Fill-in Sheet

This activity will help students learn about the economic and social diversity in a colonial town. The activity format is a “meet and greet” style, like a cocktail party. Each student receives one of thirty-five occupation identities, then tries to convince others of their occupation’s value to the community as they socialize around the room, making contact with as many other people in the colony as they can.

Occupation: _____

I am a vital member of this colonial town because:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

During Meet and Greet: Ask others, “What job do you do, and how does your work serve and contribute to the economic and social well-being of this colonial town?”

Example of a completed form:

Occupation: *Inn/Tavern Keeper (also known as a piper, hosteler, or taverner)*

I am a vital member of this colonial town because:

- *Who better to host visitors than I, your friendly inn/tavern keeper?*
- *I make sure visitors have a warm bar / dining room and a soft, not-too-crowded, flealess bed.*
- *After visitors pass through our colonial town, their lasting impression is my inn and the service I gave them.*
- *It’s good for business, and visitors spend more money here, so everyone benefits.*

During Meet and Greet: Ask others, “What job do you do, and how does your work serve and contribute to the economic and social well-being of this colonial town?”

Town Meeting Sign-Up Sheet

	Town Meeting 1	Town Meeting 2
Chairman/ Selectmen		
Secretary		
Attendee 1 William Cotton		
Attendee 2 Abner Carver		
Attendee 3 Jonathan Winslow		
Attendee 4 Benjamin Endicott		
Attendee 5 Thomas Bedford		
Attendee 6 Edward Doty		
Attendee 7 Alden Peabody		
Attendee 8 Moses Brown		

Robert's Rules of Order

A Brief Outline

I. What is parliamentary procedure?

- a. It is a set of rules for conduct at meetings that allows everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion.
- b. It's a time-tested method of conducting business at meetings and public gatherings.

II. Organizations using parliamentary procedure usually follow a fixed order of business. Below is a typical example:

- a. Call to order and roll call of members present
- b. Reading of minutes of last meeting, officers reports, and committee reports
- c. Special orders—Important business previously designated for consideration at this meeting
- d. Unfinished business
- e. New business
- f. Announcements and adjournment

III. The method used by members to express themselves is making motions. A motion is a proposal that the entire membership take action or a stand on an issue. Individual members can:

- a. Make a motion
- b. Second motions
- c. Debate motions
- d. Vote on motions

IV. How are motions presented?

- a. Obtain the floor.
 - 1. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
 - 2. Rise and address the chairman by saying, "Mr. Chairman" or "Mr. President."
 - 3. Wait until the chairman recognizes you.
- b. Make your motion.
 - 1. Speak in a clear and concise manner.
 - 2. Always state a motion affirmatively. Say, "I move that we . . ." rather than, "I move that we do not . . ."
 - 3. Avoid personalities, and stay on your subject.
- c. Wait for someone to second your motion.
- d. Another member will second your motion, or the chairman will call for a second.
- e. If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.

- f. The chairman states your motion.
 1. The chairman will say, "It has been moved and seconded that we . . ." thus placing your motion before the membership for consideration and action.
 2. The membership then either debates your motion or may move directly to a vote.
 3. Once your motion is presented to the membership by the chairman, it becomes "assembly property" and cannot be changed by you without the consent of the members.
- g. Expand on your motion.
 1. The time for you to speak in favor of your motion is at this point in time, rather than at the time you present it.
 2. The mover is always allowed to speak first.
 3. All comments and debate must be directed to the chairman.
 4. Keep to the time limit for speaking that has been established.
 5. The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the chairman.
- h. Put the question to the membership.
 1. The chairman asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
 2. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
 3. On a motion to move, the previous question may be adapted.

V. Voting on a motion:

The method of vote on any motion depends on the situation and the bylaws of policy of your organization. There are five methods used to vote by most organizations, they are:

- a. Voice—The chairman asks those in favor to say, "aye," and those opposed to say "no." Any member may move for an exact count.
- b. Roll call—Each member answers "yes" or "no" as his name is called. This method is used when a record of each person's vote is required.
- c. General consent—When a motion is not likely to be opposed, the chairman says, "If there is no objection . . ." The membership shows agreement by their silence; however if one member says, "I object," the item must be put to a vote.
- d. Division—This is a slight verification of a voice vote. It does not require a count unless the chairman so desires. Members raise their hands or stand.
- e. Ballot—Members write their vote on a slip of paper. This method is used when secrecy is desired.

There are two other motions that are commonly used that relate to voting:

- f. Motion to table—This motion is often used in the attempt to "kill" a motion. The option is always present, however, to "take from the table," for reconsideration by the membership.
- g. Motion to postpone indefinitely—This is often used as a means of parliamentary strategy and allows opponents of a motion to test their strength without an actual vote being taken. Also, debate is once again open on the main motion.

Town Meeting Procedure (Simplified)

(See **Robert's Rules of Order** for a more detailed description)

1. An issue (new business) is raised when a citizen stands to be recognized by the chairman and makes a motion ("Mr. Chairman, I move that . . .") and it is seconded by another citizen ("I second the motion . . ."). Hopefully, the motion is connected to an issue of concern in the community at large.
2. Another citizen moves for debate/discussion of the original motion and another person seconds it ("I move that we debate and discuss this motion, Mr. Chairman . . ." "Do I hear a second?").
3. Then the chairman recognizes one citizen at a time to speak to the motion, in support of or against it.
4. After thorough discussion, another person moves to end debate by calling for a vote, which is repeated by the chairman or secretary and is seconded ("It has been moved and seconded that we end debate on the motion to . . .").
5. Debate ends with an affirmative vote by the majority in a voice or a show of hands vote ("All those in favor of ending debate say, 'Aye.' Opposed say, 'Nay'").
6. If affirmative, a vote on the original motion is taken (by voice, show of hands, or secret ballot).
7. The chairman or secretary declares the results of the vote.
8. The chairman entertains another issue/motion from a citizen.

Town Meeting Issues

1. Elect a new constable (sheriff).
2. Elect a new tax collector.
3. Hire a new schoolmaster/teacher.
4. Decide on whether to appoint two or three homeless persons to round up stray hogs and corral them outside town.
5. Decide on hours and days on which our three taverns are open and whether to grant new licenses for more taverns.
6. Decide what to do with the poor who always seem to be in our gaols (jails), where they receive free food and lodging.
7. Decide how to punish (or fine) those who do not attend church each Sunday. They set bad examples for our children.
8. Decide whether to allow the community's females to speak and vote at these meetings.
9. Some other town meeting issue. (Come up with your own.)

Motions to Be Presented

ISSUE #1	<p>New Constable</p> <p>Attendee #1: William Cotton</p> <p>"Mr. Chairman . . ." (<i>wait to be recognized</i>)</p> <p>"I move that we (elect / refuse to elect) a new constable for our town."</p>
ISSUE #2	<p>New Tax Collector</p> <p>Attendee #2: Abner Carver</p> <p>"Mr. Chairman . . ." (<i>wait to be recognized</i>)</p> <p>"I move that we (elect / refuse to elect) a new tax collector for our town."</p>
ISSUE #3	<p>New Schoolmaster</p> <p>Attendee #3: Jonathan Winslow</p> <p>"Mr. Chairman . . ." (<i>wait to be recognized</i>)</p> <p>"I move that we (hire / do not hire) a new schoolmaster or teacher for our town's school."</p>
ISSUE #4	<p>Stray Hogs</p> <p>Attendee #4: Benjamin Endicott</p> <p>"Mr. Chairman . . ." (<i>wait to be recognized</i>)</p> <p>"I move that we (appoint / do not appoint) two or three homeless persons to round up all the stray hogs in the area and corral them outside of town."</p>
ISSUE #5	<p>Taverns</p> <p>Attendee #1: William Cotton</p> <p>"Mr. Chairman . . ." (<i>wait to be recognized</i>)</p> <p>"I move that we vote to (grant / refuse to grant) more licenses to adult, white townspeople who want to open a new tavern, and, further, that we (do not limit/limit) the hours of all taverns from five o'clock p.m. to ten o'clock p.m."</p>
ISSUE #6	<p>The Poor</p> <p>Attendee #6: Edward Doty</p> <p>"Mr. Chairman . . ." (<i>wait to be recognized</i>)</p> <p>"I move that we decide what to do with the poor who always seem to be in our gaols, where they receive free food and lodging and contribute nothing to society."</p>
ISSUE #7	<p>Church Attendance</p> <p>Attendee #7: Alden Peabody</p> <p>"Mr. Chairman . . ." (<i>wait to be recognized</i>)</p> <p>"I move that we (punish and fine / do not punish and fine) any townspeople, male and female alike, who chooses not to attend Sunday church services and meetings."</p>
ISSUE #8	<p>Females at Meetings</p> <p>Attendee #8: Moses Brown</p> <p>"Mr. Chairman . . ." (<i>wait to be recognized</i>)</p> <p>"I move that we (allow/deny) any adult white females the courtesy of speaking to issues or voting at our town meetings."</p>

Town Meeting Point of View

Point of View Slip

Name: _____ Town Meeting Issue: _____

Arguments

For:

Against:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

(Use back if necessary)

Point of View Slip

Name: _____ Town Meeting Issue: _____

Arguments

For:

Against:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

(Use back if necessary)

Scripted Town Meeting

CHAIRMAN: In accordance with tradition and town ordinance, I hereby call to order this town meeting. Mr. Secretary, please have a roll call.

SECRETARY: Please say 'Present, Mr. Secretary.' (*He reads eight names and waits for a response from each.*) William Cotton . . . Abner Carver . . . Jonathan Winslow . . . Benjamin Endicott . . . Thomas Bedford . . . Edward Doty . . . Alden Peabody . . . Moses Brown . . .

CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Now please read a brief summary of the minutes from our last meeting.

SECRETARY: Meeting held on October the seventeenth of seventeen hundred and thirty-eight. Those present decided to build a new community mill out near Hubbard farm. We also voted down Elijah Corey's proposal to allow Quakers to run for office. Finally, we will now allow the town's three cobblers to sell their wares at Saturday's street market. And . . . oh . . . upon Eli Hunter's motion we voted to open the casks of rum for attendees only fifteen minutes prior to these meetings. (**Note:** *If this is your second town meeting, change decisions made at previous meeting.*)

CHAIRMAN: As agreed to earlier, we will now table hearing any committee and special reports and old business and go to new business immediately.

*(During "new business" the chairman of this meeting will refer to topics on **Town Meeting Issues** and deal with one issue through until its passage or defeat using a simplified **Robert's Rules of Order** format. A second rendition of a town meeting will utilize a different issue from this sheet.)*

CHAIRMAN: The chair now entertains any motions during new business.

WILLIAM COTTON: Mr. Chairman (*wait to be recognized*). I move that we . . . (*See card*).

CHAIRMAN: It has been moved that we . . . (*repeat mover's proposal*). Do I hear a second?

ABNER CARVER: I second the motion. (*If no second, the motion is "lost"*).

CHAIRMAN: It has been moved and seconded that we . . . (*repeat motion again*). Would those present like to debate the motion or move directly to a vote? Do I hear a motion?

JONATHAN WINSLOW: I move that we debate and discuss the motion, Mr. Chairman.

BENJAMIN ENDICOTT: I second the motion.

CHAIRMAN: It has been moved and seconded that we debate and discuss the motion. All in favor of debate say "aye." (*wait*) All those opposed say "nay." (*wait*) The "ayes" have it. The motion has passed. We will debate the original motion. I call on the mover to speak first.

WILLIAM COTTON: (*speak to the motion, detailing why you support the motion with some fact or observational/anecdotal data*)

*(Others—Attendees 2–8—now speak to the motion in the same manner after hearing, "Who wishes to speak?" "What's your pleasure?" Other attendees may also voice their opinion, using words written on their **Point of View** slips. When the debate appears to be over, continue with script.)*

THOMAS BEDFORD: Mr. Chairman, I move that we end debate and vote on the motion.

CHAIRMAN: Do I hear a second?

EDWARD DOTY: Mr. Chairman, I move that we vote by hand, instead of by voice.

CHAIRMAN: It has been moved that we vote by a show of hands rather than by voice. Do I hear a second?

ALDEN PEABODY: I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN: It has been moved and seconded that we vote by a show of hands instead of by voice. All in favor of a hand vote on the original motion, say "aye." (*wait*) All opposed, say "nay." (*wait*) The "ayes" have it. We will vote by a show of hands. All those in favor of the original motion, to . . . (*read original motion*) raise their hands. (*count hands*) Opposed to the motion, raise their hands. (*count and decide if "ayes" or "nays" won the vote*) The motion is carried/defeated.

MOSES BROWN: Mr. Chairman, because of the late hour and the storm soon to hit our town tonight, I move that we adjourn this meeting and complete old and new business at a later date, say after harvest season.

CHAIRMAN: Do I hear a second?

ABNER CARVER: I second the motion, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN: It has been moved and seconded that this town meeting be adjourned and further business be conducted at a later date. All in favor say "aye." (*wait*) All opposed say "nay." (*wait*) This meeting is adjourned.

Postscript

By all accounts, a New England town meeting was (and is today) a social event as well as a political affair, one of the few times during the year where almost all citizens of the community gathered together in a meetinghouse or church. Sadly, lost from most brief primary source accounts are the strong feelings, witty pronouncements, and the sarcasm brought out after a year of pent-up frustrations that no doubt exploded at these annual conclaves. Yet, town meetings were (and are) for New Englanders a welcome respite from, or tonic for, all the months of unappreciated toil and dull, routine existences as farmers, shopkeepers, or bakers.

In the eighteenth century, the impact of the town meeting on the beginnings of the American Revolution in the 1760s and 1770s is incalculable. Attendees of town meetings all over New England at some point listened to and in some cases voted for resolutions that eventually led to the American Colonies' separation from Great Britain. A few have noted and suggested that the influential Committees of Correspondence, "shadow governments" perhaps, and even the Sons of Liberty, met in town meetings in churches and taverns to discuss vital issues. If this is accurate, then the town meeting had a significant impact on the American independence movement.

Some have said over the centuries that the New England town meeting exhibited the purest form of democracy: a face-to-face meeting, where each citizen aired his opinion, made decisions by majority vote, and finished the day knowing that, in some small way, each individual in town had some say in his life—that he was equal in expressing his opinion on issues that affected him.

A noteworthy fact is that town meetings in New England, and in certain adjacent states, continue to this day. Some critics say it's outmoded, not fit for the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Yet we see TV versions of it in outsized town hall meetings, where political candidates use it as a forum. "Those criticisms are usually written by people who are not natives of New England," says Joseph Zimmerman, a political science professor in New York. For an institution to exist nearly four hundred years, still gathering hundreds of locals together to discuss their local problems and gripes, the town meeting apparently remains mostly vital. Perhaps as many as 1200 New England towns, citizens are "warned" (notified) and still convene during late winter ("mud season") to continue their region's tradition of direct democracy.

Many have said that the open town meeting today is too unwieldy for larger population centers—cities, mostly—and smaller towns and villages seem to be havens for those who recoil from the thought of too much big government and too many policies from faceless state and federal officials. We might label these people individualists. "I think the town meeting is one of the glories of New England," said one happy participant. Said another, "I express my constitutional rights. . . . Everybody in there has got the same rights as I do. This is America. Freedom of speech. The Constitution." In most town meetings, government decisions are in the hands of those who took time to show up on the announced night once a year, listen, add their voice, and vote. "In America, we do not believe that government is a special skill," said one Cornell professor of government. "You don't have to be rich or intellectual. It's something anyone can do. A single mother has the same one vote as the president of a factory." The open town meeting is, in short, "an expression of our faith in the common person."

As with all American institutions, there are critics. Recent criticism seems to focus on the decline of attendance, the proliferation of name-calling, personal feuds, profanity, and a lack of courtesy during the meeting. Yet for many, there is still hope and a positive side. Acknowledging that town meeting attendance is down, Frank Bryan, a recognized expert on “real democracy” suggests the opposite—there is hope. Citizens still participate when they know “the area is enough for them to make a difference and there are issues at stake that really matter to them.” Democracy will flourish when decentralism and empowerment are put together. “Take either away and . . . [local participation] will die.” Bryan also found that the percentage of citizens willing to speak out at town meetings and “engage in face-to-face, public decision-making has steadily increased.” His findings include an increase in women as community speakers and participants. Real democracy, Bryan writes, “does not take place in a living room in front of a computer or alone in a polling booth. It takes place in public in real time. America needs the kind of democracy where [local] citizens can mark together the renderings of their common decisions, can know the joy that comes when they find the common good.”



Town meeting in Huntington, Vermont

Image source: © Redjar/CC-BY-SA 2.0



Historical Investigation Activity

New England Town Meeting (1738)

Bill Lacey

Focus Question

The New England town meeting: Is it still a vibrant democratic institution or has it become an irrelevant dinosaur?

Materials Needed for This Historical Investigation

- **Documents A–G**—*class set*
- **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**—*class set*

Lesson Plan

1. Getting Started

- Ask students, “What can you tell me about what goes on at a city council here in our city/town? What kind of issues do elected city council members deal with?” Write responses on the board as spokes emanating from a hub/circle and discuss those responses. Continue by saying, “Well, today we’re going to look at the city council’s antecedent—the town meeting in New England during the eighteenth century. Some would call it the cherished institution of direct democracy that the colonial period gave to us.”

2. Backstory to Use as Instruction

- Even if we haven’t been to a local city council meeting recently or ever, most of us have at least some idea of what council members do at these monthly or weekly meetings—of course, they make policy for the city or town and they are elected by the community every few years.
- To be honest, few citizens attend, or watch on local TV, these gatherings, unless they are passionate about an issue to be discussed or are somehow involved in the decision that may come from a council vote.
- Let’s go back in time to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when town meetings, the antecedent for today’s city council gatherings, originated and functioned in much the same manner. Local issues and problems were brought up by citizens, discussed, and voted on by the council.
- New England, settled by religious and strident Puritans, pioneered the town meeting, perhaps because they were isolated from British authority and had to make decisions on their own. At first, there were requirements: church membership, upstanding character, and being an adult, white male. Later, these restrictions were eased except for



women, who continued to be subservient to the town's men, though one suspects many outspoken, assertive women managed to make vital community changes through their husbands.

- Over the years, many observers have been full of praise for the town meeting, labeling it the purest form of democracy, even though minorities, rebels, non-church members, and women were mostly left out and ignored. Still, Thoreau, Jefferson, Timothy Dwight, James Bryce, and legions of academics over the centuries saw positives despite the obvious limitations.
- On the other hand, critics of the town meeting abound, as with any institution that seems to affect our lives in America. Without too much evidence, one could say that there are more critics today than in the eighteenth century when the disenfranchised rarely spoke out in small towns.
- Most towns that have become large cities have abandoned the town meeting; Boston, for example, voted away the town meeting in 1822. Yet over a thousand villages and towns across the "north forty" of New England (Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire) have kept this grassroots democratic institution alive.
- It may be alive, but does it thrive? Some critics have called the open town meeting outmoded and irrelevant in the twenty-first century. Since urbanization spread and suburbia developed in the twentieth century, the town meeting has been attacked, yet at the same time supported. There are legions on both sides.
- Ask students, "From the brief discussion earlier and this backstory, before we look at the documents, in your opinion is the New England town meeting still a vibrant democratic institution, or has it become irrelevant?"

3. Pass out the **Points to Ponder Response Sheet** and have students write their opinions for question #1. After allowing five or six minutes for students to write their responses, have a brief discussion before saying, "Our working hypothesis, based on your responses, is that local government participation is . . ."
4. Pass out the package of **Documents A–G** and explain what students are to do.
5. Allow forty to fifty minutes for students (perhaps in pairs or trios) to read, analyze the document package, and then fill in the **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**. Perhaps you or a student should read aloud the first one or two documents and discuss the gist of each. Remind students that they should analyze the documents carefully. The documents are not in any sequence.
6. A thorough discussion should follow. Go over responses and have some students read their answers to the **Focus Question**.

Points to Ponder Response Sheet

Focus Question: The New England town meeting: Is it still a vibrant democratic institution or has it become an irrelevant dinosaur?

1. Is it important for local citizens to participate in their city and community governments? Why or why not?

2. **Document A:** Why is Lord Germain so negative about town meetings? What does he want colonists to do instead of discussing politics and government?

Would he be a reliable and unbiased source? Why or why not?

3. **Document B:** The Frenchman Tocqueville is often quoted by historians for his observations of America in the 1830s. Would he be a reliable source on what the town meetings were like in that time? Why or why not?

Sum up his views in three sentences.

4. **Document C:** James Madison is considered the "father of the Constitution" for his influence and political expertise at the Convention in 1787. Why do you suppose his views on the town meetings in this excerpt are so negative?

5. **Document D:** What were two decisions made at this town meeting in 1783?

What was one of the town offices that had to be filled?

From this document, what appear to be the responsibilities of the town's residents attending the meeting?

6. **Document E:** Would Mencken's background make him a reliable source on the town meeting? Why or why not?

How might the time in which his book was written influence Mencken's point of view?

7. **Document F:** What are some of the issues raised in these "witness" accounts that might touch on the daily lives of the towns' ordinary citizens?

How might critics of the town meetings, portrayed in these accounts, view the issues aired and decisions made by citizens of modern Vermont?

8. **Document G:** Describe the central figure in Rockwell's famous "Freedom of Speech" painting.

Why did Rockwell choose to feature him?

What are the other people in the picture wearing that might indicate their status in the community?

How are they reacting to the speaker?

What, in your opinion, was Rockwell's purpose in painting this particular scene?

Is Rockwell, who lived and worked in Vermont, a reliable source for town meetings? Why or why not?

9. Based on the documents you analyzed, write a long paragraph answering the **Focus Question** at the top of this sheet. Make at least three major points to substantiate your position.

Document A

Town Meetings: Full of a “Riotous Rabble”?

Below is a quote by Lord Germain (appointed by the king to be secretary of state to the colonies) when hearing of the Boston Tea Party [circa 1774].

This is what comes of their wretched town meetings—these are the proceedings of a tumultuous and riotous rabble*, who ought, if they had the least produce, to follow their mercantile* employment and not trouble themselves with politics and government, which they do not understand.*

*Tumultuous—noise of a crowd; uproar, confusion

*Rabble—a mob; noisy, low-class people

*Mercantile—relating to business or trade

Source: Frank Bryan, *Real Democracy: The New England Town Meeting and How It Works* (University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Document B

Tocqueville on Town Meetings

A Frenchman sent to America in 1831 to study the prisons, Alexis de Tocqueville spent most of his nine-month stay observing democracy. Although there is no evidence that he attended a town meeting, his views on the subject continue to fascinate.

The New-Englander is attached to his township, not so much because he was born in it, but because it is a free and strong community, of which he is a member, and which deserves the care spent in managing it. . . . Another important fact is, that the township of New England is so constituted as to excite the warmest of human affections, without arousing the ambitious passions of the heart of man. The officers of the county are not elected, and their authority is very limited. . . .

The existence of the townships of New England is, in general, a happy one. Their government is suited to their tastes, and chosen by themselves. In the midst of the profound peace and general comfort which reign in America, the commotions of municipal life are unfrequent. The conduct of local business is easy.

. . . [H]is co-operation in its affairs insures his attachment to its interest; the well-being it affords him secures his affection; and its welfare is the aim of his ambition and of his future exertions. He takes a part in every occurrence in the place; he practises the art of government in the small sphere within his reach; he accustoms himself to those forms without which liberty can only advance by revolutions; he imbibes their spirit; he acquires a taste for order, comprehends the balance of powers, and collects clear practical notions on the nature of his duties and the extent of his rights.

Source: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translated by Henry Reeve (Cambridge: Sever and Francis, 1864).

Document C

James Madison on Town Meetings (“Assemblies”)

Madison shared authorship with Alexander Hamilton and John Jay in writing all of the essays in *The Federalist Papers*. Madison’s comments are from No. 55 and refer to town meetings.

Another general remark to be made is, that the ratio between the representatives and the people ought not to be the same where the latter are very numerous as where they are very few. . . . The truth is that, in all cases, a certain number at least seems to be necessary to secure the benefits of free consultation and discussion, and to guard against too easy a combination for improper purposes; as, on the other hand, the number ought at most to be kept within a certain limit, in order to avoid the confusion and intemperance of a multitude. In all very numerous assemblies, of whatever character composed, passion never fails to wrest the scepter from reason. Had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob.

Source: Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, edited by Paul Leicester Ford (New York: Henry Holt, 1898)

Document D

Minutes from a Town Meeting, September, 1783

These minutes (notes taken at a meeting) illustrate how citizens of Boston responded to issues which arose in their community.

Boston Ss.: At a Meeting of the Selectmen Sepr. 10. 1783

Present Messrs. Dorr, Mackay, Price, Mackay, Hubbard, Grenough,

Silas Randill appointed a Watchman in Constable Edmunds Watch in the room of Mr. Matthew James who has resigned

Mr. Paul Farmer was directed to receive into the Almshouse one John Camment a Stranger & not an Inhabitant of any Town in this State, being sick and unable to support himself—Order signed by Mr. Dorr & Capt. Mackay.

Capt. Holland of Engine N. 5—applies for the Premium allowed by the Town for bringing their Engine to work first at the Fire which lately broke out at a House near the Town House—*

Voted, that the Town Clerk give him a Draught for the same, as also for the Premium for the Fire at Mr. Phillips Store—drawn for in August draft—*

Passed upon some Accounts—The Selectmen Agreed to perambulate the Bounds betwixt this Town & the Town of Roxbury on Tuesday the 16^t of Septemr. Instt. And the Town Clerk is to Notify the Selectmen of Roxbury thereof and propose a Meeting at said Day.

Source: A Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston, Containing the Selectmen's Minutes from 1776 through 1786 (Boston: Rockwell & Churchill, 1894).

***Premium**—a reward or recompense for a particular act

***Draught**—an order for the payment of money

Document E

H. L. Mencken on Town Meetings

H. L. Mencken was one of the early twentieth century's most influential reporters, writers and critics, and a noted curmudgeon (one who is ill tempered). He used his personality, skills, and savage wit to attack hypocrisy and social conventions like politics and public officials. The 1920s, the time the book was published and Mencken was in his prime, were experiencing a move-to-the-city trend when more people were living in urban areas than rural for the first time in U.S. history.

Certainly no competent historian believes that the citizens assembled in a New England town-meeting actually formulated en masse the transcendental and immortal measures that they adopted, nor even that they contributed anything of value to the discussion thereof. . . . [T]he New England town-meeting was led and dominated by a few men of unusual initiative and determination, some of them genuinely superior, but most of them simply demagogues and fanatics. The citizens in general heard the discussion of rival ideas, and went through the motions of deciding between them, but there is no evidence that they ever had all the relevant facts before them or made any effort to unearth them, or that appeals to their reason always, or even usually, prevailed over appeals to their mere prejudice and superstition. Their appetite for logic, I venture, seldom got the better of their fear of hell. . . . Some of the most idiotic decisions ever come to by mortal man were made by the New England town-meetings.

Source: H. L. Mencken, *Notes on Democracy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926).

Document F

Firsthand Accounts of Town Meetings

In Frank Bryan's book, *Real Democracy*, citizens of Vermont and his graduate students render colorful accounts of their experiences at modern town meetings.

Excerpt 1

I've seen men almost come to blows at town meeting. Personalities would crop up and wounding remarks be made. They hurt, and may hurt for a long time, but the rule is to forgive and forget quickly, for we small-townners live so close together that we are sure to come face-to-face almost every day, and after town meeting and an occasional blizzard, spring begins to suggest itself, and hard feelings melt.

Charles Edward Crane

Excerpt 2

One problem that came up was filling the position of Second Constable. Nobody wanted the job. Someone asked the First Constable what the Second Constable did. He felt that maybe this would arouse some interest. The reply was that the First Constable didn't know exactly what the lower position entailed; didn't know exactly when he worked but he did know the Second Constable was responsible for catching stray or bothersome dogs. Basically the Second Constable is a dogcatcher. The next question was why not change the name of Second Constable to Dog Catcher. This was debated for a while. But then someone wondered what would happen if the town really needed the assistance of a Second Constable (to do whatever it was besides catch dogs that Second Constables normally did). The idea of switching names was dismissed, yet the need for a Second Constable was still there. Finally one man said he would accept the position if he got paid minimum wage and reimbursed for his gas money. That was fine with the townspeople, and at last the position was filled.

Lisa Brest

Excerpt 3

The Town Meeting was some fun, however, though I imagine, not nearly as much as it used to be. I am afraid that is one institution the zest and flavor of which have been spoiled by Woman Suffrage. In the old days, the floor of the hall used to be prepared with a significant coating of sawdust; now it is left uninvitingly bare; sufficiently sad indication of emasculating change. And the flow of language is, I am sure, not anything as full and racy as it was. Too bad! The men, flocking to what was once their social high tide of the year, must hate us women intruding our decorum into the rude freedom of their intercourse.

However the tradition still holds that Town Meeting is an occasion for the interchange of wit and wisdom, and that tradition is lived up to as well as possible. Trying to shut our petticoats from the tails of their eyes, the men do still rally and vilify one another; and I am chokingly able to say that they still smoke. The town buffoon, whose great day this is, still opposes every motion and cracks resounding jokes. The moderator still has real need of the gavel.

Just to look at, however, they are a source of satisfaction, this assembly of real country people, met on their own merits, according to their own standards, with no contamination of the "city people" influence that, in the summer, tarnishes them.

Zephine Humphrey

Source: Frank Bryan, *Real Democracy: The New England Town Meeting and How It Works* (The University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Document G

Artist Norman Rockwell Depicts a Town Meeting (1943)

One of America's most famous and admired "commercial" artists, Norman Rockwell is best known for his *Saturday Evening Post* covers, depicting idyllic scenes from American life. His series of paintings entitled *Four Freedoms* were painted in 1943, during World War II. *Freedom of Speech*, shown here, portrays a New England town meeting and was, some believe, Rockwell's favorite of the series. The plain-clothed speaker pictured, Carl Hess, was a neighbor of Rockwell and ran a gas station in Arlington, Vermont. The idea was based on another neighbor, Jim Edgerton, when he stood alone against an issue that everyone else seemed to be in favor of.

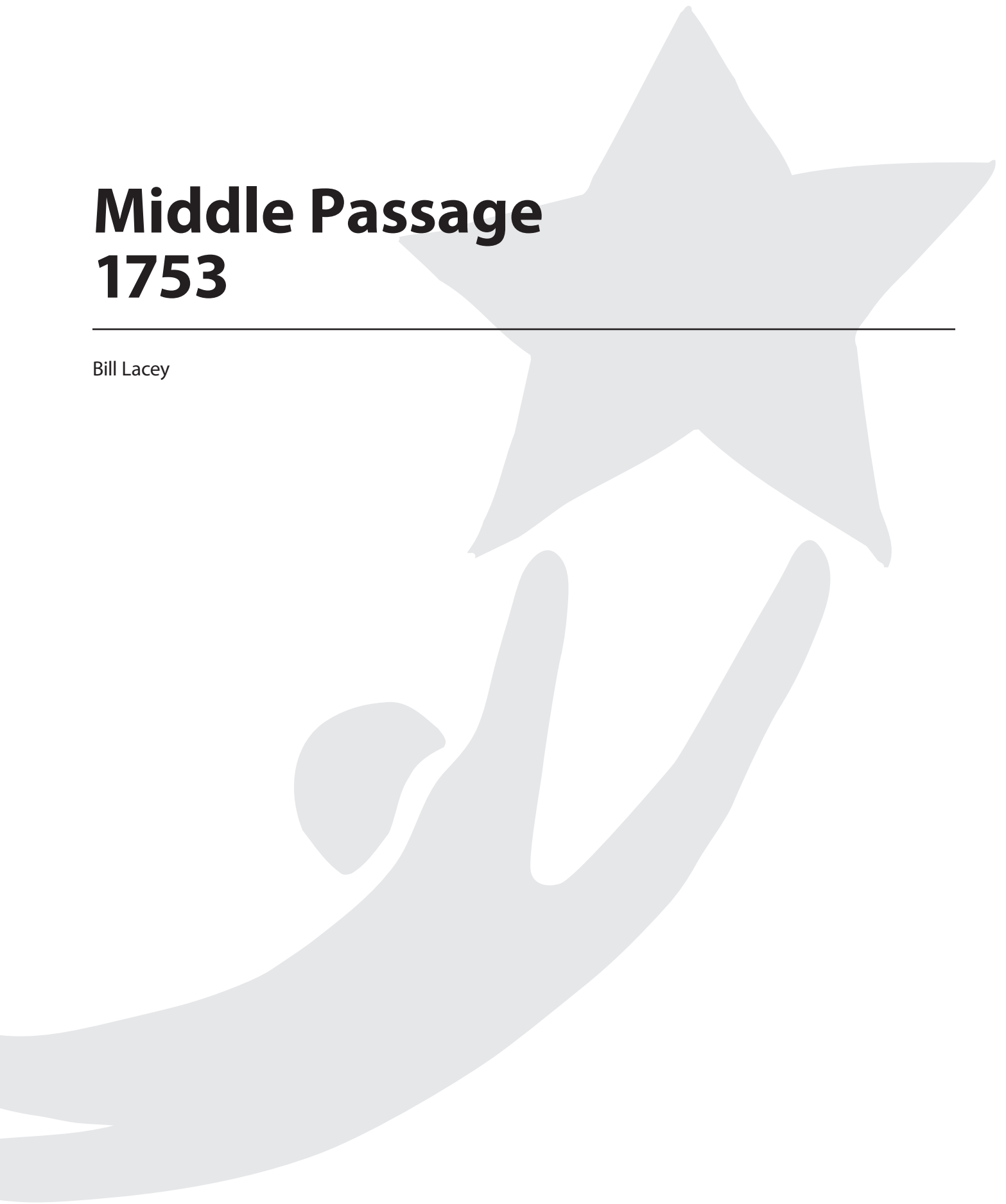


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Image Source: Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration, 513536

Middle Passage 1753

Bill Lacey



Lesson Plan

Warning: This Activator involves sensitive subject matter and may evoke strong emotions. Make sure that your students are prepared for intense experiences, and that you review the contents fully before staging the Activator.

Overview

This Activator will put most of your students into the roles of captured Africans being brought across the Atlantic Ocean to become plantation slaves in the American South in the mid-eighteenth century. These ancestors of today's African Americans were the only immigrant group forced to come to this continent against their will. The horrible experience aboard slave ships—the Middle Passage of the Triangular Trade—will deepen your students' understanding of one terrible chapter of African American history.

Setup

1. Duplication

- **Background Essay**—*class set*
- **Postscript**—*class set*
- **Narration**—*two to three copies*
- **Tribal Language Cards**—*class set* (**Note:** These cards contain modern-day languages spoken in Africa.)

2. **Schematic, props, costumes:** Study the **Schematic** carefully. Find and bring to your classroom any props and costume pieces that will help create the setting and mood of an eighteenth-century slave ship crossing the Atlantic Ocean. Your students can help you find and bring such items to your classroom. (For example: a long rope, fake rifles and swords, cutoff pants, cat-o-nine tails, striped T-shirts, and any other sailor or ship items you and your students can think of.)

3. Roles

- a. In this Activator, you need a way to differentiate the sailors and the African captives. An effective way to do this is to use different colored armbands.
- b. Here are the roles you will need:
 - **2 narrators**
 - **4–5 crew members** to play various roles called for in the **Narration** including supervising the slaves, mucking out below decks, playing an instrument to accompany the “dancing,” feeding the slaves, getting the slaves in and out of their “irons,” and “throwing” dead slaves overboard.

Teaching tip

Make use of the tribal language card suggestions at least two to three times once the Activator is taking place. Students will then realize the difficulty slaves had in organizing any mutiny because they didn't speak the same language.



Teaching tip

A few rehearsals can really help students become effective actors.



- **20–30 slaves** to carry out roles in the **Narration** in addition to their general actions/responses on the voyage. Specifically:
 - 2 slaves “vomit” their food
 - 2–3 slaves sing a brief sorrowful song
 - 2–3 slaves “throw” their horsebean gruel away
 - 2–3 “dead” slaves are “thrown” overboard
 - 2–3 slaves exhibit symptoms of the flux—fever, chills, aches, and nausea
- c. Assign roles by chance, unless you think the roles of the crew and specific actions by certain slaves should be played by more dramatic and responsible students.

Directions

1. Ensure that your students learn the historical background to augment what is contained in your history textbook. Hand out the **Background Essay** either the day before this class as homework or pass it out now. If you have given it as homework, conduct an informal discussion of the main points brought out in the essay. If you are passing it out now, read the essay aloud to the students as they read with you, pausing to explain the main points. (This choice, of course, is based upon your students’ reading level and age.)
2. Assign roles. Number the students playing slaves, 1 through 4, randomly. Then pass out the cut-apart **Tribal Language Cards** to students according to the numbers you gave them. Tell them to memorize the phrases they will use on the voyage. Later, they will line up outside in the hall so that no slave speaking the same language will be manacled next to another. (This is part of Captain Calloway’s strategy to lessen the chance of a mutiny.)
3. Display the **Schematic**, explain it, and then have the students rearrange your room to create the setting on a slave ship circa 1750. Now, have all students move or prepare to move to their positions. (*Note students’ positions found in the italicized paragraph on the first page of the **Narration**.*)
4. Narrators should be off to one side but close enough to be audible. You may want to record the **Narration** with ocean sounds in the background for effect.



Teaching tip

Above all, as you guide your students through this Activator, insist that everyone take seriously what is happening. If students are too playful or are goofing off, bring up the word “traumatic” and ensure that they understand what this word means in the context of slavery.



Teaching tip

If this segment of African American history is new to your students, embellish this brief background with your own knowledge or some other audio-visual source. (See “Resources to consult” and “Visual history.”)



Teaching tip

These “wrinkles” can really add to the entire slave ship experience.



Teaching tip

Environmental sounds (ship at sea, waves, bells, creaking ropes and timbers, etc.) are likely available and can be found if you search diligently.

Teaching tip

Lining up the “slaves” in the hallway will help them realize that they will have little control over what happens to them. (Consider having them practice some of their differing languages out loud in the hall while they are waiting to get on board the slave ship.)



You have at least three different ways you can conduct this Activator:

Option A

1. Option A allows all action to be played out as the narration is dramatically read. This might require one or two brief rehearsals to ensure the flow of events, especially when the slaves are brought up on deck for food and exercise. Otherwise, this option follows the narrators’ words.
2. Assign all roles as detailed above.
3. Tell all the slaves to go outside / into the hall with only their **Tribal Language Cards**. Have one to two crew members accompany them. Once they are outside, have the sailors line the slaves up according to the numbers they were assigned earlier (1, 2, 3, 4—1, 2, 3, 4). While this process is going on, instruct the remaining sailors on how to pack the slaves “spoon-style” on the floor in the middle of your classroom. Once everyone knows what will happen and how it will play out, proceed with the **Narration**.
4. Slowly begin going through the **Narration**. Direct your students’ movements and actions as you wish, or let the narrator, without your direction, drive the Activator forward.
5. Make sure the **Narration** pace is slow and comfortable enough to allow for some improvisation and adolescent gaffs. *Above all, insist on some seriousness, whatever the case.* If necessary to keep students focused, point out how the Middle Passage is comparable in many ways to the Holocaust of the twentieth century.

Option B

1. Option B has no narrator. Scenes aboard the *Bostonian* are carried out only after several careful rehearsals. This option necessitates a clear sequence of events for everyone since there is no narrator to drive it forward. Therefore, you and one of your student directors should hand out, or list on the board, a sequence of events. Using this sequence and rehearsing several times will serve to make the Activator flow more realistically than one driven by a narrator.
2. Assign roles days before and allow those students who have major responsibilities to review their parts.
3. Since there are no narrators under this option, you may choose to spend at least several minutes rehearsing exactly what will happen. Generous distribution of the narration pages along with an outline of the sequence of the Activator’s events is advisable.

4. Allow students, beyond rehearsal and your advice, to carry out their own interpretations of sailors and slaves aboard a 1750 slaver.
5. If possible, plan to film this version of the Activator after two or three rehearsals. Filming will make the Activator a more serious event and will give you additional material for a more interesting debriefing.

Option C

1. Consider one more option, which allows you to turn over all pages in this Activator to two or three student directors a few weeks before you schedule Activator day. Let them make decisions on what to use from the entire packet and how to use the materials. You may want to check back with them a few times to make sure they are making good progress.

Note: The consequences of using **Option B** or **C** can be dramatic. You might even come up with a dramatization worth having your history students present to other history classes in your school.

Debriefing

Decide whether you wish to use a short or long debriefing. Here are possible ways to make meaningful what happened on a Middle Passage voyage to American in the 1750s:

Short Debriefing

1. Pass out the **Postscript**. Either read this to your students or summarize the main points of each paragraph before going on. Consider recording the **Postscript** and playing it while displaying images of a Middle Passage voyage.
2. Ask students to discuss what they learned and what they felt as they played their roles of either slaves or sailors on the *Bostonian*.
3. Consider having students write a Learning Log entry following this short debriefing.

Long Debriefing

Use one or more of the following debriefing activities:

1. Pass out the **Postscript**. Either read this to your students or summarize the main points of each paragraph before going on. To extend and make the entire Activator more memorable, utilize the idea in #1 of the **Short Debriefing**.



Teaching tip

A successful video can be used the next year when you use this Activator again. Next year's students will want to top the previous year's performance.



Teaching tip

The strong emotions released by this Activator may dictate that you use the **Long Debriefing** with your students.

Middle Passage: 1753

Lesson Plan

Teaching tip

For creating a
Diamante poem:

Line 1: noun

Line 2: two adjectives
about line 1


Line 3: three verbs
about line 1

Line 4: two nouns
about line 1 + two
nouns about line 7

Line 5: three verbs
about line 7

Line 6: two adjectives
about line 7


Line 7: noun
(antonym of line 1)



2. Consider dividing the class into groups of four to six (three to five slaves with one sailor in each foursome). Have them:

- Discuss the sequence of events on a slave ship: *Which events were the most inhumane?*
- Design a “speculum oris” and explain how it worked in force-feeding slaves who refused to take in food.
- Compose a Diamante (a “diamond poem”). Use the formula given in the Teaching Tip on the left. Have volunteers read their poems to the class.
- Design a book jacket or a movie poster to advertise a book or film on the Middle Passage.
- Discuss how slaves on board might carry out a successful mutiny. Students can make a list of an action sequence for slaves to follow in order to pull off a mutiny and return the ship to Africa.
- Compare the Middle Passage of the mid-1750s with the Holocaust of the 1940s. To help your students, put this unfinished ledger on the board for each group to complete:

The Middle Passage (eighteenth century)	The Holocaust (twentieth century)
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•



3. Consider showing a segment of the TV miniseries *Roots*, in which Kunta Kinte is captured and experiences the voyage to America. The 1977 miniseries, or the 2016 remake, will grab your students’ attention as nothing else will. It will vivify the Activator’s words and actions.
4. Have students write a Learning Log entry, personalizing the Activator experience.

Write a Learning Log ...

Learning Log	
	I was surprised by what happened when our class simulated bringing slaves to America on a slave ship.
	At first, I thought it would be fun to be a slave below deck where I could goof off. But it was a pain. I hated being treated like dirt. Ms. Jorgenson had heated up the room and left some old garbage lying around so it was really foul smelling. Later, in the debriefing, we began discussing parallels between the Holocaust and slavery ...

Resources to consult

Christopher, Emma. *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Cargoes, 1730–1807*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Everett, Susanne. *History of Slavery*. Secaucus, NJ: Chartwell Books, 1991.

Franklin, John Hope. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*. New York: Vintage Books, 1969.

Haley, Alex. *Roots*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1977.

Johnson, Charles. *Middle Passage*. New York: Scribner, 1990. (This National Book Award novel merges a fictional sea saga with the tragedy of the Atlantic slave trade in 1830.)

Kachur, Matthew. *Slavery in the Americas: The Slave Trade*. New York: Chelsea House, 2006.

Kolchin, Peter. *American Slavery, 1619–1877*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993, 18–24.

Middle Passage: 1753

Lesson Plan

Mannix, Daniel, and Malcolm Cowley. *Black Cargoes: A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1518–1865*. New York: Viking Press, 1965. (This book is likely the best account of the subject for you and your students.) See also a distillation of this work in Malcolm Cowley and Daniel Mannix's article in *American Heritage* 13, no. 2 (February 1963): 22–25, 103–107.

O'Malley, Gregory E. *Final Passages: The Intercolonial Slave Trade of British America, 1619–1807*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Rediker, Marcus. *The Slave Ship: A Human History*. New York: Viking, 2007.

Sharp, S. Pearl, and Virginia Schomp. *The Slave Trade and the Middle Passage*. Drama of African American History Series. Cambridge, MA: First Harvard University Press, 2007.

Background Essay

Place: West African Coast and Atlantic Ocean

Time: May 1753

Slave trade

You are a captured African, soon to be transported across the Atlantic Ocean. The trip will become a “veritable nightmare” for you. Experiences like this are not unique in history.

Slavery has existed for centuries, going back to ancient times. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, the slave trade—the selling and buying of human beings—was big business, especially for the foremost families of England and for companies in the American colonies. Typically, slave ships with cargoes of weapons, manufacturing goods, and rum left English or American ports and set sail for the west coast of Africa to exchange these goods for slaves. With their “human cargo” below decks, the slave ships set sail for America, a transatlantic journey called the Middle Passage.



Africans

Who are these individuals who have been captured and who will be chained in the hold of a ship bound for a strange land across “a wide river”? Most of you are from Guinea, the Ivory Coast, Gambia, the Gold Coast, and the Slave Coast. Fewer of you come from the Congo/Angola region farther south or from the continent’s interior. The diversity of your origins is illustrated by the various tribes you represent: Igbo, Kongo, Angola, Coromantee, Mandingo, Fanti, and Ashanti. Most of you have difficulty communicating because you speak so many different languages.

African empires

Whatever your tribe’s identity, it is not surprising to know that the Europeans and Americans who

work in the slave trade believe all your cultures are inferior to white cultures; thus, the slavers proclaim that you deserve to be their property and eventually toil for them. They point out that validation for slavery is in the Bible. This belief astounds many of you, for you come from advanced societies in Africa. Many Africans come from advanced empires such as Mali, Songhai, and Ghana. Centuries before European contact, one of Ghana’s kings, for example, maintained a system of highways, commanded 200,000 soldiers, constructed buildings with fine architecture, advanced knowledge of agriculture and medicine, and had a code of laws. Many Africans also embraced the religion of Islam. Thus, the Africans who became captives of white men were far from the primitive spear-throwing, head-hunting stereotypes widely accepted in western societies. Nevertheless, plantations in the American colonies, Brazil, and the West Indies needed labor, and Africa had a seemingly inexhaustible supply of people to meet this need.

Vulnerabilities

What led to Africans being enslaved can partly be attributed to what they lacked. Most Africans had no written language that might unify and strengthen their resistance. Coupled with this, most spoke widely different languages. Muskets and gunpowder, usually hallmarks of a culture’s “advanced” technology, were utilized by only the northernmost regions. All these factors made Africans vulnerable to white exploitation.

Africans enslaving Africans

Interestingly, most slaves put on slave ships bound for America had been slaves in Africa. During Africa’s many tribal wars, a frequent result was that the winning group took prisoners. These prizes of war were often sold to European slavers. Smaller numbers of slaves were originally sentenced into

slavery for criminal activity or debt. Others were kidnapped into slavery. Once sold, coffles of chained Africans were marched to coastal trading factory ports prior to embarking for America.

Trauma

If you look up the word “trauma” in a dictionary, you will find that it literally means an injury to the body. However, this word is often also used when describing an injury to the mind. Used this way, “trauma” communicates the idea of a scar that has been carved into an individual’s memory. We then

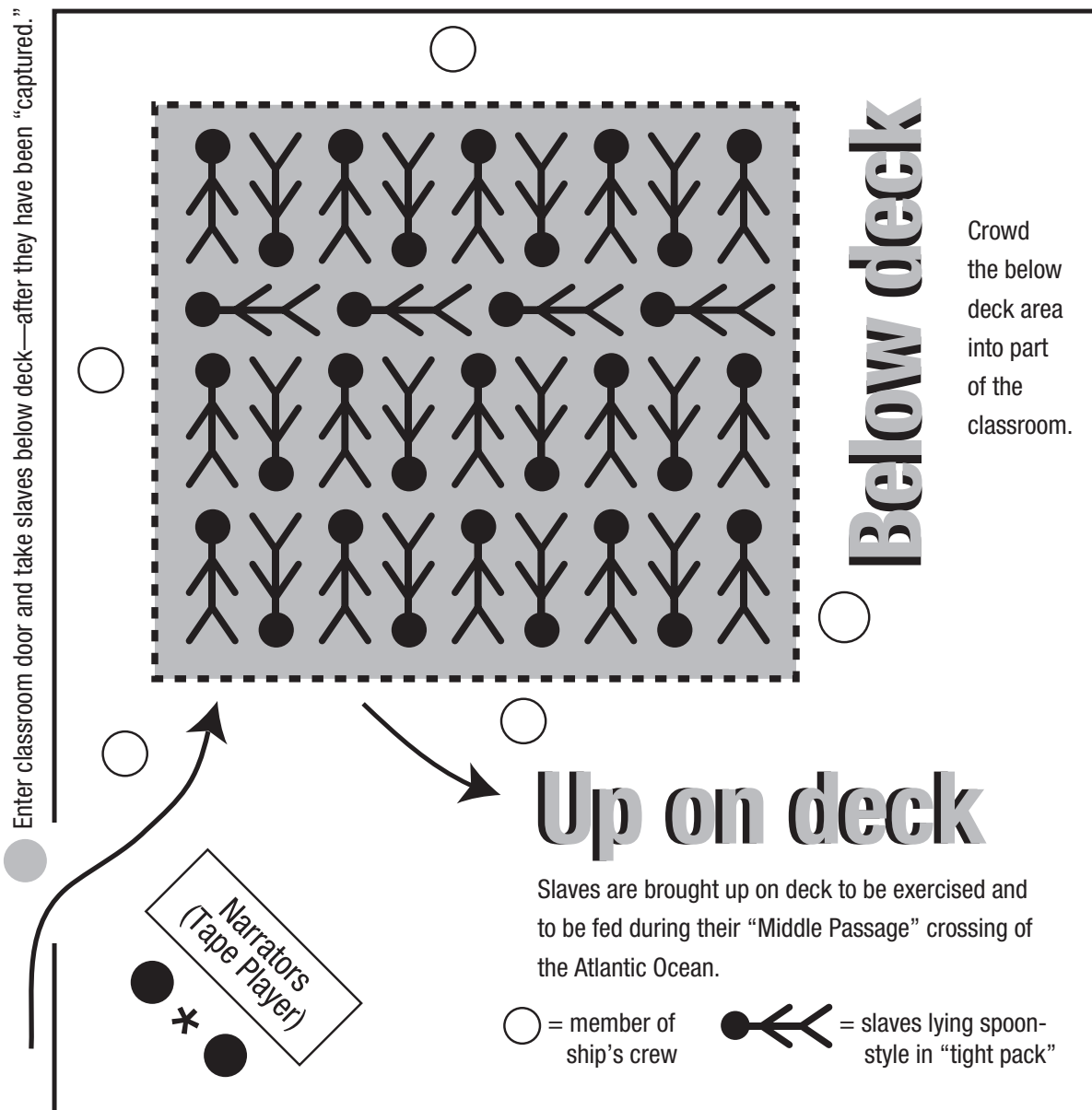
speak of a person having been “traumatized” by an event. Can you now begin to understand how the Middle Passage and slavery were traumatizing events?

Be watchful now

This essay you’ve just read will make you more knowledgeable, but it won’t protect those of you who will be enslaved and sent to America. After you are captured and “chained,” obey the commands of your captors on a voyage across “a river with no shores.”



Schematic



Suggestions

- Use some area outside the classroom (the hall or another classroom) for feeding and exercising the slaves.
- When bringing slaves into their ship quarters, have each slave put their right hand on the right shoulder of the slave immediately in front.
- “Manacle” all slaves together with a long rope. (Rope is best because it makes movement easier.)
- Record the **Narration** prior to the Activator.

Characters needed

- 4–5 crew members
- 20–30 slaves (Note that several have to act out responses)
- 1–2 narrators

Tribal Language Cards

Tribe 1: Mali (Language: Modern-day Bambara)	
Help me!	Deme!
Water	Ji
Where are you taking me?	Aw bena n mina wa?
I am hungry	Kongo b'a la
Tribe 2: Songhai (Language: Modern-day Zarma)	
Help me!	Ay gaakasinay!
Water	Yeno
Where are you taking me?	Man no aran go ga konda ay?
I am hungry	Ma haray
Tribe 3: Swahili (Language: Modern-day Swahili)	
Help me!	Nisaidie!
Water	Maji
Where are you taking me?	Wapi kuchukua mimi?
I am hungry	Nina njaa
Tribe 4: Igbo (Language: Modern-day Igbo)	
Help me!	Nyere m aka!
Water	Mmiri
Where are you taking me?	Olee ebe I na-ewere m?
I am hungry	Aguu na-agu m

Narration

NOTE TO NARRATOR:

Before this narration is read, students playing slaves should already be “outside” in a single-file coffle, ready to “climb” the plank and be put into the hold of the ship. Make sure they walk slowly and have their right hand on the right shoulder of the slave in front of them. Once they are in the classroom (below deck), they should be told to lie on the floor, crammed together, and “manacled” with rope. (As you begin, the classroom lights dim . . .)

You are in darkness, below deck on a giant canoe belonging to white men. You are traveling to a strange place across a wide river. This vessel left the African coast at night when all of you were secured below. It is dark and hot. Your nostrils and lungs are filled with foul air from human waste and body odor. With you are other Africans, most of whom speak different languages and thus have difficulty communicating with you. *(At this point, students playing slaves should choose a phrase from their **Tribal Language Cards** and say it to a slave near them. They should be displaying sadness and fear. Phrases should be said three or four times.)*

EXPECTED ACTION/RESPONSE: *Slaves lie still in darkness while guarded by crew members.*

Not only is it hot and smelly; it is also crowded. The vessel’s captain, Rufus Calloway, has decided to place all of you in a “tight-pack” configuration, forcing you to lie close together while you are below deck. As a result, his and his company’s profits will be larger because he is carrying more cargo. Many of you are on shelves, but most are confined to a space about seven feet by two feet. Around you are other captives. For the most part, the women and children slaves are left to roam the ship as they please. All told, the *Bostonian*, this particular Guineaman ship, has a human cargo of 450, fewer indeed than the 610 hauled by one slaver years before.

While you struggle to adjust to the smells, the hunger, and the crowded conditions of your quarters, the captain on the upper deck has to face the ordinary perils of the voyage—fires on board, shipwreck, pirates, foreign men-of-war ships, disease, and sufficient food to last the voyage. Tragically, some ships caught with a dwindling food supply, reported that the crew threw their human cargo overboard, or even ate the flesh of the cargo to avoid dying of starvation.

EXPECTED ACTION/RESPONSE: *Slaves are still in irons, listening quietly to the **Narration**.*

Despite these extraordinary dilemmas that faced some Guineamen during the passage, your voyage across will be typical. *(Pause)*

It is now eight o’clock in the morning, and you are released from your irons, brought up on deck, and reattached to the great chain that runs along the bulwarks on both sides of the ship. Females and children leave their resting quarters and wander on the deck. *(Pause to allow the crew to release the captives and lead them to another area.)*

EXPECTED ACTION/RESPONSE: *Slaves follow orders by coming up to the upper deck and sitting down.*

Within the hour, you are served the first of two meals of the day. For the most part, you are fed foods you were used to before your capture. That might include boiled rice, millet, cornmeal with a few lumps of salted beef, or maybe stewed yams, manioc, or plantains. Too often, however, the food is covered with maggots, weevils, rat dung, or cockroaches. A few slaves retch and empty their stomachs. All of you are given about a half pint of water served out of a pannikin. *(Pause to allow this action to occur.)*

EXPECTED ACTION/RESPONSE: *Slaves eat from bowls given to them by the crew. A few slaves throw up.*

As you finish your meal, sailors with cat-o-nine tails in hand tell you to get up, return your serving bowls, and request that you exercise by making "motions" or dancing around the deck. This part of the ship's routine is called the "dancing of the slaves." It is supposed to help those of you who are depressed and suicidal. Captain Calloway believes this dancing activity to be therapeutic against melancholy. *(Pause)*

EXPECTED ACTION/RESPONSE: *Slaves return bowls and dance to the accompanying music. They exercise by jumping around the deck. A few slaves sing sorrowful songs. A few crew members pound "drums" as the slaves dance.*

After a few minutes of dancing, some slaves find their ankles bleeding. *(Pause)*

Suddenly, three Africans break their chains and leap into the sea. *(Pause)*

Suicide attempts are common on slavers. Some captives prefer death to enslavement. A fellow slave, Olaudah Equiano, on another ship during this time, has called death "the last friend." The other Africans continue to dance. Music for this exercise activity is provided by another slave thumping a broken drum or upturned kettle. On another ship, the music might come from a sailor's bagpipe or fiddle. Slaves are told to sing, but what comes out of their mouths are sorrowful songs, a reflection of sickness, constant hunger, fear of the cat-o-nine tails, and memories of their lost homeland.

While most of the crew watch and supervise the dancing of the slaves, a few others go below to "scrape and swab out" the slave quarters. This awful assignment often requires Captain Calloway to threaten his crew members. Some captains claim that they clean these quarters three times a week. Usually, below decks are only cleaned two to three times during the entire voyage. Whatever the case, the job requires that the sailors sweep the area with brooms and then wash the floors and shelves with pails of vinegar. Hopefully, this expels the foul smells of vomit, feces, urine, and body odor. *(Pause)*

EXPECTED ACTION/RESPONSE: *A few crew members go "below" and pretend to clean the slave quarters.*

After the dancing is over, you are returned to your quarters below deck for the next several hours. There you will stay chained until four o'clock or so when the crew will feed you the second meal, usually the same fare as in the morning. *(Pause until slaves are returned to their below deck quarters and "remanacled." Perhaps a lengthy pause of two or three minutes is required here.)*

EXPECTED ACTION/RESPONSE: *Slaves are chained and remain quiet for several minutes. Some try to communicate, using their **Tribal Language Cards**. All hear the Captain's commands: "Hoist the main sail . . . First Mate, meet me on deck . . . etc."*

The slaves are again brought up onto the main deck to be fed. Most of the time, the slaves are fed horse beans, the cheapest food available to the firms operating the slave trade. These beans have been boiled to a pulp, then covered with a mixture of palm oil, flour, water, and red pepper ("slabber sauce"). Detesting the beans and missing their native food, some slaves throw the mixture away. Others refuse to eat altogether. When this happens, sailors have to force-feed the slaves, using a torturous instrument called a "speculum oris." It resembles a cross between a pair of pliers and thumbscrews. This tool forces the slave's mouth open so that a liquid bean gruel can be poured through a funnel into the slave's throat and stomach. On this voyage, a few slaves refuse to eat and even the force-feeding with the oris and hot coals is unsuccessful. Within seven or eight days, these Africans die, and their bodies are thrown to the sharks. (Pause)

EXPECTED ACTION/RESPONSE: *Slaves are brought up and fed horse beans. Some should refuse to eat so that the speculum oris can be demonstrated. Two to three others should "die" and be thrown overboard.*

The second meal ends your day on deck. You are again led below where you'll stay manacled, still lying on bare floors until the next morning when the daily routine continues. (Pause until slaves are remanacled below decks.)

Throughout the night, sailors above deck hear howling, melancholy noises, and cries of despair. Yet some of the noise comes from quarreling among the captives, usually over problems of reaching the latrines, which are hard to find in the dark. Latrines on most ships are merely three or four buckets or tubs that move during the night as the ship rolls.

EXPECTED ACTION/RESPONSE: *Slaves go below deck again and are put in irons. During the night, some try once more to communicate, using their **Tribal Language Cards**. However, most slaves continue to groan in a horrifying chorus.*

Needless to say, the sanitary conditions on board the *Bostonian* are horrendous. This ship is a "marketplace" for microbes, especially small pox and the flux. Three slaves exhibit symptoms of the bloody flux—they shake with fever, chills, and nausea. They suffer pain in their heads and necks. (Pause)

EXPECTED ACTION/RESPONSE: *Some slaves exhibit symptoms of the "flux."*

Many of you become seriously ill after a storm or rain squall when, after hatches and gratings are covered, your quarters became furnace-like and steamy. (Pause)

Since the entire voyage is one life-threatening event after another, it isn't surprising that a slaver might lose one-half to two-thirds of its "cargo." Commonly, the mortality on these ships could reach 20–30 percent. Some captains are more humane in their treatment of the "cargo" than others. As a result, they are rewarded if more Africans survive the passage than had been anticipated. Captain Calloway has not been that humane on this voyage.

Despite all these horrors, your ship eventually reaches land on the other side of the great river. Most of you have survived. The last two to three days before disembarking are predictably different for slaves. Most of you are released from your irons and are fed bigger meals and more water, two actions guaranteed to fatten you up for the upcoming auction block. A “celebration” might even be a part of the last day, occurring just before Captain Calloway rows ashore to arrange for the sale of his cargo.

EXPECTED ACTION/RESPONSE: *Slaves listen to the **Narration** as it winds down. Then they are released from their irons and stand sullenly as they hear the probable fate waiting for them after they go ashore.*

What awaits you Africans might be considered worse than your journey below decks on the Middle Passage. First, you will be sold on the auction block, and then you will face a life of unrelenting pain and toil on an American farm or plantation. (*Pause*)

The crew now unshackles you and marches all of you to the upper deck. From here, you’ll be rowed ashore.

Postscript

Historian John Hope Franklin calls the one-way transatlantic voyage to America a “veritable nightmare” for the slaves. In fact, the entire experience of capture, sale, and transportation to America must have been more than a nightmare. No doubt, resistance by native Africans to any and all parts of these events was stiff and persistent. In all, at least fifteen million Africans, mostly the flower of African manhood, were brutally removed from their homeland over the years of the slave trade.

As a slave ship crossed the Atlantic, the thirty-five or so men who made up the crew used extreme caution watching their captives, just as other guardsmen had been very careful while moving their prisoners to the coast before ships sailed for the New World. The possibility of a slave mutiny, always a great worry to the enslavers, usually decreased after the slave ship pulled up anchor and headed out to sea. Actually, mutinies on slave ships were quite common during the two centuries of the slave trade. Uprisings at sea happened most often when slaves on board were of the same tribe (especially the warlike tribes of the Gold Coast). A mixed “cargo” of slaves from various areas of Western Africa, speaking different languages and having different cultures, helped lessen the potential for on-board rebellions. Still, with all the precautions taken, slaves did mutiny and sometimes killed their guards and captain and took over the ship. From 1699 to 1845, there were, one source notes, fifty-five mutinies on slavers, costing hundreds of lives.

The sixty- to ninety-day voyage itself was well told in this Activator’s **Narration**. Soon after the ship anchored in the West Indies or in the American Colonies, the captain usually went ashore to sell his “cargo.” Sometimes whole cargoes of healthy Africans were sold to one or a few wealthy planters, even while the ship was at anchor. Sick slaves, their condition worsened over the Middle Passage, were often sold for a dollar. Those who weren’t worth a dollar might be left on the dock to die.

Whoever became their masters, the Africans who survived the journey would be fated to lives of constant toil, intimidation, and inhumane acts by white men. Beginning in 1619, when twenty-nine slaves brought over on a Dutch ship were sold to work the tobacco fields of the colony at Jamestown, Virginia, Africans became the property of other human beings in the American colonies.

If the entire “cargo” wasn’t bought as a unit, the most common way to sell or buy a slave was at a slave auction, an event repeated over the centuries at familiar sites in most medium to large Southern cities. Degraded, humiliated, and often treated like animals, Africans, either fresh off a slave ship or being resold by one master to another years later, were forced to step up onto the infamous auction block. There, they were subjected to a physical examination not unlike the scrutiny and sale of a horse. Then there was a barrage of questions from buyers such as “Ever been whipped?” or “Can you tend children?” In this way, buyers tried to sort out wise and prudent purchases from potential financial mistakes (runaways, lazy workers). Thus, slavery was based on economic decisions made by those with the power to buy, sell, and own human beings.

Whoever the master was to be as a result of the auction, the slave could usually expect a life of continual labor without pay in fields, sheds, or houses. This pattern of slavery, which began with the

infamous Middle Passage, would continue in American society from 1619 to 1865. Eventually, the Civil War of the 1860s would eliminate this “indigestible lump” as an American institution. Only then would the descendants of those survivors of the voyage be put on the road to freedom.

Unfortunately, Americans of all ethnic backgrounds will always have to live with this national trauma in U.S. history.



A colonial slave market in the seventeenth century

Image Source: Lossing, Benson J. *Harper's Encyclopedia of United States History*. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1912.

Historical Investigation Activity

Middle Passage (1753)

Bill Lacey



Focus Question

How and why did crews on slave ships mistreat and malnourish the captive Africans on the Middle Passage voyage, knowing that, at the end, unhealthy slaves reduced profits?

Materials Needed for This Historical Investigation

- **Documents A–H**—*class set*
- **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**—*class set*

Lesson Plan

1. Getting Started

- Ask students, “What do you remember about how Africans were captured and transported across the Atlantic to be sold as slaves on the auction blocks?” Write responses on the board on a graphic organizer. Discuss responses.

2. Backstory to Use as Instruction

- An immigrant’s journey to America was never an easy one and was usually a painful ordeal, and this was the experience of those who came voluntarily! What about the one immigrant group that came here involuntarily—in chains, below decks, on transatlantic ships called slavers?
- Of course, we’re talking about Africans, the over twelve million who were captured and marched to where white captains and crews of ships waited offshore along the West African coast. There, they were boarded onto crowded vessels for a sixty- to ninety-day voyage to America. This ocean trip made up one-third of the transatlantic trade, the part that was known as the Middle Passage.
- Large plantations in the West Indies and in the Southern British colonies (later the American South) used substantial numbers of black slaves from Africa as their labor force. It was concluded that Native Americans were ill-fitted for hard labor.
- This epic drama—the transatlantic business of sending Africans to the Americas—lasted about five hundred years, from the late-fifteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. According to conservative estimates, this dreadful water passage itself claimed the lives of almost two million of the 12.4 million loaded onto the slavers.

Middle Passage: 1753

Historical Investigation Activity



- Scholar W. E. B. DuBois called the Middle Passage the “most magnificent drama in the last thousand years of human history”; when slaves were put on ships, they “descended into Hell.”
 - Each captured African had their own personal experience, of course, but for most the journey was the same one-way nightmare. They were all chained tightly; packed spoon-style in hot, steamy conditions below decks; and fed a meager, monotonous diet of food frequently covered with maggots, weevils, rat dung, or cockroaches. For most, there was constant nausea and vomiting, the result of storms at sea. Melancholy struck the majority of slaves on board who had been ripped away from their families and homeland and were fearful of being eaten by the crew. Suicide by jumping overboard was common, as were deaths of those who simply willed themselves to die and refused to eat. Many more died from the horrendous unsanitary conditions and the microbes that caused the universal “flux” and smallpox.
 - Here’s the puzzle: why, for over five centuries, would the ships’ personnel—captain and crew—mistreat and underfeed their captives for several weeks aboard a slaver, knowing that unhealthy slaves at the journey’s end would bring a lower price when sold on the auction block?
3. Ask students, “From this backstory, and the Activator you have experienced, before we examine the documents on this subject, why do you think the ships’ crews mistreated slaves coming to America? Did this mistreatment hurt their profits when so many died en route or were in poor health when they arrived?” Pass out the **Points to Ponder Response Sheet** so students can write their answers to question #1.
 4. After a few minutes of writing, stop your students and poll them with a show of hands, giving you a working hypothesis. Discuss responses if you have time. Say, “Our working hypothesis, before we examine and analyze the documents, is . . .”
 5. Pass out the package of **Documents A–H**. Say, “What do the documents tell us, and what can we conclude? That’s our task.” It may be wise to read the first one or two documents aloud and go over what they say. Remind students to work through the documents carefully, perhaps highlighting key words and terms. Also, tell them that there is no chronology or sequence to the documents. Once done, release students (in pairs or small groups) to work.
 6. Allow 35–40 minutes for students to work and fill out the **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**.
 7. Then discuss thoroughly and have students write their answer to the **Focus Question** (#8) as a closure. Have volunteers read these to conclude the activity.

Name _____ Date: _____

Points to Ponder Response Sheet

Focus Question: How and why did crews on slave ships mistreat and malnourish the captive Africans on the Middle Passage voyage, knowing that at the end, unhealthy slaves reduced profits?

1. Your first reaction to the **Focus Question** before analyzing the documents:

2. What attitudes about Africans seems prevalent in the centuries of the transatlantic slave trade?

3. In as few words as necessary, explain how the triangular trade functioned.

4. Explain the difference between "tight pack" and "loose pack."

5. List several actions taken by the crews that exhibit outright cruelty and a disregard for human life.

6. What specific actions were taken by the captains and crews that show something other than a dehumanizing and cruel attitude toward the captives?

7. Thanks to William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, the British abolished the slave trade about the same time President Jefferson signed a bill to abolish the trade in the United States. Yet the slave trade continued, illegally, for years in America. What role did the cotton gin play in increasing demand for slaves in the United States and motivating people to break the law?

8. Based on the documents you analyzed, write a long paragraph answering the **Focus Question** at the top of this sheet. Make at least three major points to substantiate your position.

Document A

"Middle Passage" (Excerpt)

Sails flashing to the wind like weapons,
Sharks following the moans, the fever and the dying;

.....

Middle Passage:
voyage through death
to life upon these shores.

.....

That there was hardly room 'tween-decks for half
The sweltering cattle stowed spoon-fashion there;
That some went mad of thirst and tore their flesh

.....

A charnel stench, effluvium of living death
spreads outward from the hold,
Where the living and the dead, the horrible dying,
Lie interlocked, lie foul with blood and excrement.

.....

Voyage through death
to life upon these shores.

Source: Robert Hayden, "Middle Passage," *Collected Prose*, edited by Frederick Glaysher (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984).

Document B

Narrative of Zamba, an African King on a Slaver (c. 1800)

Although this captain . . . acted in a most dishonorable and treacherous manner towards me, and was totally devoid of all Christian principle, yet, to serve his own ends in the matter of the slaves, he acted the part of a humane and considerate man. He told me, in the course of our voyage, that, in the early part of his experience in the slave-trade, he had seen as many slaves as he had with him at present shipped on board a vessel of 200 tons, where they were literally packed on the top of each other; and, consequently, from ill air, confinement, and scanty or unwholesome provision, disease was generated to such an extent that in several cases he had known only one-half survive to the end of the voyage; and these, as he termed it, in a very unmarketable condition. He found, therefore, that, by allowing them what he called sufficient room and good provisions, with kind treatment, his speculations turned out much better in regard to the amount of dollars received; and that was all he cared for.

For the first few days, the most of us—I mean the blacks—were laid down with sea-sickness: but, the weather being fine, that was soon got over. The captain caused the hatches to be kept open night and day (except only upon two occasions) during the whole voyage; and after daylight set in he allowed about one-fourth of his cargo to come on deck for two hours by rotation. . . . After being about fifteen days out at sea, one evening, about sunset—the ship with all sail set, going down the trades at the rate of five knots an hour—in the clap of a hand, or at least more suddenly than a stranger to these latitudes could imagine, a heavy squall struck the ship, carrying away great part of the loftier spars and sails, and laying her very nearly on her beam ends. In a few minutes a tremendous sea rose, and although the squall blew over in about a quarter of an hour, and the ship regained her position, the poor slaves below, altogether unprepared for such an occurrence, were mostly thrown on the lee-side, where they lay heaped on the top of each other; their fetters rendered many of them helpless, and before they could be arranged in their proper places, and relieved from their pressure on each other, it was found that fifteen of them were smothered or crushed to death, besides a great number who were cruelly bruised. The captain seemed considerably vexed; but the only (or at least the chief) grievance to him was the sudden loss of some five or six thousand dollars.

Source: Zamba, *The Life and Adventures of Zamba, an African Negro King*, corrected and arranged by Peter Neilson (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1850).

Document C

“Loose Pack or Tight Pack?”

Sailors placed slaves below deck in spaces only 6 feet wide and 2.5 feet high. The women were usually separated from the men. Slaves were chained to each other hand and foot. Some slave ships gave slaves more room [“loose pack”]. Their captains argued that slaves were a valuable cargo. If fewer slaves died, more profit could be made. “Tight packers” reversed this argument. They claimed that slaves were so valuable that a slave ship should carry as many as possible, no matter how many died. . . .

Sometimes, the crew would command the slaves to jump up and down or dance on deck. This practice was called “dancing the slaves.” It was supposed to give the slaves some exercise. . . . [I]f the slave moved too slowly they are flogged. . . . Below deck . . . there would be no fresh air at all . . . [and] would become unbelievably hot. At night, slaves, chained together, had to sleep side by side, or “spoon” fashion. . . .

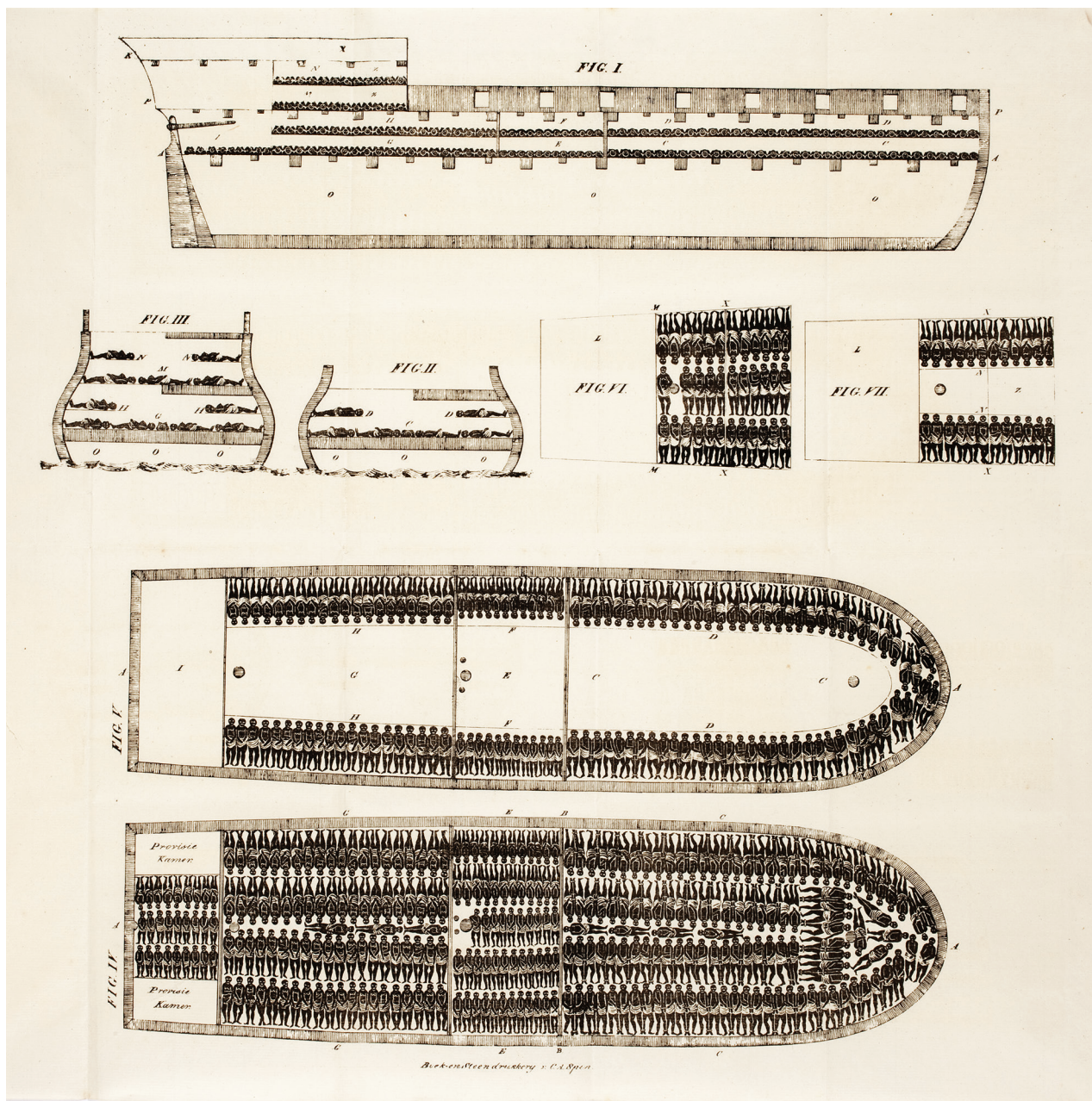
The crews of slave ships generally tried to feed and treat the slaves decently according to the standards of the time. This was not because they cared about the slaves as people but because only a living (and healthy-looking) slave would fetch a good profit when the ship landed. However, slaves died on the Middle Passage at a much higher rate than did criminals, soldiers, and free immigrants who took similar ocean voyages.

Source: Matthew Kachur, *Slavery in the Americas: The Slave Trade* (New York: Chelsea House, 2006).

Document D

Thomas Clarkson's Sketch of a Slave Ship

Clarkson was an early English abolitionist who thoroughly researched the English slave trade, drew these sketches of the slave ship *Brookes* and interviewed sailors, with the purpose of convincing the British government to abolish the trade. He and politician William Wilberforce, eventually succeeded.



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Image Source: Courtesy of the Peace Palace Library

Document E

Stereotyping Africans

[T]he English already harbored three stereotypes about Africans that facilitated their enslavement by setting them off as different (and hence liable to different treatment). First, they were “black,” or so they seemed; it is highly significant that the English saw Africans as black and themselves as white—in both cases inaccurately—for associated with the former term were numerous pejorative* meanings ranging from dirty to immoral, whereas the latter carried equally positive connotations of purity, virtue, and godliness. Second, they were “savage” or “uncivilized”; that is, their culture was very different from that of Europeans and appeared to the English to be manifestly outlandish and inferior. Third, they were “heathens,” an attribute that may have been the most important of all, for in an era when being the wrong kind of Christian put one in mortal danger in most of Christendom (including most of the English colonies), being a non-Christian automatically put one beyond the pale. . . .

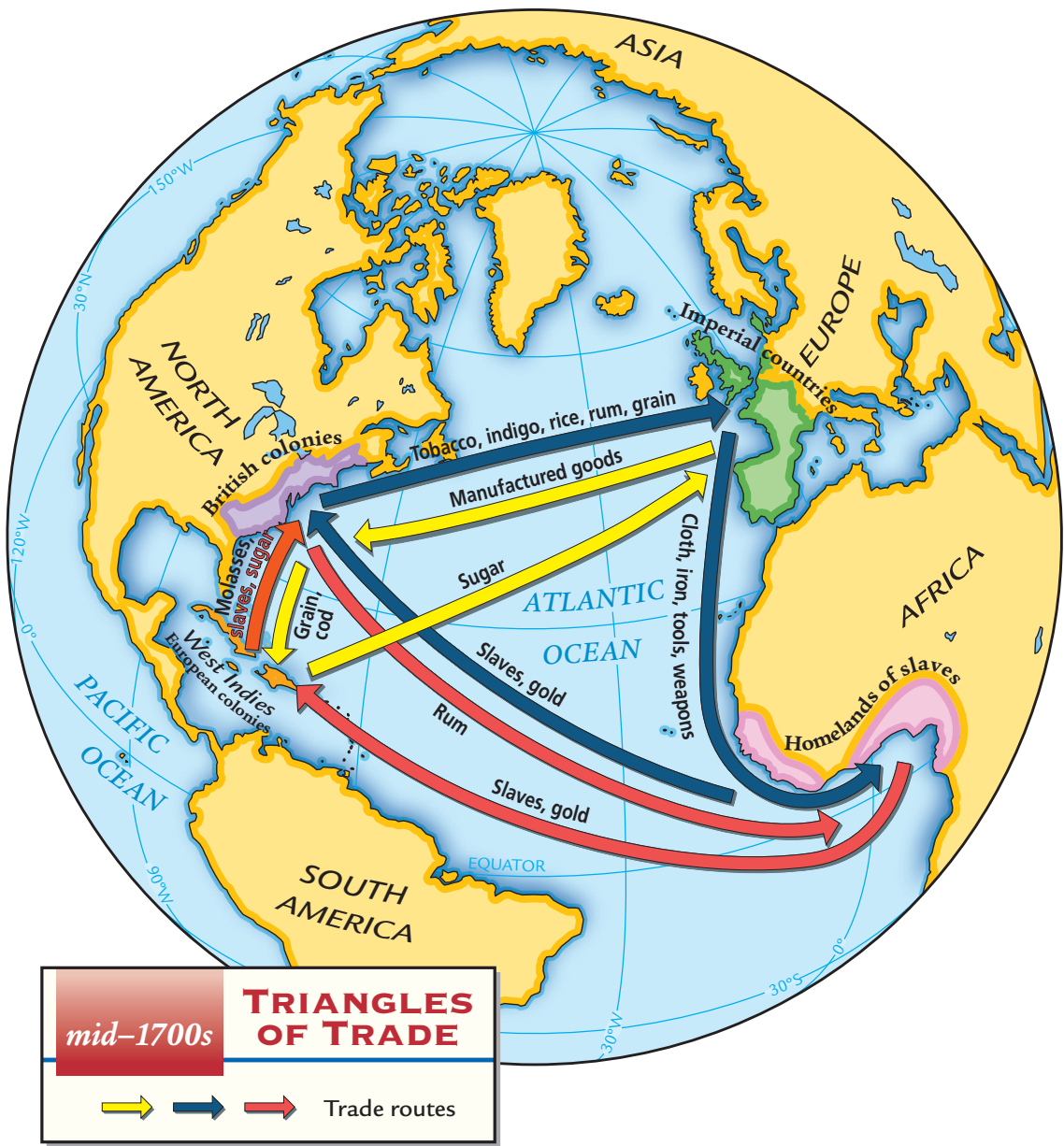
. . . [M]ost white Americans came to assume that blacks were so different from whites that slavery was their natural state. (Such sentiment would receive far more detailed expression in the nineteenth century when the abolitionist onslaught provoked an elaborate justification of slavery.) As Virginia planter Landon Carter put it in 1770, “Kindness to a Negroe by way of reward for having done well is the surest way to spoil him although according to the general observation of the world most men are spurred on to diligence by rewards.” Whereas a century earlier, freedom was a vague concept and the lot of most laborers, white and black, was to one extent or another unfree, now the assumption among whites was practically universal that blacks were slave and whites free.

Source: Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619–1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993).

* Pejorative—belittling, disparaging

Document F

Map of The Triangular Trade



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Document G

Fattening the Slaves (Olaudah Equiano's Experience)

For Equiano and several of his shipmates, the Middle Passage did not end in Barbados. These few “were not saleable amongst the rest, from very much fretting.” The traumatic passage had apparently made them unhealthy—emaciated, diseased, melancholy, or all of these. The buyers must have doubted their survival and declined to purchase them. They became “refuse slaves.” They stayed on the island for a few days and were then carried to a smaller vessel, a sloop, perhaps the **Nancy**, Richard Wallis master, bound for the York River in Virginia. The second passage was easier than the first. Compared to the slave ship, the number of the enslaved on board now was much smaller, the atmosphere was less tense and violent, and the food was better, as the captain wanted to fatten them up for sale farther north. Equiano wrote, “On the passage we were better treated than when we were coming from Africa, and we had plenty of rice and fat pork.” But all was not well, as Equiano felt the loss of his shipmates who were sold in Barbados: “I now totally lost the small remains of comfort I had enjoyed in conversing with my countrymen; the women too, who used to wash and take care of me, were all gone different ways, and I never saw one of them afterwards.”

Source: Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007).

Document H

Conditions on an English Slave Ship

[T]hey are frequently stowed so close, as to admit of no other posture than lying on their sides. Neither will the height between decks, unless directly under the grating, permit them the indulgence of an erect posture; especially where there are platforms, which is generally the case. These platforms are a kind of shelf, about eight or nine feet in breadth, extending from the side of the ship towards the centre. They are placed nearly midway between the decks, at the distance of two or three feet from each deck. Upon these the negroes are stowed in the same manner as they are on the deck underneath. . . .

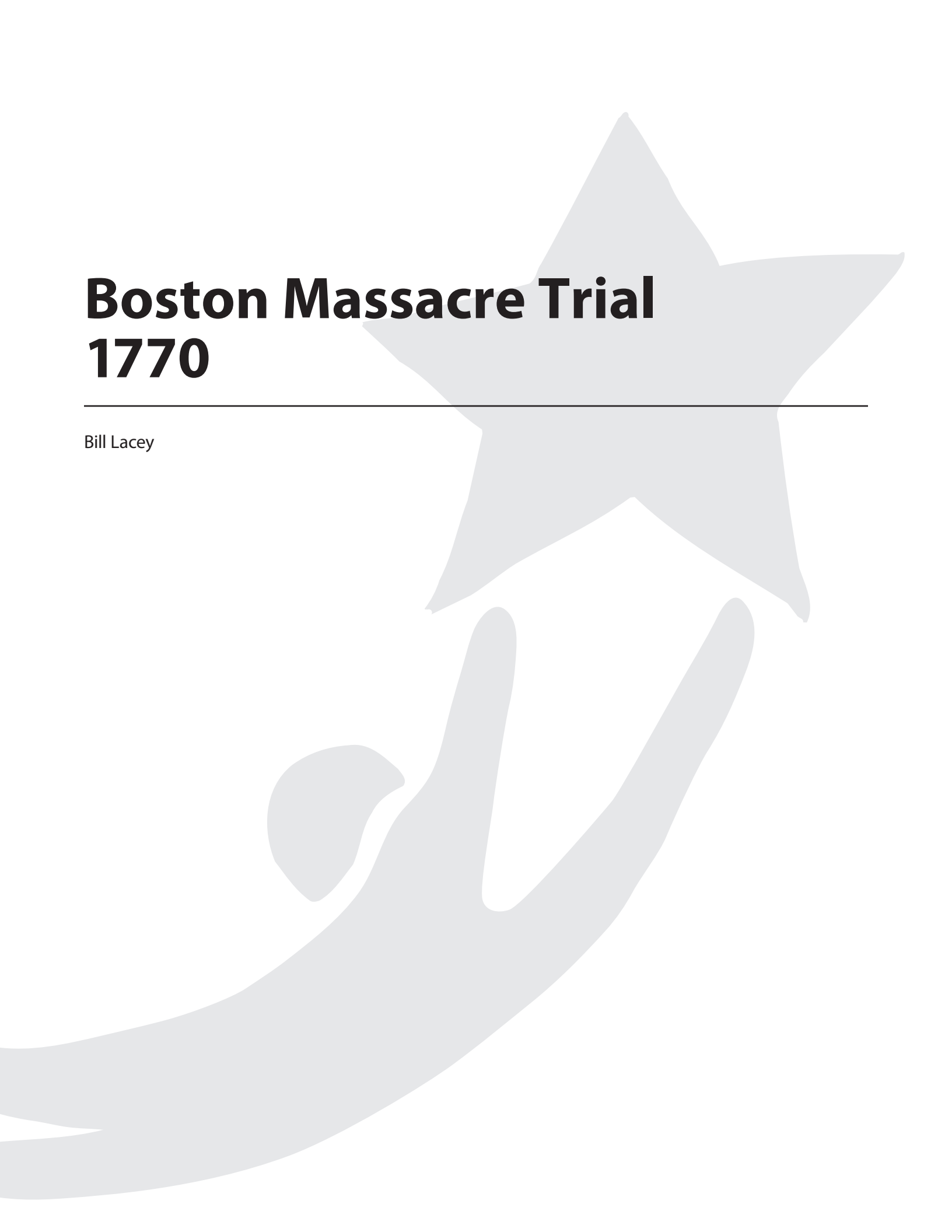
Upon the negroes refusing to take sustenance, I have seen coals of fire, glowing hot, put on a shovel, and placed so near their lips, as to scorch and burn them. And this has been accompanied with threats, of forcing them to swallow the coals, if they any longer persisted in refusing to eat. These means have generally had the desired effect. I have also been credibly informed, that a certain captain in the slave trade, poured melted lead on such of the negroes as obstinately refused their food. . . .

The hardships and inconveniences suffered by the negroes during the passage, are scarcely to be enumerated or conceived. They are far more violently affected by the sea-sickness, than the Europeans. It frequently terminates in death, especially among the women. But the exclusion of the fresh air is among the most intolerable. For the purpose of admitting this needful refreshment, most of the ships in the slave-trade are provided, between the decks, with five or six air-ports on each side of the ship, of about six inches in length, and four in breadth; in addition to which, some few ships, but not one in twenty, have what they denominate **wind-sails**. But whenever the sea is rough, and the rain heavy, it becomes necessary to shut these, and every other conveyance by which the air is admitted. The fresh air being thus excluded, the negroes rooms very soon grow intolerably hot. The confined air, rendered noxious by the effluvia exhaled from their bodies, and by being repeatedly breathed, soon produces fevers and fluxes, which generally carries off great numbers of them.

Source: Alexander Falconbridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (London: J. Phillips, 1788).

Boston Massacre Trial 1770

Bill Lacey



Lesson Plan

Overview

Surely one of the most vivid depictions of the American revolutionary era happened five years before the actual revolution commenced. On March 5, 1770, British soldiers fired into a crowd of Bostonians and killed five American colonists, a scene indelibly captured by super patriot, silversmith, and legendary nightrider Paul Revere. Revere's famous engraving has been controversial, some assert, as a propaganda piece for nearly two and a half centuries. Propaganda or not, the work circulated throughout the colonies and turned Boston into a powder keg. In this Activator, students will not reenact the "massacre" on King's Street that fateful night, but the subsequent trials of the soldiers accused of murder. Playing judges, attorneys, witnesses, defendants, and jurors, your students will immerse themselves in these tumultuous months of 1770, just a few years before Lexington and Concord ignited a war and a revolution.

Setup

1. Duplication

- **Background Essay**—*class set*
- **Postscript**—*class set*
- **Sequence/Procedure**—*class set*
- **Analyzing Paul Revere's Engraving**—*class set*
- **The Prosecution**—*one copy for each prosecuting attorney*
- **Witnesses for the Prosecution**—*one copy of each sheet for each prosecuting attorney and copies for students playing the witnesses*
- **The Defense**—*one copy for each defending attorney*
- **Witnesses for the Defense**—*one copy of each sheet for each defending attorney and copies for the students playing the witnesses*

- #### 2. Schematic, costumes, props:
- Study the **Schematic** carefully. Note the changes required to make your trial resemble what little we know about how the real trial looked. The HBO miniseries *John Adams* has a reasonable interpretation of the inside of the Queen Street courthouse. Suffice it to say, make the setting look like a courtroom of today. The prisoners/soldiers all stand at the bar throughout the trial. Colonial costumes or props are optional. Simple white wigs and three-cornered hats might enhance performances and add ambience.

Teaching tip

Give the role-playing handouts to participants a day or two prior to the activity.



3. Roles

- a. Choose your most reliable, dramatic, and eager students to be the chief justice (or you may want to take the role for yourself), the four associate justices, the four attorneys, and the twelve witnesses.
- b. The rest of the roles—clerk of the court and jurors/spectators—can be filled in with those not selected to be major participants.

3. **Historical Accuracy:** While measures were taken by the author to follow the real trials in form and accuracy, some changes were made for reasons of simplicity, clarity, and continuity. Changes made:

- There were actually three trials, two of those involving the soldiers: one for Captain Preston and a second for the other eight soldiers. To simplify, all nine are tried here in one trial.
- No defendant (i.e., the nine soldiers) ever took the stand to defend what they did—justified or not. In this simulated trial, Preston does testify, a strategy used to pump up the dramatics of having at least one defendant give his reasons for actions taken that night.
- The different testimonies, while not word for word, are close to what was actually said in court. They are based on real courtroom questions and answers or from pretrial depositions.

Directions

1. Hand out or display the **Background Essay**. However you parcel out time to cover the trial's background, make sure your students have the essentials, either by reading what is available here or by explaining most of it through teacher presentation.
2. At some point (perhaps two days before), select your cadre of performers to take on the roles of chief justice, clerk of the court, the four attorneys, and the twelve witnesses. From the students who remain, select twelve to be jurors. If you have any students left, they will be spectators.
3. Before you start, rearrange the room to assemble the **Schematic**.

You have at least two different ways you can conduct this trial Activator:

Option A

Phase I: The Trial

1. **Phase I** is a full-blown trial re-creation of the two trials held in late 1770. It is the longer activity of the two and with the legal proceedings, speeches, and testimony of twelve witnesses will take at least one and a half class periods.

2. Assign all roles, using a sheet designating who plays who.
3. To motivate students once they are set and ready for the trial, try this: In the next few minutes you, as the teacher, walk around the room and perform six or seven different acts (e.g., wad up a piece of paper and throw it in trash can), some in detail. Be creative. Afterward, have students write on half sheets of paper a description of what you did, or list all the acts you performed. Don't give any help or suggestions. Allow one to two minutes for students to write before you collect these slips. They will be used in the **Debriefing** to make a point about the varying nature of eyewitness accounts.
4. Review for students what will happen during the trial and your expectations for behavior. If you need to display the **Schematic**, do this now. Make sure the **Sequence/Procedure** is taped to every desk. Encourage jurors to take detailed notes to use when they later render verdicts. Have the justices leave the courtroom before the clerk of the court announces, "All rise . . ."
5. Let the trial then proceed. Perhaps you might want to film the proceedings.
6. If you are not doing **Phase II**, promptly go to the **Debriefing**.

Phase II: Analyzing Paul Revere's Engraving

1. **Phase II** utilizes a "get into the picture" active learning strategy along with a teacher-guided close scrutiny of exactly what's in the famous picture Revere rendered. Time allotment: 20–30 minutes.
2. Try to locate a clear picture of Revere's famous depiction of the Boston Massacre and prepare to display it for students.
3. Make sure you have duplicated the handout **Analyzing Paul Revere's Engraving**, or have a method of displaying it for all to see.
4. Display the famous Revere engraving and have several students come to the front of the screen to "get into" the picture, posing as the various townspeople and soldiers. As they pose, go over again what happened that night, perhaps asking students, "So, what happened next?" to test their memories of the **Background Essay**. Refer to the essay if you need to. Have students in these roles act out what happened as you and they together explain the details.
5. Once this is done, pass out or display **Analyzing Paul Revere's Engraving** and read it aloud, using perhaps several students. When you get to the section, "Propaganda Perfected," display the Revere picture again and slowly read over the nine (at least) inaccuracies that Revere

included in his version of the massacre, pointing out each as you read them. Use a pointer or laser to pinpoint details.

6. After this, read the **Postscript** at the end of the handout, about Revere's rather unethical, if not illegal, actions.

Option B

1. Read the **Background Essay**.
2. If you have an active and eager class of students and limited time, do either, but not both, phases. The trial obviously will consume a few days of class time. Analysis of the Revere picture can be done in 20–30 minutes.

Option C

1. Instead of the full trial, use instead parts of the trial. For example:
 - Read the **Background Essay**.
 - Have two students read the opening statements for the prosecuting and defense sides, followed by one or two witnesses for each side, testifying from their **Q and A** sheets. This could be followed by two different students reading the closing statements. This would be a time-saver overall and would allow students to know and understand some of the conflicting issues that percolated in the pre-Revolutionary War years, and what happened on the confusing and chaotic night of March 5, 1770.

Debriefing

Decide whether you wish to use a short or long debriefing.

Short Debriefing

1. Pass out the **Postscript**. Either read this to your students or have several students read it aloud from the handout. You could also use the data to create a brief lecture/PowerPoint.
2. Ask students what they learned, and consider having students write a Learning Log entry following this short debriefing.

Longer Debriefing

Use one or more of the following debriefing activities:

1. Pass out the **Postscript**. Either read this to your students or have several students read it aloud.

2. Go over some of the “eyewitness” slips filled out earlier on your actions at the beginning of the Activator. Use these as a discussion point about how eyewitness testimonies can vary from person to person.
3. Review the real verdicts at the trials held in the late fall of 1770: Captain Preston—not guilty; six of the eight soldiers—not guilty; two soldiers, Hugh Montgomery and Matthew Kilroy—guilty of manslaughter. Also review the difference between manslaughter and murder. In both instances, humans are killed by others, but when the charge, as it was in this case, is murder with malice and forethought, the prosecution had difficulty convincing the jury that the soldiers had planned ahead to kill. In Captain Preston’s separate trial, the jury had doubts about his giving the order to fire. Witnesses for the defense gave the jurors room for “reasonable doubt,” a concept used here for the first time in an American trial.
4. **Ask students:** *Could this kind of incident occur today, with policemen wearing body cameras? What percentage of blame out of 100 percent should be divided among the townspeople and the soldiers? 60/40 percent? 90/10 percent? Why?*
5. **Discuss:** Did the real verdicts—notably, manslaughter for killing without intent—result in severe enough punishment for the guilty? Montgomery and Kilroy were branded with an “M” on their left thumbs, an indelible mark for life. Was this punishment of lifelong shame severe enough?
6. Read this to students: “From the papers of Lt. Governor Thomas Hutchinson, historians found in 1949 (claims one secondary source)—what would have been a bombshell at the actual trials in 1770: Hugh Montgomery, a pivotal figure who might be the soldier who was knocked down by a thrown stick or club—admitted in private to one of his attorneys that he gave the order to fire after being knocked down. This admission did not surface during the trials or during the immediate aftermath.” Discuss with students if they think it is an attorney’s right to withhold or disclose information of this nature that would alter the outcome of the trial and focus on his client’s unassailable guilt. Would Montgomery’s admission have resulted in a guilty verdict and a hangman’s noose for him?
7. Show a segment from one of the films or documentaries recommended in the **Visual history** section.

Resources to consult

Dickenson, Alice. *The Boston Massacre, March 5, 1770: A Colonial Street Fight Erupts into Violence*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1968. (This is a book for younger readers but has lots of detail.)

Doggett, John, Jr., ed. *A Short Narrative of the Horrid Massacre in Boston, Perpetrated in the Evening of the Fifth Day of March, 1770, by Soldiers of the 29th Regiment, which with the 14th Regiment Were Then Quartered There; with Some Observations on the State of Things Prior to that Catastrophe*. New York: John Doggett Jr., 1849.

Hanson, Harry. *The Boston Massacre: An Episode of Dissent and Violence*. New York: Hastings House, 1970.

McCullough, David. *John Adams*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001.

Smith, Robert. *The Infamous Boston Massacre*. New York: Crowell-Collier Press, 1968. (This book is for young readers.)

The Trial of the British Soldiers of the 29th Regiment of Foot, for the Murder of Crispus Attucks, Samuel Gray, Samuel Maverick, James Caldwell, and Patrick Carr, on Monday Evening, March 5, 1770, Before the Honorable Benjamin Lynde, John Cushing, Peter Oliver, and Edmund Trowbridge, Esquires, Justices of the Superior Court of Judicature, Court of Assize, and General Goal Delivery, Held at Boston, by Adjournment, November 27, 1770. Boston: Belcher and Armstrong, 1807.

Winston, Alexander. "Firebrand of the Revolution." *American Heritage* 18, no. 3 (April 1967): 105–108.

York, Neil. *The Boston Massacre: A History with Documents*. Abington, OH: Routledge, 2010.

Visual history

Documentaries: History Channel's *America: The Story of Us*. Also useful is Discovery Channel's *Unsolved History: The Boston Massacre* a 44-minute documentary exploring the event's lingering questions with modern forensic and ballistic re-creations.

Feature Films/TV Series: The Boston Massacre has not, to the best of my memory, been the sole subject of a feature film from Hollywood. *Johnny Tremain* (1957) has a brief few minutes devoted to the "massacre." Entertaining but a bit hokey, it nevertheless has an addictive song about the Sons of Liberty ("The Liberty Tree") that will have you, if not your students, humming it all day. A better choice is the more recent *John Adams* (2008) miniseries shown on HBO with Paul Giamatti as Adams. Though the massacre segment is brief—Adams came on King Street just after the incident happened—the series devotes several minutes to Adams's role in the soldiers' trial.

Background Essay

Place: Boston, Massachusetts Bay Colony

Time: March–October 1770

Roots of revolution

The shooting incident that occurred in King Street in Boston, in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, in 1770, was soon referred to as the Boston Massacre. It became one event of many that dot a timeline of events leading up to a revolt in British America. Royal and Parliamentary neglect, unfair taxes without representation, and an expensive war with France led to conditions that fostered colonial resistance. Many American colonists saw this tighter grip by Parliament as a move to control the colonies and put down protests. Revenue was needed and America must share the burden of cost for expanding the empire, fighting wars, and providing protection from Indians.

American resistance

The specific names given to the taxes in the 1760s meant little to most colonists. What mattered was that these taxes were levied without colonial representation in Parliament, “taxation without representation.” Clearly to many, including the “firebrands” of the secret Sons of Liberty, Parliament and the King George were trying to enslave the colonists by restricting the liberties and rights they once had as Englishmen. To the colonists, these actions were tyrannical and must be resisted.

Redcoats in America

The port city of Boston seemed to be the center of colonial resistance, as Britain viewed the situation in the late 1760s. Later called “that metropolis of sedition,” Boston did have its share of radical and outspoken leaders, like Samuel Adams, who seemed to be at the center of every protest. To deal with the colonial resistance to paying taxes and complying with Parliament’s laws, Britain sent two additional regiments of soldiers to Massachusetts to control the discontent and vocal

protests. More redcoats in Boston meant these troops would require quartering. As they arrived on barges rowed in from anchored ships in Boston Harbor, Paul Revere wrote, “[Redcoats] formed and marched with insolent pride, drums beating, fifes playing, and colors going up King street.” Now, it seemed to Bostonians, the presence of redcoats was everywhere. Many at the time believed that the mere presence of the soldiers was an invitation to conflict and defiance.

March 1770

The situation by March 1770 was a tense powder keg. The townspeople were angry and sensed a loss of freedom with so many British soldiers watching their every move. At the same time, redcoat soldiers were bored, homesick, lonely, and frustrated with inactivity—and often, it was noticed, unruly and insulting toward residents. These soldiers were targets for abuse, hearing shouts of “lobster-backs,” “bloody-backs,” or cowards. The townspeople felt safe throwing items, yelling their offensive comments, knowing that soldiers, in order to fire their muskets or retaliate in some way, needed a direct order from the acting governor, Thomas Hutchinson. Feeling powerless, the soldiers, perhaps six hundred of them in a town of sixteen thousand, seethed with resentment.

An early confrontation

The ill-feelings between the townspeople and the occupying soldiers nearly came to a head when, on a cold winter morning, Friday, March 2, 1770, two British soldiers stopped by John Gray’s ropewalk factory and asked for work to supplement their meager soldier pay. Quickly insulted by a few Boston workers at the plant, the two soldiers were promptly told to go and clean the outhouse/privy. More sharp words led to a fight; the soldiers, outnumbered, took a beating. Returning to their barracks, the humiliated soldiers—one of whom,

Matthew Kilroy, would be involved in the incident on March 5—enlisted their comrades to seek revenge.

March 5

On Monday, three days later, (after a tense weekend with a few scuffles), a light snow had fallen and the moonlight made the snow glisten, illuminating small bands of British soldiers roaming the streets. Some yelled at the townspeople. A reported incident involving a boy taunting a soldier led to more taunting, and ice chunks and snowballs were tossed at the redcoat. Calling for backup, the soldier was soon joined by his fellow redcoats. Captain Thomas Preston of the 29th regiment ordered his men out into the streets, only to face a crowd of young men and boys, who claimed that the redcoats were stalking them. In response, the townspeople continued to pelt the soldiers with snowballs and ice.

Flashpoint!

Suddenly, shortly after 9 p.m., a church bell began to ring, usually the alarm for a fire, and more residents came out into Boston's streets, many with sticks and clubs. Now perhaps as many as a few hundred men and boys converged at the Customs House on King Street where a lonely sentry-guard and eight British soldiers stood in a semicircle near the steps, with fixed bayonets and, it seemed, loaded muskets. The crowd continued to shout, curse, and throw snowballs. Many were well "lubricated" after rounds of cheap rum served by the city's many taverns and grogshops.

Aftermath

What happened next—with the townspeople and soldiers in a face-off—will be revealed during the trial testimonies of the witnesses who were there on King Street. All told, eleven men in the crowd were struck by balls from the soldiers' muskets, three died instantly, another soon after, and one, Patrick Carr, died nine days later. Six were seriously wounded but recovered. The dead were identified

as Crispus Attucks, James Caldwell, Samuel Gray, and Samuel Maverick. Maverick and Caldwell were curious innocents, not really part of the mob, but their curiosity put them in harm's way in the last few seconds before the confrontation. Thankfully, cooler heads prevailed just after the shots were fired. The crowd quickly dispersed and the soldiers retreated to their nearby barracks. Within a few days, those soldiers deemed responsible were arrested, questioned, and held over for trial.

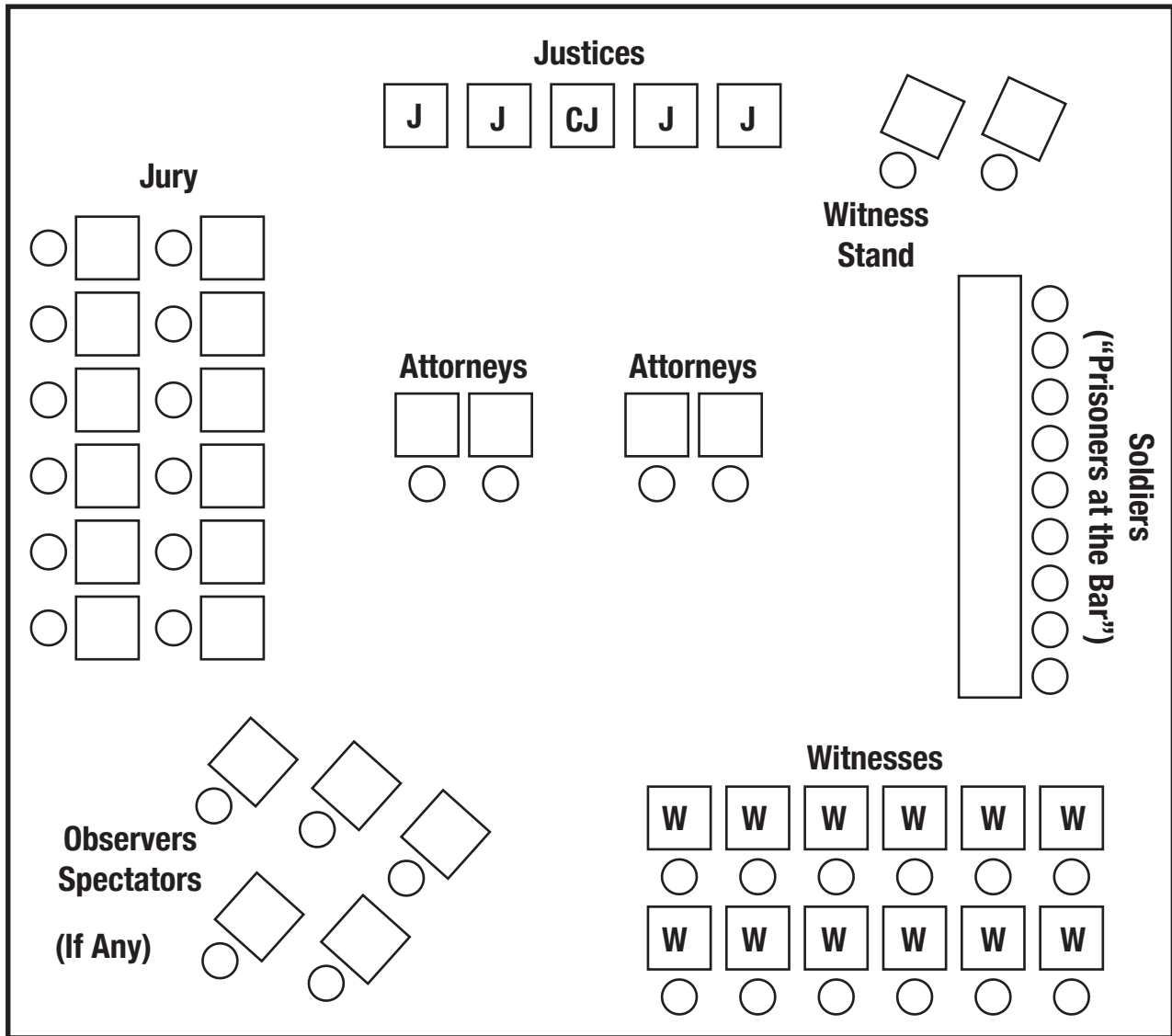
Enflamed atmosphere

Upon the advice of Samuel Adams, a member of the local chapter of the secretive Sons of Liberty, Lt. Governor Thomas Hutchinson decided to evacuate both occupying regiments of British soldiers from the town to Castle William in Boston Harbor. Three days following the incident on King Street, the coffins of the victims were carried to a common grave led by thousands of stunned mourners, amid tolling bells and shuttered shops, in a long funeral procession through the town. In such an enflamed atmosphere, Hutchinson wisely postponed the trial of the soldiers until October, months away, hoping that a cooling-off period might offer the soldiers a fair trial, even in Boston.

Become an attorney, witness, defendant, or juror

It is now October 1770, seven months after the incident that took the lives of five Bostonians. But the town is still grieving and displays of outrage can be seen everywhere. Still, it is time to put the British soldiers, blamed for what was labeled the "massacre," on trial. It will be your day in court as you participate in one of early U.S. history's most important trials—to see if justice can prevail in an atmosphere of outrage and revenge. These historic trials took place four and a half years before shots exchanged at Lexington and Concord Bridge sparked a war ending in American independence. In your re-creation, will the soldiers get a fair trial as Englishmen in the American colonies? That is up to you and your classmates. All rise for the justices of the Superior Court—the trial is set to begin!

Schematic



Suggestions

- The soldiers should stand at the "bar" during the entire trial.
- Have witnesses wear name tags.
- The "bar" for the prisoner-soldiers could be a table or chairs lined up in front of the soldiers (be creative).
- Encourage jurors to take notes.

Characters needed

- 5 justices, including a Chief Justice
- 1 clerk of the court
- 4 attorneys
- 12 witnesses
- 12 jurors
- The rest of your students will be observers/spectators

The Prosecution

A. Opening Statement (read or paraphrase)

May it please your honors and gentlemen of the jury. (*Pause*) Our task today is to prove that these British regimental soldiers—all nine—are guilty of murdering, with malice and forethought, the five townspeople and are guilty of wounding six others on the evening of March 5 of this year, 1770. There is no reasonable doubt in this case; they are all guilty, even Captain Preston, though he did not fire a musket. Indeed, Preston guided the actions of soldiers under his command; he ordered his men to shoot into a crowd of innocent people and the soldiers killed five—FIVE! The prosecution bears the burden of proving beyond reasonable doubt the charges against the soldiers and this will be clearly obvious from the testimonies of our witnesses, men who were lucky to survive that fateful night.

(*Face the jury*) It will be up to you good men, the jury, to examine the evidence through testimony and render a verdict with impartiality and without prejudice. Thank you.

B. Questioning Witnesses

As attorneys, you will use the several individual **Q and A Sheets** for each of your witnesses. The sequence of the witnesses in this trial is not important but a recommended sequence is below. When the Chief Justice asks you, "Will you please call to the stand your next witness?," you respond, "Your honor, we the prosecution call _____ to the stand." Then use the questions on each **Q and A Sheet** for the witness's testimony. You may also ask follow-up questions of your witnesses and create questions as part of cross-examining defense witnesses.

Recommended sequence of witnesses:

1. Ebenezer Hinkley
2. Edward G. Langford
3. Daniel Calef
4. Samuel Hemmingway
5. Robert Goddard
6. William Wyatt

C. Closing Statement (read or paraphrase)

It is clear that we have proved His Majesty's case against our soldiers—that they did indeed kill and murder with malice and forethought five of Boston's citizens on the night of March 5, 1770. "Malice" is defined as a desire to harm others or see others suffer with an urge to hurt. "Forethought" is defined as advanced planning or deliberation of action. Both words fit the actions and crimes of these soldiers. They, in fact, did plan, hours or days before, to harm, in this case kill, townspeople of Boston. The evidence you have heard in testimony should convince you to render verdicts quickly for the eight who fired and their officer in charge, Captain Thomas Preston, who deserved special attention for his nefarious deed and is also guilty for ordering his men to fire. Jurors, (look at each juror) they are . . . all . . . guilty . . . of . . . murder!

Witness for the Prosecution

Q and A: Ebenezer Hinkley

Note: Your role might be crucial to the outcome of this trial. Therefore, before you are called to testify, go over this Q and A sheet several times so you don't have to rely on reading it word for word. Doing this will make you a more convincing witness.

Q: Mr. Hinkley, what brought you out to King Street and the Customs House that fateful night?

A: Well, just after nine o'clock I heard the cry of "fire"—the bells were ringing all over the city.

Q: So, the fire bells brought you out and soon you were in a position to see the altercation—dispute—between the soldiers and the townspeople?

A: Oh, yes. I saw several soldiers come out of the guardhouse. One officer cried out of the window, "Fire upon 'em, damn 'em." I followed these soldiers to the Customs House door where Captain Preston—I recognized him—was out and commanding his men to draw up and charge their bayonets. One soldier, Private Montgomery, used his bayonet to push back any people advancing toward him.

Q: What happened next?

A: A boy threw a small stick and hit Montgomery on the chest. Then I heard the word "fire" and seconds later, Montgomery fired his musket.

Q: So . . . the soldier named Montgomery was provoked into firing his musket?

A: Not sure about that. I did see snowballs as big as turkey eggs being thrown, sometimes three or four at a time.

Q: And all this started when Captain Preston ordered his men to fire?

A: I did not hear him give the order to fire. I saw him between the townspeople and his men. I did not see him when the firing first began.

Witness for the Prosecution

Q and A: Samuel Hemmingway

Note: Your role might be crucial to the outcome of this trial. Therefore, before you are called to testify, go over this Q and A sheet several times so you don't have to rely on reading it word for word. Doing this will make you a more convincing witness.

Q: Do you recognize any of the prisoners at the bar, Mr. Hemmingway?

A: Yes, several. But I know Private Kilroy particularly well.

Q: Did you ever hear Kilroy make use of any threatening expressions against the townspeople?

A: Yes. One evening I heard him say he would never miss an opportunity, when he had one, to fire on the inhabitants, and that he wanted to have an opportunity ever since he landed in Boston.

Q: How long before March 5 did you heard him say this?

A: A week before, maybe two weeks before the incident.

Witness for the Prosecution

Q and A: Robert Goddard

Note: Your role might be crucial to the outcome of this trial. Therefore, before you are called to testify, go over this Q and A sheet several times so you don't have to rely on reading it word for word. Doing this will make you a more convincing witness.

Q: Mr. Goddard, you were there on King Street, on the night of March 5?

A: Right there, yes.

Q: And what do you remember about that night?

A: Well, I remember vividly soldiers and town folk facing each other. The redcoats were in a half-circle. The captain, behind his men, shouted at us to go home, that there might be murder done. Then the captain told them—the soldiers—to fire. One gun went off. A sailor or townsman then struck the captain.

Q: Did the captain say anything more?

A: Yes. He said, "Damn your bloods . . . fire!"

Q: Please continue, Mr. Goddard.

A: Well, after the captain said, "Damn your bloods, fire," they—his men—fired one shot after another, probably seven or eight shots in all. The captain stood behind his soldiers the whole time. A Mr. Lee went up to the officer—Preston—and called him by name.

Q: And what did he call the officer?

A: He called him Captain Preston.

Q: Did you ever see Captain Preston again before coming to court today?

A: I went to the jail the day after the incident; for the grand jury, I identified Captain Preston as the one who gave the order to fire. I was sworn in just before I identified him.

Witness for the Prosecution

Q and A: Edward G. Langford

Note: Your role might be crucial to the outcome of this trial. Therefore, before you are called to testify, go over this Q and A sheet several times so you don't have to rely on reading it word for word. Doing this will make you a more convincing witness.

Q: Sir, were you also on King Street when the fire bells began to ring?

A: Yes. As soon as the bells rang and I heard people cry "fire," I ran with the rest onto King Street to see if I could help put out a fire.

Q: And there was no fire, correct?

A: I was told there was no fire, but the redcoats were out and had been fighting with the townspeople.

Q: And what did you see happening on King Street?

A: Well, as I approached the sentry guard box at the Customs House, I saw several young men and boys about the sentry box, where I was told the sentry had knocked a boy down.

Q: And what did you do?

A: I told the boy to let the sentry alone. I turned to the sentry, who was trying to get into the Customs House, and I told him not to be afraid.

Q: Did you know the sentry?

A: Yes. That's him, over there, Hugh White.

Q: Do you know any other soldiers?

A: Yes, I do. That man (*point to Kilroy*), Matthew Kilroy.

Q: What were the young men and boys actually doing or saying that would cause the sentry—Hugh White—to knock the boy down?

A: The men and boys were swearing and speaking bad words, but they didn't throw anything at the sentry.

Q: And did something tragic happen next, while you were near the sentry?

A: Yes. I was standing next to Samuel Gray when a gun was fired.

Q: Did you hear someone give the order to load?

A: No. I heard no order to load. Someone did say, "Are you ready?" Next I heard the word given to fire, twice, very distinctly.

Q: Did any of the townspeople have sticks or clubs?

A: I don't know, although I had one myself.

Q: Who fired the first shot, Mr. Langford?

A: I do not know.

Q: But you did see the soldier fire.

A: Oh, yes. I looked at one man—there! (*point to Matthew Kilroy*)—in the face and bid him not to fire, but he immediately did, and Samuel Gray, who stood beside me, fell at my feet. The same soldier then thrust his bayonet through my coat and jacket, just missing my flesh.

Q: Did Samuel Gray say anything to Private Kilroy before Kilroy fired?

A: No. And he threw no snowballs.

Q: Do you have any doubts that it was Private Kilroy's gun that killed Mr. Gray?

A: No doubt at all.

Q: Do you think Kilroy aimed at Gray?

A: I do not know. He was as liable to kill me as him.

Witness for the Prosecution

Q and A: William Wyatt

Note: Your role might be crucial to the outcome of this trial. Therefore, before you are called to testify, go over this Q and A sheet several times so you don't have to rely on reading it word for word. Doing this will make you a more convincing witness.

Q: When were you alerted to the King Street altercation, Mr. Wyatt?

A: I heard the bells ring and looked out to see people running several ways. Then I went outside and saw an officer leading eight to ten men. Someone stopped the officer and said, "Captain Preston, for God's sake, mind what you are about to do and take care of your men."

Q: And how did Captain Preston react?

A: He went to the sentry at the Customs House, lined up his men, bid them to face about, and then had them prime and load their muskets.

Q: What were the townspeople doing at this point in time?

A: I saw about a hundred people in the street, some of them crying, "Fire, damn you, fire!" Then a minute or two later, I heard the same officer say, "fire!"

Q: Did the soldiers fire then?

A: No, they did not. Then the officer said, "Damn your bloods, fire! And let the consequences be what they will."

Q: And did they fire this time?

A: Yes. Almost immediately. The first shot was fired then.

Q: And this officer was the same person the man spoke to when coming down to see the sentry?

A: Yes. It was the same officer.

Q: You're sure?

A: Well, his back was to me when the last order was given. I was about five or six yards off. He stood in the rear when the guns were fired. After the firing, the captain stepped forward in front of his men and struck up their muskets. One soldier was loading again and the captain damned him for firing and severely reprimanded him.

Witness for the Prosecution

Q and A: Daniel Calef

Note: Your role might be crucial to the outcome of this trial. Therefore, before you are called to testify, go over this Q and A sheet several times so you don't have to rely on reading it word for word. Doing this will make you a more convincing witness.

Q: Sir, Mr. Calef, you were on King Street when the actual shooting took place on the evening of March 5, is that true?

A: Yes. I was there when the soldiers fired into the crowd.

Q: Please tell the court what you saw and heard.

A: I heard a rattle of one gun at first. So I turned about to see and heard an officer—I looked him right in the face—when he gave the word to fire. He was standing in a line with his men.

Q: Is this officer of whom you speak in this courtroom today? If he is, would you point him out?

A: Yes. That man over there. (*point to Captain Preston*)

Q: For the court, Mr. Calef pointed to Captain Preston. (*Pause*) So . . . you got a good look at him?

A: Oh, yes. I was about thirty feet from him. I saw the face plain; the moon shone on it. I am sure it was Captain Preston.

Q: When the shots were fired, what did you do?

A: I ran when I heard the word, "fire."

The Defense

A. Opening Statement (Read or paraphrase)

"From the start, we wish to prove that the nine soldiers, including Captain Thomas Preston, are not guilty of murder with malice and forethought. Yes, there was an altercation, muskets were fired, and yes, some Bostonians lay in the snow, expired from those shots. And yes, this incident happened because the soldiers were in fact part of an occupying army in Boston. But a closer look at the events of that night reveal the blame for the incident in King Street should be placed on the unruly mob of townspeople who provoked the soldiers—repeatedly harassed to the point of frenzy—to defend themselves in this tragic incident. Every action has a reaction. In this case, the actions—the name calling, the tossing of snowballs and ice chunks, the continued shouts and provocations by resentful townspeople of the lowest sort—produced a reaction of musket fire, unfortunately, but for the reason of self-defense. These facts will be clear to you, the jury, as we elicit honest testimonies from witnesses. Thank you.

B. Questioning Witnesses

As attorneys, you will use individual **Q and A Sheets** to question each of your witnesses. The sequence of the witnesses in this trial is not important, but a recommended sequence is below. When the chief justice asks you, "Will you call to the stand your next witness?" you respond, "Your honor, we the defense call _____ to the stand." Then use the questions on each **Q and A Sheet** for the witness's testimony. You may also ask follow-up questions of your witnesses and create questions as part of cross examining witnesses for the prosecution.

Recommended sequence of witnesses:

1. James Bailey
2. Richard Palmes
3. Dr. John Jeffries
4. Theodore Bliss
5. John Gillespie
6. Captain Thomas Preston

Closing Statement

Note: If all goes well and your witnesses paint an indelible picture of what really happened that night, as a clincher you both need to deliver a passionate and clear summation that is outlined below, some of the words of which are from John Adams's original speech.

"Your honors, jurors, courtroom observers . . . it is clear that the witnesses today have exhibited no evidence at all that indicates that Captain Preston gave the order to fire upon the inhabitants or that the soldiers of the 29th used malice or forethought in firing into a crowd. Their reaction was their only means of self-defense. Their lives were threatened—pure and simple. The townspeople used taunts over many months, and that night, they threw sharp and hard objects at the soldiers, which had the result of generating unbelievable tension among the 29th and 14th regiments, sent here in 1768 to protect the colony. In plain English,

the townspeople were a motley rabble of saucy boys—an uncontrollable mob! Furthermore, if an assault was made to endanger the soldiers' lives—which from the testimonies seems accurate—the law is clear: they, the assaulted soldiers, have the right to kill in their own defense. The soldiers were in fact assaulted, struck and abused by blows from all sorts of weapons: snowballs, oyster shells, clubs, sticks, and sharp chunks of ice. This, the jurors will note, was provocation, for which the law reduces the charge of murder to manslaughter. Manslaughter is the killing of a human by another without intent to do injury.

Put yourself in their position. The soldiers had no friends, the mob was shouting “kill them, kill them” and heaving heavy snowballs, ice, clubs, and sticks. Consider whether a reasonable man in a soldier's situation would not have concluded that his life was in danger. He had no recourse but to fire. Gentlemen of the jury, these nine soldiers had no intent to kill; the eight soldiers fired their muskets in self-defense, and Captain Preston did not give the order to fire—several witnesses have testified to that fact. Actually, one could easily deduce that the captain's presence and action that night saved lives rather than caused the loss of life. Gentlemen, all nine soldiers are not guilty of murder! *(Pause)* Thank you.”

Witness for the Defense

Q and A: Richard Palmes

Note: Your role might be crucial to the outcome of this trial. Therefore, before you are called to testify, go over this Q and A sheet several times so you don't have to rely on reading it word for word. Doing this will make you a more convincing witness.

Q: Mr. Palmes, do you know any of the prisoners?

A: I recognize Private Hugh Montgomery. I saw him on King Street on that night.

Q: What drew you out onto King Street?

A: I was told the soldiers were abusing the inhabitants and that there was a rumpus at the Customs House.

Q: So you went there and what did you see?

A: I saw Mr. Theodore Bliss talking to Captain Preston. I heard Bliss say to the officer, "Why do you not fire? God damn you, fire!"

Q: Did you yourself speak to the captain at all?

A: I did. I asked him if their muskets were loaded and he said yes, with powder and ball. Then I said, "I hope, sir, you are not going to fire on the inhabitants." He replied in these words: "By no means."

Q: What happened next?

A: At that instant, I saw a piece of ice or something strike Private Montgomery's gun. He stepped back on one foot, recovered from the ground his musket, and immediately fired. When he fired, I heard the word "fire," but who gave the order, I do not know. A few seconds after that, another soldier fired, and then the rest, one after another.

Q: How many shots were fired overall?

A: Perhaps seven or eight.

Q: How close were you to Montgomery when he fired the first shot?

A: Close enough for him to thrust his bayonet at me. With a stick that I usually carry as a cane, I struck him and knocked his gun down and at the same time struck the captain.

Q: Did you see any of the victims in the crowd fall after these shots were fired?

A: No, I did not. But soon afterward, I did see Samuel Gray and the mulatto Attucks lying in the snow.

Q: Did you see the rest of the soldiers discharge their pieces?

A: I saw powder smoke and assumed they all fired.

Witness for the Defense

Q and A: Dr. John Jeffries

Note: Your role might be crucial to the outcome of this trial. Therefore, before you are called to testify, go over this Q and A sheet several times so you don't have to rely on reading it word for word. Doing this will make you a more convincing witness.

Q: Dr. Jeffries, you were not a participant in the altercation on King Street, is this correct?

A: Correct. I am a doctor, and, because I sensed I might be needed afterward if blood was spilled, I stayed inside, even after the fire bells kept ringing and I heard shouts of "fire!"

Q: How then are you connected to this tragedy? Were your skills as a surgeon needed somehow?

A: I was needed soon after. One of the victims, Patrick Carr, needed my skills. He survived being shot and I attended him for the next few days.

Q: But you couldn't save him. Carr, as the court knows, expired nine days after the incident. He was the fifth and last to die. So your abundance of medical training and skills had no effect? He died.

A: Yes, sadly, he did die.

Q: Was Patrick Carr aware of the danger on King Street that night? Did he mention this at all to you?

A: He told me as I cared for him that, being a native of Ireland, he had frequently seen mobs and soldiers called out to quell them and that he had seen soldiers often fire on the people in Ireland, but he had never in his life seen soldiers go through so much harassment and provocation as that night.

Q: When did you have your last conversation with the deceased Mr. Carr?

A: About four o'clock in the afternoon before the night he died.

Q: What else did he say that last time you two talked?

A: He told me that he forgave the soldier—whoever he was—who shot him. He had no malice toward this soldier. The soldier, Carr said, fired in self-defense.

Witness for the Defense

Q and A: Theodore Bliss

Note: Your role might be crucial to the outcome of this trial. Therefore, before you are called to testify, go over this Q and A sheet several times so you don't have to rely on reading it word for word. Doing this will make you a more convincing witness.

Q: Where were you about nine o'clock, Mr. Bliss, when the bells rang, indicating fire?

A: I was at home. As soon as I heard the bells, I went out and ended up following the others to the Customs House on King Street.

Q: Did you see Captain Preston at that time as you neared the Customs House?

A: Yes, I did. I saw him with the other soldiers. I asked him if the muskets were loaded.

Q: And what did he tell you?

A: He said yes, they were loaded. But when I asked if he had ordered balls placed with the powder in the barrels, he said nothing.

Q: At this time, what were the townspeople doing?

A: They—most of them, it seemed—were throwing snowballs at the soldiers. I even saw a stick about three feet long thrown and it struck a soldier.

Q: How did this soldier—the one struck by the stick—how did he react?

A: He momentarily fell but recovered quickly and then fired his gun.

Q: Did the other soldiers react to this?

A: Yes. The other soldiers then fired one after another, erratically, as if on their own. More snowballs were thrown at the soldiers.

Q: Did you hear Captain Preston, the officer in charge of these eight soldiers, give an order to fire?

A: I did not hear any order to fire by the captain. And I stood so near him that I know I would have heard him if he had given an order to fire. Besides, he was positioned between his soldiers with their loaded muskets and the townspeople, so an order to fire was very unlikely.

Q: How did Captain Preston react after the first shot?

A: I'm not certain. I did hear the word "fire" several times but I can't for sure say that the word came from the captain, or soldiers, or the people facing them. I do know that two of the townspeople were hit after the first few shots.

Q: How large was the crowd of people at this time?

A: I would guess about a hundred.

Witness for the Defense

Q and A: James Bailey

Note: Your role might be crucial to the outcome of this trial. Therefore, before you are called to testify, go over this Q and A sheet several times so you don't have to rely on reading it word for word. Doing this will make you a more convincing witness.

Q: You were on King Street that night, correct, Mr. Bailey?

A: Yes, I was.

Q: Exactly where were you standing?

A: I was with the sentry, Hugh White, near the Customs House steps. At the time, there were twenty or thirty seventeen- and eighteen-year-old boys very near us.

Q: How were the boys behaving toward the sentry guard?

A: The boys—the ones I saw—were throwing pieces of ice at him. When I went over and stood next to Private White, they stopped throwing.

Q: Did you happen to notice the sizes of the ice pieces being thrown at White?

A: Yes, I did notice. The pieces were large enough to injure a man—as big as my fist.

Q: Did White say anything to you?

A: Only that he was afraid for the boys if they did not disperse.

Q: In your deposition, you said that one of the soldiers who came over to help protect White, Private Montgomery, was knocked down with a stick or a club before discharging his gun. Is that right?

A: Yes. That's correct.

Q: Did you see who threw the stick or club that knocked Montgomery down?

A: A big tall man; he was stout.

Q: In which direction did Montgomery fire when he recovered from his fall?

A: He fired toward the mulatto—Attucks.

Q: Crispus Attucks. How close was the soldier Montgomery from Attucks when he fired?

A: About fifteen feet.

Q: Did you see any of the other townspeople fall after being fired upon?

A: No. When Montgomery fired, I stooped down as a natural instinct and when the smoke was gone from the musket powder, I saw three, including Attucks, lying dead, motionless, in the snow.

Witness for the Defense

Q and A: John Gillespie

Note: Your role might be crucial to the outcome of this trial. Therefore, before you are called to testify, go over this Q and A sheet several times so you don't have to rely on reading it word for word. Doing this will make you a more convincing witness.

Q: Mr. Gillespie, why were you out in the streets of Boston that night?

A: I was headed to a tavern to meet friends.

Q: And what did you see on your way there?

A: Several people—maybe forty or fifty—many of them with arms and weapons.

Q: Weapons?

A: Well, clubs and sticks, and some with other kinds of weapons.

Q: At this time, you heard bells ringing?

A: Yes. We took that to mean there was a fire somewhere near. But then we were told that the bells were rung to collect the mob.

Q: What did you see next?

A: A number of people ran by me with two fire engines, as if there was a fire in the town. But they were informed also that there was no fire, that the townspeople were going to fight the soldiers. So they returned to the firehouse.

Q: And all this took place before the incident on King Street? What conclusions can you yourself make from this?

A: Yes, before the incident, I conclude that the inhabitants had gathered for the purpose of executing a plan of attacking the soldiers that evening.

Witness for the Defense

Q and A: Captain Thomas Preston

Note: Even though the real Thomas Preston did not take the stand to defend his actions, your role in this simulated trial might be crucial to its eventual outcome. Therefore, before you are called to testify in your defense, go over this Q and A sheet several times so you don't have to rely on reading it word for word. Doing this will make you a more convincing witness.

Q: Captain Preston, when did you first realize that there might be trouble with the townspeople?

A: About nine o'clock, actually. Some of the guard came to me and told me that the townspeople were assembling to attack the soldiers and that the bells were ringing as a signal for that purpose, and not for a fire to be put out.

Q: And it was your responsibility to take care of the assembling crowd?

A: Yes. As I was the captain of the day, it was my duty.

Q: What did you do after being informed of a possible confrontation with the inhabitants?

A: I immediately headed for the main guard. On my way, I saw people in great commotion and heard them use the most cruel and horrid threats against the troops. Many of them—the inhabitants—seemed headed to the Customs House where the King's money is lodged.

Q: So these inhabitants of Boston gathered about the Customs House on King Street then?

A: Yes. They surrounded the sentry guard there—Private Hugh White was on duty at this time—and with clubs in their hands threatened to take vengeance on him, for what reason I'm not sure. Anyway, one townsman had told me that their intention was to carry off the soldier and probably murder him.

Q: What did you do then?

A: Well, I couldn't let that happen, so I sent perhaps a dozen soldiers to protect White at the sentry box and to also protect the King's money at the same time.

Q: Did you accompany your men to the sentry box?

A: Yes. I followed them, should they be insulted and provoked by the rioters to commit, by mistake, a rash act.

Q: So . . . you and your men felt threatened? Did the townspeople call out crude names?

A: We did feel threatened, yes. And they shouted "lobster scoundrels!," "bloody backs!," and "fire if you dare, fire, damn you!"

Q: What did you do next?

A: I went out and stood between the soldiers and the mob, talking to both, trying to persuade the mob to retire peacefully, but I had no success at this.

Q: What did the "mob" do next?

A: They advanced to the points of our bayonets, even striking the soldiers and the muzzles of their muskets. One of the mob asked me if I intended my men to fire. I said no, by no means.

Q: When did the violence start?

A: While I was speaking, one of my men received a sharp blow from a long stick, stepped back, and instantly fired his gun. From this act, a general attack was made on the soldiers with heavy clubs and snowballs, accompanied by the loud words, "damn your bloods—why don't you fire?" Instantly three or four soldiers fired.

Q: So you never ordered the soldiers under your command to fire into the mob?

A: No. Absolutely not. Minutes later when I asked the soldiers why they fired without orders, they said they heard the word "fire" and they supposed the word came from me.

Q: Who then said the word "fire"?

A: Many in the mob said "fire" over and over, but I assured my men that I gave no such order. What I did say was, "Don't fire" and "Stop your firing!"

Q: In depositions from three of your men they claimed, "We did fire on captain's orders and if we don't obey his commands we might be confined and probably shot."

A: Which is true in His Majesty's army. But, again, I never gave the order to fire.

Sequence/Procedure

CLERK OF THE COURT: All rise! *(Pause)* Give your attention to the entrance of Chief Justice Benjamin Lynde, Jr., Justice Edmund Trowbridge, Justice John Cushing, and Justice Peter Oliver, all judges of the Superior Court of Judicature, Massachusetts Bay Colony, meeting here in the Queen Street Courthouse, this day in October 1770.

(Justices enter the "courtroom" and sit.)

CHIEF JUSTICE: Please be seated, except for the prisoners and observers who will stand at the bar. The defendants will now hear the charges. Clerk, if you please.

CLERK: The defendants are charged with using force and arms to willfully and with malice and forethought murder and kill five townspeople of Boston, by firing into a crowd of gathered said townspeople on the evening of Monday, the fifth of March, 1770.

CHIEF JUSTICE: Thank you. We will now ask for the individual soldiers to plea to the charges. Each will answer for himself. Clerk, read the names.

(The Clerk then reads each name individually [Captain Thomas Preston, Corporal William Wemms, James Hartigan, William McCauley, Matthew Kilroy, William Warren, John Carrol, Hugh White, Hugh Montgomery], and in response each defendant steps forward and pleads "not guilty.")

CHIEF JUSTICE: Let it be recorded that all nine soldiers of His Majesty's army have pleaded not guilty to the charges. Therefore, this trial will now continue. Let me introduce the attorneys for both sides. First, for the King and thus the prosecution, allow me to introduce Samuel Quincy and Robert Treat Paine. *(Pause)* For the defense of the soldiers, John Adams and Josiah Quincy. *(Pause)* Hmm. Are you, sir, related to Mr. Quincy, your counterpart with the prosecution?

JOSIAH QUINCY: We are brothers, your honor.

CHIEF JUSTICE: An interesting fact, but a minor one. Let us continue. Clerk, will you swear in the jury?

CLERK: Please rise, jurors. Gentlemen of the jury, look upon the prisoners. They have pleaded not guilty and now have put themselves upon God, country, and you twelve jurors to decide their guilt. Good and true men, stand and hearken to the evidence. God send you a good deliverance. Be seated, jurors.

CHIEF JUSTICE: Mr. Quincy . . . Mr. Paine, please make an opening statement.

(Attorneys for the prosecution now give a brief opening statement from the handout.)

CHIEF JUSTICE: Thank you. Defense—an opening statement please.

(Mr. Adams and/or Mr. J. Quincy now give an opening statement from the handout.)

CHIEF JUSTICE: Thank you, gentlemen. Now will the prosecution call its first witness?

SAMUEL QUINCY: Thank you, your honor. The prosecution calls . . . *(At this point, the attorneys for the prosecution call in turn their six witnesses and, using the individual Q and A Sheets, elicit key testimony from each.)*

CHIEF JUSTICE: Does the prosecution have any more witnesses?

SAMUEL QUINCY / ROBERT PAINE: We have no further witnesses, your honor. We rest our case.

CHIEF JUSTICE: Will the defense please call its first witness?

JOHN ADAMS / JOSIAH QUINCY: We are ready, your honor to call our witnesses. We call . . . *(At this point, the defense attorneys call in turn their six witnesses and, using the individual Q and A Sheets, elicit key testimony from each.)*

CHIEF JUSTICE: Do the attorneys for the defense have any further witnesses to call?

JOHN ADAMS / JOSIAH QUINCY: No, your honor.

CHIEF JUSTICE: Excellent. We will now hear closing statements. Attorneys for the prosecution, please go first.

SAMUEL QUINCY / ROBERT PAINE: *(One or both give a closing statement based on the example in their handout.)*

CHIEF JUSTICE: Thank you. Now we will hear from the attorneys for the defense. Mr. Adams and Mr. Quincy?

JOHN ADAMS / JOSIAH QUINCY: *(One or both give a closing statement based on the example in their handout.)*

CHIEF JUSTICE: Thank you, gentlemen. It is now time for the jury to retire, discuss, and render a verdict for each individual soldier, including Captain Preston. It is up to you, gentlemen, to reject partiality and prejudice to decide the guilt or innocence of these men, soldiers of His Majesty's 29th British regiment. Clerk, lead the jurors to a room to make their decisions.

(The clerk of the court now takes the jury to a room or hallway where they will go over the key testimony that they wrote down on their individual note-taking sheets and render nine separate verdicts for each of the soldiers. The foreman should write down the nine separate verdicts on paper in preparation for reading in court. Once they return to the jury box, the Chief Justice speaks.)

CHIEF JUSTICE: The jury has returned with, I presume, verdicts. Foreman of the jury, please rise and, as the clerk reads each name charged with murder, tell the court how the jury voted, guilty or not guilty. *(Pause)*

CLERK: William Wemms.

FOREMAN: Not guilty/guilty.

CLERK: Thomas Hartigan.

FOREMAN: Not guilty/guilty.

CLERK: William McCauley.

FOREMAN: Not guilty/guilty.

CLERK: Matthew Kilroy.

FOREMAN: Not guilty/guilty.

CLERK: William Warren.

FOREMAN: Not guilty/guilty.

CLERK: Hugh White.

FOREMAN: Not guilty / guilty.

CLERK: John Carrol.

FOREMAN: Not guilty / guilty.

CLERK: Hugh Montgomery.

FOREMAN: Not guilty / guilty.

CLERK: And, last, Captain Thomas Preston.

FOREMAN: Not guilty / guilty.

CHIEF JUSTICE: The verdicts being in, I want to thank the jurors and the attorneys for their service and duty. Justice has been served here today. Case closed. Court adjourned.

Analyzing Paul Revere's Engraving

Few images in U.S. history have left such an indelible imprint on Americans as Paul Revere's engraving of the Boston Massacre of March 5, 1770. Indeed, ask any student or any adult who has some knowledge of the American Revolution to tell you about the massacre and usually the response is a description of Revere's biased version of what happened that night.

Paul Revere

Revere himself was a patriot, a member of the secretive Sons of Liberty. He was also a somewhat successful horseback messenger on the night five years later before the skirmish at Lexington Green (he was captured by a British patrol before reaching Lexington). He made his living as a silversmith "mechanic." His version of the "massacre" was not by any stretch an accurate one, but that was his intention. He falsified the event to serve a purpose: to use his talents as an engraver to advance the patriots' cause against Britain, to rally his countrymen, and to make all colonists realize that no American should be oppressed in his own country or have his city occupied by a British military force.

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Very little truth

To this purpose, Revere succeeded. The engraving was produced and pictures of it circulated just after it appeared in the *Boston Gazette* a week later. The visual of British soldiers firing into a crowd of Bostonians was seared into the memories of Revere's contemporaries. It soon became labeled "The Bloody Massacre in King Street," for propaganda purposes. It not only made Revere famous but gave Americans a powerful image of British tyranny and oppression. Revere's version of the incident needed little interpretation: who was to blame was in the details of the picture. As a historian looking for truth, Revere failed miserably. As an effective propagandist, he was a successful genius.



Propaganda perfected

To help shape public opinion, Revere chose to illuminate (with a poem at the bottom) a version that would satisfy even the most radical of American patriots (like Samuel Adams) of 1770. Some examples of his fiction (AKA propaganda) are below:

- The British soldiers are lined up and an officer is giving an order to fire, implying that the British are to blame, being the aggressor.
- The crowd—or mob, as it was described then—is not shown throwing snowballs or chunks of ice, much less wielding sticks and clubs, which young men and boys actually did that night.
- The British officer appears to be giving an order, probably to fire, which the verdict of the trial (*Rex v. Preston*) proved through testimony that he did not. In fact, Captain Preston tried to calm the explosive situation.
- A small, spotted dog and a distressed woman are in the engraving, perhaps giving Revere a chance to elicit sympathy or make subtle statements like, “colonists are worse than dogs,” or “the barbaric British shoot (or aim at) women, too.”
- A very close look reveals a sniper in a window under the “Butcher’s Hall” sign on the Customs House. No witness at the trials mentioned a sniper.
- The colonists are dressed like upper-class gentlemen, not the young dock workers and laborers that made up most of the townspeople that night.
- The British soldiers look menacing and appear lined up as if preparing for battle when, in fact, the scene that night was chaotic and the firing, according to trial testimony, was spontaneous and irregular.
- The incident took place just after nine o’clock on a moonlit night, yet in the engraving, it looks like daytime, though there is a crescent moon.
- Crispus Attucks, the first “patriot” to fall and die, is not shown with African–West Indian features.

Postscript

Revere did not actually draw the original picture that was turned into his engraving. That task was accomplished by a young artist, Henry Pelham, who later publicly accused Revere of copying the drawing he made, without Pelham’s permission. At this time, however, no copyright law existed, so what Revere allegedly did was more unethical than criminal. Since prints of Revere’s engraving were sold and widely circulated, one suspects that Pelham’s actions were more about profit than artistic credit.

Image Source: Courtesy of the Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ppmsca-01657.

Postscript

In the real trials, Captain Preston was found not guilty in his separate trial. In the other soldiers' trial, six were acquitted and two, privates Montgomery and Kilroy, were found not guilty of murder but guilty of manslaughter (killing another human without intent or forethought). The two were branded on the left thumb with an "m" for manslaughter.

It seemed appropriately natural for Samuel Adams, after seeing the masterful and propagandistic Revere engraving that seared an indelible and permanent image of the incident on King Street into colonial minds, to encourage with his words and actions other ultrapatriots to utilize the massacre's outcome and trials to advance their cause. At the time, however, few knew what that cause would be. While the first few years following the "massacre" and trials appeared relatively calm, colonial frustration, even anger, especially in Boston, lingered. The Gaspee incident, the Committees of Correspondence communication network, the Tea Act, the Boston Tea Party (also led by Adams), the Coercive Acts (which included closing Boston Harbor), followed by the so-called Intolerable Acts and Quebec Act—all kept "the pot boiling" and "the flame of liberty burning" for Americans.

The events of 1770–1775, beginning with the Boston Massacre and trials, eventually came to a crisis and forced prominent leaders of the colonies to gather in a congress to share and discuss mutual problems. As they met in Philadelphia during 1774 and 1775, Boston continued to be the center of resistance and protest. Upon hearing rumors of colonial military drilling and ammunition stockpiling outside of Boston, British soldiers, on April 18, 1775, marched toward the towns of Lexington and Concord, prepared to secure any hidden arms and arrest key rebels involved. So-called "minutemen," aroused that night by riders Paul Revere, William Dawes, and Samuel Prescott, eagerly turned out after hearing the alarm, "The regulars are coming!" The next morning, April 19, 1775, soldiers and minutemen exchanged fire on Lexington Green and the American Revolution had begun.

The direct legacy of the Boston Massacre continues to play a significant role in America's national history and even its mythology. Revere's famous engraving, as inaccurate as it is, left an indelible imprint on the minds of contemporaries and on generations since. It reveals, even today, a vivid snapshot of sacrifice. The five victims quickly became martyrs. One, Crispus Attucks, a mulatto–Native American sailor and leader that fateful night, was, to many, the first victim to die in the American War for Independence. A stretch, perhaps, but Attucks's fame was revived during the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s.

The Boston Massacre trials have a separate legacy. They have come to symbolize the protection of certain rights cherished by both British and American citizens, notably the right to a fair trial before a jury of peers. The man most responsible for securing these rights for the nine soldiers who were tried was, of course, John Adams, cousin to Samuel Adams. As attorney, John Adams took on an unpopular task in defending the accused redcoats, the result of which tarnished his own reputation as a patriot who betrayed his kind—all to uphold a principle and a strong personal conviction. Yet, Adams, who personally believed that the Boston Massacre was "the foundation of American independence," also acknowledged his own role in the trials that followed. He wrote, "[my defense of the soldiers] was one of the most gallant, generous, manly, and . . . one of the best pieces of service I ever rendered my country. . . . As the evidence was, the verdict of the jury was exactly right."



Historical Investigation Activity

Boston Massacre Trial (1770)

Bill Lacey

Focus Question

The Boston Massacre: How have depictions of this pivotal event in U.S. history textbooks changed over the last two hundred years?

Materials Needed for This Historical Investigation

- **Documents A–I**—*class set*
- **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**—*class set*

Lesson Plan

1. Getting Started

- Ask students, “What can you tell me about the Boston Massacre of March 1770?” Write down student responses on the board or screen as spokes emanating from a hub/circle, and discuss those responses. Include some discussion on what a “massacre” is and its definition. Does the killing of five people, whatever the circumstances, constitute a massacre? Why would the term be applied to the deaths of five people?
- If you did not avail yourself of the Activator’s **Option A, Phase I**, #2 and its corresponding **Debriefing** activity (**Long Debriefing** #2), implement it now. In the next few minutes, you, as the teacher, walk around the room and perform six or seven different acts, some in detail. Do this without any explanation and don’t tell students to carefully watch what you do, so that there is some spontaneity in their responses. After your two minutes of different acts, have students on a half piece of paper write down descriptions of what you did or list as many of the different activities you performed. Don’t give any help or suggestions, and discourage sharing among students. Allow one to two minutes for the writing/listing. Afterward, have a discussion, based on their responses, on eyewitness testimony. Follow this with a discussion of eyewitness testimony of on an event like the Boston Massacre where chaos, darkness, a large mob, angry shouts, and the throwing of objects characterized the incident. How reliable, then, is eyewitness testimony, especially if there is bias involved?
- Pass out the **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**. Have students write their opinions about the accuracy of eyewitness testimony for question #1. Allow 3–5 minutes and then discuss.



2. Backstory to Use as Instruction

- For years, students of U.S. history have analyzed various perspectives—both narratives and visual—of the Boston Massacre, the “incident on King Street,” which occurred on March 5, 1770. It became a crucial event on a timeline of events leading to the American Revolution.
- Most of these perspectives came from textbooks over the last two hundred years, books that from time to time cast both sides—townspeople and British soldiers—as villains and victims. Depending on when the textbooks were written, the authors’ national bias, the purpose, and the intended audience of the texts, these works rarely remained neutral about the controversial, but pivotal, event.
- What exactly happened that night—March 5, 1770—has left lingering questions about the details and just who deserves the “villain” and “victim” labels, or if those labels even fit the situation at all. What we do know is that the torrent of acts and taxes by the British crown and Parliament, seemed unfair and almost tyrannical to the Americans in the late 1760s. After over a century of neglect by the British, the American colonies learned to be passionately and stubbornly independent and made decisions based on circumstances of royal neglect and geography. They were, in short, becoming less British and more American in every way by 1770.
- Over time, these protests and boycotts over taxes and tighter control increased, especially in the seaport of Boston, the most vocal of all colonial towns and cities. British laws seemed harsher and Boston’s will to resist seemed the strongest, when Parliament decided in 1768 to send more redcoat soldiers to “protect” and control the upstart colonists. Big mistake, soldiers in Boston!
- As patriot Samuel Adams wrote at the time, “How fatal are the effects, the danger of which I long ago mentioned, of posting a standing army among a free people.” Because of those occupying British soldiers who had to be quartered in Boston—perhaps in the homes of its citizens—friction was bound to occur. Skirmishes between soldiers and especially young men of the town broke out frequently in the months and weeks before the incident of March 5, 1770. One confrontation on Friday, March 2, led to a tense weekend just before.
- On Monday, March 5, the situation reached a flash point and a violence erupted when, in front of the Customs House on King Street, a lone sentry/guard became a target for snowballs, ice chunks, oyster shells, sticks, and clubs thrown by a mob of young men and boys. As the mob yelled “lobster backs” and other taunts, the sentry called for backup and a few fellow redcoats were soon at his side.

Boston Massacre Trial: 1770

Historical Investigation Activity



- One of the thrown sticks hit a soldier and knocked his musket to the snowy ground. He quickly retrieved it, stood back up, and fired into the crowd. Within seconds, other soldiers fired; eleven colonists were hit, three expired there in the snow, another soon after, and one, Patrick Carr, died nine days later.
 - Say, “Regarding this incident—later called the Boston Massacre—some questions continue to linger. One vital question is: whom should we blame in the end—the townspeople or the soldiers—for this incident that looms so large preceding the break with Britain? Other questions surround how textbooks—specifically U.S. history textbooks—have portrayed the event. Are these works accurate? Does national bias creep into the narratives on a regular basis? Is neutrality and objectivity possible or likely? Do events and trends of the era in which the textbooks were written impact the authors as they write their histories and their interpretations?”
3. Ask students, “From this backstory and in your opinion, before we analyze several textbook narratives of the Boston Massacre, do you think the incident has been honestly and accurately portrayed without bias against the British soldiers and British policy, knowing that we won our independence from Britain years later?”
 4. Allow students five minutes to respond to this issue on their **Points to Ponder Response** Sheet. Afterward, discuss their responses briefly.
 5. From this discussion say, “Our working hypothesis is, U.S. history textbooks over the past two centuries have portrayed the Boston Massacre . . .”
 6. Pass out the package of **Documents A–I** and explain what students are to do. Ask students, “So what do the documents tell us about our textbooks’ treatment of the Boston Massacre and what can we conclude about national bias and accuracy?”
 7. Allow forty to fifty minutes for students to work (in pairs or trios perhaps), reading and analyzing the document package as they fill in the **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**. Perhaps to “prime the pump,” you or a student should read aloud the first one or two textbook narratives and discuss the gist of each. Remind students that they should analyze the documents carefully and that the documents are in chronological order except for the last document, a college textbook.

Name _____ Date: _____

Points to Ponder Response Sheet

Focus Question: The Boston Massacre: How have depictions of this pivotal event in U.S. history textbooks changed over the last two hundred years?

1. Your opinion on the general accuracy of eyewitness testimony:

2. **Documents A–I:** Look over and complete the chart below, assessing how textbooks over the last two hundred years have changed.

Document	Text/Authors	Date Published	Blame for Incident	Key words/Phrases	Context: Events/Mood of the era affecting bias, if applicable
A	<i>History of the United States of America</i> by John Prentiss	1821		Insulted and pelted by mob; soldiers dared to fire	
B	<i>School History of the United States</i> by A. B. Berard	1859		Caused constant affrays; fired upon; excited the disturbance	Division of United States over slavery—first mention of Attacks
C	<i>A Pictorial History of the United States</i> by Samuel G. Goodrich	1865			Post–Civil War years—Attacks mentioned as leader
D	<i>Young Folks' History of the United States</i> by Thomas W. Higginson	1875		Insult; threatening; control; quarrel; taunting; spoke angrily	
E	<i>History of the United States for Schools</i> by Cornish and Hughes	1936			The Great Depression
F	<i>Story of Our Land and People</i> by Moon and MacGowan	1955			Civil Rights movement just beginning, <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> (1954)

G	<i>A History of the United States</i> by Boorstin and Kelley	1996		Jeered at; pelted by snowballs; confusion; taunted	
H	<i>The American Journey</i> by Joyce O. Appleby	2000		Tense atmosphere; panicked; raging crowd nervous and confused; tragic	
I	<i>The Growth of the American Republic</i> by Morison and Commager	1950		Standing invitation to disorder; harmless snowballing; mob attack; brawl	

3. What conclusions can you draw about the Boston Massacre from these textbook accounts?

Which textbooks seem to be the most reliable and accurate in addressing and even supporting facts commonly held now to be true? Why?

4. Which textbooks use words and phrases that indicate the authors’ opinions rather than just the facts?

Why would historians or authors of history books state obvious opinion instead of relying on the readers to conclude the what, why, and who of the Boston Massacre?

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5. What is especially interesting about the conclusions drawn by the author of **Document A**?

6. The 1866 text brings the role of Crispus Attucks into some perspective. What events or trends in the era (1850–1870) might explain why Attucks was included in the textbook?

7. Events usually have a general cause, an intermediate cause, and an immediate cause. Which of these events connected to the Boston Massacre would match these labels?

- a. Boston crowd throws objects and calls soldiers insulting names.
- b. The king and Parliament decide to force colonists to pay taxes and obey laws.
- c. British soldiers are sent to occupy Boston.

General cause:

Intermediate cause:

Immediate cause:

8. Based on the documents you analyzed, write a long paragraph answering the **Focus Question** at the top of this sheet. Make at least three major points to substantiate your position.

Document A

Textbook, 1821

On the fifth of March, while some of the British troops in Boston were under arms, they were insulted and pelted by a mob having clubs, snow balls, stones, &c. The soldiers were dared to fire. One, who had received a blow fired. Six others discharged their pieces; by which three of the citizens were killed, and five wounded. The town was immediately in an uproar; and nothing but an engagement to remove the troops, saved them from falling a sacrifice to the indignation of the people.

The Captain, Preston, who commanded, and eight soldiers, were tried, and acquitted; two soldiers excepted, who were brought in guilty of manslaughter. This affray was represented in its worst light, and had no small influence in increasing the general indignation against the British.

Source: John Prentiss, *History of the United States of America*, Second edition (Keene, NH: John Prentiss, 1821).

*affray—used in this era to mean a noisy quarrel; brawl

Document B

Textbook, 1855

In Boston, the presence of the British soldiers caused constant affrays. In one of these, the soldiers fired upon the populace and killed three men: one of these men was the negro who had excited the disturbance. This deed was called the Boston Massacre, and caused high indignation among the people: they were, however, much in fault, having aroused the attack which ended so fatally.

Source: A. B. Berard, *School History of the United States* (Philadelphia: H Cowperthwait & Co., 1859).

Document C

Textbook, 1866

The British troops remained in Boston, and seemed determined to remain there, notwithstanding the known disgust of the citizens at the idea of having a foreign force stationed among them. There was, it is true, for some time, no open quarrel, but the citizens and soldiers were continually insulting each other. . . .

The people were now more angry than ever. Between seven and eight o'clock in the evening of March 5, a mob collected, armed with clubs, and proceeded towards King street, now State street, crying, "Let us drive out these rascals—they have no business here—drive them out! Drive out the rascals!" Meanwhile, there was a cry that the town had been set on fire.

The bells rang, and the crowd became greater still, and more noisy. They rushed furiously to the custom-house, and seeing an English sentinel there, shouted, "Kill him! Kill him!"—at the same time attacking him with pieces of ice and whatever they could find. The sentinel called for the rest of the guard, and a few of them came forward.

The guard marched out with their guns loaded. They met a great crowd of people, led on by an immense giant of a negro, named Attucks. They brandished their clubs and pelted the soldiers with snow-balls, abusing them with harsh words, shouting in their faces and even challenging them to fire. They even rushed upon the very points of their bayonets.

The soldiers stood awhile like statues, the bells ringing and the mob pressing upon them. At last, Attucks, with twelve of his men began to strike upon their muskets with clubs, and to cry out to the mob, "Don't be afraid—they dare not fire—the miserable cowards—kill the rascals—crush them under foot!"

Attucks now lifted his arm against the captain of the guard, and seized hold of a bayonet. "They dare not fire!" shouted the mob again. At this instant the firing began. Attucks dropped dead, immediately. The soldiers fired twice more, and two more were killed and others wounded.

The whole town was now in an uproar. . . .

There is no doubt that in most of these transactions the mob were in the wrong; the source of the mischief lay, however, in the fact that the British government insisted upon keeping an army among a people outraged by a series of unjust and irritating laws. This conduct showed that the king and parliament of Great Britain intended to compel the colonists to submission by force of arms, and not to govern them by fair and proper legislation.

Source: Samuel Griswold Goodrich, *A Pictorial History of the United States With Notices of Other Portions of America North and South* (Philadelphia: J. H. Butler & Co., 1865).

Document D

Textbook, 1875

But the British troops in Boston very soon got into more serious trouble. The young men of the town used often to insult the red-coated soldiers, calling them "lobsters," "bloody-backs," and such names, and threatening to drive them from the town. On the other hand, the soldiers used to be allowed, by their officers, to stray about the town in the evening, carrying their guns, and without any proper authority to control them. One moonlight evening (March 5, 1770), some soldiers were going about in this way, and got into a quarrel, as they often did. As they were taunting the people, and calling, "Where are they? Where are the cowards?" some boys began to snowball them, crying, "Down with them! Drive them to their barracks!" The noise increased, until the guard was called out, commanded by Captain Preston. He came roughly through the crowd, with six or eight men, whom he drew up in line. Many of the people fell back: but about a dozen men, some of whom had sticks, advanced to meet the soldiers, and spoke angrily to them; and some, it was said, struck at the muskets with sticks. The noise increased every moment, till at last Captain Preston gave the word, "Fire!" . . . This affair made an intense excitement; and Captain Preston was tried for murder. But some of the leading lawyers of Boston, who were also eminent patriots, defended him, on the ground that he had done his duty as an officer; and he was acquitted.

Source: Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Young Folks' History of the United States* (Boston: Rand, Avery, & Co., 1875).

Document E

Textbook, 1936

The king and his followers were determined to enforce the unpopular laws. In order to show their determination in the matter, troops were sent to Boston to help enforce the trade laws. These troops were looked upon by the colonists as intruders. There were many street quarrels between soldiers and citizens. The soldiers gambled, held horse races, and indulged in other sports, all of which annoyed the church-going Bostonians. Finally the fatal clash came. On March 5, 1770, as the result of a street quarrel the soldiers fired into a crowd of men and boys who had been calling them names and pelting them with snowballs. This event, afterwards known as the "Boston Massacre," stirred the whole country against Great Britain and helped to fan the fire of hatred.

Source: Herbert R. Cornish and Thomas H. Hughes, *History of the United States for Schools* (New York: Hinds, Hayden and Eldridge, 1936), as excerpted in Kyle Ward, *History in the Making* (New York: The New Press, 2006).

Document F

Textbook, 1955

The Boston Massacre created bitter feelings. Just before the repeal of the Townshend duties, a serious clash occurred between British troops and a group of colonists. It happened in Boston where feelings between Red Coats and townspeople were growing.

One cold March day in 1770 some carefree boys had a snowball fight in Boston. On their way home they saw a soldier walking back and forth on guard duty. They promptly began to throw snowballs at him. To them it was just fun, but the soldier became frightened. He called for help. Soldiers rushed to aid him.

The noise brought men and boys running from all directions. Both sides hurled insults back and forth. Suddenly an excited young officer yelled a command. The soldiers thought he said "Fire!" They fired their muskets. When the smoke lifted, eleven of the crowd lay dead or wounded in the snow.

Source: Glenn W. Moon and John H. MacGowan, *Story of Our Land and People* (New York: Henry Holt, 1955) as excerpted in Kyle Ward, *Not Written in Stone* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

Document G

Textbook, 1996

One of the ablest organizers of colonial rebellion was Sam Adams of Boston. . . . He was clever at creating a sensation out of every incident and blaming it all on the British. Two regiments of British troops sent to Boston in 1768 had been taunted for months by people there. Then late one March night in 1770 a small group of redcoats was jeered at and pelted with snowballs by a few restless unemployed workers. In their confusion, the British troops fired and killed five colonists. The first to die was Crispus Attucks, a black man of giant stature who was the leader of the throng.

Sam Adams advertised this event as the “Boston Massacre” where bloodthirsty British soldiers slaughtered innocent Americans.

Source: Daniel J. Boorstin, Brooks M. Kelley, and Ruth F. Boorstin, *A History of the United States* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996) as excerpted in Kyle Ward, *History in the Making* (New York: The New Press, 2006).

Document H

Textbook, 2000

Throughout the next year, the tense atmosphere between the redcoats and the Boston colonists grew. On March 5, 1770, the tension finally reached a peak.

That day a fight broke out between townspeople and soldiers. This spurred the crowd on. While some British officers tried to calm the crowd, a man shouted, "We did not send for you. We will not have you here. We'll get rid of you, we'll drive you away!"

The angry townspeople moved on through the streets, picking up sticks, stones, shovels, and clubs—any weapon they could find. They pushed forward toward the customhouse on King Street.

As the crowd approached, the sentry on duty panicked and called for help. Seven soldiers stationed nearby rushed into the street to confront the raging crowd. The crowd responded by throwing stones, snowballs, oyster shells, and pieces of wood at the soldiers. "Fire, you bloody-backs, you lobsters," the crowd screamed. "You dare not fire."

After one of the soldiers was knocked down, the nervous and confused redcoats did fire. Seven shots rang out, killing five colonists. One Bostonian cried out: "Are the inhabitants to be knocked down in the streets? Are they to be murdered in this manner?" . . . The colonists called the tragic encounter the Boston Massacre.

Source: Joyce Oldham Appleby, et al., *The American Journey: Building A Nation* (New York: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2000).

Document I

College Textbook, 1950

The authors of this popular college textbook, *The Growth of the American Republic*, were at the time two of the most prestigious historians in America. The author of this Activator actually used their two-volume history as a student in the late 1950s.

The presence of the red-coats in the old Puritan town was a standing invitation for disorder, and the natural antagonism between citizens and soldiery flared up after eighteen months of resentment, in the so-called Boston Massacre of 5 March 1770. A harmless snowballing of the red-coats degenerated into something like a mob attack. Someone gave the order to fire, and four Bostonians lay dead in the snow. It is wrong to dignify this brawl with the name 'massacre,' but radicals such as Adams and Warren seized upon it for purposes of propaganda.

Source: Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic*, Vol. I (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950).

Constitutional Convention 1787



Bill Lacey

Lesson Plan

Overview

With the nation's survival on the line, for some seventeen weeks, awesome responsibilities were placed on the shoulders of men like George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, and James Madison, who were part of a few of the delegates from the newly-minted states sent to Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. They came to repair the weak Articles of Confederation but chose instead to throw out the Articles and draft—in secret—our revered Constitution, a document encased in a framework that has endured for over 230 years. Their brilliance is self-evident: The U.S. Constitution features a republican government and is the cornerstone of our legal system and the foundation of our nation's laws.

Your students will convert brief **Backstory Narratives** of problems that the framers faced into one-page **Picture Play** scripts. They will then perform their masterpieces. As they do, students will become aware of the complex and touchy issues, different points of view, and the compromises struck by the delegates.

Setup

1. Duplication

- **Background Essay**—*class set*
- **Postscript**—*class set*
- **Picture Play Guidelines**—*class set or one/two copies per group*
- **Backstory #1: Secrecy Rules the Day** and **Picture Play Script: Secrecy Rules the Day**—*class set*
- **Backstory Sheets #2–9**—*copies of each for each of the groups assigned one of these numbers*

2. Schematic, props, costumes:

If you need to have students visualize it, display the **Schematic** after you've studied it thoroughly. No major classroom configurations are required. Just make sure there is a screen in front and all students are facing it as the scripts are read and pictures for each script are displayed on this screen. No fancy props are needed, nor costumes. What is needed:

- a. a screen
- b. a way to display the pictures on a screen
- c. a podium in the rear of the classroom with a small light for script reading

- d. a microphone or other voice-amplifying technology to project voices of each group as they gather in the rear of the room around the podium and dramatically read their scripts
 - e. appropriate music to play softly as the scripts are read
3. **Roles:** In this Activator, assigning all roles by chance seems to work best. The only caveat: make sure at least one reliable student is placed in each of the groups. All delegates are considered equals while they create and read their scripts. Likewise, there is no narrator role but there is a need for an interviewer in **Frozen Moment: The Presidential Inauguration of George Washington**.

Directions

1. Hand out the **Background Essay** either the day before class as homework or pass it out now. If you have given the essay as homework, conduct an informal discussion of its main points. If you are passing it out now, read the essay aloud to the students as they read with you. You could also establish groups of four (perhaps the same groups that will be used later) and give each group one copy to read and discuss.

You have at least two options for conducting the actual Activator:

Option A

1. Put students into groups of four. If you have more than thirty-two students, place a fifth student in each group.
2. As a warm-up activity on compromise, a hallmark of how decisions were made at the Convention in 1787, try this little gem as a motivator. Tell each group to take thirty seconds to individually write down what each would like to have as a school mascot. The current mascot is not a candidate; it must be a new one. After thirty seconds, tell students that they—everyone in the group—must agree on a choice in one minute. During this sixty seconds, have them debate, give in, or push for their choice, but, in the end, they must compromise on one new mascot for the school. Discussions in the group should include reasons why this or that mascot should be selected. Afterward, discuss the dynamics of compromise in their groups. Also, point out that compromises—“quid pro quo”—were necessary in 1787 to reach decisions and that the final draft of the Constitution has been called “a bundle of compromises.”
3. Hand out **Backstory Sheets #2–9** to the eight groups. Assign each group a picture to go with their **Backstory**, or, alternatively, you can have groups find their own pictures. (Pictures can be found in books or by searching the internet.) Tell students that each group is responsible for reading one **Backstory** and writing a one-page script based on the backstory topic and the picture.



Teaching tip

Google Images is a great tool for finding appropriate pictures to display.

4. Pass out to each student (or two to each group) the **Picture Play Guidelines** and go over sections I and II, elaborating as needed.
5. Pass out **Backstory #1: Secrecy Rules the Day** to each student and have yourself and several students read it aloud to the entire class.
6. Next, pass out the **Picture Play Script: Secrecy Rules the Day** to each student and tell students to assume roles of delegates 1–4 and read the script aloud in each group.
7. Once the script is read, tell students that this script on secrecy at the Convention serves as a template of what they will write—perhaps their versions will be shorter and have a bit less detail.
8. Allow 40–45 minutes for groups to read their **Backstory** sheet and then write a one-page script based on that particular topic. A second day will probably be needed for the presentations.
9. Make sure the screen is down, the podium is in the rear of the room, and some sort of voice amplification system and light are ready to be used at the podium. Classroom lights should be off or dimmed significantly.
10. Have groups (#2–9) one at a time perform their scripts. You may perhaps amplify and clarify data after each group has presented.
11. After all eight groups have presented their scripts, pass out to the most dramatic students (you need five) the **Frozen Moment** activity on **The Presidential Inauguration of George Washington**. Display a picture of the inauguration and have the five students come forward and assign each of them a role.
12. “Freeze” the most prominent figures into positions similar to those in the picture: Washington, Chief Justice Livingston, a senator, a congressman, and a cabinet member. You, then, as interviewer/narrator, set the stage by announcing the time, place, and date: “It is noon, April 30, 1789, as we stand here on the Federal Building balcony, Manhattan Island, New York City. Let’s start our interviews with key persons at this occasion.” Walk up and touch the congressman to “unfreeze” him and ask him the interviewer’s questions, to which the congressman will answer from the five bulleted statements. Afterward, touch the congressman to “refreeze” him.
13. Touch and interview the senator in the same manner. Continue with the narration, then touch and “unfreeze” Livingston and Washington to finish with the dialogue/oath. Next, “refreeze” them.

14. "Unfreeze" the cabinet member, and interview him about the meaning of the inauguration while he answers from the five bulleted statements.

Option B

1. Skip the warm-up activity from **Option A**.
2. Hand out **Backstory #1: Secrecy Rules the Day** and read it aloud, using several student readers.
3. Hand out the **Picture Play Script: Secrecy Rules the Day** and have four dramatic readers come to the front and, in front of a picture displayed on the screen that resembles four delegates discussing secrecy, dramatically read the script.
4. Afterward, make comments about how the reading on secrecy became a one-page script dramatizing the data.
5. Divide the class into groups of four and pass out one **Backstory** (#2–9) to each group. Tell students to read the **Backstory** first. Also, pass out **Picture Play Guidelines** and go over exactly what the groups are to do: Follow the instructions in sections I and II and create a one-page script with four actors dramatizing the **Backstory**.
6. Allow ten minutes for the reading and thirty to forty minutes for groups to complete a one-page script.
7. Decide how many scripts you want performed—time may dictate this decision.

Debriefing

Decide whether you wish to use a short or long debriefing. Here are possible ways to make meaningful what happened during this Activator on the Constitutional Convention of 1787:

Short Debriefing

1. Pass out the **Postscript**, or give a brief lecture on its contents.
2. Ask students what they learned and how they felt as they played delegates in this momentous conclave.
3. Consider having students write a Learning Log entry as part of this debriefing.

Long Debriefing

Use one or more of the following debriefing activities:

Constitutional Convention: 1787

Lesson Plan

1. Pass out the **Postscript**, or give a lecture on its contents.
2. **Discuss:** From the backstories, which issues emerge as being the most contentious among the delegates? Why?
3. **Discuss:** Secrecy during the convention was supported almost to a person. What if, today, a convention of America's most prominent men and women met in secret which make changes in our government's structure and philosophy? Which groups or individuals in our society would accept this secrecy without complaint, and which groups would complain and work to keep the doors of the convention open and help the media have full access to the convention's discussions and decisions?
4. **Discuss:** As far as most observers knew, the purpose of the convention was to revise the Articles, not trash it and replace it with a new document that outlines a strong central government as its core. In the end, why would so many people object to a strong central government?
5. **Discuss:** Compromise! Compromise! Compromise! The three most important guidelines for achieving results at the Constitutional Convention—"quid pro quo." The Constitution as it appeared in September 17, 1787, was, as one put it, "a bundle of compromises." What were the major compromises worked out and why were these vital?
6. **Ask students:** *Do you recall the last time you compromised? What happened, and did it have a quid pro quo—this for that—ending? What did the other person and you get?*
7. Many delegates held out support—and their vote—until a bill of rights, defining and specifying individual safeguards against tyranny, was attached. In 1791, the Bill of Rights (the first ten Amendments) was indeed added. *Ask students:* "Which of the first ten Amendments is the most important as a safeguard against tyranny? Why?"
8. **Ask students:** *What was the prevailing view among the delegates of the presidency, the executive branch? Would the framers, in your opinion, be shocked about the changes over the years that transformed the executive branch (specifically, the president) into the leader of the free world and the most powerful person on earth? Why?*
9. **Ask students:** *What is interesting about the order of the three branches in Articles I–III according to the delegates priorities? Someone remarked later that the Supreme Court (in Article III) is the only original contribution by the framers in the Constitution. Explain.*
10. **Discuss:** Taverns and inns were a vital part of life throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of U.S. history. Lots of important

decisions were made while imbibing mugs of rum in front of a roaring fire (but perhaps not in the humid September of 1787). Why would such places, known for conviviality, but bad food and crowded beds in cramped overnight facilities, be known as a convention annex?

11. If you have time, show a snippet from one of the recommendations in the **Visual history** section.
12. Consider having students write a Learning Log entry to reflect on their participation in this Constitutional Convention Activator.

Resources to consult

Beeman, Richard. *Plain, Honest Men: The Making of the American Constitution*. New York: Random House, 2009.

Berkin, Carol. *A Brilliant Solution: Inventing the American Constitution*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2002.

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Cooke, Alistair. *Alistair Cooke's America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

Ellis, Joseph J. *The Quartet: Orchestrating the Second American Revolution, 1783–1789*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015.

Maier, Pauline. *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787–1788*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011.

Steward, David O. *Madison's Gift: Five Partnerships That Built America*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015.

———. *The Summer of 1787: The Men Who Invented the Constitution*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007.

Wood, Gordon S. *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Visual history

There are many available versions of the Constitutional Convention in visual formats. *Alistair Cooke's America* television series from the mid-1970s had one episode, "Inventing a Nation," that is both entertaining and easy to follow for students. Cooke, a British journalist, was erudite, humorous, and a fine writer, as well as the narrator of the entire *America* series. Not fully recommended is a film on the Constitutional Convention, *A More Perfect Union* (2011), starring Craig Wesson as Madison. It is entirely from Madison's point of view. An excerpt or two could be productive.

Background Essay

Place: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Time: Summer 1787

The morning after

When the British surrendered in October 1781, the United States, in effect, became an independent country. Two years later, the Treaty of Paris made it official. During the war, most of the states had written constitutions that outlined key principles for the creation of an orderly, if not democratic, society. Most of the men who guided these efforts were conservative and wealthy. Moving forward, the state governments established and issued their own money, taxed their citizens, competed with each other in trade, and a few had overlapping claims to territory beyond the Appalachian Mountains. As a result, by the 1780s, the new states behaved less like thirteen states in a union and more like thirteen scattered and separate nations. At this time, one might refer to himself as a Virginian or Marylander before calling himself an American.

The Articles

In effect since 1781, the Articles of Confederation established the first government for the United States. It had a one-house legislature and each state had one vote in that congress. But this body was authorized to exert its power only in areas that the individual states could not satisfy alone—such as declaring war, conducting foreign policy, and establishing a postal system. Denied to the national Congress was the power to collect taxes to support itself. (Taxes were a fearful thing to revolutionaries who felt excessively abused by king and Parliament before the revolution.) The national Congress was also denied the power to enforce its own laws and treaties. This lack of power reflected the fear and evils of a strong central government like the one Americans had just broken away from.

Achievements under the Articles

To be sure, there were some important achievements made while the Articles were in effect. After all, the congress did wage war successfully and won major concessions during the peace treaty meetings in Paris. One other achievement, the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, established a policy for the organization and settlement of the vast region west of the Appalachian Mountains. The congress also dealt with slavery by reaching a compromise: slavery was allowed in territories south of the Ohio Valley and the transportation of slaves was prohibited north of the Ohio River. The ordinance also established rules for admitting future states in this territory “on an equal footing with the original states.”

Debts and other issues

But the congress that showed wisdom in passing the Northwest Ordinance, in waging a war, and in negotiating peace, was stymied by a host of serious problems in the 1780s. Perhaps the most complex problem was the enormous debt incurred from the war. The congress had borrowed nearly sixty million dollars from American investors and European governments. Congress simply lacked the cash to pay its debts. Since Congress could not by law collect taxes from the states, the only method to solve the debt problem was to print money in massive amounts, which deflated its value. Hard money, gold and silver coins, was in short supply. As a result, Americans lost confidence in paper money and the government officials who issued it. In these years, other problems loomed. Except for the peace treaty, several embarrassing and humiliating diplomatic failures were experienced, and the delegates to the congress stopped attending sessions, resulting in a low morale and a near paralysis of legislative action. All these

problems directly affected the lives of America's common people in the 1780s.

A new threat

One of these "common" Americans dissatisfied with his new government's money policy was a farmer from Massachusetts, Daniel Shays. Shays had been a captain in the Continental Army. Even in the best of times, people like Shays had very little money to spend and to meet their needs as productive farmers. He and others like him often lost their property to the courts as a way to pay off debts. If they had no property, the penalty might be debtor's prison. To make this dire situation known, Shays, in August and September of 1786, organized farmers in armed protest.

Shays's Rebellion

With muskets in hand, Shays and his band of angry, determined farmers demanded that the courts cease imprisoning more and more farmers for debt. A series of early successes, including closing down a courthouse guilty of seizing property from poor farmers, emboldened Shays's contingent to gather in Springfield, Massachusetts, where the state Supreme Court met and where the state's arsenal was located. The act itself threw fear of open rebellion into the hearts of New Englanders. Calling Shays and his men traitors, state officials, funded by the fearful well-to-do, induced nearly five thousand state militiamen under General Benjamin Lincoln to march on the rebels and put down "Shays's Rebellion." In January 1787, the rebel army advanced on the Springfield arsenal but were met by the superior firepower of the assembled militia. Four of Shays's farmers were killed. The rebellion soon dissolved.

Adrift

Shays's Rebellion was one of several events that exposed glaring weaknesses in the national government. Shays's revolt was an example of civil strife, even anarchy, and with it came a widespread sense of fear from all social classes. At the same time, any cooperation among the states, forged in the 1700s, had vanished. Now it appeared that the nation was a mere "league of friendship,"

a Disunited States of America on the "verge of destruction," five years after a triumphant war for independence. If the new nation were a ship, it seemed rudderless, adrift on a stormy sea.

"An assembly of demigods"

Grave as circumstances appeared to be, there were those who wished to do something about it. Many leaders in the states now called for a convention where delegates could discuss and seek ways to make the Articles' government work. These men chose to gather in the spring of 1787 in Philadelphia, where the Declaration of Independence had been created and signed. It was also where George Washington was given command of the Continental Army in 1776. Most important now, however, were the delegates who traveled to the "city of brotherly love." Almost to a man they were the most distinguished, experienced, and brilliant men in America at the time: Washington, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, Roger Sherman, Benjamin Franklin, Gouverneur Morris, James Wilson, John Dickinson, George Mason, to name the most famous. Notables not in attendance were Thomas Jefferson (who was in France), Samuel Adams, and Patrick Henry, the latter refused to attend, worried that the convention might lean toward a monarchy: "I smelled a rat in Philadelphia," he wrote later. Jefferson, from across a wide ocean, upon hearing who was in attendance, called the gathering "an assembly of demigods." By May 25, enough delegates had arrived in Philadelphia to assemble for meetings, so on that day in 1787, in the same building where the Declaration was signed, the Constitutional Convention commenced.

Philadelphia

It's no wonder that the city of Philadelphia was chosen to host the May 1787 Convention to revise the Articles of Confederation. It was perhaps unlike any other city in America at this time. Philadelphia was statistically America's largest city with more than forty thousand inhabitants, most of whom displayed an obvious sense of community pride and smug superiority. Many of the gathering delegates themselves believed Philadelphia, the

"city of brotherly love," to be the cultural and intellectual capital of the new nation, in spite of, or because of, the Quaker imprint over the previous century. At the same time, the city seemed to be enlightened, elegant, wealthy, and moral. Philadelphians had a reputation to uphold, and they made every effort to exhibit their superiority in every way over New York and Boston. In fact, the city could boast of its beauty, refinements, and innovations: well lit, paved, and patrolled streets; bookshops; large, fancy stores, displaying feminine goods rivaling those found in Paris or London; and well-designed residential squares.

The city's pleasures

It was also a city of scientific and intellectual societies, first-rate newspapers, a flourishing center for the publishing industry and for artists, state-of-the-art fire and police departments, and very accommodating inns and boarding house. When

the delegates weren't sleeping, dressing in their living quarters, or debating in convention sessions nearby, these men were in the city's popular taverns, chatting and imbibing Philadelphia's finest assortment of wines, ales, beers, and rum. Foremost among these taverns were the Indian Queen and the City Tavern, both of which also served as inns for overnight travelers.

Summer 1787

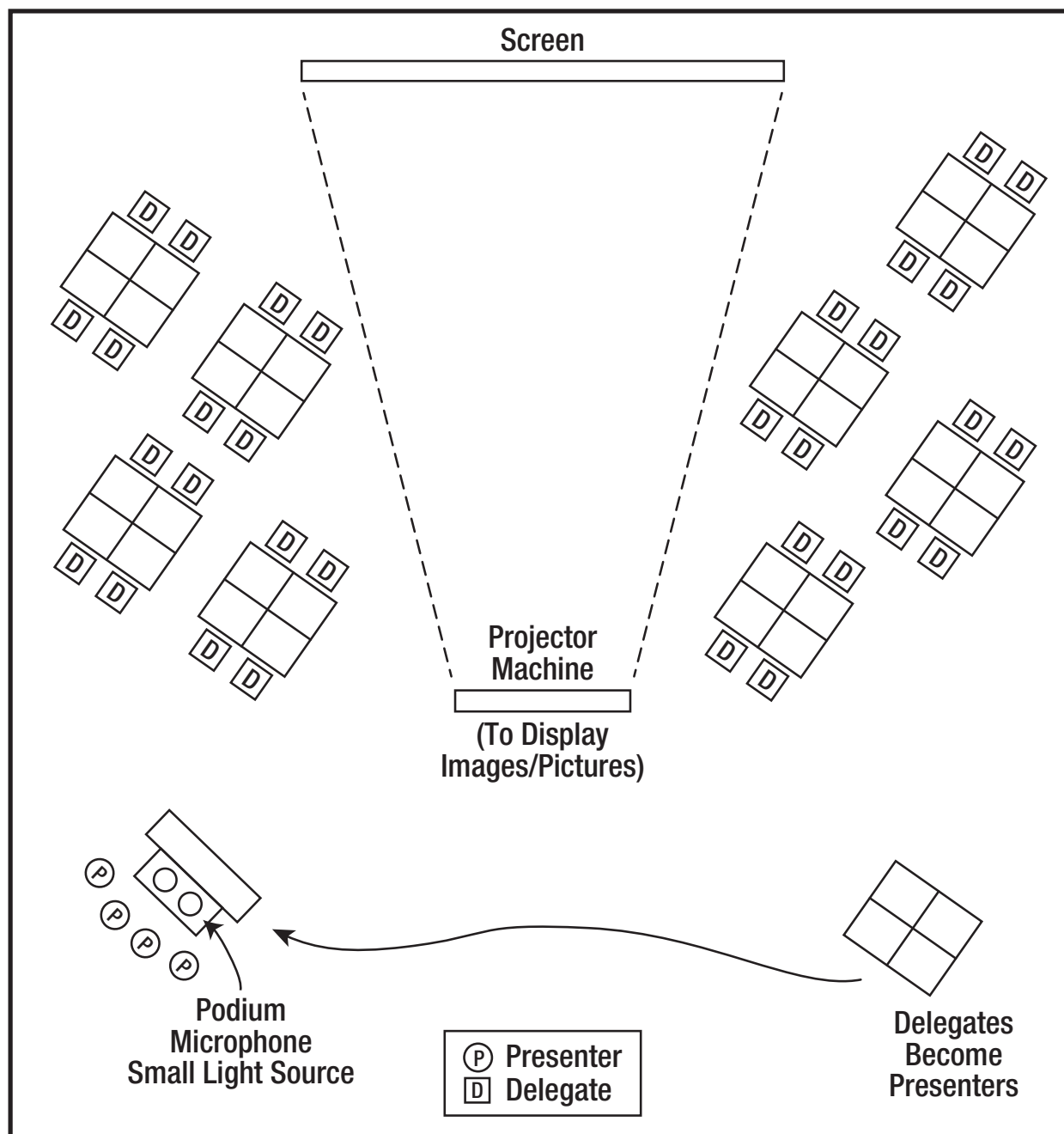
Now it is summer 1787, and outside the State House building the city's inhabitants prepare for temperatures in the high nineties and low hundreds. Bugs and mosquitoes flit through the fetid air. Cobblestone streets near the building have been spread with sand to muffle the noise of wagon wheels and horseshoes. Inside, the first session of the Convention is about to begin. The pounding of the gavel is heard, bringing the delegates to order.



Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States

Image source: *The Indian Reporter*. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Schematic



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Suggestions

- **Backstories #1–9 are Picture Plays. The Inauguration of George Washington** is a **Frozen Moment**. All require pictures on the background screen.
- Dramatic reading of the script will make the activity more lively and effective.
- No costumes or props are necessary.

Characters needed

- All student participants are convention delegates.
- For **The Inauguration of George Washington**, one interviewer/narrator and five students are necessary.

Picture Play Guidelines

After you have received the picture and the **Backstory** . . .

I. Answer these questions:

1. How many people are in the picture?
2. What are they doing?
3. Where are they?
4. What circumstances brought them to this place in time?
5. What might have happened just before the picture was painted or sketched?
6. What probable dilemma or situation do they face?
7. What might have happened just after the picture was painted or sketched?

II. Write one page of dialogue (a script) between people in the picture, based on data in the backstory and your imagination of what these people might have said. The script should include:

1. A name or delegate number for everyone who has a speaking part. (If it is a solitary picture, the individual's thoughts should be conveyed.)
2. A beginning, middle, and end, or reasonable facsimile
3. A tie-in with the historical era, dilemma, or situation (refer to issues, personalities, idioms, the era's peculiarities, etc.—but don't overdo these)
4. Periodic questions to advance the dialogue and general answers/discussion
5. A point of view: decide which delegates will have stronger opinions and make sure they consistently advance these views
6. A location where the dialogue between delegates is taking place (Are they sitting in the convention, a tavern, walking Philadelphia streets, watching George Washington taking the oath?)
7. A conversation between your characters (avoid formal language)
8. A clever but appropriate title to cap off your literary work

Backstory #1

Secrecy Rules the Day

One of the first items of business we addressed at the convention, even before we selected General Washington as our presiding officer, was to accept the decision of the Rules Committee on secrecy. We discussed these rules in some detail and then we agreed to their recommendations.

First, no one was allowed to keep a private journal of what we said and did. Nothing spoken could be printed or published or communicated. We all believed that secrecy within those walls was essential, even though we knew the public was anxious about the state of affairs and wanted solutions to our vexing problems.

Why secrecy? To begin with, we wanted to be certain foreign officials did not know about our candid discussions regarding our problems. Second, there was the danger that newspapers might print the names of “patriots” like us who voted to overthrow the government, which might be one option we considered. Third, we all represented our state legislatures, so imagine returning home after the Convention and facing the very people who sent us here to Philadelphia to repair the Articles! Clearly, most of us worried about our personal reputations and our future political aspirations.

We all sensed that without locked doors, closed shutters, posted sentries outside the State House, and rules to ensure we kept our traps shut even while downing a mug or two at the Indian Queen, there would be no honest discussions on the issues. Thus, there would be no ultimate solutions to the nation’s crises.

Not everyone supported our secrecy rule. Across the pond in France, Mr. Jefferson, we were told, found out and sent letters to Mr. Madison, stating that this was an “abominable precedent, tying up [our] tongues.” Of course, notes of the proceedings were written down with the delegates’ approval by the indefatigable Mr. Madison who, while writing furiously, amazingly still took part in the discussions. In his case, we delegates agreed that his journal would not be published or released to the public for fifty years. Only then, when we’re all gone, will the next generations know how and why we decided to take the steps we did to change the government.

The secrecy decision was made that first day, May 25, Monday. It was a certainty that this action will produce a “hullabaloo” among the newspapers and the people once word got out. We tried to be careful, even in letters to our families. Once, when General Washington was given a copy of that day’s resolutions found on the convention floor, he scolded us, saying, “Be more careful, lest our transactions get into the News Papers and disturb the public repose by premature speculations.”

Picture Play Script

Secrecy Rules the Day



DELEGATE 1: As a delegate to this convention, I worry about the public outside getting misinformation.

DELEGATE 3: Misinformation?

DELEGATE 1: Aye. About the subject of debates and our opinions as we reach decisions here.

DELEGATE 2: I agree. What we say in heated discussions inside these walls of the Assembly Room should be kept secret. How else can we express our feelings, thoughts, and opinions about what we want to do with the Articles of Confederation, or create a new document to govern us, if we have to worry about what the public hears and thinks?

DELEGATE 3: Aye. We were selected to represent our state—and its peoples. That means we make decisions for them. They don't need to know the process of reaching those decisions or the nature of the discussions leading up to decisions.

DELEGATE 2: The Rules Committee recommended that we work in secret, and the delegates pledge to keep private what we say, write, and do.

DELEGATE 4: I disagree with all of you. This secrecy business is an abominable and dangerous precedent to have as a rule. Look at what secrecy has produced: locked doors to this convention, closed shutters, and guards—guards!—outside keeping people out. Once information gets out, our citizens will be shocked—maybe angry—about this secrecy rule.

DELEGATE 1: Dangerous as it might seem, we have to have secrecy. This convention is not a cabal. This is not a secret plot, or conspiracy. We are a large committee with good intentions. Sir, we are re-inventing a nation here.

DELEGATE 3: Aye. Whatever we do with the Articles document, we need to discuss it in private so we don't, as General Washington has warned us, "disturb the public repose."

Image source: Courtesy of the British Library, HMNTS 010349.f.17

DELEGATE 4: And they won't be disturbed when they finally discover how we made decisions?

DELEGATE 3: I believe we're taking the correct approach. Certainly, a reason for me to support secrecy is the danger of any news of our proceedings leaking out to foreign officials. Any frank discussion on our nation's weaknesses or problems might give them an upper hand in negotiations.

DELEGATE 4: Still no reason for secrecy.

DELEGATE 2: Well, I believe there is also the danger of the newspapers printing half-truths and rumors as accurate information.

DELEGATE 1: And imagine seeing in print our names associated with overthrowing the Articles of government . . . if that's what we actually decide to do here.

DELEGATE 3: These factors for secrecy you've mentioned are important, but for me the number one reason for secrecy is to maintain my reputation. I may seek higher office. Imagine returning home after this convention and facing the very people who sent me to Philadelphia to repair the Articles but instead helped stage a coup d'état, a bloodless overthrowing of our government.

DELEGATE 1: Aye. Clearly, we are putting our political futures on the line.

DELEGATE 3: Indeed we are. So gentlemen, let's be discreet and careful. Someone in this assemblage has already left some secret notes on the floor. The general has chastised us for this.

DELEGATE 1: And let's watch our loose tongues, too, especially when tossing down some mugs of rum at the Indian Queen Tavern.

DELEGATE 2: Good advice. But I've been thinking about the need for someone to write down for posterity how the work we do here came into being. The Convention needs a note taker.

DELEGATE 3: Aye. Here's my suggestion: I prefer to have young Jimmy Madison of Virginia take down the only notes of our proceedings.

DELEGATE 4: I'm still against this secrecy rule, but let's compromise. Let's agree to have Mr. Madison's notes, or journal, of the proceedings eventually published so the public is informed, at least at some point in time.

DELEGATE 1: Published . . . but not for several years. Maybe thirty to fifty years from now.

DELEGATE 4: A half-century?

DELEGATE 1: Aye.

DELEGATE 2: Aye.

DELEGATE 3: Aye, but by then I'll be dust. So perhaps it won't matter.

DELEGATE 4: Once it gets out it will matter, especially if we fail.

Backstory #2

Revising the Articles

It seemed that the sole purpose of calling us to Philadelphia in May 1787 was to revise, or repair, the defects of the Articles of Confederation, the framework of the government of this nation since 1781. Most of us agreed that the document was as weak as the system of government it directed. Goodness, Mercy!

Events leading up to the Convention demonstrated just how badly we needed to change the Articles. The new nation was a “newcomer in the world . . . a fragile, uncertain experiment.” We had debts to foreign powers and the threat of social and political anarchy loomed. Social revolution and civil strife were ready to erupt. Uprisings among our own farmers in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts—Shays’s Rebellion—in 1786 shocked Americans and made us, as leaders, fearful of another revolution. To put down any disorder would take cooperation among the states and, after the peace with Britain, there was little harmony in our “union.” We were competing and bickering like children. A sense of doom prevailed. Was the new nation on the verge of destruction?

Real or not, this fear of collapse brought us delegates to Philadelphia. As stated, our express purpose was to revise the Articles of Confederation. What we did was stage a bloodless coup d’état. In fact, this “assembly of demigods” behind locked doors secretly trashed the Articles and we invented a nation, to be ruled by a new document, the Constitution.

Most who attended had some core beliefs about a new government. We desired a representative government, and we preferred reform over another revolution. These beliefs and our recent experience under the Articles led us to steer away from repeating mistakes. General Washington, who rarely spoke, gave us a pep talk when he said, “Let us raise a standard to which the wise and the honest can repair; the event is in the hand of God.” This said, in the first days of the Convention, Virginia governor Edmund Randolph rose and recited the flaws and failings of the Confederation government: the threat of anarchy, unpaid debts to foreign nations, treaty violations, havoc over paper money, the inability of Congress to raise taxes or an army, conflicting trade laws among the states, no real executive power, no system of federal courts, and real power vested in the individual states—all thirteen of them! In effect, there was no system to deal with so many problems and situations that called for action by a national government. Since the states—each one of them—were sovereign under the Articles, it was difficult to accomplish anything or please anybody!

So Governor Randolph rose and requested a bold resolution—that a national government be established consisting of executive, judicial, and legislative branches, with a separation of powers and a checks and balance system, so no one branch has too much power. Some doubted we could do this, replace the Articles. A certain recklessness seemed to possess us all. With not much debate and little opposing arguments, the resolution to start anew passed. Unbelievably, by dumping the Articles, we had “crossed the Rubicon.”

Backstory #3

Representation in Congress

Right from that first day, we all knew a fundamental issue to be discussed was, what would be the basis of representation in Congress? After Governor Randolph proposed his bold resolution “that a national government ought to be established consisting of a supreme Legislative, Executive, and Judiciary” we knew lots of feathers would be ruffled in the next few weeks. This clearly meant the Articles would be tossed aside in the trashcan of history and a new document would be written.

The Virginia Plan, as it came to be called (since its author was Virginian James Madison), called for a national, central government with power over the states, a worrisome idea to many indeed. Part and parcel of “the plan” was the idea that the legislative branch, a one-house congress based on population would be the strongest and most powerful in the new government. It would be, as one wrote, “the depository of the supreme will of the Society.”

Though we discussed the executive branch for days, we soon dived into the question of the legislature. This topic was the great issue of the convention. This took up the next six to seven weeks, and the debates revolved around proportional representation or state representation in Congress based on population and how to elect members to this congress. To get the necessary votes in the Convention, there was a lot of caucusing, deal-making, and compromises. After all, we delegates were mostly lawyers and politicians, and we know about compromising: “this for that” or quid pro quo.

Essentially, it was a battle between the larger states and smaller states. The larger ones, like Virginia, New York, and Pennsylvania wanted proportional representation. Simply put, if a state had more citizens within its borders, it should have more voices and votes in the new legislature. Counter to the Virginia Plan was the New Jersey Plan: a unicameral (one-house) congress with one vote for each state. This plan expressed the sentiments of many delegates from small, northern states like Vermont, Delaware, New Hampshire, Maryland, and, of course, New Jersey.

Just when it looked like the two factions would pack up and go home, the wise and insightful Roger Sherman from Connecticut and a few New York delegates came up with what became the Connecticut Compromise. This idea was absolutely brilliant and shows how determined the Convention’s delegates were to hammer out an acceptable proposal. Essentially, it laid out a plan where there was a two-house congress (bi-cameral): one house based on population of a state and the other house based on equal representation (two per state). This “other house” would be the Senate, of course, and would be made up of an elite group of bright, wise, experienced, and educated men—a “senate of sages,” someone said later.

Opponents of the Senate, the upper house, worried that it would resemble the British House of Lords. Whatever merit this argument has, the smaller states would be fairly and equally represented in this new Senate. As an enticement to the larger states for their support of the Senate, it was decided to give the lower house, where they would dominate, the power to originate all bills of appropriation—the “power of the purse.”

Before the final vote, we still had some other issues to deal with regarding the legislature, but basically our compromise looked workable and it proved to be the most important proposal resolved on the Convention’s agenda. So important, that it has been called the Great Compromise.

Backstory #4

Counting Enslaved People and the Slave Trade

Perhaps no problem was more vexing to all of us in Philadelphia—outside representation in Congress—than the struggle over slavery, as it existed, and the slave trade. Aye, slavery was like a thorn in our backside, always there to be a source of extreme irritation and contention between states.

Some of our northern delegates believed slavery would eventually tear our nation apart. One delegate called it the “nefarious institution.” To our southern delegates, slavery was a necessity, a vital part of their plantation economy. Others in the middle felt that “slavery in time will not be a speck in our country.” So we really could not avoid discussing it as we sorted out our ideas on representation in Congress. Both issues were connected.

How do we count our slaves with respect to taxes and state representation in Congress? They are human beings, are they not? We keep importing them from Africa, do we not? The slave trade flourished still in the 1780s! Obviously, the South, particularly South Carolina and Georgia, wanted to continue the trade. Delegates from these two states continued to use large numbers of slaves in their rice paddies and malarial swamps. Their delegates protest mightily about any talk of ending the trade. Many Northerners wanted slavery and the trade abolished. On this issue of representation and taxes, northerners thought slaves should be counted the same as whites for purposes of taxes, but not for representation. Southerners naturally argued for the opposite, there being so many slaves in their region, perhaps up to thirty percent of the population.

The hidden agenda for the South in fighting to get the slaves counted as full people was really about maintaining power in the congress. Though the slaves could not vote—a concept few of us could accept, wherever we’re from—most of the delegates felt they should be accounted for in some way.

It was our visionary delegate, James Madison, who provided the answer once more. His proposal called for a compromise—yet again—that settled, at least for a time, the thorny issue. Few of us realized, as Jimmy pointed out, that the Confederation government over the past several years operated on the idea of what was called the three-fifths formula. That means counting each slave as three-fifths of “all other persons” for the population base in the congress. So, this is what we voted on and it passed. Slaves were to be counted as three-fifths of a person for representation and for taxes in each state.

This issue also paved the way for a solution to the slave trade. With so many opposed to this unsavory business and very few—notably delegates from South Carolina and Georgia—in favor of it, we compromised again. We voted that “the importation of such persons” would stop twenty years from now (1787). So no more Africans would be brought into the United States after 1808.

I’m pleased to say that compromise once more ruled the day at the Convention. Few here were completely satisfied, but compromise helped us move on to deal with other issues in this new Constitution.

Backstory #5

The Executive Branch

Once we resolved the issue of representation in Congress and the slave trade, we delegates focused on other necessary items in the Convention, perhaps the executive branch being the most pressing. Under the Confederation government, the states dominated our “union,” and there was no single authority figure. Only the leader of the one-house congress could claim the title, “president.”

Many had concerns when the discussions began on the executive branch of the new government as proposed by Mr. Madison in his Virginia Plan. Among the delegates, there was a fear of executive abuse, tyranny, much like the colonies suffered under King George. Yet, many were pledged to support a “vigorous executive.” Further, would this “president” be popularly elected, or chosen by a national legislature or state legislatures? Or would the executive actually be a committee?

Whichever choice we decided to approve in this Convention, all of us foresaw the Congress dominating the government. The executive, in our minds, would have a supportive role, to be, if you will, an errand boy for Congress. We even discussed the idea of a committee or council making up the executive. We worried about putting power into the hands of one person; a single executive might try to imitate the British model across the pond, and that could lead to monarchy!

So how would the executive be chosen? Madison’s plan called for his election by a national legislature. Our delegates, who were throughout the Convention ardent nationalists, wanted to erode the power of the states, and they advocated the election of an executive by the people.

Division over this issue caused us to table any further debate and decision on the executive. We took up the issue again when our patience had returned. Slowly, the Convention began to conceptualize the executive branch. Many voiced concern over a popularly elected person. Could the average citizen be relied on to make a wise and informed decision? Would there be a need to control any bad outcomes, or mistakes, in a democratic election?

Despite fears of tyranny and the potential domination of candidates from larger states, in the end, we delegates decided to put our confidence in the people’s judgment and to give the chosen a term of four years (with reelection possible). We also decided to give the executive enough power to balance out the other two branches of government. We believed it was vital to build into our framework a checks and balance system and a separation of powers. Our executive would be able to veto legislation, appoint judges and justices, initiate treaties (but not approve them), command and lead the armed forces, and appoint ambassadors.

Certainly, these were far-reaching powers over the president of the Confederation Congress. This fear of tyranny and the domination by larger states forced us to insert into the Constitution an electoral college. This was our safeguard, our hedge against a danger of democracy. It seemed to us that any dangers of electing the wrong man could be blunted by an electoral college, whereby electors from each state gather separately and miles apart to vote for candidates, though the same person may not be elected by the people. We also gave Congress the power to try and remove a president from office. This was another example of a checks and balance system.

Once we settled on the general outline of the executive, as an afterthought we invented the office of the vice-president. Since he would have no official duties, we made him president of the Senate to break all tie votes. In case of the president's death, he would assume the title and duties of the executive.

Near the end of our discussions on this subject, we decided on what to call the executive. He would be called "president" and "Mr. President," and he would be addressed in person as "Your Excellency."

Backstory #6

Adjustments and Signing

After debate and voting on issues of representation in the congress, the slave trade, and the executive branch, we took up the judicial branch—the courts system—and prepared to sign the final ink-ready document. The Confederation document gave us no model for a court system, so we started afresh. We debated how we all envisioned the courts. The way the Articles in the new Constitution are numbered does reflect our priorities and the hierarchy among the three branches. Among the three, the legislative branch sits as Article I, the most important in our minds. The executive branch is Article II, and the judicial branch is Article III. That's the order of importance.

Anyway, we took up the court system in September after weeks of wrestling with the other issues in the framework of our new government. We then created in Article III a judiciary with a Supreme Court and a system of inferior courts. These courts were to have authority over all cases involving the Constitution and the nation's laws and treaties.

In those last few days before we signed the document, we debated and voted on Article IV, rules governing relations between the federal government and the states; we indirectly upheld slavery and laws governing the return of fugitives from their owners; and we authorized the quelling of domestic outbreaks if the states requested federal assistance. We established an amendment process in Article V, and we honored debts incurred by the Confederation government in Article VI, as well as making U.S. laws and treaties the "supreme law of the land." The last Article, number VII, we specified would take the vote of nine of the thirteen states to approve or ratify the Constitution before it became established.

Once this was all approved in the Convention, we prepared to sign the Constitution, which had been grammatically "cleaned up" by the Committee of Style and its chief writer, Gouverneur Morris. In the final version, the Committee removed any evidence of the struggles, disagreements, and confusion that we delegates experienced in those sixteen weeks. A preamble was added at the front to tell the reader of the document's purpose. Aye, the smooth, opening phrases of the preamble read like poetry: "We the People . . ."

There were, of course, lots of last minute proposals by bickering delegates to add, change, or delete items in the Constitution. Keep in mind, we had a roomful of lawyers. Some proposals seemed valid. George Mason of Virginia protested the absence of a bill of rights. He received little support, the vote being nay. Perhaps these guarantees would come later. One proposal, to override a presidential veto by three-fourths vote of Congress, was changed to two-thirds vote.

Despite these last-minute proposals and changes—and there were several—a few delegates refused to support the final version and chose not to sign. Mason for one. Virginia governor Edmund Randolph, the man who earlier in May presented the Virginia Plan, worried about a national Congress with so much power. He didn't sign either.

In the end, however, all twelve states voted "aye." Rhode Island, of course, remained a no-show throughout. Just before the signing, Pennsylvania delegate Benjamin Franklin agreed to support and sign it, although he believed the document had faults but was "near perfect" and necessary.

So after sixteen long weeks of heat, flies, and vigorous debate, we were ready to sign. Major Jackson, the Convention's secretary, placed the Constitution on the table in front of General Washington, the presiding officer. He signed first. Then the delegates from each state beginning with New Hampshire came forward to affix their signatures. Altogether, eleven states signed, and Colonel Alexander Hamilton of New York put his signature, making it twelve. As delegates from the last state to sign, Georgia, came to the table, Dr. Franklin, our Convention's sage, who sat near the front, was heard to say to a few other delegates close by that the sun design on the back of the General's chair was a rising and not a setting sun. We all took this pithy Franklin quote to mean that our nation's destiny was on the rise. We dissolved the Convention after Dr. Franklin provided a perfect coda to the occasion.

Backstory #7

Tavern Toasts to the Constitution

'Tis time to celebrate our new Constitution and all the hard work and energy we delegates invested. Where better to raise a few glasses or mugs to the document than in a local tavern? Taverns in our era were very important to us Americans. At hospitable taverns, travelers and overnight guests were offered a place to sleep, reasonably good food at low cost, refreshing drinks, and, most important, lively conversations. Tavern patrons could discuss political issues of the day, play cards or checkers, or just relax in convivial situations.

For us Convention delegates during those sixteen weeks from May 25 to September 17, 1787, relief from the pressures of heated debates was vital for our well-being and endurance. Throughout that late spring and summer, we met almost continuously in the Assembly Room of the Pennsylvania State House, the same spot where eleven years before—1776—many of us came to discuss independence and sign the Declaration. Because of the secrecy rule decided upon the first day back in May, the room was sealed off—doors locked, windows shuttered, and guards at each exit. That made the Assembly Room a “furnace,” nearly intolerable for humans, let alone lawyers. Needless to say, we relished the evenings spent in the friendly atmosphere of the local taverns.

Our favorite locals were the Indian Queen and the City Tavern, two Philadelphia establishments close by that offered a hearty meal and lodging and sparked spirited conversations. Much of the caucusing, compromising, and lining up votes for proposals occurred after work in these informal settings.

It was in such a setting—the City Tavern—that most of us assembled in the afternoon and early evening of September 17, to celebrate with a hearty meal of giant cornmeal-fried oysters or braised rabbit and several rounds of beer, ale, hard cider, or rum. Each round had a few toasts attached to it.

As you all know, toasting—the raising (and perhaps clinking) of glasses or mugs and drinking in honor of a person, people, achievement, or event—is a very old tradition, dating back to the ancient Greeks. That particular evening, most of us were joyful, or at least relieved, over wrapping up the work on our new Constitution. So we were in the mood for several toasts to what we—as delegates—had accomplished. Toasts for the evening were plentiful and the drinks flowed easily through the night. The occasion was live-spirited and full of heartfelt fellowship. Those present, perhaps uplifted by the free-flowing alcohol they imbibed, offered toasts like these:

- “I propose a toast to General George Washington, whose . . .”
- “I propose a toast to the new Constitution whose words . . .”
- “I propose a toast to the spirit of compromise. Without it we . . .”
- “I propose a toast to our new nation under the Constitution.”
- “I propose a toast to Dr. Benjamin Franklin, the oldest delegate, whose wisdom . . . and who supports the Constitution despite . . .”

- "I propose a toast to James Madison, a true visionary, the architect of the Constitution, who will years from now be called the Father of the Constitution."
- "I propose a toast to a successful campaign to secure ratification of the Constitution in the state legislatures."

After the evening of brotherhood and toasts, we "took a cordial leave of each other, returned to our lodgings and began the next morning's journey to our home states whereupon we resolve to secure the Constitution's ratification in at least nine state legislatures. This will be a daunting task, given the division of thought the Constitution has provoked."

Backstory #8

The Battle for Ratification

Once we had returned to our home states after sixteen weeks at the Philadelphia Convention, we prepared to meet head-on the important task of securing the Constitution's ratification in the states' legislatures. Our "bundle of compromises" would mean nothing if we failed at getting approval by the states. Unless nine of the thirteen states ratified the new document, all those four months of hard work would be for naught—wasted!

We knew that in some states the debates would be divisive and the vote close, especially in the larger states. General Washington, in a somber mood, wrote to a friend, "The Constitution is now before the Judgment Seat." He was correct. Supporters of the Constitution knew fierce battles lie ahead in New York and Virginia, in particular. Without these two bellwether states, the Constitution was certain to fail. Likewise, those men who worked so mightily for independence years before, notably activists like Patrick Henry and Sam Adams, opposed the new government and formed anti-ratification resistance. Conversely, the smaller states and farmers and working people in all states supported the Constitution.

Yet, once the ratification forces united, the battles made victory nearly certain for the Constitution's supporters. Using the era's available means of communication, newspapers primarily, the nationalist perspective flooded America's towns and cities. One such collection of persuasive essays in support of the Constitution's ratification came from the pens of John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison. Writing under the "Publius" pseudonym, these brilliant men defended the Constitution in specific detail. Eventually named *The Federalist Papers*, these essays helped turn public opinion in New York against the anti-federalists, who, despite their criticism of the new government plan, were less organized, more inconsistent, and seemed to be continually on the defensive about their obvious support of the "retired" Articles of Confederation, which they agreed needed some repair. One argument the anti-federalists could agree on was the lack of a bill of rights.

In this charged atmosphere, the state legislatures began to line up in support of the Constitution. Delaware was first to ratify in December 1787, followed shortly by Pennsylvania. Then New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, and South Carolina ratified. In June 1788, New Hampshire became the ninth state to approve of the Constitution, making the new government officially the law of the land. When Virginia voted 89 to 79 in support and New York, thanks to the efforts of Hamilton and *The Federalist Papers*, voted 30 to 27, eleven states joined the new union. North Carolina followed in August and stubborn Rhode Island, a no-show in Philadelphia in 1787, finally ratified the Constitution in March 1790.

The ratification victory was not an easy one. Perhaps it would be appropriate at this juncture to summarize the arguments for and against ratification that echoed through the halls and chambers of the state legislatures these past few months.

Ratification Rap

The Convention's over
The end is in sight
But need to win key states
In the ratification fight.
The Nationalists exhort:
"Federal law is a must."
If men were angels
There'd always be trust
But angels they're not
So we need national laws
It's the nature of man
To be ripe with some flaws.
To convince those who matter
Was up to three guys
To publish their thoughts
To gain more allies.
Using a pseudonym
In the 'papers of their day
"Publius" was Madison,
Hamilton, and Jay.
These essays were persuasive,
Making it clear:
National government's power
We need not fear.
Readers were told
A republic's for us
Liberty will flourish
So wrote, "I, Publius."
In two big states
The vote was close
Imagine the worst:
The Union . . . adios!
Ratification did win
We didn't disband
The Constitution is now
The law of the land.

Backstory #9

Presidential Inauguration of George Washington

It was no surprise to any of us involved in creating the new government under the Constitution—or to any average citizen in America—that the first president chosen by the electors under the new system was General Washington. After all, he was the hero of the revolution, the presiding officer at the Convention, and, most importantly, he was arguably the most admired and charismatic man in the country, Dr. Franklin perhaps being the exception. Many believe the Constitutional Convention succeeded because he gave the Convention legitimacy.

Clearly, “this great and good man” deserved to be our first executive under the Constitution, elected as he was unanimously. It was a sign of everyone’s affection for this truly historic figure. He was always courteous, and he exuded dignity and calm. Elected in February 1789, and certified in the House of Representatives in April, with no campaigning, no speeches, and no promises, the reluctant Virginian made it clear that he preferred to retire from public duty and return to farm life at Mt. Vernon.

His reluctance was only part of the story. The general, at age fifty-seven, was in ill health, dogged by constant bouts of rheumatism and by the agony of wearing primitive dentures that nagged him day and night. The comforts of riding around his vast estate on his horses, Magnolia, Blueskin, and Nelson, and warming his feet at the hearth’s fires, made rejecting his country’s call a strong option. It was not to be. The general accepted “the appointment,” borrowed money, and headed for the nation’s current capital, New York City, for his inauguration.

Along the route he traveled, large crowds greeted him and his entourage. He seemed to lead countless parades and listened to every town’s welcoming speeches and tributes. Meanwhile, in New York, we in Congress took time out of our already busy schedules to plan the inauguration festivities for Thursday, April 30, in front of Federal Hall on Manhattan Island. On that day, April 30, 1789, church bells in the early hours signaled the history about to unfold. Martial music set a majestic tone; military banners and uniformed soldiers seemed to be everywhere. It was a glorious start for our republic.

Before a large crowd of several hundred spectators, including friends and our familiar faces from the Convention, the general stood before the chancellor of the State of New York, Robert Livingston, and repeated, with his hand on a Bible, the Constitutional oath, adding “So Help Me God” at the end. Livingston then said, “It is done,” before facing the festive throng and adding, “Long live George Washington, President of the United States!”

Following the oath and the cheering, the new president, visibly shaking and with a voice we thought uncharacteristically unsteady, delivered a brief inaugural speech. In it, he admitted his anxiety, minimized his talents in dealing with the challenges he and the nation faced, and spoke of his dependence on God (“the Great Author”). He ended his address by saying he would take no payment for his service as president, rejecting an opportunity to relieve his personal debt as a cash-poor, land-rich planter.

We were all disappointed that the scheduled inaugural ball was postponed. The president’s lady, Martha Washington, had not yet arrived in New York, making it awkward to hold the event on this glorious day. But this postponement allowed the president to retire to his temporary home at 10 p.m. after a long day.

A Frozen Moment



The Presidential Inauguration of George Washington

TIME: Around Noon

DATE: April 30, 1789

PLACE: The Federal Building Balcony, Manhattan Island, New York City

CHARACTERS: Washington, Livingston, Balcony Officials 1, 2, and 3

INSTRUCTIONS: Select students to role-play those individuals to be interviewed. Have students "get into" the picture on the screen and then "FREEZE" them in those positions until you tap them and "UNFREEZE" them. After each interview, another tap "FREEZES" them again. The questions and answers below form the interviews to take place.

QUESTION 1

INTERVIEWER: So here we are at the inauguration of our first president under the constitution. Let's get some background from some important officials before the general takes the oath of office.

(Unfreeze Official #1)

"Congressman, is this a surprise to be witnessing the inauguration of George Washington as the first president of the United States?"

- "No, not at all. General Washington is the most popular figure in America, next to Dr. Franklin."
- "He was the presiding officer at the Constitutional Convention, chosen because of who he is."
- "He was the military genius and hero of our revolution."
- "He is a unifying force in our nation, the only man indispensable to our past, present, and future."
- "He is truly a historic and great man, as evidenced by his being elected unanimously as president."

(Refreeze Official #1)

QUESTION 2

(Unfreeze Official #2)

INTERVIEWER: "Senator, we all think the general was reluctant to take on another civic burden, wanting instead to retire to Mt. Vernon to supervise the work on his vast plantation. Sir, why do you suppose he changed his mind about retirement?"

- "I think you ought to ask the general yourself. But most of us believe it was a duty to his country."
- "Few have credentials to lead us during these difficult, transitional times. His election and assumption of duties as president will unify us as no one else could, and he knows this."
- "He could have said no instead of accepting 'the appointment,' as the general calls our country's highest honor."
- "Also, his health, never good these past few years, could have been given as a valid reason to bow out. Constant dental pain, rheumatism, and, at age fifty-seven, just plain old age have plagued him."

(Refreeze Official #2)

INTERVIEWER: "General, soon-to-be-President, Washington has made his way out onto the balcony. The noisy crowd has quieted down, unlike the massive crowds that greeted him everywhere as he traveled to New York City from Mt. Vernon in Virginia. Countless parades and tributes made that journey a busy and hectic one. Now the moment has arrived for him to take his Constitutional oath."

(Unfreeze Chancellor of New York Robert Livingston and General Washington)

"Mr. Livingston, you may proceed with the oath."

LIVINGSTON: "Are you ready, General?"

WASHINGTON: "I am read to proceed."

LIVINGSTON: "Repeat after me, sir. I, George Washington, do solemnly swear . . .

WASHINGTON: "I, George Washington, do solemnly swear . . .

LIVINGSTON: . . . that I will faithfully execute . . .

WASHINGTON: . . . that I will faithfully execute . . .

LIVINGSTON: . . . the office of president of the United States . . .

WASHINGTON: . . . the office of president of the United States . . .

LIVINGSTON: . . . and will to the best of my abilities . . .

WASHINGTON: . . . and will to the best of my abilities . . .

LIVINGSTON: . . . preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States."

WASHINGTON: . . . preserve, protect, and defend the constitution of the United States. So help me God."

LIVINGSTON: "Congratulations, Mr. President."

(Loud Cheering. Refreeze Livingston and Washington.)

QUESTION 3

(Unfreeze Official #3)

INTERVIEWER: “Sir, as a member of the new executive cabinet, we would be in your debt if you would share with us some perspectives on the meaning of today’s historic ceremony. What does this inaugural mean?”

- “When the new president finished his oath and Mr. Livingston told the large assemblage, ‘Long live George Washington, president of the United States!’ I, like most standing on the balcony or in the crowd below the Federal Building, felt enormous pride.”
- “Though the president and the new government under the brilliantly conceived Constitution face complex and difficult problems, he is the best man to meet these head on. His and our destinies are the same.”
- “We were impressed with his just-delivered inaugural address, especially that he will accept no payment for his services, despite the fact that he is land-rich but cash-poor—like so many Southern planters. He had to borrow money to pay for this trip to New York!”
- “He is a man of selfless and quiet dignity, unafraid of leading us into a new era with the new Constitution. His shaky voice and trembling hands that those of us saw during his address belie his obvious resolve and courage in accepting his countrymen’s honor.”
- “Unfortunately, the president’s celebration today will be cut short. This evening’s inaugural ball—incidentally, the general was quite a good dancer in his day—will be postponed because his wife, Martha Washington, has not yet arrived in New York. The president will no doubt retire early tonight and ready himself for his first full day in office tomorrow.”

Postscript

Two stories have been told over the past two centuries that involve elder statesman Benjamin Franklin. He had just signed the Constitution on September 17, 1787, when the sage noticed a shining half-sun on the back of George Washington's chair. Immediately, someone asked Franklin about the sun—was it a rising or setting sun? Franklin replied that it was a rising sun. Once outside on the Philadelphia street, a woman approached him and, assuming that he and the other delegates after seventeen weeks of secret sessions must have made some alterations in the Articles document, asked Franklin:

Woman: Well, Doctor, what do we have, a republic or a monarchy?

Franklin: A republic, madam, if you can keep it.

A rising sun would mean that the United States was destined to rise to be a great nation and lead the community of nations. The retort about “a republic, if you can keep it” certainly expresses Franklin's faith in a republican form of government. As a matter of fact, the republic has been kept for over 230 years but with great triumph, tragedies, and a few major blunders along the way. The United States, few would disagree, has taken on its share of responsibility and leadership in international affairs, especially since 1900. Some today—often politicians seeking office—would argue that the United States is a product of exceptionalism, the result of a providential blessing, the Constitution, geography, renewal through waves of immigration, and vigorous creative and resilient people working, often selflessly, to make a better life for themselves. Along the way, Americans have helped their neighbors and others in the world who are not so fortunate: victims of war, natural disaster, or oppressive governments.

Has the Constitution, adopted in 1789, played a role in this perceived “exceptionalism”? Some would say yes, based on the fact that the document has endured longer than any other written constitution in the world, and with the adoption of the sacred Bill of Rights, has made the United States a beacon of freedom with safeguards of individual liberties. Those seeking freedom and opportunity have been attracted to the United States since the Constitution was adopted.

The framers, our Founding Fathers, weren't sure about the Constitution's longevity or durability. They did create it with some flexibility and elasticity with words that left future generations to interpret the meanings and scope of the principles, and make it fit their times. One can only imagine how James Madison, the Father of the Constitution, would interpret the Second Amendment—the right to bear arms—knowing that the musket of his day had been replaced in the late twentieth century by an AK-47, or how he would react to issues, such as abortion and same-sex marriage, that have divided the nation.

After the signing, the next battle was getting the state legislatures to ratify the Constitution. By 1788, after rancorous debate in especially Virginia and New York, every state voted (except Rhode Island, which ratified it in 1790) to ratify the Constitution. Soon after, in 1789, George Washington was appropriately elected and inaugurated as the first president under the Constitution. His two terms (1789–1797) were predictably bumpy for the young nation, especially with the rise of political parties,

a result of widely divergent views on government by two of Washington's cabinet secretaries, Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton.

Despite the contentious political battles of the 1790s, the nation under Washington and John Adams (1797–1801) avoided major international crises and entangling alliances. The nineteenth century would bring western expansion, several wars—one that pitted American against American, and another against Native Americans—as well as massive immigration, and the Industrial Revolution. The Constitution served as a guideline, a structure, through all these epic events and movements, and gave authority to the courts, especially the Supreme Court, to interpret diverse but vital cases by ruling on their constitutionality.

The twentieth century, in which the United States took a leading role internationally, also saw many issues resolved by the Constitution, judgments made by the courts on just about every possible aspect of American life, involving individuals, groups, races, economic booms and busts, recessions, assassinations, and even one major depression. Through them all, the Constitution of 1787, with amendments, has provided and will continue to provide a framework for generations of Americans past, present, and future to navigate the nation through calm and stormy seas alike.



Historical Investigation Activity

Constitutional Convention (1787)

Bill Lacey

Focus Question

Shays's Rebellion: Was it really a dangerous threat to the young republic in 1786–1787?

Materials Needed for This Historical Investigation

- **Documents A–F**—class set
- **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**—class set

Lesson Plan

1. Getting Started

- Whether you did the Activator on the Constitutional Convention or not, review or find out what your students know or remember about the Articles of Confederation, Shays's Rebellion, and what possible impact the rebellion had on the delegates ready to travel to Philadelphia to revise the Articles of Confederation. Have students put their knowledge onto a scratch piece of paper in this format:

What I know about the Articles of Confederation, the first framework of government for the United States	Shays's Rebellion: who, what, where, and why?	Probable impact of Shays's Rebellion on Convention delegates

Duplicate this format on the board and have a discussion as you fill it in with student responses.

2. Backstory to Use as Instruction

- Most people who have taken a U.S. history class have probably heard of Shays's Rebellion but couldn't place it on a timeline or describe its significance. Shays's Rebellion was, in fact, a domestic insurrection of dissatisfied, angry, and debt-ridden farmers in the 1780s led by Daniel Shays, a former captain in the Continental Army, and Daniel Gray. These



rebels took up arms against the state of Massachusetts to fight unfair taxes levied by the state legislature.

- The rebellion, which lasted about six months, exposed the inability of the state government to deal with not only an insurrection but a financial crisis as well. The common people in Massachusetts, especially, were hit hard by the economic woes in the first few years after the War for Independence. In these hard times, judges in local courthouses authorized seizures of and foreclosures on rural properties owned by farmers in payment for debts they had incurred, and for back taxes. Most of the farmers, victims of poor harvests and low prices for their crops, couldn't pay their debts and soon, under these legal rules, lost their farms. In many cases, the farmers' inability to pay their debts—after they lost their farms—resulted in debtor's prison.
- One of these desperate farmers, Daniel Shays, helped organize an army of other disgruntled farmers and began to take dramatic action. Perhaps anywhere from several hundred up to two thousand joined Shays with a goal of trying to make their lives better by battling the farm foreclosures and oppressive taxes and by forcing the legislature to issue cheap paper money. When the state government remained unresponsive, the rebel army marched on and surrounded local courthouses and demanded that judges stop deciding these cases that ended so harshly for the poor farmers.
- From August 1786 through February 1787, the ranks of Shays's army increased and took action that produced some early successes. Word of the rebellion spread, even to Philadelphia, where the Confederation government resided. Nearly powerless to act, the congress, which could not raise an army, basically left Massachusetts to fund a militia and put down the rebellion on its own. A large contingent of Massachusetts's militiamen were then called out and led by Generals Benjamin Lincoln and William Shepard.
- Finally, the rebellion reached a desperate level when the "Shaysites" marched on the state's arsenal at Springfield to seize its guns and ammunition. Eventually four thousand to five thousand Massachusetts's troops under General Lincoln met the rebels and easily crushed them, but not before three farmer-soldiers were killed by artillery fire, which was intended only to scare, not kill, the rebels. Shays himself escaped capture by fleeing to Vermont. He was later pardoned by John Hancock in 1788.
- At the time, few knew exactly what impact Shays's Rebellion, as it was soon called, might have as the delegates to the Constitutional Convention began assembling in Philadelphia later that spring of 1787. What the rebellion did do was give a sense of urgency to the fifty-five men, many of whom were concerned, perhaps alarmed, at the farmers' uprising. At the same time, many thought that the Convention's



delegates needed to make some changes in the Articles, perhaps to strengthen its powers to put down future insurrections like Shays's Rebellion.

3. Ask students, "From this backstory (and perhaps the Activator you have experienced on the Constitutional Convention), before we examine the documents on Shays's Rebellion, do you think you could offer an opinion on a few pivotal questions like:
 - Were officials in Massachusetts and Philadelphia exaggerating the farmers' threat when, in fact, General Lincoln's militiamen far outnumbered the Shaysites by almost three to one?
 - Was there ever any hope that the Shaysites could beat the militiamen and thus reverse policies against the state's desperate farmers?
 - And, last, was Shays's Rebellion a real and dangerous threat to the young republic—enough to make an impact on the Constitutional Convention's delegates?"
4. Pass out the **Points to Ponder Response Sheet** and have students answer #1. Have students write for a few minutes and then poll them with a show of hands to give you a working hypothesis. Discuss responses if you have time. Say, "Our working hypothesis, before we look at the documents, is that Shays's Rebellion . . ."
5. Pass out the package of **Documents A–F**. Say, "What do the documents tell us, and what can we conclude? That's our task." It may be wise to read the first one or two documents aloud and go over what they say. Remind students to work through the documents carefully, and tell them there is no order or sequence to the documents. Perhaps the first task might be to have students put the documents in somewhat chronological order. Once done, release students (in pairs or small groups) to work.
6. Allow 40–45 minutes for students to work by discussing and then filling out the **Points to Ponder Response Sheet**.
7. Then discuss thoroughly and have students write their answers to the **Focus Question** (#8) as closure. Have volunteers read their answers to conclude the activity.

Name _____ Date: _____

Points to Ponder Response Sheet

Focus Question: Shays's Rebellion: Was it really a dangerous threat to the young republic in 1786–1787?

1. I think Shays's Rebellion was / was not a danger and a threat to the young republic for these reasons:

2. **Document A:** What three words would you use to describe Washington's initial reaction to Shays's Rebellion in 1786?

What seemed to concern him the most? Why?

3. **Document B:** From Washington's words, what can you deduce about his opinion of the Articles of Confederation government?

Does Washington seem shocked and surprised? What specific words does he use to describe his reaction?

4. **Document C:** What words and phrases does Jefferson use that indicate his opinion of Shays's Rebellion is nearly opposite to Washington's?

How consistent is he in all three letters? Explain.

How does he compare the rebellion in Massachusetts to the French Revolution's early stages, which he was witnessing in Paris?

5. **Document D:** How would you describe General Lincoln's attitude toward Shays and his rebel army of farmers?

What is he asking Shays's officers to do, and what does he promise these men?

6. **Document E:** What does Shays's reply to Lincoln show about the reasons they (the Shaysites) rebelled in the first place?

7. **Document F:** Besides a summary of events that constitute Shays's Rebellion, what kind of opinions does Governor Bowdoin have about the rebellion? Is he a reliable source? Why or why not?

Does his account reflect in any way the time in which it was written (note the last paragraph)? Why would this be important?

8. In one lengthy paragraph of about five or six sentences, answer the **Focus Question** using evidence from the document packet to support your point of view.

Document A

George Washington's Letter to John Jay

George Washington, in 1786, was a "retired" war hero, a former general, when he wrote this letter to John Jay of New York. From his idyllic plantation in Virginia along the Potomac, Washington was isolated from but not unaware of problems individual states were experiencing during the post-revolution years. His immediate reaction to Shays and his armed mob in Massachusetts was: "Good God! Who . . . could have foreseen, or predicted them?"

Your sentiments, that our affairs are drawing rapidly to a crisis, accord with my own. What the event will be is also beyond the reach of my foresight. We have errors to correct; we have probably had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our Confederation. Experience has taught us that men will not adopt, and carry into execution, measures the best calculated for their own good, without the intervention of coercive power. I do not conceive we can exist long as a nation without lodging, somewhere, a power which will pervade the whole Union in as energetic a manner as the authority of the state governments extends over the several states.

To be fearful of investing Congress, constituted as that body is, with ample authorities for national purposes, appears to me the very climax of popular absurdity and madness.

What then is to be done? Things cannot go on in the same train forever. It is much to be feared, as you observe, that the better kind of people, being disgusted with these circumstances, will have their minds prepared for any revolution whatever. We are apt to run from one extreme to another. To anticipate and prevent disastrous contingencies would be the part of wisdom and patriotism.

What astonishing changes a few years are capable of producing! I am told that even respectable characters speak of a monarchical form of government without horror. . . . What a triumph for our enemies to verify their predictions! What a triumph for the advocates of despotism to find that we are incapable of governing ourselves, and that systems founded on the basis of equal liberty are merely ideal and fallacious. Would to God that wise measures may be taken in time to avert the consequences.

Source: J. C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings of George Washington*, 28 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1938) as reprinted in David M. Kennedy and Thomas A. Bailey, *The American Spirit: United States History as Seen by Contemporaries, Vol I: To 1877* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

Document B

George Washington's Reaction to Shays's Rebellion

When George Washington wrote this letter to his friend Henry Knox on February 3, 1787 he was just months from being chosen to preside at the Constitutional Convention and about two years from being inaugurated as the first president of the United States.

The moment is, indeed, important! If government shrinks, or is unable to enforce its laws; fresh manoeuvres will be displayed by the insurgents—anarchy & confusion must prevail—and every thing will be turned topsy turvey in that State; where it is not probable the mischiefs will terminate. . . .

. . . [I]f three years ago, any person had told me that at this day, I should see such a formidable rebellion against the laws & constitutions of our own making as now appears I should have thought him a bedlamite—a fit subject for a mad house.

Source: "From George Washington to Henry Knox, 3 February 1787," *Founders Online*, National Archives.

Document C

Thomas Jefferson's Reaction to Shays's Rebellion

The missing giant at the Constitutional Convention was, of course, Thomas Jefferson. He was American Minister in Paris from 1784 to 1789. John Adams served in a similar position in Britain. Absent from Philadelphia in those eventful months of 1787, Jefferson relied on his close friend and confidant, James Madison, to keep him abreast of what was occurring at home before, during, and after the convention. Below are excerpts of letters from Jefferson regarding Shays's Rebellion and his reactions. Abigail Adams was John Adams's wife.

To James Madison, Paris, January 30, 1787

I am impatient to learn your sentiments on the late troubles in the Eastern states. . . . I hold it that a little rebellion now and then is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical. . . . It is a medecine necessary for the sound health of government.

Source: "From Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 30 January 1787," *Founders Online*, National Archives.

To James Madison, Paris, December 20, 1787

The late rebellion in Massachusetts has given more alarm than I think it should have done. Calculate that one rebellion in 13 states in the course of 11 years, is but one for each state in a century & a half. No country should be so long without one. Nor will any degree of power in the hands of government prevent insurrections. France, with all it's despotism, and two or three hundred thousand men always in arms has had three insurrections in the three years I have been here in every one of which greater numbers were engaged than in Massachusetts & a great deal more blood was spilt.

Source: "To James Madison from Thomas Jefferson, 20 December 1787," *Founders Online*, National Archives.

To Abigail Adams, Paris, February 22, 1787

The spirit of resistance to government is so valuable on certain occasions, that I wish it to be always kept alive. It will often be exercised when wrong, but better so than no to be exercised at all. I like a little rebellion now and then. It is like a storm in the Atmosphere.

Source: "From Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, 22 February 1787," *Founders Online*, National Archives.

Document D

Letter from General Benjamin Lincoln to Daniel Shays

George Richards Minot (1758–1802) was a Boston lawyer when he wrote his version of Shays's Rebellion and included in his book the letter below that General Lincoln sent to Captain Shays. The rebellion, after several months, was nearing its end. The letter is dated January 30, 1787.

[To Captain Shays]

Whether you are convinced or not of your error in flying to arms, I am fully persuaded that before this hour, you must have the fullest conviction upon your own minds, that you are not able to execute your original purposes.

Your resources are few, your force is inconsiderable, and hourly decreasing from the disaffection of your men; you are in a post where you have neither cover nor supplies, and in a situation in which you can neither give aid to your friends, nor discomfort to the supporters of good order and government.—Under these circumstances, you cannot hesitate a moment to disband your deluded followers. If you should not, I must approach, and apprehend the most influential characters among you. Should you attempt to fire upon the troops of government, the consequences must be fatal to many of your men, the least guilty. To prevent bloodshed, you will communicate to your privates, that if they will instantly lay down their arms, surrender themselves to government, and take and subscribe the oath of allegiance to this Commonwealth, they shall be recommended to the General Court for mercy. If you should either withhold this information from them, or suffer your people to fire upon our approach, you must be answerable for all the ills which may exist in consequence thereof.

Source: Letter from General Benjamin Lincoln to Captain Shays as printed in George Richards Minot, *The History of the Insurrections in Massachusetts, in the Year Seventeen Hundred and Eighty Six, and the Rebellion Consequent Thereon*, Second Edition (Boston: James W. Burditt, 1810).

Document E

Captain Shays's Reply to General Lincoln

The letter excerpted below was a reply to General Benjamin Lincoln's letter on that same day, January 30, 1787. The rebellion was in its final stages when the Lincoln-Shays correspondence was in progress.

Pelham, January 30th, 1787

To General Lincoln, commanding the government troops at Hadley.

Sir,

The people assembled in arms from the counties of Middlesex, Worcester, Hampshire and Berkshire, taking into serious consideration the purport of the flag just received, return for answer, that however unjustifiable the measures may be which the people have adopted, in having recourse to arms, various circumstances have induced them thereto. We are sensible of the embarrassments the people are under; but that virtue which truly characterizes the citizens of a republican government, hath hitherto marked our paths with a degree of innocence; and we wish and trust it will still be the case. At the same time, the people are willing to lay down their arms, on the condition of a general pardon, and return to their respective homes, as they are unwilling to stain the land, which we in the late war purchased at so dear a rate, with the blood of our brethren and neighbours. Therefore, we pray that hostilities may cease, on your part, until our united prayers may be presented to the General Court, and we receive an answer, as a person is gone for that purpose. If this request may be complied with, government shall meet with no interruption from the people, but let each army occupy the post where they now are.

DANIEL SHAYS, Captain

Source: Letter from Daniel Shays to General Benjamin Lincoln as printed in George Richards Minot, *The History of the Insurrections in Massachusetts, in the Year Seventeen Hundred and Eighty Six, and the Rebellion Consequent Thereon*, Second Edition (Boston: James W. Burditt, 1810).

Document F

Massachusetts Governor James Bowdoin's Account of Shays's Rebellion

As governor, it was James Bowdoin's job to mobilize the state's militia to crush the army of insurrectionist/farmer Daniel Shays, which Bowdoin did successfully. Interestingly, voters turned him out in the next election.

The rebels, under Daniel Shays, Luke Day, and Eli Parsons, soon gathered a force in that vicinity [of Springfield], of 2000 men, and on the 25th of January advanced in a menacing manner towards the arsenal. Gen. Shepard sent an aid-de-camp to inquire the design of the movement, and to warn Shays of his danger. The answer was, that they would have possession of the barracks; and they immediately marched to within 250 yards of the arsenal. They were again warned that if they approached nearer, they would be fired on; still they advanced. He then ordered the artillery to be pointed at the centre of their column. The cry of murder then arose from the rear of the insurgents, and the whole were struck with panic and confusion. Shays lost all control over them, and they fled . . . 10 miles, leaving 3 dead and 1 wounded. . . .

Good frequently springs from evil. Shays' Rebellion served to impress on the public mind a belief of the necessity of a new form of National Government. It may be doubted, whether the present United States Constitution would have been adopted, if that rebellion had not predisposed the minds of the people in favor of an energetic government.

Source: Commonwealth of Massachusetts. By His excellency, James Bowdoin, Esquire, Governour of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, an address to the good people of the commonwealth (Boston: 1787), courtesy of the Library of Congress.

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