

History-Mystery- Slavery on Long Island

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This activity been used with fourth and fifth graders of mixed abilities. It illustrates that elementary students can investigate historical questions worthy of study by examining excerpts from actual primary source documents and have fun in the process. The lesson is presented in the form of a mystery to be solved through historical research. While this particular lesson focuses on the conditions of slavery in New York State, it is possible to use the history mystery model to explore other topics.

All of the sources included for students in the activity below come from two web sites:

www.pbs.org/wnet.newyork/laic/sitemap.html (a site accompanying Ric Burns' *New York: A Documentary Film* shown on PBS two years ago) and www.lihistory.com (a site accompanying *Newsday's* Long Island Our Story series). The *Newsday* website can be used to add illustrations to the "History Mystery."

Illustrations of Slavery Available on www.lihistory.com

- Illustration of a slave auction in Manhattan; unlike at plantations in the South, slaves on Long Island lived just a few to a house, usually away from friends and relatives.
- Illustration shows Africans packed into a cargo hold of a ship. The space is only 3 feet, 3 inches high.
- "Slave Quarters" says the small sign at the entrance to the room above at the Joseph Lloyd Manor House on Lloyd Neck. If they lived in the main house, slaves often lived in a cramped back room with no source of heat in the winter. A spinning wheel in the room might allow them to work well past sunset.
- The upper gallery at Caroline Church in Setauket is believed to have been added to seat slaves.

History Mystery Documents

A. Population Statistics

1626 11 Black slaves in New Netherlands

1698 2,130 Blacks in New York, almost all of whom are slaves (1/2 of whom are on Long Island, 1/5 of all residents in Suffolk are Black slaves)

Mid-1700s Only 7 people in the entire colony of New York held 10 or more slaves. In Huntington, 53 masters owned 81 slaves.

1771 3,623 people in Kings County; 1/3 of whom are Black slaves; 10,980 people in Nassau County; 1/5 of whom are Black slaves; 13, 128 people in Suffolk County; 1/10 of whom are Black slaves; 20,000 Blacks in New York State (almost all of whom are slaves)

B. Laws Concerning Slavery

1702 "An Act for Regulating Slaves"

--No person may trade with a slave without permission of the slave's master or mistress.

-- Owners may punish their slaves at their own discretion, though they are not allowed to take a slave's life or sever a body part.

-- Slaves may not carry guns.

-- Except when working for their owners, slaves may not congregate in groups larger than three, with whipping the penalty, up to 40 lashes.

-- Towns may appoint a public whipper, who will be paid up to three shillings for each slave whipped.

-- A slave who assaults any free Christian man or woman is subject to prison for up to 14 days as well as reasonable corporal punishment.

-- No slave may give evidence in court, except against other slaves who are plotting to run away, kill their master or mistress, burn their houses and barns or destroy their corn or cattle.

1706 -- Negro, Indian and Mulatto slaves may be baptized as Christians, though this will not automatically free them from slavery.

-- Any child born of a slave woman will carry the slave status of the mother (even if the father is a free white man).

1708 "An Act for Preventing the Conspiracy of Slaves"

-- Any slave who killed or conspired to kill anyone who was not Black or a slave will be subject to execution. The owner of the executed slave will be reimbursed by the colony up to 25 pounds sterling.

1712 -- Freed slaves may not hold property.

-- Slaves may not own or use a gun, except with permission of their masters.

1732 -- Slaves may not be out at night except on an extraordinary occasion (Town of Brookhaven).

1757 -- No Negro shall be found without a pass from his master, not to exceed one mile (Smithtown).

1827 -- New York State bans slavery within its borders.

C. Slave Life Serving The Wealthy Lloyd Family

This information was found in the ledgers, letters and wills of the Lloyd family of Lloyd Neck, Long Island. The original language appears below; therefore, the misspellings and incorrect punctuations also appear.

Bill of Sale of Negroes, Sixth Day of December A.D. 1773: Know all Men by these present that I Joseph Conkling...for and in consideration of Twenty five pounds of Current money...sell...unto Joseph and John Lloyd and to their heirs one Certain Negro Girl named Phoebe of about Six Years of Age...

Letter from John Lloyd to Henry Lloyd, October 16, 1746: If it is no asking more than becomes me...I Desire that I should be next purchaser of one of your Negro men.

Letter From Henry Lloyd II To John Lloyd II, September 13, 1773: I am much better pleased with Hesters being sold as she was with 10 pounds loss than she should be sent to Carolina against her will, though by what I can learn of the treatment Negroes meet with at the plantation she was design'd for is Such as that Some of those I have Sent prefer their Situation to that they have left.

Letter from Dr. George Muirson to Henry Lloyd, May 19, 1730: Jupiter is afflicted with Pains in his Leggs, Knees and Thighs, ascending to his Bowels....Give one of the Purges, In the morning fasting,...the next day take away about 12 or 14 ounces of blood...

D. A Slave Becomes Free

“Black Tom” Becomes Tom Gall in Oyster Bay, October 26, 1685

- Tom the Negro which was formerly my mother's servant...[is] therefore no longer in bondage, but to be a free man from the day or the date hereof to the day of his death...
- The Town of Oyster Bay grants unto Negro Tom and his children a two-acre plot (1697).
- “Black Tom” purchases the black slave Obed for 60 pounds from Nathaniel Weeks (February 7, 1717).
- Tom Gall purchases an additional 8 acres of land from George Balden or Baldwin for 85 pounds (1720).
- Tom Gall sells the 8 acres of land to Thomas Rodgers for 85 pounds (1722).
- Tom and Mary Gall's daughter marries Obed. Obed is freed from slavery (1721).

E. Slave Burned At Stake In 1741.

The mysterious fires . . . began on March 18, 1741. Around noon, flames broke out at the governor's house at Fort George. The winter breeze helped the fire travel quickly. Although a bucket brigade tried to put it out, helped by new, hand-pump fire engines, the chapel next door caught fire. Both buildings were destroyed. During the next month, more homes and businesses fell victims to smoke and flames.

The . . . government not only smelled smoke -- they smelled a conspiracy, a rebellion by the slaves, which the whites greatly feared. Justice Daniel Horsmanden was appointed to investigate.

During the trial, the judge spoke with Mary Burton, a white indentured servant. Even though Mary's stories were full of contradictions, she told the government what they wanted to hear: that the fires were part of a “Negro plot.” (To encourage her to testify, the government promised to free her from her indenture.)

Even though there was little evidence that the fires were part of a large organized effort, almost half of the male adult slaves in the city were thrown in jail. In the end, seventeen blacks and four whites were hanged, thirteen slaves were burned slowly at the stake, and seventy-two slaves were deported.

HISTORY MYSTERY INSTRUCTIONS

You have all become historians. Historians are really detectives who find clues and put together puzzle pieces until a more complete picture emerges. Below is the statement of a White male 46 year old farmer made sometime during the mid-1700s. Your task is to compare this statement against all of the evidence presented in your packets. You are trying to find out how accurate his statement is.

“The lives of slaves on Long Island are not so bad. It’s not like in the South. And besides, we don’t have that much slavery here anyway...”

1. Each group should read through the documents in the packet.
2. As you read, you should record evidence you discover in the chart, indicating whether it proves or disproves the statement above.
3. If you find that you need information beyond what the documents provide to help you answer the question, make note of this in the space provided.
4. Record interesting points or have any questions that do not seem to fit into the chart.

<u>More evidence needed</u>	<u>Interesting points</u>	<u>Questions</u>

<u>Evidence which proves the statement</u>	<u>Evidence which disproves the statement</u>

Now that you’ve been doing the work of real historians, you should be able to answer these questions:

How do historians know what they know? What types of sources do they use as evidence?

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