



Lesson 4.3 “Merchants, Ships, and the Triangle Trade”

Unit 4: Building a Colony

Lesson Objectives

- Students will engage in an activity and reflection to understand economic interdependence.
- Students will discuss and answer questions about the Triangle Trade infographic and the motivations of people involved in the Triangle Trade.
- Students will notice and wonder about a variety of primary sources about slavery in New Hampshire in the 1700s.
- Students will complete a mind map and reflection about historical perspective and how New Hampshire participated in enslaving people in the 1700s.

Lesson Competencies

- I can investigate and describe basic economic principles and explore how they impact communities. (Moose SS)
- I can locate relevant key ideas using text features, including visual and graphic information, to make connections within or across sources and explain how various parts of information contribute to overall meaning. (ELA 3)
- I can analyze primary and secondary sources and draw appropriate conclusions. (Moose SS)
- I can interpret and use information delivered orally or visually and respond by asking relevant questions, summarizing key points, or elaborating on ideas. (ELA 7)
- I can explain that historical perspectives vary based upon the time period in which the person lived and that those perspectives shaped the historical sources they created. (Moose SS)

Essential Questions

How has New Hampshire come to be the way it is?
How has New Hampshire been shaped by many voices?

Focus Questions

How did towns develop throughout New Hampshire during this time?
How was New Hampshire connected to other colonies, countries, and continents in the 18th century?

Estimated Time

Three to five 40-minute class sessions

Materials & Equipment

Definitions of consumer, good/product, producer, service for projection
Ball of yarn
Triangle Trade infographic for projection
Class set of “The Triangle Trade” worksheet
Historical perspective definition for projection
“Slavery in New Hampshire” Sources 1–6 for display in the classroom
Note about language for posting in the classroom
Class set of “Notice and Wonder: Slavery in New Hampshire” worksheet
Class set of “New Hampshire’s Participation in Slavery Mind Map” worksheet



Educator Introduction & Rationale

In the 1700s, Portsmouth emerged as the colony's capital as well as New Hampshire's political and economic center. Merchants in Portsmouth made fortunes in the Triangle Trade. Ships carried New Hampshire products like fish, fur, and lumber across the ocean where traders exchanged them for manufactured goods from England, enslaved people from Africa, and commodities like sugar and molasses from the West Indies. The Africans who arrived in New Hampshire as a result of the Triangle Trade helped found what became a substantial Black community in Portsmouth that remains culturally vibrant today. In addition, Portsmouth became renowned throughout the American colonies for its shipbuilding industry. It is said that at one point in the 18th century, Portsmouth had more than 200 ships sailing in and out of its busy wharves and docks. These business ventures made the fortunes of many families in Portsmouth, allowing them to build impressive homes and create a town that offered entertainment and luxury to those who could afford it.

The Triangle Trade, including the Middle Passage, is an essential topic to include in the history of New Hampshire. Students must recognize what part New Hampshire's merchants and people played in the trade, as well as in slavery in the Americas. New Hampshire merchants made fortunes in the Triangle Trade. Even though enslaved people (and free blacks) were a small percentage of the colonial population, especially compared to further south, students need to know that New Hampshire traded in enslaved people and that slavery was a part of its early history. Historian Valerie Cunningham says in her book *Black Portsmouth*,

Statistics too easily become mind numbing and impersonal. Whether spoken of by the million or the shipload or as scattered individuals, all those in bondage were individuals whose expectations, hopes, families, and identities were stolen and withheld from them. The theft of anyone's freedom was no less tragic or severe because that person was geographically isolated from thousands or millions of others. (19)

This is the third lesson in Unit 4: Building a Colony. This lesson can stand alone from other lessons, although students should have some concept of the incredible growth of the colony during this time (see lesson 4.1: Building New Hampshire's Towns). In this lesson, students explore the idea of economic interdependence through a game, then learn about the Triangle Trade through an infographic and worksheet. They talk about New Hampshire's part in the trade and "Notice and Wonder" about a mini-museum exhibit focusing on slavery in New Hampshire. A mind map and reflection questions help students process the lesson before turning to think about economic interdependence today and what goods in their lives might include child or forced labor. Considering reprehensible actions of the past can be difficult for students; work with them on historical perspective, or understanding that people's viewpoints are shaped by the time in which they live. However, note that the goal of historical perspective is not to excuse the actions of the past, but rather to examine motivations. Consider using this kind of language: "In the past, most people thought enslaving a person was acceptable. Today, most people agree that all humans are equal and should be treated fairly and protected by laws."

Teaching tip: This lesson uses sensitive language that should be discussed with students. There are notes throughout the sources and worksheets, but make sure to note it is important when speaking of people who have been enslaved to use the words “enslaved people” rather than the dehumanizing “slave.” Also, review with students the word “Negro” and its definition.

There are reinforcement activities for students who need more practice with the basics of the lesson or with motivations and historical perspective. Two extension activities recommend visiting the Black Heritage Trail in Portsmouth and examine a primary source written about New Hampshire’s first governor. Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom. Please note, lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of this document. You may wish to preview these with your students.

Learning Activity

Activation

Economic interdependence. Project the definitions or display a chart with your definitions of “good,” “service,” “producer,” and “consumer” for student reference. Review with students.

Introduce the activity by saying that interdependence is when we all depend on each other. Economic interdependence is when parts of the economy depend upon others and the things they make or do. Tell students that you will show these connections by making a web with a ball of yarn. Give a few examples of possible connections, perhaps even writing one on the board as a visual example:

- A farmer is a producer. Next, potato is a good a farmer produces. Next, French fries are a good produced from potatoes. Next, selling French fries at McDonald’s is a service. Next, customers at the restaurant are consumers. Next, they also consume ice cream, and so on.
- Paint is a good. Next, a painter buys paint and so is a consumer. Next, the painter provides the service of painting someone’s business. Next, that business owner/house owner ...

Gather students into a circle to begin and give instructions. Tell them the person holding the ball of yarn will name a good, service, producer, or consumer. They will then name another student and roll the ball of yarn to them, who will state a good, service, producer, or consumer and say how it’s related to the previous word. They should then choose another student and roll the yarn to them, making further connections. Continue until all students are woven into the web.

Ask students to reflect by asking:

- What made this activity successful?
- How does that relate to interdependence?

Student Reading

Portsmouth, NH’s trade center. Before moving to Guided Practice and Discussion, direct students to read Unit 4: Learn It! “[Portsmouth, NH’s Colonial Capital](#),” pages 1 to 6.

Teaching tip: This is a good place to pause if you divide the lesson across teaching sessions.

Guided Practice & Discussion

The Triangle Trade. Project the Triangle Trade infographic and let students spend a few minutes looking at it. Guide them through a quick “Notice and Wonder” activity to help them process a busy infographic. What do they see on the infographic? What do they wonder about?

Distribute the “Triangle Trade” worksheet and work together as a class to answer the questions. As you work, ask students if they knew that kidnapped and enslaved people were part of a global trade network. The Triangle Trade supplied kidnapped people who then were enslaved for generations in the United States. Did students realize that a trade network like this was part of creating slavery in the United States?

While it is difficult to think about kidnapping and enslaving people, it is important to know our history. In order to understand who we are as Americans and as people from New Hampshire, we need to be fully honest about our past. Review the worksheet as best for your class.

Teaching tip: This is a good spot to pause if you divide the lesson between teaching sessions.

New Hampshire's part. Return to the Triangle Trade infographic and focus on the part of North America where New Hampshire is located. Tell students that Portsmouth merchants and people were deeply involved in the Triangle Trade even though enslavement of Africans was not as common in the New England area as it was in the American South. New Hampshire built ships for merchants who traded in the Triangle Trade, and New Hampshire merchants made money by participating in the Triangle Trade themselves. New Hampshire merchants typically shipped lumber and other raw materials as well as building ships for other traders.

Discuss with students that studying history can be difficult, especially when people in the past have done something we know today is wrong and morally offensive. How can we in the current day understand people in the past participating in the Triangle Trade when they knew it involved enslaving people? We need to do more than condemn them because we need to take care not to repeat their actions.

Project the definition of “historical perspective” and read with students. Tell them that understanding people and their actions as part of the time in which they lived does not mean we excuse their actions. We know that participating in a system that enslaved people is an absolute wrong; we need to think about their motivations so that we can understand how not to be part of something immoral ourselves. Were they motivated by money? Did they think going along with the system was the easiest? Did they think that enslaved people were better off in America than they were when they were free in Africa? Did they not care about the people involved?

Ask students if they can think of anything we do today that might be viewed differently 300 years from now. Our environmental policies, the gap between the rich and the poor in our society, and illegal drug sales are situations that people today struggle with. What will people in the future think of us and how we act? If appropriate for your class, consider selecting an issue and constructing a triple Venn diagram, one circle for how people thought in the past, one for the present, and one circle for future thinking. What do we have in common in how we think and what is different?

Teaching tip: This is a good spot to pause if you divide the lesson between teaching sessions.

Student Reading

Triangle Trade. Before moving to Independent Practice, reinforce understanding by directing students to read Unit 4: Learn It! [“Portsmouth, NH’s Colonial Capital,”](#) page 7.

Independent Practice

Mini-museum exhibit. Print out the image set “Slavery in New Hampshire” and hang it up, being sure to keep captions and transcriptions with the appropriate images. These images show evidence of the participation of people in New Hampshire in the slave trade and slavery. Tell students that although some of the writing may be old and hard to read, the transcripts will be clearer. As they walk about the museum exhibit, have them fill out the “Notice & Wonder: Slavery in New Hampshire” worksheet.

Give students time to read the sources and fill out the worksheet individually. Circulate to answer questions and process with students. Periodically call the class’ attention to a pertinent question or observation so that students feel part of the class community.

Teaching Tip: As students consider the source available to learn about slavery in New Hampshire, ask them why these are the available sources. There are letters and records from merchants like John Moffat, but not from Seneca Hall or Cato. Why might this be? How does this shape the evidence they consider and the voices they hear?

Teaching tip: This is a good spot to pause if you divide the lesson between teaching sessions.

Student Reading

Slavery in New Hampshire. Before moving into Guided Practice, direct students to read Unit 4: Learn It! “[Black Americans in NH](#)” pages 2 to 6, including the short biographies about [Nero Brewster](#) and [Esther Whipple Mullinaux](#) and the infographic about [Amos Fortune](#).

Guided Practice

How did New Hampshire participate? What did they think about these sources? Distribute “New Hampshire’s Participation in Slavery Mind Map” with reflection questions on the back. Work as small groups to complete the mind map, then share. Have students spend time individually on the reflection questions on the back, but be sure to process these difficult questions together.

Reflection

Economic interdependence today. It is impossible to go back in time to fight against the enslavement of people in the past, but consider whether your students are ready to think about the implications of economic interdependence today that they are a part of. Around the world, there is child labor, forced labor, and poor working conditions for more people than we expect. If we want to do better than our history, investigate what's happening in the world today. Once they have this information, what can students realistically do? Brainstorm together, perhaps including:

- Educating others about the reality of child labor or forced labor
- Consider what goods and services they use that are impacted or created by child labor or forced labor and stop using them
- Research with whom they can communicate to protest support of goods and services that are impacted or created by child labor or forced labor and stop using them
- Fund raise as a class and donate to an organization working to stop child and forced labor

Start with these websites:

- The U.S. Department of Labor maintains a "List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor" and which areas of the world use it. Linked to specific products as well.
www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods
- The International Labour Organization's Child Labour Section has a picture of child labor in the world today as well as trends for the future. See "The big picture" on the right column as well as charts on child labor around the world.
www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm
- Human Rights Watch has a variety of articles about child and forced labor as well as suggestions for how to fight it. See "Report Traces Goods Made with Child Labor to 76 Countries" but note that this website makes mention of sex trafficking so student access should be limited.
www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/21/report-traces-goods-made-child-labor-76-countries#
- The Washington International Trade Organization links to the U.S. Department of Labor report and helps digest the numbers.
www.wita.org/atp-research/2020-list-of-goods-child-forced-labor/

Reinforcement

1. **Interdependence today.** Think about a farmer's market or grocery store. What web of interdependence exists for their products? Have students make diagrams showing the purchase of goods and products and how they are interdependent.
2. **Motivations.** One way to think about the people in the past is to look at their motivations or the reasons behind their actions. Use "George Boyd's Letterbook" to think about the motivations of Portsmouth ship builders and merchants. There are transcriptions of two letters that he sent about his business practices as well as discussion questions. Guide students to understand that when reading these letters, they should be thinking about the big picture rather than the details. George Boyd participated in the Triangle Trade by shipping goods back and forth from England. Have students work to understand his motivations. Why do they think he did what he did?
 - What do you know about George Boyd based on these letters?

He was a merchant in Portsmouth.
He traded in lumber, cordage, anchors, and other ship supplies.
He traded with London but also had contacts in Grenada (the West Indies) so likely traded there as well.
He was part of a larger network of merchants who communicated together.
He seems to have been very busy in his work.
He kept copies of his letters.
He cared about prices.
 - What do you think motivates him?

It seems like he's motivated by money and by getting the best prices. He talks about comparing his prices with other people, saying that his payment should be higher. He also asked someone what they would pay for something and kind of threatened that he would go elsewhere if they didn't give him a good price.
 - Is he part of the Triangle Trade? How?

He is. He is part of the side that trades from the Americas to Europe, sending raw materials to Europe. He also seems like he might be sending raw materials to the West Indies as well.

Extension

1. **The Black Heritage Trail.** Visit the Black Heritage Trail in Portsmouth. The organization works to tell the hidden stories of the past 300 years of New Hampshire's Black residents. They offer both guided and independent tours: blackheritagetrailnh.org/.
2. **Josiah Bartlett and slavery.** Josiah Bartlett was New Hampshire's first governor. He also enslaved people. Use "Governor Josiah Bartlett and Peter" to explore this history with primary sources.

Supporting Materials

New Hampshire Historical Society Resources

1. Edmund Quincy's Bill of Sale, March 15, 1755
2. George Boyd Letterbook, 1773 – 1775
3. Inventory of the Ship *Exeter*, September 6, 1756
4. James Stoodly's Sale, July 2, 1762
5. Josiah Bartlett's Memoirs, 1831
6. Runaway Notice for Cato, January 11, 1765
7. Runaway Notice for Seneca Hall, June 1, 1776
8. Sloop Carolina from Gambia, July 28, 1758
9. Thomas Beck's Sale, April 3, 1767
10. Triangle Trade infographic

Other Resources

- Black Heritage Trail blackheritagetrailnh.org/
- Inspiration for Activation: "We're All in This Together" (109) from Leah Caron and Jane Cofie's *Responsive Classroom's Doing Social Studies in Morning Meeting*
- List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods

The *Critical Thinking Consortium* is a non-profit Canadian organization working with educators to create effective thinking and deep engagement in the world. Their lesson "Learning about historical perspective" is intended for grades 6 – 8 but contains helpful ideas for the elementary classroom. tc2.ca/uploads/PDFs/thinking-about-history/historical_perspective_elementary.pdf They talk about historical perspective like this:

We cannot transport ourselves back in time, so it is difficult to understand what the past meant to the people who lived it. Though our goal in history is to understand bygone times, our attempts are often clouded by our current concerns, beliefs and values, which obscure our understanding of the concerns, beliefs, and values of the people we are studying. How, then, do we understand a past that is so different from our present views and beliefs? Historical perspective involves viewing the past through the social, intellectual, and emotional lenses of the time in order to understand what life was like for those living then.

Standards

“Moose on the Loose” Content:

- ✓ Students will understand that European exploration led to the colonization of the region that became New Hampshire. They will understand that, beginning in the early 1600s, colonial New Hampshire was home to people from different areas of the world. (3-5.T2.1)
- ✓ Students will understand that the United States became divided over several issues in the decades before the Civil War, including slavery, which resulted in rising tensions throughout the nation. They will understand that New Hampshire played a part in these relationships. (3-5.T4.2)

“Moose on the Loose” Skills:

- ✓ Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence (3-5.S1.1, 3-5.S1.2)
- ✓ Effective Historical Thinking (3-5.S3.1, 3-5.S3.2)
- ✓ Comprehensive Geographic Reasoning (3-5.S4.1, 3-5.S4.2)
- ✓ Understanding Economics and Economic Systems (3-5.S5.2)

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ Economics: International Economics and Trade (SS:EC:4:5.3)
- ✓ Geography: The World in Spatial Terms (SS:GE:4:1.2)
- ✓ Geography: Human Systems (SS:GE:4:4.2)
- ✓ US / NH History: Contacts, Exchanges & International Relations (SS:HI:4:2.1)
- ✓ US / NH History: Social/Cultural (SS:HI:4:5.4, SS:HI:4:5.5)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
- ✓ Theme 9: Global Connections

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Constructing Supporting Questions (D1.3.3-5)
- ✓ Determining Helpful Sources (D1.5.3-5)
- ✓ Exchange and Markets (D2.Eco.8.3-5)
- ✓ The Global Economy (D2.Eco.14.3-5, D2.Eco.15.3-5)
- ✓ Geographic Representations: Spatial Views of the World (D2.Geo.2.3-5)
- ✓ Human-Environment Interaction: Place, Regions, and Culture (D2.Geo.6.3-5)
- ✓ Change, Continuity, and Context (D2.His.3.3-5)
- ✓ Perspectives (D2.His.4.3-5, D2.His.5.3-5, D2.His.6.3-5)
- ✓ Historical Sources and Evidence (D2.His.10.3-5, D2.His.12.3-5)
- ✓ Gathering and Evaluating Sources (D3.1.3-5)
- ✓ Communicating Conclusions (D4.1.3-5, D4.2.3-5)
- ✓ Taking Informed Action (D4.7.3-5, D4.8.3-5)

Common Core ELA Grade 3:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.3.1, RI.3.3)
- ✓ Craft and Structure in Informational Text (RI.3.4, RI.3.5)
- ✓ Integration of Knowledge and Ideas in Informational Text (RI.3.7, RI.3.9)
- ✓ Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity in Informational Text (RI.3.10)
- ✓ Text Types and Purposes in Writing (W.3.1, W.3.2)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.3.2)

Common Core ELA Grade 4:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.4.1, RI.4.3)
- ✓ Craft and Structure in Informational Text (RI.4.4)
- ✓ Integration of Knowledge and Ideas in Informational Text (RI.4.7, RI.4.9)
- ✓ Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity in Informational Text (RI.4.10)
- ✓ Text Types and Purposes in Writing (W.4.1, W.4.2)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.4.2)
- ✓ Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (L.4.6)

Common Core ELA Grade 5:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Informational Text (RI.5.1, RI.5.3)
- ✓ Craft and Structure in Informational Text (RI.5.4)
- ✓ Integration of Knowledge and Ideas in Informational Text (RI.5.7, RI.5.9)
- ✓ Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity in Informational Text (RI.5.10)
- ✓ Text Types and Purposes in Writing (W.5.1, W.5.2)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.5.2)
- ✓ Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (L.5.6)

Lesson Vocabulary

consumer	(noun) Someone who buys products or goods
economic	(adjective) Describing the system by which goods and services are made, bought, and sold
enslaved	(verb) The act of labeling a human being as property and forcing them to work for nothing
historical perspective	(noun) Understanding that people's actions and beliefs are shaped by the time period in which they live
interdependence	(noun) When systems, things, or people are mixed together and rely on one another
letterbook	(noun) A copy of letters sent and received
lumber	(noun) Wood that has been processed from a tree into usable boards or pieces
manufactured goods	(noun) Products that are made, especially by machines in factories
Middle Passage	(noun) One part of the Triangle Trade; the journey for kidnapped Africans on ships across the Atlantic Ocean from Africa on the way to be enslaved in the Americas
raw material	(noun) Material that has not yet been processed or manufactured into a final form
service	(noun) In the economy, actions that are bought and sold, such as a haircut or cleaning a house
slavery	(noun) When human beings are treated as property and made to work for nothing
Triangle Trade	(noun) Trading routes in the 1600s–1800s that linked Africa, Europe, and the Americas; raw materials, manufactured good, food stuffs, and enslaved people were traded between the three continents