

Classroom Practice: “Why Sugar?”

“Why Sugar?” is an interdisciplinary unit of study, where students explore the exchange, circulation and transmission of ideas, people and goods that border the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic Ocean becomes as a bridge between Great Britain, West Africa, The British West Indies, and the British American Colonies.

Colonization of the Atlantic World, students discover, is a kaleidoscope of commodities, and cultures. Students become historians in their quest to discover how sugar affected the lives of those living in the British Atlantic world. Visual artwork and simulated role-play engage students in portraying their knowledge of this interdependence.

This unit is most appropriate for upper elementary and middle school students. It is assumed that students possess prior knowledge regarding exploration and have completed or are participating in United States History I. Basic geography, civic and economic skills are utilized through lessons.

Significance & Relevance

Selected Relevant Standards –

National History Standards, Part II United States History Standards for Grades 5-12
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Students Should Understand: The characteristics of societies in the Americas, Western Europe, and West Africa that increasingly interacted after 1450.

1A Demonstrate understanding of commonalities, diversity, and change in the societies of the Americas from their beginnings to 1620.

Students Should Understand: Early European exploration and colonization; the resulting cultural and ecological interactions.

2A Demonstrate understanding of how the stages of European oceanic and overland exploration from 1492 to 1700 occurred amid international rivalries.

Students Should Understand: The early arrival of Europeans and Africans in the Americas, and how these people interacted with Native Americans.

1A Demonstrate understanding of how diverse immigrants affected the formation of European colonies

1C Demonstrate understanding of the European struggle for control of North America

3A Demonstrate understanding of colonial economic life and labor systems in the Americas

3B Demonstrate understanding of economic life and the development of labor systems in the English colonies

Virginia Standards of Learning

- VS.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical and geographical analysis and responsible citizenship, including the ability to
- identify and interpret artifacts and primary and secondary source documents to understand events in history;
 - determine cause-and-effect relationships;

- c) compare and contrast historical events;
- d) draw conclusions and make generalizations;
- e) make connections between past and present;
- g) interpret ideas and events from different historical perspectives;
- h) analyze and interpret maps to explain relationships among landforms, water features, climatic characteristics, and historical events.

VS.3 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the first permanent English settlement in America by

- a) explaining the reasons for English colonization;

WHII.4 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the impact of the European Age of Discovery and expansion into the Americas by

- a) explaining the roles and economic motivations of explorers and conquistadors
- c) explaining migration, settlement patterns, cultural diffusion, and social classes in the colonized areas
- e) mapping and explaining the triangular trade

WG.9 The student will analyze the global patterns and networks of economic interdependence by

- a) identifying factors, including comparative advantage, that influence economic activities and trade
- b) describing ways that economic and social interactions have changed over time
- c) mapping, describing, and evaluating the formation of economic unions

OAH Historical Inquiry Skills –

Chronological Thinking: Students will construct a triangle to illustrate the movement of people, ideas and goods through the British Atlantic World.

Historical Understanding: students will listen to narratives and respond to issue regarding the past. Students will respond to recount of the middle passage from Africa to Barbados as an 11-year-old boy.

Historical Maps: Students will view maps of the British Atlantic World to obtain data and to clarify information regarding the geographic setting for this unit. Students will find the absolute location of Barbados, the distance involved in the movement of slaves from West Africa to the Leeward Islands.

Historical Analysis and Interpretation: Students will compare and contrast differing sets of ideas colonization in the British American Colonies with that of the British West Indies.

Historical Research Capabilities: Students will construct useful information regarding a primary resource, “The Sugar Act” through the British National Archives’ interactive gallery: The rise of the British Empire. Students will study the source, *Complaint about duties on sugar refining in 1691*, to discover clues about why the British became empire builders in North America.

Historical Issues Analysis and Decision Making: Students will identify the key issues/problems encountered by British Colonists. The interests, values, and perspectives of those involved will be reflected in a final piece of artwork, a Kaleidoscope of the movement of ideas, people and goods. A short essay will summarize the illustration.