

Title: Investigating Indentured Servitude

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Key Words: indentured servants, American colonies

Grade Level: 6

Time Allotted: 90 minutes (1 block)

Lesson Overview	Students will analyze primary sources that deal with indentured servitude. They will use these sources to evaluate indentured servitude. Then, they will compare and contrast indentured servitude, free labor, and slavery.
Guiding Question(s)	What was life like for indentured servants? How do free labor, indentured servitude, and slavery compare and contrast with each other?

Learning Objectives (SWBAT)

- Students will be able to describe the conditions faced by indentured servants in the colonies.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast indentured servitude, free labor, and slavery.

Standards of Learning & Essential Historical Skills Taught

SOL USI.5 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the factors that shaped colonial America by

- c) describing colonial life in America from the perspective of large landowners, farmers, artisans, women, indentured servants, and slaves.

Historical Analysis and Interpretation

- Students will read and interpret primary sources that deal with indentured servitude. They will use the sources to evaluate indentured servitude as a labor system and compare it to free labor and slavery.

Assessment Tool(s)

See Independent Practice below.

Materials/Resources

- Primary source documents
 - o Source A: Indenture contract
 - o Source B: Elizabeth Sprigs letter

- o Source C: Pamphlet by John Hammond
- o Source D: Virginia court ruling regarding servant uprising
- o Source E: Maryland indentured servant laws
- o Source F: Richard Frethorne letter
- o Source G: Plymouth colony court records
- o Source H: George Alsop's account
- o Source I: Richard Ligon's description of indentured servitude
- Source Guides for each source
- *Checking the Evidence* - handout
- *Evaluating Indentured Servitude* - handout
- *Comparing Labor Systems* - Venn diagram handout

Modifications (to meet needs of diverse learners)

- Students could analyze more than one document each.
- Students could be given a set of these documents to make a case for or against indentured servitude in a debate.

Instructional Procedures/Process

1. Opening discussion: Contracts

Possible questions:

- a) What is a contract?
- b) What are the purposes for contracts?
- c) When are contracts used?
- d) Who uses contracts?
- e) What happens if you break a contract?
- f) Examine a contract students are familiar with—behavior contract, bus contract, technology use contract, etc.
 - a. Whom is the contract between?
 - b. Who wrote the contract?
 - c. What is the purpose of the contract?
 - d. What do the signers agree to do?
 - e. What will happen if the contract is broken?
- g) Look at an example labor contract (e.g. teacher's contract) to see what it looks like, what is required of employer and employee, what happens if it is broken.

2. Primary source analysis

- a) Now, we will look at some primary sources to answer these questions:
 - What was life like for indentured servants in the colonies?
 - Do you think indentured servitude was a good or bad economic system?
- b) Analyze one source together (Source A: Indenture Contract) as a model. Teachers should refer to the Source A Guide for an example.

- c) In pairs or small groups, students read and analyze the primary source documents. They will use the *Checking the Evidence* sheet as they do this. Teachers should refer to the Source Guides for information on each of these sources. The guides contain suggestions that could be provided to students and ideas to include during the presentation step (step 3, below).

3. Presenting the evidence

- Students take turns present evidence to develop an evaluation of indentured servitude. As the evidence is presented, students take notes on the sheet titled *Evaluating Indentured Servitude*. The teacher should write each group's key ideas on the board and list the supporting evidence.

4. Class discussion: Evaluating indentured servitude (Refer to the contextual essay for details on what indentured servitude was actually like to make this discussion richer)

- Using the evidence, what was indentured servitude like for the servants?
- Who benefitted more—the servants or the masters?
- Do you think the benefits of indentured servitude were worth the costs?
- Debate the following resolutions:
 - o Indentured servitude was a fair labor system.
 - o Indentured servitude was a good way to help England's poor.
 - o Indentured servitude was a form of slave labor.

5. Comparing indentured servitude, free labor, and slavery

- In pairs, students complete the Venn diagram comparing indentured servitude, free labor, and slavery.
- Share and complete a Venn diagram as a class.
- Discussion:
 - o How are indentured servitude and slavery similar? How are they different?
 - o What are the advantages and disadvantages of free labor as compared to indentured servitude? (for master/employer and servant/employee)
 - Encourage students to think about workers' incentives to work hard.
 - o Why do you think indentured servitude eventually died out in the U.S. but slavery grew?

Closure: Independent Practice

You are living in England in 1690, and many people are debating whether indentured servitude in the colonies should be stopped or encouraged. Choose one of the following:

- Create a broadside (poster) either supporting or opposing indentured servitude. Your broadside must give some strong support for your position.
- Write a letter to the editor of *The Times of London* explaining why you support or oppose indentured servitude. Your letter must make a convincing argument and give some strong support for your position.

Assess the student work using the following traits:

- Supports its position with at least five strong reasons

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Module 3

- Addresses at least one possible argument against its position
- Clarity & Style
- Grammar and Spelling