

Unit 4, Lesson 1: Seeking Solutions to the Labor Problem in the Colonies

Lesson Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about the need for labor in the English colonies and two strategies (systems) that the English used to solve that problem i.e., the indentured servant and headrights systems. The dissatisfaction with, or shortcomings of, these systems will cause the shift to a system of permanent enslavement.

Excellent sources of information about the indentured servant system [here](#) and [here](#).

Delaware Standard(s)

- **History Standard 1a, 4-5 [Chronology]:** Students will study historical events and persons within a given time frame in order to create a chronology and identify related cause-effect factors.
- **History Standard 2b, 4-5 [Analysis]:** Students will examine historical materials relating to a particular region, society, or theme; chronologically arrange them; and analyze change over time.
- **History Standard 3a, 4-5 [Interpretation]:** Students will explain why historical accounts of the same event sometimes differ and relate this explanation to the evidence presented or the point-of-view of the author.

Big Ideas

- Causation, change over time

Essential Questions

- What changed and why?
- Why might there be different accounts of the indentured servant system?

Enduring Understandings

Students will understand that (a) the indentured servant and headright systems caused many people to migrate from England to its 13 colonies, and (b) there might be different accounts of the indentured servant system because the authors of those accounts use different evidence to support their claims.

Resources

- [Resource 1: Warm-Up - Be a Problem Solver](#)
- [Resource 2: England's Solutions to their Labor \(Worker\) Problems](#)
- [Resource 3: Why Were They Called Indentured Servants?](#)
- [Resource 4: Sample Indenture Contract](#)
- [Resource 5: Accounts of Indentured Servant Life](#)
- [Resource 6: Venn Diagram](#)
- [Resource 7: Checks for Understanding](#)

Procedures

1. **Warm-Up:** Distribute copies of [Resource 1: Warm-Up - Be a Problem Solver](#) . Tell your students to imagine that there are two places separated by a large body of water - Place A and Place B have different problems (see the map on Resource 1). Have students work with a partner or small group and come up with one or more good solutions for the problems described on the map.
2. **Reading:** Distribute copies of [Resource 2: England's Solutions to their Labor \(Worker\) Problems](#). Explain that the purpose of the reading is to help students understand how England tried to solve the labor (worker shortage) problem in the North American colonies while also reducing the poverty problems at home. Ask them to pay close attention to England's solutions.
3. **Video:** NBC Learn "Indentured Servitude" available [here](#). This 2 minute video provides a nice video explanation of the indentured servant system.
4. **Reading:** Distribute copies of [Resource 3: Why Were They Called Indentured Servants?](#)
5. **Matching Indentures:** This is designed to be a fun activity for the students. Assign students to a partner. Ask the pairs to be Partner 1 or Partner 2. Tell them that you are going to do an activity that will show them how the indentured papers worked.
 - a. Distribute one copy of [Resource 4: Sample Indenture Contract](#) to *each pair* (not one per person) Resource 3 has two copies of the same, simulated indenture agreement. Partner 1 will be the person who wants to be an indentured servant. Partner 2 will be the indentured (person for whom the indentured servant will work). Students are to
 - b. read the terms of the agreement,
 - c. fill out the information requested in the blank spaces (but tell them to write make-up names, not their own),
 - d. then create unique indents that separate the two simulated contracts.
 - e. After students fill them out and create the indents, collect all of the papers. Shuffle them and pass one out randomly to each student.
 - f. Tell them that a wicked storm hit the colony and blew all of the papers all over the place. They have been asked by a judge to find out who has been indentured to whom by finding the person in the room whose indents match up with the one they have.
 - g. Give them a few minutes to walk around and see if they can find their matching indenture contract.
6. **Understanding Reasons for Competing Accounts:** History standard 3 for grade 4 establishes the expectation that students will be able to explain why there might be different accounts of the same event. Although the indentured servant system is not an "event," it does offer a good context in which to help students understand reasons for competing accounts.
 - a. Distribute copies of [Resource 5: Accounts of Indentured Servant Life](#) and [Resource 6: Venn Diagram](#). Have students work with a partner, read the two accounts of indentured

life on Resource 5, then complete the Venn Diagram on Resource 6 by listing points made uniquely by Elizabeth Sprigs and George Alsop, while also noting things they shared in common (e.g., both indentured in Maryland, both were indentured servants, both in an English colony etc.).

- b. You will want to highlight the fact that there are different accounts because Sprigs and Alsop offered different evidence to support their claims. Students should be able to explain that one reason why there might be different accounts of the same event (or “system”) is that the authors used different evidence as the bases for their accounts.
7. **Checks for Understanding:** Distribute copies of [Resource 7: Checks for Understanding](#) and have students complete the checks for understanding.