

**Lesson:** “In every Sense of the Word”

By: Jeff Frenkiewich

**RE:** NEH Landmarks of American History & Culture Workshop: African Americans in the Making of Early New England

**Overarching Question:** How should modern readers interpret the difference between “enslaved people” and “indentured servants” in colonial and antebellum New England?

**Objective:** Students will compare and contrast a contract of indenture to a bill of sale for an enslaved person living in colonial Massachusetts during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**NH SS Standards Theme: Patterns of Social and Political Interaction**

- Examples of these patterns are human rights issues, the changing role of women in the economy, immigration issues, and slavery.

**NH SS Standards**

SS:GE:4:4.2: Describe the types and historical patterns of human migration, e.g., chain migration or slave trade. (Themes: C: People, Places and Environment, I: Patterns of Social and Political Interaction)

SS:HI:4:5.5: Describe the reasons why various groups have come to the United States, e.g., enslavement or economic opportunity. (Themes: C: People, Places and Environment, F: Global Transformation, H: Individualism, Equality and Authority)

SS:WH:12:4.3: Analyze the development and impact of various labor systems, e.g., slavery, the medieval guilds, or wage labor. (Themes: C: People, Places and Environment, D: Material Wants and Needs, I: Patterns of Social and Political Interaction)

**Lesson Materials:**

Bill of sale for slave named Kate. *Memorial Hall Museum Online: American Centuries*. Retrieved from <http://www.memorialhall.mass.edu/activities/media.jsp?itemid=7797&img=0>

Indenture of Sarah Green. *Memorial Hall Museum Online: American Centuries*. Retrieved from <http://www.memorialhall.mass.edu/activities/media.jsp?itemid=15389&img=0>

Our Nig (2015). *Our Nig*. Astounding Stories., <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/africam/ournighp.html>

**Lesson Steps:**

1. Student Brainstorm: Have students brainstorm words associated with “indentured servant” and “enslaved worker.” If they do not have sufficient background with these terms, provide students with the following definitions. For better success, this lesson should follow a more complete study of American slavery so students have proper background information as to the lives of enslaved Americans and indentured servants during colonial America.
  - a. “indentured servant”: a person who signs and is bound by indentures to work for another for a specified time especially in return for payment of travel expenses and maintenance (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/indentured%20servant>)
  - b. “slave”: 1 : a person held in servitude as the chattel of another. 2 : one that is completely subservient to a dominating influence (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/slaves>)

2. Introduce students to Margaretta Thorn's line, "She was indeed a slave, in every sense of the word," (*Our Nig*, p. 98) (Background: Harriet Wilson became an indentured servant after her mother abandoned her on the doorstep of a neighborhood house in Milford, NH, in the 1820s. Although this was after the colonial period, this line remains the inspiration for this lesson as it forces a juxtaposition of the two terms that are often held in distinct relief from one another. One purpose of this lesson is to help students explore the language and legal frameworks used to define these two subject positions.)
3. Task: Tell students that their task today is to read two documents (Document 1 & 2) and use their background information to fill in two Frayer organizers (one for "indentured servant" and one for "enslaved worker") (Organizer 1 & 2)
4. When students finish their organizers, discuss the following questions:
  - a. What language in these documents defines the different subjects?
  - b. What are the assumptions inherent in these documents?
  - c. Why is the bill of sale for enslavement shorter than the contract of indenture?
  - d. What other documents support the language / codes in these documents?
  - e. What do these documents say about the rights of the various parties beholden to these contracts?
  - f. Should Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century give more attention to the lives of indentured servants?

**(DOCUMENT 1)**

**Bill of Sale for Slave Named Kate**

May ye 22 1734 Then I Samuel Kent of Suffeild  
In holden for the Consideration of Eightynine  
Pounds In Cash In hand Paid to me have Sold Set  
over & Delivored to Capt Israel Williams of  
Hatfeild a Certain Negro Girl named Kate  
Ageed About Eight or Nine years wch I hereby  
Engage for me my heirs Executors & Administrators  
To warrant To him his heirs Executors & Administra-  
tors against the Lawful Claim Challenge or Demand  
of Any Person or Persons Whosoever as witness  
My hand and Seal ye Day Abovevd –  
Sign'd Seal'd & Delivd  
In presence of  
Elear Porter  
Oliver Partridge  
John Pomroy  
Samll Kent

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/activities/media.jsp?itemid=7797&img=0>

**(DOCUMENT 2)**

**Indenture of Sarah Green**

This Indenture witnesseth that Joseph Barnard Gentleman, Joseph Stebbins Esquire, & John Williams Esquire all of Deerfield in the County of Hampshire & Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Overseers of the Poor of the said Town of Deerfield: by virtue of a law of the Commonwealth aforesaid in such case provided.

Have placed & by these presents, do place and bind out as an Apprentice a poor child (who has become chargeable to said town) named Sarah Green daughter of Samuel Green late resident of said town.

Unto Ebenezer Hindsdale Williams of said Deerfield Gentleman; to learn the Art or Mystery of common needlework & housewifery the said Sarah to dwell with & serve the said Ebenezer H. Williams after the manner of an Apprentice from the date hereof untill the Eleventh day of September which will be in the Year of our Lord one thousand Eight Hundred & Seven at which time, the said apprentice (if she be living) will be Eighteen Years of age; or untill she shall be married whichever of said events shall first take place. during all which time the said Apprentice her said Master shall well & faithfully serve, she shall not reveal his secrets, & shall readily obey his lawful commands. She shall do no damage to her said master, nor know or suffer any to be done by others without giving him notice thereof: she shall not spend her time in idle pastimes, or amusements, nor absent herself from the service of her said master: but shall behave herself, as a good & faithful apprentice in all things, & at all times, during The whole of said term

And the said Ebenezer H. Williams on his part doth hereby covenant & agree with the Overseers aforesaid to teach the said Apprentice or cause her to be taught the Art & Mystery of common needlework, and housewifery by the best way

(begin page 2)

and means he can: and also to teach her, or cause her to be taught to read & write if she be able to learn and shall faithfully provide for her sufficient meat

& drink, cloathing & lodging, & other necessaries fit & convenient for such an apprentice, during the term aforesaid: and at the expiration thereof to give unto said apprentice, two good suits of wearing apparel, for all parts of her body, one suitable for the Sabbath, & the other for labouring days

As Witness our hands & seals  
the twenty Eighth day of November in  
the year of our Lord one thousand seven  
Hundred & ninety seven.

Signed Sealed & Delivered

In presence of

Saml Merrill

Thos W. Ashley

Ebenr H. Williams

Joseph Barnard

Joseph Stebbins

John Williams.

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/activities/media.jsp?itemid=15389&img=0>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Frayer Model

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Notes/Facts</b>
<b>Example</b>	<b>Non-example</b>

word:  
**Indentured Servant**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Frayer Model

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Notes/Facts</b>
<b>Example</b>	<b>Non-example</b>

word:  
**Enslaved Person**