

Unit Title: The Case of Romulus

Teacher: Mr. Coll

Subject: E.L.A. Narrative Writing

Duration: 80 Minutes x 3

Grade: Six

Summary of Unit: Students will read about Romulus, a Freed Slave, from Greenfield, MA who moved to Shelburne, MA. Romulus was constantly engaged in a legal dispute between Shelburne and Greenfield over Shelburne's not wanting to be responsible for Romulus and his family's welfare should Romulus prove to be unable to care for his family.

Stage 1 – Desired Results – Students will become aware that freedom didn't necessarily mean complete liberty and a means to prosperity. Legal hurdles sometimes still stood in the way of the recently emancipated.

Objectives/Standards: Massachusetts Frameworks for ELA, Grade Six

W3A - Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters, organize an appropriate narrative sequence.

W3B – Use narrative techniques, such as dialog, pacing and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

W3C – Use a variety of transition words, phrases, clauses, to convey sequence and signal shifts from one timeframe to another.

W3E – Provide a conclusion that follows the narrated experiences or events.

Essential Questions – What did the term “Warning Out” mean in the mid to late 18th Century in Western Massachusetts?

Why were the Selectmen of Shelburne concerned about Romulus and his family's place of domicile?

Factual Knowledge - (“Students Will Know”)

Students will learn that in the 1780's, Western Massachusetts, as well as the rest of the state, began to see an increase in freed slaves and that town taxes led to many people migrating to new towns. The towns to which they went would often

try to “Warn Out” these people so that the town would not have to care for them in terms of welfare or if the newly arrived fell on hard times.

Procedural Knowledge - (“Students Will Be Able To”)

Students will be able to follow the flow of records from the town of Shelburne’s Selectmen to the Selectmen of Greenfield and to read the records of the case as it transpired from 1790 – until the last records in 1795.

Conceptual Knowledge - (“Students Will Understand”)

Students will understand that the emancipation of slaves in Massachusetts in the late 18th Century did not necessarily mean that freedmen were “Free and Clear” to move about as they pleased and establishing a new life would not be that easy.

Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks – Students will write a narrative based on their perceptions of Romulus’ reactions to the Shelburne Selectmen’s case against the Town of Greenfield regarding his family’s legal domicile. The narrative must be written with a consideration of the Massachusetts Writing Standards for Sixth Grade. Namely: W3A, W3B, W3C, and W3E. Length of assignment is no less than 400 words, typed double-spaced, font size 12-14, Times New Roman or Calibri.

Unit Pre-Assessment – N.A.

Other Evidence/Assessments – Standard Ware Sixth Grade Writing expectations.

(i.e. Capitalizing proper nouns, punctuation, etc.)

Extensions – We can gather evidence from other cases in Western Mass. to illustrate the theme of this exercise. We can use primary documents gleaned from different sources.

Differentiation – Identified students will work in a small group with the Special Education staff and the classroom teacher to produce a representative sample for this project. Identified ELL students will have the project modified.

Stage 3 Learning Plan

Learning Activities – Comparing the original primary source material with the modern text version.

Guided examination of a map of Franklin County to fix the locations of Greenfield and Shelburne.

Legal Settlement, Warning Out, and the Case of Romulus

In the colonial and early national periods, every New England town required residents to have “legal settlement” in their town—that is, to be born, enslaved, or apprenticed there; to purchase a “freehold” (property right) there; or, if a woman, to marry a man who was legally settled there. Towns “warned out” people who came into town and stayed there without having or obtaining legal settlement. The concern of the town officials was the high cost to taxpayers of providing poor relief; in the event that a town resident became impoverished, the town was responsible for providing food, shelter, and other support, medical care, and, if necessary, burial—but only if she was “legally settled” in that town and thus entitled to town charity.

The Revolution both raised taxes at every level and led to an increase in the numbers of propertyless poor people who moved from town to town seeking work. When such people found a congenial place, they tended to stay. Town officials used various means to locate, identify, and “warn out” such people; if they continued to stay, they usually would be forcibly removed, but in any case, the act of warning them out relieved the town of responsibility for them, should they fall into need or illness. But as new towns hived off from old ones, entitlement to legal settlement became an ever more complicated issue.

In the 1780s, as more and more enslaved people of color became free, they became a larger and more visible part of the transient population. Town Councils and Boards of Selectmen began to systematically seek out, interrogate, and warn out ever larger numbers of free blacks.

What follows are excerpts from the Record Book of the Board of Select Men of Shelburne, Massachusetts, which contain the minutes of their meetings, interspersed with minutes of the Town Meetings that followed each meeting of the Board of Select Men, held between 1775 and 1800. This Record Book is archived in the Shelburne Town Hall. The excerpts concern a certain former slave named Romulus (spelled variously as Romelus, Romalus, Romalis, Romas, Romus) and his family.

Board of Select Men – November 26, 1790

7th To see if the Town will direct the Select Men to warn out Inhabitants that came into Town and act thereon as they think proper—

8th To see what the Town will direct the Selectmen to do with Romelus and act thereon as they think proper.

Town Meeting – December 6, 1790

7th Then voted to have 10 men to consult with the Select Men with regard to Warning out Inhabitation. [List ten names]

8th Then voted to pass over the 8th awhile.

Board of Select Men – August 1, 1791

...To Mr. John Ransom Constable of The Town of Shelburne in the County of Hampshire and Commonwealth of Massachusetts – Greeting. In the Name of the Commonwealth Aforesaid you are Required forthwith To Warn Romilus And Roxanna His Wife And Pedro And Roxanna Jnr And Zachariah And Ecclesiastus And Dianna And Hercules Their Children Resident Last at Greenfield in the County And Common Wealth Aforesaid And Having No Legal Right In the Town of Shelburne That They Forthwith Depart from And leave Said Town of Shelburne under the pains and Penalty of The Law Made and provided in Case of Refusal.

Board of Select Men – September 7, 1791

2nd item To See What Method The Town Will Take With Regards The Dispute There Is Between Shelburne and Greenfield About the Maintenance of Romalus and His family and Act Thereon as They Think propper—

Town Meeting – September 14, 1791

2nd item Then Voted to Chuse a Committee To Consult With Greenfield Agents Concerning the Suit That Is in Court about Romalus and His family.

Then voted to have Two Men for The above Committee.

December 12, 1791

Entered into Minutes of Board of Select Men

Hampshire Viz. Pursuant to the Directions of The Within Council, the Sixth Day of December 1791 I Warned Romilus And Roxanna His Wife And Pedro and Roxanna Jnr And Zacchariah And Ecclesiastus and Diana and Hervules Their Children forthwith to Depart from The Town of Shelburne Under the pains and Penalty of the Law in Case of Refusal Who have been Resident Here from the 12th Day of April 1776 Before Was Last Inhabitants at Greenfield in this Commonwealth.

John Ransom Constable

Board of Select Men – February 26, 1792

12th item To See What method The Town Will Take With Regard To Romas & Family and act Thereon as They Think proper.

Town Meeting – March 5, 1792

12th Then Voted That The Select Men prosecute Greenfield With Regard to Romalus and family—

Board of Select Men – March 26, 1792

To See What Method The Town Will Take With Regard to providing a House for Romus and act Thereon as They Think proper.

Town Meeting – April 2, 1792

Then Voted To Allow John Boyd 3/ per Week for What he Has Kept Romus family and Till after May Court.

Board of Select Men – March 4, 1793

14th To know the Minds of The Town Respecting The Suit With [Greenfield Regarding] Romus.]

Town Meeting – April 1, 1793

14th item Voted to prosecute the Matter With Greenfield With Regard To Romalus Family—
(Adjourned to April 8, 1793)

14th item Then Voted to Choose an Agent To prosecute The Matter With Greenfield With Regard to Romalus Family.

Board of Select Men – March 3, 1795

4th item. To Choose a Committee to settle with Greenfield with regard to Romolus's Family.

Town Meeting – April 6, 1795

4th item. That – to vote – to see if the Town will choose a committee to settle with Greenfield with regard tomRomolus's family voted to have Three Men for the above Committee. Then voted Maj. Nash & John Wells & John Stuart for the above committee.

Board of Select Men – December 31, 1795

4th item: To see what Method the Town will Take with regard to Romases Family and act thereon as they think Proper.

Town Meeting – January 7, 1776

4th item: Then Voted to Vandue [sell] Romases two Boys at the lowest bidder till May Meeting if no place found before.

Then put up the oldest Boy Zacheus to the lowest Bidder and it was struck off to John Boyd at three shillings and ten pence per week. Then set up Ecclesiastus at the lowest Bidder and he was struck off to Capt. H—

Board of Select Men - November 26, 1790

- 7th To see if the Town will direct the Select Men to warn out Inhabitants that came into Town and act thereon as they think proper - - - - -
- 8th To see what the Town will direct the Select men to do with Bromelius and act thereon as they think proper -

Town Meeting - December 6, 1790

- 1st Article Then voted to have 10 men to consult with the Select Men with regard to warning out Inhabitanee
- Then voted in Jⁿ Burdock, Mores, Hawkes Robert Willson Parker Dole Jⁿ Long Jⁿ Aaron Skinner Saml Fitch Jⁿ Barnard Tho^s Drury Eben^s Allen Jⁿ.
- for the above Committee
- 8th Article Then voted to pass over the 8th Article

Board of Select Men - August 1, 1791

To Mr. John Ransom Constable of the Town of Melbourne in the County of Hampshire and Commonwealth of Massachusetts Greeting - In the name of the Commonwealth aforesaid you are required forthwith to warn Nomelias And Rosanna His wife And Pedro And Rosanna jⁿ. And Jacobariah And Sulestacthis And Diana And Harculus Their Children Residout Left at Greenfield in the County And Common Wealth aforesaid And Having No Legal try in the Town of Melbourne That they forthwith Depart from And leave said Town of Melbourne under the pains and Penalties of the Law Made And provided In Case of Refusal

1

Board of Select Men - September 7, 1791

^{and}
2^d To see what Method the Town will take with regard to
the Diffute, that is Between Melburne and Greenfield
About the Maintenance of Romulus and His family and act
thereon as they think proper -

Town Meeting - September 14, 1791

2^d It is then voted to Chuse a Committee to Consult with Greenfield
Agents Concerning the Suit that is in Court about
Romulus and His family -
It is then voted to Have 5 Men for the above Committee.

December 12, 1791

Entered into Minutes of Board of Select Men

Having done Pursuant to the Directions of the within
On the sixt^h Day of December 1791 I Warrant Romulus And
Refanna His Wife And Pedro and Refanna Jun^r And Garchanish
And Selefiaster And Jiana and Romulus their Children forthwith
to Depart from the Town of Melburne under the pains and
Penalty of the Law in Case of Refusal. Who Have Been
Resident Here from the 12th Day of April 1776 Before the
last Inhabitants at Greenfield In this Commonwealth
John Hanson Constable

Board of Select Men - February 26, 1792

12th So see what Method the Town will take with regard to Romas & family and act thereon as they think proper -

Town Meeting - March 5, 1792

12th then voted that the Select Men prosecute Greenfield with Regard to Romas and family -

Board of Select Men - March 26, 1792

12th So see what Method the Town will take with regard to providing a House for Romas and act thereon as they think proper

Town Meeting - April 2, 1792

then voted to allow John Boyd 3/10th Week for what he has kept Romas family and till after May Court -

Board of Select Men - March 4, 1793

14th So know the Minds of the Town respecting the Suit with [Greenfield regarding Romas]

Town Meeting - April 1, 1793

then voted to prosecute the Matter with Greenfield with Regard to Romas family -

14th then voted to Choose an agent to prosecute the Matter with Greenfield with Regard to Romas family -

Board of Select Men - March 3, 1795

4. To change a Committee to settle with Greenfield with regard to Pomocuffs Family

Town Meeting - April 6, 1795

4. Voted to vote to see if the Town will change a committee to settle with Greenfield with regard to Pomocuffs Family voted to have three men for the above Committee
Then voted Maj. Nathl. S. John Thelb S. John Ward for the above Committee

Board of Select Men - December 31, 1795

4th To see what Method the Town will take with regard to Pomocuffs Family and act thereon as they think Proper

Town Meeting - January 7, 1776

4 Then voted to send Pomocuffs two Boys at the lowest bidder till May Meeting if no place found before

Then put up the oldest Boy Zachens to the lowest bidder and it was struck off to John Boy at three shillings and ten pence per week

Then put up Eulapius at the lowest bidder and he was struck off to Capt. Thump at 9/ per week