

Triangular Trade Web of Interaction

By: Ryan Sylvia

Grade Level: 6 and up

Applicable MA History and Social Science Frameworks:

TOPIC 5. Explain the importance of maritime commerce and the practice of bartering – exchanging goods or services without payment in money—in the development of the economy of colonial Massachusetts, using materials from historical societies and history museums as reference materials

b. trans-Atlantic and Caribbean trade, especially the Triangular Trade that included Africans to be sold as slaves in the colonies and goods such as sugar and cotton produced by slave labor to be sold in the colonies and in Europe

c. the development of seaport cities of New Bedford, Newburyport, Gloucester, Salem, and Boston

Summary and Objective:

The purpose of this lesson plan is to demonstrate the interconnectedness of Europe, Africa, and the Americas during the Triangular Trade. By highlighting the movement of goods and people students will have a visual representation of the winners and losers of this trade that correlates to their primary source readings. This activity will help students understand the economics and interconnectedness of labor markets during the American colonial era as well as today.

Students will be tasked with reading a primary source article about the process of constructing and selling an iPhone. A quick snowball activity will follow in which they are asked to either write down one lingering question about the article or one comment regarding the reading that stuck them as important. The class will then discuss five of these comments/questions.

Students will then move on to the Triangular Trade portion of the lesson. The teacher will have England, the American colonies, the Caribbean colonies, and Africa marked throughout the room. The best way would be to use a projector to project a map down onto the floor for students to stand on. However, if this is not feasible, taping pictures of these regions to a wall would also work. Each student will go to the center of the room, grab one random item off a table, and one long string. After examining the item, each student will stand on the region where they think it was produced.

Students will, at this point, be prompted to prepare answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is your item and why do you think it came from this place?
- 2) Where do you think your item was headed and why?

If a student's answer is not correct explain to the class what would have taken place in reality. If the student is correct (or after the teacher has explained), have them connect their string from continent to continent, possibly by tying either end to a desk or chair. Using very long strings and crisscrossing the room would be ideal, as it would illustrate the long distances these goods and people traveled.

When all items have been explained, ask the class for a volunteer for a final item. Hand the student a picture of an enslaved African and ask them to go through the same process as stated above. Then ask the class what the difference is between the original set of items and the last "item" traded.

Answer: All items were treated the same, as commodities and nothing more.

Ask students to read an article outlining the process of rum production during the colonial period.

They are then tasked with writing one paragraph to be shared with an elbow partner, responding to the prompt:

Compare and contrast the process of assembling a modern iPhone and colonial rum.

Needed for this lesson:

- 1) <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/people-and-culture/food/the-plate/2015/04/10/rum-the-spirit-that-fueled-a-revolution/>
- 2) <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/29/technology/iphone-china-apple-stores.html>
- 3) Projector or print-outs of geographic locations

Samples of the following:

wood	coffee beans	molasses
salt	fabric	rum
sugar	peas	cod
teacup	fur	tobacco
pepper	rice	
representation of an enslaved African		