

Forced Labor in the British North American Colonies

This sample task contains a set of primary and authentic sources about indentured servitude and slavery in the British North American colonies.

Alignment

The questions in this task align to the following social studies grade-level expectations.

5.3.2 Describe cooperation and conflict among Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans

5.3.6 Explain and give examples of how Native Americans, Europeans, and free and enslaved Africans adapted to living in the New England colonies, the Middle colonies, and the Southern colonies

Contents

This sample task contains the following sections:

- [Primary and Authentic Sources](#)
- [Assessment Items](#)
- [Extended-Response Task](#)
- [Scoring Rubric](#)
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- [Printable Student Version](#)

Task Directions

- Teachers may choose to use or modify this sample as part of an instructional lesson or as a formative or summative assessment.
- Teachers should provide students access to the printable student version of the task items, which excludes GLE alignment, answer keys, and scoring information.
- Students should then read or review the sources and answer the questions.
- For additional specifications about the task, please see the [Assessment Guidance](#) for grade 5.

Primary and Authentic Sources

Read and study Sources 1 through 4 about indentured servitude and slavery in the British North American colonies. As you read, you may take notes in the space next to the sources or on page 5 in this answer document. Then use the sources to answer questions 1 through 5.

Source 1: Newspaper advertisements, *Virginia Gazette*

December 22, 1768

To be SOLD...

FORTY VIRGINIA born SLAVES, consisting of men, women, and children, among which are several good spinners. Eighteen months credit will be allowed, the purchasers giving bond and approved security to

Tdf PITMAN CLEMENTS, Executor.

JUST arriv'd, the *Justitia*, Captain Colin Somerwell, with about 120 healthy SERVANTS, consisting of men, women, and boys, among which are many tradesmen, viz. [as follows] Shoemakers, tailors, weavers, hatters, diers [dyers], carpenters, joiners, house painters, a tanner, a bookbinder, a stone mason, a good wheelwright, a tallow shandler [candle maker], farmers, and other country laborers. There are, I doubt not, other tradesman; but not yet having examined the servants, I cannot not now mention them....

THOMAS HODGE

February 21, 1771

Twenty five Pounds Reward. RUN away...a Virginia born Negro Man Slave named WILL, near six feet high, thirty five Years old, and well made; his Face is often full of bumps. He was seen with a forged Pass.... Whoever apprehends [captures] the said Slave, and brings him to me, shall have the above Reward; or if secured in any Jail, and advertised in the VIRGINIA GAZETTE, TEN POUNDS Reward.... GEORGE KELLY, an Irishman, about six Feet high...had some Dealings with the above Slave before he ran away, and I have Reason to think harboured [hid] him some Time after.... Kelly, with his Wife and one Child, ran away in August, and crossed the Roanoke River, at Jefferson's Ferry. It is probable the Slave had some Place appointed [set] to meet him in Carolina; and if they are together, I have no Doubt will endeavor [try] to make him pass for a Freeman.

Source 2: [Chart of estimated immigration to the 13 Colonies, 1607-1775](#) (Top of page)

Source 3: Excerpts from *Gottlieb Mittelberger's Journey to Pennsylvania in the Year 1750*

[T]he people are packed densely...in the large sea-vessels. One person receives a place of scarcely 2 feet width and 6 feet length in the bedstead [of space], while many a ship carries four to six hundred souls [persons]....

But during the voyage there is on board these ships terrible misery,...fever, dysentery,...and the like, all of which come from old and sharply salted food and meat, also from very bad and foul water, so that many die miserably....

Among the healthy, impatience sometimes grows so great and cruel that one curses the other, or himself and the day of his birth.... One always reproaches [blames] the other with having persuaded him to undertake the journey. Frequently children cry out against their parents, husbands against their wives and wives against their husbands, brothers and sisters, friends and acquaintances against each other. But most against the soul-traffickers [traders who convinced indentured servants to sign up for the voyage]....

When the ships have landed at Philadelphia after their long voyage, no one is permitted to leave them except those who pay for their passage or can give good security; the others, who cannot pay, must remain on board the ships till they are purchased, and are released from the ships by their purchasers....

It often happens that whole families, husband, wife, and children, are separated by being sold to different purchasers, especially when they have not paid any part of their passage money....

When one has served his or her term, he or she is entitled to a new suit of clothes at parting; and if it has been so stipulated [agreed to], a man gets in addition a horse, a woman, a cow.

Source 4: Historical markers

[The Indentured Servants' Plot \(1663\), Virginia](#)

[Stono Rebellion \(1739\), South Carolina](#)

Item 1: Multiple Choice

Based on the newspaper advertisements in source 1, which conclusion can **best** be reached?

- A. Both enslaved persons and the contracts of indentured servants were considered valuable forms of property.
- B. Both enslaved persons and indentured servants worked mostly as skilled laborers on tobacco plantations.
- C. Enslaved persons could legally be punished for running away, but indentured servants could not be punished.
- D. Indentured servitude was used in the northern colonies, while slavery was used only in the southern colonies.

Item 2: Multiple Choice

Which statement is a correct interpretation of the chart in source 2?

- A. Indentured servants were no longer an important source of labor after 1700.
- B. By 1775 enslaved persons outnumbered free persons in the thirteen colonies.
- C. More immigrants arrived as forced laborers than as free persons from 1607 to 1775.
- D. Indentured servants increased as a percentage of the population from 1607 to 1775.

Item 3: Multiple Choice

Which statement **best** contrasts the journey indentured servants and enslaved persons took to get to the British North American colonies in the 18th century?

- A. Because enslaved persons were more valuable than indentured servants, they received better food and conditions during the voyage.
- B. Indentured servants were required to work to pay off the cost of the voyage, while enslaved persons were forced into labor for life.
- C. Because indentured servants generally chose to take the voyage, they were less likely to complain about the conditions.
- D. Families of indentured servants were often separated after the voyage, while enslaved families generally remained together.

Item 4: Multiple Choice

How is the third newspaper advertisement (Source 1) related to the historical markers in Source 4?

- A. They are all primary sources about indentured servants and enslaved persons.
- B. They all show cooperation between indentured servants and enslaved persons.
- C. They all contain examples of forced laborers resisting their masters.
- D. They were all created to prevent forced laborers from running away.

Item 5: Extended Response

Write a well-organized response on the lines provided on pages 6 and 7 in this answer document.

Describe the different experiences of indentured servants and enslaved persons during the colonial period in British North America.

Consider the following when writing your response:

- **voyage to the colonies**
- **legal differences between indentured servants and enslaved persons**
- **living and working conditions in the colonies**

As you write, follow the directions below.

- Address all parts of the prompt.
- Include information and examples from your own knowledge of social studies.
- Use evidence from the sources to support your response.
- Follow the steps on the Checklist as you write your response.

Use page 5 in this answer document for notes and planning. Write your **final response** on pages 6 and 7 in this answer document.

Remember: The prewriting activities on page 5 will not be scored. Only your response on pages 6 and 7 will be scored.

Scoring Rubric

The response should be scored **holistically** on its adherence to two dimensions: Content and Claims. Each response should be given the score that corresponds to the set of bulleted descriptors that **best** describes the response.

Dimension: Content	
Score	Description
4	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects thorough knowledge of the different experiences of indentured servants and enslaved persons during the colonial period in British North America by incorporating ample, focused factual information from prior knowledge and the sources; • Contains accurate understandings with no errors significant enough to detract from the overall content of the response; • Fully addresses all parts of the prompt.
3	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects general knowledge of the different experiences of indentured servants and enslaved persons during the colonial period in British North America by incorporating adequate factual information from prior knowledge and the sources; • Contains mostly accurate understandings with minimal errors that do not substantially detract from the overall content of the response; • Addresses all parts of the prompt.
2	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects limited knowledge of the different experiences of indentured servants and enslaved persons during the colonial period in British North America by incorporating some factual information from prior knowledge and the sources; • Contains some accurate understandings with a few errors that detract from the overall content of the response; • Addresses part of the prompt.
1	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects minimal knowledge of the different experiences of indentured servants and enslaved persons during the colonial period in British North America by incorporating little or no factual information from prior knowledge and the sources; • Contains few accurate understandings with several errors that detract from the overall content of the response; • Minimally addresses part of the prompt.
0	The student's response is blank, incorrect, or does not address the prompt.

Dimension: Claims	
Score	Description
4	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a valid claim that effectively expresses a solid understanding of the topic; • Thoroughly supports the claim with well-chosen evidence from the sources; • Provides a logically organized, cohesive, and in-depth explanation of the connections, patterns, and trends among ideas, people, events, and/or contexts within or across time and place.
3	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a relevant claim that expresses a general understanding of the topic; • Supports the claim with sufficient evidence from the sources; • Provides an organized explanation of the connections, patterns, and trends among ideas, people, events, and/or contexts within or across time and place.
2	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents an inadequate claim which expresses a limited understanding of the topic. • Includes insufficient support for the claim but does use some evidence from the sources; • Provides a weak explanation of the connections, patterns, and trends among ideas, people, events, and/or contexts within or across time and place.
1	<p>The student's response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not develop a claim but provides evidence that relates to the topic; OR develops a substantially flawed claim with little or no evidence from the sources; • Provides a vague, unclear, or illogical explanation of the connections among ideas, people, events, and/or contexts within or across time and place.
0	<p>The student's response is blank, incorrect, or does not address the prompt.</p>

Scoring Notes for Claims Rubric

A response that develops a **valid** claim expresses a **solid** understanding of the social studies topic. The response is supported by **ample and well-chosen** evidence from the sources. The explanation is logical, organized, and cohesive, as demonstrated by connections, patterns, or trends among ideas, people, events, and contexts within or across time and place. A **valid** claim shows a deep understanding of the complexity of social studies themes that is supported by convincing evidence. The analysis may include the ability to discuss cause-and-effect relationships; analyze the importance of and connection between source documents; classify patterns of continuity and change; evaluate differing perspectives; provide in-depth interpretations of historical events, etc.

A response that develops a **relevant** claim expresses a **general** understanding of the social studies topic. The response is supported by **sufficient** evidence from the sources. The explanation is organized and includes connections, patterns, or trends among ideas, people, events, and contexts within or across time and place but fails to reach the valid level. A **relevant** claim shows an accurate understanding of social studies themes but is less complex and includes more generalized evidence. The explanation may identify cause-and-effect relationships; describe patterns of continuity or change; recognize perspectives on a single topic or theme; identify the importance of or connection between source documents; provide general interpretations of historical events, etc.

A response that includes an **inadequate** claim expresses a **limited** understanding of the social studies topic and uses insufficient evidence from the sources to develop the claim. The explanation includes weak connections, patterns, or trends among ideas, people, events, and contexts within or across time and place. An **inadequate** claim shows some understanding of social studies themes but is limited in its analysis and evidence. The explanation may include insufficient understanding of cause and effect relationships; little recognition of patterns of continuity or change; limited knowledge of perspectives on a single topic or theme; misconceptions regarding the importance of or connections between source documents; limited interpretation of historical events, etc.

A response that develops a **substantially flawed** claim expresses **little** understanding of the social studies topic. The explanation, if present, may include vague or illogical connections, patterns, or trends among ideas, people, events, and contexts within or across time and place. It fails to reach the inadequate level for a variety of reasons. For example, the response may provide some evidence that relates to the topic, but is ineffective in supporting a claim, if one is made.

Characteristics of a Strong Response

A strong response is logically organized into several paragraphs. Any errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, or capitalization do not interfere with the ability of the reader to understand the ideas presented.

A strong response may develop one or more lines of reasoning to support the claim. Here are some examples.

- It was very expensive to purchase passage to come to the colonies; only very wealthy people could afford it. People in Europe heard stories of opportunities available in the colonies and agreed to contracts of indenture hoping to find a better life for their families. Many of the indentured servants died on the journey from Europe because of the unsanitary conditions. Africans were captured and sold into slavery. Many enslaved persons died on the Middle Passage due to disease, close quarters, and poor sanitation on the ships.
- Indentured servitude and slavery had both similarities and differences. Indentured servants were under contract to serve for a set amount of time to work off the cost of their passage to the colonies. The contracts could be bought and sold by other masters, but the indentured servants themselves could not be. Once in servitude, the servitude contracts were legally binding and supported by the courts. Slavery was a

lifetime of forced labor. Slavery was an inherited status that was recognized and upheld by the courts. Both types of forced labor held strict control over the laborers including not being allowed to marry without the permission of the master. Both indentured servants and enslaved persons were subject to harsh punishment. Those who rebelled or attempted to run away were punished severely. Both the contracts of indentured servants and the status as enslaved persons were recognized and enforced by the courts.

- Indentured servants who made it to the colonies had to endure years of hard labor, harsh conditions, and strict treatment. The landowners who paid their passage controlled many aspects of their lives such as indentured servants not being allowed to marry without permission. Because of the hard work, exposure to new diseases, and difficulty adjusting to a new climate, many indentured servants died before they reached the end of their contract. Enslaved persons were considered property; they could be bought and sold at will. This resulted in many enslaved families being separated and living with different masters. Once enslaved persons were purchased, the buyer owned them for life. If they had children, the children were also owned by the master.

A strong response shows understanding of the topic by analyzing the required sources and including well-chosen evidence from the sources, such as:

- The arrival of ships of enslaved persons and indentured servants was advertised in newspapers, demonstrating that labor was considered a highly valuable commodity in the colonies. (Source 1)
- Both enslaved persons and indentured servants ran away from their masters. (Source 1)
- On occasion, enslaved persons and indentured servants cooperated with one another to resist their masters. (Source 1)
- Runaway enslaved persons and indentured servants were actively tracked down with rewards offered for their return. (Source 1)
- The majority of immigrants to the British North American colonies arrived as forced laborers. (Source 2)
- Over time, the number of enslaved persons transported to the colonies increased significantly, while the number of indentured servants remained about the same but decreased as a percentage of the population. (Source 2)
- Though most immigrants to the colonies arrived as forced laborers it should not be concluded that forced laborers outnumbered free persons at any given time because indentured servants became free persons after fulfilling the terms of their contracts. (Source 2)
- Conditions on the voyage to the colonies were very difficult for indentured servants and many died in transit. (Source 3)
- Immigrants who could not pay for their passage to the colonies became indentured servants for a certain number of years in order to leave the ship. (Source 3)
- Families of indentured servants were often separated. (Source 3)
- Upon the fulfillment of an indentured servitude contract, the servant usually received some basic supplies, as agreed upon in the original contract. (Source 3)
- Rebellions by enslaved persons and indentured servants during the colonial period demonstrate dissatisfaction existed among both groups. (Source 4)

A strong response also includes important information beyond what is presented in the sources, such as:

- Describing the economic motivations behind the use of indentured servitude and slavery and how these motivations affected the experiences of indentured servants and enslaved persons. Indentured servitude was based on the need for cheap labor to work the land of the colonies. There were a limited number of settlers, and they weren't able to work the large amount of land in the large area of the colonies. The cost of

passage to the North American colonies was expensive, so the system of indentured servitude developed to attract workers. Indentured servants planted, cultivated, and harvested crops grown in the colonies. The hard labor, poor conditions, and exposure to new diseases caused most indentured servants to die before their time of servitude was complete.

- Describing the reasons people would agree to become indentured servants. It was very expensive to purchase passage to come to the colonies; only very wealthy people could afford it. People heard stories of opportunities available in the colonies such as getting their own land. In hopes of making a better life for their families, people agreed to contracts of indenture. Skilled and/or healthy, strong indentured servants could often negotiate better contracts with shorter terms because they were able to meet the needs of the landowner. Not all indentured servants went into servitude willingly. There were instances of kidnapping people to sell into servitude as well as some indentured servants being tricked into servitude by the “soul-traffickers.” These people made a profit off the people they brought over as indentured servants.
- Describing the shift from the use of indentured servants to enslaved people. As demands for labor grew, so did the cost of indentured servants. Many landowners saw enslaved Africans as a more profitable source of labor. Landowners also realized the indentured servants were only there for a given period of time but enslaved persons could be used for their entire lives which led to the shift from the use of indentured servants to enslaved Africans.
- Describing the hardships faced by enslaved persons. Enslaved people faced hardships before they ever even reached the colonies. Many Africans passed away on the voyage from Africa known as the Middle Passage. Disease, close quarters, and poor sanitation contributed to many deaths on the ships. Once in the colonies, enslaved Africans were used as field labor to plant and harvest cash crops such as cotton. Some enslaved people were treated harshly by their owners. The families of enslaved persons were often separated by being sold to different masters.
- Describing the legal similarities and differences between slavery and indentured servitude. Slavery was a lifetime of forced labor while indentured servants work for a set number of years. Slavery was an inherited status, but indentured servitude was not. Enslaved persons were considered property while the contracts of indentured servants could be bought and sold, the individuals themselves could not be. Both types of forced labor forbid individuals to marry without the permission of the master. Both indentured servants and enslaved persons were subject to corporal punishment. Both the contracts of indentured servants and the status as enslaved persons were enforced by the courts.

**Printable
Student Version**

***Note: Some sources are available only in digital format. A link is provided and will require the use of a computer to view the source.**

Forced Labor in the British North American Colonies

Read and study Sources 1 through 4 about indentured servitude and slavery in the British North American colonies. As you read, you may take notes in the space next to the sources or on page 5 in this answer document. Then use the sources to answer questions 1 through 5.

Source 1: Newspaper advertisements, *Virginia Gazette*

December 22, 1768

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Tdf PITMAN CLEMENTS, Executor.

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THOMAS HODGE

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Source 2: [Chart of estimated immigration to the 13 Colonies, 1607-1775](#) (Top of page)

Source 3: Excerpts from *Gottlieb Mittelberger's Journey to Pennsylvania in the Year 1750*

[T]he people are packed densely...in the large sea-vessels. One person receives a place of scarcely 2 feet width and 6 feet length in the bedstead [of space], while many a ship carries four to six hundred souls [persons]...

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Source 4: Historical markers

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[Stono Rebellion \(1739\), South Carolina](#)

Item 1: Multiple Choice

Based on the newspaper advertisements in Source 1, which conclusion can **best** be reached?

- A. Both enslaved persons and the contracts of indentured servants were considered valuable forms of property.
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Item 2: Multiple Choice

Which statement is a correct interpretation of the chart in Source 2?

- A. Indentured servants were no longer an important source of labor after 1700.
- B. By 1775 enslaved persons outnumbered free persons in the thirteen colonies.
- C. More immigrants arrived as forced laborers than as free persons from 1607 to 1775.
- D. Indentured servants increased as a percentage of the population from 1607 to 1775.

Item 3: Multiple Choice

Which statement **best** contrasts the journey indentured servants and enslaved persons took to get to the British North American colonies in the 18th century?

- A. Because enslaved persons were more valuable than indentured servants, they received better food and conditions during the voyage.
- B. Indentured servants were required to work to pay off the cost of the voyage, while enslaved persons were forced into labor for life.
- C. Because indentured servants generally chose to take the voyage, they were less likely to complain about the conditions.
- D. Families of indentured servants were often separated after the voyage, while enslaved families generally remained together.

Item 4: Multiple Choice

How is the third newspaper advertisement (Source 1) related to the historical markers in Source 4?

- A. They are all primary sources about indentured servants and enslaved persons.
- B. They all show cooperation between indentured servants and enslaved persons.
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- D. They were all created to prevent forced laborers from running away.

Item 5: Extended Response

Write a well-organized response on the lines provided on pages 6 and 7 in this answer document.

Describe the different experiences of indentured servants and enslaved persons during the colonial period in British North America.

Consider the following when writing your response:

- **voyage to the colonies**
- **legal differences between indentured servants and enslaved persons**
- **living and working conditions in the colonies**

As you write, follow the directions below.

- Address all parts of the prompt.
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Remember: The prewriting activities on page 5 will not be scored. Only your response on pages 6 and 7 will be scored.

Use for notes and planning your response.
(This page will not be scored.)

