Slavery, Naval Stores and Rice Plantations in Colonial North Carolina

Overview
In this lesson, students will examine the origins of slavery in Colonial North Carolina, particularly the work of those enslaved in the naval stores industry and cultivation of rice. Students will then participate in a perspective activity in which they explore the complex attitudes of people living in Colonial America as they either condemn or defend slavery.

Grade
5

North Carolina Essential Standards for 5th Grade Social Studies
- 5.H.2.3- Compare the changing roles of women and minorities on American society from Pre-Colonial through Reconstruction.
- 5.G.1.1- Explain the impact of the physical environment on early settlements in the New World.
- 5.G.1.2- Explain the positive and negative effects of human activity on the physical environment of the United States, past and present.
- 5.G.1.3- Exemplify how technological advances (communication, transportation and agriculture) have allowed people to overcome geographic limitations.
- 5.G.1.4- Exemplify migration within or immigration to the United States in order to identify push and pull factors (why people left/why people came).

Essential Questions
- Why is North Carolina called the Tar Heel state?
- What is a naval store?
- What are pine resins used for?
- Why were naval stores so popular in North Carolina in the 1700s?
- Based on the way tar, pitch and turpentine are produced, what are some possible dangers associated with its production?
- What was life like for a person enslaved in colonial North Carolina?
- What were some responsibilities of slaves?
- What were the prevailing perspectives regarding slavery of various people living in Colonial America?
- Despite some opposition, why did slavery persist in America for as long as it did?

Materials
- Tar Heel Image
• “Rice and Slavery: A Fatal Gold Seed,” reading from http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/history/hs_es_rice.htm (link not working...handout attached)
• Perspective Activity Role Cards, attached
• Perspectives on Colonial Slavery Activity Instructions, attached
• “Colonial Origins of Slavery in North Carolina” Power Point (optional), available in the Database of K-12 Resources (in PDF format)
  o To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click “View” in the top menu bar of the file, and select “Full Screen Mode”
  o To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to CarolinaK12@unc.edu

Duration
Two 60 minute periods

Procedure
Day 1

What is a “Tar Heel”?
1. Display the attached “Tar Heel” image where it is visible for all students and have a volunteer read aloud the accompanying “toast”:

   “Here’s to the land of the long leaf pine,
   The summer land where the sun doth shine,
   Where the weak grow strong and the strong grow great,
   Here’s to “Down Home,” the Old North State!”

2. Ask students to write, on a sheet of scrap paper, what they believe the phrase “Tar Heel” means, where it originated, why it has become such a popular phrase in North Carolina, and anything else they might know about it. Once students have approximately 5 minutes to write, explain that the exact history of the phrase is unknown, but that it is so ingrained in North Carolina’s history that the “toast” read aloud is actually, by law, the official toast of North Carolina. Further explain that many legends have developed in order to explain it. Select several student volunteers to share what they wrote regarding the phrase. Note and discuss differences in responses.

3. Explain to students that there are several explanations for the origination of Tar Heel. One explanation historian’s offer is that the phrase stems from North Carolina’s abundant tar, pitch and turpentine, referred to as naval stores, a result of the vast pine forests in the state. Naval stores were some of state’s most important exports early in its history. Enslaved people and others who worked in the pine forests to extract tar in the form of sap from trees often found the sticky tar on the bottoms of their feet, hence the phrase “tar heels.”

   Naval Stores in North Carolina

4. Distribute the attached short reading “Naval Stores and the longleaf pine”, attached for students to read individually or in partners. Afterwards discuss:
   • What is a naval store?
   • What are pine resins used for?
   • Why were naval stores so popular in North Carolina in the 1700s?
   • Based on the way tar, pitch and turpentine are produced, what are some possible dangers associated with its production? Why might naval store-related work be difficult?
5. Additional information to share with students:

“The naval stores industry in North Carolina started during the early 1700s. In 1720, the English Parliament enacted a bounty to encourage colonists to engage in the industry, because Great Britain’s dependence on its naval trade necessitated many boats. In the 1720s and 1730s, the industry in the Northeast Cape Fear region of present-day Duplin County attracted Welsh migrants from Pennsylvania and Delaware. By the 1770s, the production of naval stores was widespread in Eastern North Carolina, as noted by Janet Schaw, a well-educated Scot who toured the Cape Fear region a couple years prior to the American Revolution. Small farmers and their slaves (typically one to four on each farm) provided the infrastructure of the naval stores industry while growing grains and raising cattle.

During the colonial period, turpentine was used mainly as a laxative or as a water repellent for cloth and leather, but demand for it increased exponentially during the nineteenth century. Although soap manufacturers started using leftover resin from the stills in which turpentine had been extracted, turpentine was used primarily from 1800 to 1860 as an illuminant; the substance when combined with alcohol provided a cheap form of lighting that was used in homes, public buildings, and streets. This mixture was known as camphene, Teveline, or palmetto oil. By 1860, a less costly illuminant replaced the turpentine-based one: kerosene.”
(Source: http://www.northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/103/entry/)

6. Explain to students that slave labor was used in a variety of ways in Colonial North Carolina, particularly for jobs that required working in dangerous, grueling, and nasty conditions in which injury or death were part of everyday life. Production of naval stores was one such job. Ask students:

• Has anyone ever accidentally been burned by oil splashing when someone is cooking? Describe what it felt like.
• Imagine sticking your hands or feet in a pot of hot oil – what do you imagine this would feel like?

7. Explain that when enslaved people would stir pine tar, pitch and turpentine, it was often in huge cauldrons that required them to stand on the edge and use a long stirrer, almost like an oar. One slip could lead to severe burning, instantly deforming the flesh, and sometimes necessitating amputation or even death. In this case, being a “tar heel” was certainly not a good thing.

8. Further explain:

“...slaves in the naval stores industry were often bored and lonely while for consecutive months cutting boxes, or holes approximately six to eight inches, to collect resin in barrels placed at the base of trees. A boxer worked typically from November to March and cut anywhere from 80 to 500 boxes per week. Overworked slaves in the pine forests were often subjected to cruel punishment and labored in conditions similar to slaves on sugar cane plantations. Temporary housing was another difficulty. Unlike plantation slaves, bondsmen in the naval stores industry primarily lived in crude lean-tos, no more than four feet high, and were therefore constantly exposed to the elements. Many were also poorly clothed and fed, and more than a few suffered
illnesses caused by breathing the fumes of the portable copper turpentine stills.” *(Source: http://www.northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/103/entry/)*

9. Next, go through the “Colonial Origins of Slavery in North Carolina” Power Point (a short, 10 slide presentation) available in the Database of Civic Resources or by e-mailing a request to hinson@sog.unc.edu, to further student understanding of the origins of slavery in Colonial North Carolina.

10. At the end of class, remind students what a grueling job slaves engaged in when cultivating rice in the wet tidal plains of Cape Fear, North Carolina. Those people enslaved were forced in stand ankle to knee deep in stagnant, smelly mud contending with blazing sun and mosquito bites for weeks at a time. Distribute the reading “Rice and Slavery: A Fatal Gold Seed,” attached, and instruct students to read it for homework.

**Day 2**

**Rice Cultivation**

11. As a warm-up and review of the homework reading, discuss:
   - Why did Samuel Eveleigh say he was positive that rice could not be produced by whites? What does this tell you about blacks during this period?
   - How was rice produced?
   - What were some of the factors that made the cultivation of rice so grueling and dangerous?
   - What percentage of slaves died within a year of their arrival? What percentage of slave babies that survived birth died before turning 16?
   - Given the harsh conditions slaves endured when cultivating rice, why was slavery accepted and even encouraged in colonial North Carolina?

12. Ask students to consider the fundamental reason slaves were brought to the New World as laborers. The answer: money. Drive home the fact that America was built on the backs of enslaved people, and unfortunately, slave labor became the most important thing for the economy in North Carolina during the Colonial period.

**Exploring Colonial Perspectives**

13. Divide students into groups of 5. Explain that the class will be participating in an activity in which they will assume the perspective of a North Carolinian during the Colonial period. Through participation in this activity, students will gain an understanding of all the different views on slavery during the 1700s. Take the following steps to set up the activity:
   - Give each student in each group one of the attached “Perspectives Cards,” so that each group is comprised of the attached 5 different perspectives.
   - Teachers may also want to assign specific administrative roles to each student so that groups stay on task, such as:
     - Manager: Ensures that the work of the group is running smoothly, and that each group member is contributing and fulfilling their responsibility
     - Timekeeper: Ensure that the group is completing sections of the activity in a timely manner
     - Recorder: Responsible for taking notes during group discussion
     - Reporter: Responsible for presenting and summarizing perspectives to class on behalf of their group
Questioner: Keeps track of any questions students have; communicates with teacher if questions regarding the activity arise

- Tell students to take a minute to read their assigned role and independently consider what they believe their position on slavery would be.
- While students read and ponder, distribute the “Perspectives on Colonial Slavery Activity Instructions,” attached, one to each student. Read the instructions for number #1, #2, and #3 aloud, ensuring that students understand expectations.
- Allow students 10 minutes to individually brainstorm their perspectives and create a colonial character based on the information provided. Students will have to make inferences based on what they have learned throughout the lesson. Encourage them to be creative and realistic as they develop a 2 minute introductory speech to deliver to the remainder of their group when the activity begins. This introduction will let other group members know who all is at the table and how each feels regarding slavery.

Teacher tips: As students work on fleshing out their assigned perspective into a character, circulate around the room to ensure students are on the right track. Students who struggle can partner with a student from another group assigned the same perspective. Teachers should also provide some ground rules regarding acceptable language when playing such diverse perspectives (for example, even though some students are playing slave owners, it is advised students be told not to use racist language during the activity.) Give students intermittent time warnings as they develop their introduction.

Once students have completed their 2 minute introductory speech to deliver to their group, teachers should remind students of their administrative responsibilities (if assigned) as well as go over group work behavior expectations.

Finally, tell students to begin introducing themselves to their group members. Tell students to take notes on the differing perspectives presented in their groups.

Once all group members have introduced themselves to the group, tell students to individually answer the questions under section #4. Teachers should then allow around 4 minutes for students to pose and answer questions that they created in section 4. This will allow for some open discussion in character.

14. Next, move students on to step #5, in which students respond to particular primary sources in character. Teachers can choose to project each primary source for student review, or hand out a copy to each group. Groups should have approximately 4 minutes to discuss and then respond in writing to each of the 4 items (A-D) attached.

15. Upon reviewing all primary source items, praise students for a job well done and ask them to return to their individual seats. Debrief by discussing as a class:

- Was it difficult to assume the perspective assigned to you? Explain.
- For plantation owners, retail merchants, and Lords Proprietors, justifications for slavery did you make? Were there any arguments against slavery that struck you?
- For slaves and Quakers, how did listening to the pro-slavery perspectives make you feel? What counter arguments do you feel you made that were most convincing?
- Quakers actively sought the prohibition of slavery over 100 years before the Civil War. Why do you think slavery persisted for as long as it did?

Culminating Assignment: Seeing Things from the Other Side
16. As a culminating assignment (which can be completed for homework), instruct students to switch roles and assume an opposite perspective. (For example, if a student was originally assigned the perspective of a plantation owner, retail merchant, or Lords Proprietor, they should now assume the perspective of either a slave or a Quaker; if they were a slave or a Quaker, they should assume the perspective of a plantation owner, retail merchant, or Lords Proprietor.) Instruct students to write a letter to the colonial North Carolina legislature expressing their new character’s views on slavery. Give students some parameters for the letter. (For example, “In order to receive full credit, letters should be at least 3 full paragraphs in length.”) Tell students that in their letters, they should:

- Introduce yourself (in character)
- Explain how you feel about slavery and why you feel this way
- Explain why you think the legislator should support your views over opposite views
- Be grammatically correct
- Be creative, yet realistic
Here's to the land of the Long Leaf Pine,
The Summer land where the Sun doth Shine,
Where the Weak grow Strong and the Strong grow Great,
Here's to North Carolina, the good Old Tar Heel State.
**North Carolina Plantation Owner**

As a plantation owner, you depend on slaves for your livelihood. Slaves, which you paid top dollar for, provide the intensive labor needed to work in the naval stores and rice industry to ensure you have large amounts of goods to sell to merchants. Without slave labor, you cannot provide your family with food, shelter, and clothing, among other things. Slaves are the backbone of your business and economic security. In your mind, you have no choice but to use slave labor. You feel less guilty about it since it is only seldom that you are forced to physically punish slaves for refusing to work or for talking back to you.

**Enslaved Person**

As an enslaved person, you have had to endure some of the worst conditions imaginable: you have been separated from your family and forced to work in dangerous, grueling conditions when cultivating rice or working in the naval stores industry. You are treated poorly, occasionally whipped or beaten, receive only enough food to survive, and live in small quarters with 5 others. You don’t understand how any decent human being can justify having slaves. You breathe and bleed just like any other person, and thus you shouldn’t be treated like an animal.

**North Carolina Quaker**

As a devout Quaker, you believe that slavery is wrong and you are vocally opposed to it. In order to help make the lives of enslaved people more bearable, you hold regular religious meetings to lift the spirits of those poor souls who are enslaved and urge plantation owners to treat enslaved people with kindness. Despite economic benefits to the state, you ultimately believe slavery should be outlawed and take every opportunity to try and convince people of this. Even though your position angers many slave holders, you don’t care. You know that slavery is wrong.

**North Carolina Lords Proprietor**

You are one of the eight Lords Proprietors of North Carolina. You received your title when the British King appointed you to rule in “Carolina” during the early Colonial period. You seek easy profits and believe that slavery is the answer to quick economic growth in this colony. In fact, to encourage slavery you promise new settlers in North Carolina a certain amount of land for each slave they bring to the colony. You feel this is the only way to ensure North Carolina grows and is successful.

**North Carolina Retail Merchant**

As a successful retail merchant, your best selling items are naval stores, rice, and tobacco, which are all produced with slave labor. The more goods you receive from plantation owners, the more you can sell. The more you sell, the higher your profit and income. While you do not deal directly with slaves themselves, you are in favor of slavery because it makes you better off financially.
Perspectives on Colonial Slavery - Activity Instructions

1. Read the perspective assigned to you and begin individually brainstorming who you are. Take time to consider what your life in Colonial North Carolina is like, what your goals are, and what your feeling regarding slavery is. Your role will give you a basic understanding of who you are, but you must use the additional knowledge you have learned and your own creativity to determine your full identity.

2. Once you have brainstormed some ideas of who you are, answer the following (BE CREATIVE but REALISTIC!):
   - Describe yourself. What is your life like?
   - What is your perspective on slavery? Why?
   - Why should others care about your perspective?

3. Each of your group members will have alternate perspectives than your own, thus you will each have to introduce yourself in character. Using your brainstormed information above, write an introductory speech in first-person. This speech should be no longer than 2 minutes and will introduce yourself (feel free to assume a name other than your own) summarize who you are, what your life is like, what your perspective on slavery is, and why. Write your final draft here:

   I am…
4. When given instructions to do so, each of you will introduce yourselves to your group by reading your introductory speech. As you listen to the other perspectives in the group, summarize who each of the other people are below:

A.

B.

C.

D.

Which person in your group do you most agree with and why?

Which person do you disagree with the most and why?

Create one question for a person in your group who has an opposing view:

Is there anything all of your characters have in common? Or, is there anything you can all agree on? Explain.
5. Your teacher will give you items to discuss in your characters. After each of you have discussed your opinion, note your character’s thoughts in first person below:

A. What is your opinion of this image? How do you feel about the actions represented here? What do you think should be done with this piece of art?

B. What is your opinion of this quote from Carolina’s Fundamental Constitutions? Should Article 110 remain as written, or do you recommend changes to the article? Explain.

C. How does this excerpt from the Declaration of Independence make you feel? How do you interpret its meaning?

D. Based on this description of slave work, what recommendations would you make regarding slavery and why?
Items for Discussion During Perspectives Group Activity
(These items can be displayed in the front of the classroom using a projector or overhead, or individual copies can be made for distribution to each group.)

A.

_________________________________________________________________________________

B.
“Every freeman of Carolina, shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slaves, of what opinion or religion soever.” Carolina’s Fundamental Constitutions, Article 110; 1669

_________________________________________________________________________________

C.
“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence, 1776

_________________________________________________________________________________

D.
“Slaves worked in the naval stores industry and would “box” a pine tree by cutting deep holes in it. The resulting flow of turpentine was then ladled into barrels. One man can readily care for 3000 boxes, and that number is generally assigned one negro, the negroes doing the most of this work. At the best and warmest season one negro can easily fill 15-20 barrels of turpentine a day...After three years the turpentine flow will cease and the pine trees collapse. Slaves then cut them up and burn them in kilns to make tar. It sometimes happens through ill management, and especially in too dry weather, that these kilns are blown up as if a train of Gun powder had been laid under them by which accident their Negroes have been very much burnt or scalded.”