

Lesson Plan for NEH on African Americans in Early New England Jennifer Howland

Lesson Overview: The Labor Triangle: "Moors", Indians and White Indentured Servants in New England

Lesson Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Contextualize a primary source letter from Emmanuel Downing to John Winthrop from 1645
- Have a strong grasp of the geography of the Triangular Trade as it related to labor and supplies
- Understand the principle of dislocation as a form of control
- Connect insights gained from specific details in the letter to the views of the sender and the recipient regarding the people involved (slaves, Indians, and white indentured servants), market economies and the entrepreneurial interests involved in controlling and settling a new land.

Grade Level: 11

Historical Background:

The Puritans settled the Massachusetts Bay Colony area in 1629 and as they spread out there were wars with Native American tribes in the 1630s and 1640s. John Winthrop was the governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony during this time.

At about the same time a separate set of Puritans who were closely related to John Winthrop settled in the Caribbean. Winthrop's sister and brother-in-law, Emmanuel Downing, remained in England for some time, but provided some financial support and advice regarding trade between New England and the Caribbean. The letter is part of the steady correspondence between John Winthrop and his brother-in-law, Emmanuel Downing.

In the Caribbean, African slaves who worked on sugar plantations generally only survived about 5 years.

During the Pequot Wars, the Puritans killed many Pequot Indians but took some captive. The females and children were enslaved by them but they sent away the Pequot males to the Caribbean to be enslaved.

Materials:

Letter from Emanuel Downing to John Winthrop, 1645

Map of Caribbean north to Massachusetts

Three parts of maps and samples of slaves, salt, molasses, sugar, rum, etc. for students to place on each geographic location of its origin.

Procedures:

- Give background setting of Puritan England circa 1645, the political and religious status of John Winthrop, and his relationship with Emanuel Downing.

- Using three parts of maps of the Caribbean, the East Coast of North America, and West Africa, have students take samples and representative pictures of slaves, salt, molasses, sugar, rum, etc. and place them in their correct place of geographic origin.

- Define terms like "Moors", "Pequots", pillage, laden, etc.

- Share reading of the letter aloud and slowly.

- Guide a student discussion of their impressions of the letter, and have them consider the following questions:
 - What were Emmanuel Downing's assumptions about slaves? About Indians? About people in the Massachusetts Bay Colony?
 - Why did Emmanuel Downing write this letter? What was he proposing?
 - What were Downing's interests in this matter? What does he believe are the interests of the Massachusetts Bay Colony?
 - How was "dislocation" being used as a tool of control?
 - Why did Emmanuel Downing not want to use white indentured servants in New England?
 - What was Downing suggesting that New England trade with the Caribbean?
 - What did Downing claim would reduce the risk of the cost of the slaves?
 - How did Downing feel about the Puritans of New England going to war with the Native Americans in the region?
 - How would the institution of slavery affect the ability of indentured servants and free laborers to compete?

Assessments and Extensions:

Students will write an in-class essay on the following prompt: discuss how "dislocation" could be used to control indigenous people and slaves in New England in the 17th century.

Extension:

In the late 18th century as New England states gradually emancipated the slaves, we can return to this lesson and get a layered look at the conditions and effects of being freed.

We will again visit many of the same questions when we read the antebellum period of the 19th century and the competing interests of free labor and slave-owners.

Primary source, 1645

EMMANUEL DOWNING TO JOHN WINTHROP¹

To his ever honored brother John Winthrop esqr. at Boston

SIR, I hartlye thanke you for your kynde lettre and the newes therein.

A warr with the Narraganset is verie considerable to this plantation, For I doubt whither yt be not synne in vs hauing power in our hands to suffer them to maynteyne the wo[rshi]p of the devill, which their Paw wawes often dee; 2lie, If vpon a Just warre the lord should deliver them into our hands, wee might easily haue men woemen and Children enough to exchange for Moores, which wilbe more gaynefull pilladge for vs then wee conceive, for I doe not see how wee can thrive vntill wee gett into a stock of slaves sufficient to doe all our buisines, for our Childrens Children will hardly see this great Continent filled with people, soe that our servants will still desire freedome to plant for them selves, and not stay but for verie great wages. And I suppose you know verie well how wee shall maynteyne 20 Moores cheaper then one Englishe servant.

The ships that shall bring Moores may come home laden with salt which may beare most of the chardge, if not all of yt. But I marvayle Conecticott

¹ Roger Garde was the Recorder of the Province of Maine.

² W. 2. 33; 4 *Collections*, vi. 64-65.