

BLACKS IN COLONIAL NORTH CAROLINA
“A FORCED MIGRATION”: WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Historical Overview

The article “A Forced Migration” explores the enslavement of free people from West Africa and the journey of enslaved people to the American colonies, specifically North Carolina.

Lesson Objectives

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the information presented in the article by reading and answering questions about the article.
- Students will create their own questions, based on the article, to gather responses from others.

Time

One 45-minute session

Materials

- Copies of “A Forced Migration,” by Jennifer Farley (*Tar Heel Junior Historian*, Spring 2006)
- Copies of the discussion/question worksheet, as needed
- Access to additional research materials (optional)
- Paper, pencils

Procedure

- Have students read or listen to the article.
- Hand out copies of the discussion/question worksheet.
- Allow students to work individually or in groups with the worksheet.
- Encourage students to access additional research materials to supplement their responses.
- Review students’ responses.

Extension

In groups, have students create end-of-grade-type questions related to content from the article. Pass lists of questions between groups for others to answer. Review responses.

**Blacks in Colonial North Carolina
“A Forced Migration”: What Do You Know?
Discussion/Question Worksheet**

1. Who was Olaudah Equiano? How was his life similar to many others at this time? How was it different?

2. What was *the Middle Passage*? Where did this “passage” begin and end? Describe the conditions for captured Africans.

3. What is the difference between an indentured servant and an enslaved person? Were all people of African descent brought to the American colonies enslaved? How were most enslaved people brought to North Carolina?

4. What was the largest plantation in North Carolina? Roughly how many enslaved people were owned at this plantation? What types of work did these people do?

5. How did enslaved people maintain community? How did they continue sharing their heritage with their children?

6. How did slavery end in North Carolina and the United States? What obstacles do you think newly freed people faced after emancipation?

Blacks in Colonial North Carolina “A Forced Migration”: What Do You Know? Discussion/Question Worksheet, Answer Sheet

1. Who was Olaudah Equiano? How was his life similar to many others at this time? How was it different?

Olaudah Equiano was an 11-year-old boy who was kidnapped in Nigeria and sold to a British Naval officer, who sold him to a Quaker merchant. Equiano was able to purchase his own freedom in 1766 and later wrote an autobiography. His early life is similar to many others who were enslaved from Africa. Few enslaved people were able to purchase their freedom; even fewer were able to write, or provide their autobiographies to others.

2. What was the *Middle Passage*? Where did this “passage” begin and end? Describe the conditions for captured Africans.

African people who were captured for slavery were shipped from Africa to South America, the Caribbean, or North America. This part of their journey was called the Middle Passage (since it was between their free homes and their eventual enslaved homes) and was a horrific experience. Hundreds of people were held for months below deck, in cramped quarters that did not allow movement. Disease spread quickly because they had almost no fresh air; they had no way to dispose of waste; and their food and water were limited. Panic and violence occurred frequently.

3. What is the difference between an indentured servant and an enslaved person? Were all people of African descent brought to the American colonies enslaved? How were most enslaved people brought to North Carolina?

An indentured servant was a laborer who worked for another person for a set amount of time. Indentured servants often worked to pay off a previous debt or to pay their passage to a new start in the New World. At the end of the laborer’s contracted time, he or she was released from their contract; they were sometimes also granted land or additional money to begin their new lives. An enslaved person had no contract, no limit to the time he or she had to work for another person, and no rights. While some enslaved people were brought to North Carolina directly from Africa by ship, the coast’s hazards made this method of importing “goods” difficult. The majority of enslaved people were brought to North Carolina over land, from Virginia or South Carolina.

4. What was the largest plantation in North Carolina? Roughly how many enslaved people were owned at this plantation? What types of work did these people do?

Stagville was the largest plantation in North Carolina by the time of the Civil War, with more than 900 enslaved people working on 30,000 acres. The Bennehan-Cameron family owned Stagville. Most enslaved people there worked in fields of tobacco, wheat, corn, potato, and sweet potato crops. Others tended poultry or cattle or worked as blacksmiths, made barrels or shoes, or served in other trades needed to maintain the large community.

5. How did enslaved people maintain community? How did they continue sharing their heritage with their children?

Despite their bondage, enslaved people worked to maintain a sense of community and to share their heritage. Music and oral traditions were the primary ways they formed bonds and shared stories of their pasts, but sharing games, foods, and languages also helped to ensure that children knew about their heritage.

6. How did slavery end in North Carolina and the United States? What obstacles do you think newly freed people faced after emancipation?

In 1808, the United States banned the importation of additional people who would be sold into slavery. However, slavery was allowed to continue through the natural growth of the slave population that was already in place (because children of enslaved women were considered to be slaves). In January 1863 President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which partially abolished slavery. Slavery did not actually end, however, until the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865.