ACTIVITY 4

Patterns of Slavery in the English Colonies

Using Source Materials

HISTORICAL CONTEXT  All of England’s North American colonies allowed slavery until the late 1700s. By the end of the century, slavery had been abolished in the New England and Mid-Atlantic colonies. In the South, however, the enslavement of Africans continued until the end of the Civil War.

TASK

Using information from the documents in Part A and your knowledge of U.S. history, answer the questions that follow each document. Your answers will help you write the Part B essay, in which you will discuss the similarities and differences in the ways slavery was practiced in the New England colonies, the Mid-Atlantic colonies, and the southern colonies.

PART A

DIRECTIONS  Read and examine the following documents. Underline key words and make notes in the margin if you wish. Then answer the questions using complete sentences.

DOCUMENT 1

Before You Read:  The following words in the document below may be new to you: query, folly. You may want to look them up in a dictionary.

As to your second query, if enslaving our fellow creatures be a practice agreeable to Christianity . . . Like Adam, we are all apt to shift off the blame from ourselves and lay it upon others, how justly in our case you may judge. The Negroes are enslaved by the Negroes themselves before they are purchased by the masters of the ships who bring them here. It is, to be sure, at our choice whether we buy them or not, so this then is our crime, folly, or whatever you will please to call it.


1a. How does Fontaine justify enslaving the “Negroes”?

1b. Does Fontaine think the selling and buying of slaves is a crime? Explain your answer.
There has been in Town a conspiracy of the Negroes. At present it is kept pretty private and was discovered by one who endeavored to dissuade them from it—he being threatened with his life, applied to justice Quincy for protection. They . . . got an Irishman to draw up a petition to the Governor telling him they would fight for him provided he would arm them and . . . liberate them if he conquered . . . There is but little said, and what Steps they will take in consequence of it I know not. I wish most sincerely there was not a Slave in the province. It always appeared a most iniquitous Scheme to me—fight ourselves for what we are daily robbing and plundering from those who have as good a right to freedom as we have. You know my mind upon this Subject.

—Abigail Adams
letter to her husband, John Adams, 1774

2a. What was the conspiracy that Abigail Adams tells her husband about?

2b. How did Abigail Adams feel about slavery?
DOCUMENT 3

Before You Read: The following words in the document below may be new to you: servitude, institute, extraordinary, plaintiff. You may want to look them up in a dictionary.

Background: Theodore Sedgwick was a pro-Independence lawyer. He later became a congressman, senator, and judge of the state Supreme Court.

Mum-Bett’s character was composed of few but strong elements. Action was the law of her nature, and . . . she felt servitude intolerable.

It was soon after the close of the revolutionary war, that she chanced at the village “meeting house,” in Sheffield, to hear the Declaration of Independence read. She went the next day to the office of Mr. Theodore Sedgewick . . . “Sire,” said she, “I heard that paper read yesterday, that says, all men are born equal, and that every man has a right to freedom. I am not a dumb critter; won’t the law give me my freedom?”

Mr. Sedgewick immediately instituted a suit in behalf of the extraordinary plaintiff; a decree was obtained in her favour . . . on this decision was based the freedom of the few slaves remaining in Massachusetts.

—Catherine Maria Sedgwick
dughter of Theodore Sedgwick, “Slavery in New England,” 1853

3a. What clues does the author give to show that she knew Mum-Bett personally?

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

3b. Why is Mum-Bett’s case important in the history of Massachusetts?

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________
Activity 4, Patterns of Slavery in the English Colonies, continued

DOCUMENT 4

Before You Read: In the 1700s a “long s” was commonly used. It looks like the letter f. Thus, the word that looks like subscriber is actually subscriber. There is a misspelling in the fourth line from the bottom. The word goal appears instead of gaol, which is the British spelling for jail.

4a. In what colony was Titus enslaved before he ran away?

4b. How do you think Titus would be treated when he was returned to his owner? Why?
DOCUMENT 5
Before You Read: The following words in the document below may be new to you:
assembly, barbarity. You may want to look them up in a dictionary.

I am a poor negro, who with myself and children have had the good fortune to
get my freedom, by means of an act of assembly passed on the first of March
1780 . . . but I am told the assembly are going to pass a law to send us all back
to our masters. Why dear Mr. Printer, this would be the cruellest act that ever
a set of worthy good gentlemen could be guilty of. To make a law to hang us
all, would be merciful, when compared with this law; for many of our masters
would treat us with unheard of barbarity, for daring to take the advantage (as
we have done) of the law made in our favor.—Our lots in slavery were hard
enough to bear: but having tasted the sweets of freedom, we should now be
miserable indeed.

—Cato, a former slave
letter and petition to the Pennsylvania Assembly, 1780

5a. Why did Cato write his letter to petition the Pennsylvania Assembly?

5b. What experience has made the idea of slavery harder for him to bear than before?
DOCUMENT 6

Before You Read: The following words in the document below may be new to you: 
discerned, effectual. You may want to look them up in a dictionary.

I beg leave to lay before your Lordships an account of . . . the Desertion of our Negroes. On the 9th of September . . . a great Number of Negroes Arose in Rebellion, broke open a Store where they got arms, killed twenty one White Persons, and were marching the next morning in a Daring manner out of the Province, killing all they met . . . I was returning from Granville County . . . and fortunately discerned the approaching danger time enough to avoid it, and to give notice to the Militia who . . . killed and took so many as put a stop to any further mischief at that time, forty four of them have been killed and Executed . . .

It was the Opinion of His Majesty’s Council . . . that one of the most effectual means that could be used at present to prevent such desertion of our Negroes is to encourage some Indians by a suitable reward to pursue and if possible to bring back the Deserters . . .

—William Bull

Lieutenant Governor of the Colony of South Carolina
report to the British Board of Trade, October 5, 1739

6a. How many white people were killed in the rebellion? How many enslaved Africans were killed?

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

6b. How did the Council plan to capture runaway slaves and prevent future rebellions?

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________
Roughly speaking, slavery in the North can be divided into two regions. New England slaves numbered only about 1,000 in 1708, but that rose to more than 5,000 in 1730 and about 13,000 by 1750. New England also was the center of the slave trade in the colonies, supplying captive Africans to the South. Black slaves were a valuable shipping commodity that soon proved useful at home, both in large-scale agriculture and in ship-building. The Mid-Atlantic colonies (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania) had been under Dutch rule before the British conquered them in 1664. African slavery in the middle colonies had been actively encouraged by the Dutch authorities, and this was continued by the British.

By the late colonial period, the average slave-owning household in New England and the Mid-Atlantic seems to have had about 2 slaves. Estates of 50 or 60 slaves were rare, though they did exist. In contrast to Southern plantation slavery, Northern slavery tended to be urban.


7a. What region was originally the center of the African slave trade in the colonies?

7b. What kind of work did enslaved Africans mostly do in the North? What kind of work did they mostly do in the South?
**THE EXTENT OF SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1790.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Slave Population</th>
<th>Slaves As a Percentage of the Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>237,655</td>
<td>2,648</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>59,096</td>
<td>8,887</td>
<td>15.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>82,548</td>
<td>29,264</td>
<td>35.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>319,728</td>
<td>103,036</td>
<td>32.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>378,556</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>141,899</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>184,139</td>
<td>11,423</td>
<td>6.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>340,241</td>
<td>21,193</td>
<td>6.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>395,005</td>
<td>100,783</td>
<td>25.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>433,611</td>
<td>3,707</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>69,112</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>249,073</td>
<td>107,094</td>
<td>43.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>747,550</td>
<td>292,627</td>
<td>39.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The states of Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island had officially ended slavery by 1790, but in all cases except Massachusetts, the actual end of slavery did not come about until much later.

**8a.** What six states had the highest percentages of slaves in 1790?

**8b.** Why did New York and New Jersey have a much higher percentage of slaves in 1790 than the other northern states?
Activity 4, Patterns of Slavery in the English Colonies, continued

Writing a Document-Based Essay

PART B
DIRECTIONS Write a well-organized essay. It should include an introduction, a body of several paragraphs, and a conclusion. Use evidence from at least four documents in Part A to support your response. You may draw on any additional knowledge you have acquired about the subject.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT All of England’s North American colonies allowed slavery until the late 1700s. By the end of the century, slavery had been abolished in the New England and Mid-Atlantic colonies. In the South, however, the enslavement of Africans continued until the end of the Civil War.

TASK

Using information from the documents in Part A and your knowledge of U.S. history, write an essay in which you discuss the similarities and differences in the ways slavery was practiced in the New England colonies, the Mid-Atlantic colonies, and in the southern colonies.

GUIDELINES

In your essay, be sure to:

- Provide a thorough response to the Task. Be sure to cover all parts of the assignment.
- Include specific information from at least four of the sources in Part A.
- Incorporate relevant information from your textbook and class work.
- Organize your essay in a clear and logical way.
- Support your statements with facts and information that address the topic.
- Write a conclusion that sums up your ideas.

Note: Do not simply restate the Task or Historical Context. Your essay should include more information.