

# Using Colonial Account Books as a Window into the Lives of African-Americans in Colonial New England

*By Kyle O. von Kamp*

## **Objective:**

- I can use primary sources to infer about the lives of African-Americans in colonial New England.
- I can write a first-person narrative basing content on primary source material.
- I can keep an account book.

## **Pre-Assessment**

Have students take this Kahoot before beginning the lesson.

<https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/78ed6a13-a065-4ff3-b7f9-357e01b0ec77>

## **Post-Assessment:**

Complete Graph

First-person paragraph about the life of a slave using the historical account books to infer more about their life.

Create a fictitious account book.

## **Instructional Procedures:**

Start the lesson by having students take the following Kahoot in class. <https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/78ed6a13-a065-4ff3-b7f9-357e01b0ec77> This reviews triangular trade and you will see if students even recognize that slavery was in New England in the colonial period.

Next, pair students up with an advanced and basic reader. Project the links to the colonial account books and provide them on your classroom webpage.

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/collection/itempage.jsp?itemid=10056&img=0&level=advanced&transcription=1>

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/collection/itempage.jsp?itemid=10069&img=0&level=advanced&transcription=1>

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/collection/itempage.jsp?itemid=6303&img=0&level=advanced&transcription=1>

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/collection/itempage.jsp?itemid=6303&img=1&level=advanced&transcription=1>

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/collection/itempage.jsp?itemid=6303&img=3&level=advanced&transcription=1>

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/collection/itempage.jsp?itemid=6303&img=4&level=advanced&transcription=1>

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/collection/itempage.jsp?itemid=6304&img=0&level=advanced&transcription=1>

[Account Book Transcriptions](#)

Have students read the account books in their pairs and answer the following questions in their interactive notebook.

1. What are these documents?
2. Why would they be used?
3. Where do these people live?

Allow time for the class to discuss each question, guiding them to self-discovery. Before revealing that the people are from Deerfield, Massachusetts, ask students to think of the triangular trade, what was transported on each leg of the trip, and what evidence from the documents might support where the people live. After revealing that the individuals are from Deerfield, Massachusetts, discuss why they may not have thought it was from New England prior. Ask students, “how is slavery in New England evident through these primary sources?” [18th Century Slaves in Deerfield, Massachusetts Listed by Owner](#)

Discuss currency and pounds, shillings, and pence. This short video can help with the explanations.

[https://youtu.be/p7o8oNFO7\\_U](https://youtu.be/p7o8oNFO7_U)

Denominations of Colonial Money

4 farthings = 1 pence (abbreviated as “d”)

12 pence = 1 shilling (abbreviated as “s”)

5 shillings = 1 crown

20 shillings = 1 pound (abbreviated as “£”)

240 pence = 1 pound

21 shillings = 1 guinea Shilling was an English coin worth one-twentieth of a pound.

In eighteenth-century writing, values of money appear as follows: 7d = seven pence 6/5 = six shillings, five pence 3..4..8 = three pounds, four shillings, eight pence

Have students go through the account books and make graphs of their choice in a shared Google sheet to show purchasing trends. Allow time for students to work in their pairs. Then project some of the graphs in front of the room and have groups talk about their charts.

Review the language arts term “infer”. Ask students make a list of five inferences made about the slave owner, the slave, and the lives they lead.

Have students write a first-person narrative of at least one paragraph using information from the account books and inferring the life of the slave. Use a peer evaluation method to examine the narrative.

As students finish, each can create a fictitious account book using legal paper. Have them set up the accounts as they saw in the primary sources. Use a black pen or, for a more challenging option, create quill pens. Have students fill in the account page complete with pounds, shillings, and pence. Make sure their denominations of money make sense. Once complete, each student can make a cup of tea. Make sure the water is not too hot. Place the account book page on a tarp. Use the tea bag to blot over the page to make it look aged. Let the paper dry in place.

### **Real world connection:**

Using spreadsheets to assist in budgeting and accounting

Interconnected and interdependent economies from around the world

### **Differentiated Instructional Support/Learning Styles:**

Scaffolded graphs/account books/paragraphs available

Pairings with strong and weak students

Small groups - interpersonal learners

ESL - typing information on Google docs - translating with Google translate for notes

ESL - Spanish textbook - listening

ESL and G/T - paired together to assist in activity

Graphs- logic learners

Narrative - linguistic learners/intrapersonal learners

Account book - artistic learners/intrapersonal learners

### **Extension:**

Research why the Triangular Trade and slavery drove the New England economy

Make a flail for students to thrash wheat by hand

Exchange rates from currency then to now

### **Homework Options and Home Connection:**

Graphs could be completed as homework, as could the paragraph and/or mock account book

### **Interdisciplinary Connections:**

Art - creating the fictitious account book

Economics - basic accounting

LA - first-person narrative and public speaking

### **Materials/Resources Needed:**

Kahoot and projector

Online account books

Chromebooks/Google account

Legal-sized paper

Black pens and/or quills with ink

Tea bags

Warm water in cups

Plastic tarp

### **Key Vocabulary:**

Account books

Slave

Servant

Indenture

Economy

Pound

Shilling

Pence

### **Technology Connections:**

Researching the account books on computer

Creating the digital graph using Google spreadsheets

Keyboarding skills as students complete their paragraph