

Gregg Moul

Summer 2016 – Living on the Edge of Empire

Lesson #1 – *The Chains that Bind*

Essential Question: In what ways were northerners tied intricately to slavery? This lesson will fit in almost anywhere in our study of the first half of American history. I will probably use it late in the first quarter, after we have introduced the three regions of colonial America and the types of industries that drove the region's economy. This lesson should also reinforce the concept of mercantilism and how integral a part African enslavement played in this socio-economic system.

Objective: Students will understand that the institution of slavery touched almost everyone, northerner and southerner alike.

Overview: In the center of the room is a pole. On the pole is a piece of paper with the word SLAVERY written on it. There will be 30 (or more) strong binder clips with a ten-foot piece of string tied to each clip.

Each student will be given brief background information on one occupation. For instance, I would create a notecard "ROPE". On the back of the card would be a brief description of the industry, where the major factories or farms of the industry are located, and a rough number of individuals employed in the industry.

After giving students some time to read the information and answer the questions below, each student will stand up and move to the portion of the classroom that has been designated for that colony. Each student will be asked to briefly describe his or her occupation. If we start with obvious choices, such as overseer on a rice plantation in Savannah, Georgia, the class should be able to agree that an overseer is a part of slavery in colonial (or antebellum) America. So the person with the OVERSEER card would walk up to the piece of paper with SLAVERY on it and attach his strong binder clip to SLAVERY and go back to his spot with the string in one hand – there is a physical representation of a connection to slavery for the class to see. And as the class progresses forward, hopefully they will begin to see how almost every industry and occupation, and thus almost everyone in the American colonies were tied to slavery rather directly.

Questions for each occupation:

How many of you are there?

What colonies are engaged in your industry? What region seems to dominate the industry or occupation?

How is your occupation or industry tied to other types of industry? (For instance, rope is essential in the shipping business, and many ships built in New England were destined to engage in the transportation of enslaved Africans. So the rope industry is tied to the institution of slavery).

Assessment components:

Formative: Students will orally explain to class the connection they made to slavery and the slave trade.

Summative: Students will compose an essay concerning the ways in which slavery connected all regions and colonies and the extent to which slavery drove our mercantilist economy.