

Slavery Debate Cards

Photocopy and cut out the cards as needed.

ANGELO

An African woman living in a house owned by Captain William Pierce in James City in 1623.

Records show that you arrived on the ship *Treasurer* in 1619, making you one of the first Africans in Virginia. At this time, you are most likely treated as an indentured servant.

GROUP ONE

EMANUEL

A black servant (slave?) who escaped with six white indentured servants.

Because your punishment does not include additional time in service, you may already be a slave for life. The whites who accompanied you were sentenced to serve additional time. Other punishments varied from probation to whipping, branding, and having their legs shackled.

GROUP ONE

JOHN PUNCH

A runaway indentured servant.

For running away, you are sentenced to a whipping of thirty lashes and your period of servitude is lengthened to "service for life." (This is a turning point in the development of Virginia slave law.)

The two white servants who escaped with you are each punished with an additional four years of servitude and a whipping of thirty lashes.

GROUP ONE

PLANTATION OWNERS

Your plantation grows "Virginia Gold" tobacco. You have a vested interest in a reliable, economical labor force. Imported Africans tend to be more resistant to the Tidewater climate, are more immune to European diseases, and come from agrarian cultures. West Africans seem to be economically perfect for the demands of raising tobacco.

GROUP TWO

JAMES GREGORY

A Scottish indentured servant to Hugh Gwyn.

You ran away with John Punch. As punishment, you received a whipping of thirty lashes and had to serve your master for one additional year and the colony for three years.

GROUP ONE

PLANTATION MISTRESS

Your lifestyle depends upon successful tobacco crops. You defer to your husband's decisions and wishes. You are religious and view most Africans as heathen and evil, since they tend to be non-Christian.

GROUP TWO

These characters are covered in the Field Trip or in Lesson Three.

SMALL LANDOWNER

You imitate the larger, wealthier landowners and follow their examples. Your cash crop is tobacco. Although you do not own many slaves, you rely on enslaved Africans for your labor force.

GROUP TWO

MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF BURGESSES

Many of your fellow Burgesses are large landowners who understand and sympathize with the need for labor. They have a vested interest in the control of slave labor and often rule in self-interest or in the favor of large landowners.

GROUP FOUR

FIELD SLAVE

You work on a tobacco plantation. You work long hours in the fields, typically sunup to sundown. Your tasks include: planting tobacco seedlings; checking each leaf of the plant for tobacco worms and their eggs and removing them; hoeing and hilling the plants; cutting off flowers; and pulling the side plants and leaves off the stalk. During harvest you cut the plants, strip leaves from the stalks, hang leaves to dry, pack tobacco into the barrels, and transport the barrels to a local tobacco warehouse for inspection.

GROUP THREE

ANGLICAN PRIEST

You are very concerned about the relationship between Christianity and bondage, which is becoming a turning point in the development of slavery. Until 1667, Christians could not be held in bondage and any slaves who converted to Christianity were given their freedom. A new law in 1667 eliminated conversion to Christianity as a factor in gaining freedom.

GROUP FOUR

FEMALE SLAVE

Beginning in 1642/43, you are counted as a tithable, along with all white and black males, who are considered income producers. (White women are not tithables.) Your status—or condition—as a slave means that your children will also be considered to be slaves.

GROUP THREE

JUSTICE OF THE COUNTY COURT

You are responsible for administering justice in your county. Many of your colleagues come from the local gentry and own a number of slaves. They have a vested interest in slavery as a cheap, reliable labor force, and they need to control that labor force.

GROUP FOUR