



## LESSON TWO: The Caribbean, a Crossroads for Eighteenth Century Commerce

### DURATION

60 - 90 minutes

### OVERVIEW

Students will analyze the goods and resources that made up the transatlantic trade. Students will also study how merchants, sailors, and slaves were at the heart of global commerce.

### SKILLS AND LEARNING STANDARDS

The following history and social studies concepts, skills, and learning standards are addressed:

**3-CS-10.** Define barter, give examples of bartering and explain how money makes it easier for people to get things they want. (E)

**4-CS-7.** Give examples of limited and unlimited resources and explain how scarcity compels people and communities to make choices about goods and services, giving up some things to get other things. (E)

**4-CS-8.** Give examples of how the interaction of buyers and sellers influences the prices of goods and services in markets. (E)

**LS-4.11.** Describe the climate, major physical features, and major natural resources in each region. (G)

**LS-5.11.** Explain the importance of maritime commerce in the development of the economy of colonial Massachusetts, using historical societies and museums as needed. (H, E)

**LS-5.12.** Explain the causes of the establishment of slavery in North America. Describe the harsh conditions of the Middle Passage and slave life, and the responses of slaves to their condition. Describe the life of free African Americans in the colonies. (H, G, E, C)

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Were the goods being produced by slave plantations necessary for human survival?

## OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of the lesson students will be able to:

- Identify Cape Cod's maritime industries and explain how they connected to a global economy.
- Illustrate the flow of goods involved in the "Triangular Trade."
- Indicate which forces changed the demographics of the Caribbean; explain how these forces changed the demographics.

## MATERIALS

1. Unlabeled map of the Caribbean (provided in **Unit Materials** package).
2. Note cards or prop

## METHODS

Students will fill in their own maps to provide an overview of the shifting populations, language, and political powers of the colonial Caribbean. A group exercise will demonstrate how large forces impacted the everyday lives of individuals in particular groups.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

While Sam Bellamy's swashbuckling adventure through the Caribbean has roots in his personal experience (his background as a sailor, his relationship with Maria Hallett), it was also shaped by much larger forces. The circumstances that spawned the Golden Age of Piracy can be traced all the way back to Columbus's first voyage across the Atlantic.

The waves of piracy which characterized the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century were not random, isolated phenomena. Far reaching social, political, and economic forces created the environment in which disenfranchised classes turned to piracy. To properly understand the "Golden Age of Piracy," students must also understand the broader world in which it took place. The rise and continuation of colonialism, mercantilism, the slave-trade and rivalries between European powers, among other factors, contributed far more to the raising of the skull and crossbones, than the moral shortcomings of a few individuals.

## LESSON A

### Warm-up

Teachers should begin the activity with a discussion about Maritime industries on Cape Cod. During the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, fisherman, whalers, ship builders and merchant sailors were the main economic lifeblood of Cape Cod.

Before the invention of trains, airplanes, and the internet, it was the ocean that first connected humans to their peers all around the world. The 18<sup>th</sup> century is often called the "Age of Trade." While most Cape Codders in the 18<sup>th</sup> century barely traveled more than a few miles from their home, those involved in maritime trade might travel thousands of miles in a single year.

Sailors visited bustling ports throughout the Atlantic. Many of these major ports were located in the Caribbean, which could be reached from Cape Cod in a matter of weeks or months depending on the winds and weather. The Caribbean, also referred to as the "West Indies," was a

major hub and economic powerhouse during the "Age of Sail." As European empires were constantly vying for new territory, the Caribbean changed dramatically in a relatively short time.

The first activity demonstrates how the arrival and subsequent colonization by Europeans drastically altered the demographics of the Caribbean.

**Activity:**

Teachers pass out individual copies of **Material A**—a blank map of the Caribbean. With the aid of a globe, static map, or interactive map (Google maps, for example) teachers will guide the class to placing key ports on the map. Students will then write down the names of these ports in the first column of the table.

Teachers are free to choose their own locations, but the sample exercise uses the following ports:  
1. Havana 2. Port Royal 3. Nassau 4. Vera Cruz 5. Port-au-Prince.

Next the teacher will guide the class to identifying the various indigenous peoples who lived in the Caribbean before the arrival of Europeans. Students will circle the Bahamas, where the Lucayans lived, the Greater Antilles islands, where the Taíno/Chiboney lived, and the middle portion of the Yucatan where the Aztecs lived.

In the table, students will write down the indigenous populations they would have encountered in 1492—the year of Columbus's first expedition. If the class is following the sample locations, the second column should read as follows: 1. Taíno/Chiboney 2. Taíno/Chiboney 3. Lucayan 4. Aztec 5. Taíno/Chiboney.

The teacher will guide students forward into history by discussing the arrival of the Europeans. First, students will color in the vast Spanish territory along the Spanish main, as well as the island of Cuba and the eastern half of Hispaniola (modern day Dominican Republic). Next, students will choose a different color and color in the British territories of Jamaica and the Bahamas. Finally, students will choose a third color and fill in the western half of Hispaniola (modern day Haiti) for France.

After coloring is complete, students will write down in the third column the colonial territory and flag they would have encountered in 1717—the year of the Whydah's capture. If following the sample exercise, the table should read as follows: 1. Spanish 2. British 3. Jolly Roger\* 4. Spanish 5. French. Note that Nassau in the Bahamas had no colonial government in 1717 and functioned as a "pirate republic" from 1714-1718.

Finally, teachers will guide their students into the present day and discuss how these territories eventually became independent. In the last column, students will write down the modern name of each nation, the year it achieved independence and the language students would encounter today. If using the sample locations, the final column should read: 1. Cuba (1902), Spanish 2. Jamaica (1962), English 3. Commonwealth of the Bahamas (1973), English 4. Mexico (1821), Spanish 5. Haiti (1804), French/ Haitian Creole.

#### Wrap-up:

Examining their newly created map, students will see that the arrival of European explorers impacted the make-up of the Caribbean significantly. But why did the major European powers start claiming territory in the West Indies? What incentive did countries like Spain, England, and France have for establishing colonies on the other side of the Atlantic? Discussing these questions will set the stage and tie in directly with **Activity B**.

## LESSON B

#### Warm-up

The wrap-up from the previous activity will also serve as the warm-up for the second activity.

#### Activity B:

Teachers will rearrange the physical space of the classroom into three stations, which represent the three regions of triangle trade—Europe, western Africa, and the Caribbean. Alternatively, for distance education, teachers can use a bulletin board, refrigerator magnets, etc. with labeled note cards to keep track of student locations.

Students will be divided into six or seven groups: 1. *Merchants/ShipOwners* 2. *Sailors* (one student among this group may be appointed *Captain*) 3. *Manufacturers* 4. *West African Kings* 5. *Captives from Africa's Interior* 6. *Sugar Plantation Owners* 7. *Native American Captives*. Classes can have multiple ships, captains and crews. Each student will be given a note card to designate goods or pay they receive along each stage of the journey. Props can also be used in place of note cards.

Each group will be sent to their respective starting location. Groups 1-3 will begin in Europe, groups 4-5 will begin in West Africa and groups 6 -7 will begin in the Caribbean.

*Merchants/ship owners* will purchase manufactured goods and *manufacturers* will receive profit. The *captain(s)* will sail for Africa with manufactured goods along with the *sailors*.

They will arrive in West Africa to trade and barter. *African kings* will receive the manufactured goods. *Captains* may receive valuables like gold, ivory and jewelry. *Sailors* and captives receive nothing and depart for Caribbean.

After arriving in the Caribbean, *plantation owners* will buy slaves and sell sugar. *African* and *indigenous captives* receive nothing and remain in the Caribbean. The *captain(s)* receive sugar and/or profit from the sale of slaves. *Sailors* receive nothing and depart for Europe.

After arriving in Europe, *merchants/ship owners* will receive large profits from the sale of sugar and the acquisition of any valuables from Africa. *Sailors* will receive a few pounds in wages. *Captains* will receive 20x what *sailors* receive.

The cycle will repeat once or twice more. In the final cycle, Teachers may play the role of a pirate captain and capture a merchant ship on its return to Europe.

#### Wrap up:

At the end of the exercise, students will either write or talk about their experience as one of the group types. Compare and contrast the lifestyle of merchants, sailors, and captives. Teachers may also want to recount the story of the *Whydah*'s capture by Sam Bellamy's crew as it will segue into **Lesson Three**.