

## Apprenticeship and Indentured Servitude: Contract Labor in the British Colonies

*This* INDENTURE  
Witnesseth that James Bracken of Armagh  
~~at~~ Linen Weaver — doth Voluntarily put him self  
Servant to Enoch Stickney M. of the Ship Washington to serve the said  
Enoch Stickney — or his Assigns, for and  
during the full Space, Time and Term of ~~Two~~ <sup>Three</sup> Years from the first  
Day of the arrival of the Ship *Washington* at  
*Virginia* — in the United States of NORTH  
AMERICA; during which Time, or Term, the said Master  
— or his Assigns shall and will  
find and supply the said *Jas Bracken* — with sufficient  
Meat, Drink, Apparel, Lodging, and all other necessaries befitting such

*James Bracken's Indenture to Enoch Stickney, May 20, 1784 (Special Collections, University of Virginia Library)*

# Apprenticeship and Indentured Servitude: Contract Labor in the British Colonies

BY TIM BAILEY (CREATED IN 2014, REVISED IN 2024)

*Tim Bailey taught middle school and elementary school in Utah for over two decades. Named the 2009 National History Teacher of the Year, he is the Gilder Lehrman Institute's director of curriculum development and instructional design.*

## CONTENTS

Lesson 1 . . . . .	6	Lesson 1 Handouts . . . . .	11
Lesson 2 . . . . .	8	Lesson 2 Handouts . . . . .	15
Lesson 3 . . . . .	10		

**GRADE LEVELS:** 5–8

**RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION:** Three 45-minute class periods

## UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary sources. These skills will enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate documents and other resources of historical significance.

The three lessons in this unit focus on labor contracts and what was required of the people who signed them. The three primary sources include a 1742 contract for an apprentice in New York, a 1784 contract for an indentured servant emigrating from Northern Ireland, and a German traveler's 1750 report on conditions for indentured servants in Pennsylvania. You will assess students' understanding through their narrative illustrations of Gottlieb Mittelberger's journey.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary source documents using close-reading strategies
- Explain and summarize the meaning of the text on both literal and inferential levels
- Draw conclusions based on direct evidence found in the text
- Deliver an effective oral presentation
- Illustrate a historical narrative
- Explain a historical term (e.g., indentured servitude)

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What was it like to be an apprentice or an indentured servant?
- What benefits did employers owe to apprentices or indentured servants?

- What risks came with being indentured or apprenticed?
- What were the trials and dangers of the transatlantic crossing?
- Was the chance for a better life in America worth the dangers of the transatlantic crossing and the strict conditions of being an indentured servant?

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade[-level] topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.4: Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

## MATERIALS

- Source 1: John Reid Jr.'s Indenture of Apprenticeship with Robert Livingston Jr., signed by John Reid and John Reid Jr., November 1, 1742, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC03107.02668
- Source 2: James Bracken's Indenture to Enoch Stickney, May 20, 1784, Accession #10398, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library
- Activity Sheet 1: Critical Thinking Questions: What Is a Labor Contract?
- Source 3: Excerpts from *Gottlieb Mittelberger's Journey to Pennsylvania in the Year 1750 and Return to Germany in the Year 1754 . . .*, Carl Theo. Even, trans. (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey, 1898), pp. 20–27. The complete book is available through the Internet Archive at [archive.org/details/gottliebmittelbe00gott](https://archive.org/details/gottliebmittelbe00gott).
- Activity Sheet 2: Telling the Story

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### APPRENTICESHIPS, INDENTURED SERVITUDE, AND SLAVERY: FORMS OF BOUND LABOR IN THE BRITISH COLONIES IN NORTH AMERICA

by Anna Suranyi, Endicott College

In an era when the conception of universal human rights did not exist, colonial society included several forms of forced or unfree labor in arrangements that were legal and acceptable at the time, but would not be permissible or legitimate today. These practices limited or obliterated the freedom and human rights of individuals bound to servitude and gave their masters and mistresses full control over their lives. The main forms of unfree labor (slavery, indentured servitude, and apprenticeships) shared many features with each other, but also differed, depending on the status of the individual who was bound to serve. Of these three forms, slavery was the most exploitative, because unlike the others, which were temporary arrangements that also acknowledged some rights for the individual, slavery essentially reduced human beings to objects or chattel.

Apprenticeships predated the colonial period. Apprentices were youths, mainly male, bound by their parents to a craftsman who would provide education and seven years of training in a trade, like shoemaking or weaving. Apprentices lived with the master's family. Additionally, orphaned or fatherless children were sometimes bound to work in "pauper apprenticeships," generally until age 21, or until girls married. They also potentially received some training, education, and a small payment. These practices continued in the American colonies.

Indentured servitude was a newer practice. Impoverished individuals from Britain and Ireland agreed to work in the colonies, generally in agriculture or domestic service, for a term of four years with a paper contract ["indenture"], or seven years without a contract, or until age 21 if they were youths. Indentured servants had restricted lives: they had to obey their employers, could not quit, and could be sold during the period of their indenture. The work was often unrelenting and extremely difficult. However, employers had to provide a basic level of sustenance and housing and after their terms, indentured servants received a payment of "freedom dues" in land, provisions, clothing, or tools. Like all dependents in this era, they could be beaten by their masters and mistresses. However, it was illegal to injure, sexually assault, or murder them. They sometimes experienced abuse, but as future members of colonial society, they also had legal rights, and could and did sue their masters for mistreatment or breach of contract, with the right to obtain pro bono lawyers. Approximately 320,000 indentured servants—about 80% of White migrants—traveled to the British colonies (mainland and Caribbean) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The most exploitative form of forced labor was slavery, which involved a total denial of an enslaved person's humanity. For those of African and sometimes Indigenous ancestry, enslavement meant lifelong bondage; total impunity for masters to inflict violence, sexual assault, family separation, and murder; no regulations mandating the provision of basic needs such as clothing, shelter, food, or medicine; no requirement of pay; and no legal recourses, including no right to appear in court. About one million enslaved people were sent to the British colonies (mainland and Caribbean) in the period before the Revolution, with about 400,000 sent to the mainland from the seventeenth century to the Civil War.

Although these colonial forms of labor were vaguely defined in the early colonial period, by the 1630s they were well established in law and custom. Indentured servitude mainly ended with the American Revolution, which also convinced northern states to abolish slavery. However, by then enslaved labor had become the main source of labor in the southern states.

*Anna Suranyi is a professor of history at Endicott College. She is the author of Indentured Servitude: Unfree Labour and Citizenship in the British Colonies (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021).*

### *Sources for further reading*

David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

David Galenson, *White Servitude in Colonial America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

Ruth Wallis Herndon and John Murray, eds., *Children Bound to Labor: The Pauper Apprentice System in Early America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012 [1969]).

Russell Menard, *Migrants, Servants, and Slaves: Unfree Labor in Colonial British America* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton, *Banishment in the Early Atlantic World: Convicts, Rebels, and Slaves* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery and Servitude in North America, 1607–1800* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

Sharon Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully: Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Anna Suranyi, *Indentured Servitude: Unfree Labour and Citizenship in the British Colonies* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021).

Christopher Tomlins, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580–1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

John Wareing, *Indentured Migration and the Servant Trade from London to America, 1618–1718: “There is Great Want of Servants”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Betty Wood, *The Origins of American Slavery: Freedom and Bondage in the English Colonies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997).

## LESSON 1

### WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO BE AN APPRENTICE OR AN INDENTURED SERVANT?

BY TIM BAILEY (CREATED IN 2014, REVISED IN 2024)

#### OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will use primary sources to build their background knowledge about what it meant to be a contracted laborer—an apprentice or an indentured servant—in colonial America. They will demonstrate their understanding through responses to critical thinking questions and class discussion.

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What was it like to be an apprentice or an indentured servant?
- What benefits did employers owe to apprentices or indentured servants?
- What risks came with being indentured or apprenticed?

#### MATERIALS

- Source 1: John Reid Jr.'s Indenture of Apprenticeship with Robert Livingston Jr., signed by John Reid and John Reid Jr., November 1, 1742, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC03107.02668
- Source 2: James Bracken's Indenture to Enoch Stickney, May 20, 1784, Accession #10398, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library
- Activity Sheet 1: Critical Thinking Questions: What Is a Labor Contract?

#### PROCEDURE

1. Before the class, review the historical background essay for the unit.
2. Tell students that this lesson will focus on defining the key characteristics of apprenticeship and indentured servitude, two different types of labor under contract. How were slavery, indentured servitude, and apprenticeship similar or different?
3. Divide the class into “critical-thinking groups” of three to four students.
4. Distribute Source 1, John Reid Jr.'s contract as an apprentice from 1742, and Source 2, James Bracken's contract as an indentured servant from 1784, along with Activity Sheet 1 with the critical thinking questions.

*Tim Bailey taught middle school and elementary school in Utah for over two decades. Named the 2009 National History Teacher of the Year, he is the Gilder Lehrman Institute's director of curriculum development and instructional design.*

GRADE LEVELS: 5–8

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary sources. The three lessons in this unit focus on labor contracts and what was required of the people who signed them. The three primary sources include a 1742 contract for an apprentice in New York, a 1784 contract for an indentured servant emigrating from Northern Ireland, and a German traveler's 1750 report on conditions for indentured servants in Pennsylvania.

5. Due to the complexity and unfamiliarity of the eighteenth-century text, you should “share read” the text with the whole class. This is done by having the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read along with the students, still serving as the model. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).
6. After share reading both texts, make sure that the students understand what it means to be an apprentice and an indentured servant and point to places in the contracts that demonstrate the differences and similarities.
7. Each group will work together to read and discuss the critical thinking questions. They should reach a consensus on the answer for each question.
8. Reconvene the class and ask students to identify what aspects of the larger story each text illuminates. For example:
  - a. Which document most clearly explains the obligations of a contracted laborer to their employer?
  - b. Which document most clearly explains how contracted laborers would be compensated by their employer?
  - c. What similarities or differences do you see in the two contracts?
9. Finally, the students should answer the following question in their small groups or in a class discussion: Why did people give up their own freedom, or their children’s freedom, to become apprentices or indentured servants?

## LESSON 2

### THE TRANSATLANTIC CROSSING OF GOTTLIEB MITTLEBERGER

BY TIM BAILEY (CREATED IN 2014, REVISED IN 2024)

#### OVERVIEW

In this lesson students will read excerpts from Gottlieb Mittelberger's report of his voyage to Pennsylvania to understand the hazards of traveling across the Atlantic Ocean in 1750. Mittelberger described a trip in which many German immigrants had to sign indentured servant contracts to pay the debt for their travel. You can assess students' understanding by asking them to create graphic panels that summarize and retell Mittelberger's story.

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- What were the trials and dangers of the transatlantic crossing?

#### MATERIALS

- Source 3: Excerpts from *Gottlieb Mittelberger's Journey to Pennsylvania in the Year 1750 and Return to Germany in the Year 1754 . . .*, Carl Theo. Even, trans. (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey, 1898), pp. 20–27. The complete book is available through the Internet Archive at [archive.org/details/gottliebmittelbe00gott](https://archive.org/details/gottliebmittelbe00gott).
- Activity Sheet 2: Telling the Story

#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first indentured servants in the British colonies came from Great Britain and usually served employers they already knew. Northern Irish, impoverished Germans, and other Europeans became more numerous until, by the mid-1700s, they constituted approximately one-third of Pennsylvania's population. Gottlieb Mittelberger arrived in late 1750 aboard the *Osgood* along with approximately 500 other German immigrants, many of whom had signed indentured servant contracts. Mittelberger was not an indentured servant; he eventually returned to Germany and wrote about his disillusionment with the British colonies.

#### PROCEDURE

1. Distribute Source 3, excerpts from *Gottlieb Mittelberger's Journey to Pennsylvania in the Year 1750*. Explain to students that, while not an indentured servant himself, Mittelberger was on the same ship as many people who became indentured servants. His account, published four years after the events described, was written for German readers considering indentured servitude and a journey to the British colonies.
2. Share read the text with the students as described in Lesson 1. The paragraphs have been numbered to help structure the reading for students; the numbers are not in the original text.

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RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

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3. Divide the class into pairs or small groups of three to four students.
4. The students will work with their partner or group to choose the six most important events in the story and underline those events on their copies of the text.
5. Distribute Activity Sheet 2 and drawing supplies.
6. Students will draw a picture of the first important event in the story. The pairs or groups can divide up the images equally or all complete each drawing. Below the illustration, they will quote a phrase from Gottlieb Mittelberger's text to serve as their caption. For instance, a student may draw a picture of a ship in a storm and write, "The ship is constantly tossed from side to side by the storm and waves."
7. The students will complete the six illustration panels and create captions from quotes as textual evidence. These drawings and quotes should provide a summary of Mittelberger's journey.

## LESSON 3

### TELLING GOTTLIEB MITTELBERGER'S STORY

BY TIM BAILEY (CREATED IN 2014, REVISED IN 2024)

#### OVERVIEW

In this lesson the students will present to the class their illustrations and quotations/captions as a summary of Gottlieb Mittelberger's experiences.

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- Was the chance for a better life in America worth the dangers of the transatlantic crossing and the strict conditions of being an apprentice or indentured servant?

#### MATERIALS

- Source 1: John Reid Jr.'s Indenture of Apprenticeship with Robert Livingston Jr., signed by John Reid and John Reid Jr., November 1, 1742, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC03107.02668
- Source 2: James Bracken's Indenture to Enoch Stickney, May 20, 1784, Accession #10398, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library
- Completed Activity Sheet 1: Critical Thinking Questions: What Is a Labor Contract?
- Source 3: Excerpts from *Gottlieb Mittelberger's Journey to Pennsylvania in the Year 1750 and Return to Germany in the Year 1754 . . .*, Carl Theo. Even, trans. (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey, 1898), pp. 20–27. The complete book is available through the Internet Archive at [archive.org/details/gottliebmittelbe00gott](https://archive.org/details/gottliebmittelbe00gott).
- Completed Activity Sheet 2: Telling the Story

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RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

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#### PROCEDURE

1. Students or student groups will present their illustrated retelling of Gottlieb Mittelberger's story.
2. Share with students what you consider best oral presentation practices. For example, you might ask students to begin by introducing themselves, or to use the expressions "first" and "second" to mark transitions, or to make their voice loud enough so that the back row can hear them easily.
3. After all of the students or groups have had a chance to present, pose the following discussion question and remind students to consider the apprenticeship and indentured servant's contracts from Lesson 1 as well as Mittelberger's report: Was the chance for a better life in America worth the dangers of the transatlantic crossing and the strict conditions of being an apprentice or indentured servant?

### Source 1

#### John Reid Jr.'s Indenture of Apprenticeship with Robert Livingston Jr., 1742

THIS Indenture Witnesseth, that John Reid . . . with the Consent of his father, John Reid . . . hath put himself, and by these Presents doth voluntarily, and of his own free Will and Accord put himself an Apprentice to Robert Livingston Jun of New York with him to live, and (after the Manner of an Apprentice) to Serve from the first Day of Novembr: . . . One Thousand Seven Hundred and Forty two till the full Term of five years be compleat and ended. During all which Term the said Apprentice his said Master faithfully shall serve, his Secrets keep, his lawfull Commands gladly every where obey: he shall do no Damage to His said Master . . . he shall not waste his said Masters Goods, nor lend them unlawfully to any . . . nor contract Matrimony within the said Term. At Cards, Dice or any other unlawful Game, he shall not play . . . he shall not absent himself Day nor Night from his said Masters Service without his Leave . . . And the said Master during the said Term shall by the best Means or Method that he can, Teach or cause the said Apprentice to be Taught the Art and Mystery of a Marchent And also shall find and provide unto the said Apprentice sufficient meat Drink and Lodging

Sealed and delivered in the Presence of

John Carpenter

John Reid

Richd Smith

John Reid Jnr:

*Source: John Reid Jr.'s Indenture of Apprenticeship with Robert Livingston Jr., signed by John Reid and John Reid Jr., November 1, 1742 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC03107.02668)*

## Source 2

## James Bracken's Indenture to Enoch Stickney, 1784

*This* INDENTURE  
 Witnesseth that James Bracken of Armagh  
~~at~~ Linen Weaver — doth Voluntarily put him self  
 Servant to Enoch Stickney M<sup>r</sup>. of the Ship Washington to serve the said  
 Enoch Stickney — or his Assigns, for and  
 during the full Space, Time and Term of ~~Four~~ Years from the first  
 Day of the arrival of the Ship Washington at  
 Virginia — in the United States of NORTH  
 AMERICA; during which Time, or Term, the said Master  
 — or his Assigns shall and will  
 find and supply the said Jas<sup>s</sup> Bracken — with sufficient  
 Meat, Drink, Apparel, Lodging, and all other necessaries befitting such  
 a Servant; and at the end and expiration of the said Term of ~~Four~~ Four  
 Years, the said Jas<sup>s</sup> Bracken — to be made Free, and  
 receive according to the Custom of the Country.

In Witness whereof the said Parties have hereunto interchangeably put  
 their Hands and Seals this ~~twentieth~~ Day of May — in  
 the Year of our Lord, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty four

Sign'd, Seal'd and Delivered  
 in the Presence of  
 Wm<sup>o</sup> Harrison

Jas<sup>s</sup> Bracken

Jas<sup>s</sup> Bracken

James Bracken's Indenture to Enoch Stickney, May 20, 1784  
 (Accession #10398, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library)

## Source 2

### James Bracken's Indenture to Enoch Stickney, 1784

This Indenture Witnesseth that James Bracken of Armagh Linen Weaver doth Voluntarily put him self Servant to Enoch Stickney [Master] of the Ship Washington to serve the said Enoch Stickney or his Assigns, for and during the full Space, Time and Term of Four Years from the first Day of the arrival of the Ship Washington at Virginia in the United States on NORTH AMERICA; during which Time, or Term, the said Master or his Assigns shall and will find supply to said James Bracken with sufficient Meat, Drink, Apparel, Lodging, and all other necessaries befitting such a Servant; and at the end and expiration of the said Term of Four Years, the said James Bracken to be made Free, and receive according to the Custom of the Country.

In Witness whereof the said Parties have hereunto interchangeably put their Hands and Seals this twentieth Day of May in the Year of our Lord, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty four.

Sign'd, Seal'd and Delivered in the Presence of

Rich. Harrison

James Bracken

Saml Bracken

X

*Source: James Bracken's Indenture to Enoch Stickney, May 20, 1784 (Accession #10398, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library)*

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

**Activity Sheet 1**  
**Critical Thinking Questions: What Is a Labor Contract?**

1. Who gave their consent for John Reid Jr. to become Robert Livingston Jr.'s apprentice?

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2. What were three of the rules that John had to follow as an apprentice?

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3. What did Robert Livingston Jr. promise to do for John while he was an apprentice?

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4. Examine the image of James Bracken's indenture. Why is this document printed with blank spaces in the text? What does that tell you about how common indentured servitude was in the 1700s?

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5. What do the two sides in the indentured servant contract agree to do for each other and for how long?

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### Source 3

#### *Gottlieb Mittelberger's Journey to Pennsylvania in the Year 1750 (excerpts)*

1. When the ships have for the last time weighed their anchors near the city of Kaupp [Coves] in Old England, the real misery begins with the long voyage. For from there the ships, unless they have good wind, must often sail, 8, 9, 10 to 12 weeks before they reach Philadelphia. But even with the best wind the voyage lasts 7 weeks.
2. But during the voyage there is on board these ships terrible misery, stench, fumes, horror, vomiting, many kinds of sea-sickness, fever, dysentery, headache, heat, constipation, boils, scurvy, cancer, mouth-rot, and the like, all of which come from old and sharply salted food and meat, also from very bad and foul water, so that many die miserably.
3. Add to this want of provisions, hunger, thirst, frost, heat, dampness, anxiety, want, afflictions and lamentations, together with other trouble, as c. v. the lice abound so frightfully, especially on sick people, that they can be scraped off the body. The misery reaches the climax when a gale rages for 2 or 3 nights and days, so that every one believes that the ship will go to the bottom with all human beings on board. In such a visitation the people cry and pray most piteously.
4. When in such a gale the sea rages and surges, so that the waves rise often like high mountains one above the other, and often tumble over the ship, so that one fears to go down with the ship; when the ship is constantly tossed from side to side by the storm and waves, so that no one can either walk, or sit, or lie, and the closely packed people in the berths are thereby tumbled over each other, both the sick and the well—it will be readily understood that many of these people, none of whom had been prepared for hardships, suffer so terribly from them that they do not survive it. . . .
5. Children from 1 to 7 years rarely survive the voyage; and many a time parents are compelled to see their children miserably suffer and die from hunger, thirst and sickness, and then to see them cast into the water. I witnessed such misery in no less than 32 children in our ship, all of whom were thrown into the sea. The parents grieve all the more since their children find no resting-place in the earth, but are devoured by the monsters of the sea. It is a notable fact that children, who have not yet had the measles or small-pocks, generally get them on board the ship, and mostly die of them.
6. Often a father is separated by death from his wife and children, or mothers from their little children, or even both parents from their children; and sometimes whole families die in quick succession; so that often many dead persons lie in the berths beside the living ones, especially when contagious diseases have broken out on board the ship. . . .
7. At length, when, after a long and tedious voyage, the ships come in sight of land, so that the promontories can be seen, which the people were so eager and anxious to see, all creep from below on deck to see the land from afar, and they weep for joy, and pray and sing, thanking and praising God. The sight of the land makes the people on board the ship, especially the sick and the half dead, alive again, so that their hearts leap within them; they shout and rejoice, and are content to bear their misery in patience, in the hope that they may soon reach the land in safety. But alas!
8. When the ships have landed at Philadelphia after their long voyage, no one is permitted to leave them except those who pay for their passage or can give good security; the others, who cannot pay, must remain on board the ships till they are purchased, and are released from the ships by their purchasers. The sick always fare the worst, for the healthy are naturally preferred and purchased first; and so the sick and wretched must often remain on board in front of the city for 2 or 3 weeks, and frequently die, whereas many a one, if he could pay his debt and were permitted to leave the ship immediately, might recover and remain alive. . . .

9. The sale of human beings in the market on board the ship is carried on thus: Every day Englishmen, Dutchmen and High-German people come from the city of Philadelphia and other places, in part from a great distance, say 20, 30, or 40 hours away, and go on board the newly arrived ship that has brought and offers for sale passengers from Europe, and select among the healthy persons such as they deem suitable for their business, and bargain with them how long they will serve for their passage money, which most of them are still in debt for. When they have come to an agreement, it happens that adult persons bind themselves in writing to serve 3, 4, 5 or 6 years for the amount due by them, according to their age and strength. But very young people, from 10 to 15 years, must serve till they are 21 years old.
10. Many parents must sell and trade away their children like so many head of cattle; for if their children take the debt upon themselves, the parents can leave the ship free and unrestrained; but as the parents often do not know where and to what people their children are going, it often happens that such parents and children, after leaving the ship, do not see each other again for many years, perhaps no more in all their lives.

*Source: Gottlieb Mittelberger's Journey to Pennsylvania in the Year 1750 and Return to Germany in the Year 1754 . . . , Carl Theo. Even, trans. (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey, 1898), pp. 20–27*

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

**Activity Sheet 2**  
**Telling the Story**

1)
2)

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

Activity Sheet 2  
Telling the Story

3)

4)

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

Activity Sheet 2  
Telling the Story

5)

6)