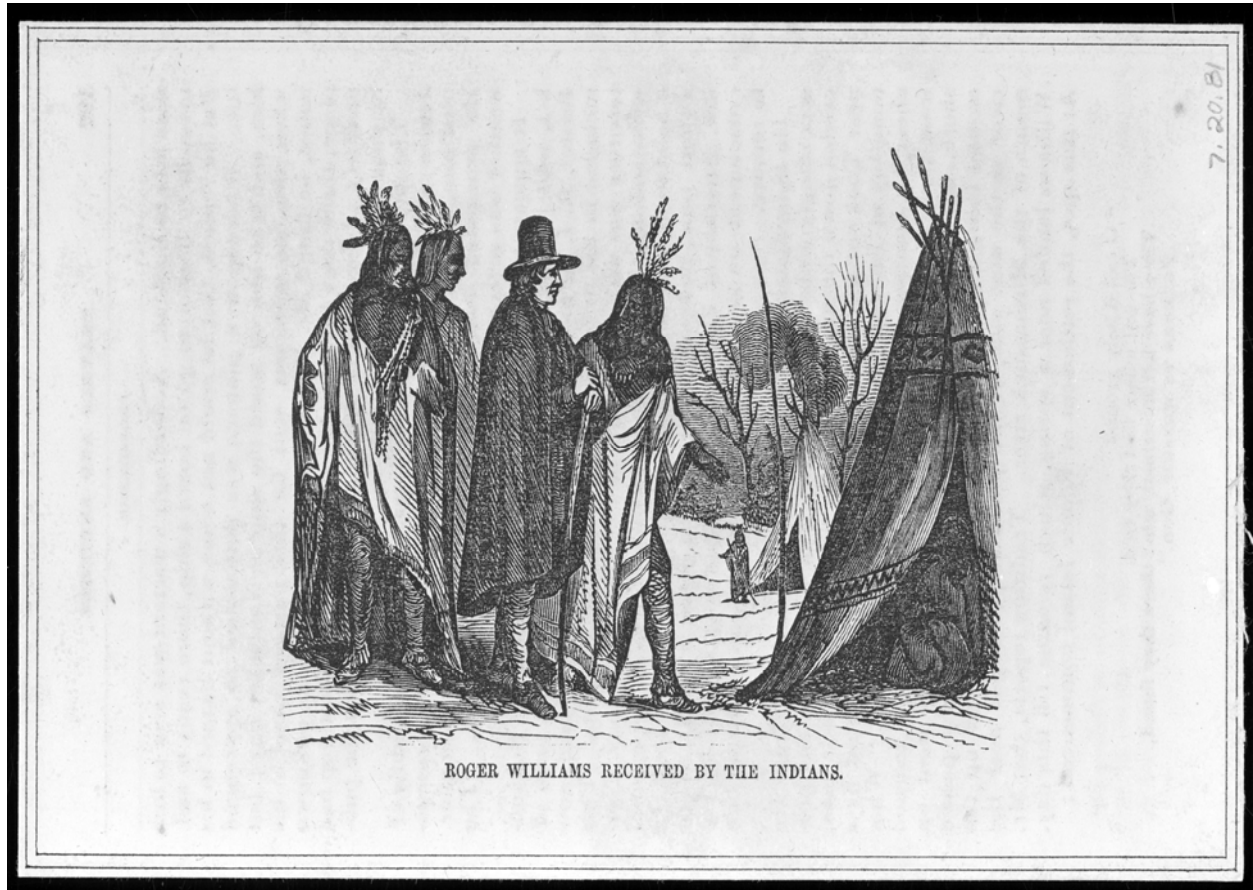


Twelve Bushels of Indian Corn



Twelve Bushels of Indian Corn

Introduction

The Narragansett, and other native people, were Rhode Island's earliest inhabitants. The Narragansett territory included most of present day Rhode Island. In 1636, the Narragansett accepted Roger Williams and other English settlers into their territory, which led to the founding of Providence. The continual flow of settlement by Europeans would lead to increased conflict with the Narragansett and other area nations.

In March of 1676, the final conflict between the Indians and the English colonists, King Philip's War, had left much of Providence burned to the ground and its European citizens fearful. By August 1676, Providence was teeming with Indian prisoners from King Philip's War. The death of Metacomet (King Philip) in the Mirey Swamp in Bristol and the devastation of the Great Swamp Fight, or Massacre, left the Narragansett and other native people vanquished. Forty years after the English settlement of Providence, Roger Williams and other prominent colonists held a meeting trying to decide what to do about these prisoners.

In 1893, the Rhode Island Historical Society published the article, *Indian Slaves of King Philip's War, Notes on the Transaction of Roger Williams and others in Selling Indians into Slavery* by James G. Vose. The article includes Mr. Vose's 19th century interpretation and views on the subject, as well as transcriptions of the 17th century documents. The following lessons explore the issue of Indian enslavement in Rhode Island based on this article and other related documents. Thus, these lessons explore not just the fact of Indian enslavement, but also how 19th century Rhode Islanders understood and portrayed it.

Standards

High School Proficiency Grades 9-12

HP 1: History is an account of human activities that is interpretive in nature.

HP 1-1: Students act as historians, using a variety of tools (e.g., artifacts and primary and secondary sources) by...

- a. formulating historical questions, obtaining, analyzing, evaluating historical primary and secondary print and non-print sources
- b. explaining how historical facts and historical interpretations may be different, but are related
- c. identifying, describing, or analyzing multiple perspectives on an historical trend or event

HP 1-2: Students interpret history as a series of connected events with multiple cause-effect relationships, by

- a. explaining cause and effect relationships in order to sequence and summarize events, make connections between a series of events, or compare/contrast events
- b. interpreting and constructing visual data (e.g., timelines, charts, graphs, flowchart, historical films, political cartoons) in order to explain historical continuity and change

HP 2: History is a chronicle of human activities, diverse people, and the societies they form

HP 2- 1: Students connect the past with the present by

- a. explaining origins of major historical events
- b. identifying and linking key ideas and concepts and their enduring implications
- c. analyzing and evaluating how national and world events have impacted Rhode land and how Rhode Island has impacted national and world events

HP 2 - 2: Students chronicle events and conditions by...

- a. creating narratives based on a particular historical point of view
- b. synthesizing information from multiple sources to formulate an historical interpretation

HP 2- 3: Students show understanding of change over time by...

- a. tracing patterns chronologically in history to describe changes on domestic, social, or economic life

Twelve Bushels of Indian Corn

INDIAN SLAVES OF KING PHILIP'S WAR

A Town meeting was held in Providence, Aug. 14, 1676, "before Thomas Field's house under a tree by the water side." (Probably on the east side of South Main Street nearly opposite Crawford Street.) "King Philip's War" had just been ended by the death of Philip, two days before, in the Swamp near Mount Hope. The Town was full of Indian prisoners. In the other Colonies such prisoners were almost always sold into life servitude and frequently sent out of the Country. But in the preceding March the Colonial legislature of Rhode Island had passed a law "that noe Indian in this Collony be a slave, but only to pay their debts or for their bringeing up, or Custody they have received, or to performe Covenant as if they had been Countrymen and not taken in war."

A Committee was therefore appointed to "set the disposal of the Indians now in Town."

Twelve Bushels of Indian Corn

Document Analysis Worksheet

Refer to document #1 to answer these questions.

1. What was the purpose of the town meeting held in Providence on August 1676?
2. What was routinely done to Indian prisoners by most of the colonies in the 17th century?
3. In March of 1676 a law was passed by the colonial legislature of Rhode Island which prohibited taking Indians as slaves, but there were exceptions to the law. For example one of the exceptions:

to performe Covenant as if they had been Countrymen and not taken in war

In the case of King Philip's War the defeated Indians had broken a covenant because they had previously submitted themselves as subjects to the King of England. Their actions were considered an act of rebellion. Explain why this would be considered an exception to the law.¹

4. State the other exceptions to the law, putting them in your own words.
5. The outcome of this first meeting led to the appointment of a committee to *set the disposal of the Indians now in Town*. What does the word disposal mean today? If the meaning was the same in earlier times, how does this reflect the attitudes of the period?

¹ Glenn W. LaFantasie and Paul R. Campbell, "Scattered to the Winds of Heaven-Narragansett Indians 1676-1880," Rhode Island History 37: 3 (August 1978) 69.

"We whose names are underwritten, being Chosen by the Town to set the disposal of the Indians now in Town, we agree, that Roger Williams, Nathaniel Waterman, Thomas Fennner, Henry Ashton, John Morry, Daniel Abbott, James Olney, Valentine Whitman, John Whipple, Sen., Ephraim Pray, John Pray, John Angell, James Angell, Thomas Arnold, Abraham Man, Thomas Field, Edward Bennett, Thomas Clemence, William Lancaster, William Hopkins, William Hawkins, William Harris, Zachariah Field, Samuel Windsor, and Captain Fennner, shall each have a whole share in the product, Joseph Woodward and Richard Pray, each three fourths of a share, John Smith, Miller, and Edward Smith, Samuel Whipple, Nelly Whipple, and Thomas Walling, each, half a share. Inhabitants wanting, to have Indians at the price they sell at Rhode Island or elsewhere. All under five years to serve till thirty, above five and under ten, till twenty eight, above ten to fifteen, till twenty seven, above fifteen to twenty, till twenty six, from twenty to thirty shall serve eight years, all above thirty, seven years.

Roger Williams

Thomas Field

Thomas Harris, Sen.

John Whipple, jr.

Thomas + Angell

August 14; ¹⁶⁷⁶."

Note: The average price at which Indians, "great and small," were sold "at Rhode Island or elsewhere" was about thirty two shillings. Some of this lot sold for twelve bushels of Indian Corn, some for silver, £2 10s., some for wool, 100 lbs., and one for three fat sheep.

Document #2

“Wee whose names are herunto subscribed having right to the sayd Indians, as by an act of the Comitty doth appeer, doe bestrust, impower, and fully authorize Capt. Arthur Fenner William Hopkins and John Whipple Jun^r to hire and procure a boate to transport the sayd Indians where they may be sold, and to make sale and delivery thereof as fully, and as firmly, as if we were all personally present, and to doe all such things as shall any ways belong to the transporting making sale or dissotion of all and every of the sayd Indians as above sayd and to see all such charges as doth arise by the sayd Indians, after to them comitted, defrayed out of the product of the same, and themselves reasonably satisfied for their paines, and then to make returne of the remainder of the product of the sayd Indians to the s., "gd company_ This being our reall act and deed as witness our handes this 16 day of August 1676:

Roger Williams
Daniell Abbott
John Morcy
Henry Ashton
Nathaniell Waterman
Ephraim Prag
Joseph Woodward
Abraham Man
Eliazur Whipple
John Angell
James Olney
James Angell
Vallintine Whittman
Edward Bennett
Thomas Field
John Prag-”

Twelve Bushels of Indian Corn

Document Analysis Worksheet

Refer to documents #2 & #3 to answer these questions.

1. A meeting of was held on August 14, 1676 and decision was made to sell the captives in and Rhode Island and elsewhere. They put limits on the years of servitude based on the age. Complete the following chart.

Under five years old	
Five to ten years old	
Ten to fifteen years old	
Fifteen to twenty years old	
Twenty to thirty years old	
Thirty + years old	

2. By looking at this chart you can see that the captives were not just warriors. Who were they and why do you think they were sold?

3. The captives were sold for money or bartered for goods for an average worth of 32 shillings.

Fill in the chart:

wool	sheep	corn	silver
pounds		bushels	£

4. The men who made up the committee and are named on both of the documents were the prominent citizens and founding fathers of Providence. Choose one of them, other than Roger Williams, to research and write a short biographical sketch (2 to 3 paragraphs).

NOTE ON THE TRANSACTION OF ROGER WILLIAMS AND OTHERS, IN SELLING INDIANS, INTO SLAVERY.

Whatever scruples may have existed in the minds of individuals in New England with regard to slavery in general, in the 17th century, there appears to have been no doubt of the right of selling captives taken in war. Gov. Washburn in his Lowell lecture on "Slavery as it once prevailed in Massachusetts," quotes the 91st Art. of the 'Body of Liberties,' which begins thus:-

"There shall never be any bond Slavery, Villinage, or Captivity amongst us, *unless* it be lawful captives taken in just wars & such strangers as willingly sell themselves or are sold to us."

The same writer informs us that slavery was then regarded as a fit punishment for crime. "Three Indians were sold in Sandwich in 1678 for having broken into a home and stolen." But he adds that "the instances in which this mode of punishment was adopted appear to have been few." . . . "Of captives taken in war and sold. into slavery by the colony, the number appears to have been larger. . . . As a measure of policy, it was chiefly confined to the remnants of the Pequod tribe, and to such as were taken in the war with King Philip..... As they could be bound by no treaty, the only measure of safety for the colonists was to hang or shoot their prisoners, or put them in a situation not to again engage in burning the towns and murdering the inhabitants. And this could be done effectually by selling them into bondage."..... "This policy does not seem to have been dictated by considerations of gain or by mercenary motives, but rather as a measure of self-defence."

These remarks of Gov. Washburn are quoted as illustrating the prevailing opinion of the time, which seems to have been that slavery was a mercy, instead of death for the captives; and that it might possibly be the means of their conversion to Christianity. The transaction now first published, in which Roger Williams seems to have had a leading part, would indicate that his views with regard to the justifiableness of slavery, in the case of captives in war, at last of heathen captives, did not differ materially from those generally held in the colonies, or throughout Christendom.

The original papers and signatures are to be found in the 1st Vol. of the Foster collection, in the R. I. Historical Society. J. G. V.

Twelve Bushels of Indian Corn

Document Analysis Worksheet

Refer to document # 4 to answer these questions.

James G. Vose looks back at slavery in the seventeenth century and examines the reasons that justify the selling of Indian captives. He refers to a lecture given by William B. Washburn, the governor of Massachusetts from 1871-74. The lecture was on slavery and outlined the reasons for enslavement of Indians in Massachusetts. Vose takes the examples stated by Governor Washburn and applies them to the enslavement of captives from King Philip's War in Rhode Island.

There are several reasons given for the enslavement of Indians in this article. State each reason in your own words, including examples. Begin with a topic sentence and write a paragraph of three to five sentences to illustrate the case.

A.

B.

C.

D.



ROGER WILLIAMS RECEIVED BY THE INDIANS.

Undated engraving, RIHS Collection (RHi X3 5445)

Document #5

Twelve Bushels of Indian Corn

Image Analysis Worksheet

The title of this image is *Roger Williams Received by the Indians*. It is undated; we do not have any actual images of Roger Williams. This particular image tells a story about Roger Williams and his early dealings with the native population of Rhode Island. One is left to imagine the conversation depicted in this engraving. Write a short dialogue between Roger Williams and the Narragansett sachems, or leaders, Canonicus and Miantonomi as they might have welcomed Roger Williams into their community. Base the dialogue on the conversation that you think is going on in the picture. Because you are telling a story like a playwright, write this out as dialogue, listing the characters names, followed by their words.



Engraving from Samuel Drake's Book of Indians of North America

RIHS Collection (RHiX3 9035)

Document #6

Image Analysis

Study the image for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the engraving and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.

1. Use the chart below to list and describe the people, objects, and activities depicted in this image.

People	Objects	Activities

2. Based on what you have observed list three things you infer from this image.

RAN-AWAY from Thomas Ninegrett of Charlestown, an Indian Boy about 14 Years old, named Sampson Seedux ; had on when he went away, a dark colour'd Bearskin great Coat, and a Jacket of the same Cloth, lighter colour'd, a pair of Pumps, with Brass Buckles, a pair of striped Flannel long Trowsers, a blue Cap, with a remarkable large Patch upon it ; he also had with him an English felt Sea Hat, bound with Black, two white flannel shirts and a flannel under Waistcoat, a pair of yarn Stockings : He has had a Kick by a Horse in the Face, which broke his upper Jaw and knocked out three of his Teeth. Whoever will secure the said Run-away so that his Master may have him again, shall receive FOUR DOLLARS Reward, and all necessary Charges paid by
THOMAS NINEGRETT.
N. B. All Persons are forbid entertaining, concealing, or carrying away the said Lad, as they will avoid the Penalty of the Law

Newport Mercury
10 March 1766

Transcription

Ran away from Thomas Ninegrett of Charlestown, an Indian boy 14 Years old, named Samson Seedux. "Had on when he went away, a dark colour'd Bearskin great Coat, and a Jacket of the same Cloth, lighter colour'd pair of Pumps, with Brass Buckles, a pair of striped Flannel long Trowsers, a blue Cap. With a remarkable large Patch upon it: he also had with him an English felt sea hat, bound with Black, two white flannel shirts under Waistcoat, a pair of yarn Stockings: He had a kick by a Horse in the Face, which broke his upper Jaw and knocked out three of his Teeth. Whoever will secure the said Runaway for that his Master may have him again, shall receive FOUR Dollars Reward, and all necessary Charges paid by THOMAS NINEGRETT.
N.B. All persons are forbid entertaining, concealing, or carrying away the said Lad, as they will avoid the Penalty of the Law.

Document #7

Document Analysis Worksheet

1. Using Document # 7, complete the following web.

Type of Document:	Audience:
Topic:	Purpose:

2. List the words in the document that are capitalized.
3. Why were these words capitalized and what does it tell us about the enslavement of Indians in the 17th century?
(The answer to this question should be 1-2 paragraphs long and include examples from the document)
4. Write a short news bulletin on Samson Seedux.
(The news bulletin should be 1-2 paragraphs long and include examples from the document)

Twelve Bushels of Indian Corn

DBQ Questions

Choose one of the following questions and write a complete essay. Refer to the documents, including the images. Include examples and quotes from the documents. Your answers from the document analysis questions may be helpful in formulating your essay.

You may also need to include other sources to complete your essay.

1. It was believed by many of the early colonists that taking captive Indians into involuntary servitude was morally right because it saved them from death and it was a means to convert them to Christianity. From the previous documents and your prior knowledge, write an essay that argues the validity of this statement in the eyes of the colonists.
2. The image in document #5 seems to show Roger Williams and the Narragansett's in a peaceful encounter, yet we have documents signed by Williams and other prominent Rhode Islanders enslaving Indians. Using the previous documents and your prior knowledge, write an essay in which you reconcile these conflicting realities?