

TOBACCO IN JAMESTOWN

LEVEL

Elementary

GUIDING QUESTION

What was life like for enslaved Africans on tobacco plantations during the colonial period?

VIRGINIA STANDARDS AND HISTORICAL SKILLS

SOL: VS.3e, VS.4a-b

Analyzing and interpreting primary and secondary sources; questioning and using critical thinking skills; determining cause and effect; making connections between past and present; making economic decisions

LESSON OVERVIEW

The economy of Virginia depended on agriculture, namely tobacco, as its primary source of wealth. Tobacco became the colony's most successful cash crop, which required a steady and inexpensive source of labor to work on farms and plantations. For this reason, African men, women, and children, were brought to the colony in large numbers, establishing a dependence on slave labor for economic success in Virginia and beyond. In this lesson, students will analyze and compare primary source documents related to slavery and tobacco in Virginia, to better understand the compelling question: What was life like for enslaved Africans on tobacco plantations during the colonial period?

MATERIALS

- [Image of tobacco pipe](#) for warmup
- "Guardians of Jamestown, 1619" video clip: ["The Influence of Tobacco on Jamestown"](#)
- ["London's Virginia" tobacco label](#)
- [Student Worksheet: "London's Virginia" Tobacco Label Analysis Sheet](#)
- [Student Worksheet: Slavery and tobacco exit ticket](#)
- [Firsthand accounts on tobacco and slavery](#) (optional)

PROCEDURE

Warm up/Staging the Question

1. Display the [image of the tobacco pipe](#) found by archeologists at Historic Jamestowne. Ask students to share their perspective on what the pipe represents. (Responses may include that people use pipes to smoke tobacco, that smoking is bad for you, that some people use pipes but others smoke cigarettes, etc.).
2. Explain that every object, including this pipe, tells a story, but that stories change over time. Hundreds of years ago, people did not know how unhealthy smoking was, so their stories might be different than ours. Stories also change depending on the storyteller. For example, an archeologist who discovered a pipe like this might tell a story about how she found it, while the pipe might remind someone else of a childhood memory about a relative who smoked a pipe.
3. Tell students that today, they will look at the tobacco pipe from two more perspectives: Virginia colonists and enslaved Africans. After watching a short video, they'll discuss the stories both of these groups might tell about the pipe.

Main Activity

1. Show students the “Guardians of Jamestown, 1619” video clip [“The Influence of Tobacco on Jamestown”](#). After watching the video, discuss the following questions with the class:
 - What storytellers did you see in the video besides Safiri and the Guardian?
 - Why did the colonists grow tobacco?
 - How were they able to grow so much tobacco?

Explain that the pipes archeologists found are only one way we know about tobacco at Jamestown. We also have labels for tobacco products that help tell the story.
2. Divide students into pairs or trios and give each group a copy of the ["London's Virginia" tobacco label](#) and [analysis sheet](#). Have students carefully observe the label and discuss the questions on the sheet. Teachers may opt for students to write answers to a select number of the questions. Then have groups take turns sharing their responses with the whole class.
3. Reflect on the discussion by asking students what the Guardian meant when he said “the legacy of tobacco and the tragedy of African slavery are forever intertwined in Virginia’s history.” Introduce the vocabulary “incentives” and “consequences.” Explain that the incentive for growing tobacco was to make money, but the consequence was the enslavement of thousands of people from Africa.
4. Students should discuss their responses before completing the [slavery and tobacco exit ticket](#).

Extension/Optional Activities

1. Pass out the [firsthand accounts on tobacco and slavery](#) to individual students and/or groups. Instruct students to read the passages independently or with their groups. Encourage students

to use highlighters and to annotate the text—What’s important? What’s interesting? What will help me to answer the compelling question?

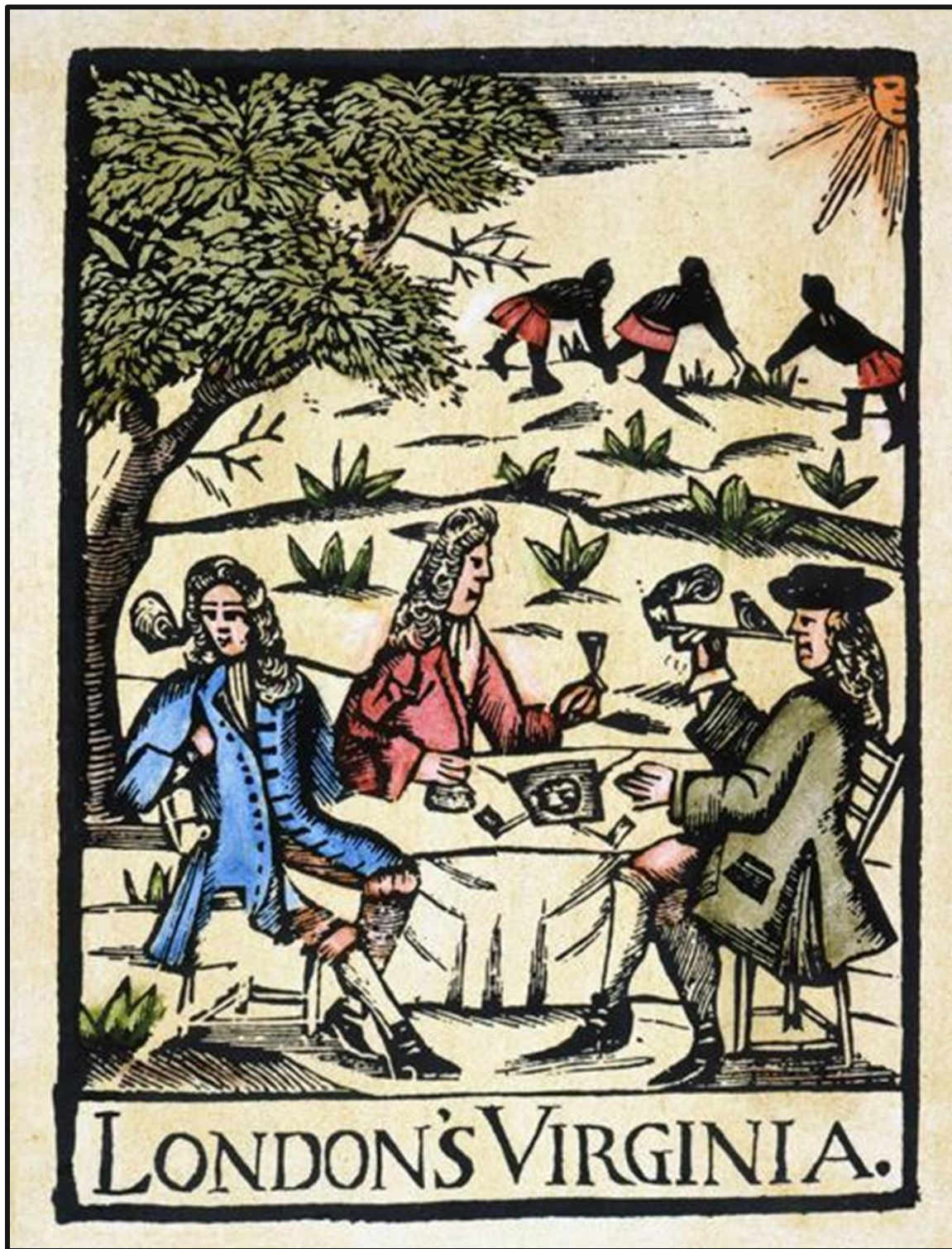
2. Have students fill out the right-hand column, “What have I learned about tobacco and slavery?” (Alternatively, create categories related to tobacco and slavery that you want students to focus on, and post those categories on poster paper around the room. Have students record their thoughts in each category. Examples could be: hardships of slavery, master responsibilities, tobacco, etc.).
3. Students could alternatively respond by writing poems about the effect tobacco had on Virginia or draw a tobacco label with enslaved Africans at the front of the image and the plantation owners at the back.

WARMUP



Courtesy of Historic Jamestowne

“LONDON’S VIRGINIA” TOBACCO LABEL (1859)



“London’s Virginia” tobacco label (1859). Courtesy of Monticello

"LONDON'S VIRGINIA" TOBACCO LABEL ANALYSIS SHEET

<i>SEE</i>	
<p>What do you notice first?</p> <p>What colors do you see?</p> <p>How many people are in the image?</p> <p>How many clay pipes do you see?</p> <p>How many plants do you see?</p> <p>What words do you see?</p>	
<i>THINK</i>	<i>WONDER</i>
<p>Who made this label? What message are they using the label to send?</p> <p>Where might people have seen this label? Who was the intended audience?</p> <p>What do you think was happening at the time this label was made?</p> <p>What are the people at the front of the image doing? How might they be feeling?</p> <p>What are the people at the back of the image doing? How might they be feeling?</p> <p>If this label were made today, how might it be different?</p> <p>How does this label teach us about the relationship between tobacco and slavery?</p>	<p>What do you wonder about the people in the image?</p> <p>What do you wonder about the people who made the image?</p> <p>What do you wonder about the time when this image was made?</p> <p>What do you wonder about tobacco and slavery?</p>

EXIT TICKET: “LONDON’S VIRGINIA” TOBACCO LABEL

1. What incentives did plantation owners have for growing tobacco?
2. What was needed in order to make a profit from growing tobacco?
3. Describe the effects of our reliance on tobacco as a cash crop:
4. Draw a cause-and-effect diagram to show why Virginians enslaved people from Africa:

FIRSTHAND ACCOUNTS ON TOBACCO AND SLAVERY

Directions: Read the following accounts about slave life on 18th-century tobacco farms and colonial thoughts on tobacco. After reading, record what you have learned about tobacco and slavery from the firsthand accounts.

Firsthand Account	What have I learned about tobacco and slavery?
<p>1. William Byrd, <i>The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712</i> (1941) describes disciplining his slaves: "...we rode to Kensington where I reprimanded [my slave] Robin for not looking after the cattle better. Here we went over the river to Burkland where things were in good order. Then we walked to [Byrd Park] where I had several negroes whipped for stealing the hogs [or hogsheads]. From hence we walked to Shockoe where things were in good condition. Then we went over the River again to the Falls and from thence to Falling Creek..."</p>	
<p>2. Thomas Hariot, <i>A Brief and True Report on the New World Found Land of Virginia</i> (1588) on tobacco: "There is an herb called uppowoc, which sows itself. In the West Indies it has several names, according to the different places where it grows and is used, but the Spaniards generally call it tobacco. Its leaves are dried, made into powder, and then smoked by being sucked through clay pipes into the stomach and head. The fumes purge superfluous phlegm and gross humors from the body by opening all the pores and passages. Thus its use not only preserves the body, but if there are any obstructions it breaks them up. By this means the natives keep in excellent health, without many of the grievous diseases which often afflict us in England."</p>	

<p>3. Charles Ball, <i>Slavery in the United States</i> (1836), on being separated from his family:</p> <p>“My mother was the slave of a tobacco planter, an old man, who died, according to the best of my recollection, when I was about four years old, leaving his property in such a situation that it became necessary, as I suppose, to sell a part of it to pay his debts. Soon after his death, several of his slaves, and with others myself, were sold at public venue. My mother had several children, my brothers and sisters, and we were all sold on the same day to different purchasers. Our new master took us away, and I never saw my mother, nor any of my brothers and sisters afterwards.</p> <p>“At the time I was sold I was quite naked, having never had any clothes in my life; but my new master had brought with him a child's frock or wrapper, belonging to one of his own children; and after he had purchased me, he dressed me in this garment, took me before him on his horse, and started home; but my poor mother, when she saw me leaving her for the last time, ran after me, took me down from the horse, clasped me in her arms, and wept loudly and bitterly over me.</p> <p>“My mother then turned to him and cried, ‘Oh, master, do not take me from my child!’ Without making any reply, he gave her two or three heavy blows on the shoulders with his raw hide [and] snatched me from her arms. Young as I was, the horrors of that day sank deeply into my heart, and even at this time, though half a century has elapsed, the terrors of the scene return with painful vividness upon my memory.”</p>	
<p>4. Durand of Dauphine, <i>A Huguenot Exile in Virginia</i> (1687) on the success of Virginia tobacco:</p> <p>“So much tobacco is grown that a hundred & fifty ships might every year be [loaded] with it in Virginia alone. Those buying this tobacco give twenty-four sous [French coin] a barrel, which brings fifty thousand pounds to the Governor, pays entirely for Parliament [the General Assembly] and the five collectors.”</p>	