



TEACHING TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER
TOLERANCE.ORG

Introduction

In these videos, scholars and historians explore the Key Concepts of the Teaching Hard History framework by discussing slavery's impact on the lives of enslaved people in the United States and the nation's development around the institution. They also explain how enslaved people influenced the nation, its culture and its history.

The resources below can help you analyze each video's content and its connection to the related Key Concept with your students or with colleagues. You can also use them to help build your own content knowledge.

Resources

For each video, we have included the following:

- the **Key Concept** that the video explores
- an **essential question** to help viewers explore the connection between the video and its related Key Concept
- **vocabulary** words that students may need defined to better understand the video
- **text-dependent questions** that can help viewers understand and analyze the videos

Note: There are two sets of text-dependent questions for each video. **Set A** focuses on *identifying* key ideas and details in each video. **Set B** focuses on *analyzing* key ideas and details in each video. Select whichever set is better suited for your classroom.



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TEACHING HARD HISTORY: AMERICAN SLAVERY

Text-Dependent Questions

IBRAM X. KENDI | KEY CONCEPT 1

Key Concept 1

Slavery, which Europeans practiced before they invaded the Americas, was important to all colonial powers and existed in all North American colonies.

Essential Question

How did colonists in Virginia protect the institution of slavery to ensure their wealth?

Vocabulary

➤ **critical** (adj.) [**krit-i-kuhl**]

of essential importance

➤ **derive** (v.) [**dih-rahyyv**]

to come from a source or origin

➤ **indentured servant** (n.) [**in-den-cherd sur-vuh nt**]

a person who was placed under contract to work for another person for free over a period of time; in the Americas, usually seven years, especially from the 17th to 19th centuries

➤ **legislator** (n.) [**lej-is-ley-ter**]

a person who gives or makes laws

➤ **primary** (adj.) [**prahy-mer-ee**]

first or highest in rank or importance

➤ **suit** (n.) [**soot**]

an action brought in a court seeking a remedy for injuries suffered or a determination of rights

Sources

Dictionary.com, Merriam-Webster.com

Text-Dependent Questions

Set A

1. How did Elizabeth Key win her freedom suit?
2. What laws did Virginia colonists pass to protect slavery in response to freedom suits?
3. Why was the labor of enslaved Africans especially important to Virginia planters?

Set B

1. What does Elizabeth Key's successful freedom suit demonstrate about the permanence of enslavement for people of African descent during the early colonial period? How did the laws enacted to respond to these freedom suits begin to change this?
2. How did the law ensuring that Africans who converted to Christianity remained enslaved demonstrate a compromise of Virginians' values?
3. How did the labor needs of tobacco farming influence the laws governing the colony of Virginia?

TEACHING HARD HISTORY: AMERICAN SLAVERY

Text-Dependent Questions

IBRAM X. KENDI | KEY CONCEPT 1

RESPONSES

Set A

1. How did Elizabeth Key win her freedom suit?

Key won her freedom suit by using British laws, which applied to people living in British colonies. Under British law, a child's status was based on their father's status, and Christians could not be enslaved. Key was both the child of a free man and a Christian, and she used those characteristics to argue for and gain her freedom.

2. What laws did Virginia colonists pass to protect slavery in response to freedom suits?

Virginia's leaders passed two laws: one establishing that a child's status would be derived from their mother and another establishing that enslaved Christians could not sue for their freedom based on their Christianity.

3. Why was the labor of enslaved Africans especially important to Virginia planters?

Many planters in Virginia grew tobacco, which was very popular in parts of Europe. They needed a stable labor force to produce enough tobacco. Permanently enslaved Africans provided a more stable labor force than white indentured servants, who were only bound to work for a few years.

Set B

1. What does Elizabeth Key's successful freedom suit demonstrate about the permanence of enslavement for people of African descent during the early colonial period? How did the laws enacted to respond to these freedom suits begin to change this?

Key's case suggests that the permanence of enslavement for people of African descent had not yet been codified because she was able to gain her freedom based on her Christianity and her father's status. The laws enacted in response to these freedom suits began to ensure that people of African descent would be born into slavery and that their status as enslaved would be extremely difficult to change.

2. How did the law ensuring that Africans who converted to Christianity remained enslaved demonstrate a compromise of Virginians' values?

Under British law, Christians could not be enslaved. If it was immoral to enslave a fellow Christian, that should have been true no matter when someone became a Christian. The new law demonstrated that Virginians were willing to compromise their morals to serve their economic interests.

3. How did the labor needs of tobacco farming influence the laws governing the colony of Virginia?

Growing tobacco required a stable labor force, so Virginia planters preferred the permanent labor of enslaved Africans. Thus, Virginia's leaders, who were enslavers, made laws that were intended to protect their ability to permanently enslave Africans (conversion to Christianity didn't affect enslavement) and increase the number of people they could enslave (child's status followed the mother).