



QUESTIONING

*Thinking
strategies
to enhance skills
of analysis,
creativity,
and problem
solving.*

INTERVIEW AN INDENTURED SERVANT

Lesson Description: Students role play being reporters for a colonial newspaper. As reporters they will think of interview questions for John Harrower, a Scottish merchant who came to the American colonies as an indentured servant. His experiences are shared through a primary source, his journal from 1774. The questions are used to gain information about his past life, his present situation and his future plans. As a follow-up lesson, students use the interview information to create an article about John Harrower for a colonial newspaper. (Historical fiction)

Pre-assessment/Prior Knowledge:

- Students have indicated a basic understanding of the Questioning strategy through the introductory lesson (p. 21).

SOL/POS Objective:

History 4.3 The student will explain economic, social, and political life of the Virginia colony with emphasis on the characteristics and contributions of various groups of people.

Instructional Strategy:

Cues, Questions and Advance Organizers- Students identify effective questions for eliciting quality responses in an interview.

Materials:

The Journal of John Harrower (p. 155)

Enduring Understanding:

- Composing good questions is an important first step in conducting an interview.
- A variety of questions provides a wide range of information about a person.
- Open-ended questions lead to more detailed, in depth responses and create opportunities for discussion.

Introduction/Essential Questions:

- What kinds of questions are most effective in an interview?
- Why is interviewing an important research method?
- What motivated people to leave their homes and come to the American colonies as indentured servants?
- What did people living in the 1700's think about the political events of the time?
- How is colonial life similar to and different from life in the 21st century?



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Teach and Explore Strategy:

- Introduce the role play: students will act as reporters for a colonial newspaper. They have been assigned to write an article about an indentured servant, John Harrower, who came to the colonies from Scotland. The article must include information about Harrower's past, his current daily living, and his hopes and plans for the future.
- To begin investigating John Harrower, students have some information from his journal, but need to find out more about him through an interview.
- Distribute the excerpt from Harrower's journal (p. 155). As a class, preview the writings and point out things that are interesting or unusual. Students will notice that the spelling is irregular, which was common in the 18th century. Read the excerpt aloud. Help students remember that John Harrower was a real person and that the letters he wrote to his wife and his journal entries give us very specific information about him. His journal is a **primary source** of information.
- Help students think like reporters for the *Colonial Times*. Ask, what information do the journals give us? (His situation as an indentured servant, his thoughts about current political events, everyday events like eating and drinking).
- How do reporters find out more information about a person for a story or article? So, what is a good way for us to find out more information about Harrower's past and his future plans to write our article? (interview John Harrower)
- Review the basics for writing good interview questions (fat rather than skinny questions). Remind students to include some questions related to his life before he came to the colonies, some about his current situation, and questions about his future plans.
- Give students 15 -20 minutes to write questions. Their goal should be a total of 5-6 questions or enough to write an interesting article.
- Have students share their questions with the group. If time in this lesson, continue with answering the interview questions below.
- Explain since Harrower can't answer the interview questions, they will use their imaginations and write responses from him. (Students may also exchange papers and respond to each other's questions.)

Assessment Evidence:

- Student responses in teacher-led discussion
- Student questions for the interview
- Student responses to John Harrower's questions

Metacognition:

- Why are strong questioning skills important when you do research?
- Was it easy or challenging to think of several questions? If challenging, what could have made it less difficult?
- Is composing questions a critical thinking skill, creative thinking or both?

Extensions:

- Students use information gathered from John's answers in the interview and write an article for the *Colonial Times* about him. The article should include a headline and share information about John's past, present and future.
- Students can research John Harrower on the internet and find out more about his real life through other primary sources.



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The Journal of John Harrower

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John Harrower was a Scottish merchant who, after failing to find profitable work in Scotland or England, set out in 1774 for the American colonies as an indentured servant. Upon his arrival in Virginia, Harrower's four-year indenture contract was sold to Colonel William Daingerfield. Harrower went to live at Belvidera, Daingerfield's plantation in Fredericksburg, where he served as tutor to the Colonel's children and the children of other local planters. He kept a journal of his life at Belvidera, providing insight into the daily activities of an eighteenth-century plantation. Harrower sent letters to his wife in Scotland which he also copied into his journal. In the following excerpts from these letters, Harrower describes the meals he shared with the Daingerfield family and also alludes to some of the political events taking place in the colonies at the time.

"Belvidera 14th. June 1774.

". . . As to my living I eat at their own table, & our witualls are all Dressed in the english taste. We have for breackfast either Coffie or [Chocolate], and warm loaf bread of the best floor, we have also at Table warm loaf bread of Indian corn, which is extreamly good but we use the floor bread always at breackfast. For Dinner smoack'd bacon or what we cal pork ham is a standing dish either warm or cold. When warm we have greens with it, and when cold we have sparrow grass. We have also either warm roast pigg, Lamb, Ducks, or chickens, green pease or any thing else they fancy. As for Tea there is none drunk by any in this Government since 1st. June last, nor will they buy a 2d. worth of any kind of east India goods, which is owing to the difference at present betwixt the Parliament of great Brittan and the North Americans about laying a tax on the tea; and I'm afraid if the Parliament do not give it over it will cause a total revolt as all the North Americans are determined to stand by one another, and resolute on it that they will not submit."

"Belvidera 6th. Decr. 1774.

". . . Know that I have not drunk a dish of Tea this six Mos. past, nor have I drunk a dram of plain spirits this seven Mos. past, nor have I tasted broth or any kind of supping mate for the above time unless three or four times some soup; Notwithstanding I want for nothing that I cou'd desire, and am only affraid of getting fatt, tho we seldom eat here but twice a day. For Breackfast we have always Coffie with plenty of warm loaf bread and fine butter. At 12 oClock when I leave School, I have as much good rum toddie as I chuse to drink, and for Dinner we have plenty of roast & boyld and good strong beer, but seldom eat any supper."

Source: John Harrower, *The Journal of John Harrower*, ed. Edward Miles Riley. Williamsburg, Va: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1963. pp. 56, 73.