

Multicultural American History Through Children's Literature

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CHAPTER 1

Coming to America

Building a New Land: African-Americans in Colonial America

Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson
(New York: HarperCollins, 2001)

Book Summary: This picture book for older readers examines the lives of African-American slaves beginning in the 1400s, with an emphasis on the colonial period in America (1607–1763). From the settling of Jamestown to the slave revolts of the 1700s, the authors share the experiences, traditions, and contributions of African Americans in a changing society.

Key Concepts: Slavery, colonial America

National History Standards: 1, 5, and 6

Activity #1: Design a Postcard

Materials for Activity #1:

- Sample picture postcards from various places
- 4" × 6" blank white index cards (1 per student)
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils, and paint

Areas of Integration: Creative and artistic expression, oral language

After reading *Building a New Land: African-Americans in Colonial America*, ask students if they have ever gone on trips with their families. Ask if they have ever mailed a postcard to someone back home while on their trip. Following a brief discussion, show students samples of picture postcards from various places. Have students note and discuss the format of postcards.

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Next, have students assume that they are slaves being brought to America. Have them design postcards to send back to relatives in their homeland that depict an aspect of their journey or new life in America. Encourage students to depict scenes detailed throughout the book.

After designing the front of the card, have students complete the back of the card by scripting messages to relatives that relate to the front illustration on their postcards. They can also create an appropriate destination name and address, as well as design a stamp for their postcards.

Activity #2: Book Making: The Contributions of African Americans

Materials for Activity #2:

- Internet access
- Library access
- Heavy 8½" × 11" paper
 - Spiral binding
- Crayons and markers

Areas of Integration: Research skills, written expression, artistic expression

After reading and discussing the chapter “African Contributions to Colonial Society,” ask students to list the contributions of African Americans in the areas of art, music, and literature and storytelling. Record students’ ideas on the chalkboard or poster board. Have students expand on the contributions mentioned in the book by researching on websites or in other books. Students may also want to interview parents, grandparents, or other adults who may know of the cultural contributions of African Americans. After the list is complete, have each student select one contribution to research in more depth. Each student will then contribute a page in a class book on the contributions of African Americans. The book could be divided into three chapters: art, music, and literature and storytelling. Each page would include an artistic representation of the contribution and a short paragraph detailing the history of the item. The book could be spiral bound and placed in the library or classroom.

Activity #3: The Forced Immigration of African Americans

Materials for Activity #3:

- Large map of the world
 - Pushpins
 - Yarn or string

Areas of Integration: Geography skills, critical thinking

After reading and discussing *Building a New Land: African-Americans in Colonial America*, ask students to compare the native countries from which African Americans emigrated with countries from which other groups, such as Caucasian Americans and Hispanic Americans, emigrated. Students may use other reference materials or interview relatives to gather more information. Have students use pushpins and yarn to show the distance traveled from native countries to areas settled in America. As a class have students discuss the following:

1. The time period when various groups came to America
2. The reasons why various groups came to America
3. The areas where various groups settled in America
4. A comparison of experiences in the new country.

Nickommoh! A Thanksgiving Celebration

Jackie French Koller

(New York: Scholastic, 1999)

Book Summary: This is the story of the first Thanksgiving from the perspective of the Narragansett Indian tribe that lived in what is now Rhode Island. Native Narragansett language is incorporated into the telling of the story, and the author includes author's notes and a glossary at the end of the book.

Key Concepts: Thanksgiving, Narragansett Indian tribe

National History Standards: 1, 2, and 6

Activity #1: "Who has . . .?" Vocabulary Game

Materials for Activity #1:

- "Who has . . .?" game cards (provided)

Areas of Integration: Listening skills, auditory memory

After reading and discussing the book *Nickommoh! A Thanksgiving Celebration*, have students play the "Who has . . .?" vocabulary game to learn the words from the Narragansett Indian tribe. Distribute the cards randomly to the students and keep card #1 for yourself. Read the first question. The student who has the answer reads it and then reads the question on his or her card. Play continues from one student to another until all the cards have been read. (Words and definitions are taken from the glossary provided in *Nickommoh! A Thanksgiving Celebration*.)

“Who has . . .?” Vocabulary Game

<p>Card #1:</p> <p>Who has a word that describes pits dug into the earth and lined with mats? Baskets of dried-foods were stored in these for winter use.</p>	<p>Card #2: <i>Auqunnash</i></p> <p>Who has a word that names an arbor consisting of four poles sixteen to twenty feet high, set up in a square? Strings of wampum and other valued possessions were hung from the poles. Men then gambled for the prizes.</p>
<p>Card #3: <i>Gaming Arbor</i></p> <p>Who has a word that means a crow, the sacred bird of the Narragansett?</p>	<p>Card #4: <i>Kaukant</i></p> <p>Who has a word that is the Narragansett name for God, the Creator, who gave a spirit to all of his creations?</p>
<p>Card #5: <i>Kautantawwitt</i></p> <p>Who has the word for soft deerskin shoes?</p>	<p>Card #6: <i>Mocussinass</i></p> <p>Who has the three words for the colors red, yellow, and black? The Narragansett used these colors to paint their bodies and faces for ceremonies, war, and every day.</p>
<p>Card #7: <i>Msqui, Wesau, Mowi-sucki</i></p> <p>Who has the word for cornmeal, boiled in water until it is a thick pudding?</p>	<p>Card #8: <i>Nasaump</i></p> <p>Who has the Narragansett word for a celebrational gathering?</p>
<p>Card #9: <i>Nickommoh</i></p> <p>Who has the definition for winter?</p>	<p>Card #10: <i>Papone</i></p> <p>Who has the word for a sweat lodge?</p>

<p>Card #11: <i>Pesuponck</i> Who has the word for summer?</p>	<p>Card #12: <i>Quaquusquan</i> Who has the word that names a ceremonial longhouse, sometimes 100 to 200 feet long?</p>
<p>Card #13: <i>Qunnekamuck</i> Who has the word that describes the place where Native American people gather for ceremonies and dances? It is considered a sacred shape.</p>	<p>Card #14: <i>Sacred Circle</i> Who has the word for spring?</p>
<p>Card #15: <i>Sequan</i> Who has the word for a flat stone, rounded to a disk, which could be rolled on its edge while players hurled eight-foot poles, trying to land them as close as possible to where the disk would come to rest?</p>	<p>Card #16: <i>Spear-the-Disk</i> Who has the word for the great woolly mammoth?</p>
<p>Card #17: <i>Stiff-Legged Bear</i> Who has the word for October, the harvest month?</p>	<p>Card #18: <i>Taqountikeeswush</i> Who has the word for crystalline stones that had been struck by lightning and were found in the ground near trees? These were thought to bring luck.</p>
<p>Card #19: <i>Thunderbolts</i> Who has the word for a game in which two teams stretch a rope between them and mark the midline? Both teams try to pull the other team across the midline.</p>	<p>Card #20: <i>Tug-of-War</i> Who has the word for the Pleistocene Era, when the great woolly mammoth, giant elk, caribou, musk ox, saber-toothed tiger, giant beaver, and an immense Kodiak-like species of bear inhabited New England?</p>
<p>Card #21: <i>When the Animals Were Big</i> Who has the word for purple and white beads made from quahog shell, used for adornment and for money? The purple beads were rarer and worth about three times as much as the white.</p>	<p>Card #22: <i>Wompampeage or Wampum</i></p>

Activity #2: Becoming Strategic Readers

Materials for Activity #2:

- Questions to encourage strategic reading (provided)

Areas of Integration: Critical thinking, auditory memory

Before reading the book *Nickommoh! A Thanksgiving Celebration*, encourage students to become strategic readers by asking themselves the following questions:

1. What will this book be about?
2. What do the title and pictures tell me?
3. What do I already know about this topic that will help me?
4. From whose perspective is this story told?
5. Why would the author write this?
6. How might this Thanksgiving story be alike or different from other Thanksgiving stories?

After discussion, read the book. While you are reading, ask students to consider the following questions in order to improve their comprehension of the story:

1. What have I learned so far?
2. What have I found interesting so far?
3. Is this book easy to read or hard to read? Why?
4. How can I figure out difficult words or parts of the story I don't understand?
5. What strategies would help me to understand better this kind of book?
6. What is the author implying or what underlying messages is she sending?
7. How do I feel about what the author is saying?
8. How do the pictures help me to understand the story?

After you have finished reading the book, have students discuss the following questions:

1. What did I learn?
2. Were my predictions about the book correct?
3. Did I like this book? Why or why not?
4. How would I summarize what I read?

5. Are there any parts that I should read again to be sure that I understand what they meant?
6. Are there any new vocabulary words that I have learned?
7. How was this book similar to or different from other Thanksgiving stories I have read?
8. How does this Thanksgiving story compare to my own Thanksgiving experiences?

Activity #3: A Book Review of *Nickommoh! A Thanksgiving Celebration*

Materials for Activity #3:

- Writing paper (1 sheet per student)

Areas of Integration: Written expression, critical thinking

After reading and discussing the book, have students write a book review of the story. Begin by sharing reviews of other books so that students learn what a book review is and how one is written. Encourage students to be very specific about what they liked and did not like about the book. After the reviews are finished, arrange students in small groups. Allow students to share and discuss their book reviews. Encourage students to justify their opinions about the book while also considering other students' perspectives.

The First Thanksgiving

Jean Craighead George
(New York: Philomel, 1993)

Book Summary: Craighead George tells the story of Squanto, a Pawtucket man, who helped save the lives of the Pilgrims by teaching them the ways of the land. This tale of the *Mayflower's* travels to the New World, and of their first year here with the Native Americans, is the true story of the first Thanksgiving.

Key Concepts: The *Mayflower*, Squanto, Thanksgiving, Plymouth Rock

National History Standards: 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6

Activity #1: Historical Facts of the First Thanksgiving

Materials for Activity #1:

- Writing paper (1 sheet per student)

Areas of Integration: Critical thinking, oral language

After reading and discussing *The First Thanksgiving*, discuss with students the authenticity of Jean Craighead George's book. Ask students to list ten historical facts that they learned from the book that they did not know before. After students have made their lists, make a group list on chart paper. Then have students pretend that they are newspaper reporters who lived during this period of history. Have them write a short newspaper article describing the events of the first Thanksgiving.

Activity #2: Sharing Pumpkin Bread

Materials for Activity #2:

- Ingredients for pumpkin bread (see recipe)
 - Mixing bowls and spoons
- Measuring cups and spoons
 - Loaf pans
 - Oven
- Plastic wrap

Areas of Integration: Following directions, measuring ingredients, cooperative learning, service

After reading and discussing the book, discuss with students the importance of giving as a way to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday. Decide on a recipe, such as the one below for cranberry pumpkin bread, that the class might make to share with people in a nursing home or homeless shelter.

Decide with students the responsibilities that each student will have (bringing in ingredients, measuring, chopping, mixing, setting the oven temperature, cleaning up, wrapping the bread, etc.). Deliver the bread to a nursing home or homeless shelter and allow time for students to talk with residents.

Cranberry Pumpkin Bread

Ingredients:

1 cup whole raw cranberries, fresh or frozen, coarsely chopped	½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
1½ cups all-purpose white flour	½ teaspoon ground ginger
¼ cup cornmeal	¼ teaspoon ground cloves
1½ cups granulated sugar	1 egg
1 teaspoon baking soda	1 cup canned pumpkin puree
¼ teaspoon baking powder	4 tablespoons vegetable oil
¾ teaspoon salt	2 teaspoons grated orange rind

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly coat a loaf pan with vegetable oil spray. Mix the flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, ginger, and cloves in a large bowl. In a medium bowl whisk the egg with the pumpkin puree until smooth. Mix in the oil and orange rind. Add to the flour mixture and mix until blended. Add the cranberries and mix. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan. Bake until a toothpick comes out clean, 55 to 60 minutes. Cool in the pan for 10 minutes, turn onto a rack, and cool completely before slicing.

Activity #3: Thanksgiving Traditions

Materials for Activity #3:

- Shields, drawn on 8½" × 11" paper (1 per student)
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Areas of Integration: Artistic expression, oral language

After reading and discussing *The First Thanksgiving*, discuss with students some of the Thanksgiving traditions they observe in their family. Give each student a shield and ask them to design the shield so that it represents their family's Thanksgiving traditions. Allow students to share their shields in a small group. Hang the shields in your classroom.

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