



Opposition to Slavery in New France

This MysteryQuest examines documents from the early 1700s relating to slavery in New France. Students learn to make inferences about the worldviews expressed in textual sources to uncover evidence that some people in New France opposed slavery.

A critical thinking challenge to accompany

Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History

Torture and the Truth:

Angélique and the Burning of Montreal

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/16/indexen.html>

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based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC²)

www.tc2.ca

Ages

14-18

Courses

Quebec and Canadian history, social studies,
language arts and literacy, Native studies

Key Topics

- settlement of New France
- impact of Contact in the Americas
- slavery in New France

Critical Challenge

Take on the persona of an eighteenth century opponent to slavery in Quebec and write a letter to your family explaining why you are against slavery and why they should free the slaves they have in their house.

Broad Understanding

- Students will learn to use primary sources as indirect evidence for understanding past societies.
- Students will develop an understanding of the motivations for and against slavery in 18th century New France.

Requisite Tools



Background knowledge

- knowledge of social, economic, and political structures of New France
- knowledge of the status, restrictions, and duties imposed on enslaved peoples



Criteria for judgment

- criteria for sound conclusion (e.g., plausible, supported with accurate evidence)



Critical thinking vocabulary

- inferences



Thinking strategies

- data charts



Habits of mind

- attention to detail

Independent Study

This lesson can be used as a self-directed activity by having students individually or in pairs work their way through the guided instructions and support material found at <http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/16/indexen.html>.

Whole Class Activities

On the following pages are suggested modifications of the self-guided procedures found on the MysteryQuest website for use with a class of students. For convenience, each support material and set of directions found on the website is reproduced next to the relevant suggestions for whole class instruction.

Suggested Activities

Introduce the challenge

- Using *Introduction* as a guide, explain to students the challenge that is the focus of their investigation.

INTRODUCTION

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Canada maintained a practice of slavery that forced people of Aboriginal and African descent to endure captivity and servitude. Many people at that time saw slavery as a natural social condition for certain peoples. However, there appear to be few records explicitly documenting that other people were, like us, opposed to slavery.

It is important to appreciate why it is not easy to find or interpret evidence about citizens in New France who opposed slavery. Since people who opposed slavery were in a minority, they may have been reluctant to talk openly about their beliefs. In addition, it may be difficult for us in the present to understand the historical reasons why people objected to slavery. We reject slavery because of the injustice and inequality involved in legally “owning” another person and taking away their basic human rights and freedoms. But the equality of all human beings was not always accepted; those living in earlier times may have had reasons for opposing slavery that differ from ours.

Can we find evidence in the historical documents on the Angélique website that establishes that some people in New France objected to slavery? If so, can we determine whether their reasons were the same or different from our reasons for rejecting slavery?

- Using *The Task* as a guide, outline the activities that students will undertake.
- You may want to download and display pictures of New France and other related events.

THE TASK

In this MysteryQuest, you will take on the role of a person living in eighteenth century New France who is against slavery. However, your opinions are in the minority and you fear that raising such issues in public may cause trouble for you. Instead, you will write a letter to your family explaining why you are against slavery and why they should free the slaves they have in their house.

First, you will read about life in New France. You will also learn to make inferences from the evidence you find here about the thinking of people in New France who opposed slavery. Finally, you will construct a dialogue between yourself — the conscientious objector — and your family, explaining why you are against slavery.

Learn about life and slavery in New France

- Using *Step 1: Learn about life and slavery in New France* as a guide, provide students with some background information about life in the early 18th century in the colony.
- You may want to begin by asking students what they know about New France in the 1700s and constructing a KWL (Know/Want to know/Learned) chart. Students might work on individual charts or work together as a class to complete one large chart. If students construct their own charts, remind them to add information to the charts throughout the activities in order to share them at a later date.
- Explain that further information about the diverse nature of New France in the 18th century can be found in the Secondary Documents section of *Evidence in the Case*.

STEP 1: LEARN ABOUT LIFE AND SLAVERY IN NEW FRANCE

Your first step is to learn more about life in the early eighteenth century in the colony of New France. Endorsed by the King of France, the practice of slavery was confined mostly to domestic duties in the cities. Go to the “Secondary documents” section of *Evidence in the Case* and read the two accounts listed there. These documents, written by historians, provide an overview of the story of Angélique, an enslaved African accused of burning down Montreal in the Great Fire of 1734. Angélique was found guilty, tortured until she confessed, and then publicly executed. As you read about the trial you will gain insight into daily life in French colonial society.

EVIDENCE IN THE CASE

Secondary documents

Welcome

Introduction: *The Trial in Context*

Draw inferences based on evidence

- Distribute a picture advertisement or project it with an overhead or a data projector. Ask students to disregard any text and suggest the messages the picture alone conveys. As students respond, ask them how they came to that conclusion. After several responses, point out that students are making inferences based on the evidence in the picture.
- Using *Step 2: Draw inferences based on evidence* as a guide, explain to students that they will use the same strategy — making inferences — in order to gather their evidence about slavery in New France.
- Point out that people in New France who might have opposed slavery did not speak out. In such settings, enslaved servants were used to conduct household chores and the association between servants and their bosses was far from work relationships today. Most people accepted notions of inequality and few people questioned the lack of dignity given to certain groups. Explain that since people did not speak out about their feelings about slavery, we have to infer, or conclude from evidence, how they felt.
- Suggest that by reading a letter written by Madame Bégon to her son, they can practice historical inquiry by gathering evidence from a primary source. Distribute to students copies of *Relationship of a Mistress and Her Enslaved Servants* to record their evidence. Point out that the first example is done for them. Draw attention to the fact that the inferences do not state anything that cannot be justified by the facts — we can infer that Elizabeth can write because she has written this letter to her son. We can infer from this that she is educated but we do not know how much education she has or whether she went to school.

STEP 2: DRAW INFERENCES BASED ON EVIDENCE

The historians who wrote the two accounts you just read were able to do so because they could piece together clues obtained from primary documents to develop a picture of what happened in the past. In other words, they were able to make inferences or draw conclusions from historical documents. Let us see how well you are able to draw historical inferences from a primary source.

On the activity sheet *Relationship of a Mistress and her Enslaved Servants* you will find a number of questions related to a letter written by a woman (named Élisabeth) to her son. To answer the questions, read the letter describing the relationship between a mistress (the female head of a house) and her slaves.

Record the specific information (the “facts”) you find in the letter that relates to each question on the chart and then make inferences about each question. The first question is done for you as a sample. This question asks what we can learn from the letter about Élisabeth. We can see that the letter is written by Élisabeth. This information allows us to infer that Élisabeth can write and perhaps that she has some education. When we draw inferences we must be careful not to reach conclusions that cannot be justified by the facts in the document. For example, we can infer from the letter that Élisabeth is somewhat educated but we do not know how much education she has or whether she went to school.



Relationship of a Mistress and her Enslaved Servants

Topics	Evidence/clues (quote the text dealing with question)	Your conclusions (what you infer from the evidence)
What do we know about Élisabeth?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the letter is from Élisabeth - refers to her son and the “pieces of furniture that you left us with” - says “see how you” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Élisabeth can write and perhaps is educated - she is a mother and perhaps has a husband or other family members - she misses her son who is away
Who is Pierre?		
Who is Jupitère?		
What are Élisabeth's feelings towards Pierre?		
Is Pierre healthy?		
Is Jupitère healthy?		
What value does Élisabeth attach to her servants?		

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Look for evidence of conflicts

- Using *Step 3: Look for evidence of conflicts* as a guide, explain to students that they are now ready to apply the strategy of making inferences to more extended primary sources from New France.
- Download and distribute copies of *Ordinance by Intendant Raudot* on the subject of slavery in Canada, April 13, 1709 from the Primary Documents section of *Evidence in the Case*. Alternatively direct students to the Archives sections of the Torture and the Truth website, found at <http://www.canadianmysteries.ca/sites/angelique/accueil/indexen.html>.
- Your students may find it helpful to work with a partner or as a whole class to read the document in order to clarify their understanding.
- Distribute copies of *Finding Evidence of Social Conflict* to students to record their evidence. Ask them to summarize the passage, then think of questions that come from reading the passage, and finally make an inference about the passage.

STEP 3: LOOK FOR EVIDENCE OF CONFLICTS

Once you have drawn inferences about the letter from Élisabeth, you are ready to examine a more difficult primary source — a legal decree from the chief economic administrator in the government. Read the document *Ordinance by Intendant Raudot* on the subject of slavery in Canada, April 13, 1709.

Use *Finding Evidence of Social Conflict* to direct your reading. Read the document twice — the first time to get a preliminary understanding of it. Next, read the questions in the “What do you know about this document?” column on your chart. Then re-read the document, looking for evidence to answer the questions from which you can make inferences. Record your evidence in the question column and then make inferences from your evidence.



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Support Materials 2 (Activity Sheet)

Finding Evidence of Social Conflict

Document Title: *Ordinance by Intendant Raudot on the subject of slavery in Canada, April 13, 1709*

What do you know about this document?	What is your evidence for this inference? (How do you know?)
What is its purpose?	
Who created it?	
What is the main message?	
Who are the opposing parties?	

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Closely examine the document

- Using *Step 4: Closely examine the document* as a guide, engage students in a class discussion to review their findings and the nature of historical evidence.

STEP 4: CLOSELY EXAMINE THE DOCUMENT

Now that you have a general understanding of the document, use *Concerns about Slaves* to look more carefully at the document for possible evidence that some people in the eighteenth century objected to slavery. In this chart, the text from the document has been re-written into smaller paragraphs to help you understand each part. You are asked to re-write the passage in your own words to help you identify what is being said. Your next task is to try to think of questions or clues that might hint at the reasons why people opposed slavery. The answers to the first passage are done as an example for you. First summarize the passage, then think of questions that come from reading the passage, and finally, make an inference about each passage.

Although the document talks about what objectors have done, we are not sure that the writer is telling the truth. However, by considering the context of the document (that is, the circumstances surrounding it, its purpose, and understanding the intended audience) you may draw conclusions or inferences about the beliefs and concerns of people who objected to slavery in New France.

- Help them understand that evidence is not restricted to the intentions of the writer of documents. This ordinance was intended to secure slavery, not reveal a society with conflicting beliefs. Use the reformat-
ted text found in *Concerns about Slaves* to help students interpret the meaning of each part of the document and identify possible objections to slavery implied in the text.
- Ask students to note that even though the document talks about what objectors have done, we are not sure that the writer is telling the truth. However, by considering the context of the document, that is the cir-
cumstances surrounding it, its purpose, and to whom it is addressed, we may draw a conclusion or make inferences about the existence, beliefs, and values of objectors.



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Support Materials 3 (Activity Sheet)

Concerns about Slaves

Document Title: *Ordinance by Intendant Raudot on the subject of slavery in Canada, April 13, 1709*

Statement from the historical document	What is the author saying about slaves? (summarize the passage in your own words)	What inferences or questions does this raise about slavery and attitudes to slavery?
Having good Knowledge of how this Colony would benefit if it were possible for the inhabitants to purchase Savages known as punis ... it is necessary to ensure the ownership of those who have purchased them or will purchase them in the future.	<i>It would benefit the colony of New France if its people could know that the government would support their legal right to own slaves.</i>	<i>Why does there have to be a public proclamation about slavery if everyone agrees that slavery is good and necessary? Perhaps, it suggests that everyone is not in favour of slavery.</i>
Savages known as punis, whose nation is distant from this country, and whom we can only obtain through savages who will take them from their Homeland and most frequently sell them to the English of Carolina, and who have at times sold them to the people of this country...		
[The inhabitants of New France] at times are frustrated by the considerable sums that they must pay, owing to these savages being inspired with a sense of freedom by those who did not purchase them		
[O]wing to these savages being inspired with a sense of freedom by those who did not purchase them, which means that they most always abandon their masters, and this under the pretext that there are no slaves in France, which is not necessarily the truth...		

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Present your conclusions

- Using *Step 5: Prepare your historical objection to slavery* as a guide, instruct students to write a letter to their family explaining why they are against slavery and why their family should free the slaves they have in their house.

STEP 5: PREPARE YOUR HISTORICAL OBJECTION TO SLAVERY

Using the evidence you found above for the existence of objectors and the kinds of objections some people had to slavery in the eighteenth century from the documents, write an historically informed, realistic letter to your family. From the perspective of an eighteenth century person objecting to slavery in New France, write 200 to 300 words, explaining why you are against slavery and why your family should free the slaves they own. Be sure to include how your beliefs and values are different from those who support slavery. Also, explain how you see the conditions of people who are enslaved. You may wish to describe the thoughts and feelings of people who are bought and sold in slave markets.

Evaluation

- Use the rubric *Assessing the Evidence and Inferences* to assess how well students were able to identify relevant statements from the historical documents and draw plausible inferences from them. Use the rubric *Assessing a Persuasive Presentation* to assess students' ability to write a well-argued letter from the perspective of an 18th century person.



Assessing the Evidence and Inferences

	Outstanding	Very good	Competent	Satisfactory	In-progress
Identifies relevant and important evidence	Identifies the most important and relevant statements in the documents.	Identifies relevant statements, including most of the important ones in the documents.	Identifies some relevant statements in the documents, but important ones are omitted.	Identifies some relevant statements in the documents, but many important ones are omitted.	Identifies no relevant statements in the documents.
Offers plausible inferences	All inferences are highly plausible and highly justifiable in light of the evidence.	Most inferences are clearly plausible and justifiable in light of the evidence.	Most inferences are plausible and somewhat justifiable in light of the evidence.	The majority of inferences are plausible, but many are barely justifiable given the evidence.	Most inferences are implausible and not justifiable given the evidence.



Assessing a Persuasive Presentation

	Outstanding	Very good	Competent	Satisfactory	In-progress
Clear arguments supported with evidence	Arguments are very clearly presented and thoroughly supported with very convincing evidence.	Arguments are clearly presented and well supported by the evidence, with only minor gaps or unaddressed issues.	Arguments are quite clear and consistent with the evidence provided, but key issues are inadequately addressed.	Arguments are somewhat clear and some evidence is offered.	No clear arguments are presented and the evidence is largely irrelevant or missing.
Appropriate perspective and tone	Is very convincingly written from the assigned perspective and highly appropriate for the intended audience.	Is convincingly written from the assigned perspective and largely appropriate for the intended audience.	Is generally written from the assigned perspective and often appropriate for the intended audience.	Some parts are written from the assigned perspective and may be somewhat appropriate for the intended audience.	Is not written from the assigned perspective and is not suited to the intended audience.

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Extension

- Invite students to work individually or as a class to pursue the suggested activities listed in *Extension*.

EXTENSION

Learn more about the society of New France

Go to Archives and the "Slavery" section of Society on the Angélique website to learn more about slavery in New France. Gather evidence and make inferences about the role of slaves in the economy of New France.

Find out more about arguments for and against slavery The following two documents contain arguments for and against slavery in New France:

- Request by M. Ruette d'Auteuil to have black slaves brought to Canada, 1689
- Philippe Rigaud de Vaudreuil and Michel Bégon, Memorandum of October 14, 1716 to the Marine Ministry

Summarize their arguments for and against slavery and compare them to your own reasons for opposing slavery.

Learn more about opposition to slavery

For more information about opposition to slavery you may use the link below to read quotes from Philippe You de La Découverte's criticism of selling slaves in New France: <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?Bioid=35711&query=Comanche%20AND%20Pierre>

Make a list of reasons why opposition to slavery was not widespread.