

# Indentured Servants by Nealie Perkins

## Grade 5/U.S. History

**Objectives:** Students will evaluate two primary documents.

Students will discuss reasons why people became indentured.

Students will discuss the potential disadvantages of being an indentured servant.

Students will be able to compare and contrast an indentured servant to enslaved person.

**TEKS:** 5.1a, 5.1b, 5.6a, 5.8a, 5.8b, 5.8d, 5.10b, 5.11a, 5.11b, 5.14a, 5.25b, 5.25c, 5.26a, 5.26d, 5.26e

### **Time and Materials:**

One or two class periods

Make copies of documents for students to study with a partner.

**Context:** Many newcomers came to New World for various different reasons. Some people could not afford the trip to North America. In these cases the Virginia company paid for them. To repay the debt, each person agreed to work about five to seven years. Thousands of people came to the Americas this way. Many Africans were brought to America and were indentured servants, but by 1661 a different life was paved for them. Africans were enslaved and forced to work. As farms grew larger and the planters' desire for cheap labor increased, laws were passed to legalize the enslavement of the Africans.

### **The Lesson:**

Draw students' attention to the way the document looks and the handwriting from hundreds of years ago. Ask students to look for variations and similarities in both documents.

Help students read parts in documents that gives the time of indentured servitude

Then ask them to answer the following questions in groups:

**Define the term, indentured servant.**

**What would cause people to become indentured servants?**

**What would be some advantages / disadvantages of becoming an indentured servant?**

### **Extending the Lesson:**

Have students sign their own indentured servant contract.

Looking at the advertisement for the sale of enslaved servants, discuss contrast/similarities in those situations.

**Assessment:** Make a Venn Diagram comparing indentured servants to enslaved servants.

Know all men by these presents, that We John  
Allen, and Betsy Allen, for diverse causes and  
Considerations unto this moving, do hereby emanci-  
pate & set at liberty our negroes George, Sim-  
on, Hester, Hannah, Jack, and their increase  
reserving their service to us for and  
during the life of the undersigned Betsy  
Allen - As we clearly wish it to be  
understood that at the death of the  
P Betsy Allen, said negroes & their in-  
crease are to be free & not before - &  
We hereby acknowledge the above &  
desire it shall be recorded as irrevoca-  
ble - given under our hands & seals  
This the 9<sup>th</sup> of Sept 1823 - We do  
hereby at the expiration of three years  
from this day, set at liberty Negro Man  
Scipio whom we have sold to B. Warfield  
for P. Howard, provided he serves said Allen  
& his said term faithfully. The day  
above all of which is irrevocable &  
to be placed upon record in Harrison  
County -

John Allen

Betsy Allen

J. C. Moore  
B. Warfield  
A. Moore

Oct 1823  
prov?

Indentured document #1 Library of Congress  
Conditional emancipation deed, Harrison County, Kentucky (page one)

### SUMMARY

**Deed** from John Allen and Betsy Allen promising the **emancipation** of George, Simon, Hester, Hannah, Jack and their children upon Betsy Allen's death. Scipio, a sixth slave, was sold to B[enjamin] Warfield and was to be freed at the end of a three-year term. [Document proven in court by the oaths of witnesses page 2] October 1823 signed H. C. Moore, clerk

Harrison County October Court 1823 &c.  
 This Manumission from John Allen and Betsy Allen  
 to negro Slaves George, Simon, Hester, Hannah, Jack and  
 Scipio was proved in open Court by the oaths of Ben  
 Warfield and S. Moore Subscribing witnesses thereto and  
 ordered to be recorded. Attest S. Moore C. C. C.

Allen & wife  
 to E. Manumission  
 Negroes George &c

Recorded in deed  
 Book I. Folio 79

W. M. Moore  
 S. Moore