

Laws of Control

Trace how colonial slave codes expanded and changed over time.

SS.68.AA.1.4 "Describe the history and evolution of slave codes."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three details that show a slave code changing or expanding. In the margin, number the details 1, 2, and 3 in time order.

Building Slave Codes

- ① Slave codes were laws that colonial governments used to control enslaved people and protect slavery. They developed over time, rather than appearing all at once. Barbados passed a major slave code in 1661, which influenced other English colonies. In Virginia, a 1662 law made a child's status follow the mother, helping make slavery hereditary. Virginia's 1705 code gathered earlier rules into a broader system. It treated enslaved Africans and their descendants as property and gave white colonists legal power over them.
- ② These laws regulated daily life. Codes commonly restricted travel, meetings, weapons, and actions in court. Enslaved people could face severe punishment for breaking rules, while white people had wide authority to patrol and punish them. The laws did not simply record prejudice, they made racial control part of government. Rules varied by colony and changed with local fears and labor demands. Some codes also limited the rights of free Black people, showing that lawmakers tried to preserve a racial hierarchy beyond slavery itself.
- ③ After the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina in 1739, lawmakers passed the Negro Act of 1740. It tightened controls on movement and assembly, restricted enslaved people from learning to write, and made freeing an enslaved person harder. This response shows how resistance could lead officials to expand slave codes. During and after the American Revolution, debates about liberty grew, but slavery and many legal restrictions continued. By building, revising, and enforcing these codes, colonial and later state governments defended an economy that depended on enslaved labor.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did Virginia's laws of 1662 and 1705 show two stages in the development of slave codes?

2 Name two parts of daily life that slave codes restricted. What was one purpose of these restrictions?

3 Why did South Carolina lawmakers pass tighter slave-code rules in 1740?

4 What does the passage show about how slave codes changed when officials faced local fears or resistance?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write exactly four sentences explaining how slave codes evolved from early colonial laws into broader systems of control. Use at least three specific pieces of evidence from the passage, including dates, places, laws, or events.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline three details that show a slave code changing or expanding. In the margin, number the details 1, 2, and 3 in time order. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Virginia's laws of 1662 and 1705 show two stages in the development of slave codes?	The 1662 law made slavery hereditary through the mother. The 1705 code gathered earlier rules into a broader system of control.
2	Name two parts of daily life that slave codes restricted. What was one purpose of these restrictions?	Answers may name travel, meetings, weapons, or actions in court. The restrictions helped control enslaved people and preserve white authority.
3	Why did South Carolina lawmakers pass tighter slave-code rules in 1740?	They responded to the Stono Rebellion of 1739. The rebellion led officials to expand controls on enslaved people.
4	What does the passage show about how slave codes changed when officials faced local fears or resistance?	Officials revised and expanded the codes, adding or tightening restrictions to strengthen control.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Slave codes became broader as colonies built systems of racial slavery. In 1662, Virginia tied a child's status to the mother, making slavery hereditary. The 1705 Virginia code brought earlier rules together, and South Carolina imposed tighter limits after the Stono Rebellion. These changes helped governments control labor and protect white authority.

Accept equivalent evidence-based explanations of how laws became broader, more restrictive, or were revised in response to local conditions and resistance. For Part 3, students should use three accurate details and explain a change over time in exactly four sentences.