Work by Agreement

Explore jobs and agreements in colonial America

5.C.2.2.B "a labor system utilizing indentured servants in various occupations"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the different jobs and tasks indentured servants did. Circle what they received in return and when their agreements ended.

Many Jobs, One Labor System

1. In the 1700s, ships brought many workers from Europe to Britain's North American colonies. Some could not pay for the trip. They signed a written agreement, called an indenture, promising to work for a set number of years. In return, someone paid their ocean fare and usually provided food and a place to sleep. This system supplied colonial employers with workers when labor was scarce.

2. An indentured servant's work depended on the employer's needs. On a farm, a servant might plant corn, pull weeds, or care for animals. In a carpenter's shop, another might carry wood and help make doors. A servant in a household might cook meals, wash clothes, and fetch water. The jobs differed, but each worker owed labor under an agreement rather than choosing to leave at any time.

3. Most agreements lasted several years. During that time, a farm owner, shopkeeper, or householder directed the servant's daily work. Servants had some legal rights, but life could be harsh, and breaking rules could sometimes add time to a contract. When an agreement ended, the person was free to seek other work. Some received clothes or supplies, depending on the agreement and the colony.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What did a servant promise to do, and what did the servant usually receive in return?

2. How might a servant's work on a farm differ from work in a carpenter's shop?

3. How was a household servant part of the same labor system as a farm servant?

4. How could a servant's choices about work change when the agreement ended?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a colonial job not named in the passage. Write three sentences explaining the work an indentured servant might do in that job, what the servant's agreement could provide, and what the person could do when the agreement ended.

ANSWER KEY

Work by Agreement

GRADE 5 · 5.C.2.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the different jobs and tasks indentured servants did. Circle what they received in return and when their agreements ended. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What did a servant promise to do, and what did the servant usually receive in return?	**The servant promised to work for a set number of years. In return, someone paid the ocean fare and usually provided food and a place to sleep.**
2	How might a servant's work on a farm differ from work in a carpenter's shop?	**On a farm, a servant might plant corn, pull weeds, or care for animals. In a carpenter's shop, a servant might carry wood or help make doors.**
3	How was a household servant part of the same labor system as a farm servant?	**Both owed work under an agreement for a set number of years, though a household servant might cook or wash clothes while a farm servant worked with crops or animals.**
4	How could a servant's choices about work change when the agreement ended?	**During the agreement, the employer directed the servant's work. After it ended, the person was free to seek other work.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

An indentured servant working for a barrel maker might shape wooden pieces and help fit them together. The servant could agree to work for five years in return for ocean fare, food, and a place to sleep. When the agreement ended, the person could seek other work.

Accept other plausible colonial jobs not named in the passage. The response should connect the job to a term of service, describe what the servant received, and explain that the person could seek other work after the agreement ended.