

# Slavery in New England

## Supplement to Lesson 17: The Beginning of Slavery in the Colonies

### Supplement Activity Overview and Rationale

Using quotes, maps, and census data, students will explore slavery in New England and understand that slavery was legal and prevalent in Massachusetts in the years leading up to the Revolution.

### Instructional Objectives:

*Students will*

1. Examine evidence and reach conclusions on the role of slavery in New England.

### Materials

Handout “Quotes About Slavery in New England”

Table of Massachusetts census data

Massachusetts county map

1755 Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island population map

### Procedure:

1. After studying the beginnings of African slavery and slave life in the colonies in **Lesson 17: The Beginning of Slavery in the Colonies**, assess students’ knowledge of slavery in New England. Did it exist in Northern states like Massachusetts? How was it alike and different from Southern slavery?

As a class, make a list of what students already know about slavery in New England.

2. Tell students that they will examine evidence, including real Massachusetts laws, quotes from real people, maps, and population charts to see what they can learn about slavery in New England.
3. Teaching the quotes:
  - a) Hand out the Quotes about Slavery in New England sheet and ask for four volunteers.
  - b) The volunteers will each read one quote and where it came from outloud to the class.
  - c) Conduct a class discussion on what these quotes teach us about slavery in New England. For example,
    - *It started as early as 1642*
    - *Some felt that slavery in Massachusetts was necessary in order for the colony to be successful*
    - *Newspapers were used to advertise slave sales*
    - *Laws were passed and enforced to limit and control slaves in New England.*
    - *Slaves could be violent.*
  - d) Consider adding what students say in this discussion to the list created in step #1. Or create a new list titled “What we’ve learned about slavery in New England.”



4. Maps and Census Numbers:

- e) Hand out the county map of Massachusetts, or put it up on an overhead projector. If possible, place your town on the map as a reference for students.
  - f) Hand out the Table of Massachusetts Census Data and examine a few counties together as a class. While not all black people in Massachusetts were slaves, this chart helps show where in Massachusetts much of the slave population lived and worked.
  - g) Lastly, hand out the map of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island that shows population density.
  - h) Using this map, the county map, and the census table together, determine where in New England most of the slave activity was, and have a discussion on what sort of work slave labor was used for in New England.
  - i) Add this information to your class list.
5. How does this information compare to what students know of work slaves did in other colonies like the South?

Slaves in New England primarily lived and worked in coastal cities, rather than farms as was common in the South. New England slaves were most often used in the shipping business, especially in building and repairing ships.



## Quotes about Slavery in New England

While there were fewer slaves in New England than in other colonies, slavery did exist here. Read the following quotes. What do they tell you about New England slavery?

“To prosper, we must have a stock of slaves to do all our business.”

*Emmanuel Dowling, Massachusetts Bay, 1642*

“If you cannot sell all your slaves in the South . . . bring some of them home (to Rhode Island); I believe they will sell well.”

*James Brown to Obadiah Brown, Providence, RI, 1717*

We are strangers to the endearing ties of husband and wife for we are no longer man and wife as our masters and mistresses think proper married or unmarried. Our children are also taken from us and we seldom or ever see them again. They are to be made slaves for life, which sometimes is very short, by reason of being dragged from their mother . . . By our deplorable situation we are rendered incapable of showing our obedience to almighty God. How can a slave perform the duties of a husband to a wife or a parent to his child?... How can a child obey their parent in all things?

*Freedom Petition for a group of Boston Negroes, 1774*

*Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*

“For Sale: A parcel of Likely Negroes, both male and female, from ten years of age to twenty, imported last week from Africa!!”

*Boston Gazette (Newspaper) advertisement, 1761*

“Boston’s slaves except the crippled are forbidden to carry any sticks or implements that might be used for fighting . . . Indian, Negro and Molatto servants or slaves are prohibited from being out of doors after nine o’clock at night.”

*Massachusetts General Laws, 1703*



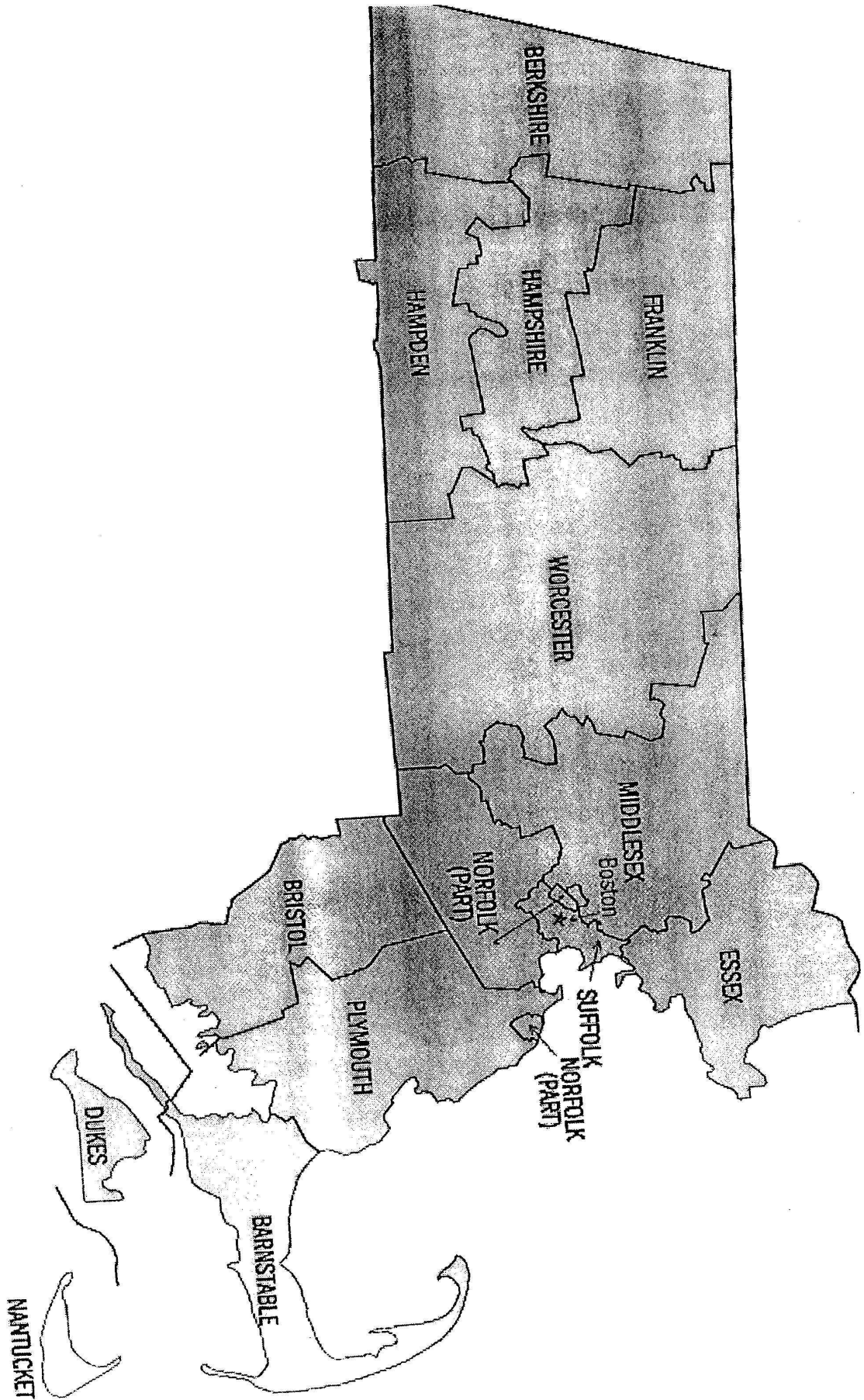
## Table of Massachusetts Census Data 1754-1755 and 1764

MASSACHUSETTS					
Counties	Census of 1754-55 <sup>1</sup>		1764 <sup>2</sup>		
	Negroes		Negroes and Mulattoes		Whites
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Suffolk	792	423	814	537	34,987
Middlesex	216	123	485	375	22,827
Essex	178	184	624	446	42,665
Worcester	40	22	138	114	30,126
Hampshire	56	18	121	73	17,051
Plymouth	69	52	243	219	21,571
Bristol	39	22	165	128	17,683
Barnstable	36	30	135	96	11,717
Dukes	3	4	25	21	2,360
York	75	41	120	105	10,419
Cumberland	—	—	55	40	7,359
Lincoln	—	—	17	7	3,620
Nantucket	—	—	24	20	3,333
Berks	—	—	50	38	2,941
	1,504	919	3,016	2,219	238,659
	Total: 2,423		Total: 243,894		

1. "Number of Negro slaves in the Province of Massachusetts Bay, Sixteen Years Old and Upward," Massachusetts Historical Society *Colls.*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser. III (1815), 95-97.

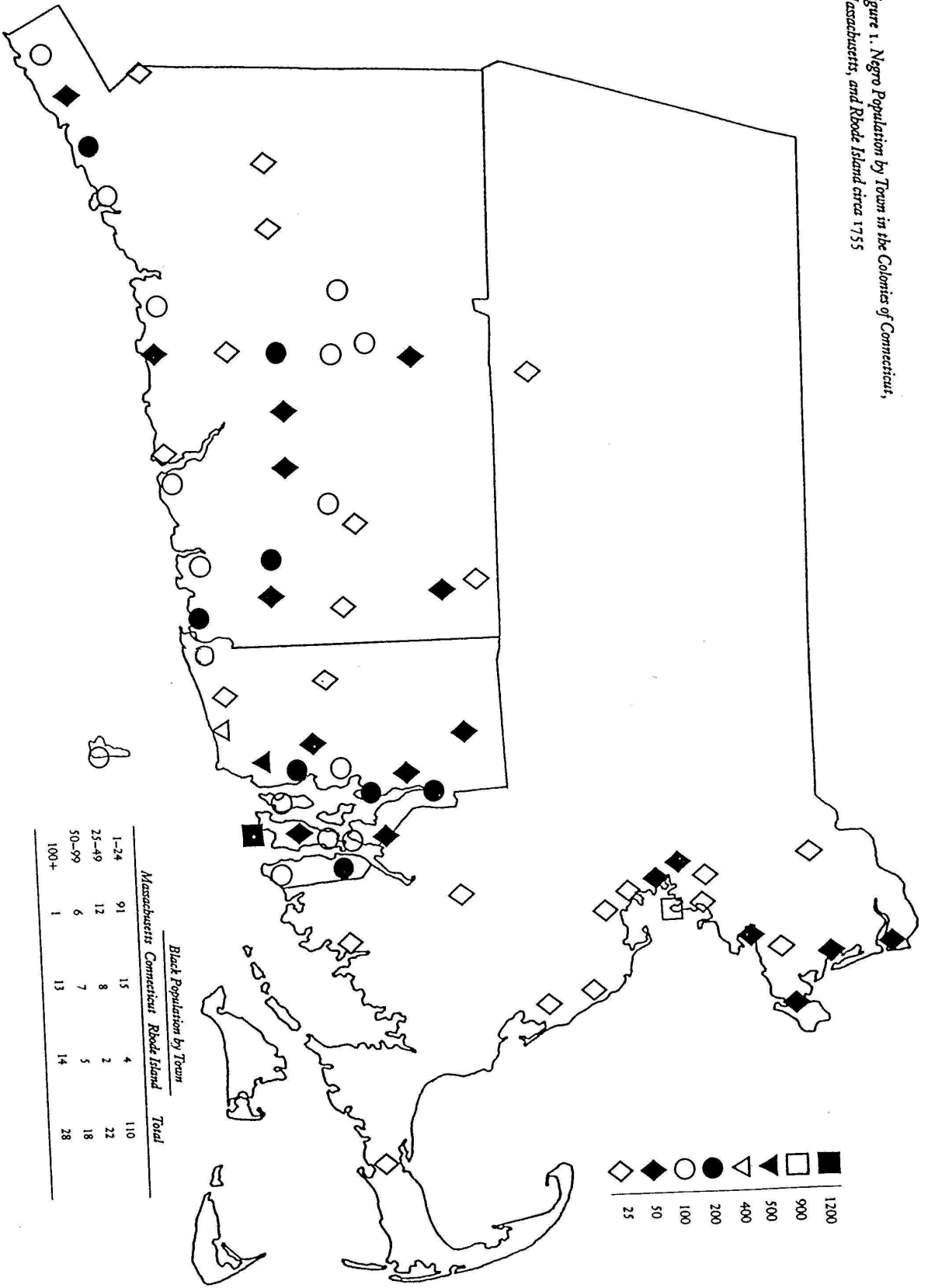
2. W.A. Rossiter, ed. *A Century of Population Growth in the United States, 1790-1900* (Washington D.C., 1909), pp. 158-161.





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Figure 1. Negro Population by Town in the Colonies of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island circa 1755



Black Population by Town				
Massachusetts	Connecticut	Rhode Island	Total	
1-24	91	15	4	110
25-49	12	8	2	22
50-99	6	7	5	18
100+	1	13	14	28

## Table of Massachusetts Census Data

### Questions to Consider

- According to the table and map, where did most of the slaves in Massachusetts and the rest of New England live? Do you think these were city areas or rural?
- Based on where they lived, what sort of work could they have been doing?
- How does this compare to what you know about the work of slaves in the Southern colonies?

