



Snuff Box and Hogshead: Tobacco, Trade, and Slavery

Students will learn...

- The economics of tobacco in the 18th century
- How government, economics, and slavery were intricately linked through tobacco production

You will need...

- Snuff Box and Hogshead pictures
- Tobacco and Snuff Advertisements Handouts
- Big poster paper and markers or the Question Notes Worksheet

Opener: Tobacco Review

- This activity assumes that your class has previous knowledge about tobacco production in the 18th century.
- Review some of the key aspects of tobacco production- that it was a cash crop (definition), raw tobacco was sent to England to be traded for goods, and enslaved Africans were sold to American slaveholders to farm tobacco

Task: Snuff Box and Hogshead

- Tell your class that they will examine two containers for tobacco that are very different: a hogshead and a snuff box.
- Split your class into mini-groups. Half of the groups will be given a hogshead to look at and the other will be given the snuff box.

- Write the following questions on big sheets of paper (one question per page so they have a lot of room) and have them answer them using objects. It doesn't need to be in full sentences, just jotting down notes.

- **Description:** Write down 5-7 words to describe your object.
- **Trade:** Draw a basic diagram of how tobacco was traded with England and where your object fits on that process).
- **People:** Who would have used your object? Who would have made your object?
- **Value:** How valuable is your object? Why?
- **Labor:** What skills and materials were needed to make this object? How is enslaved labor reflected in these objects (obvious and less visible)? How easy was this to use and transport?

- Give each group the advertisement that corresponds with their object, and ask them to discuss what the advertisement tells them about how their object was bought and sold.

Closer: Presentation

- Pair up one group that has the snuff box and one that has the hogshead and have them present their answers to each other.
- Then, have them discuss how their objects are connected to each other.
- *Optional:* Have them ponder the question: Why do you think that England was so concerned about maintaining control of Virginia and the Colonies at this time?¹

¹ Reference back to this activity later on in the year- ex. how the declining prices for tobacco contributed to the Revolutionary War, and how the founding fathers wanted to protect their economic interests by writing slavery into the Constitution.

Hogshead



Date: Reproduction by the National American History Museum
Geography: America
Material: Wood panels and wooden hoops
Size: 48 in (height) x 30 in (diameter)

Description: A large cask or barrel used to store and transport food and liquids. It was used as a unit of measurement equal to 54-130 gallons, depending on its contents. When full, a tobacco hogshead weighed 1,000 pounds.

Snuff Box



Date: 1770-1790

Geography: England

Material: Horn, gold, silver,
copper alloy

Size: .44 in. (height) x 2.94 in.
(length) x .94 in (width)

Description: Enjoyed as a luxury among many eighteenth-century Virginians including the Washingtons, snuff (powdered tobacco, which was sniffed or inhaled through the nose) was often carried in small containers such as this one. Martha Washington was particularly fond of snuff.

Question Notes Worksheet

Instructions: Look at your object and take notes on the following topics.

1. **Description:** Write down 5-7 words to describe your object.
2. **Trade:** Draw a basic diagram of how tobacco was traded with England and where your object fits on that process).
3. **People:** Who would have used your object? Who would have made your object?

4. **Value:** How valuable is your object? Why?

5. **Labor:** What skills and materials were needed to make this object? How is enslaved labor reflected in these objects (obvious and less visible)? How easy was this to use and transport?

Tobacco Advertisement



Tobacco paper print advertisement, Mid 18th century, Published in London. British Museum.

What does this advertisement tell you about how tobacco hogsheads were bought and sold in London (Shoreditch is a district in London)?

Snuff Advertisement



George Acton, tobacconist & snuff maker, 1725-1850. George Arents Collection, The New York Public Library Digital Collections.

What does this advertisement tell you about how snuff was made and sold in London?