



Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plan

A Child's Life in Colonial Times

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Subject: Social Studies **Grade:** 1

Introduction:

This lesson is part of a first grade unit on colonial times which includes learning about the daily life of a child growing up in colonial Massachusetts. The lesson is taught in two parts. This is **Part 2: Sunday.**

In colonial times, Sunday was a very important day of the week. There was no work on Sunday; it was the Lord's Day. Parents taught their children to worship God. Religion was a very important part of their lives.

Everyone had to go to church, the meetinghouse, on Sunday – even babies. Babies were put in wooden cages, like playpens, where they could lie down. Everyone else had to sit on hard wooden benches. It was against the rules to fall asleep. It was the job of the church watchman, or Tithing Man, to make sure that no one slept during the long service. He carried a “tithing stick” which had a knob on one end and a furry fox or squirrel tail on the other. If a child giggled or talked, the Tithing Man would tap them on the head with the knob. If anyone fell asleep, he would wake them by tickling their nose with the long furry tail.

Objectives:

- The students will learn about the importance of Sunday to the people of colonial times.
- The students will experience how the colonial children spent their time on Sunday.
- The students will experience how the colonial children were expected to behave in the meetinghouse on Sunday.



The Rebecca Nurse Homestead.



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Materials:

- Book: *If You Lived in Colonial Times* by Ann McGovern
- Yardstick, scrap of fake fur, glue gun (attach the fur to the yardstick to make a “tithing stick”)

Activities:

Read the section entitled, “What did people do on Sunday?” (pp. 35-38) from the book: *If You Lived in Colonial Times*.

Discuss the reading with the children. Have them compare their Sundays with those of the colonial children.

Tell the class that we are going to find out what it was like for the colonial children to try to sit still and be very quiet in the meetinghouse.

The children should sit still in their seats and not make any noise, not even a whisper. The teacher will act as the Tithing Man and tickle the nose, or lightly tap the head of any child who is not sitting still. To ensure that the children will try their best to sit still and pay attention, reward those who do by allowing them the chance to be the Tithing Man.¹



The Rebecca Nurse Homestead.

Assessment:

Have the children make a class picture book comparing something that they do with their families with something that a colonial child may have done. Divide a piece of drawing paper (12"×18") in half. One on side they should draw a picture of an activity that they do with their families. On the other, they should draw a picture of something colonial children may have done with their families. Have each child write a descriptive sentence on his/her page. Bind the pages to make a class book.

¹ Having a child act as Tithing Man is up to the discretion of the teacher. Each teacher knows his/her own class and should decide whether or not such an activity is a good idea.



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Follow-Up Site Visit:

During the site visit to the Rebecca Nurse Homestead², the children will enter an authentic colonial home. They will see the keeping room with its large fireplace and baking ovens. They will see the furniture and where the family slept. They will visit the meetinghouse where they will be able to see the pews and sit on the hard wooden benches. They can try to imagine what it was like for children their age to sit or stand for many hours on Sunday listening to a long sermon and remaining quiet and still.

The visit to the Homestead will give the children the opportunity to experience a little of what life was like for children growing up in colonial times.

² Although the Rebecca Nurse Homestead is best known for its connection to the Salem Witch Hysteria of 1692, that subject will not be emphasized with small children. Instead, the children will visit the house to experience an authentic colonial dwelling. They will visit the replica of the Salem Village Meeting House, which is on the grounds of the Homestead, to see where colonial families spent many hours on Sundays for church services. Most colonial houses were made of wood. The inside of the house was very plain. There was one large room called the *keeping room*. The family cooked, ate, and worked in that room. The grownups and babies slept there. Older children slept in the attic. The furniture was very plain. In most houses there was only one chair for the father. The rest of the family sat on wooden benches or the settle, a long wooden bench with high sides and a high back. During meal times, the children stood at the table to eat.