

“Satisfying Expectations in Colonial Marriage”

Grade Level: 6-8

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9

Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

Objectives:

Students will be able to use a primary source document to analyze song lyrics and make connections between the two sources. In doing so, students will better understand the history of coverture, the legal structure of marriage, and how these affected the aspirations and satisfactions of colonial women.

Introduction:

After listening to the *Hamilton* song, “Satisfied”, some students might be curious as to why Angelica Schuyler Church felt the pressure to marry someone wealthy and why marriage had so much to do with status. In order to better understand the world in which the Schuyler sisters lived, students will read William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. Vol., 1 (1765). This document discusses the English system of coverture. Under coverture, a husband and wife become one person in the eyes of the law. The woman no longer had a legal existence, beyond that of her husband’s. He was her baron and she was the covert baron. These rules governed and restricted the legal and economic rights of women ostensibly in order to “protect” women.

Activity #1:

To begin the lesson, have students complete a quick free write (about 5-10 minutes) about what expectations they have personally for marriage. Possible guiding questions for the free write might include:

- What would you expect from your partner in marriage?
- What expectations would you have for yourself in your marriage?
- What are some marriage customs that you feel are prevalent in today’s society? How do you feel about these customs, do you agree with them or disagree? Why?

Activity #2:

Have students read the primary source document, William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, Vol., I (1765), pages 442-445. Allow students to read through it once before they pair-off and discuss the main points with a partner.

Activity #3:

Who was Angelica Schuyler Church? Many of your students might not know who Angelica Schuyler Church was, while others might be able to recite her lines from *Hamilton*. In order to ensure that your students understand who she was, and from what background she came from, allow time for the students to read the attached biography on Angelica from The University of Virginia.

After reading Angelica Schuyler Church's biography, have students listen to and then read the lyrics for her song in *Hamilton*, "Satisfied".

Ask the students to annotate 3 specific areas in the lyrics in which Angelica Schuyler Church articulates ideas mentioned in Blackstone's document. By identifying the specific areas in which the primary and secondary sources discuss similar topics, the students are able to demonstrate a level of synthesis across different types of texts. This connection will also help students develop their argument for the next activity.

Activity #4:

Using the primary source document, ask students to write from Angelica Schuyler Church's perspective on why she is not "satisfied." The students should cite direct evidence from both the primary document and the lyrics. Encourage the students to write as much as they need in order to support their argument. However, the responses should be at least a few paragraphs.

Discussion or Assignment Questions to have the students consider...

- What about colonial marriage laws restrict Angelica and keep her dissatisfied?
- What would she change about the laws to become more satisfied?

Assessment:

Use the written response as the assessment tool for this lesson. Assess the quality of the written work as well as the quality of the evidence that the student used.

Optional Extension For This Lesson:

- Additional assignment: Have students write another two stanzas to the song "Satisfied" about the changes Angelica wants to make to the law so that she can become "satisfied."