

“Satisfying Expectations in Colonial Marriage”

Grade Level: 9-12

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

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 for women. 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 became one person in the eyes of the law. The woman no longer has a legal existence, beyond that of her husband’s. He is her baron and she is the covertbaron. These rules governed and restricted the legal and economic rights of women ostensibly in order to “protect” the 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 in 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?

Activity #5:

By using their written work from the previous activity, have the 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." Their written responses from the previous activity provide a justification for the lyrics that the students choose to write in this activity. This activity allows the students to display their argument in two various forms, paragraph form and prose form. Articulate to the students that Lin-Manuel Miranda went through a similar process when writing the songs for the musical. As a closure, allow students to share their lyrics extensions to the class.

Assessment:

Use both the written response and the lyric extension as the assessment tools for this lesson. Assess the quality of the written works, as well as the quality of the evidence that the students use. It is important for the students to have demonstrated that they can make the same arguments in two different forms of writing.