

## Lesson 1

**Lesson Title:** Molly Bannaky

**Museum Connection:** Labor and the Black Experience

**Purpose:** In this lesson students will use the picture book *Molly Bannaky* by Alice McGill to learn about the life of indentured servants in colonial Maryland. They will also examine tobacco production in the colony and the importance of that crop to its economic growth.

**Grade Level and Content Area:** Elementary, Social Studies

**Time Frame:** 1 class period

### **Correlation to State Social Studies Standards:**

USH 2.3.5.1 Analyze the social and religious composition of early settlers, their motives for migration, and the difficulties they encountered, with particular attention to the early settlements of Maryland

### **Social Studies: Maryland College and Career Ready Standards**

5.A.1.a (Grade 4) Explain how and why the Maryland colony was established, including political and economic motives for coming to the new world

5.B.2.a (Grade 5) Describe the religious, political, and economic motives of individuals who migrated to North America and the difficulties they encountered

### **Correlation to State Reading and English Language Arts Maryland College and Career Ready Standards:**

1.E.1.a (Grades 4 and 5) Listen to critically, read, and discuss texts representing diversity in content, culture, authorship, and perspective, including areas such as race, gender, disability, religion, and socio-economic background

1.E.2.c (Grades 4 and 5) Make predictions and ask questions about the text

1.E.3 (Grades 4 and 5) Use strategies to make meaning from text (during reading)

### **Objective:**

- Students will analyze the motives for migration to Maryland and the difficulties early settlers encountered in Maryland by describing the life of Molly Bannaky.

**Vocabulary and Concepts:**

**Dairymaid** – A dairymaid is a woman employed in a dairy.

**Indenture** – An indenture—a type of written contract—binds one person to work for another for a given length of time.

**Indentured servant** – In order to settle debts or other obligations, or in return for free passage (in this case to the colony), an indentured servant signed an indenture, a written contract that binds one person to work for another person for free for a specified period of time.

**Production** – Production is the act of creating goods and services by combining economic resources.

**Slavery** – Slavery is a system in which people are owned by other people and can be sold at the will of their owners.

**Materials****For the teacher:**

McGill, Alice. *Molly Bannaky*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

Teacher Resource Sheet 1 – Information Cards

Teacher Resource Sheet 2 – Tobacco Plant

Teacher Resource Sheet 3 – “Benjamin Banneker: Astronomer–City Planner”

Teacher Resource Sheet 4 – “The forme of binding a servant”

**For the student:**

Student Resource Sheet 1 – Transcription of “The forme of binding a servant”

Student Resource Sheet 2 – Journal Entry Outline for Assessment

**Resources****Book:**

Christian, Charles Melvin. *Black Saga: The African American Experience*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995.

**Web site:**

Benjamin Banneker (1731-1806)

<http://inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blbanneker.htm>

**Teacher Background:**

The first colonial settlements in North America needed labor in order to stabilize their growth and development. Indentured servants, who were obligated to provide five to seven years of free labor in order to repay the costs of their passage to the colonies, began arriving in the Jamestown colony in 1609. According to the agreement (called an indenture), these servants would receive 100 acres of land and their “freedom dues”—clothing and tools—when they completed the terms of their service.

During the 1620s, tobacco became the Chesapeake region's staple export crop, but it was a crop that required much labor. Early colonial planters had hoped that Native Americans would work the fields, but the Native Americans either resisted, died from the hard work, or ran away. As a result, since the early 1600s planters had used their profits from tobacco to bring more laborers to work in the tobacco fields. Most of these workers came from the poorer classes in England and were usually unskilled young men in their late teens or early twenties. Some of these indentured servants were African. In fact, the first 20 Africans to arrive in the Virginia colony in 1619 were indentured servants, and fifteen of them served their redemption time as laborers for the governor of Virginia.

Between 1630 and 1680 about 75,000 Whites immigrated to the Chesapeake region, with 50 to 75 percent of them arriving as indentured servants. Many hoped they would be able to fulfill their obligations, work as wage laborers, and earn enough to buy land, acquire their own servants, and become wealthy. Most did not succeed. There were laws that protected the rights of indentured servants, but many of these laws did not apply to Africans, who experienced worse working conditions and generally had to serve longer periods of service than Whites. Some Africans, however, did gain their freedom and were able to buy land and own servants.

Planters worked their servants harshly in order to maximize their labor before their contract was up and to take advantage of high tobacco prices. As a result, indentured servants were often treated as slaves. Planters could forbid them to marry, punish them by whipping, and even sell them to others during their terms of servitude. Hard work and disease (malaria, influenza, measles, smallpox, and typhoid) killed many of the colonies' early laborers, especially those who had arrived before 1640.

When tobacco prices fell, a growing number of young men free of their indentures could not find work or afford their own land. They were poor and disruptive, and they frequently moved from place to place. They also resented the landed gentry and were considered a threat to authorities. The landowners tried to prevent the growth of this group, usually by lengthening the terms of service, but by the end of the 1670s planters recognized that slavery afforded them better and longer control of labor.

The switch to slave labor occurred slowly in the Chesapeake region. Between 1650 and 1690, most planters were not very wealthy and could afford only a few slaves. Africans were often kept as bondservants for a few years and then freed, much like indentured servants. As long as there was a supply of indentured servants, there was little reason to go to the expense and bother of importing large numbers of Africans. The cost of buying enslaved Africans was also high for British landowners until 1667 because the Dutch and Portuguese controlled the African slave trade.

As the supply of servants decreased, the supply of enslaved Africans increased. Better working conditions in England (higher wages and more jobs) and a decrease in the birth rate led to fewer indentured servants. When tobacco prices were low, few potentially

indentured servants wanted to come to the colonies because opportunities for wealth had dwindled. England also began to control the African slave trade, especially with the establishment of the Royal African Company in 1672. As a result, the ratio of slave prices to servant prices fell.

Both Maryland and Virginia shifted from servant labor to slave labor during the 1680s. In 1660, approximately 1,700 Blacks lived in Maryland and Virginia; by 1680, the number had increased to about 4,600. Twenty years later, 13,000 Blacks lived in the two colonies, nearly all of them slaves. Free Whites still made up the majority of tobacco laborers in 1700, but enslaved Blacks would eventually become the source of labor preferred by planters. They were as productive as Whites. They were also workers for life, and their children could be enslaved as well.

The largest planters, who were concentrated in tobacco-growing areas along the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, enslaved the majority of African Americans held on bondage. They hired overseers who disciplined the slaves and maximized their productivity. These overseers often came from the group of young, landless white men, some of whom had been indentured servants themselves. In Maryland, however, the largest group of landowners owned no servants or slaves; they were farmers with small plots of land that they worked by themselves with their families.

Colonial society controlled the lives of indentured servants and slaves. Legislatures passed laws that governed the relationships between masters, servants, and slaves. These laws clearly protected the masters' investments and worked to maximize the owners' use of the labor. They also protected White indentured servants from the worst physical abuse. For example, if the planter violated the custom of the country or the terms of the contract, he or she could be sued by the servant. Except in the earliest period, Africans had no such rights.

For more information on Molly Bannaky, see the Historical Note at the back of *Molly Bannaky*.

### **Lesson Development:**

*Note to the teacher: Prior to the lesson, cut Teacher Resource Sheet 1, "Information Cards," into separate pieces.*

- 1. Motivation:** Distribute the information cards from Teacher Resource Sheet 1, "Information Cards," to selected students and have them read their cards to the class. The cards may be read in random order. After all the cards have been read, ask the students to predict something about the story. Students may suggest that the story is about someone being in jail or going to court, coming to America as an indentured servant, or raising tobacco.
- 2.** Show students the cover to the book *Molly Bannaky* by Alice McGill. Introduce them to Molly Walsh. Molly Walsh was a white indentured servant from England. She

married an African slave named Bannaky, who had been brought to the Colonies by a slave trader. Tell them that these information cards are about the life of Molly Bannaky. Display Teacher Resource Sheet 2, "Tobacco Plant," and Teacher Resource Sheet 3, "Benjamin Banneker: Astronomer–City Planner." Tell students that Molly Bannaky was Benjamin Banneker's grandmother and that she had raised tobacco on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Explain to students that today they are going to find out how tobacco farming helped Molly Bannaky's family, as well as many other families, become prosperous in Maryland.

3. Have students locate England and Maryland on a world map. Ask students to identify how someone would get from England to Maryland in the 1600s, and recall some of the dangers that these early travelers faced. If needed, ask students to recall sailing ships like the *Mayflower* that journeyed across the Atlantic Ocean.
4. Ask students to name some reasons why people would face these dangerous conditions to travel to the new land of America. (Students may recall reasons such as religious persecution, political problems and persecution, or imprisonment for debts.)
5. Read the first four pages of text up to the page where Molly says goodbye to England and boards a ship. After the reading, ask students to recall why Molly had to leave England. Then ask the students to recall her age and what the sentence for her "crime" was.
6. Write the term "indentured servant" on the board. Ask students what a servant is. Then ask students what an indentured servant might be. Explain to students that "indentured" means that the person had signed a contract to serve someone for a specific number of years without pay but that the master had to provide shelter, food, and clothing for the servant. At the end of the bondage or contract term, the servant was then free and could do whatever he or she wanted. Display Teacher Resource Sheet 4, "The forme of binding a servant." Give the students Student Resource Sheet 1, a transcription of the form, and have them examine the contract that Molly was forced to sign.
7. Read the next page about her servitude in Maryland. Ask students to name some jobs that indentured servants like Molly did in the colonies. Responses might include working in the fields, growing tobacco, cooking, sewing, or taking care of the animals. Then ask how these indentured workers helped the economy of the Maryland colony. (*Workers produced the tobacco, which was then traded for other goods, or the tobacco was sold for gold that was then used to buy more seeds, land, tools, workers, etc.*) Explain to students that as the amount of products that were traded increased, the economy of the Maryland colony grew, and thus the colony became more prosperous.

8. Ask students why Molly's master, the planter, was growing tobacco instead of other crops. Students may recall that tobacco was in demand in Europe, and many planters in Virginia and Maryland tried to grow tobacco in order to get rich.
9. Read the next page about Molly's day of freedom. Have students recall what goods Molly received at the end of her seven years of bondage as an indentured servant. Ask students to predict what Molly will do with these goods. Then finish reading the book.
10. Ask students to explain why Molly and many other colonists decided to grow tobacco. *(There was a demand for tobacco in Europe; other colonists were getting richer by growing tobacco; the climate in Maryland was good for growing crops like tobacco; the soil was good for growing crops; and the bay and the rivers provided transportation to ship tobacco to Europe.)*
11. Ask students to recall how Molly established the tobacco farm. Then have students name some of the important farming skills that Bannaky had learned in Africa and taught to Molly. Tell students that Bannaky had some specialized skills because he knew how to irrigate during a drought, and he also knew about crop rotation that helped to replenish nutrients in the soil. Ask students how these specialized skills allowed Molly and Bannaky to be successful growing tobacco. *(When other planters lost their crops from the drought or when their soil didn't grow very good tobacco because the soil was poor, Molly and Bannaky were able to grow good tobacco and sell it.)*
12. Have students reread the page with the text, "Years passed. Molly and Bannaky . . . hundred acres of land." Ask students what that section tells the reader about the family. *(They were becoming richer and more prosperous.)* Then ask students to explain how Molly and Bannaky were now able to own a large house, many outbuildings, and more land. *(They were making "money" growing tobacco. As they grew more tobacco, they were then able to buy and trade more goods and services. When farmers and planters were able to increase production and trading of tobacco, they helped the economy in the Maryland colony prosper.)*
13. **Assessment:** Have students use Student Resource Sheet 2 to write a journal entry about one of the points in Molly Bannaky's life. When finished, students may illustrate the event they chose. Use the information cards from Teacher Resource Sheet 1 as a list of events in her life.
14. **Closure:** Molly Walsh, who became Molly Bannaky, was Benjamin Banneker's grandmother. With the help of her husband Molly established a successful tobacco farm. Although Benjamin Banneker enjoyed an elementary school education, he too spent most of his life as a farmer. Imagine you are Molly Bannaky. Knowing that your grandson is very bright and industrious, write a journal entry about your hopes and dreams for Benjamin.

**Thoughtful Application:**

Research the differences in the treatment of indentured servants and slaves.

**Lesson Extensions:**

- Visit the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture.
- Invite Alice McGill, author of *Molly Bannaky*, to speak to students at your school.
- Read about John Halfhead, Plantation Master, who lived in St. Mary's City in the 1600s. Go to <http://www.stmaryscity.org> and click on "Education" in order to access the lesson.
- Research the accomplishments of Benjamin Banneker, Molly Bannaky's grandson.
- Use journal entries to create a timeline of Molly Bannaky's life.

### Information Cards

Molly Walsh was a dairymaid for the lord of the manor in England. She had to get up at five o'clock every morning to milk a very obstinate, difficult cow.	The cow had kicked over her pail of milk last week. The cook said that Molly had stolen his lordship's milk when the cow spilled the milk. It was the law.
While milking the cow, Molly sneezed. The cow jumped and tipped over the pail of milk, and the milk seeped into the ground. The cook said Molly had stolen his lordship's milk again.	The usual penalty for stealing was death, but the law said no one could be executed if they could read the Bible. Molly could read the Bible, so she was sentenced to indentured servitude in America for seven years.
At the age of 17, she said goodbye to England and boarded a ship for America. After surviving the journey to the new land, Molly went to work for a planter on the eastern shore of Maryland.	Cannons fired at daybreak to call the servants to work. Molly planted tiny brown tobacco seeds in hills of dirt and picked worms from the flowering stalks.
After seven years of working for the planter, Molly earned her freedom and received everything that was due to her according to the law.	Molly traveled down the road for a distance, and then left the road and went four miles into the wilderness to stake a claim on her fifty acres of land.
Years passed and there was a large house and many outbuildings on the hundred acres.	Molly taught her grandson Benjamin Banneker to read and write.

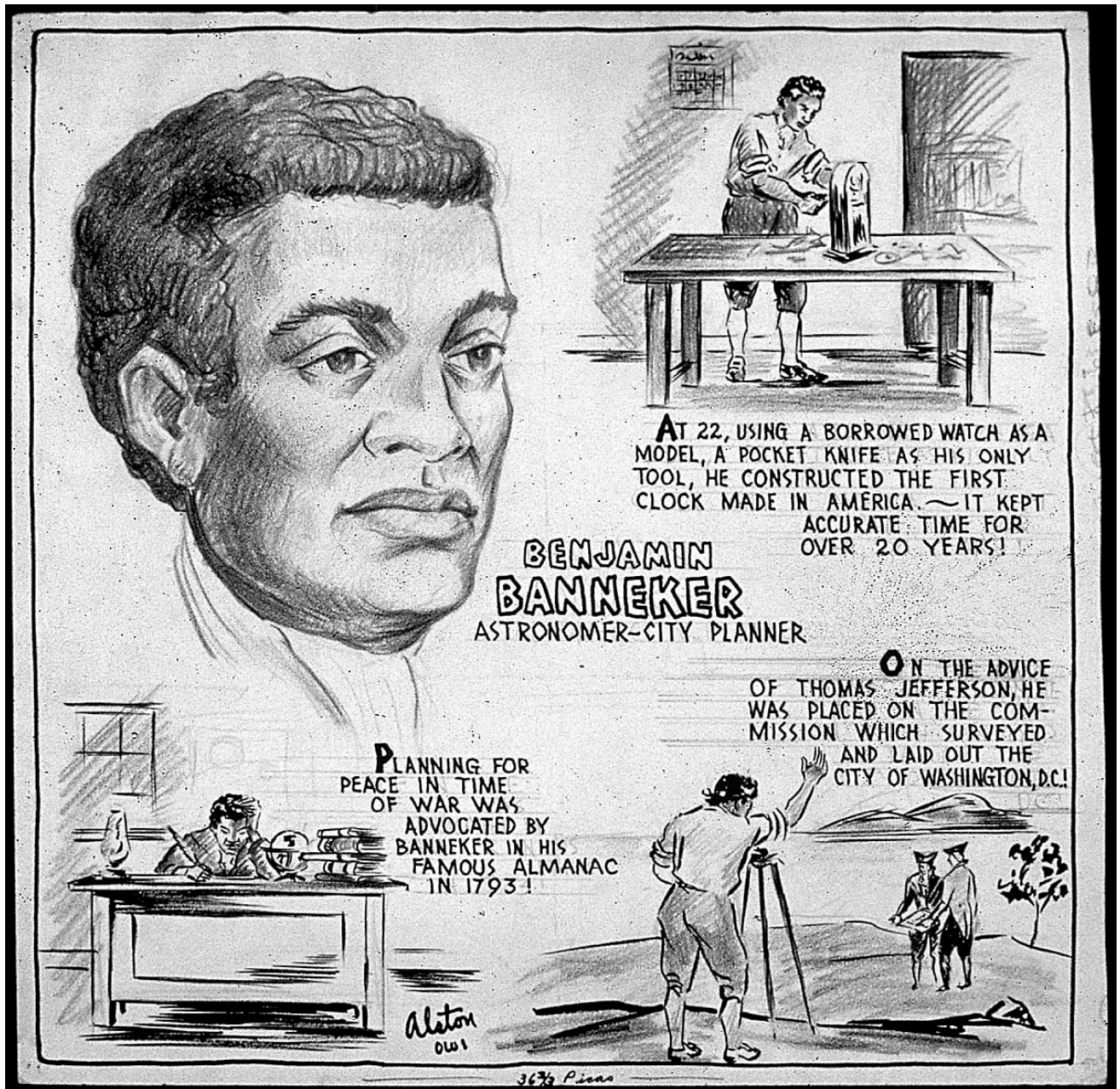


## **Tobacco Plant**



Photograph of a tobacco plant by Sheldon Dick, August 1938. From the Library of Congress.

## Benjamin Banneker



"Benjamin Banneker: Astronomer-City Planner" by Charles Alston. From *Artworks and Mockups for Cartoons Promoting the War Effort and Original Sketches by Charles Alston, ca. 1942-ca. 1945*, a collection at The National Archives in College Park, Maryland.

### The forme of binding a servant

This indenture made the       day of       in the       yeere of our  
Soveraigne Lord King Charles, etc. betweene       of the  
one party, and       on the other party, Witnesseth,  
that the said       doth hereby covenant promise, and grant, to  
and with the said       his Executors and Assignes, to serve him  
from the day of the date hereof, untill his first and next arrivall in Maryland;  
and after for and during the tearme of       yeeres, in such service and  
imployment, as the said       or his assignes shall there  
imploy him, according to the custome of the Countrey in the like kind. In  
consideration whereof, the said       doth promise and grant, to and  
with the said       to pay for his passing, and to find him with  
Meat, Drinke, Apparell and Lodging, with other necessities during the said  
terme; and at the end of the said terme, to give him one whole yeeres provision  
of Corne, and fifty acres of Land, according to the order of the countrey. In  
witness whereof, the said       hath hereunto put his hand and seale,  
the day and yeere above written.

Sealed and delivered in the presence of

From "Meet John Halfhead," part of a series of lessons and activities prepared by Historic St. Mary's City for use in the study of Maryland's colonial beginnings.

Student Resource Sheet 1

The forme of binding a servant

This indenture made the       day of       in the       yeere of our  
Soveraigne Lord King Charles, etc. betweene       of the  
one party, and       on the other party, Witnesseth,  
that the said       doth hereby covenant promise, and grant, to  
and with the said       his Executors and Assignes, to serve him  
from the day of the date hereof, until his first and next arrival in Maryland;  
and after for and during the tearme of       yeeres, in such service and  
mployment, as the said       or his assignes shall there  
employ him, according to the custome of the Countrey in the like kind. In  
consideration whereof, the said       doth promise and grant, to and  
with the said       to pay for his passing, and to find him with  
Meat, Drinke, Apparell and Lodging, with other necessaries during the said  
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Sealed and delivered in the presence of

Transcription of a form for an indentured servant. From "Meet John Halfhead," part of a series of lessons and activities prepared by Historic St. Mary's City for use in the study of Maryland's colonial beginnings.

Student Resource Sheet 2

Dear Journal,

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