

**Daniel C. Melega**

### **Life on the Frontier in Colonial New England**

Leading into the lesson: Students will have read:

- “English Colonization” by Kevin Sweeney,  
<http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/popups/background.do?shortName=expColonialEnglish>
- “French Colonization” by Kevin Sweeney,  
<http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/popups/background.do?shortName=expColonialFrench>
- *Changes in the Land*, By William Cronon

#### **Lesson Topic:**

Life on the frontier in colonial New England c. 1675-1725 and what contact between English, French, and Indians tells us about each group’s settlement motivations and patterns of interaction

**After completing this lesson, students will understand that** the interplay between European (English and French) settlers and Native peoples was far more complicated than the general geo-political histories, which are emphasized in high school texts, would suggest. Students will gain an appreciation for the complex and dynamic ways in which French, English, and Native peoples crossed paths, and how, ultimately, they would come to view one another. In particular, students will not only note the differences between French, English, and Indians (and their settlements) but also will come to recognize how these differences in worldview led to conflict.

Going further, in the second batch of documents, students will use their collected knowledge from part one (noted above) and use it to better inform their discussion on excerpts from Demos’ *The Unredeemed Captive* in an attempt to better understand, in vivid detail, the difficulties of living on the colonial frontier in New England and the very real realities English settlers could end up facing should they find themselves prisoners in captivity. Students will use the captivity experiences to highlight the intersection of peoples and cultures during this period.

This lesson assignment, therefore, will do two things: a) students will gain an understanding of the macro-view of the colonial world during this period, and b) they will also understand what it meant to live at the crossroads of these three cultures in “frontier” New England communities.

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#### **Taken together, students will use the primary and secondary sources below to:**

1. Identify and assess the motivations and reasons behind settlement behavior for the English, French, and Indians.
2. Recognize changes over time, as the geo-political map of colonial New England evolved in light of conflict and adaptation by the three respective groups during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

3. Students should gain an appreciation and identify the effects of interplay on the frontier and how the peculiarities of contact between and occasional movement from one group to another could ultimately result in a blending, alteration, and/or complete modification of behavior for those that crossed over.

## **Grade Level 11/12**

### **Group Document Analysis and Discussion**

Goals: Students will understand the...

1. Differences and motives of the English, French, and Indians in New England c. 1675-1725.
2. Effects of interplay on the frontier and how the peculiarities of how contact between and occasional movement from one group to another could ultimately result in blending, alteration, and/or complete modification of behavior for those that crossed over.

Questions students need to consider when reviewing documents:

Part I:

1. What were the motivations for English, French, and Indian settlement and behaviors in New England c. 1675-1725?
2. What perspectives/worldviews do the English, French, and Indians have with respect to the land and to one another?
3. How did these differences in perspectives result in conflict or misunderstanding?
4. How did each group advance their interests? Who was most successful? Why?

Part II:

1. What difficulties confronted English settlers in places like Deerfield on a regular basis?
2. What did English settlers in places like Deerfield fear the most?
3. Why do you think the captivity experience for English settlers taken in French and Indian raids varied so widely? What kinds of captives were likely to return home? Which ones were less than likely to return? Explain.
4. What do these captive experiences tell us about Puritan religious beliefs? What do these experiences tell us about growing up on the English frontier and family life?

Closing Focus Questions:

1. Three hundred years after the fact, can we truly relate to what life was like c. 1700 in the frontier areas of colonial New England? Why or why not? What are the difficulties that historians (you) have to confront when examining an era so far removed from our current time?
2. In what ways did living on the edge of empire come to shape early American views of identity? In what ways do these views carry on throughout our history and today?

#### Document Set #1

1. Map of Deerfield/Pocumtuck Area, <http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/maps/landscapes.html>
2. Map of New England, 1677, <http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/maps/foster.html>
3. Map of Native Homelands and Movements, <http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/maps/movements.html>
4. Settlement Patterns in the Connecticut River Valley, <http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/maps/crv.html>
5. Chauk Deed, <http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/artifacts/transcriptions/chaukdeed.html>
6. Amiskwolowokoik, The People of the Beaver-Tail Hill, [http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/voices/transcripts/wob\\_creation.html](http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/voices/transcripts/wob_creation.html)
7. Seal of the Massachusetts Bay Company, [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/ff/1629\\_seal\\_Massachusetts\\_Bay\\_Colony\\_MassachusettsArchives.png](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/ff/1629_seal_Massachusetts_Bay_Colony_MassachusettsArchives.png)
8. 1749 Letter from Father Joseph Aubery, in the name of the Abnakis of Canada, to the Dean of the Chapter of Chartres, [http://puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit/relations/relations\\_69.html](http://puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit/relations/relations_69.html) scroll down to Chapter CCXVI, Facing Page 70

#### Document Set #2

1. Excerpts from *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*, [http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/popups/artifacts.do?shortName=redeemed\\_captive](http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/popups/artifacts.do?shortName=redeemed_captive)
2. Excerpts from "Stephen Williams's Account", <http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/popups/artifacts.do?shortName=whatbefellSW>
3. Selections (chosen by the teacher) from *The Unredeemed Captive*, by John Demos
4. Map- "The March to Canada", <http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/maps/march.html>