

Apprenticeship System

In the 18th century people worked through the apprenticeship system to become journeymen and then master craftsmen. Their training took years to become accomplished:in a trade.

Activity:

1. Set up an apprentice system in your classroom. Everyone has something they can teach or show the rest of the class.
2. Discuss with the children what skill they might share (sport, art, cooking, etc.).
3. Assign partners (one the craftsman, one the apprentice)
4. The craftsman will teach the apprentice. Then change roles. 5. Assign new partners and repeat the process.
6. The amount of time an apprentice spends with his or her master will depend on the age of the children and the skills being taught and shared.

Apprenticeship Indenture

Not all Virginians were farmers or planters during colonial times. Some people learned trades and worked in towns or on plantations as craftsmen. Craftsmen did not learn their trades in school, but learned from older, master craftsmen by serving as apprentices.

A young man could learn to be a blacksmith, cooper, carpenter, tailor, doctor or other tradesman by serving as an apprentice for about seven years. When an apprentice turned 21 years old he became a journeyman, or fully-trained craftsman. Some young women served apprenticeships too, and learned skills such as cooking, sewing, knitting and spinning.

The agreement between the apprentice and master was often written down as a legal contract, or indenture. This indenture usually told the length of time the apprentice was to serve the master, the duties of the apprentice and the duties of the master.

On the following page is the text of an actual apprenticeship indenture from the York County, Virginia, court records. Read the indenture and answer the following questions:

1. What is the name of the apprentice? _____

2. What is the name of the master? _____

3. What are some of the duties of the apprentice? _____

4. What are some of the duties of the master? _____

5. What trade (Art and Mystery) is the master supposed to teach the apprentice?

6. What is the master supposed to give the apprentice at the end of his apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship Indenture

York County Deeds

Apprenticeship Indenture. Peter Powell for Divers good causes & considerations hereafter mentioned doth put, place & bind himself unto Matthew Bun of the Parish of York Hampton in the County of York him to serve after the manner of an Apprentice until he the said Peter shall arrive to the age of twenty one years

During which time he the said Peter his master faithfully shall serve his lawfull Comands willingly & readily obey; his Secrets keep his said Masters Goods he shall not wast or lend Matrimony he shall not contract; At Cards Dice or other unlawful Games he shall not play, Gaming tables Ordinarys or Disorderly places or houses he shall not frequent from his said masters service Day or Night without his leave he shall not himself Absent, but in all things shall behave himself as becometh an honest & faithfull Apprentice and the said Matt Bun Doth for himself Promise Covenant & Agree that During the said Servitude he will find & provide for the said Peter Powell Good Sufficient Cloatbing good & wholesome Meat Drink, washing and Lodging fit & Convenient for such an Apprentice & that he the said Matthew the said Peter will Instruct or cause to be Instructed in the whole Art and Mjstery of a Wheel Wright [wheel-maker] according to the best of his skill and Understanding And at the Expiration of which Servitude he will give the said Peter a Suit of Cloaths four Pounds Value in full of all Dues & Demands.

Witnesses: William Powell
John Roberts
Tbos Archer

Peter Powell
Matthew Burt

Recorded: 21 May 1750

[This document contains the original spelling, punctuation, and grammar.]