

Any Sort of Labor



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Introduction

Africans brought to New England as slaves most often worked on small farms or in businesses, except in South County, the Narragansett region of Rhode Island. In this area, there were large farms, often known as plantations, which had many more slaves who worked raising and breeding cattle, horses, sheep, as well as producing the bulk of dairy products in New England.

On the small farms and in the towns, Africans often did a variety of jobs in addition to farming and household duties. They became skilled as stone cutters, coopers, barbers, weavers and in a number of other trades needed in a diversified, 18th century economy. Such trades sometimes helped secure freedom for many slaves. Within the free black population in colonial Rhode Island, there were many tradesmen, both free and enslaved, who contributed to the economy of the colony.

Standards

RI K-12 GSEs for Civics & Government and Historical Perspectives/RI History

GSEs for Grades 5-6

HP 1: History is an account of human activities that is interpretive in nature.

HP 1 -2: Interpret history as a series of connected events with multiple cause-effect relationships...

HP 1-1

Students *act as historians*, using a variety of tools (e.g., artifacts and primary and secondary sources) by...

- a. identifying appropriate sources (e.g., historical maps, diaries, photographs) to answer historical questions
- b. using sources to support the stories of history (*How do we know what we know?*)
- c. asking and answering historical questions, organizing information, and evaluating information in terms of relevance
- d. identifying the point of view of a historical source

HP 2: History is a chronicle of human activities, diverse people, and the societies they form.

HP 2 -1: Connect the past with the present

HP 2 -2: Chronicle events and conditions

HP 2 -3: Show understanding of change over time...

HP 2- 1

Students connect the past with the present by...

- a. identifying sequential events, people, and societies that have shaped RI today
- b. comparing and contrasting the development of RI ethnic history to the nation's history (e.g., what historical factors makes RI unique? immigration, settlement patterns, religion, resources, geography)

Any Sort of Labor

Jobs Worksheet

In the book *Black Yankees*, historian William Pierson included a list of occupations that were held by both free and enslaved blacks in New England. On this chart there are some of the jobs, since many of these occupations may not be familiar to you, do some research and explain what the worker does.¹

cooper	
barber	
bookbinder	
blacksmith	
Peruke-maker	
mason	
spinner	
weaver	
joyner	
shipwright	

¹ Pierson, William D. *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England*, Amherst, The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

Any Sort of Labor Document #1

The following document is an advertisement from the *Providence Gazette*, 25 August, 1770.

M I S S I N G,

QUAM, a Negro Man, supposed to be about 30 Years of Age, by Trade a Cooper, went from his Master's Houſe, in Providence (moſt probably in a delirious Condition, being often ſubject to be ſo) on Sunday, the 8th of July laſt, and has not been heard of ſince.

He is of a middling Stature, ſlim Make, of a ſerious thoughtful Turn of Mind, inclines to talk but little, but ſpeaks pretty good Engliſh, is a good Workman at his Trade, and formerly lived with Mr. Alexander Frazier, of whom he learnt it. Had on an old ſtriped Flannel Jacket, ſtriped Shirt, Tow Trowlers and an old Hat; but took nothing elſe with him that is known, ~~though he was uncommonly neat and pre- ciſe in his Dreſs.~~

Whoever can give any Account (if living) where he is, ſo that his Maſter may have him again, or will (if he is found living) tenderly and kindly treat him, and re- turn him as ſoon as poſſible to his Maſter, ſhall have Two Dollars Reward, and all ne- ceſſary Expences and Charges, paid by

JOB SMITH.

**Any Sort of Labor
Document #1 a.**

Transcription
Providence Gazette, 25 August, 1770

M I S S I N G

Quam, a Negro Man supposed to be about 30 Years of Age, by Trade a Cooper, went from his Master's House in Providence (most probably in a delirious Condition, being often subject to be so) on Sunday, the 8th day of July last, and has not been heard of since.

He is of a middling Stature, slim Make, of a serious thoughtful Turn of Mind inclines to talk but little, but speaks pretty good English, is a good Workman, at his Trade, and formerly lived with Mr. Alexander Frazier, of whom he learned it. Had on an old striped Flannel Jacket, striped Shirt, Tow Trousers and an old Hat, but took nothing else with him that is known although he was uncommonly neat and precise in his Dress.

Whoever can give any account (if living) where he is, so that his Master may have him again, or will (if he is found living) tenderly and kindly treat him and return him as soon as possible to his Master shall have Two Dollars Reward and all necessary expenses and charges paid by

Job Smith

Providence Gazette
25 August, 1770

Any Sort of Labor
Document Analysis Worksheet

1. Using the document, complete the following web.

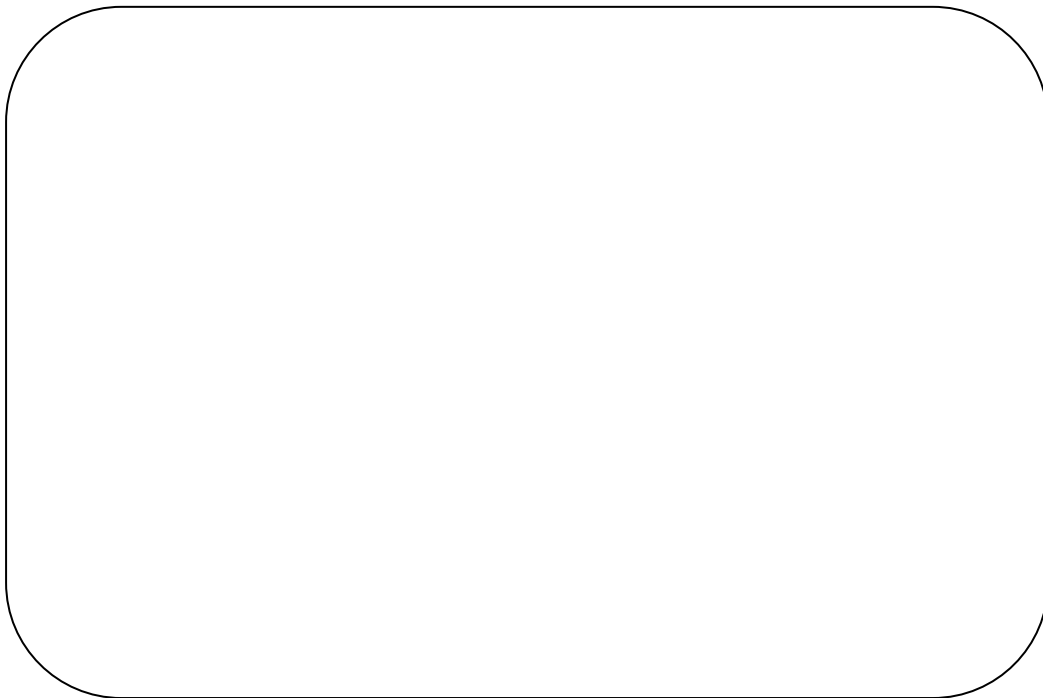
Who is Quam?	When did he leave, and what is the date of this document?
What is his occupation? Explain the job.	How did he learn the skills needed for his job?
Quam has a number of good qualities. List them.	Describe his physical appearance (body type).
Describe his clothing.	If Quam is found, how will he be treated?

Any Sort of Labor Document #2

The following document is from the *Newport Mercury*, 10 April, 1769.

T O B E S O L D,
By Andrew Hunter,
Of NEWPORT,
A Very likely, healthy, young NEGRO
FELLOW, named CATO, brought up a Barber
and Peruke-Maker, and excels in the Art of Shaving,
and Dressing Gentlemen's and Ladies Hair; and, being
stout and strong is fit for any Sort of hard Labour.

1. What kind of a document is this?
2. What is the purpose of the document?
3. What does the document tell us about Rhode Island in 1769?
4. We can learn a great deal about Cato's skills from this document. Imagine if Cato was a freeman and was able to offer his services for hire. Create an advertisement for his business. The ad should include an illustration.



Any Sort of Labor Document #3

Grave markers tell us many things not only about the person who is memorialized but also about the historical period in which they lived and the person who carved the stone. *God's Little Acre* in Newport, Rhode Island has one of the largest collections of graves of both enslaved and free Africans dating back to the 17th century in North America. The following photographs are examples of some of the grave markers.



This stone was cut by Pompey
Stevens in memory of his brother
Cuffe Gibbs
who died December 27, 1768

Document #4



In Memory of
Adam Miller
Died at Sea 1799
Age 43 Years
Also
Belinda
his Wife
a Faithful Servant of Samuel Freebody, Esq.
Died 9 April 1807
Age 60 Years

Any Sort of Labor

Document Analysis Worksheet

1. Each grave marker tells us something about the person or persons being memorialized. Fill in the grid to examine the details about each life. Some markers have more information than others, if the information is missing from the marker just write in N. A. (not available) in the box

	Cuffe Gibbs	Adam Miller	Belinda Miller
Date of death			
Age at death			
Occupation			
Names of other relatives			
Other information			

2. Sketch an example of interesting artwork on one of these markers.

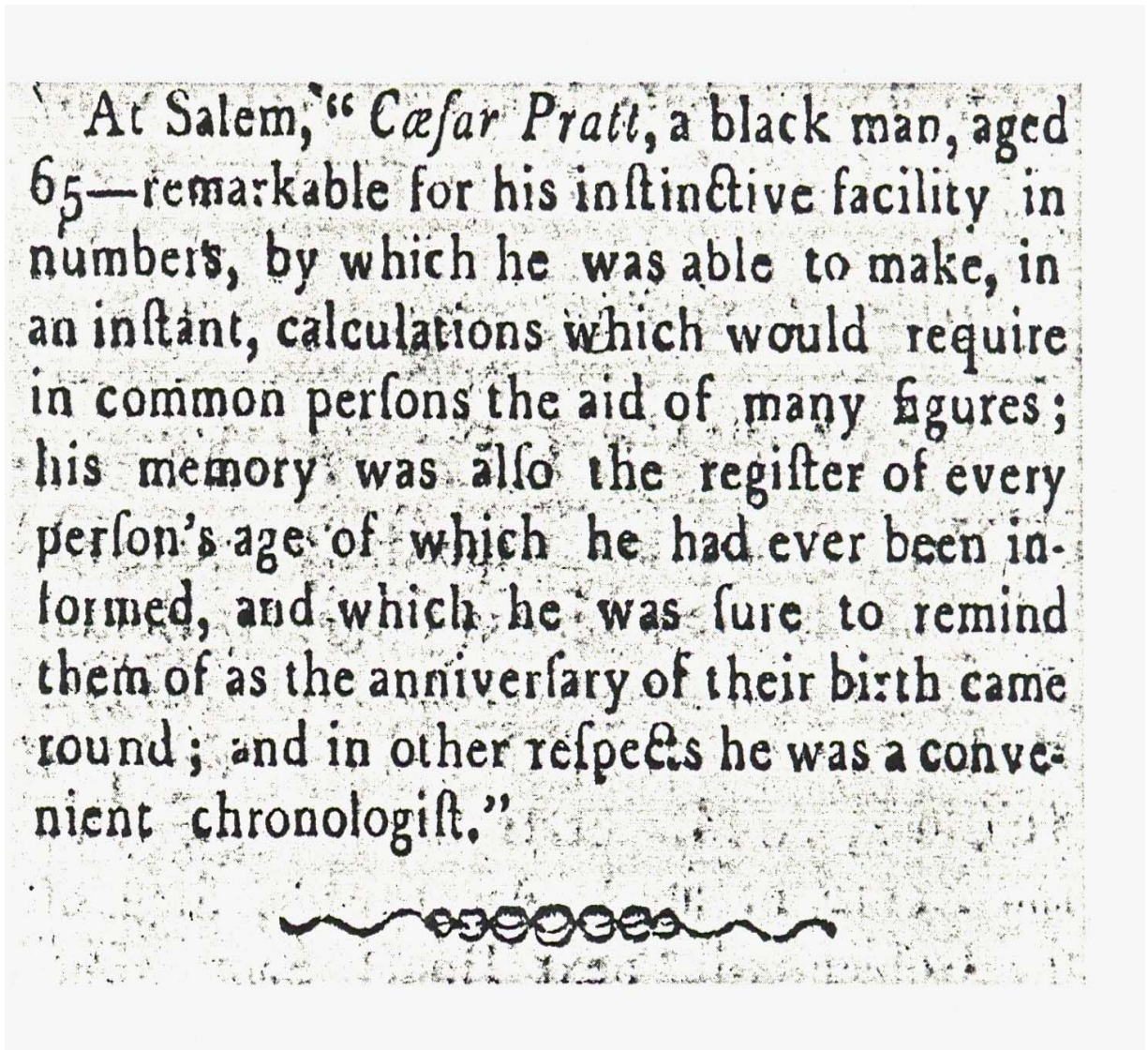


3. What do these markers say about life, times and technology of the people? Your answer should be 2-3 complete sentences in length and include examples from the documents.

Any Sort of Labor Document #5

This is a document from the *Providence Gazette*, 19 May 1804. The document is an obituary for Caesar Pratt. It is unique because in the 19th century few blacks were given extensive obituaries in newspapers.

Before you try to read this document, you will need to complete the worksheet on the following page. Keep the document and the worksheet side by side on your desk.



In reading newspapers and books from the 17th and 18th Century you will notice that a lower case "f" is often used where there should be a lower case "s".

An upper case "S" is "S" and upper case is "F" is "F". Complete the word chart on the next page it will help you read this document.

Any Sort of Labor

Word Chart

Change the letter **f** to **s** in each word; be sure to change only the letters in **bold** type. Use the blank space to rewrite the word and write a short definition.

Ca ef ar		
in ft inctive		
in ft ant		
per ff ons		
alb o		
reg if ter		
anniver fa ry		
re ff ects		
chronolog if t		

Directions:

- Replace the underlined words with corrected words in your worksheet.
- Read odd looking words aloud, phonetically. Maybe the sound will help you recognize an oddly-spelled word.

Return to the document #5 several times after leaving it for awhile. Sometimes words you could not recognize before will seem simple to read later

Now read the document

**Any Sort of Labor
Document #6**



Frontispiece from the *Memoirs of Elleanor Eldridge*

RIHS Collection
RHi (X3 2914)

From the *Memoirs of Elleanor Eldridge* (1785-1862) we learn that Elleanor worked at a number of trades including weaving, spinning, nursing and soap making. For twenty years she also had a successful business, white washing, papering and painting houses.

