Student Handout 1: Women in Colonial America

Directions: With your partner, you will visit several stations where you will investigate information about women in Colonial America. You will be using images, diaries, letters, websites, and text to find information. As you and your partner examine the resources, answer the questions below. After you complete each section, bring this sheet to your teacher to be checked.

Station 1: Martha Ballard Diary
Go to the bookmark: “Martha Ballard Diary”. (http://dohistory.org/diary/themes/money/index.html)
Read through the excerpts from the diary and answer the following questions:
1. Sometimes Martha Ballard traded with currency, such as shillings, pence, and pounds. Other times she and her neighbors traded for other items. List at least 10 other items that were traded:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
2. Martha’s main job was being a midwife. In the first 15 entries, how many times does Martha mention helping delivery a baby? ____________________________ How much detail does she use in describing the births? Why do you think this is the case?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
3. In addition to being a midwife, Martha also does lots of other work. As you read the journal entries, list at least 5 other types of work or chores that she does: ____________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
4. What do you think was the purpose of this diary? Why do you think so? Use evidence from the diary to support your answer. ____________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
5. What did you learn about women in colonial America from reading this diary? ________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Station 2: Images of Slavery
First, read “Introduction to African-American Life in Colonial America”. Next, look carefully at the images, discuss them with your partner, and answer the questions.
6. Image 1: What details do you notice in the picture? What do they tell us about this woman’s life?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
7. Image 2: What is taking place in this picture? How do you think the woman feels about what is happening? Why?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
8. Image 3: How does the ad describe the “Negroes for Sale”? _____________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
What does the ad tell us about how slave traders viewed slaves? _______________________
______________________________________________________________________________

9. Image 4: What seems to be different about this woman from the other images of slaves you have
looked at? ______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

10. Using the images and the reading, how would you compare the lives of enslaved African-
Americans with the lives of free African-Americans? ________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Station 3: Letter from Elizabeth Sprig, an indentured servant
11. What is the date of the letter? ______________________ Where does Elizabeth live? _________
Where does Elizabeth work? ______________________________________________________
12. Elizabeth says that she is “suffering” and “unhappy”. Why? Give specific examples.    
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
13. How does Elizabeth compare her life to the life of a slave? __________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

14. What does Elizabeth want her father to send her? _________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
15. What questions do you still have about the letter or Elizabeth’s situation? _____________
______________________________________________________________________________

Station 4: Diary of Elizabeth Fuller
16. As you read through the diary, write down all the jobs or chores that Elizabeth writes about:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

17. Other than chores, what other activities does Elizabeth mention?
______________________________________________________________________________

18. How would you describe Elizabeth’s life? ________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

19. What does the diary tell us about the lives of colonial women?
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

20. What questions do you still have about the diary or Elizabeth’s life?
______________________________________________________________________________
Station 5: Lady Randolph (Secondary Source)
Go back to the Colonial Williamsburg website: “Meet the People”. Click on the link to Lady Susannah Beverly Randolph and read the information about her.
21. How would you describe Lady Randolph’s social status? ________________________________
22. What were some of Lady Randolph’s duties on the plantation? __________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
23. What were some of the things Lady Randolph did for fun or enjoyment? _________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
24. How do you think Lady Randolph’s life was different from the lives of the other women you
have learned about? __________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________