

Worldwide Trading Game

Classroom Resource Guide



The House of the Seven Gables is pleased to offer a classroom resource guide to help teachers prepare students for this program. We strongly encourage both preparation and follow-up to make the program a more meaningful learning experience for all involved. Included is background information of the particular time period and the important vocabulary words students will be using during the *Worldwide Trading Game* activity.

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Description of Activity

Students are given a brief introduction to the “triangle trade,” a trading network that developed during the seventeenth century and helped to make Salem one of America’s most important seaports. Following this discussion, students are divided into four groups: Native Americans, Colonial Merchants, West Indies / Caribbean Merchants, and English Merchants. Each group will receive color-coded identification tags, a set of commodity cards, and eight “pieces of eight.” The students receive instructions on the process of trading and then begin to buy, sell, and trade their goods. After approximately fifteen minutes of active trading, a Gables staff member announces that there has been a shipwreck, and one group, consequently, loses a portion of its goods.

Following the announcement, the shipwrecked team has the opportunity to try to recover its losses during the remaining period. After approximately forty-five minutes of play, trading ceases and each group gathers together to compute their profits and losses. Each group reports its new worth and, following a discussion of the law of supply and demand, the group whose goods have the highest value is recognized as the winner.

Background Information for Teachers

Salem’s maritime history begins in 1626, when **Roger Conant**, a salter, arrived with a group of approximately twenty people at an abandoned **Native American** settlement. The Native Americans called the area “**Naumkeag**,” which means “good fishing” or “fishing place.” Conant and his fellow English men and women, under the sponsorship of a group of investors called the Dorchester Company, hoped to establish a successful plantation. Upon settlement, the group established a fishing station. The abundant waters off Salem Harbor supplied enough food to meet their own needs, and also provided large quantities of **cod**, a steady **commodity** to trade with England. Large pieces of cod were salted, dried, and shipped to the mother country and her colonies around the globe. Throughout the course of the seventeenth century, cod remained crucial to the colony’s survival, serving as both a food staple and trading commodity.

With the emergence of new commodities, new markets also opened. Traders expanded their markets, supplementing their fishing catch with lumber, and sailing south to take on cargoes of iron, hides, tallow, salt, horses, cotton, tobacco, rice, corn, and wheat.

Gradually the famous “**Triangle Trade**” developed. Ships took New England rum to **Africa’s** West Coast, brought enslaved Africans to the **West Indies or Caribbean region**, and took West Indies sugar and molasses to **New England**.

Few New England ships carried slaves as cargo, but they did supply the plantations with low-grade cod for slaves' food, horses for the mills, and wooden staves for molasses barrels. In addition, New England provided an eager market for sugar, molasses, and indigo from the Caribbean region.

By the end of the century, shipping was the major force driving Salem's economy. Trade continued to grow. Ships sailed to Nova Scotia, Bermuda, the Channel Islands, and the British Isles, trading lumber, wool, cod, and rum for salt, linen, hardware, iron, and bills of exchange. Traders visited southern France, the Iberian Peninsula, Madeira, the Azores, and the Canaries, exchanging cod, tobacco, and barrel staves for wine, hides, fruit, and Spanish **pieces of eight**.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the merchant class had taken Salem from a tiny, struggling fishing settlement to a bustling seaport community of five thousand inhabitants. Cod remained the backbone of trade, but new commodities, and strategies for trading, were emerging. Small schooners fished in the summer months and ventured to the West Indies in the autumn, returning in the spring with cargoes for larger trans-Atlantic ships.

The **American Revolution** led to yet another chapter in maritime trading history: **privateering**. During the early years of the war, industrious New Englanders made fortunes by outsmarting British blockades. Following the close of the war, Salem's sea captains opened the final great trade routes to the East. In 1786, Ebenezer West, aboard the *Grand Turk*, reached **China**. The *Grand Turk*, owned by Elias Hasket Derby, was the first New England ship to open trade with the hitherto isolated country. When the ship returned to Salem Harbor in 1787 with a cargo of **tea, porcelain, and cassia** ("Chinese cinnamon"), the cargo turned a profit of nearly two hundred percent. Salem's courageous captains soon regularly sailed to China, India, and other foreign ports. Salem's fleet peaked in 1807 at approximately two hundred vessels. Following the War of 1812, Salem declined as a shipping center. By 1815, there were only 57 vessels docked in the Harbor.

Salem's seafaring legacy can still be seen today in magnificent houses such as **The House of the Seven Gables**. **John Turner**, a wealthy merchant who owned a number of ships and operated a shop on the grounds, built the mansion in 1668. Following the fiscal demise of the Turner family in the late eighteenth century, Captain Samuel Ingersoll, a prosperous merchant who helped open the Eastern trade, purchased the seaside home. It still stands on its original location, facing the harbor, and reminding guests of its maritime connections.

VOCABULARY

Cod – a type of fish, often dried and traded as a commodity in early New England

Commodity – a product that can be transported and sold

Fleet – a group of ships

Merchant – a person who makes his or her living buying, selling, and trading products

Molasses – thick, dark syrup made from sugar cane

Pelt – the furry skin of an animal

Piece of eight- a piece of Spanish currency

Pound - the British monetary unit

Voyage – a sea journey

VOCABULARY APPROACH FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Strategy 1: Group vocabulary words in categories

Category 1 -- Things that are traded – *Commodities*

Cod, molasses, pelts, hides, iron, corn, cotton, lumber, Madeira wine, rum, cacao beans

(*Did you know?* Cacao beans were introduced in Spain by Columbus, and Spanish friars in the Americas used them to make chocolate, which was later introduced by the friars to the Spanish court.)

Wherever possible, present vocabulary words through visuals or actual samples of these commodities.

Category 2 – Words about trading, or *Commerce*

Fleet, merchant, voyage, Spanish pieces of eight, British pound

Strategy 2: Present big ideas through famous quotes / popular sayings:

Fortune favors the bold – Ask students what they think this saying means. Explain the saying as necessary by taking it apart, or clarifying individual words. For example, make sure students understand that “favors” in this case is used to mean “selects” or “prefers” -- *Good luck or riches will go to people who are bold, or take risks.*

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Before the Visit:

Help students locate New England, England, Barbados, China, and Africa on a map. Each of these regions played a vital role in the vast trading networks that developed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Review the attached vocabulary list.

Discuss the **law of supply and demand**. Simply stated, items for which there is high demand increase in value. If popular items are in short supply, they tend to become even more valuable. On the other hand, if there is little demand for an item, or if a particular item is very plentiful, its value tends to decrease.

After the Visit:

Have students create a journal entry for a ship’s captain sailing out of Salem Harbor. Encourage students to weave in as many historical details as possible, *i.e.*, type of cargo, destination, trading plans, etc.

Have students select a single modern commodity and track its value for a week by reading the newspaper or watching commodities reports on television. Create extensions by allowing students to invest “pretend” dollars in chosen commodities and seeing whose investment pays off the most. Try charting a few selected commodities and tracking related news stories to see how such events as weather and political and military actions affect the commodities’ value.