

A proprietary colony: Exploring the Charter of Carolina

BY PAULINE S. JOHNSON

In this lesson students will examine a primary source document, the Charter of Carolina (1663)¹. Students will cite references from the document to support their interpretation of specific sections of the charter. Students will complete this activity by taking on the role of one of the Lords Proprietors in writing a letter thanking the King for this grant. While the lesson is written as a small group activity, the worksheet can be done individually or in small groups. It can also be a teacher-directed lesson, with the teacher asking the questions and the students/groups answering orally.

Learning outcomes

Students will:

- study the Charter of Carolina (1663)
- evaluate a primary source document
- cite references from a primary source to support their own interpretation
- engage in critical thinking
- take on the role of one of the Lords Proprietors in thanking the King for this grant

Teacher preparation

MATERIALS NEEDED

- White board or chart paper
- Computer with internet access for each group of students **or** a computer for each student
- Copies of the graphic organizer — you may want to copy these front and back
- Optional — a transparency of the graphic organizer **or** the graphic organizer projected by computer onto a white board

TIME REQUIRED FOR LESSON

1 hour with the processing activity as homework

Procedure

PREVIEW ACTIVITY

Spend about five minutes on this preview.

1. Ask the students to imagine that they have been given an island that they and their friends will be able to govern.
2. Have them think about some of the powers that they would have as the rulers of this island.
3. As the students brainstorm, list these powers on a white board or chart paper.

ACTIVITY

1. Put the students into groups of four. Give each group a copy of the graphic organizer and at least one computer with internet access. Assign a recorder for each group, or have the groups choose a recorder.
2. Have students access the Charter of Carolina².
3. Explain that the students will be examining the Charter of Carolina, the document that granted the colony of Carolina to eight men. Ask the students to look at the sidebar on the left of the document. Each of these headings will help the students get a better understanding of the charter. Direct their attention to the sidebar section called “Reading the Charter.” Explain that they will use this method to get a general understanding of the Charter of Carolina:

You may want to start by skimming the headings we've added in the sidebar. Then look at the highlighted passages and read the comments to understand what's going on. From there, you can read forward and backward in each paragraph to get some context.

As they use the graphic organizer, each group will examine the document, filling in the blocks and answering the questions or explaining the notes. Then each group should extract one sentence from the document to support their answers or explanations.

4. Give the groups 30 minutes to examine the document and fill in the graphic organizer. (Some classes or groups of students may need more time.) If time is a factor, you may choose to assign different groups to do specific parts of the organizer — there are 19 headings.
5. After groups have completed the chart, have each group choose the three sections they believe are the most unfair and the three they feel are the most fair. They must be able to explain why they chose them.
6. Ask the recorder for each group to share one fair and one unfair part with the rest of the class. Hopefully, since each group will have chosen three, there will not be a lot of repetition.

7. After all the groups have shared their responses, ask the class to evaluate the Charter of Carolina:
 - Would it be a workable plan?
 - Is it more fair or unfair? To whom?
 - Would these rules have encouraged you to move from your home to Carolina in the 1600s? Why or why not?
 - Would you have liked to live under these rules?
 - Why do you think the Charter was set up the way it was?

PROCESSING ACTIVITY

1. Ask the students to take on the role of one of the Lords Proprietors. Have them write a formal letter to the King thanking him for the grant of the Carolina Colony. They need to include in their letter the specific portions of the charter that most appeal to them and why. They can use the Charter as an example for the flowery language that was used at the time for a document of this importance, and their letter should reflect this language.

Assessment

The graphic organizer should be complete, with an explanation and reference from the document for each section. There are many possible answers for this.

The class discussion will allow the teacher to gauge the comprehension of the students. Include student participation in your assessment.

The letter to the King should be assessed by the following: It should be written in the form of a letter, language should be appropriate, and it should include examples of the sections of the charter that would have been most beneficial to the Lords Proprietors, along with an explanation of the reasons they included those portions. You may choose to check grammar and spelling, but some of your students may be aware that spelling was not standardized at this time.

The Charter of North Carolina graphic organizer

Sidebar notation	Answer the question or explain	Examples from the document
Who were the Lords Proprietors and what did they wish to do?		
What was the extent of the land being granted?		
What were the powers regarding the Church?		
What was the extent of the Lords Proprietors' power?		

Sidebar notation	Answer the question or explain	Examples from the document
<p>How was the province of Carolina named? How did the charter provide for its good government, including legislative assemblies and courts?</p>		
<p>What was the power of the Lords Proprietors to make laws when a legislative assembly is unavailable, within certain constraints?</p>		
<p>“The King’s subjects are permitted to emigrate to Carolina, and shall remain the King’s subjects there, as will their descendants.”</p>		
<p>“Settlers in Carolina may trade freely, subject to the laws of England.” Why did this section include ‘subject to the laws of England’?</p>		
<p>“To promote trade and settlement, import duties are suspended for four years.”</p>		

Sidebar notation	Answer the question or explain	Examples from the document
<p>How did the Charter give power to make and control ports for trade?</p>		
<p>Who had the power to tax imports and exports with the consent of the settlers' legislative assembly?</p>		
<p>Who had the power to grant or sell land?</p>		
<p>What did it mean to have the power to confer hereditary titles upon settlers in Carolina? What were those titles?</p>		
<p>Why was having the power to establish towns and to arrange for their defense so important?</p>		

Sidebar notation	Answer the question or explain	Examples from the document
<p>“Power to raise armies.”</p>		
<p>“Power to declare martial law in case of rebellion was one that belonged to the Lords Proprietors.” What is this and why is it important?</p>		
<p>“Inhabitants of Carolina to be subjects of the king and not subject to the laws of other colonies or nations.” Why was this section included?</p>		
<p>“Inhabitants permitted free exercise of religion.” Why was this such an issue?</p>		
<p>“The Lords Proprietors should be given benefit of the doubt in court.” What does this mean?</p>		

1. Three unfair sections — include reasons they are unfair:

1.

2.

3.

2. Three fair sections — include reasons they are fair:

1.

2.

3.

National Standards

In addition to meeting objectives of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, this lesson plan addresses the following national standards.

HISTORICAL THINKING STANDARDS 5-12

Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

- A. Identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative and assess its credibility.
- B. Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.

NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

Era 2: Colonization and Settlement (1585-1763)

Standard 1: Why the Americas attracted Europeans, why they brought enslaved Africans to their colonies, and how Europeans struggled for control of North America and the Caribbean

Standard 2: How political, religious, and social institutions emerged in the English colonies

Standard 3: How the values and institutions of European economic life took root in the colonies, and how slavery reshaped European and African life in the America

On the web

The Charter of Carolina (1663)

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/1655>

In the Charter of Carolina, King Charles II of England granted the eight men known as the Lords Proprietors rights to the land that became North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Primary source includes historical commentary.

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Visit us on the web at www.learnnc.org to learn more about topics related to this article, including Charter of Carolina, North Carolina, colonial, history, and social studies.

Notes

1. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/1655>.
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About the author

PAULINE S. JOHNSON

I am currently the Director of a Teaching American History Grant for Buncombe County Schools, Asheville City Schools, and Madison County Schools. I have taught history and English in the seventh and eighth grades for over twenty-six years at Reynolds Middle School in Asheville, North Carolina. I am currently doing adjunct work for Mars Hill College and Western Carolina University. I have a Masters Degree from Western Carolina University and am Nationally Board Certified in Early

Adolescence/Social Studies-History. I am certified to teach K-12 and I also have Academically-Intellectually Gifted certification.