

RAYNHAM HALL PRIMARY SOURCE INVESTIGATION

Instructional Sequence: Before, During, and After the Visit

Materials

- Raynham Hall Primary Source Investigation Sheet
- Final Conclusion response sheet
- Student vocabulary reference sheet
- Pencils and clipboards
- Teacher-provided copies or images of the three primary sources
- Optional sentence starters and enlarged source images

Before the Visit: Build Background

Introduce the compelling question and key vocabulary. Students imagine that it is 1778 and British soldiers have occupied Oyster Bay and are living in local homes. They consider what choices they might make if some neighbors supported Britain, others supported independence, and they participated in passing information that supported the Patriot cause. Connect the events to the local community by explaining that Raynham Hall, formerly the Townsend Homestead, is located in Oyster Bay.

Opening Discussion

- What choices might people have to make if soldiers moved into their community?
- Why might a person keep their beliefs or actions secret?
- How could the same occupation affect different people in different ways?
- What risks might people take to protect their family, beliefs, safety, or freedom?

During the Visit: Primary Source Investigation

Students work in small groups to examine three sources. For each source, they record at least two observations, one question, and a connection to the compelling question.

Source 1: Rooms of Raynham Hall

Students examine the Townsend family rooms, the rooms used by enslaved people, and the bedroom occupied by a member of the Queen's Rangers. The rooms show that the Revolution affected everyday life inside homes and communities.

- What details do you notice in the different rooms?
- What do these details tell you about the people who lived here?

- How might the Townsend family's daily life have changed when British soldiers moved into the home?
- How might the Townsend family, enslaved people, and British soldiers have experienced the same house differently?

Source 2: Townsend Family Bible Records

Students examine handwritten records that include the names and family information of people enslaved by Samuel Townsend. The source provides evidence that slavery existed in New York and preserves rare family information about enslaved people.

- What names and family information do you notice?
- Which people appear to be listed together as a family?
- What additional information is written next to the names?
- What does this source reveal, and what does it leave unanswered?

Source 3: Robert Townsend's Letter About Liss

Students examine Robert Townsend's May 26, 1779 letter to his father. The letter suggests that Liss, also known as Elizabeth, may have left Oyster Bay with Lt. Col. John Graves Simcoe of the Queen's Rangers.

- What does the letter tell us about what may have happened to Liss?
- What questions does the letter leave unanswered?
- What choice might Liss have been making by leaving Oyster Bay?
- What might she have hoped for, and what risks might she have faced?

Whole-Group Discussion

- How did living under British occupation affect the choices people made at the Townsend Homestead?
- Which source gave you the strongest evidence about life during the occupation, and why?
- Why might people at the Townsend Homestead have been willing to take risks while living in close quarters with a British soldier?

After the Visit: Evidence-Based Conclusion

Students use their investigation sheets to compare how British occupation affected the Townsend family, the enslaved people living and working in the household, British soldiers, and Robert Townsend. Students then complete a short written response from one person's or group's perspective using evidence from the sources.

Writing Prompt

British occupation affected people's choices because...

Perspective Options

- The Townsend family

- Enslaved people in the household
- Robert Townsend
- Liss
- A British soldier