

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
SECONDARY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

GRADE SEVEN (7)
WEEK 11 LESSON ONE (1)

SOCIAL STUDIES

Topic: A Glimpse of Our History.

Sub-Topic: The six ethnic groups from which Guyanese have descended

Objectives:

- Explain the way of life of the:
 - Africans
 - Portuguese

Concept: We must have respect and appreciation for the culture of different ethnic groups in Guyana.

Content:

THE AFRICANS

Most of the Africans were brought to Guyana as slaves. A small number came during the 1630s – 1640s when the Dutch changed to sugar cane cultivation. The Amerindians no longer proved an effective source of labour because of their small population. The Dutch cultivated sugar on a large scale and this cultivation survived up to the present time. During the Dutch occupation, the sugar industry experienced many problems

1. Rising production cost.
2. Falling sugar prices on the European market.
3. Inadequate supplies of labourers.

The British inherited and continued to operate the sugar industry. Slaves were captured and brought from the West Coast of Africa. The overcrowded vessels left Africa with inadequate food and the conditions on board caused widespread disease. A great number of slaves died before reaching Guiana. The slaves travelled through the dangerous Middle Passage before arriving on the plantations.

On arrival, the cargo was advertised and the slaves were put up for auction. They were thoroughly examined before being purchased. Families were separated with no hope of seeing each other again. On the plantations, the slaves were placed in barracks. The food of the slaves consisted of vegetables, salt fish, plantains and ground provision. They were also given a little clothing. The men received a coarse woollen jacket, a hat and two pairs of trousers. Work began

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at about 6:00 am. The slaves proceeded to the fields where they did strenuous labour under the supervision of drivers and white overseers. Punishments were a major part of slave life. They were punished for a variety of offences. For not complying with instructions slaves could be flogged, imprisoned or tortured. To maintain control, a system of divide and rule was implemented.

Apart from field slaves, some slaves worked in the factories and in their master's household. Slaves were allowed to purchase their freedom. Manumission was granted to elderly slaves and those who bore children for their masters. Slaves protested against the conditions of slavery. Rebellions were one form of protest. In 1763 Cuffy, a house slave led a rebellion in Berbice.

After emancipation in 1834, the slaves withdrew their labour from the sugar plantations. They bought abandoned plantations in such places as Victoria, Buxton and Plaisance. Africans also came as immigrants after emancipation in 1834 from other Caribbean islands where wages were lower than in Guyana.

THE PORTUGUESE

With the withdrawal of slave labour from the sugar plantations, it was thought that immigrant labour would supply the additional labour needed to compensate for the loss created by emancipation. To correct the racial imbalance immigrants were brought from Ireland, Germany and Malta but a great majority soon died on arrival.

Immigrants were expected to work for wages and by so doing free the planters of some of the responsibilities for their existence.

In 1835 Portuguese were brought from Madeira but the death rate among these immigrants was very high.

Some Problems of the Portuguese Immigrants

- A severe epidemic broke out among the Portuguese immigrants.
- The authorities in Madeira put obstacles in the way of the emigrants because they thought that they were losing a better class of agriculturalists.
- The mortality rate caused the system to be suspended on a few occasions. This resulted in an irregular flow of Portuguese immigrants.

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- Inability to cope with the conditions on the sugar plantations caused them to withdraw from estate labour and turn to retail trading.

The Africans saw the presence of the Portuguese on the plantations as an attempt to reduce wages. Portuguese were able to monopolise the retail trade with credit from European merchants. This pushed food prices up.

Activity

1. Use any relevant material to do additional reading on the Africans and the Portuguese.
2. Write two separate reports on the following:
 - (i) Africans
 - (ii) Portuguese

Homework

1. Use your Gyana our Country Our Home textbook to do additional reading on the Portuguese

Reference

1. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-school-community-definition-members.html>
2. Ministry of Education Social Studies teacher's guide level 7 pages 45 to 47
3. Ministry of Education Curriculum guide page 6
4. New Horizon in Social Studies book 7 pages 98 to 99