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Lesson: Baltimore as a Port of Entry

Objective:

Students will explore Baltimore's role as a port of entry for European immigrants between 1830-1850.

Voluntary State Curriculum Correlation:

Grade Four:

5.C.2.b Describe the changes in industry, transportation, education, rights and freedoms in Maryland, such as roads and canals, slavery, B&O Railroad, the National Road, immigration, public schools, and religious freedoms

Grade Eight:

5.B.4.a. Analyze patterns of immigration to the United States before 1877

Estimated Time:

Two 45 minute class periods

Advance Preparation:

(Note: The links below are in PDF format and may take a few minutes to open.)

1. Make copies of the primary source documents and their transcriptions for each student.

- [Affidavit for Brig Neptune](#). Passenger List of the Brig *Neptune*. Port of Baltimore Passenger Lists 1834-1854. MS 1382, Box 1. H. Furlong Baldwin Library. Maryland Historical Society. [Transcription of Affidavit for Brig Neptune](#).
- Passenger List of the Brig *Neptune*. [List 1](#), [List 2](#), [List 3](#), [List 4](#), [List 5](#), [List 6](#), [List 7](#), [List 8](#). Port of Baltimore Passenger Lists 1834-1854. MS 1382, Box 1. H. Furlong Baldwin Library. Maryland Historical Society. [Transcription of Neptune Passenger List](#).
- [Letter of Obligation regarding Nancy Miller](#). Passenger List of the Brig *Neptune*. Port of Baltimore Passenger Lists 1834-1854. MS 1382, Box 1. H. Furlong Baldwin Library. Maryland Historical Society.

2. Make copies of the worksheet "How to Interpret a Document" for each student (<http://www.mdhs.org/teachers/documt.html>).
3. Make copies of the worksheet "Descriptions of Immigrants Aboard the Neptune."

New Vocabulary:

berth: a shelf-like sleeping space on a ship

brig: a two-masted ship that is square-rigged on both masts

destination: the place to which a person travels

immigrant: a person who comes to a new country to live

manifest: a list of the cargo and passengers carried on a ship

obligation: a moral or legal duty

packet ship/packet ship line: a ship/shipping company that makes regular voyages to and from two points

port of entry: any place through which passengers and cargo are allowed to enter a country

primary source: a first-hand account of something or someone from the past

steerage: the lowest class of accommodations on a passenger ship

Historical Background:

During the 19th century, Baltimore ships traveled the world, making the fortune of many a Baltimore merchant and giving employment to generations of Baltimore sailors and shipbuilders. In the early 1800's, Baltimore brigs and ships carried Maryland flour and tobacco to Europe and returned with an immense variety of merchandise and the city's first influx of Irish and German immigrants.

By the 1840s, Baltimore packet lines advertised ships that traveled on a regular schedule to Europe. Packets of the 1840s and 1850s specialized in the immigrant trade. Relatives in America could arrange for the passage of their friends in Ireland by sending money to local agencies that made arrangements to bring out passengers from any part of the old country.

Steerage passengers could count on overcrowding, sickness, primitive sanitation, foul air, and poor food during their journey to America. By law, each immigrant was guaranteed 14 square feet of horizontal space and a berth (bed) that measured 6 feet long and 18 inches wide. Immigrants had to supply their own bedding, and they had to clean their own rooms and cook their own food. Their food consisted mostly of salt meat, herring, potatoes, rice, dried peas, and bread. By the 1850s one out of every six steerage passengers either died or became dangerously sick while at sea.

Excerpted from: Hayward, Mary Ellen. *Maryland's Maritime Heritage: A Guide to the Collections of the Radcliffe Maritime Museum*. Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1984. Pages 11-12.

Motivation:

Ask students to think about what it is like to immigrate to a new country. What sorts of challenges and hardships would immigrants have faced in the early 1800s? How would they have traveled from Europe to the United States? What challenges would they face when they arrived? What types of people would be most likely to immigrate? Tell students that they will be examining documents associated with a ship called the Neptune that carried immigrants from Germany to Baltimore in 1834 to learn more about immigration.

Procedure:

1. Divide the students into groups of 2 or 3 students.
2. Give each group a copy of the shipmaster's affidavit. Each group should also get copy of the transcription and the "How to Interpret a Document" worksheet.
3. Allow the students 15 minutes to examine the document and complete their "How to Interpret a Document" worksheet.
4. Each group should select a reporter to share their findings with the class.
5. As a class, discuss the purpose of the affidavit: Why did Mr. Hilcken write the affidavit?
6. Distribute the *Neptune* passenger list and "Worksheet: Descriptions of Immigrants Aboard the *Neptune*" to each group. Working in their groups, have the students use the passenger manifest to complete each of the three tables. Allow the students 10-15 minutes to complete the tables.
7. As a class, try to draw conclusions about the types of people who immigrated to America through the port of Baltimore in the early 1800s - age, occupation, destination, family situation, etc.

Closure/Assessment:

At the end of the lesson, instruct each student to choose a passenger from the brig *Neptune* whose final destination was Baltimore and who was at least eighteen years of age. Ask the students pretend to be the passenger they chose. Have them respond to the following prompt:

It is now July 10th, 1840. You are only a week away from arriving in Baltimore. Write a letter home to your relatives in Germany describing your voyage to Maryland. Who are some of the other people on the ship? What are conditions like aboard the ship? What are your hopes and dreams for your new life? Is your final destination a rural area or an urban area? Do you have any special skills that will help you to find a job once you reach your final destination?

Alternate Assessment:

At the end of the lesson, distribute a 4"x6" index card to each student. Instruct the students to select a passenger from the brig *Neptune* who is between the ages of 18-50. Then have the students identify their passenger's age, destination, and skill, and then to answer the following question: What do you think influenced your passenger's decision to settle in the listed destination location?

Extension #1

Provide the students with a copy and a transcription of the letter of obligation concerning Irish immigrant Nancy Miller. Students will also need a copy of the "How to Interpret a Document" worksheet.

Questions:

- Why do you think Nancy Miller needed to have Mr. Wilson, Mr. W.R. Adair, and Mr. T. B. Adair sign this document?

- By signing this document, what did the gentlemen listed above agree to do?
- Do you think that all immigrants coming through the port of Baltimore needed this type of document? Why or why not?

WORKSHEET: DESCRIPTIONS OF IMMIGRANTS ABOARD THE *NEPTUNE*

TABLE 1: OCCUPATIONS

Occupations/skills of <i>Neptune's</i> passengers	Tally
Farmers	
Coopers (Barrel maker)	
Joiners (Woodworker)	
Upholsterers	
Shoemakers	
Brewers (Beer maker)	
Tanners (Leather maker)	
Seamstresses	
Tailors	
Millers	
Masons (Bricklayer)	
Retailers (Merchants)	
Glazier (Glass maker)	
Weavers	
Blacksmiths	
Bakers	

TABLE 2: DESTINATIONS

Destination of <i>Neptune's</i> Passengers	Tally
Baltimore	
Ohio	
Indiana	
St. Louis	



Daiton (Dayton, Ohio)	
Undecided (listed as "United States")	

TABLE 3: AGE

Ages of <i>Neptune's</i> Passengers	Tally
Between 70-80 years	
Between 60-69 years	
Between 50-59 years	
Between 40-49 years	
Between 30-39 years	
Between 20-29 years	
Between 10-19 years	
Under the age of 10	

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