

LESSON THREE: LIFE AS A COLONIAL SLAVE

INTRODUCTION

The history of the African-American family is a story of the struggle to rebuild stable family institutions to fill the emotional, cultural, and spiritual void created when African people were torn from their homelands. Despite the separation from homelands and the legalities of slavery, black men and women continued to form unions, joining together in marriage ceremonies. Although many of these couples lived apart from one another, many traveled great distances at night to visit their loved ones. This “night walking,” a family institution born of necessity, employed a network of foot trails that became physical landmarks of the family ties that bound the black community together.

Enslaved Africans established families, extended kin connections, and formed networks with those at other plantations. These kinships and networks also included free blacks. The world blacks made for themselves helped to mitigate the isolation and debasement of the slave system. Africans and their Virginia-born descendants developed their own system of social relationships in the quarters and a semi-autonomous culture that borrowed from both African and English traditions. The practice of a distinctive culture that whites could not entirely control afforded African-Virginians some small measure of power over their lives. In addition, these enslaved Africans were able to affect daily living conditions and relationships with their masters.

OBJECTIVES

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Provide information on the characteristics of African-Americans’ living conditions, daily routines, and material culture.
2. Make inferences about a slave’s living conditions, including family life, work conditions, daily routines, and material culture.
3. Read and interpret eighteenth-century documents, and provide answers to questions related to these resources.
4. Respond to “Documents-Based Questions,” utilizing the primary sources provided.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Painting: “The Old Plantation”

Story: “Dividing Up Souls”

Excerpt from *The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, 1774–1777*

Excerpt from Autobiography of Dick, a Slave

Spiritual: “Gonna Shout All Over God’s Heaven”

Artifact: Cowrie Shells

Scaffolding Questions—Teacher Answer Key

LearningCheck™ File: ColonialSlaveQuestions

Class set of TI-83 Pluses or TI-83 Plus Silver Editions

TI-Navigator™ Classroom Learning System

LearningCheck™ Application for the TI-83 Plus and TI-83 Plus Silver Edition

LearningCheck Creator™

Class set of TI-Keyboards

TI-Navigator Instructions Tip Sheet (optional)

PROCEDURE

SETTING THE STAGE

1. Give each student a copy of the six primary source documents.
2. Send the Scaffolding Questions that are contained in LearningCheck™ AppVar **ColonialSlaveQuestions** through the TI-Navigator™ system by selecting the Add to Transfer List option within the Edit menu of the TI-Navigator tool bar. [NOTE: For more detailed instructions on sending already-created files to students with the TI-Navigator™ system, refer to the TI-Navigator™ Instructions Tip Sheet.]
3. Using the LearningCheck™ **ColonialSlaveQuestions** AppVar, have students respond to the questions associated with each primary source document.
4. Using the TI-Navigator™ system, select the Class Analysis icon within the left navigation panel of the software's tool bar. From within the Class Analysis tool, select the Collect From Class option in order to view student responses to the questions associated with each of the primary source documents. [NOTE: Refer to the TI-Navigator Instructions Tip Sheet for guided instructions.] Use these responses as the basis for a class discussion. During the discussion, answers can be clarified and inaccuracies corrected. At the teacher's discretion, several or all of the documents may be addressed.

STRATEGY/EVALUATION

Using their answers to the Scaffolding Questions and their knowledge of American history, have students respond to the following question. All student answers should be written in essay form and make use of information obtained from at least three of the primary source documents.

“Based on the documents, what evidence is there that a unique African-American culture was created and maintained in the American colonies?”



"The Old Plantation," possibly South Carolina, ca.1790–1800.

STORY: “DIVIDING UP SOULS”

It seems that a couple of slave boys on Master White’s plantation felt like they weren’t getting enough to eat, because one Saturday night they stole a bag of potatoes. Now they needed a place to divide them up where no one would hear them, so they took them to the graveyard. No one would hear them there.

Well they were dragging the bag to the graveyard – it was pretty heavy, you see. By the time they got to the graveyard they’d dragged a hole into the bag, and when they threw the bag over the gate two of the potatoes fell out. They were in a hurry and decided they’d pick up those two potatoes on their way back out. They jumped on over the gate and headed for the deepest, darkest corner of the graveyard.

Now neither one of them could count very high, so they began dividing the potatoes one at a time in a kind of a sing-song voice:

“You take this one, and I’ll take that one. You take this one, and I’ll take that one.”

About that time Ol’ Tom passed by, on his way home from a gathering. He always walked by the graveyard. It didn’t bother him at all – dead people don’t bother anybody. But when he got to the part of the wall at the back of the graveyard, he thought he heard something. He stopped dead in his tracks and tried not to breathe. Then the hair on the back of his neck stood straight up, because sure enough, inside the graveyard he heard voices:

“You take this one, and I’ll take that one. You take this one, and I’ll take that one.”

“Oh Lord,” he thought. “It’s the day of judgement! That’s the Lord and the Devil in there, dividing up souls!” And he ran home, just as fast as he could go, to tell his master.

“Master, Master! Wake up! It’s the day of judgement! The Lord and the Devil are in the graveyard right now, dividing up souls! You’ve got to come and see!”

Now Master Johnson didn’t really believe Ol’ Tom, and told him he’d be mighty sorry if he was lying. But he was curious just the same, so he got up and pulled on his breeches and riding boots. He didn’t bother with his wig – this time of night nobody’d see him anyway. And the two of them headed back over to the graveyard.

As they got close, they began to hear the voices.

“You take this one, and I’ll take that one. You take this one, and I’ll take that one.”

They crept right up next to the gate, so they could hear better.

“You take this one, and I’ll take that one. You take this one, and I’ll take that one.”

Just about that time the two boys reached the bottom of the bag. There were only two potatoes left, and they remembered the two they’d dropped by the gate on the way in. So they divided up the last four, saying:

“You take these two, and I’ll take those two over there by the gate.”

And the master and Ol’ Tom ran home just as fast as their legs could carry them, and to this day, Master Johnson’s never doubted a thing Tom said.

Source: Oral Tradition.

EXCERPT FROM *THE JOURNAL OF NICHOLAS CRESSWELL, 1774-1777*

Nicholas Cresswell, born in Edale, England, was 24 when he went to America in 1774. Cresswell made the journey because he believed that “a person with a small fortune may live much better and make greater improvements in America than he can possibly do in England.” Sailing from Liverpool, he went to Virginia, and returned to Edale in 1777.

. . .Went to see a Negro Ball. Sundays being the only days these poor creatures have to themselves, they generally meet together and amuse themselves with dancing to the Banjo. This musical instrument (if it may be so called) is made of a Gourd something in the imitation of a Guitar, with only four strings and played with the fingers in the same manner. Some of them sing to it, which is very droll music indeed. In their songs they generally relate the usage they have received from their Masters or Mistresses in a very satirical stile and manner. Their poetry is like the Music – Rude and uncultivated. Their dancing is most violent exercise, but so irregular and grotesque. I am not able to describe it. They all appear to be exceedingly happy at these merry-makings and seem as if they had forgot or were not sensible of their miserable condition.

Source: Nicholas Cresswell, *The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, 1774-1777*, (New York: The Daily Press, 1928).

EXCERPT FROM “AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DICK, A SLAVE”

Dick’s autobiography comes from a travel book written by John Davis, an Englishman who traveled throughout the new republic between 1798 and 1802. Davis described Dick as a man of about sixty years, dressed in ragged clothing, and slow of movement but still engaged in a variety of jobs for his owner. The excerpt describes Dick’s life in Virginia, where he lived both before and after the Revolution.

“I was born at a plantation on the Rappahannoc River. . . .

When I was old enough to work, I was put to look after the horses, and, when a boy, I would not have turned my back against the best negur at catching or backing the most vicious beast that ever grazed in a pasture.

‘Squire Sutherland had a son who rode every fall to look at a plantation on James River, which was under the care of an overseer. Young master could not go without somebody on another horse to carry his saddle-bags, and I was made his groom. . . .

My young master was a mighty one for music, and he made me learn to play the Banger. I could soon tune it sweetly, and of a moonlight night he would set me to play, and the wenches to dance. My young master himself could shake a desperate foot at the fiddle; there was nobody that could face him at a Congo Minuet; but Pat Hickory would tire him at a Virginia Jig. . . .

My master at Annapolis being made a bankrupt, there was an execution lodged against negurs. I was sent to Alexander, and knocked down at vendue to old ‘Squire Kegworth. I was put to work at the hoe. I was up an hour before the sun, and worked naked till after dark. I had no food but Homony, and for fifteen months did not put a morsel of any meat in my mouth, but the flesh of a possum or a racoon that I killed in the woods. This was rather hard for an old man, but I knowed there was no help for it.

I was now once more put up at vendue, and as good luck would have it, I was bid for by ‘Squire Ball. Nobody would bid against him because my head was grey, my back covered with stripes, and I was lame of the left leg by the malice of an overseer who stuck a pitchfork in my ham. But ‘Squire Ball knowed I was trusty; and though self praise is no praise, he was not a negur on the plantation that wished him better than I; or a young man that would work for him with a more willing heart. There is few masters like the ‘Squire. He has allowed me to build a log-house, and take in a patch of land where I raise corn and water Melions. I keep chickens and ducks, turkeys and geese, and his lady always gives me the price of the Alexander market for my stock. . . . But I never wronged Master of a cent and I do the work of Hinton, of Henry, and Jack, without ever grumblin. I look after the cows, dig in the garden, beat out the flax, curry-comb the riding nag, cart all the wood, tote the wheat to the mill, and bring all the logs to the school house.

Source: John Davis, *Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America During 1798, 1799, 1800, 1801, and 1802* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1909).

SPIRITUAL: “GONNA SHOUT ALL OVER GOD’S HEAVEN”

I’ve got a robe, you’ve got a robe
All of God’s children got a robe
When I get to Heaven goin’ to put on my robe
Goin’ to shout all over God’s Heaven

Heav’n, Heav’n
Ev’rybody talkin’ ‘bout Heav’n ain’t goin’ there
Heav’n, Heav’n
Goin’ to shout all over God’s Heaven

I’ve got a crown, you’ve got a crown
All of God’s children got a crown
When I get to Heaven goin’ to put on my crown
Goin’ to shout over God’s Heaven

I’ve got shoes, you’ve got a shoes
All of God’s children got shoes
When I get to Heaven goin’ to put on my shoes
Goin’ to walk all over God’s Heaven

I’ve got a harp, you’ve got a harp
All of God’s children got a harp
When I get to Heaven goin’ to play on my harp
Goin’ to play all over God’s Heaven

I’ve got a song, you’ve got a song
All of God’s children got a song
When I get to Heaven goin’ to sing a new song
Goin’ to sing all over God’s Heaven

Source: 18th-century song based on oral tradition.

ARTIFACT IMAGE: COWRIE SHELLS



Cowrie shells are indigenous to the Indian Ocean. In ancient civilizations, most notably those of Africa, cowrie shells were used as currency. Surprisingly, in areas such as Nigeria, the cowrie was used as recently as the early 1900s. In the thirteenth century, Arab and Dutch merchants transported cowrie shells to Africa. Eventually, the shells were traded among English merchants who were astonished to discover that Africans preferred the shells to gold, silver, or bronze. Though gold and silver were the standard currency for foreign exchange, cowries could be used to buy small items.

Cowrie shells have been excavated from slave quarters and other areas frequented by enslaved Africans, at various archeological sites along the eastern seaboard. Many of these shells were found with man-made holes and other intentional alterations.

[NOTES: The writing on the left cowrie shell is a Colonial Williamsburg Foundation accession number. Each artifact is assigned a unique accession number to facilitate tracking and to ensure that detailed information regarding its original location and archaeological context will always be available for research. Also, these shells are shown much larger than their actual size: Top shell— $1\frac{1}{16}$ " x $\frac{1}{2}$ "; Left shell— $\frac{7}{8}$ " x $\frac{5}{8}$ "; Right shell—1" x $\frac{11}{16}$ "]

SCAFFOLDING QUESTIONS—TEACHER ANSWER KEY

Painting: “The Old Plantation”

Questions:

1. The African-Americans in this painting are engaged in an activity. Historians have offered varying opinions about what the activity might be and its origins. What do you think is happening in this image?
2. What three things can you identify in the painting to support your inferences?

Possible Answers:

This watercolor shows a plantation complex situated on a river bend. The facades of two small outbuildings frame the central action, whose exact nature, unfortunately, remains a matter of speculation.

Several African-American scholars have suggested that it may illustrate a marriage ceremony; the act of jumping over a stick, especially a broomstick, has long borne such a connotation. Some authorities believe the dance or action being depicted is secular in nature. Dancing barefoot with sticks and scarves is common among the Yoruba of northern and southwestern Nigeria, and the cloth headdresses worn by several of the group are clearly of West African derivation—some scholars say specifically Yoruban.

The musician on the right may be playing a Yoruba gudugudu, an animal skin stretched over a hollowed piece of wood to form a drumhead, which is then tapped by tightly twisted strips of leather. Others have suggested that he is playing a hollow gourd with sticks or bird bones. The stringed instrument is reminiscent of the Yoruba molo, an antecedent of the banjo. The body of this instrument appears to be a hollow gourd.

Story: “Dividing Up Souls”

Questions:

1. Formal education was not available to many members of eighteenth-century society, especially enslaved Africans. Enslaved persons did, however, use alternative methods, such as storytelling, to teach their children “survival skills.” How does the story “Dividing Up Souls” demonstrate this?
2. What are the values being taught in the story?

Possible Answers:

The enslaved community, though mixing closely with the members of the master’s family, had a unique system of networking by which information could be exchanged. For this system to work as a successful survival skill, the enslaved community had to keep what they heard within the slave community. One moral to the story is: “Don’t tell all you know.”

In more general terms, the story “Dividing up Souls,” teaches a bit of common sense that is useful whether or not one is enslaved: “Don’t believe everything you hear.”

Excerpt from *The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, 1774–1777*

Questions:

1. What aspects of Negro music are identified in the account?
2. How would you characterize Cresswell's opinion of Negro music?

Possible Answers:

Cresswell identifies the instrument being played at the Negro ball as the banjar, or banjo. He notes that the slaves sing about the treatment they receive at the hands of their masters. He also comments on the energy displayed in the slaves' style of dance and notes that the enslaved community seems to use these gatherings as a way of escaping the drudgery of everyday life.

Cresswell does not seem to appreciate the instruments, musical lyrics, or dance style demonstrated by the slaves. He finds it "rude and uncultivated." However, his opinion is undoubtedly influenced by the fact that he is more familiar with European style music in which melody is the focal point. In African music, rhythm is the most important component. It is also notable, that whites attending balls in the eighteenth century often describe ending the ball with a "Negro jig." This indicates that some whites, being more accustomed to the music and dance of the enslaved community, found it worthy of imitation.

Excerpt from *Autobiography of Dick, a Slave*

Questions:

1. What tasks did Dick undertake during his life as a plantation slave? What were some of the skills that he was able to acquire over the years?
2. What kind of a person was Dick?

Possible Answers:

Dick was trained to care for horses, hunt, play a musical instrument, and toil in the fields. He was a hard worker; fast learner as well as loyal and talented.

Spiritual: "Gonna Shout All Over God's Heaven"

Questions:

1. What is the message that is being conveyed in this spiritual?
2. What inferences can be made regarding life as a slave from this song?

Possible Answers:

Slave owners and white ministers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries frequently used religion as a means of control. Enslaved Africans were taught that if they were good slaves on earth, they would receive their "reward" in heaven. However, African-Americans found hope and inspiration for the present day in religion. The song "Gonna Shout All Over God's Heaven" celebrates the equality of all people, in defiance of slavery. This song is a "shout," sometimes referred to as a "ring shout" in African religious custom retained in North America. The ideology of receiving one's reward in heaven is a basic belief of many Judeo-Christian religions. [NOTE: *For further

information on the African “shout”: *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* by John W. Blassingame, copyright 1979, Oxford University Press.]

As a historian, you might see this spiritual as a song of equality. It reminds us that, “I got a robe (crown, shoes...) and you got a robe (crown, shoes...)” Clearly, these lyrics demonstrate that enslaved men and women were well aware of the discrepancies between their standard of living and that of their masters. Perhaps the line, “everybody talkin’ ‘bout heaven ain’t goin’ there,” was directed at those teaching Christianity to slaves, but who, in many cases, did not act in accordance with what they taught. [NOTE: *For more information on veiled criticisms directed at slave owners in the music and stories of enslaved African-Americans: *When Birds Could Talk and Bats Could Sing: Bruh Sparrow, Sis Wren, and Their Friends* by Virginia Hamilton, copyright 1996, School and Library Binding and *African-American Folktales: Stories from the Black Traditions in the New World*, compiled and edited by Roger D. Abrams, copyright 1999, Pantheon Fairytale and Folklore Library.]

Cowrie Shells

Question:

1. In African communities, cowrie shells were used as a form of currency. In the American colonies, however, enslaved Africans valued the shells for other reasons. Based on what you see in this photograph of cowrie shells excavated from an archaeological site, how do you think the shells may have been used?

Possible Answer:

Since the shells have man-made holes in them, we might assume they were used as adornment (i.e. jewelry, adornment for the hair or clothing).

Using the TI-Navigator™ System with this Lesson

Introduction

This document provides ideas about how the lesson you have chosen can be enhanced by using the TI-Navigator™ Classroom Learning System. Read further to learn about:

- ◆ Enhancing Your Lessons with the TI-Navigator™ System
- ◆ Sending Files to Your Class
- ◆ Receiving and Viewing LearningCheck™ Results From Your Students
- ◆ Using LearningCheck™ Results

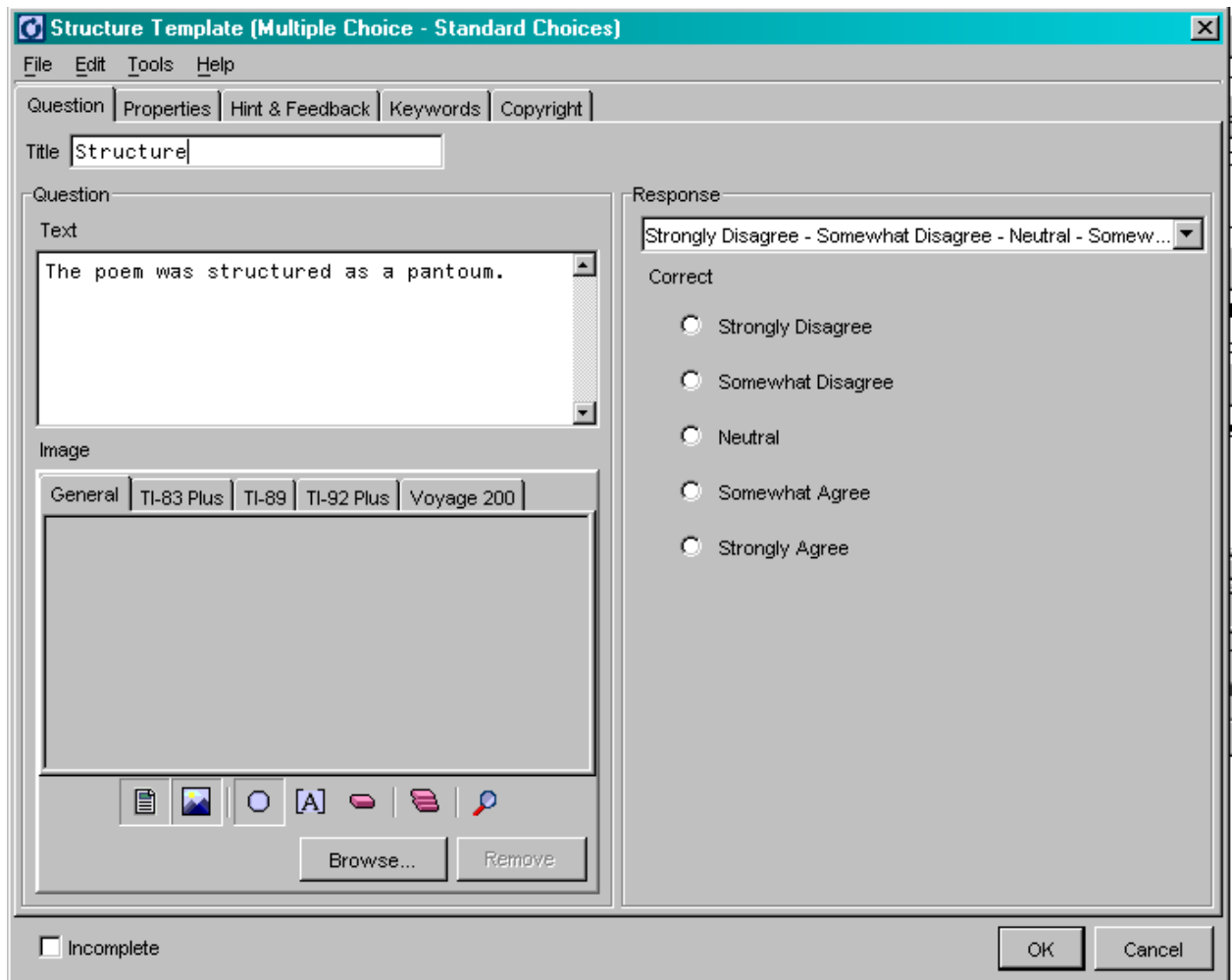
Notes:

Detailed instructions for specific TI-Navigator™ tasks are available in the *Getting Started Guide* that accompanies the System.

The examples provided in this document will not necessarily match the text you see on your computer or device. They are provided as a guideline for using the hardware and software.

Enhancing Your Lessons with the TI-Navigator™ System

- ◆ Use the TI-Navigator System to efficiently send Notefolio™, LearningCheck™, StudyCards™, CellSheet™, and TimeSpan™ files to students, to save time and paper.
- ◆ Use the Notefolio™, LearningCheck™, TimeSpan™, or StudyCard™ Creator or the CellSheet™ Converter software to modify any of the ready-made lesson files to better fit the needs of your students.
- ◆ Use the TI-Navigator™ System and LearningCheck™ Application to measure student understanding at any point during a lesson. To do this, use the LearningCheck™ Creator software to make an assignment using a variety of questioning types such as Likert Scale (shown below), Yes/No, Agree/Disagree, and so forth. This technique is an excellent way to spark lively class discussions.



Likert Scale Question

Sending Files to Your Class

Most lessons begin with a ready-made file (called an Application Variable or AppVar for short), such as a LearningCheck™ file, that you distribute to the class. Using the TI-Navigator™ System, you can quickly send these files to the whole class at one time. This eliminates the need for students to use the unit-to-unit cables to distribute the files, thus saving valuable class time. With the TI-Navigator™ System, any student who arrives late to class can obtain their file with minimum disruption to the class.

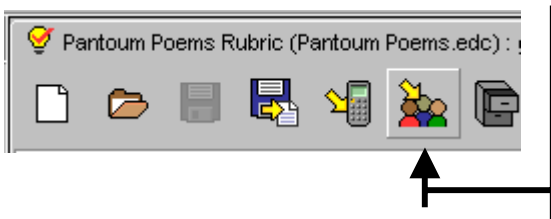
Creating and Sending LearningCheck™ Files

Since the LearningCheck™ Creator software is a part of the TI-Navigator™ System, you can quickly check student comprehension during a lesson by creating a file with one or two questions, and then sending it to the class. Use the following procedure to send a newly created file using the TI-Navigator™ System.

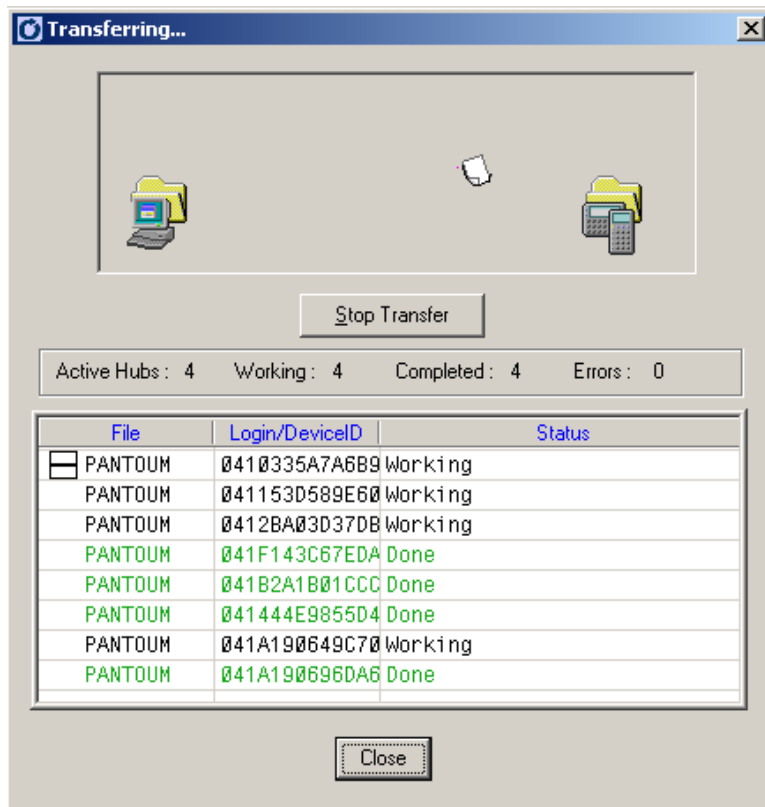
1. On the computer, click **Start > Programs > TI-Navigator > TI-Navigator**. The TI-Navigator™ System Home screen opens.
2. Click the LearningCheck™ button on the left to launch the LearningCheck™ Creator program. Create the new assessment or assignment.

Note: Instructions for using the LearningCheck™ Creator are available with the creator software.

3. When the file is completed, click **File > Send to > Class**. An alternate method of sending files is to click on the **Send to Class** icon.



The Transfer window opens, letting you see the progress of the files as they are sent to your class.



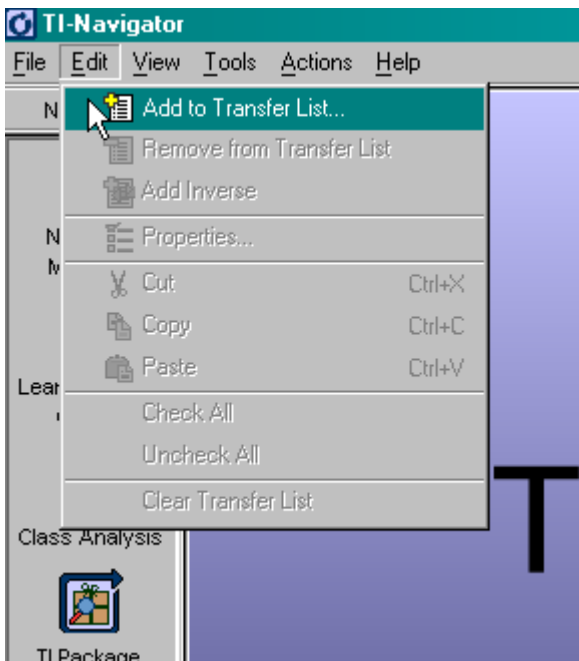
Window with Transfer In Progress

4. When the Status column shows Done for all the devices in your classroom, click **Done**.
5. Click **File > Close** to close the LearningCheck™ Creator. Click **No** when asked whether to save your document. Each student has the new file.

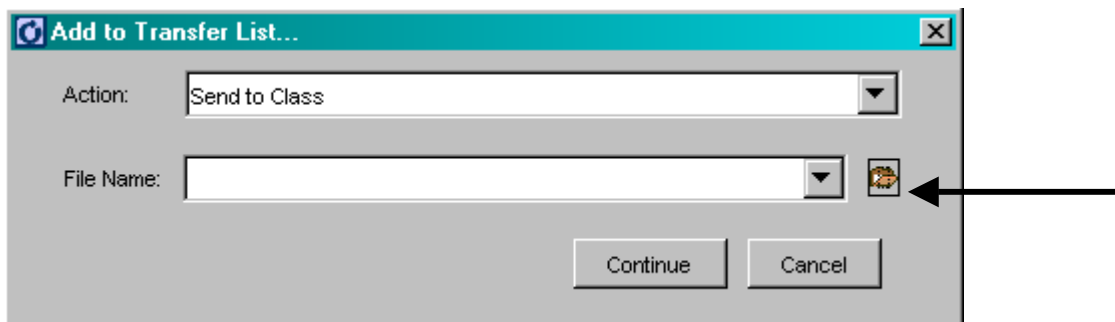
Sending Existing Files

If you have AppVars (LearningCheck™, CellSheet™, or NoteFolio™ files) already created and saved, you can send these to a class without opening the creator software.

1. Start the TI-Navigator™ System. Select the **Edit** menu.
2. Select **Add To Transfer List** from the Edit menu options.

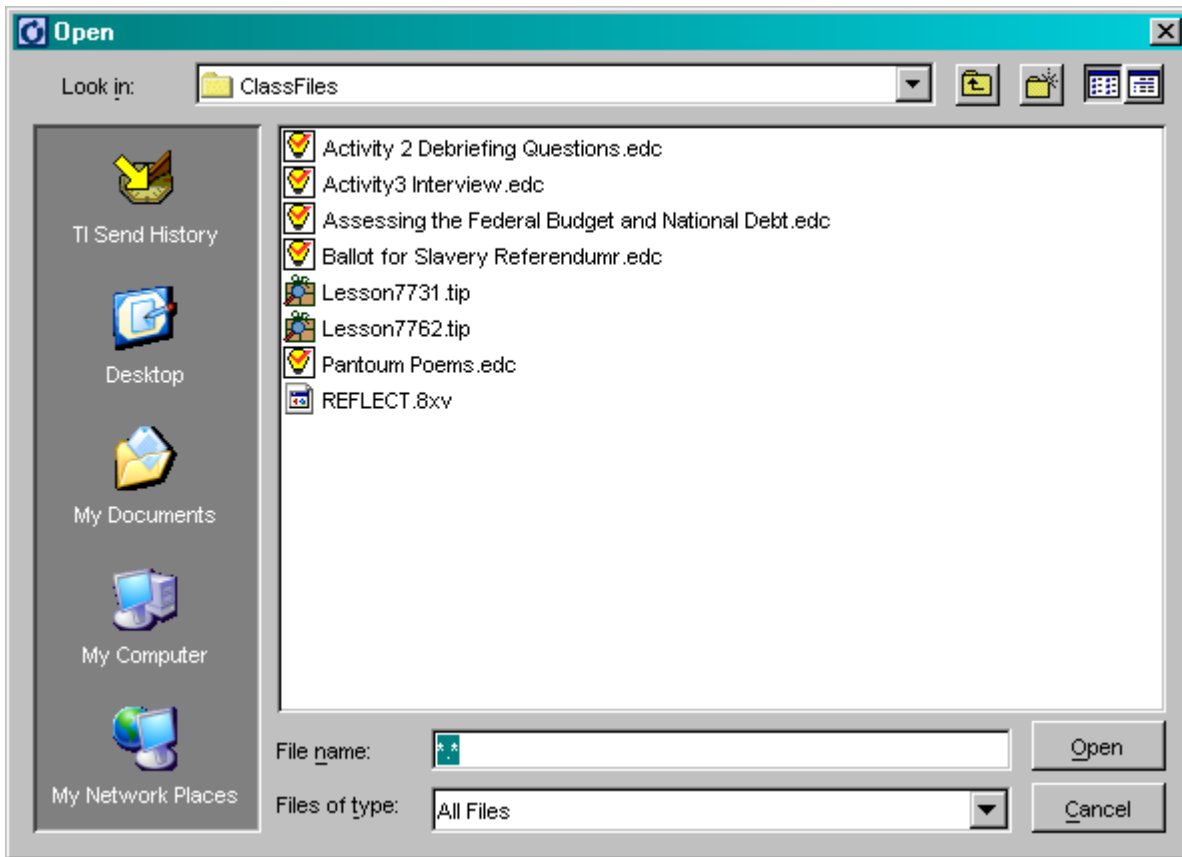


A box opens that enables you to type the name of the file you want added to the transfer list. If you do not know the path and name of the file, click the browse icon to the right of the file name box.



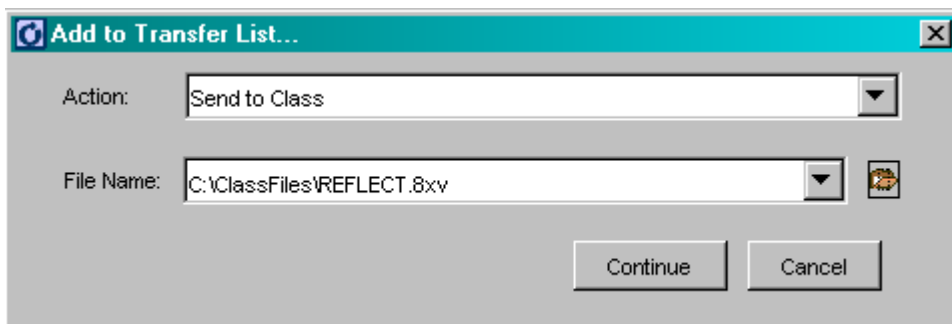
Add to Transfer List Box with Browse Button Indicated

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3. If you choose to search for your files, a window opens that enables you to search for the AppVars (files) you want to send to the class. Note that these must be device-specific AppVars (such as .8xv files), not creator files such as the .edc files from LearningCheck™ Creator.



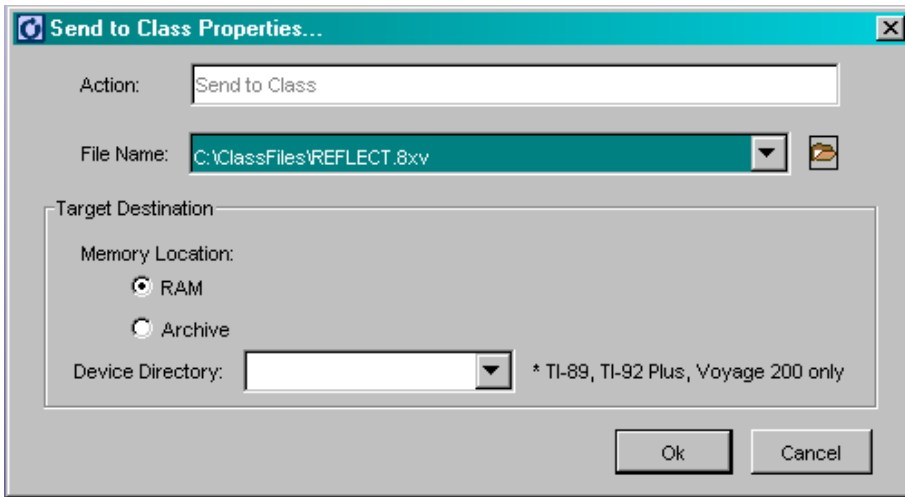
Browse for Files Box

4. Double-click the mouse button to enter the name of the file in the File Name field.



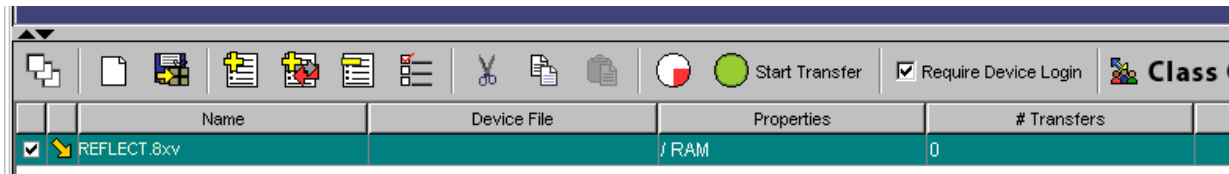
Selected File entered

- Click **Continue**. A Properties window opens before each file is added. This box informs you of the target destination and estimated size of the file on the device.

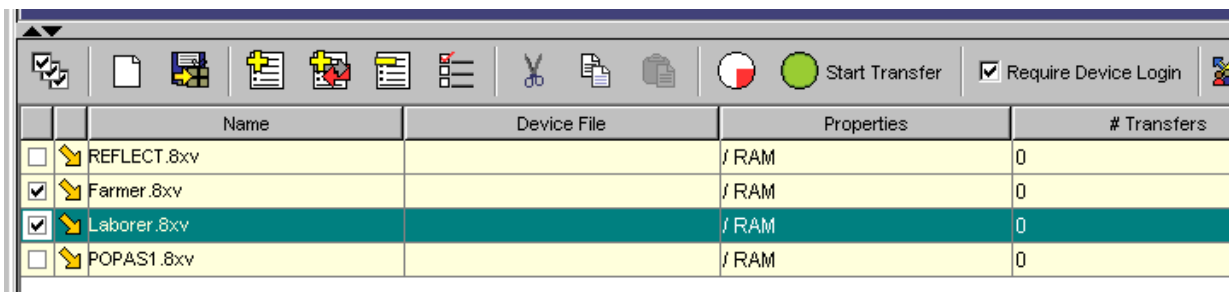


Send to Class Properties Box

- Click **OK** to add a file to the list. Repeat these steps to add all AppVars files you want to transmit to the class.



During class, you can send specific files to the class by clicking the checkbox at the far left of the file name in the Class Connect section of the TI-Navigator™ screen. (This is a toggle—turn the check mark on/off by clicking on the box. See the example below.)



Send to Class file list (note green Start Transfer button)

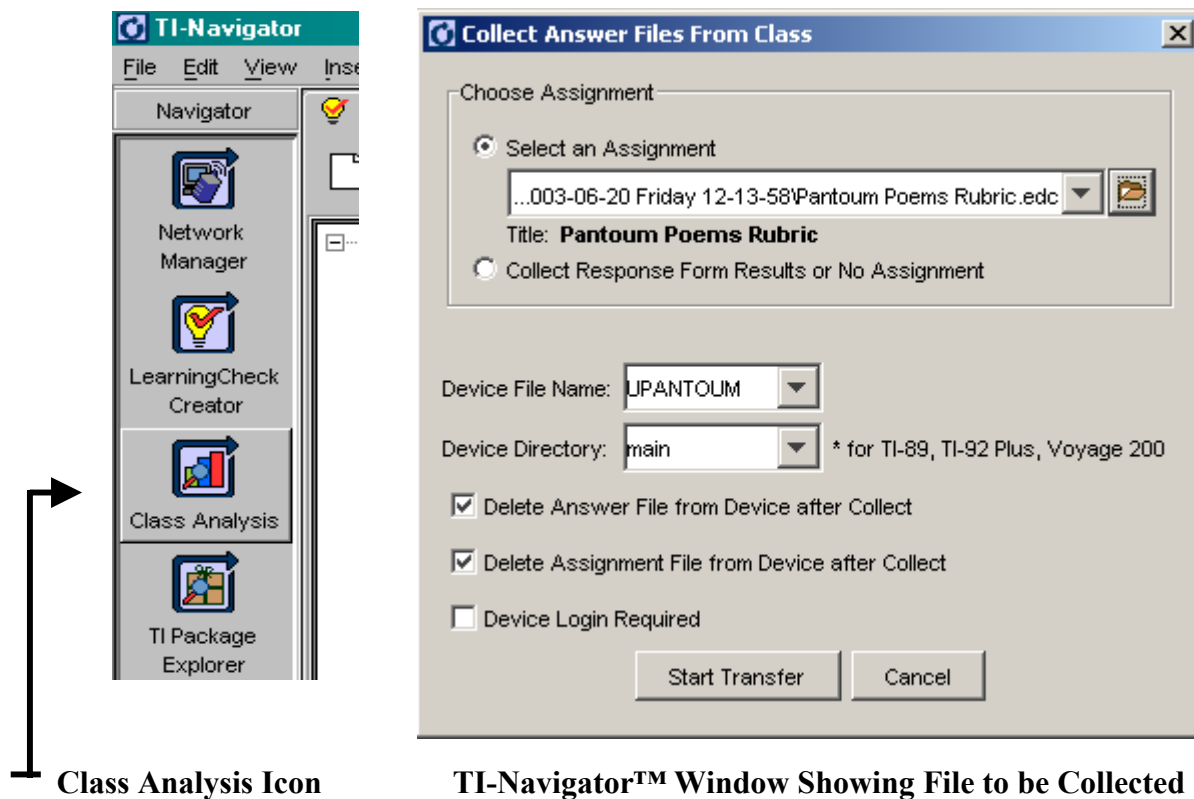
To send the selected file(s), click the **Start Transfer** button that appears just above the Properties column heading. The Transferring window opens and shows the progress of the file transfers. When the Status column shows Done for all the devices in your classroom, click **Done**.

Receiving and Viewing LearningCheck™ Results from Your Students

Whenever a lesson requires students to send you their completed LearningCheck™ files, you can retrieve the file from the entire class almost instantaneously with the TI-Navigator™ System. (Refer to the TI-Navigator™ System *Getting Started Guide* for information on retrieving and viewing other file types.)

Use the Class Analysis tool to receive and view results from completed student LearningCheck™ files. Access it by clicking the icon in the left bar of the TI-Navigator™ Home screen.

With the Class Analysis tool opened, if you select Collect From Class, the system is automatically ready to retrieve the last LearningCheck™ file sent to the students. When file collection is completed, the system populates the Class Analysis File with the students' data.



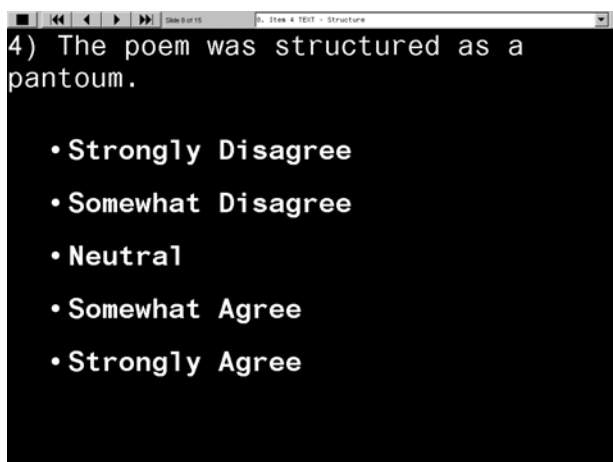
Using LearningCheck™ Results

The Class Analysis tool does more than just allow you to quickly retrieve student files. Once you have retrieved a set of LearningCheck™ assignments, the software enables you to analyze the results of the assignment. With the Class Analysis tool, you have the ability to view and print

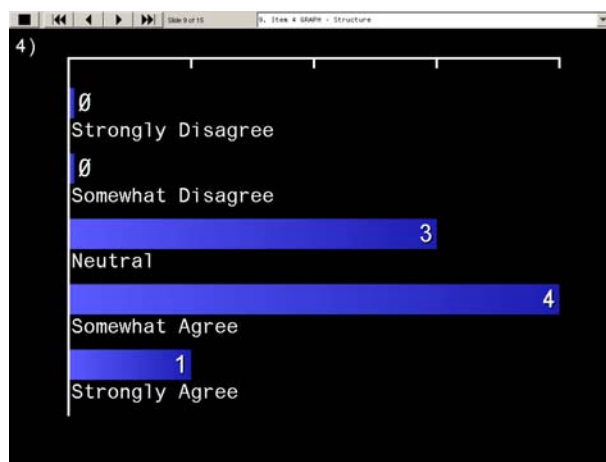
- ◆ A summary for all students and all questions (responses per question),
- ◆ A single student's results,
- ◆ A single item's responses (item analysis).

Class Analysis also allows you to display student responses anonymously, allowing you to conduct stimulating class discussions based on what was answered instead of who answered what.

Class Analysis Slide Show of Results



Question To Which Students Responded



The Responses for Each Response Option

For More Information

For more information about the TI-Navigator™ System, go to education.ti.com and click on the link for the TI-Navigator™ System.

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This TI-83 Plus lesson was adapted from *Slavery: A Colonial Odyssey*, a lesson unit available from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. For more information on this lesson unit and other Colonial Williamsburg instructional materials and classroom resources, visit <http://www.history.org/teach>, or call 1-800-688-6473.

Special thanks for developing this lesson go to:

Janet P. Brooks, AP U.S. History teacher, Liverpool High School, Liverpool, NY

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Texas Instruments staff