

An Indenture Agreement

During colonial times, a young person became the apprentice of a skilled worker through the signing of a contract, or indenture. Under the terms of this agreement, the apprentice was bound to work under the guidance of a master for a stated number of years. In the following excerpt, the duties of the apprentice and of the master are clearly stated. Read it carefully and then answer the questions that follow.

ōThis indenture witnesses that I, William Matthews, son of Marrat of the city of New York, a widow í does voluntarily and of his own accord and by the consent of his said mother put himself as an apprentice cordwainer[shoemaker] to Thomas Windover of the city aforesaid.

ōHe will live and(after the manner of an apprentice) serve from August 15, 1718, until the full term of seven years be completed and ended. During all of this term, the said apprentice shall faithfully serve his said master, shall faithfully keep his secrets, and gladly obey his lawful commands everywhere. He shall do no damage to his said master, nor see any done by others without giving notice to his said master. He shall not waste his said master's goods nor lend them unlawfully to any. He shall not í contract matrimony within the said term.

ōAt cards, dice, or any other unlawful game, he shall not play(whereby his said master may have damage) with his own goods or the goods of others. Without a license from his master he shall neither buy nor sell during the said term. He shall not absent himself day or night from his master's service without his leave, nor haunt alehouses, but in all things he shall behave himself as a faithful apprentice toward his master all during his said term.

ōThe said master, during the said term, shall, by the best means or methods, teach or cause the said apprentice to be taught the art or mystery of a cordwainer[shoemaker]. He shall find and provide unto the said apprentice sufficient meat, drink, apparel, lodging, and washing fit for an apprentice. During the said term, every night in winter he shall give the apprentice one quarter of schooling. At the expiration of the said term he shall provide him with a sufficient new suit of apparel, four shirts, and two necklets.ö



[From Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1909. *New York, 1910.*]

1. What were two(2)obligations of the apprentice to the master under the agreement? What were two(2) of the master's obligations to the apprentice? (Use a two-column chart for this answer.)
2. Based on your reading and knowledge of social studies, do you think you would sign such an agreement if you were a young person in the American colonies in the early 1700's? Explain your answer using insight gained from the course reading and class discussions.