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Living on the Edge of Empire: 2013 NEH  
Landmark Summer Workshop  
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## **Captivity Stories**

Understandings:

- motives, actions, and effects
- the history of white/American Indian relations is complicated
- the importance of knowing the truth of all sides of a situation

Materials:

- Rowlandson, Mary, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, 1682
- Smith, James, "Prisoner of the Caughnawagas", in *Captured by the Indians*, Frederick Drimmer, ed., c. 1961, Dover Pub., pgs. 25-60
- "John Thaxter" from *History of the Town of Hingham, Massachusetts*, Thomas Tracy Bouve, pg. 230: <http://plymouthcolony.net/hingham/history/book1/11230.html>
- "Eunice Kanenstenhawi Williams": <http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/popups/people.do?shortName=EuniceKWilliams>

Objective: Students will:

1. understand that there are many sides to every story, that the history of relations between the whites and the American Indians is complicated, that stereotyping is dangerous, and that in order to move forward in achieving peace and justice in the world we must learn the truth of what happened in history.
2. read, summarize, paraphrase, and write an informal essay, pair-share and participate in a whole class discussion.

Lesson:

1. Students will begin by listening to a brief lecture recounting the background of the British colonists' arrival, the life the Native peoples had been leading in both the Southeastern Massachusetts and Deerfield areas, their escape north, their joining the French, and Metacomet's decision to forge King Philip's War. The lecture will go on to explain reasons the French enlisted Native peoples to attack the British, a description of King Philip's War, and an explanation of the Indian practice of taking captives.

2. Students will read excerpts from Mary Rowlandson's memoir and then work in pairs to produce a summary using bullet points. They will discuss with their partners what stereotypes and assumptions Mary held and what positive things surprised her about her experiences with her captors.
3. Students separate and are assigned the following writing assignment: make believe that you are Mary Rowlandson and you are having an hour of therapy after having returned from your captivity. Write what you would say to your therapist about the following: 1) what was terrible, what was disturbing; 2) what was good; and 3) how your view of the Indians has changed.
4. The class will share some of these writings and then have a whole class discussion on specific stereotypes held by the colonists and what actually was the truth of the situation.
5. Students will then read the primary document of the petition to the Governor by John Thaxter of Hingham asking to be allowed to skirt his town's laws by letting him keep a young captive Indian boy for domestic help.
6. Working alone, each student will paraphrase the document; then work with a partner to improve upon what the document actually says, producing one complete paraphrase.
7. Whole class discussion of document including the question of how John Thaxter could want to do this in light of what he knew about the Indians capturing whites and how the colonists so objected to this practice.
8. Finally, students will read one more captivity story- either James Smith's or Eunice Williams'.
9. Final activity will be to discuss two things: 1) what was it about the Indian way of life that was so attractive to some of the captives and 2) what stereotypes were perpetuated by white colonists and then reiterated again and again in American history and in fact, still remain today? What can and should be done about this? Students will then go back to the original understandings and write in class about the following: What were the motives of the Native peoples in taking captives? Why did the Deerfield area Indians migrate north and join up with the French? Why did the Narragansett Indians fight in King Philip's War? What stereotypes of the Native peoples did the British colonists promote that then lasted into modern history? Why do stereotypes exist and what should now be done to set the record straight?