

## Lesson Stats:

Grade Level	3
Unit	Aunt Sarah’s Unexpected Son
Time Range	Flexible
Ohio Standards/ 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	Economics Benchmark A/Indicator 1 Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities Benchmark A/Indicator 2



### To Arthur Boke With Respect

Born of a Female Slave Belonging  
To the Sullivant Family Helpless Human,  
Abandoned by His Own Mother He Lived a  
Authenticate In the Humanity He Was Nursed,  
Nourished By Sarah Sullivant With Her Children  
Among Where He Lived Respected Till the End Of  
His Life He Died August 10, 1841

One Orphaned His Servant In Childhood Having Raised Him  
Into Manhood Extending On Him As First, Indured Him For  
The Integrity of His Character And Gratefully Remembering  
His Devoted Service and Commitment Dedicated This  
Epitaph To His Memory

*Compiled from Inscription On  
Arthur Boke’s Tombstone 1803-1841  
by Bea Murphy -- Copyright 1998*

## Teacher Introduction

“Aunt Sarah’s Unexpected Son” introduces the real-life Sullivant Family: Lucas, Sarah, and their baby William Starling Sullivant, born January 15, 1803. It also introduces another real-life person: the mixed race child Arthur Boke, Jr. born just a few days after William who was actually raised by the Sullivants and stayed with them until his death in 1841. Very little is known about Arthur Boke, Jr. At his death, Boke was buried in the Sullivant family plot in the Franklinton Cemetery which still exists today. In 1851, Greenlawn Cemetery was opened and the Sullivant family graves were moved there. However, it is unclear whether Arthur Boke was moved with them. In 1998, a stone commemorating Arthur Boke, Jr. was installed in the Greenlawn Cemetery.

This story raises several important issues about family life on the frontier and demonstrates that everyone in the community was responsible for the survival of its children. In a very basic and humane way, Sarah Sullivant recognized that unless she nursed Arthur Boke, he was likely to die. She made the choice to do so regardless of the social consequences that decision brought. Although Arthur was a mixed race child in an era when African Americans were considered of lower status than white persons, he was part of the larger community. As a result, this story offers an opportunity to think about families then and now and about what makes a family strong and functional.

## Resources

Beulina Murphy, **Boke** (2003) is an attempt to tell Arthur Boke’s life story.

Stephanie Coontz, **The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap** (1992) is a searching look at the history of family life in the U.S.

## Sample Achievement Test Items

Consult the following website for sample achievement test items in third grade economics and citizenship rights and responsibilities:

<http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?Page=3&TopicRelationID=240&Content=52063>

## Teaching Strategies/Activities

- 1) **The story of Arthur Boke, Jr. and the concept of opportunity costs.** This story provides an excellent occasion to introduce the concept of OPPORTUNITY COSTS if it has not already been discussed. Opportunity costs refers to the fact that whenever we make a hard decision, we weigh its advantages (i.e., opportunities) against its disadvantages (i.e., costs) before we decide. In economics, there is an assumption that a “good” decision will provide a person or a business with positive or profitable outcomes. In the life of an individual, this weighing of advantages and disadvantages becomes the basis of rational decision-making.

The concept of opportunity costs is introduced in the Third Grade by asking students to consider the opportunity costs of decisions they have made. Ask students to consider the following, either as a class or in a small group.

- a. When Arthur Boke’s mother abandoned him, what opportunities was she pursuing? What costs did she pay? Did she make a good decision? Why or why not?
  - b. When Arthur Boke’s father [who was a surveyor] left Franklinton and his small son, what opportunities was he pursuing? What costs did he pay? Did he make a good decision? Why or why not?
  - c. When Sarah Sullivant decided to take care of and nurse Arthur Boke, what opportunities was she pursuing? What costs did she pay? Did she make a good decision? Why or why not?
  - d. When Lucas Sullivant agreed to raise Arthur Boke with his family, what opportunities was he pursuing? What costs did he pay? Did he make a good decision? Why or why not?
  - e. Then ask each student to consider the following. Some may wish to write an essay which could be shared with the class:
    - i. What is a difficult decision you had to make recently? Explain what made it hard.
    - ii. What did you decide to do?
    - iii. What opportunities did this decision allow you?
    - iv. What were the costs you had to pay?
    - v. Looking back, are you glad you made the decision you did? Why or why not?
- 2) **Family Life and Citizenship on the Frontier.** The family is a basic unit of social, political and economic life. People learn how to behave towards others in the larger society from their experiences with members of their families. Family life is complex and involves many activities. Family forms and functions have changed over time. This unit provides a good opportunity to compare the “modern” family with the frontier family to see its similarities and differences.

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## Teaching Strategies/Activities continued

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- a. Review some basic concepts of family life with your students
    - i. What is a family? Generally, a family is defined as a group of people who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption who live together and function as a unit. Different societies have different ideas about marriage [e.g., how many wives, how many husbands] and how individuals are brought into a family by adoption [something that is raised in a later chapter of the *Tales of Old Columbus* book.]
    - ii. Social scientists speak about two types of family: the **nuclear family** (husband, wife and children) and the **extended family** where one or more relatives of the spouses also live under the same roof.
  - b. List some of the characteristics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century family and ask students to compare and contrast that earlier family with families that they are aware of today. You can discuss each aspect of family life as you list it, comparing “then” with “now”.
    - i. Earlier families were **large** with many more children than Americans have today. The typical American family today has two children. In the frontier, a couple would have four or more children. However, many of these children would not survive to adulthood. Lucas and Sarah Sullivant had four children: three boys and a girl. Their youngest child Sarah Anne died about a month after Sarah died of typhus. Ironically, she may have needed a mother’s care to survive.
    - ii. Earlier families were **extended families** with grandparents, aunts and uncles and other relatives living under one roof. Even if family members did not live together, they often lived nearby and were actively involved in one another’s lives. Sarah Sullivant’s brother, Lyne Starling, moved to Franklinton in the early 1800s to be near the Sullivants. He went on to organize the settlement of Columbus and left money to found the Starling Medical College which became part of the Ohio State University. He never married.
    - iii. It was not uncommon for one or both spouses to marry and have children with **several different husbands or wives**. The most common reason for this was the death of a spouse from disease or accident. Lucas Sullivant did not remarry after Sarah’s death, but his son, William Starling Sullivant, had three wives and thirteen children! Sullivant’s first two wives both died of physical illnesses.
    - iv. Children who became **orphaned** were often cared for by other relatives or even by families unrelated to them, often without benefit of formal adoption procedures. In a way, this is what happened to Arthur Boke, Jr. In some cases, orphaned children lived on their own without parents. The oldest children would continue to care for the youngest ones. Members of the larger community would provide help to such families if they could.
    - v. Large, extended families living in small cabins or houses had to learn how to get along with one another, support one another, and settle disputes or differences fairly quickly. This provided valuable learning in some important citizenship skills listed under the current Ohio Standards of Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities: civility, respect for the rights and dignity of each person, volunteerism, compromise, compassion, persistence in achieving goals, and civic-mindedness.

Review each of these terms with members of the class and ask them to talk about how frontier family life would require the development of each.
  - c. To summarize the information in this activity, ask students to draw a picture of what they believe would be the ideal frontier family and then be prepared to tell the rest of the class why they have chosen the family form they have.
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<b>Student Handout</b>	<b>Unit 2: Aunt Sarah's Unexpected Son</b> <b>Lesson 5: Family Life on the Frontier</b>
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## Vocabulary Words

- ✓ **Generous**
- ✓ **Birthing**
- ✓ **Dote**
- ✓ **Irritated**
- ✓ **Surveyor**
- ✓ **Family**
- ✓ **Extended Family**
- ✓ **Nuclear Family**
- ✓ **Orphan**
- ✓ **Adoption**
- ✓ **Civility**
- ✓ **Respect (for the rights and dignity of each person)**
- ✓ **Volunteerism**
- ✓ **Compromise**
- ✓ **Compassion**
- ✓ **Persistence (in achieving goals)**
- ✓ **Civic-mindedness.**