

Chapter Summary

Life in the American Colonies

Lesson 1 *Colonial Economy*

- Colonial America began as a society based on agriculture. Colonists learned to adapt to climate and terrain.
- In New England, farmers adapted to long winters and poor soil by practicing subsistence farming. New England commercial enterprises included small businesses, shipbuilding, shipping, and fishing.
- In the Middle Colonies, fertile soil and a milder climate permitted large-scale farming. Farmers grew large quantities of wheat and other cash crops. Industry in the Middle Colonies included home-based crafts like carpentry and businesses such as lumber mills and manufacturing.
- In the Southern Colonies, rich soil and warm climate was well suited to large farms, called plantations. Each plantation was like a small village, able to meet most of its own needs. The principal cash crops were tobacco and rice. In the backcountry of the Southern Colonies, settlers grew corn and tobacco on small family farms.
- Southern farmers, especially plantation owners, relied on slave labor. Enslaved Africans were shipped to America from West Africa. The voyage was called the Middle Passage (the middle leg of a three-part route called the triangular trade).
- Life as an enslaved person was difficult. Most worked in the fields, although some learned trades. Slave codes governed the behavior and punishment of enslaved people. Critics of slavery included Puritans, Quakers, and Mennonites.

Lesson 2 *Colonial Government*

- The English colonists brought with them ideas about government. These included protected rights and representative government.
- The idea of protected rights first appeared in Magna Carta (1215). The English Parliament—a representative assembly—was a model for American legislatures. The English Bill of Rights (1689) set clear limits on a ruler's powers.
- There were three types of colonies: charter colonies, proprietary colonies, and royal colonies. Charter colonies

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were controlled by a company that had been granted a charter by England. Proprietary colonies were controlled by an individual owner or a group of owners. Royal colonies were controlled by the English king and Parliament.

- In royal colonies, Parliament appointed a governor and council, or upper house. Colonists selected an assembly, or lower house. These two were often in conflict. Over time, town meetings in the colonies developed into local governments. Town meetings gave colonists a strong belief in the right to govern themselves.
- England looked to the American colonies for raw materials and as a market for English manufactured goods. The Navigation Acts were passed to control trade in the colonies. Many colonial merchants rebelled and began smuggling goods. Trade restrictions would cause conflict between the American colonies and England.

Lesson 3 *Culture and Society*

- Immigration and large families contributed to the growing population in the colonies. Between 1700 and the mid-1700s, the population in the colonies grew from about 250,000 to 2.5 million. Included in that increase were about 500,000 African Americans.
- Although the colonies were a relatively healthy place to live, life was still fragile. Threats to life included large outbreaks of serious diseases, called epidemics.
- Colonists had to adapt their traditions to the new conditions in America. They developed their own ways of doing things.
- Family was the foundation of colonial society. Men were the head of the family and represented the family in the community. Married women ran their households and cared for the children. Young men could work as indentured servants or apprentices. Unmarried women and widows could work for a family or in a trade, run businesses, and own property.
- Americans valued education. They taught their children at home, built schools, and passed public education laws. Craftspeople set up schools for apprentices. Colleges were founded to train ministers.

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- Americans shared strong religious beliefs. The Great Awakening inspired greater religious freedom in the colonies. It also united colonists from north to south in a common experience.
- Americans were open to new ideas, such as those of the Enlightenment. This movement spread the idea that knowledge, reason, and science could improve society.
- Freedom of the press and civic virtue were important to colonists. They believed a free press was essential to liberty. Ideas of civic virtue became the building blocks of a new nation.

Lesson 4 *Rivalry in North America*

- Britain and France both claimed rights to the Ohio River valley. The French built forts to protect their claims. They seized a British site in Pennsylvania and built Fort Duquesne on it.
- As the conflict grew, the French and British both sought Native American help. The British met with leaders of the Iroquois Confederacy, seeking an alliance. The Iroquois refused but promised to remain neutral.
- Benjamin Franklin proposed a united colonial government in the Albany Plan of Union. Delegates from the colonies decided to adopt this plan, but it failed because no colony would agree to give up any of its powers.
- The French enjoyed early success in the war. Then William Pitt became prime minister of Great Britain. He was a skilled military planner and sent more British troops to fight in North America.
- Pitt's goals were to gain access to the Ohio River valley and to conquer French Canada. The fall of Quebec and capture of Montreal marked the defeat of France in North America. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 gave Canada and French land claims east of the Mississippi to Britain.
- Colonists began moving west into Native American lands. The resulting conflict was called Pontiac's War. The British Proclamation of 1763 stopped colonists from settling west of the Appalachian Mountains. This calmed the conflict but angered the colonists.