

CHAPTER 5

Colonial Society on the Eve of Revolution, 1700–1775

PART I: REVIEWING THE CHAPTER

A. CHECKLIST OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After mastering this chapter, you should be able to

1. describe the demographic, economic, and social structure of the eighteenth-century colonies and indicate how they had changed since the seventeenth century.
2. explain how the economic development of the colonies altered the patterns of social prestige and wealth.
3. identify the major religious denominations of the eighteenth-century colonies, and indicate their role in early American society.
4. explain the causes of the religious Great Awakening, and describe its effects on American education and politics.
5. describe the origins and development of education, culture, and journalism in the colonies.
6. describe the basic features of colonial politics, including the role of various official and informal political institutions.
7. indicate the key qualities of daily existence in eighteenth-century colonial America, including forms of socialization and recreation.

B. GLOSSARY

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms:

1. **melting pot** The mingling of diverse ethnic groups in America, including the idea that these groups are or should be “melting” into a single culture or people. “Colonial America was a melting pot and had been from the outset.” (p. 85)
2. **sect** A small religious group that has broken away from some larger mainstream church, often claiming superior or exclusive possession of religious truth. (A **denomination** is a branch of the church—usually Protestant—but makes no such exclusive claims.) “They belonged to several different Protestant sects. . . .” (p. 85)
3. **agitators** Those who seek to excite or persuade the public on some issue. “Already experienced colonizers and agitators in Ireland, the Scots-Irish proved to be superb frontiersmen. . . .” (p. 86)
4. **stratification** The visible arrangement of society into a hierarchical pattern, with distinct social groups layered one on top of the other. “. . . colonial society . . . was beginning to show signs of stratification. . . .” (p. 87)
5. **mobility** The capacity to pass readily from one social or economic condition to another. “. . . barriers to mobility . . . raised worries about the ‘Europeanization’ of America.” (p. 87)

6. **elite** The smaller group at the top of a society or institution, usually possessing wealth, power, or special privileges. “. . . these elites now feathered their nests more finely.” (p. 87)
7. **almshouse** A home for the poor, supported by charity or public funds. “Both Philadelphia and New York built almshouses in the 1730s. . . .” (p. 87)
8. **gentry** Landowners of substantial property, social standing, and leisure, but not titled nobility. “Wealth was concentrated in the hands of the largest slaveowners, widening the gap between the prosperous gentry and the ‘poor whites’. . . .” (p. 90)
9. **tenant farmer** One who rents rather than owns land. “. . . the ‘poor whites’ . . . were increasingly forced to become tenant farmers.” (p. 90)
10. **penal code** The body of criminal laws specifying offenses and prescribing punishments. “But many convicts were the unfortunate victims . . . of a viciously unfair English penal code. . . .” (p. 90)
11. **veto** The executive power to prevent acts passed by the legislature from becoming law. “Thomas Jefferson, himself a slaveholder, assailed the British vetoes. . . .” (p. 90)
12. **apprentice** A person who works under a master to acquire instruction in a trade or profession. “Aspiring young doctors served for a while as apprentices to older practitioners. . . .” (p. 90)
13. **speculation** Buying land or anything else in the hope of profiting by an expected rise in price. “Commercial ventures and land speculation . . . were the surest avenues to speedy wealth.” (p. 91)
14. **revival** In religion, a movement of renewed enthusiasm and commitment, often accompanied by special meetings or evangelical activity. “The stage was thus set for a rousing religious revival.” (p. 96)
15. **secular** Belonging to the worldly sphere rather than to the specifically sacred or churchly. “A more secular approach was evident late in the eighteenth century. . . .” (p. 98)

PART II: CHECKING YOUR PROGRESS

A. True-False

Where the statement is true, circle T; where it is false, circle F.

1. T F Most of the spectacular growth of the colonial population came from immigration rather than natural increase.
2. T F The most numerous white ethnic groups in the colonies were the Germans and the Scots-Irish.
3. T F Compared with the seventeenth-century colonies, the eighteenth-century colonies were becoming more socially equal and democratic.
4. T F The lowest class of whites in the colonies consisted of the convicted criminals and prisoners shipped to America by British authorities.
5. T F Thomas Jefferson’s condemnation of British support of the slave trade was removed from the Declaration of Independence by other members of Congress.
6. T F The most highly regarded professionals in the colonies were doctors and lawyers.
7. T F Besides agriculture, the most important colonial economic activities were fishing, shipping, and ocean-going trade.

8. T F Colonial merchants were generally satisfied to trade in protected British markets and accepted imperial restrictions on trade with other countries.
9. T F The established Anglican Church was a more powerful force in colonial life than the Congregational Church of New England.
10. T F The Great Awakening was a revival of fervent religion after a period of religious decline caused by clerical over-intellectualism and lay liberalism in doctrine.
11. T F Great Awakening revivalists like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield tried to replace the older Puritan ideas of conversion and salvation with more rational and less emotional beliefs.
12. T F The Great Awakening broke down denominational and sectional barriers, creating a greater sense of a common American identity and a united destiny.
13. T F Most early colonial education, including that at the college level, was closely linked with religion.
14. T F The greatest colonial cultural achievements came in art and imaginative literature rather than in theology and political theory.
15. T F The central point of conflict in colonial politics was the relation between the democratically elected lower house of the assembly and the governors appointed by the king or colonial proprietor.

B. Multiple Choice

Select the best answer and circle the corresponding letter.

1. The primary reason for the spectacular growth of America's population in the eighteenth century was
 - a. the conquering of new territories.
 - b. the natural fertility of the population.
 - c. the increased importation of white indentured servants and black slaves.
 - d. new immigration from Europe.
2. German settlement in the colonies was especially heavy in
 - a. Massachusetts.
 - b. Maryland.
 - c. New York.
 - d. Pennsylvania.
3. The Scots-Irish eventually became concentrated especially in
 - a. coastal areas of the Middle Colonies and the South.
 - b. the New England colonies.
 - c. the frontier areas.
 - d. the cities.
4. Compared with the seventeenth century, American colonial society in the eighteenth century showed
 - a. greater domination by small farmers and artisans.
 - b. greater equality of wealth and status.
 - c. greater gaps in wealth and status between rich and poor.
 - d. greater opportunity for convicts and indentured servants to climb to the top.
5. The most honored professional in colonial America was the
 - a. lawyer.

- b. clergyman.
 - c. doctor.
 - d. journalist.
6. The primary source of livelihood for most colonial Americans was
- a. manufacturing.
 - b. agriculture.
 - c. lumbering.
 - d. commerce and trade.
7. Indians and African Americans shared in the common American experience of
- a. migrating westward in search of free land.
 - b. creating new cultures and societies out of the mingling of diverse ethnic groups.
 - c. forming closed, settled communities that resisted outsiders.
 - d. clinging to traditional cultural values brought from the Old World.
8. An unfortunate group of involuntary immigrants who ranked even below indentured servants on the American social scale were
- a. the younger sons of English gentry.
 - b. French-Canadian fur traders.
 - c. convicts and paupers.
 - d. single women.
9. The “triangular trade” involved the sale of rum, molasses, and slaves among the ports of
- a. Virginia, Canada, and Britain.
 - b. the West Indies, France, and South America.
 - c. New England, Britain, and Spain.
 - d. New England, Africa, and the West Indies.
10. The passage of British restrictions on trade encouraged colonial merchants to
- a. organize political resistance in the British Parliament.
 - b. find ways to smuggle and otherwise evade the law by trading with other countries.
 - c. turn to domestic trade within the colonies.
 - d. turn from trading to such other enterprises as fishing and manufacturing.
11. Besides offering rest and refreshment, colonial taverns served an important function as centers of
- a. news and political opinion.
 - b. trade and business.
 - c. medicine and law.
 - d. religious revival.
12. The Anglican Church suffered in colonial America because of
- a. its strict doctrines and hierarchical church order.
 - b. its poorly qualified clergy and close ties with British authorities.
 - c. its inability to adjust to conditions of life in New England.
 - d. its reputation for fostering fanatical revivalism.
13. The two denominations that enjoyed the status of “established” churches in various colonies were the
- a. Quakers and Dutch Reformed.
 - b. Baptists and Lutherans.
 - c. Anglicans and Congregationalists.
 - d. Roman Catholics and Presbyterians.
14. Among the many important results of the Great Awakening was that it
- a. broke down sectional boundaries and created a greater sense of common American identity.
 - b. contributed to greater religious liberalism and toleration in the churches.
 - c. caused a decline in colonial concern for education.

- d. moved Americans closer to a single religious outlook.
- 15. A primary weapon used by colonial legislatures in their conflicts with royal governors was
 - a. extending the franchise to include almost all adult white citizens.
 - b. passing laws prohibiting the governors from owning land or industries.
 - c. voting them out of office.
 - d. using their power of the purse to withhold the governor's salary.

C. Identification

Supply the correct identification for each numbered description.

1. _____ Corruption of a German word used as a term for German immigrants in Pennsylvania
2. _____ Ethnic group that had already relocated once before immigrating to America and settling largely on the Western frontier of the middle and southern colonies
3. _____ Rebellious movement of frontiersmen in the southern colonies that included future President Andrew Jackson
4. _____ Popular term for convicted criminals dumped on colonies by British authorities
5. _____ Term for New England settlements where Indians from various tribes were gathered to be Christianized
6. _____ A once-despised profession that rose in prestige after 1750 because its practitioners defended colonial rights
7. _____ Small but profitable trade route that linked New England, Africa, and the West Indies
8. _____ Popular colonial centers of recreation, gossip, and political debate
9. _____ Term for tax-supported condition of Congregational and Anglican churches, but not of Baptists, Quakers, and Roman Catholics
10. _____ Spectacular, emotional religious revival of the 1730s and 1740s
11. _____ Ministers who supported the Great Awakening against the "old light" clergy who rejected it
12. _____ Institutions that were founded in greater numbers as a result of the Great Awakening, although a few had been founded earlier
13. _____ The case that established the precedent that true statements about public officials could not be prosecuted as libel
14. _____ The upper house of a colonial legislature, appointed by the crown or the proprietor
15. _____ Benjamin Franklin's highly popular collection of information, parables, and advice

D. Matching People, Places, and Events

Match the person, place, or event in the left column with the proper description in the right column by inserting the correct letter on the blank line.

- | | | |
|----------|----------------------------|---|
| 1. ____ | Philadelphia | a. Itinerant British evangelist who spread the Great Awakening throughout the colonies |
| 2. ____ | African Americans | b. Colonial printer whose case helped begin freedom of the press |
| 3. ____ | Scots-Irish | c. Colonial painter who studied and worked in Britain |
| 4. ____ | Paxton Boys and Regulators | d. Leading city of the colonies; home of Benjamin Franklin |
| 5. ____ | Patrick Henry | e. Largest non-English group in the colonies |
| 6. ____ | Molasses Act | f. Dominant religious group in colonial Pennsylvania, criticized by others for their attitudes toward Indians |
| 7. ____ | Anglican church | g. Former slave who became a poet at an early age |
| 8. ____ | Jonathan Edwards | h. Scots-Irish frontiersmen who protested against colonial elites of Pennsylvania and North Carolina |
| 9. ____ | George Whitefield | i. Attempt by British authorities to squelch colonial trade with French West Indies |
| 10. ____ | Phillis Wheatley | j. Brilliant New England theologian who instigated the Great Awakening |
| 11. ____ | Benjamin Franklin | k. Group that settled the frontier, made whiskey, and hated the British and other governmental authorities |
| 12. ____ | John Peter Zenger | l. Nonestablished religious group that benefited from the Great Awakening |
| 13. ____ | Quakers | m. Author, scientist, printer; “the first civilized American” |
| 14. ____ | Baptists | n. Eloquent lawyer-orator who argued in defense of colonial rights |
| 15. ____ | John Singleton Copley | o. Established religion in southern colonies and New York; weakened by lackadaisical clergy and too-close ties with British crown |

E. Putting Things in Order

Put the following events in correct order by numbering them 1 to 10.

1. _____ Epochal freedom of the press case is settled.
2. _____ First southern college to train Anglican clergy is founded.

3. _____ Britain vetoes colonial effort to halt slave importation.
4. _____ Scots-Irish protestors stage armed marches.
5. _____ First medical attempts are made to prevent dreaded disease epidemics.
6. _____ Parliament attempts to restrict colonial trade with French West Indies.
7. _____ Princeton College is founded to train “new light” ministers.
8. _____ An eloquent British preacher spreads evangelical religion through the colonies.
9. _____ Benjamin Franklin starts printing his most famous publication.
10. _____ A fiery, intellectual preacher sets off a powerful religious revival in New England.

F. Matching Cause and Effect

Match the historical cause in the left column with the proper effect in the right column by writing the correct letter on the blank line.

- | Cause | Effect |
|--|---|
| 1. _____ The high natural fertility of the colonial population | a. Prompted colonial assemblies to withhold royal governors’ salaries |
| 2. _____ The heavy immigration of Germans, Scots-Irish, Africans, and others into the colonies | b. Created the conditions for the Great Awakening to erupt in the early eighteenth century |
| 3. _____ The large profits made by merchants as military suppliers for imperial wars | c. Resulted in the development of a colonial “melting pot,” only one-half English by 1775 |
| 4. _____ American merchants’ search for non-British markets | d. Was met by British attempts to restrict colonial trade, e.g., the Molasses Act |
| 5. _____ Dry over-intellectualism and loss of religious commitment | e. Increased the wealth of the eighteenth-century colonial elite |
| 6. _____ The Great Awakening | f. Led to the increase of American population to one-third of England’s in 1775 |
| 7. _____ The Zenger case | g. Forced the migration of colonial artists to Britain to study and pursue artistic careers |
| 8. _____ The appointment of unpopular or incompetent royal governors to colonies | h. Marked the beginnings of freedom of printed political expression in the colonies |
| 9. _____ Upper-class fear of “democratic excesses” by poor whites | i. Reinforced colonial property qualifications for voting |
| 10. _____ The lack of artistic concerns, cultural tradition, and leisure in the colonies | j. Stimulated a fervent, emotional style of religion, denominational divisions, and a greater sense of inter-colonial American identity |

G. Developing Historical Skills

Learning from Map Comparison

By comparing two similar maps dealing with the same historical period, you can derive additional information about the relations between the two topics the maps emphasize. The map on p. 85 shows immigrant groups in 1775, and the map on p. 91 shows the colonial economy. By examining both maps, you can learn about the likely economic activities of various immigrant groups.

Answer the following questions:

1. To what extent were Scots-Irish immigrants involved in tobacco cultivation?
2. What agricultural activities were most of the Dutch immigrants involved in?
3. With what part of the agricultural economy were African American slaves most involved?
4. Which major immigrant group may have had some involvement in the colonial iron industry?

H. Map Mastery

Map Discrimination

Using the maps and charts in Chapter 5, answer the following questions:

1. Which section contained the fewest non-English minorities?
2. The Scots-Irish were concentrated most heavily on the frontiers of which four colonies?
3. In which colony were German and Swiss immigrants most heavily concentrated?
4. Which colony contained the largest concentration of French immigrants?

5. Which *four* colonies had the greatest concentration of tobacco growing?
6. Which was the larger minority in the colonies: all the non-English white ethnic groups together, or the African Americans?
7. Which *two* social groups stood between the landowning farmers and the slaves in the colonial social pyramid?
8. Which of the following religious groups were most heavily concentrated in the middle colonies: Lutherans, Dutch Reformed, Quakers, Baptists, Roman Catholics?
9. How many years after the Declaration of Independence in 1776 was the last church officially disestablished?
10. How many of the colonial colleges were originally founded by “established” denominations?

Map Challenge

Using the map on p. 85, write a brief essay in which you compare the “ethnic mix” in each of the following colonies: North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts.

PART III: APPLYING WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

1. What factors contributed to the growing numbers and wealth of the American colonists in the eighteenth century?
2. Describe the structure of colonial society in the eighteenth century. What developments tended to make society less equal and more hierarchical?
3. What attitudes toward education and the “higher” forms of culture were prevalent in eighteenth century colonial America? To what extent were these products of a basically rural society, and to what extent did they derive from popular ideas and attitudes?
4. What were the causes and consequences of the Great Awakening?
5. What features of colonial politics contributed to the development of popular democracy, and what kept political life from being more truly democratic?

6. How did the various churches, established and nonestablished, fundamentally shape eighteenth-century colonial life, including education and politics?
7. What made American society far more equal than Britain's, but seemingly less equal than it had been in the seventeenth century?
8. Compare and contrast the social structure and culture of the eighteenth century with that of the seventeenth century (see Chapter 4). In what ways was eighteenth-century society more complex, and in what ways did it clearly continue earlier ideas and practices?