Colonial America and the Navigation Acts

Paragraph 1

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the British parliament enacted a number of laws, called Navigation Acts, governing commerce between Britain and its overseas colonies. For example, the Navigation Acts of 1660 and 1663 barred the empire’s colonial merchants from exporting such commodities as sugar and tobacco anywhere except to England and from importing goods in non-English ships. Similarly, the Molasses Act of 1733 taxed all foreign molasses (a thick liquid drained from sugarcane and used to make rum) entering the mainland American colonies at sixpence per gallon. This act was intended less to raise revenue than to serve as a protective tariff (tax) that would benefit British West Indian sugar producers at the expense of their French rivals. By 1750 a long series of Navigation Acts were in force, with several effects on the North American colonial economy.

1. According to paragraph 1, the Navigation Acts of 1660 and 1663 did not allow

* importing goods without paying taxes on them
* importing goods made outside the British Empire
* using English ships to transport goods to non-British colonies
* using non-English ships to bring in goods from outside the colonies

1. What was the purpose of “the Molasses Act of 1733”?

* To produce the funds needed to protect British West Indian sugar producers from attack by the French
* To give British sugar producers in the West Indies an advantage over their French rivals
* To prevent rum from being made outside of the British West Indies
* To discourage the mainland American colonies from importing molasses

Paragraph 2

For one thing, the laws limited all imperial trade to British ships, defined as those with British ownership and crews that were three-quarters British. For purposes of the legislation, Parliament classified all colonists as British. This restriction not only contributed to Great Britain’s rise as Europe’s foremost shipping nation but also laid the foundations for an American shipbuilding industry and merchant marine. By the 1750s one-third of all imperial vessels were American-owned, mostly by merchants in the northeast and in mid-Atlantic colonies. The swift growth of this merchant marine diversified the northern colonial economy and made it more self-sufficient. The expansion of colonial shipping in turn accelerated urbanization by creating a need for centralized docks, warehouses, and repair shops in the colonies. By 1770 Philadelphia and New York City had emerged as two of the British Empire’s busiest ports.

1. The word “swift” in the passage is closet in meaning to

* gradual
* fast
* protective
* long-term

1. According to paragraph 2, the Navigation Acts had all of the following effects on the northern colonies in North America EXCEPT:

* The region’s economic dependence on Britain declined.
* The region’s ports became increasingly busy.
* Shipbuilding and related industries grew in strength.
* Ownership of vessels by merchants in the northeast and mid-Atlantic colonies declined.

Paragraph 3

The Navigation Acts also barred the export of certain “enumerated goods” to foreign nations unless those items first passed through England or Scotland. The American mainland’s chief items of this sort were tobacco, rice, furs, indigo (a Carolina plant that produced a blue dye), and naval supplies (such as masts and tar). Parliament never restricted grain, livestock, fish, lumber, or rum, which altogether made up 60 percent of American colonial exports. Furthermore, Anglo-American exporters of tobacco and rice—the chief commodities affected by enumeration—had their burdens reduced by two significant concessions. First, Parliament gave tobacco growers a monopoly over the British market by excluding foreign tobacco, even though this hurt British consumers. (Rice planters enjoyed a natural monopoly because they had no competitors.) Second, Parliament tried to minimize the added cost of landing tobacco and rice in Britain (where customs officials collected duties on both) by refunding the duties on all tobacco and rice that the colonists later shipped to other countries.

1. Select the TWO answer choices that, according to paragraph 3, indicate how the Navigation Acts affected rice and tobacco exporters. To receive credit, you must select TWO answer choices.

* They first had to ship their products to either England or Scotland before shipping them elsewhere.
* Their exports were reduced by 60 percent.
* They received special concessions by Parliament.
* They had to use their own ships to export their products.

1. The author mentions “grain, livestock, fish, lumber, or rum” in the passage in order to

* indicate the colonial exports that were affected by enumeration
* provide examples of important commodities that had not been allowed to be exported before the Navigation Acts were introduced
* explain why Britain decided to introduce the Navigation Acts
* show how North American exporters quickly increased the exports of certain products to compensate for the restrictions imposed by the Navigation Acts

1. The word “significant” in the passage is closet in meaning to

* problematic
* considerable
* minor
* temporary

Paragraph 4

The navigation system’s **impact on** the colonies encouraged economic diversification as well. Parliament used British tax money to pay modest incentives to Americans producing such items as silk, iron, dyes, hemp, and lumber（, which Britain would otherwise have had to import from other countries,） and **it** raised the price of commercial rivals’ imports by imposing protective tariffs on them. The trade laws did prohibit Anglo-Americans from competing with large-scale British manufacturing of certain products, most notably clothing. However, colonial tailors, hatters, and other small clothes manufacturers could continue to make any item of dress in their households or small shops. 【Manufactured by low-paid labor,】 British clothing imports generally undersold whatever the colonists could have produced given their higher labor costs. The colonists were also free to produce iron and built numerous ironworks.

1. The word “modest” in the passage is closet in meaning to

* direct
* relatively small
* adequate
* various

1. Paragraph 4 supports which of the following statements about **why Britain did not pass laws restricting the small-scale manufacture of clothing in the colonies?**

* Such clothing presented no serious competition to clothing imported from Britain.
* The British realized that any attempt to enforce such laws would be ineffective.
* Clothing manufactured in the American colonies generally did not sell well in Britain.
* The quality of clothing produced in the colonies was lower than that of British clothing.

Paragraph 5

Finally, the Navigation Acts made the colonies a protected market for low-priced consumer goods and other exports from Britain. 【Steady overseas demand for colonial products created a prosperity that enabled colonists to consume ever-larger amounts not only of clothing but of dishware, home furnishings, tea, and a range of other items both produced in Britain and imported by British and colonial merchants from elsewhere.】 Consequently, the share of British exports sold to the colonies rapidly increased from just 5 percent in 1700 to almost 40 percent by 1760. Cheap imported goods enabled many colonists to adopt a lifestyle similar to that of middle-class Britons.

1. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in the passage? Incorrect choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.

* British and colonial merchants prospered because of a demand in the colonies for increasing amounts of consumer goods made in Britain.
* Both the colonists and the British increasingly consumed clothing and other household items imported from foreign countries by colonial merchants.
* The wealth gained from exporting their products enabled the colonists to buy increasing quantities of consumer goods brought into North America by British and colonial merchants.
* As merchants increased their wealth, they began to widen the range of products they exported from North America to Britain and the British colonies elsewhere.

Paragraph 5

Finally, **the Navigation Acts** made the colonies a protected market for low-priced consumer goods and other exports from Britain. Steady overseas demand for colonial products created a prosperity that enabled colonists to consume ever-larger amounts not only of clothing but of dishware, home furnishings, tea, and a range of other items both produced in Britain and imported by British and colonial merchants from elsewhere. Consequently, the share of British exports （sold to the colonies） rapidly increased from just 5 percent in 1700 to almost 40 percent by 1760. Cheap imported goods enabled many colonists to adopt a lifestyle similar to that of middle-class Britons.

1. The word “Consequently” in the passage is closet in meaning to

* However
* Similarly
* In addition
* Therefore

1. According to paragraph 5, which of the following was **one effect that the Navigation Acts had during the period from 1700 to 1760?**

* They reduced the attractiveness of most locally produced commodities for the American colonists.
* They protected colonial merchants from having to compete with low-priced imports.
* They greatly increased the importance of the American colonies as purchasers of British exports.
* They raised the production costs for many commodities manufactured in the American colonies.

Paragraph 3

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1. Look at the four squares [■] that indicate where the following sentence can be added to the passage.

About 85 percent of all North American tobacco and rice was eventually reexported and sold outside the British Empire.

Where would the sentence best fit? Click on a square [■] to add the sentence to the passage.

1. Directions: An introductory sentence for a brief summary of the passage is provided below. Complete the summary by selecting the THREE answer choices that express the most important ideas in the passage. Some answer choices do not belong in the summary because they express ideas that are not presented in the passage or are minor ideas in the passage. This question is worth 2 points.

Drag your choices to the spaces where they belong. To review the passage, click on View Text.

The Navigation Acts put in place by Britain had significant effects on the economy of the American colonies.

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Answer Choices

The acts were originally designed to force the French to gradually abandon their American colonies.

Although the acts restricted colonists from exporting certain goods directly to foreign nations, important colonial products enjoyed both reduced duties and a monopoly of the British market.

The British refusal to allow tobacco imports from foreign nations hurt both British consumers and the American colonial tobacco planters.

The acts limited trade with the Empire to British ships, but by classifying all colonists as British, the acts allowed North Americans to develop their own ships.

High tariffs on imports from the colonies served to protect British-made goods from having to compete with the less expensive goods the colonists could produce using low-cost labor.

Trade laws protected some British manufacturing from colonial competition but encouraged colonial economic prosperity while making cheap British consumer goods ready available.