

Prompt: Evaluate the extent to which commercial exchange systems such as mercantilism fostered change in the British North American economy in the period from 1660 to 1775.

Essay:

As soon as the first settlers landed in the New World, it was an opportunity for economic gain. The Spanish had the intention of finding gold in Mesoamerica. The French also had the intention of making money in the north through the all-important fur trade. Many English settlers came to the New World in search of economic gain, mostly the wealthy. Thus, it cannot be difficult to see how economic ideas such as mercantilism changed the economies of the British and the colonies from 1660 to 1775 a lot.

Initially, the colonies were free to do almost whatever they wanted. Many lived there for religious freedom from the Church of England. The local government was appointed by England, and both of them traded freely with anyone. Then, as time went on, the southern colonies became the huge exporter of cash crops such as tobacco and cotton. The English colonies became more economically profitable as time went on. The British economic policy restricted their own trading freely as goods were needed.

Then, as events such as the French and Indian War destroyed British economy, it looked to the colonies. It was seen that, because the English colonies were under British rule, they should help pay for the war debt. Many taxes such as the Stamp Act, as well as high tariffs, were implemented. This marked the overturning of the economy as the colonies were now seen as a source of income.

As more time passed, laws were enacted by the British that only allowed trade with Great Britain. They had their prices low so that they could make as much profit as possible off of the colonies' goods. This is directly in line with the idea of mercantilism, where you export more than you import, as power is measured more in wealth. This completely changed British economic policy for a very long time, because they repeated this in India in the future. This also changed North American economy by creating a place where the entire economy revolved around the exportation of raw materials to foreign markets. This caused North America to adopt the ideas of mercantilism in their own systems as well.

Feedback:

A. Thesis/Claim: 0 The response did not earn the point for the thesis. In the last sentence of the introduction the claim that “economic ideas such as mercantilism changed economies of the British and the colonies ... a lot” is a restatement of the prompt and does not establish a line of reasoning. The qualifying phrase “a lot” does not

provide enough direction about how or to what extent commercial exchange systems fostered economic change.

B. Contextualization: 1 The response earned 1 point for contextualization because the introduction has a short but accurate description of the economic motivations of three empires: the French and the fur trade, the Spanish and gold, and the English and wealth-seeking.

C. Evidence: 2 The response earned 2 points for providing examples of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt. The response explains English colonial commercial exchanges such as the tobacco trade, with the additional observation that profits increased over time. The response also describes the financial cost of the French and Indian War and how England increased revenues with the Stamp Act and other taxes. It then builds on this evidence by noting, “This marked the overturning of the economy as the colonies were now seen as a source of income.”

D. Analysis and Reasoning: 1 The response earned 1 point for using the historical reasoning skill of change over time. The last paragraph has an abstract but accurate summary of how North America had to “adopt the ideas of mercantilism” where “the entire economy revolved around the exportation of raw materials to foreign markets.” Though minimal, this demonstrates an understanding of how British imperatives caused change in colonial economies. The response did not earn a second point for complexity.

Total Score: 4