Slavery and Empire

1441–1770
CHAPTER OUTLINE

THE BEGINNINGS OF AFRICAN SLAVERY
Sugar and Slavery
West Africans

THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE
The Demography of the Slave Trade
Slavers of All Nations
The Shock of Enslavement
The Middle Passage
Arrival in the New World
Political and Economic Effects on Africa

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH AMERICAN SLAVE SOCIETIES
Slavery Comes to North America
The Tobacco Colonies
The Lower South
Slavery in the Spanish Colonies
French Louisiana
Slavery in the North

AFRICAN TO AFRICAN AMERICAN
The Daily Life of Slaves
Families and Communities
African American Culture
The Africanization of the South
Violence and Resistance

SLAVERY AND EMPIRE
Slavery the Mainspring
The Politics of Mercantilism
Wars for Empire
British Colonial Regulation
The Colonial Economy

SLAVERY AND FREEDOM
The Social Structure of the Slave Colonies
White Skin Privilege
Africans labored in the steamy heat of the coastal Georgia rice fields in the middle of the eighteenth century, the breeches of the men rolled up over their knees, the sack skirts of the women gathered and tied about their hips, leaving them, in the words of one shocked observer, “two-thirds naked.” Upriver, groups cut away cypress and gum trees and cleared the swampland’s jungle maze of undergrowth; others constructed levees, preparing to bring more land under cultivation. African slave drivers, whips at the ready, supervised the work. An English overseer or plantation master might be seen here and there, but overwhelmingly this was a country populated by Africans.

These plantations were southern extensions of the South Carolina rice belt. Although slavery was prohibited by Georgia’s original charter of 1732, the restriction was lifted two decades later when Georgia became a royal colony. By 1770, 15,000 African Americans (80 percent of the region’s population) were enslaved on several hundred coastal rice plantations owned by a small planter elite.

Rice was one of the most valuable commodities produced in mainland North America, surpassed in value only by tobacco and wheat. The growth of rice production was matched by an enormous expansion in the Atlantic slave trade, and during the eighteenth century, rice planters engaged in what one historian calls a “veritable orgy” of slave trading. Although the number of slaves who were “country born” (native to America, and thus born into slavery) grew steadily over the century, on rice plantations the majority were what were known as “saltwater” Africans.

These men and women had endured the shock of enslavement. Ripped from their homeland communities in West Africa by slave raiders and brutally marched to coastal forts, they were subjected to humiliating inspections of their bodies and branded like animals, then packed into the stinking holds of ships and forced into a nightmarish passage across the Atlantic Ocean during which many died. Unloaded on a strange continent, the survivors were sold at dockside auctions, then once again marched overland to their destinations. On the rice plantations of isolated coastal Georgia, enslaved Africans suffered from overwork and numerous physical ailments, the results of poor diet, minimal and inappropriate clothing, and inadequate housing. Mortality rates were exceptionally high, especially for infants. Colonial laws permitted masters to discipline and punish slaves indiscriminately. Harsh punishments were imposed on slaves who were suspected of taking food, agitated for reforms, or plotted revolts. They were whipped, confined in irons, mutilated, sold away, or murdered.

Like slaves everywhere in the Americas, many ran away. Readers of Savannah newspapers were urged to look out for fugitives: Statira, a woman of the “Gold Coast Country” with tribal markings on her temples, or “a negro fellow named Mingo, about 40 years old, and his wife Quante, a sensible wench about 20 with her child, a boy about 3 years old, all this country born.” Some fled in groups, heading for Indian settlements in northern Florida, or toward St. Augustine, where Spanish authorities promised them safe haven. Some struck out violently at their masters: a group of nine Africans from a Savannah plantation killed their master and stole a boat, planning to head upriver, but were apprehended as they lay in wait to murder their hated overseers.

So some slaves resisted, but the majority of Africans and African Americans remained imprisoned within the heartless world of slavery. Plantation slaves married, raised children, and over time constructed kinship networks. They passed on African names and traditions and created new ones. The slaves of coastal Georgia combined elements of African languages and English, creating dialects that allowed people from many different African ethnic groups to communicate with one another. Common African heritage and their slave status were the foundations of the African American community.
African Americans reworked traditional African dance, song, and story to fit their enslavement in the New World, just as they reestablished traditional arts, such as woodworking, iron making, and weaving. Through their culture, the slaves shared a powerful awareness of their common oppression. They told or sang dialect tales of mistreatment, as in this song of Quow, the punished slave:

[What’s the matter Brother Quow?]
I ble Obesha bang you . . .
Dah Backrow Man go wrong you, Buddy Quow,
Dah Backrow Man go wrong you, Buddy Quow.

The history of African Americans includes the story of the Atlantic slave trade, the plunder of Africa, and the profits of empire. But it is also a story of the making of families, kin networks, and communities under the most difficult of circumstances. They “labor together and converse almost wholly among themselves,” a minister wrote of low-country slaves. “They are, as ’twere, a nation within a nation.”

The Beginnings of African Slavery

Household slaves had long been a part of the world of Mediterranean Europe. War captives were sold to wealthy families, who put them to work as servants or artisans. In the fifteenth century, Venetian and Genoese merchants led the traffic in captured Slavic peoples—the word “slave” derives from “Slav”—as well as Muslims and Africans. Many Europeans were disturbed, however, by the moral implications of enslaving Christians, and in the early fifteenth century the pope excommunicated a number of merchants engaged in selling such captives. Africans and Muslims, however, were sufficiently different in religion to quiet those concerns.

One of the goals of Portuguese expansion in the fifteenth century was access to the lucrative West African trade in gold, wrought iron, ivory, tortoiseshell, textiles, and slaves that had previously been dominated by the Moors of northern Africa. The first African slaves arrived in Lisbon in 1441. European traders found it most efficient to leave the capture of men and women for slavery to Africans, who were willing to exchange the captured slaves for European commodities. By the mid-fifteenth century, the Portuguese were shipping a thousand or more slaves per year from Africa. Most of them were sent to the sugar plantations on the Portuguese island colony of Madeira, off the coast of northern Africa.
Sugar and Slavery

Sugar and slaves had gone together since Italian merchants of the fourteenth century imported the first cane sugar from the Middle East and set up the first modern sugar plantations on the islands of the Mediterranean. African slaves came to the Americas with the introduction of sugar production. Columbus brought sugar cane to Hispaniola, and soon sugar plantations were in operation. Because disease and warfare had devastated the indigenous population, colonists imported African slaves from Spain. Meanwhile, the Portuguese, aided by Dutch financiers, created a center of sugar production in northeast Brazil that became a model of the efficient and brutal exploitation of African labor. By 1600, some 25,000 enslaved Africans labored on the plantations of Hispaniola and Brazil.

Skilled at finance and commerce, the Dutch greatly expanded the European market for sugar, converting it from a luxury item for the rich to a staple for ordinary people. Along with other tropical commodities such as tobacco, coffee, and tea, sugar helped sustain workers through the increasingly long working day. Once the profitability of sugar had been demonstrated, England and France sought West Indian sugar colonies of their own. With the Spanish preoccupied on the big islands of Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico, English and French settlers began constructing plantations and importing slaves to the islands of the Lesser Antilles. By the 1640s, English Barbados and French Martinique had become highly profitable colonies. Lusting for more, in 1655, the English seized the island of Jamaica, and by 1670, the French had taken over the western portion of Hispaniola, which they renamed St. Dominique (present-day Haiti). By then, Caribbean sugar and slaves had become the centerpiece of the European colonial system.

West Africans

The men and women whose labor made these tropical colonies so profitable came from the long-established societies and local communities of West Africa. In the sixteenth century, more than a hundred different peoples lived along the coast of West Africa, from Cape Verde south to Angola. In the north were the Wolofs, Mandingos, Hausas, Ashantis, and Yorubas; to the south were the Ibos, Sekes, Bakongos, and Mbundus.

In all these societies the most important institution was the local community, organized by kinship. West Africans practiced a marriage system known as polygyny, in which men often took a second or third wife. This produced very large composite families with complex internal relationships. Because of cultural restrictions on sexual relations, however, West African women bore fewer children than typical European women, and many enjoyed considerable social and economic independence as traders. Communities were led by clan leaders and village chiefs. Disputes were arbitrated by local courts.

West African societies were based on sophisticated farming systems many thousands of years old. Africans practiced shifting cultivation: they cleared land by burning, used hoes or digging sticks to cultivate fields, and after several years...
moved on to other plots while the cleared land lay fallow. Men worked at clearing the land, women at cultivation and the sale of surpluses. Farming sustained large populations and thriving networks of commerce, and in some regions kingdoms and states developed. Along the upper Niger River, where the grassland gradually turns to desert, towns such as Timbuktu developed into trading centers. There were also a number of lesser states and kingdoms along the coast, and it was with these that the Portuguese first bargained for Africans who could be sold as slaves.

Varieties of household slavery were common in West African societies, although slaves there were often treated more as members of the family than as mere possessions. They were allowed to marry, and their children were born free. “With us they did no more work than other members of the community, even their master,” remembered Olaudah Equiano, an Ibo captured and shipped to America as a slave in 1756, when he was a boy of eleven. “Their food, clothing, and lodging were nearly the same as [the others], except that they were not permitted to eat with those who were born free.” When African merchants sold the first slaves to the Portuguese, they must have thought that European slavery would be similar. But as Equiano declared: “How different was their condition from that of the slaves in the West Indies!” Yet the West African familiarity with “unfree” labor made it possible for African and European traders to begin the trade in human merchandise.

**The African Slave Trade**

The movement of Africans across the Atlantic to the Americas was the largest forced migration in world history (see Map 4-1). Africans made up the largest group of people to come to the Americas before the nineteenth century, outnumbering European immigrants by the ratio of six to one. The Atlantic slave trade, which began with the Portuguese in the fifteenth century and did not end in the United States until 1807 (and continued elsewhere in the Americas until the 1870s), is the most brutal chapter in the making of America.

**The Demography of the Slave Trade**

Although there is much dispute over the numbers, the consensus among scholars today is that slave ships transported from 10 to 12 million Africans to the Americas during the four-century history of the trade. Seventy-six percent arrived between 1701 and 1810—the peak period of colonial demand for labor, when tens of thousands were shipped from Africa each year. Of this vast multitude, about half were delivered to Dutch, French, or British sugar plantations in the Caribbean, a third to Portuguese Brazil, and 10 percent to Spanish America (see Map 4-2 on page 97). A much smaller proportion—about one in twenty, or an estimated 600,000 men, women, and children—were transported to the British colonies of North America. With the exception of the 1750s, when the British colonies were engulfed by the Seven Years’ War, the slave

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**A black slave driver** supervises a gang of slave men and women preparing the fields for the planting of sugar cane in the West Indies, a colored engraving published in William Clark’s *Ten Views Found in the Island of Antigua* (London, 4823).

The British Library.

**QUICK REVIEW**

**The Demand for Labor**

- Indians first forced into slavery in the Americas.
- By 1700, Indian slave trade replaced by slaves from Africa.
- Sugar played a key role in the expansion of slavery.

**Seven Years’ War** War fought in Europe, North America, and India between 1756 and 1763, pitting France and its allies against Great Britain and its allies.
trade continued to rise in importance in the decades before the Revolution (see Figure 4-1 on page 98).

Among the Africans brought to the Americas, men generally outnumbered women two to one. Because most Africans were destined for fieldwork, this ratio probably reflected the preferences of plantation owners. The majority of captured and transported Africans were young people between the ages of fifteen and thirty. Nearly every ethnic group in West Africa was represented among them.

**Slavers of All Nations**

All the nations of western Europe participated in the slave trade. Dutch slavers began challenging Portuguese control of the trade at the end of the sixteenth century, and Holland became the most prominent slave-trading nation during the sugar boom of the seventeenth century. The English also entered the trade in the sixteenth century with the African voyages of John Hawkins. The Royal African Company, a slave-trading monopoly based in London, was chartered in 1672, but in 1698, England
threw open the trade to independent merchants. Soon hundreds of ships from Bristol and Liverpool were competing with those from London. As a result, the number of slaves shipped to North America skyrocketed. The Dutch and Portuguese, however, continued to play important roles, alongside slave traders from France, Sweden, and several German duchies.

For the most part, the European presence in Africa was confined to coastal outposts. By the early eighteenth century, more than two dozen trading forts dotted the 220 miles of the Gold Coast alone. As the slave trade peaked in the middle of the eighteenth century, however, trading posts gave way to independent European and American traders who set up operations with the cooperation of local headmen or chiefs. This informal manner of trading offered opportunities for small operators, such as the New England slavers who entered the trade in the early eighteenth century. Many great New England fortunes were built from profits in the slave trade.

The Shock of Enslavement

The slave trade was a collaboration between European or American and African traders. Dependent on the favor of local rulers, many colonial slave traders lived permanently in coastal outposts and married African women, reinforcing their commercial ties with family relations. In many areas, their mixed-ancestry offspring became prominent players in the slave trade. Continuing the practice of the Portuguese, the grim business of slave raiding was left to the Africans themselves. Slaves were not at all reticent about condemning the participation of their fellow Africans. “I must own to the shame of my own countrymen,” wrote Ottobah Cugoano of Ghana, who was sold into slavery in the 1750s, “that I was first kidnapped and betrayed by those of my own complexion.”

Most Africans were enslaved through warfare. Sometimes large armies launched massive attacks, burning whole towns and taking hundreds of prisoners. More common were smaller raids, in which a group of armed men attacked at nightfall, seized everyone within reach, then escaped with their captives. As the demand for slaves increased in the eighteenth century with the expansion of the plantation system in the Americas, these raids extended deeper and deeper into the African interior. The march of captives to the coast was filled with terrors. One account describes a two-month trip in which many people died of hunger, thirst, or exhaustion, and the whole party was forced to hide to avoid being seized by a rival band of raiders. The captives finally arrived on the coast, where they were sold to an American vessel bound for South Carolina.

Enslavement was an unparalleled shock. Venture Smith, an African born in Guinea in 1729, was only eight years old when he was captured. After many years in North American slavery, he still vividly recalled the attack on his village, the torture and murder of his father, and the long march of his people to the coast. “The shocking scene is to this day fresh in my mind,” he wrote, “and I have often been overcome while thinking on it.”

On the coast, European traders and African raiders assembled their captives. Prisoners waited in dark dungeons or in open pens called “barracoons.” To lessen the possibility of collective resistance, traders split up families and ethnic groups. Captains carefully inspected each man and woman, and those selected for transport were branded on the back or buttocks with the mark of the buyer. Olaudah Equiano remembered that “those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair, looked and acted . . . in so savage a manner; . . . I had never seen among
CHAPTER 4  SLAVERY AND EMPIRE, 1441–1770

any people such instances of brutal cruelty.” Equiano’s narrative, published in 1789 after he had secured his freedom, is one of the few that provide an African account of enslavement. He and his fellow captives became convinced that they “had got into a world of bad spirits” and were about to be eaten by cannibals. A French trader wrote that many prisoners were “positively prepossessed with the opinion that we transport them into our country in order to kill and eat them.”

The Middle Passage

In the eighteenth century, English sailors christened the voyage of slave ships as the “Middle Passage,” the middle part of a trading triangle from England to Africa to America and back to England. From coastal forts and barracoons, crews rowed small groups of slaves out to the waiting ships and packed them into shelves below deck only six feet long by two and a half feet high. “Rammed like herring in a barrel,” wrote one observer, slaves were “chained to each other hand and foot, and stowed so close, that they were not allowed above a foot and a half for each in breadth.” People were forced to lie “spoon fashion,” and the tossing of the ship knocked them about so violently that the skin over their elbows sometimes was worn to the bone from scraping on the planks. “It was more than a week after I left the ship before I could straighten my limbs,” one former slave later remembered.

One ship designed to carry 450 slaves regularly crossed the Atlantic tightly packed with more than 600 slaves.

Their holds filled with human cargo, the ships headed toward Cape Verde to catch the trade winds blowing toward America. A favorable voyage from Senegambia to Barbados might be accomplished in as little as three weeks, but a ship departing from Guinea or Angola and becalmed in the doldrums or driven back by storms might take as much as three months.

Most voyages were marked by a daily routine. In the morning the crew opened the hatch and brought the captives on deck, attaching their leg irons to a great chain running the length of the bulwarks. After a breakfast of beans the crew commanded men and women to jump up and down, a bizarre session of exercise known as “dancing the slave.” A day spent chained on deck was concluded by a second bland meal and then the stowing away. During the night, according to one seaman, there issued from below “a howling melancholy noise, expressive of extreme anguish.” Down in the hold, the groans of the dying, the shrieks of women and children, and the suffocating heat and stench were, in the words of Olaudah Equiano, “a scene of horror almost inconceivable.”

Among the worst of the horrors was the absence of adequate sanitation. There were “necessary tubs” set below deck, but Africans, “endeavoring to get to them, tumbled over their companions,” as one eighteenth-century ship’s surgeon wrote. “And as the necessities of nature are not to be resisted, they ease themselves as they lie.” Crews were to swab the holds daily, but so sickening was the task that on many ships it was rarely performed, and Africans were left to wallow in their own wastes. “The floor,” wrote an English ship’s surgeon, “was so covered with blood and mucus that it resembled a slaughter house. It is not in the power of human imagination to picture to itself a situation more dreadful or disgusting.” When first taken below deck, Equiano remembered, “I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life,” and “became so sick and low that I was not able to eat.”
According to Atlantic sailors, they could "smell a slaver five miles down wind." In these filthy conditions, many captives sickened and died. Others contracted dysentery, known as the "flux." Frequent shipboard epidemics of smallpox, measles, and yellow fever added to the misery. The dying continued even as the ships anchored at their destinations. Historians estimate that during the Middle Passage of the eighteenth century, one in every six Africans perished.

The unwilling voyagers offered plenty of resistance. As long as ships were still within sight of the African coast, hope remained alive and the danger of revolt was great. One historian has found references to fifty-five slave revolts on British and American ships from 1699 to 1845. Once on the open sea, however, the captives' resistance took more desperate form. The sight of the disappearing coast of Africa "left me abandoned to despair," wrote Equiano. "I now saw myself deprived of all chance of returning to my native country, or even the least glimpse of hope of gaining the shore." He witnessed several of his fellow Africans jump overboard and drown, "and I believe..."
CHAPTER 4
SLAVERY AND EMPIRE, 1441–1770

many more would very soon have done the same if they had not been prevented by the ship’s crew.” Captains took the precaution of spreading nets along the sides of their ships. “Could I have got over the nettings,” Equiano declared, “I would have jumped over the side.”

ARRIVAL IN THE NEW WORLD
As the ship approached its destination, the crew prepared the human cargo for market. All but the most rebellious individuals were freed from their chains, and were allowed to wash themselves and move about the deck. To impress buyers, captains might parade Africans off the ship to the tune of an accordion or the beat of a drum. But the toll of the Middle Passage was difficult to disguise. One observer described a disembarking group as “walking skeletons covered over with a piece of tanned leather.”

Some cargoes were destined for a single wealthy planter, or consigned to a merchant who sold the captives in return for a commission; in other cases the captain himself was responsible. Buyers painstakingly examined the Africans, who again suffered the indignity of probing eyes and poking fingers. This caused “much dread and trembling among us,” wrote Equiano. In ports such as Charleston, sales were generally made by auction, or by a cruel method known as the scramble—the prices were set in advance, the Africans driven into a corral, and on cue the buyers rushed among them, seizing their pick. The noise, clamor, and determination of the buyers, Equiano remembered, renewed all the terrible apprehensions of the Africans. “In this manner, without scruple, are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again.” Bought by a Virginian, Equiano was taken to an isolated tobacco plantation where he found himself unable to communicate with any of his fellow slaves, who came from other ethnic groups.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS ON AFRICA
Africa began the sixteenth century with genuine independence. But as surely as European empires grew strong as a result of the slave trade, so Africa grew weaker. For every individual taken captive, at least another died in the chronic slave raiding. Death and destruction spread deep into the African interior. Coastal slave-trading kingdoms drew slaves from central Africa. But these coastal states found that the trade was a viper that could easily strike back at them. “Merchants daily seize our own subjects, sons of the land and sons of our noblemen, they grab them and cause them to be sold,” King Dom Affonso of the Kongo wrote to the Portuguese monarch in the sixteenth century. “And so great, Sir, is their corruption and licentiousness that our country is being utterly depopulated.” Many of the new states became little more than machines for supplying captives to European traders, and a “gun-slave cycle” pushed them into a destructive arms race with each other.

Even more serious was the long-term stagnation of the West African economy. Labor was drawn away from farming and other productive activities, and imported consumer goods such as textiles and metal wares stifled local manufacturing. African traders were expert at driving a hard bargain for slaves, and over several centuries, they won increasing prices for slaves. But even when they appeared to get the best of the exchange, the ultimate advantage lay with the Europeans, who received wealth-producing workers in return for mere consumer goods.

This political, economic, and cultural demoralization paved the way for the European conquest of Africa in the nineteenth century. The leaders of West Africa
during the centuries of slave trading, writes the Nigerian poet Chinweizu, “had been too busy organizing our continent for the exploitative advantage of Europe, had been too busy with slaving raids upon one another, too busy decorating themselves with trinkets imported from Europe, too busy impoverishing and disorganizing the land, to take thought and long-range action to protect our sovereignty.”

**The Development of North American Slave Societies**

New World slavery was nearly two centuries old before it became an important system of labor in North America. There were slaves in each of the British colonies during the seventeenth century, but in 1700, slaves accounted for only 11 percent of the colonial population (see Figure 4-2). During the eighteenth century, slavery expanded greatly, and by 1770 there were 460,000 Africans and African Americans in British North America, more than 20 percent of the population.

**Slavery Comes to North America**

The first Africans in Virginia arrived in 1619 when a Dutch slave trader exchanged “20 and odd Negars” for badly needed provisions with planter John Rolfe. But because slaves generally cost twice as much as indentured servants, yet had the same appallingly short life expectancy in the disease-prone Chesapeake region, they offered little economic benefit. Consequently, over the next several decades, tobacco planters employed far more indentured servants than slaves. Servants and slaves on seventeenth-century Virginia and Maryland plantations worked together, ate and slept in common quarters, and often developed intimate relationships. The Chesapeake was what historians term a *society with slaves*, a society in which slavery was one form of labor among several.

Under these circumstances the status of black Virginians could be ambiguous. An interesting case illustrates the point. In 1654, the African John Castor told a local court that “he came unto Virginia for seven or eight years of indenture, yet Anthony Johnson his Master had kept him his servant seven years longer than he should or ought.” Johnson claimed that “he had the Negro for his life.” The court decided in the master’s favor. But strange to say, Johnson himself was of African descent. He had arrived as a slave in 1621, but by hiring himself out during his free time, had earned enough to gain freedom for himself and his family. Eventually he succeeded in becoming a landowner. “I know myne owne ground and I will worke when I please and play when I please,” Johnson declared. Colonial records reveal that other Africans acquired farms, servants, and slaves of their own. Many slaves were Christians, and since religious difference had traditionally been a justification for slavery, this raised doubts about whether they could legally be kept as slaves. Moreover, sexual relations among Africans, Indians, and Europeans produced a sizable group of free people of mixed ancestry known as *mulattoes*. It was only later that dark skin came automatically to mean slavery, segregation, and the absence of the rights of freemen.

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, however, the Chesapeake went from being a *society with slaves* to a *slave society*, in which the dominant form of labor was slavery. In the first place, there

**FIGURE 4-2**

*Africans as a Percentage of Total Population of the British Colonies, 1650–1770*  Although the proportion of Africans and African Americans was never as high in the South as in the Caribbean, the ethnic structure of the South diverged radically from that of the North during the eighteenth century.

was a decline in the immigration of English servants. Previously it had been possible for former indentured servants to migrate westward and claim small plots on which they grew tobacco. But after the 1660s, most of the arable land had fallen into the hands of the planter elite. “There has not for many years,” Virginian Edward Randolph wrote in 1696, “been any vast land to be taken up.” English immigrants turned away from the Chesapeake to colonies such as Pennsylvania, where there was more opportunity. The labor shortage was filled by the English Royal Africa Company, which began importing slaves directly to North America in the 1670s. Slaves were expensive, but they could be kept in the fields for longer hours, with fewer days off. By 1700, there were 5,000 slaves in Virginia, and people of African descent made up 22 percent of the population of the Chesapeake.

There were no English legal precedents for enslaving people for life and making that status inevitable and inheritable. So as the proportions of slaves in the colonial population rose, colonists wrote slavery into law, a process best observed in the case of Virginia. In 1662, the planter assembly declared that henceforth children would be “bond or free only according to the condition of the mother.” As one historian writes, this statute was “the great planters’ first move in the direction of asserting their authority over the progeny of enslaved women.” Five years later they passed a law that Christian baptism could no longer alter conditions of servitude. Thus were two important avenues to freedom closed. The colony then placed life-threatening violence in the hands of masters, declaring in 1669 that the death of a slave during punishment “shall not be accounted felony.” Such regulations accumulated piecemeal until 1705, when Virginia gathered them into a comprehensive slave code that became a model for other colonies.

The institution of slavery was strengthened just as the Atlantic slave trade reached flood tide at the beginning of the eighteenth century. More Africans were imported into North America during the decade between 1700 and 1710 than the entire previous century. The English colonies were primed for an unprecedented growth of plantation slavery.

**The Tobacco Colonies**

During the eighteenth century, the European demand for tobacco increased more than tenfold, and it was supplied largely by increased production in the Chesapeake. Tobacco was far and away the single most important commodity produced in eighteenth-century North America, accounting for more than a quarter of the value of all colonial exports.

The expansion of tobacco production could not have taken place without a corresponding growth in the size of the slave labor force. Unlike sugar, tobacco did not require large plantations and could be produced successfully on small farms. But it was a crop that demanded a great deal of hand labor and close attention. As tobacco farming grew, slaveholding became widespread. By 1770, more than a quarter million slaves labored in the colonies of the Upper South (Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina), and because of the exploding market for tobacco, their numbers were expanding at about double the rate of the general population.

Shipments from Africa accounted for a portion of the growth of the slave population. From 1700 to 1770, an estimated 80,000 Africans were imported into the
tobacco region. But natural increase was even more important. In the Caribbean and Brazil, where profits from sugar were extremely high, many planters literally worked their slaves to death, replenishing them with a constant stream of new arrivals, mostly men, from Africa. In Virginia, however, significantly lower profits led tobacco planters to pay more attention to the health of their labor force, establishing work routines that were not as deadly. Moreover, food supplies were more plentiful in North America and slaves better fed, making them more resistant to disease. By the 1730s, the slave population of the Chesapeake had become the first in the Western Hemisphere to achieve self-sustained population growth. Natural increase gradually balanced the sex ratio among slaves, another encouragement to population growth. Planters came to recognize that they stood to benefit from the fertility of their slaves. “A woman who brings a child every two years [is] more valuable than the best man on the farm,” wrote Virginia planter Thomas Jefferson, “for what she produces is an addition to the capital.” By the 1750s, about 80 percent of Chesapeake slaves were “country-born.”

The Lower South

The Chesapeake did not become a slave society until almost a century after its founding. But in South Carolina, settlement and slavery went hand in hand, and the colony was a slave society from the beginning. The most valuable part of the early Carolina economy was the Indian slave trade. Practicing a strategy of divide and conquer, using Indian tribes to fight one another, Carolinians enslaved tens of thousands of native people before the 1730s, shipping many to slave markets in the Caribbean, employing others raising cattle or felling timber. In 1713, colonists attacked the Tuscarora tribe, killing at least a thousand warriors and enslaving a thousand women and children. In retaliation, the Yamasee tribe staged
a general uprising in 1715 that nearly defeated colonial forces. Only by enlisting the aid of the Cherokees was South Carolina able to turn the tide.

By the time of the Yamasee War, however, planter preference had turned toward African rather than Indian slaves. Rice production was rapidly becoming the most dynamic sector of the South Carolina economy (see Table 4.1), and with their experience in agriculture, West Africans made much better rice workers than Indians. Another important crop was added in the 1740s, when a young South Carolina woman named Elizabeth Lucas Pinckney successfully adapted West Indian indigo to the low-country climate. The indigo plant, native to India, produced a deep blue dye important in textile manufacture. Rice grew in the lowlands, but indigo could be cultivated on high ground, and with different seasonal growing patterns, planters were able to harmonize their production. Rice and indigo were two of the most valuable commodities exported from the mainland colonies of North America. The boom in these two crops depended on increasing numbers of African slaves. Before the international slave trade to the United States ended in 1808, at least 100,000 Africans had arrived in South Carolina. It is estimated that one of every five ancestors of today’s African Americans passed through Charleston on the way to the rice plantations.

By the 1740s, many of the arriving Africans were being taken to Georgia, a colony created by an act of the English Parliament in 1732. Its leader, James Edward Oglethorpe, hoped to establish a buffer against Spanish invasion from Florida and make it a haven for poor British farmers who could then sell their products in the markets of South Carolina. Under Oglethorpe’s influence, Parliament agreed to prohibit slavery in Georgia. Soon, however, Georgia’s coastal regions were being colonized by South Carolina planters with their slaves. In 1752, Oglethorpe and Georgia’s trustees abandoned their experiment, and the colony was opened to slavery under royal authority. The Georgia coast had already become an extension of the Carolina low-country slave system.

Tobacco plantations in the Chesapeake were often small affairs, but rice plantations required a minimum of thirty slaves and more commonly had fifty to seventy-five, which meant large black majorities in the colonies of the Lower South. By 1770, there were nearly 90,000 African Americans in the Lower South, about 80 percent of the coastal population of South Carolina and Georgia. In the words of one eighteenth-century observer, “Carolina looks more like a negro country than like a country settled by white people.” The African American communities of the Lower South achieved self-sustained growth in the middle of the eighteenth century, a generation later than those in the Chesapeake.

### Slavery in the Spanish Colonies

Slavery was basic to the Spanish colonial labor system, yet doubts about the enslavement of Africans were raised by both church and crown. The papacy denounced slavery many times as a violation of Christian principles. But the institution of slavery remained intact, and later in the eighteenth century, when sugar production expanded in Cuba, the slave system there was as brutal as any in the history of the Americas.

The character of slavery varied with local conditions. One of the most benign forms operated in Florida. Slaves could be found in many Florida settlements, but the conditions of their servitude resembled the household slavery common in Mediterranean and African communities more than the plantation slavery of the British colonies. In 1699, in an attempt to undermine the English colonies of

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tobacco (in thousands of pounds)</th>
<th>Rice (in thousands of pounds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>37,840</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1725</td>
<td>21,046</td>
<td>5,367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750</td>
<td>51,339</td>
<td>16,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>55,968</td>
<td>57,692</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the Lower South, the Spanish declared Florida a refuge for escaped slaves from the British colonies, offering free land to fugitives who would help defend their colony. Over the next half-century, refugee Indians and fugitive Africans established many communities in the countryside surrounding St. Augustine. North of the city, Fort Mose was manned by Negro troops commanded by their own officers. By 1763, 3,000 African Americans, a quarter of them free, made up 25 percent of St. Augustine’s population.

In New Mexico, the Spanish depended on Indian slavery. In the sixteenth century, the colonial governor sent Indian slaves to the mines of Mexico. The enslavement of Indians was one of the causes of the Pueblo Revolt (see Chapter 3). During the eighteenth century, the Spanish were much more cautious in their treatment of the Pueblos, who were officially considered Catholics. But they captured and enslaved “infidel Indians” such as the Apaches or nomads from the Great Plains, using them as house servants and fieldworkers.

**French Louisiana**

Slavery was also important in Louisiana, the colony founded by the French in the lower Mississippi Valley in the early eighteenth century. After Robert Sieur de La Salle’s voyage down the Mississippi River in 1681–82, the French planned colonies to anchor their New World empire. In the early eighteenth century, French Canadians established bases at Biloxi and Mobile on the Gulf of Mexico, but it was not until 1718 that they laid out the city of New Orleans on the Mississippi Delta. The French Company of the Indies imported some 6,000 African slaves, and planters invested in tobacco and indigo plantations on the Mississippi River in the country of the Natchez Indians. But in 1629, the Natchez and the slaves together rose in an armed uprising, the Natchez Rebellion, that took the lives of more than 200 French settlers, 10 percent of the population. Although colonial authorities were able to put down the rebellion—crushing and dispersing the Natchez people—the Louisiana French pulled back from a total commitment to slavery.

After the Natchez Rebellion, Louisiana’s economy grew more diversified. Several thousand French colonists established farms and plantations on the Gulf Coast and in a narrow strip of settlement along the Mississippi River. African slaves amounted to no more than a third of the colonial population of 10,000. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the colony of Louisiana became an important North American slave society.

**Slavery in the North**

Slavery was a fundamental, acceptable, thoroughly American institution. Although none of the northern colonies could be characterized as a slave society, slavery was an important form of labor in many areas. Over the course of the eighteenth century, it grew increasingly significant in the commercial farming regions of southeast Pennsylvania, central New Jersey, and Long Island, where slaves made up about 10 percent of the rural residents. In the vicinity of Newport, Rhode Island, the proportion of slaves in the population reached nearly 25 percent, a concentration resulting from that port’s
dominance in the midcentury slave trade. The area was unique for the large slave
gangs used in cattle and dairy operations in the Narragansett country, some of which
were as large as Virginia plantations. Elsewhere in the New England countryside,
slavery was relatively uncommon.

It was widespread in all the port cities, however, including Boston. There was
“not a house” that “has not one or two,” a visitor to that city wrote in the 1680s, and
a visitor to Philadelphia about the same time noted that slaves were bought “by almost
everyone who could afford [them].” Slave ownership was nearly universal among
the wealthy and ordinary among craftsmen and professionals. By 1750, slaves and small
free black populations made up 15 to 20 percent of the residents of Boston, New
York City, and Philadelphia.

The Quakers of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, many of whom kept slaves,
were the first colonists to voice antislavery sentiment. In 1715, John Hepburn of
New Jersey published the first North American critique of slavery, but his was a
lonely voice. By midcentury, however, there was a significant antislavery move-
ment among the Quakers. In Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes (1754), John
Woolman urged his readers to imagine themselves in the place of the African peo-
lace. Suppose, he wrote,

that our ancestors and we had been exposed to constant servitude in
the more servile and inferior employments of life; that we had been
destitute of the help of reading and good company; that amongst
ourselves we had had few wise and pious instructors; that the religious
amongst our superiors seldom took notice of us; that while others in
ease had plentifully heaped up the fruit of our labour, we had received
barely enough to relieve nature, and being wholly at the command of
others had generally been treated as a contemptible, ignorant part of
mankind. Should we, in that case, be less abject than they now are?

In 1758, the Philadelphia Friends Meeting voted to condemn slavery and urged
masters to voluntarily free their slaves. It was not until the Revolution, however, that
antislavery attitudes became more widespread in the colonies.

African to African American

The majority of Africans transported to North America arrived during the
eighteenth century. They were met by a rapidly growing population of
country-born slaves, or “Creoles” (from the French créole and Spanish criollo,
meaning “born” or “raised”), a term first used by slaves in Brazil to distinguish their
children, born in the New World, from newly arrived Africans. The perspective of
Creoles was shaped by their having grown up under slavery, and that perspective
helped them to determine which elements of African culture they would incorporate
into the emerging culture of the African American community. That community was
formed out of the relationship between Creoles and Africans, and between slaves
and their European masters.

The Daily Life of Slaves

Because slaves formed the overwhelming majority of the labor force that made the
plantation colonies so profitable, it is fair to say that Africans built the South. As an
agricultural people, Africans, both women and men, were accustomed to the routines
of rural labor, and this was put to use on the plantations. Most Africans were field
hands, and even domestic servants labored in the fields when necessary.
Masters provided their slaves with rude clothing, sufficient in the summer but nearly always inadequate in the winter. Cheap garments, made from what was called “Negro cotton,” was not only a means of saving money, but underscored the inferior status of slaves. At Mount Vernon, George Washington doled out a single set of clothes for each of his slaves. They were expected to last through a full year of field labor. Within months the garments were reduced to mere rags.

On small plantations and farms, which were typical in the tobacco country of the Chesapeake, Africans might work side by side with their owners and, depending on the character of the master, might enjoy a standard of living not too different from those of other family members. The work was more demanding and living conditions less sustaining on the great rice and indigo plantations of the Lower South, where slaves usually lived separately from the master in their own quarters. But large plantations, with large numbers of slaves, created the concentration of population necessary for the emergence of African American communities and African American culture. This was one of the profound ironies of American slavery. On the great plantations, life was much harder, but slaves had more opportunity for some autonomy.

Families and Communities

The family was the most important institution for the development of African American community and culture, but slave codes did not provide for legal slave marriages, for that would have contradicted the master’s freedom to dispose of his property as he saw fit. “The endearing ties of husband and wife are strangers to us,” declared a group of Massachusetts slaves who petitioned for their freedom in 1774, “for we are no longer man and wife than our masters or mistresses think proper.” How, they asked, “can a slave perform the duties of a husband to a wife or parent to his child? How can a husband leave master to work and cleave to his wife? How can [wives] submit themselves to their husbands in all things? How can [children] obey their parents in all things?”

Planters commonly separated families by sale or bequest, dividing husbands and wives and even separating mothers from their children. Charles Ball was separated from his wife and children when his master sold him to a rice planter in Georgia. “My heart died away within me,” Ball remembered vividly, “I felt incapable of weeping or speaking, and in my despair I laughed loudly.” He was sent away, his hands bound, the same day he learned of his fate, and on his journey he dreamed his wife and children were “beseeching and imploring my master on their knees.” He never saw them again. Another planter sold the children of a slave mother, allowing only that her infant could “suck its mother till twelve months old,” but then the child was also to be sold.

Despite the barriers, however, during the eighteenth century slaves in both the Chesapeake and the Lower South created the families that were essential for the development of African American culture. On large plantations throughout the southern colonies, travelers found Africans living in family households. In the Lower South, where there were greater concentrations of slaves on the great rice plantations, husbands and wives often lived together in the slave quarters, and this was clearly the ideal. On the smaller plantations of the Upper South, men often married women from neighboring farms, and with the permission of both owners, visited their families in the evenings or on Sundays.

Generally, slave couples married when the woman became pregnant. “Their marriages are generally performed amongst themselves,” one visitor to North Carolina

Mum Bett, also known as Elizabeth Freeman, was born into slavery in a Massachusetts household in about 1742. As a young woman she was subjected to the violent abuse of her mistress, who struck her with a hot shovel, leaving an indelible scar. Fleeing her owner Mum Bett enlisted the aid of antislavery lawyer Thomas Sedgwick, who helped win her freedom in 1772. This miniature was painted by Sedgwick’s daughter Susan in 1811. Courtesy of Massachusetts Historical Society.

Slave codes A series of laws passed mainly in the southern colonies in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to defend the status of slaves and codify the denial of basic civil rights to them.
wrote of the Africans he observed in the 1730s. “The man makes the woman a present, such as a brass ring or some other toy, which she accepts of, [and] becomes his wife.” Common throughout the South was the postnuptial ritual in which the couple jumped over a broomstick together, declaring their relationship to the rest of the community. This custom may have originated in Africa, although versions of it were practiced in medieval Europe as well.

Recent studies of naming practices among eighteenth-century African Americans illustrate their commitment to establishing a system of kinship. Frequently sons were named for their fathers, perhaps a way of strengthening the paternal bonds of men forced to live away from their families. Children of both sexes were named for grandparents and other kin. African names were common; names such as Cudjo (Monday), Quow (Thursday), or Coffee (Friday) continued the African tradition of “weekday” names. Later in the century, Anglo names became more general. Margery and Moody, slaves of Francis Jerdone of Louisa County, Virginia, named their six children Sam, Rose, Sukey, Mingo, Maria, and Comba, mixing both African and English traditions. Many Africans carried names known only within their community, and these were often African. In the sea island region of the Lower South, such names were common until the twentieth century.

Emotional ties to particular places, connections between the generations, and relations of kinship and friendship linking neighboring plantations and farms were the foundation stones of African American community life. Kinship was especially important. African American parents encouraged their children to use family terms in addressing unrelated persons: “auntie” or “uncle” became a respectful way of addressing older men and women, “brother” and “sister” affectionate terms for agemates. Fictive kinship may have been one of the first devices enslaved Africans used to humanize the world of slavery. During the Middle Passage, it was common for children to call their elders “aunt” and “uncle,” for adults to address all children as “son” or “daughter.”

**African American Culture**

The eighteenth century was the formative period in the development of the African American community, for it was then that the high birthrate and the growing numbers of country-born provided the necessary stability for the evolution of culture. During this period, men and women from dozens of African ethnic groups molded themselves into a new people. Distinctive patterns in music and dance, religion, and oral tradition illustrate the resilience of the human spirit under bondage as well as the successful struggle of African Americans to create a spiritually sustaining culture of their own.

Eighteenth-century masters were reluctant to allow their slaves to become Christians, fearing that baptism would open the way to claims of freedom or give Africans dangerous notions of universal brotherhood and equality with masters. One frustrated missionary was told by a planter that a slave was “ten times worse when a Christian than in his state of paganism.” Before the American Revolution, the majority of black southerners practiced some form of African religion. Large numbers of African Americans were not converted to Christianity until the **Great Awakening**, which swept across the South after the 1760s (see Chapter 5).

One of the most crucial areas of religious practice concerned the rituals of death and burial. In their separate graveyards, African Americans often decorated
graves with shells and pottery, an old African custom. African Americans generally believed that the spirits of their dead would return to Africa. The burial ceremony was often held at night to keep it secret from masters, who objected to the continuation of African traditions. The deceased was laid out, and around the body, men and women would move counterclockwise in a slow dance step while singing ancestral songs. The pace gradually increased, finally reaching a frenzied but joyful conclusion. As slaves from different backgrounds joined together in the circle, they were beginning the process of cultural unification.

Music and dance may have formed the foundation of African American culture, coming even before a common language. Many eighteenth-century observers commented on the musical and rhythmic gifts of Africans. Olaudah Equiano remembered his people, the Ibos, as “a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets.” Thomas Jefferson, raised on a Virginia plantation, wrote that blacks “are more generally gifted than the whites, with accurate ears for tune and time.” Many Africans were accomplished players of stringed instruments and drums, and their style featured improvisation and rhythmic complexity, elements that would become prominent in African American music. In America, slaves re-created African instruments, as in the case of the banjo, and mastered the art of the European violin and guitar. Fearing that slaves might communicate by code, authorities often outlawed drums. But using bones, spoons, sticks, or simply “patting juba” (slapping their thighs), slaves produced elaborate multirhythmic patterns.

One of the most important developments of the eighteenth century was the invention of an African American language. An English traveler during the 1770s complained he could not understand Virginia slaves, who spoke “a mixed dialect between the Guinea and English.” But such a language made it possible for country-born and “saltwater” Africans to communicate. The two most important dialects were Gullah and Geechee, named after two of the African peoples most prominent in the Carolina and Georgia low country, the Golas and Gizzis of the Windward Coast. These Creole languages were a transitional phenomenon, gradually giving way to distinctive forms of black English, although in certain isolated areas, such as the sea islands of the Carolinas and Georgia, they persisted into the twentieth century.

The Africanization of the South
The African American community often looked to recently arrived Africans for religious leadership and medical magic. Throughout the South, many whites had as much faith in slave conjurers and herb doctors as the slaves themselves did, and slaves won fame for their healing powers. This was one of many ways in which white and black southerners came to share a common culture. Acculturation was by no means a one-way street; English men and women in the South were also being Africanized.

Slaves worked in the kitchens of their masters, and thus introduced an African style of cooking into colonial diets already transformed by the addition of Indian crops. African American culinary arts are responsible for such southern culinary specialty perennials as barbecue, fried chicken, black-eyed peas, and collard greens.
And the liberal African use of red pepper, sesame seeds, and other sharp flavors established the southern preference for highly spiced foods. In Louisiana, a combination of African, French, and Indian elements produced a distinguished American regional cuisine, exemplified by gumbos (soups) and jambalayas (stews).

Mutual acculturation is also evident in many aspects of material culture. Southern basket weaving used Indian techniques and African designs. Woodcarving often featured African motifs. African architectural designs featuring high, peaked roofs (to vent the heat) and broad, shady porches gradually became part of a distinctive southern style. The West African iron-working tradition was evident throughout the South, especially in the ornamentation of the homes of Charleston and New Orleans.

Even more important were less tangible aspects of culture. Slave mothers nursed white children as well as their own. As one English observer wrote, “each child has its [black] Momma, whose gestures and accent it will necessarily copy, for children, we all know, are imitative beings.” In this way, many Africanisms passed into the English language of the South: goober (peanut), yam, banjo, okay, tote, buddy. Some linguists have argued that the southern “drawl,” evident among both black and white speakers, derived from the incorporation of African intonations of words and syllables.

African American music and dance also deeply affected white culture. These art forms offer a good example of mutual acculturation. At eighteenth-century plantation dances, the music was usually provided by Africans playing European instruments and their own, such as the banjo. African American fiddlers were common throughout the South by the time of the Revolution, but the banjo also became the characteristic folk instrument of the white South. Toward the end of the evening, the musicians were often told to play some “Negro jigs,” and slaves were asked to demonstrate the African manner of dancing. Dancing provided slaves with a unique opportunity to express themselves. “Us slaves watched white folks’ parties where the guests danced a minuet,” an old South Carolina slave woman recalled, “then we’d do it too, but we used to mock ’em, every step.” Whites in turn attempted to imitate African rhythmic dance styles. A slave named Dick related how his master loved to listen to him play the banjo and watch the slave women dance on moonlit nights. The master himself “could shake a desperate foot at the fiddle,” said Dick, attempting to outperform the slaves at the “Congo minuet.” In such a back-and-forth fashion, the traditions of both groups were gradually transformed.

**Violence and Resistance**

Slavery was a system based on the use of brute force and violence. The only way to make slaves work, planter Robert “King” Carter instructed his overseer, was “to make them stand in fear.” Humane slave masters like George Washington did not wish to be harsh. He sought, as he wrote it, “tranquility with a certain income.” But the tranquility of Mount Vernon rested on the constant threat of violence. Washington ordered his overseers to carefully monitor the work of the slaves and punish their offenses with regular whippings. Even the most cultured plantation owners thought nothing about floggings of fifty or seventy-five lashes. “Der prayer was answered,” sang the slaves of South Carolina, “wid de song of a whip.” The threat of violence was omnipresent. And some masters were downright sadistic—stabbing, burning, maiming, mutilating, raping, and castrating their slaves.

Former slave David George, who was born and raised on a Virginia plantation, wrote a searing account of plantation violence. “My oldest sister was called Patty. I have seen her several times so whipped that her back has been all corruption, as though it would rot. My brother Dick ran away, but they caught him. . . . After he had received 500 lashes, or more, they washed his back with salt water and whipped it in, as well
as rubbed it in with a rag. . . . I also have been whipped many a time on my naked skin, and sometimes till the blood has run down over my waist band. But the greatest grief I then had was to see them whip my mother, and to hear her, on her knees, begging for mercy."

Yet African Americans demonstrated a resisting spirit. In their day-to-day existence they often refused to cooperate: they malingered, they mistreated tools and animals, they destroyed the master’s property. “Let an hundred men shew him how to hoe, or drive a wheelbarrow,” wrote one frustrated planter, “he’ll still take the one by the bottom, and the other by the wheel.” Flight was also an option, and judging from the advertisements placed by masters in colonial newspapers, even the most trusted Africans ran away. “That this slave should run away and attempt getting his liberty, is very alarming,” read the notice of one Maryland master in 1755. “He has always been too kindly used” and was “one in whom his master has put great confidence, and depended on him to overlook the rest of the slaves, and he had no kind of provocation to go off.” An analysis of hundreds of eighteenth-century advertisements for runaways reveals that 80 percent were young men in their twenties, suggesting that flight was an option primarily for unattached males.

Runaways sometimes collected together in communities called “maroons,” from the Spanish cimarron, meaning “wild and untamed.” Slaves who escaped from South Carolina or Georgia into Spanish Florida created maroon communities among the Creek Indians there. These mixed African and Indian peoples came to call themselves “Seminoles,” a name deriving from their pronunciation of “cimarron.” Maroons also lay hidden in the backcountry of the Lower South, and although they were less common in the Upper South, a number of fugitive communities existed in the Great Dismal Swamp, the coastal region between Virginia and North Carolina.
CHAPTER 4  SLAVERY AND EMPIRE, 1441–1770

The most direct form of resistance was revolt. The first notable slave uprising of the colonial era occurred in New York City in 1712. Taking an oath of secrecy, twenty-four Africans vowed revenge for what they called the “hard usage” of their masters. They armed themselves with guns, swords, daggers, and hatchets, killed nine colonists, and burned several buildings before being surrounded by the militia. Six of the conspirators committed suicide rather than surrender. Thirteen were hanged, another was starved to death in chains, another broken on the wheel, and three more burned at the stake. In 1741, New York authorities uncovered what they thought was another conspiracy. Thirteen black leaders were burned alive, eighteen more hanged, and eighty sold and shipped to the West Indies. A family of colonists and a Catholic priest, accused of providing weapons, were also executed.

A series of small rebellions and rumors of large ones in Virginia in the 1720s culminated in the Chesapeake rebellion of 1730, the largest slave uprising of the colonial period. Several hundred slaves assembled in Norfolk and Princess Anne counties, choosing commanders for their “insurrection.” More than 300 escaped en masse into the Dismal Swamp. Hunted down by Indians hired by the colony, their community was soon destroyed. Twenty-nine leaders were executed and the rest returned to their masters.

There were also isolated but violent uprisings in the Lower South, where slaves made up a majority of the population, in 1704, 1720, and 1730. In 1738, a series of violent revolts broke out throughout South Carolina and Georgia. Then in 1739, a group of twenty recently arrived Angolans sacked the armory in Stono, South Carolina. They armed themselves and began a march toward Florida and freedom. Beating drums to attract other slaves to their cause, they grew to nearly one hundred. They plundered a number of planters’ homes along the way and killed some thirty colonists. Pausing in a field to celebrate their victory with dance and song, they were overtaken by the militia and destroyed in a pitched battle. That same year there was an uprising in Georgia. Another took place in South Carolina the following year. Attributing these revolts to the influence of newly arrived Africans, colonial officials shut off the slave trade through Charleston for the next ten years.

Wherever masters held slaves, fears of uprisings persisted. But compared with slave colonies such as Jamaica, Guiana, or Brazil, there were few slave revolts in North America. The conditions favoring revolt—large African majorities, brutal exploitation with correspondingly low survival rates, little acculturation, and geographic isolation—prevailed in only some areas of the Lower South. Indeed, the very success of African Americans in British North America at establishing families, communities, and a culture of their own inevitably made them less likely to take the risks that rebellions required.
Slavery and Empire

Slavery contributed enormously to the economic growth and development of Europe during the colonial era, and it was an important factor in Great Britain just before the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century. Slavery was the most dynamic force in the Atlantic economy during that century, creating the conditions for industrialization. But because slave-owning colonists single-mindedly committed their resources to the expansion and extension of the plantation system, they derived very little benefit from the economic diversification that characterized industrialization.

Slavery the Mainspring

The slave colonies—the sugar islands of the West Indies and the colonies of the South—accounted for 95 percent of the exports from the Americas to Great Britain from 1714 to 1773. Although approximately half of all Great Britain’s American colonists lived in New England and the mid-Atlantic, the colonies in those regions contributed less than 5 percent of total exports during this period (see Table 4.2). Moreover, there was the prime economic importance of the slave trade itself, which one economist of the day described as the “foundation” of the British economy, “the mainspring of the machine which sets every wheel in motion.” The labor of African slaves was largely responsible for the economic success of the British Empire in the Americas.

Slavery greatly contributed to the economic development of Great Britain in three principal ways. First, slavery generated enormous profits that became a source of capital investment in the economy. The profits of individual investors in the slave system varied widely. But as the British economist Adam Smith wrote, “the profits of a sugar plantation in any of our West Indian colonies are generally much greater than those of any other cultivation that is known either in Europe or America.” Economic historians estimate that annual profits during the eighteenth century averaged 15 percent of invested capital in the slave trade, and 10 percent in plantation agriculture. Some of the first of England’s great modern fortunes were made out of slavery’s miseries.

The profits of the slave trade and slave production contributed greatly to the accumulation of capital. Although economic historians differ in their estimates, profits derived from the triangular trade in slaves, plantation products, and manufactured goods (see Map 4-3) furnished from 21 to 35 percent of Great Britain’s fixed capital formation in the eighteenth century. This capital funded the first modern banks and insurance companies, and eventually found its way into a wide range of economic activities. Merchant capitalists were prominent investors in the expansion of the merchant marine, the improvement of harbors, and the construction of canals.

### Table 4.2

**BRITISH COLONIAL TRADE IN THE AMERICAS, 1714–73**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Exports to Britain</th>
<th>Imports from Britain</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£</td>
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<tr>
<td>British West Indies</td>
<td>96,808</td>
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<td>Lower South and Chesapeake</td>
<td>47,192</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Middle Colonies and New England</td>
<td>7,160</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>151,160</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second, slavery contributed to the economic development of Great Britain by supplying the raw cotton essential to the Industrial Revolution. In 1787, slave plantations in the Caribbean supplied 69 percent of the raw cotton for British mills. The insatiable demand for cotton led to the development of the cotton gin and the rise of cotton plantations in the United States (see Chapter 11). And third, slavery provided an enormous stimulus to the growth of manufacturing by creating a huge colonial market for exports. From 1700 to 1740, the growth in American and African demand for manufactured goods (principally textiles, metal products, and ship’s wares) accounted for nearly 70 percent of the expansion of British exports.

The multiplier effects of these activities are best seen in the growth of English ports such as Liverpool and Bristol. There the African and American trades provided employment for ships’ crews, dockmen, construction workers, traders, shopkeepers, lawyers, clerks, factory workers, and officials of all ranks down to the humblest employees of the custom house. It was said of Bristol that “there is not a brick in the city but what is cemented with the blood of a slave.” In the countryside surrounding Liverpool and elsewhere, capital acquired through slavery was invested in the new industrial methods of producing cotton textiles, the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.
THE POLITICS OF MERCANTILISM

When imperial officials argued that colonies existed solely for the benefit of the mother country, they had in mind principally the great wealth produced by slavery. To ensure that this wealth benefited their states, European imperial powers created a system of regulations that became known as mercantilism. The essence of mercantilist policy was the political control of the economy by the state. First advanced in France in the seventeenth century under the empire of Louis XIV, mercantilist policies were most successfully applied by Great Britain in the eighteenth century. The monarchy and Parliament established a uniform national monetary system, regulated wages, encouraged agriculture and manufacturing with subsidies, and erected tariff barriers to protect themselves from foreign competition. England also sought to organize and control colonial trade to the maximum advantage of its own shippers, merchants, manufacturers, and bureaucrats.

The mercantilists viewed the economy as a “zero-sum” game, in which total economic gains were equal to total losses. As an English mercantilist put it, “there is but a certain proportion of trade in the world.” Profit was thought to result from successful speculation, crafty dealing, or simple plunder—all considered forms of theft. The institution of slavery confirmed the theory, for slavery was nothing more than a highly developed system by which some people stole the labor of others. The essence of the competition between states, the mercantilists argued, was the struggle to acquire and hoard the fixed amount of wealth that existed in the world. The nation that accumulated the largest treasure of gold and silver specie would be the most powerful.

WARS FOR EMPIRE

The mercantilist era was thus characterized by intense and violent competition among European states. Wars usually arose out of Old World issues, spilling over into the New World, but they also originated in conflicts over the colonies themselves. In the Anglo-Dutch Wars of the 1650s through the 1670s, England successfully overtook Holland as the dominant Atlantic power. Then, beginning with King William’s War (1689–97), England and France (generally allied with Spain) opened a long struggle for colonial supremacy in North America. (For discussion of these conflicts, see Chapter 3.)

OVERVIEW

THE COLONIAL WARS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>War</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queen Anne’s War</td>
<td>1702–13</td>
<td>England fights France and Spain in the Caribbean and on the northern frontier of New France. Part of the European conflict known as the War of the Spanish Succession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War of Jenkins’s Ear</td>
<td>1739–43</td>
<td>Great Britain versus Spain in the Caribbean and Georgia. Part of the European conflict known as the War of the Austrian Succession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King George’s War</td>
<td>1744–48</td>
<td>Great Britain and France fight in Acadia and Nova Scotia; the second American round of the War of the Austrian Succession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French and Indian War</td>
<td>1754–63</td>
<td>Last of the great colonial wars pitting Great Britain against France and Spain. Known in Europe as the Seven Years’ War.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The fighting took place mainly at the edges of the empire, on the frontiers separating Spanish Florida from British Georgia and New France from New England.

Colonial wars in the southern region had everything to do with slavery. The first fighting of the eighteenth century took place during Queen Anne’s War (known in Europe as the War of the Spanish Succession), a conflict that pitted Great Britain and its allies against France and Spain. In 1702, troops from South Carolina took the war as an opportunity to invade Florida, plundering and burning St. Augustine in an attempt to destroy the refuge for fugitive slaves there. A combined French and Spanish fleet took revenge in 1706 by bombarding Charleston. Great Britain emerged the victor in the general war, and in 1713, as part of the Peace of Utrecht, Spain ceded to the British the exclusive lucrative right to supply slaves to its American colonies.

The entrance of British slavers into Spanish ports also provided an opportunity for illicit trade, and sporadic fighting between the two empires broke out over this issue a number of times during the next two decades. But Robert Walpole, British prime minister from 1721 to 1748, saw distinct advantages for his nation in the continuation of peace. The Spanish empire in America was now open to British traders, he argued, and while “it is true that treasure is brought home in Spanish names, . . . Spain herself is no more than the canal through which all these treasures are conveyed all over the rest of Europe.” A faction in the House of Commons, however, demanded elimination of the Spanish threat. In 1739, at their urging, a one-eared sea captain by the name of Jenkins testified before Parliament about the indignities suffered by British merchant sailors at the hands of the Spanish. In a dramatic flourish, he produced a dried and withered ear, which he claimed they had cut from his head. A public outrage followed, forcing Walpole to agree to a war of Caribbean conquest that the British called the War of Jenkins’s Ear.

English troops allied with Creek Indians invaded Florida once again, laying waste the last of the old mission stations but failing to capture St. Augustine. In response, Spanish troops, including several companies of African Americans, invaded Georgia. Although the Spanish were defeated seventy-five miles south of Savannah, the campaign produced an agreement on the boundary between British Georgia and Spanish Florida that today still separates those states. Elsewhere the British were not so lucky: in the Caribbean the imperial fleet suffered disaster at the hands of the Spanish navy.

In the northern region, the principal focus of this imperial struggle was control of the Indian trade. In 1704, during Queen Anne’s War, the French and their Algonquian Indian allies raided New England frontier towns, such as Deerfield, Massachusetts, dragging men, women, and children into captivity in Canada (see Chapter 5). In turn, the English mounted a series of expeditions against the French fort at Port Royal in Acadia, which they captured in 1710. At the war’s conclusion in 1713, France was forced to cede Acadia, Newfoundland, and Hudson Bay to Great Britain in exchange for guarantees of security for the French-speaking residents of those provinces. Nearly thirty years of peace followed, but from 1744 to 1748, England again battled France in King George’s War (known in Europe as the War of the Austrian Succession). The French attacked the British in Nova Scotia, Indian and Canadian raids again devastated the border towns of New England and New York, and hundreds of British subjects were killed or captured.

The French, allied with the Spanish and Prussians, were equally successful in Europe. What finally turned the tide of this war was the capture in 1745 of the French fortress of Louisburg on Cape Breton Island by an expedition of Massachusetts troops.
in conjunction with the royal navy. Deprived of the most strategic of their American ports, and fearful of losing the wealth of their sugar islands, the French agreed to a negotiated settlement in 1748. But despite the capture of Louisburg, the war elsewhere had been fought to a stalemate, so the treaty restored the prewar status quo, and Louisburg was returned to France. This disgusted the merchants of New England, who wanted to expand their commercial influence in the maritime colonies, and left the North American conflict between France and Britain still simmering. Significantly, however, this was the first time that the concluding battle of a European war had been fought on North American soil, and it was a harbinger of things to come: the next war was destined to start as a conflict between French and British colonists before engulfing Europe (see Chapter 6).

**British Colonial Regulation**

Mercantilists used means other than war to win the wealth of the world. In the sixteenth century, the Spanish monarchy created the first state trading monopoly—the Casa de Contratación—to manage the commerce of its empire. It was widely emulated by others: the Dutch East Indies Company, the French Company of the Indies, the English East India Company, the Hudson’s Bay Company, and the Royal African Company.

English manufacturers complained that merchant-dominated trading monopolies too frequently carried foreign (particularly Dutch) products to colonial markets, ignoring English domestic industry. Reacting to these charges, between 1651 and 1696 Parliament passed a series of Navigation Acts, creating the legal and institutional structure of Britain’s colonial system. The acts defined the colonies as both suppliers of raw materials and as markets for English manufactured goods. Merchants from other nations were expressly forbidden to trade in the colonies, and commodities from the colonies had to be shipped in vessels built in England or the British colonies themselves.

The regulations specified a list of “enumerated commodities” that could be shipped only to England. These included the products of the southern slave colonies (sugar, molasses, rum, tobacco, rice, and indigo), those of the northern Indian trade (furs and skins), and those essential for supplying the shipping industry (pine masts, tar, pitch, resin, and turpentine). The bulk of these products were not destined for English consumption; at great profit they were reexported elsewhere.

England also placed limitations on colonial enterprises that might compete with those at home. A series of enactments—including the Wool Act of 1699, the Hat Act of 1732, and the Iron Act of 1750—forbade the production of those goods in the colonies. Moreover, colonial assemblies were forbidden to impose tariffs on English imports as a way of protecting colonial industries. Banking was disallowed, local coinage prohibited, and the export of coin from England forbidden. Badly in need of a circulating monetary medium, Massachusetts minted its own copper coin, and several colonies issued paper currency, forcing Parliament to explicitly legislate against the practice. The colonists depended mostly on “commodity money” (furs, skins, or hogsheads of tobacco) and the circulation of foreign currency, the most common being the Spanish silver *peso* and the German silver *thaler* (or “dollar”). Official rates of exchange between commodity money, colonial paper, foreign currency, and English pounds allowed this seemingly chaotic system to operate without too much difficulty.

As the trade in colonial products increased, most Britons came to agree with Prime Minister Robert Walpole that it made little sense to tamper with such a prosperous system. Walpole’s policy was later characterized as one of “salutary neglect.”
Enumerated goods: Items produced in the colonies and enumerated in acts of Parliament that could be legally shipped from the colony of origin only to specified locations.

Any colonial rules and regulations deemed contrary to good business practice were simply ignored and not enforced. Between 1700 and 1760, the quantity of goods exported from the colonies to the mother country rose 165 percent, while imports from Britain to North America increased by more than 400 percent. In part because of lax enforcement, but mostly because the system operated to the profit of colonial merchants, colonists complained very little about British mercantilist policies before the 1760s.

**The Colonial Economy**

Despite the seemingly harsh mercantilist regulations, the economic system operated to the benefit of planters, merchants, and white colonists in general. Southern slave owners made healthy profits on the sale of their commodities. They enjoyed a protected market in which competing goods from outside the empire were heavily taxed. Planters found themselves with steadily increasing purchasing power. Pennsylvania, New York, New England, and increasingly the Chesapeake as well, produced grain, flour, meat, and dairy products. None of these was included in the list of enumerated goods, and could be sold freely abroad. They found their most ready market in the British West Indies and the Lower South. Most of this trade was carried in New England ships. Indeed, the New England shipbuilding industry was greatly stimulated by the allowance under the Navigation Acts for ships built and manned in the colonies. So many ships were built for English buyers that by midcentury, nearly a third of all British tonnage was American made.

The greatest benefits for the port cities of the North came from their commercial relationship to the slave colonies (see Figure 4-3). New England merchants had become important players in the slave trade by the early eighteenth century, and soon thereafter they began to make inroads into the export trade of the West Indian colonies. It was in the Caribbean that northern merchants most blatantly ignored mercantilist laws. In violation of Spanish, French, and Dutch regulations prohibiting foreign trade, New Englanders traded foodstuffs for sugar in foreign colonies. By 1750, more than sixty distilleries in Massachusetts Bay were exporting more than 2 million gallons of rum, most of it produced from sugar obtained illegally. Because the restrictive rules and regulations enacted by Britain for its colonies were not enforced, such growth and prosperity among the merchants and manufacturers of the port cities of the North prospered.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the Chesapeake and Lower South regions were major exporters of tobacco, rice, and indigo, and the Middle Colonies were major exporters of grain to Europe. The carrying trade in the products of slave labor made it possible for the northern and Middle Colonies to earn the income necessary to purchase British imports despite the lack of valuable products from their own regions. Gradually, the commercial economies of the Northeast and the South were becoming integrated. From the 1730s to the 1770s, for example, while the volume of trade between Great Britain and Charleston doubled, the trade between Charleston and northern ports grew sevenfold. The same relationship was developing between the Chesapeake and the North. Merchants in Boston,
Newport, New York, and Philadelphia increasingly provided southern planters not only with shipping services but also with credit and insurance. Like London, Liverpool, and Bristol—though on a smaller scale—the port cities of the North became pivots in the expanding trade network linking slave plantations with Atlantic markets. This trade provided northern merchants with the capital that financed commercial growth and development in their cities and the surrounding countryside. Slavery thus contributed to the growth of a score of northern port cities, forming an indirect but essential part of their economies.

**Slavery and Freedom**

The prosperity of the eighteenth-century plantation economy thus improved the living conditions for the residents of northern cities as well as for a large segment of the white population of the South, providing them with the opportunity for a kind of freedom unknown in the previous century. The price of this prosperity and freedom, however, was the oppression and exploitation of millions of Africans and African Americans. Freedom for white men based on the slavery of African Americans is the most important contradiction of American history.

**The Social Structure of the Slave Colonies**

Slavery produced a highly stratified class society. At the summit of power stood an elite of wealthy planters who held more than half the cultivated land and over 60 percent of the wealth. Although there was no formal colonial aristocracy—no royal recognition of rank—the landed elite of the slave colonies sought to present itself as one. Binding themselves together through strategic marriage alliances and carefully crafted business dealings, dressing themselves in silk, lace, and powdered wigs, staging elaborate public rituals designed to awe common folk and slaves, they made up what one historian calls an “interlocking directorate.”

**Quick Review**

- **Colonial Exports**
  - Chesapeake colonies: tobacco.
  - South Carolina: rice and indigo.
  - Middle Colonies: wheat.
The typical wealthy Virginia planter lived in a Tidewater county; owned several thousand acres of prime farmland and more than a hundred slaves; resided in a luxurious plantation mansion, built perhaps in the fashionable Georgian style; and had an estate valued at more than £10,000. Elected to the House of Burgesses and forming the group from which the magistrates and counselors of the colony were chosen, these “first families of Virginia”—the Carters, Harrisons, Lees, Fitzhughs, Washingtons, Randolphs, and others—were a self-perpetuating governing class. A similar elite ruled the Lower South, although wealthy landowners spent little time on their plantations. They lived instead in fashionable Charleston, where they made up a close-knit group who controlled the colonial government. “They live in as high a style here, I believe, as any part of the world,” a visitor wrote.

A considerable distance separated this slave-owning elite from typical southern landowners. About half the adult white males were small planters and farmers. But while the gap between rich and middling colonists grew larger during the eighteenth century, the prosperity of the plantation economy created generally favorable conditions for the landowning class as a whole. Slave ownership, for example, became widespread among this group during the eighteenth century. In Virginia at midcentury, 45 percent of heads of household held one to four slaves and even poorer farmers kept one or two.

Despite the prosperity that accompanied slavery in the eighteenth century, however, a substantial portion of white colonists owned no land or slaves at all. Some rented land or worked as tenant farmers, some hired out as overseers or farm workers, and still others were indentured servants. Throughout the plantation region, landless men constituted about 40 percent of the population. A New England visitor found a “much greater disparity between the rich and poor in Virginia” than at home.

**White Skin Privilege**

But all the white colonists of eighteenth-century North America shared the privileged status of their skin color. In the early seventeenth century, there had been more diversity in views about race. For some, black skin was thought to be a sign of God’s curse. “The blackness of the Negroes,” one Englishman argued, “proceedeth of some natural infection.” But not everyone shared those views. “I can’t think there is any intrinsic value in one colour more than another,” a second Englishman remarked, “nor that white is better than black, only we think it so because we are so.”

As slavery became increasingly important, however, Virginia officials took considerable care to create legal distinctions between the status of colonists and that of Africans. Beginning in 1670, free Africans were prohibited from owning Christian servants. Ten years later, another law declared that any African, free or slave, who struck a Christian was to receive thirty lashes on his bare back. One of the most important measures was designed to suppress intimate interracial contacts between white servants and enslaved Africans. A 1691 act “for prevention of that abominable mixture and spurious issue which hereafter may encrease in this dominion” established severe penalties for interracial sexual relationships.
Such penalties were rarely applied, however, to masters who had sexual relations with their slave women. Because by law the children of slave women were born into bondage, many plantations included light-skinned slaves who were the masters’ kin. Recent tests of descendants’ DNA have confirmed that Thomas Jefferson was probably the father of several children by his slave Sally Hemings. Hemings herself was the slave child of Jefferson’s father-in-law, and thus the half sister of Jefferson’s deceased wife. Less well known is the fact that at Mount Vernon, the household slave Ann Dandridge was the daughter of Martha Washington’s father. Hemings and Dandridge may have been kin to wealthy planters and future presidents, but they spent their entire lives as slaves. Slavery, as one historian has written, “required certain evasions, denials, and psychological cruelties.”

Relationships between free whites and enslaved blacks produced a rather large mixed-ancestry group known as mulattoes. The majority of them were slaves; a minority, the children of European women and African men, were free. According to a Maryland census of 1755, more than 60 percent of the mulattoes of that colony were slaves. But they also made up three-quarters of the small free African American population. This group, numbering about 4,000 in the 1770s, was denied the right to vote, to hold office, or to testify in court—all on the basis of racial background. Denied the status of citizenship enjoyed by even the poorest white men, free blacks were an outcast group who raised the status of white colonials by contrast. Racial distinctions were a constant reminder of the freedom of white colonists and the debasement of all blacks, slave or free.

Racism set up a wall of contempt between colonists and African Americans. Jefferson wrote of “the real distinctions which nature has made” between the races. “In memory they are equal to the whites,” he wrote of the slaves, but “in reason much
This anonymous watercolor, discovered in South Carolina, dates from the last quarter of the eighteenth century. It offers a wonderfully detailed depiction of Africans or African Americans gathered together in the slave quarters celebrating with music. This is clearly a community celebration, involving several families. Seated on the right, two men play instruments that suggest continuity with the African heritage. One plucks on something that looks like a banjo, and indeed, the banjo can be traced back to West Africa. “The instrument proper to them,” Thomas Jefferson wrote of his slaves, “is the banjar, which they brought hither from Africa.” The other man plays a drum that resembles the gudugudu, a small wooden kettledrum from Nigeria played with two long thin rawhide sticks. The dancing man with the carved stick may indicate that this is a wedding ceremony that involves jumping the broom, an African custom for newly married couples. One planter’s description of a slave dance seems to fit this scene: the men leading the women in “a slow shuffling gait, edging along by some unseen exertion of the feet, from one side to the other—sometimes courtesying down and remaining in that posture while the edging motion from one side to the other continued.” The women, he wrote, “always carried a handkerchief held at arm’s length, which was waved in a graceful motion to and fro as she moved.” The painting is a tribute to the celebration of life amidst adversity.

WHY DO you think the plantation master is omitted from this painting?

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, VA.
inferior.” He gave no consideration to the argument of freed slave Olaudah Equiano that “slavery debases the mind.” Jefferson was on firmer ground when he argued that the two peoples were divided by “deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites” and “ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained.” Perhaps he knew of these feelings from his long relationship with Sally Hemings. “I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just,” Jefferson concluded in a deservedly famous passage, and remember “that his justice cannot sleep forever.”

Conclusion

During the eighteenth century, nearly half a million Africans were kidnapped from their homes, marched to the African coast, and packed into ships for up to three months before arriving in British North America. They provided the labor that made colonialism pay. Southern planters, northern merchants, and especially British traders and capitalists benefited greatly from the commerce in slave-produced crops, and that prosperity filtered down to affect many of the colonists of British North America. Slavery was fundamental to the operation of the British empire in North America. Mercantilism was a system designed to channel colonial wealth produced by slaves to the nation-state, but as long as profits were high, the British tended to wink at colonists’ violations of mercantilist regulations.

Although African Americans received little in return, their labor helped build the greatest accumulation of capital that Europe had ever seen. But despite enormous hardship and suffering, African Americans survived by forming new communities in the colonies, rebuilding families, restructuring language, and reforming culture. African American culture added important components of African knowledge and experience to colonial agriculture, art, music, and cuisine. The African Americans of the English colonies lived better lives than the slaves worked to death on Caribbean sugar plantations, but lives of misery compared with the men they were forced to serve. As the slaves sang on the Georgia coast, “Dah Backrow Man go wrong you, Buddy Quow.”

AP* DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

Directions: This exercise requires you to construct a valid essay that directly addresses the central issues of the following question. You will have to use facts from the documents provided and from the chapter to prove the position you take in your thesis statement.

Isolate and identify those environmental, economic, and political factors that promoted the survival of slavery as a viable institution in the southern colonies.

Suggested Answer:
Successful essays should note:
• The economic factors and higher productivity of slavery—longer hours and fewer days off than indentured servants (Document A)
• Mercantilist regulations benefited planters; slave products became profitable under British law (Figure 4-3)
• New England shipbuilding stimulated high trade volume for the Navigation Acts and the Triangular Trade, and it linked slave plantations to the Atlantic market (Map 4-3)
• Warm southern climate was conducive to the profitable and highly demanded products of sugar and tobacco, making slave-grown products economical (See The Lower South)
• Court rulings—John Punch 1619 first slave, three men attempt to run away as indentured servants and were caught, the two white men were forced to serve for additional years, Punch was black and punished to life in servitude. Racism assisted court rulings promoting black servitude.

• The status of children born to slaves was based on their mother’s status. Whether their father was slave or free was irrelevant. (See Slavery Comes to North America)

• Slaves were distinguished based on their skin color and, unlike English indentured servants, had nowhere to run (could not return to Africa easily) or an easy way to assimilate into English society, based on their skin color, culture, religion, and native language

• In the late 1600s, the importation of indentured servants to the Americas declined, further promoting slavery to fill the gap in the labor supply (See Slavery Comes to North America and Figure 4-2)

Document A

A common laborer, white or black, if you can be so much favored as to hire one, is 1s. ster. or 15d. currency per day; a bungling carpenter, 2s. or 2s. 6d. per day, besides diet and lodging. That is, for a lazy fellow to get wood and water, £19 16s. 3d. current per annum; add to this £7 or £8 more and you have a slave for life.

—Rev. Peter Fontaine of Westover, Virginia to Moses Fontaine, 1757

Reverend Fontaine is very clear in his letter to his brother that the use of slaves in Virginia was a decision of pure economics. Look at his arguments concerning the cost of free labor as opposed to slave labor. At first the indentured servant system was the preferred form of labor, but turn to pages 80–81 for the discussion of Bacon’s Rebellion to learn why Virginia planters changed their minds.

• How did Bacon’s Rebellion create a political justification for the use of slavery in Virginia?

On page 92 read the discussion of Georgia plantation slaves in the 1750s to learn why “saltwater” slaves were preferred for rice cultivation. The painting on page 95 shows gangs of slaves preparing land for cultivation in the Caribbean, but it could just as easily be Virginia, South Carolina, or Georgia for tobacco, rice, or indigo. The print below shows slave women preparing tobacco fields.

• Why would slave labor be more economical than free labor?
**Document B**

Look at the painting of colonial goods being unloaded in London on page 112. Turn to the chart on page 118 and compare the kinds of colonial products that were shipped from the Chesapeake and the Lower South to England with the kinds of goods that were shipped from the Middle Colonies and New England to the mother country.

- Which group of goods would most likely be better and more economically produced by slave labor? Why?

Now turn to the table on page 113 detailing British trade to and from the colonies between 1714 and 1773.

- Which trade was more financially rewarding, that of New England and the Middle Colonies to Britain or that of the Chesapeake and the Lower South to Britain? Why?
- Under the mercantile system, what made the goods of one group of colonies so much more valuable?
- What in the environment of the Chesapeake and the Lower South made certain crops viable that could not be grown in the more northern colonies?
- How would these factors affect the importance of slavery as a system of labor in the South?

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**AP* PREP TEST**

Select the response that best answers each question or best completes each sentence.

1. An important element in the development of the African slave trade was the:
   a. English occupation of South Africa early in the sixteenth century.
   b. demand for workers in the new manufacturing cities of Europe.
   c. European accord with Islamic states to outlaw enslaving Muslims.
   d. reluctance of the Catholic Church to allow enslavement of Christians.
   e. immense degree of religious tolerance throughout Europe.

2. The majority of people who came to America prior to 1800 were from:
   a. Africa.
   c. Spain.
   d. France.
   e. Prussia.

3. The vast majority of Africans bound into slavery were:
   a. from the region along the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea.
   b. captured by European raiding parties working on behalf of slave trading companies.
   c. initially indentured servants who were never given their freedom.
   d. captured by other Africans who traded their victims to Europeans.
   e. members of warring factions who were captured by European troops.

4. In the account of his enslavement, Olaudah Equiano states that:
   a. he knew when he boarded the slave ship that he was going to be carried to a plantation in America.
   b. most of the slaves were able to escape by jumping off of the ship before it sailed away from Africa.
   c. the ship’s crew did not care one way or the other if the slaves lived or died during their journey.


d. he believed that many more slaves would have tried to kill themselves if they had been able to.
e. the conditions on the slave ship were surprisingly pleasant.

5. One result of the slave trade was:
   a. that it prepared the continent to defend itself against further European infringement.
   b. the creation of powerful and independent nations in Africa.
   c. the advantage it gave Africa in diplomatic relations with Europe.
   d. the tremendous wealth it generated throughout the interior of Africa.
   e. debilitating social and economic dislocations in West Africa.

6. One reason that South Carolina embraced African slavery early in the colony’s history is:
   a. there were no Indians in the region that could be forced into slavery.
   b. the role that Africans played in the production of indigo and rice.
   c. the expansion of tobacco production in the state could not have taken place without corresponding growth in the size of the slave labor force.
   d. that Europeans could not survive in the heat and humidity of the region.
   e. the importance of large-scale cotton production in the American South.

7. During the colonial era of North America, slavery was:
   a. limited to the South.
   b. restricted to agriculture.
   c. on the decline everywhere.
   d. restricted to rural areas.
   e. present in all areas.

8. The growth of the African American community was based on:
   a. the gradual elimination of African culture in favor of European customs and traditions.
   b. the emphasis masters placed on Christianity and the decline of African religious influences.
   c. the new compassion masters felt as they came to realize the inherent brutality of slavery.
   d. the prominence of family life being superseded by an emphasis on the African American community at large.
   e. the relationship between Creoles and Africans and between the slaves and their masters.

9. The identity that African Americans developed during the eighteenth century:
   a. occurred because most of the slaves already spoke the same African language.
   b. revealed the resilience of human beings in responding to the tragedy of enslavement.
   c. was truly American because the slaves were completely isolated from African traditions.
   d. was initially based on the common religion that the slaves brought with them from Africa.
   e. was based on a universally shared experience regardless of the region.

10. In British North America, slavery:
    a. discouraged economic diversification that characterized the development of industry.
    b. encouraged Americans to develop factories to process the raw materials slaves produced.
    c. created a dynamic economy that quickly surpassed that of England, Spain, and France.
    d. retarded economic growth to such a degree that England had to subsidize most colonies.
    e. did not generate the sufficient profits needed to secure capital for investment in the economy.

11. The fundamental principle of mercantilism is that:
    a. individuals should be free to pursue their own economic interest to ensure the wealth of the nation.
    b. free and open trade is the best way to guarantee the economic activity that makes a nation powerful.
    c. the wealth of a nation is based on the amount of the gold and silver specie that a nation accumulates.
    d. there is no real correlation between government policies and the economic success of the nation.
    e. open competition weeds out weaker nations, allowing those superior nations to take control of markets.

12. The eighteenth-century plantation economy:
    a. generated tremendous wealth for some white southerners but had little substantive effect on the American economy.
b. allowed for equal economic involvement across disparate socioeconomic lines.
c. was regressive and so retarded economic development in the South that the region suffered from endemic poverty.
d. began to decline in influence as American attitudes toward freedom led to increasing demands to eliminate slavery.
e. created widespread wealth for many white Americans and an unprecedented opportunity for freedom.

13. One result of slavery in the colonies was:
   a. a highly stratified class structure.
   b. total equality for all adult white males.
   c. a greater role for women in society.
   d. a decline in traditional social values.
   e. the elimination of the bureaucratic elite.

For additional study resources for this chapter, go to *Out of Many, AP® Edition* at [www.myhistorylab.com](http://www.myhistorylab.com)
The Cultures of Colonial North America

1700–1780
CHAPTER OUTLINE

NORTHERN AMERICAN REGIONS
Indian America
The Spanish Borderlands
The French Crescent
New England
The Middle Colonies
The Backcountry
The South
Traditional Culture in the New World
The Frontier Heritage

DIVERGING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PATTERNS
Population Growth and Immigration
Social Class
Economic Growth and Increasing Inequality
Contrasts in Colonial Politics

THE CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF BRITISH NORTH AMERICA
The Enlightenment Challenge
A Decline in Religious Devotion
The Great Awakening
The Politics of Revivalism
Before dawn on February 29, 1704, Reverend John Williams and his wife, Eunice, of Deerfield, Massachusetts, awoke to “horrid shouting and yelling.” Leaping out of bed, they knew immediately that their town was under attack by the Canadian French and their Catholic Indian allies from several nations. This frontier settlement on the northwestern fringe of New England had already been attacked six times in the perennial fighting with New France. Never before, however, had the enemy penetrated the town’s stockade. Suddenly the door burst open and “with painted faces and hideous exclamations” warriors began pushing inside. “I reached up my hands for my pistol,” Williams remembered, “cocked it, and put it to the breast of the first Indian that came up.” It misfired, and as the couple stood trembling in their nightclothes, they were bound and dragged into the central hall with their seven children. They watched in horror as the invaders clubbed and killed their resisting six-year-old son, their screaming newborn infant daughter, and their black nursemaid. The remaining family was hustled out into the frigid dawn and, with more than a hundred other captives, were marched north through snow and ice toward Canada, leaving the burning town behind.

This raid became one of the most infamous events in a long series of attacks and counterattacks between English and French colonists. One hundred and forty residents of the town managed to hold off the invasion and survive, but fifty others died in the attack. Twenty-one of the captives were murdered along the way, including Mrs. Williams, who had not yet recovered from a difficult childbirth six weeks before. The governor of Massachusetts ordered a day of fasting, raised the bounty on Indian scalps from £10 to £100, and organized bloody raids on French and Indian settlements to the north in reprisal.

Most of the Deerfield captives were delivered to the French authorities in Montreal. Within two years, fifty-nine had been ransomed and returned to Deerfield, Reverend Williams and four of his children among them. Williams soon published an account of his captivity, *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*. In colonial America, with its many peoples and cultures, readers were fascinated by the problems and dilemmas of crossing the frontiers between colonial and Indian societies, as well as the borders between the English, French, and Spanish empires. What was it like, people wanted to know, on the other side of the frontier? How were you changed by your experience? Did you remain loyal to your community? Can you still be trusted?

Such questions arose because over the years, hundreds of English colonists had chosen to remain with their captors. Among the Deerfield captives, thirty-one—including ten-year-old Eunice Williams, her mother’s namesake—remained in Canada. Eunice was adopted by a family at Kahnawake, a community of Catholic Indians near Montreal. Like Deerfield, Kahnawake was a farming town clustered around a central church and surrounded by a stockade. The differences between the two communities, however, were more striking than the similarities.

Founded in the seventeenth century by Jesuit missionaries as a refuge for Iroquois converts, Kahnawake was home not only to a great variety of Native American Catholics, but people of mixed Indian and European ancestry. Visitors were struck by the appearance of residents who seemed Indian in all respects except for their blue eyes. Such mixing was also evident in the exotic combinations of European and Indian clothing, the use of Indian and French names, and the special ways the community bent Catholic ritual to fit traditional Iroquois religious practices. Residents of Kahnawake crossed boundaries in other ways, as well. Many were smugglers who engaged in the illegal trade of furs and other Indian products into New York. According to the frustrated authorities in Montreal, Kahnawake operated as “a sort of republic,” insisting on its freedom and independence.
Kahnawake, historian John Demos writes, was “a unique experiment in bicultural living.” Eunice Williams found it a comforting place, and when a man sent by her father came to fetch her, she declared she was “unwilling to return.” Soon she converted to Catholicism. She took an Iroquois name: A’ongonte, which means “she has been planted as a person.” In 1713, at the age of sixteen, she married a Mohawk man. She saw her father only once, the following year, when he finally went to Kahnawake himself to beg her to return. But she would “not so much as give me one pleasant look,” Williams wrote mournfully. “She is yet obstinately resolved to live and dye here.”

And that is what happened. A’ongonte and her husband raised a family and worked as traders. John Williams died in 1729, surrounded by his children and grandchildren but still longing for his “unredeemed” daughter. But A’ongonte continued to stay away, fearing she would be held in New England against her will. It was not until 1739 that she found the courage to bring her family south for a visit. “We had ye joyful, Sorrowfull meeting of our poor Sister,” her brother Stephen wrote in his diary. Soon thereafter war erupted once again, preventing her from further visits. “We have a great desire of going down to see you,” she wrote her brother near the end of their lives in the 1770s, “but do not know when an opportunity may offer. . . . I pray the Lord that he may give us grace so to Live in this as to be prepared for a happey meeting in the worlde to Come.” And, perhaps as a sign of reconciliation, she signed the letter, “Loving Sister until death, Eunice Williams.”

**KEY TOPICS**

- The similarities and differences among eighteenth-century Spanish, French, and English colonies
- The impact on British colonial culture of increasing European immigration
- Cultural changes in Indian America brought about by contact with European customs and lifestyles
- Patterns of work and class in eighteenth-century America
- Tensions between Enlightenment thought and the Great Awakening’s call to renewed religious devotion

**NORTH AMERICAN REGIONS**

American colonial history too often is written as if only the British colonies along the Atlantic coast really mattered. But as the experience of the Deerfield community and the Williams family demonstrates, that is a mistake. Eighteenth-century colonists could not afford to make. In the first place, Indian America was a critically important part of the eighteenth-century world. Indian peoples continued to make up a majority of the population of North America (see Table 5.1). From the fringes of colonial societies into the native heart of the continent, from the eastern foothills of the Appalachians to the western flank of the Sierra Nevada in California, hundreds of Indian cultures, despite being deeply affected by the spread of colonial culture, remained firmly in control of their homelands. And in addition to the British provinces stretching along the Atlantic coast, there were Hispanic colonists who defended the northern borderlands of the Spanish Caribbean and Mexican empire in isolated communities from Florida to California, and French communities that occupied the valley of the St. Lawrence River and scattered down the Mississippi Valley from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico. There were impressive similarities among these colonial societies, representing a continuation in the New
World of traditional Old World beliefs, customs, and institutions, as well as a general pattern of European adaptation to American conditions (see Map 5-1).

**Indian America**

As the native peoples of the Atlantic coastal plain lost their lands to colonists through battles or treaties and moved into or beyond the Appalachian Mountains, they became active in the fur trade. Indians demonstrated a remarkable capacity for change and adaptation. They used firearms and metal tools, built their homes of logs as the frontier settlers did, and participated in the commercial economy. In the process, they became dependent on European goods. “The clothes we wear, we cannot make ourselves, they are made for us,” a Cherokee chief admitted. “We cannot make our guns. Every necessary thing in life we must have from the White People.”

Yet Indian peoples continued to assert a proud independence and gained considerable skill at playing colonial powers against one another. The Iroquois Five Nations battled the French and their Indian allies in King William’s War (see Chapter 3), but in 1701, signed a treaty of neutrality with France that kept them out of harm’s way during the next round of conflicts. The Catholic Iroquois of Kahnawake sometimes supported the French, as they did by mounting the Deerfield raid, but they also traded with the English. In the Lower South, the Creeks maintained commercial relations with both the French and the English as a means of maintaining their autonomy.

In general, the French had better relations with native peoples than the English. There were fewer French colonists, and the French strategy was to build alliances with native tribes. The preeminent concern of the Indians of the eastern half of the continent was the tremendous growth of colonial population in the British Atlantic coastal colonies, especially the movement of settlers westward. Indian alliances with the French resulted not from any great affection, but rather from their greater fear of British expansion.

Indian communities continued to take a terrific beating from epidemics of European disease. No census of Indian population was taken before the nineteenth century, but historians estimate that from a high of 7 to 10 million north of Mexico in 1500, the native population probably fell to around a million by 1800. Thus, during the eighteenth century, colonists began to overwhelm natives in sheer numbers. Population loss did not affect all Indian tribes equally, however. Native peoples with a century or more of colonial contact and interaction had lost 50 percent or more of their numbers, but most Indian societies in the interior had yet to be struck by the horrible epidemics.

By the early eighteenth century, Indians on the southern fringe of the Great Plains were using horses stolen from the Spanish in New Mexico (see Map 5-2 on page 134). Horses enabled Indian hunters to exploit the buffalo herds much more efficiently, and on the basis of this more productive economy a number of groups built a distinctive and elaborate nomadic culture. Great numbers of Indian peoples moved onto the plains during the eighteenth century, pulled by this new way of life and pushed by colonial invasions and disruptions radiating southwest from Canada and north from the Spanish borderlands. The invention of nomadic Plains Indian culture was another of the dramatic cultural
innovations of the eighteenth century. The mounted Plains Indian, so often used as a symbol of native America, was actually a product of the colonial era.

**THE SPANISH BORDERLANDS**

In the mid-eighteenth century, what is today the Sunbelt of the United States formed the periphery of the largest and most prosperous European colony on the North American continent—the viceroyalty of New Spain, which included approximately 1 million Spanish colonists and mestizos and at least 2 million Indians. Mexico City, the administrative capital of New Spain, was the most sophisticated city in the Western

**Map 5-1**

Horses enabled Indian hunters to exploit the buffalo herds much more efficiently and, on the basis of this more productive economy, a number of groups built a distinctive and elaborate nomadic culture. The introduction of the horse allowed Native Americans to interact with other tribes and cultures, resulting in more exploration and more conflict among the Native tribes. The mounted Plains Indians, so often used as a symbol of native America, was actually a product of the colonial era.

**Guideline 2.2**

*How did* the introduction of horses help shape the life of Native American culture on the Great Plains?

To explore this map further, go to www.myhistorylab.com.
Hemisphere, the site of one of the world’s great universities, with broad avenues and spectacular architecture. New Spain’s northern provinces of Florida, Texas, New Mexico, and California, however, were far removed from this sophistication. Officials of the viceroyalty of New Spain, who oversaw these colonies, thought of them as buffer zones, protecting New Spain from the expanding empires of Spain’s New World rivals. Compared to the dynamic changes going on in the English colonies, society in the Spanish borderland was relatively static.

In Florida, the oldest of the European colonies in North America, fierce fighting among Spanish, British, and Indians had reduced the colonial presence to little more than the forts of St. Augustine on the Atlantic and Pensacola on the Gulf of Mexico, each surrounded by small colonized territories populated with the families of Spanish troops. In their weakened condition, the Spanish had no choice but to establish cooperative relations with the Creek and Seminole Indians who dominated the region, as well as hundreds of African American runaways who fled to Florida. Eighteenth-century Florida included a growing mestizo population and a considerable number of free African Americans and Hispanicized Indians from the old missions.
Nearly 2,000 miles to the west, New Mexico was similarly isolated from the mainstream of New Spain. At midcentury, New Mexico included some 20,000 Pueblo Indians and perhaps 10,000 mestizo colonists. The prosperity of these colonists, who supported themselves with subsistence agriculture, was severely limited by a restrictive colonial economic policy that required them to exchange their wool, pottery, and buffalo hides for imported goods at unfavorable rates. But unlike the population of Florida, that of colonial New Mexico was gradually expanding, settlers leaving the original colonial outposts along the upper Rio Grande to follow the valleys and streams leading north and east.

Concerned about the expansion of other colonial empires, the Spanish founded new northern outposts in the eighteenth century. French activity in the Mississippi Valley prompted viceroyal authorities to establish a number of military posts or presidios on the fringes of Louisiana, and in 1716, they began the construction of a string of Franciscan missions among the Indian peoples of Texas. By 1750, the settlement of San Antonio had become the center of a developing frontier province. New colonial outposts were also founded west of New Mexico, in what is today southern Arizona. In the 1690s, Jesuit missionaries, led by Father Eusebio Kino, built missions among the desert Indians of the lower Colorado River and Gila River Valleys and introduced cattle herding, which remained the dominant economic activity for the next two centuries.

In the early eighteenth century, the Spanish also established missions in arid Baja (lower) California. The more temperate northern coastline remained in native possession. In 1769, however, acting on rumors of Russian expansion in the north Pacific (see discussion of Russian America in Chapter 9), officials in Mexico City ordered the governor of Baja, Gaspar de Portolá, and the president of the Franciscan

A mounted Soldado de Cuera (Leather-Coated Soldier), a watercolor by Ramón de Murillo, c. 1803. Thick leather coats offered protection from Indian arrows for the cavalry posted to the northern frontiers of eighteenth-century New Spain.
Laurie Platt Winfrey, Inc.
missions there, Junípero Serra, to extend the Spanish presence northward. Supported by some two hundred soldiers and settlers, the two men founded a presidio and mission at San Diego and the next year established their headquarters at Monterey Bay on the central coast. Two years later, the officer Juan Bautista de Anza and a small party of soldiers blazed an overland route across the deserts connecting Arizona and California, and in 1776, he led a colonizing expedition that founded the pueblo of San Francisco. Over the next fifty years, the number of California settlements grew to include twenty-one missions and a half-dozen presidios and towns, including Los Angeles, founded in 1781 by a group of mestizo pioneers.

But over the next several decades, relatively few settlers came to California. Instead, the plan called for converting the natives to Catholicism, subjecting them to the rule of the crown, and putting them to work at the missions raising the subsistence necessary for the small civil and military establishment that was to hold the province against rival empires. The first contacts between the Franciscans and the natives were not encouraging. “What is it you seek here,” a chief and his entourage of warriors shouted at the missionaries. “Get out of our country!” But numerous native families were attracted to the missions by offerings of food and clothing, by new tools and crafts that promised improvements in the standard of living, and by their fascination with the spiritual power of the newcomers. Gradually, there developed a flourishing local economy of irrigated farming and stock raising. San Gabriel, near the pueblo of Los Angeles, was one of the most prosperous missions, with large vineyards and orchards that produced fine wines and brandies. Indian workers also constructed the adobe and stone churches, built on Spanish and Moorish patterns, whose ruins later came to symbolize California’s colonial society.

Indians were not forced to join the missions, but once they did, they were not allowed to change their minds. The Franciscan missionaries resorted to cruel and sometimes violent means of controlling their Indian subjects: shackles, solitary confinement, and whipping posts. Resistance developed early. In 1775, the villagers at San Diego rose up and killed several priests, and over the years many missions experienced revolts. But the arms and organization of Spanish soldiers were usually sufficient to suppress the uprisings. Another form of protest was flight. Spanish soldiers hunted the runaways down and brought many back. Aggressive tribes in the hills and deserts, however, often proved even more threatening than the Spanish, so many mission Indians remained despite the harsh discipline.

**Quick Review**

- **Spanish Colonies**
  - Mexico City was the capital of New Spain.
  - Conflict with Indians and the British reduced the Spanish presence in Florida.
  - New Mexico was isolated from the mainstream of New Spain.
Foreign observers noted the despondency of the mission Indians. “I have never seen any of them laugh,” one wrote. “I have never seen a single one look anyone in the face. They have the air of taking no interest in anything.” Overwork, inadequate nutrition, overcrowding, poor sanitation, and epidemic disease contributed to death rates that exceeded birthrates. During the period of the mission system, the native population of coastal California fell by 74 percent.

As the prominence of mission settlements in Florida, New Mexico, Texas, and California suggests, the Catholic Church played a dominant role in the community life of the borderlands. In the eighteenth century, religion was no private affair. It was a deadly serious business dividing nations into warring camps, and the Spanish considered themselves the special protectors of the traditions of Rome. The object of colonization, one colonial promoter wrote in 1584, was “enlarging the glorious gospel of Christ, and leading the infinite multitudes of these simple people that are in error into the right and perfect way of salvation.” Although these were the words of the English imperialist Richard Hakluyt, they could as easily have come from the Spanish padres Kino or Serra or the Jesuit missionaries at Kahnawake. There was no tradition of religious dissent. Certain of the truth of their “right and perfect way,” the Spanish could see no reason for tolerating the errors of others.

The French Crescent

In France, as in Spain, church and state were closely interwoven. During the seventeenth century, the French prime ministers, Cardinal Richelieu and Cardinal Mazarin, laid out a fundamentally Catholic imperial policy, and under their guidance, colonists constructed a second Catholic empire in North America. In 1674, church and state collaborated in establishing the bishopric of Québec, which founded local seminaries, oversaw the appointment and review of priests, and laid the foundation of the resolutely Catholic culture of New France. Meanwhile, Jesuit missionaries continued to carry Catholicism deep into the continent.

The French sent few colonists to New France in the eighteenth century, but by natural increase the population rose from fewer than 15,000 in 1700 to more than 70,000 at midcentury. The French used their trade and alliance network to establish a great crescent of colonies, military posts, and settlements that extended from the mouth of the St. Lawrence River southwest through the Great Lakes, then down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. After the loss in 1713 of the maritime colony of Acadia to the British (see Chapter 4), French authorities constructed the great port and fortress of Louisbourg on Ile Royale (Cape Breton Island) to guard the northern approach to New France. The southern approach was protected by French troops at the port of New Orleans in Louisiana. Between these two points, the French laid a thin colonial veneer, the beginning of what they planned as a great commercial empire that would confine the Protestant British to a narrow strip of Atlantic coastline (see Map 5-3). By the middle of the century, the French were moving into trans-Mississippi country, ascending the Missouri and Arkansas rivers and planting traders in Indian communities on the fringe of the Great Plains.

At the heart of the French empire in North America were the communities of farmers or habitants that stretched along the banks of the St. Lawrence between the provincial capital of Québec and the fur trade center of Montreal. There were also farming communities in the Illinois country, supplying wheat to the booming sugar plantations in Louisiana. By the mid-eighteenth century, those plantations, extending along the
Mississippi from Natchez and Baton Rouge to New Orleans, had become the most profitable French enterprise in North America.

Among the most distinctive French stamps on the North American landscape were the “long lots” that stretched back from the rivers, providing each family a share of good bottomland to farm and frontage on the waterways, the “interstate highway system” of the French Crescent. Long lots were laid out along the lower Mississippi River in Louisiana and at sites on the upper Mississippi such as Kaskaskia and Prairie du Chien, as well as at the strategic passages of the Great Lakes. Detroit, the most important of those, was a stockaded town with a military garrison, a small administrative center, several stores, a Catholic Church, and 100 households of métis (French for mestizo) families. Farmers worked the land along the Detroit River, not far from communities inhabited by thousands of Ottawa, Potawatomi, and Huron Indians.

Communities of this sort, combining both European and native American elements, were in the tradition of the inclusive frontier. Detroit looked like “an old French village,” said one observer, except that its houses were “mostly covered with bark,” in Indian style. “It is not uncommon to see a Frenchman with Indian shoes and stockings, without breeches, wearing a strip of woolen cloth to cover what decency requires him to conceal,” wrote another. “Yet at the same time he wears a fine ruffled shirt and a laced waistcoat, with a fine handkerchief on his head.” Detroit had much of the character of the mixed community of Kahnawake on the St. Lawrence River.

**New England**

Just as New Spain and New France had their official church, so did the people of New England: local communities in all the New England colonies but Rhode Island were governed by Puritan congregations (thus the term Congregational). Under the plan established in Massachusetts, the local church of a community was free to run its own affairs under the guidance of the General Court (the governor and the representatives selected by the towns). The Puritan colonies allotted each congregation a tract of communal land. Church members divided this land among themselves on the basis of status and seniority, laying out central villages such as Deerfield, and building churches (called meetinghouses) that were maintained through taxation. Adult male church members constituted the freemen of the town, and thus there was very little distinction between religious and secular authority. At the town meeting, the freemen chose their minister, voted on his salary and support, and elected local men to offices ranging from town clerk to fence viewer.

The Puritan tradition was a curious mix of freedom and repression. Although local communities had considerable autonomy, they were tightly bound by the restrictions
of the Puritan faith and the General Court. The Puritans did not come to America to create a society where religion could be freely practiced, but sought to establish their own version of the “right and perfect way,” which placed severe restraints on individuals. Not only did the Puritans exile dissidents such as Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson, who threatened the religious orthodoxy of Massachusetts (see Chapter 3), they banned Anglicans and Baptists and exiled, jailed, whipped, and even executed members of the Society of Friends, who came repeatedly among them to preach the tenets of Quakerism.

It was one of those exiled dissenters, Roger Williams, the leader of Rhode Island, who made one of the first formal arguments for religious toleration. “Forced worship,” he wrote, “stinks in God’s nostrils.” After the religious excesses of the English civil war, this argument had considerable appeal. In 1661, King Charles II ordered a stop to religious persecution in Massachusetts. The new climate of opinion was best expressed by the English philosopher John Locke in his *Letter on Tolerance* (1688). Churches were voluntary societies, he argued, and could work only through persuasion. That a religion was sanctioned by the state was no evidence of its truth, because different nations had different official religions. Consequently, the state had no legitimate concern with religious belief. The *Toleration Act*, passed by Parliament in 1689, was at first resisted by the Puritans. Under pressure from English authorities, however, in 1700, Massachusetts and Connecticut reluctantly began to allow other Protestant denominations to meet openly, although Congregational churches continued to be supported officially through taxation. By the 1730s, there were Anglican, Baptist, and Presbyterian congregations in many New England towns.

As towns grew too large for the available land, groups of residents left together, “hiving off” to form new churches and towns elsewhere. The region was knit together by an intricate network of roads and rivers. Seventy-five years after the Indians of southern New England suffered their final defeat in King Philip’s War (see Chapter 3), Puritan farm communities had taken up most of the available land of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, leaving only a few small communities of Pequots,

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**Toleration Act** Act passed in 1661 by King Charles II ordering a stop to religious persecution in Massachusetts.

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In this excerpt, Anne Hutchinson’s trial is hearing testimony concerning accusations and charges that she is challenging the authority of the ministry and promoting individualism—provocative issues in Puritan society.

*About three years ago we were all in peace. Mrs. Hutchinson, from that time she came hath made a disturbance, and some that came over with her in the ship did inform me what she was as soon as she was landed. I being then in place dealt with the pastor and teacher of Boston and desired them to enquire of her, and then I was satisfied that she held nothing different from us.*

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**The Turner House** (immortalized by Nathaniel Hawthorne in his novel *The House of the Seven Gables*) in Salem, Massachusetts, was constructed in the seventeenth century. In this style of architecture, function prevailed over form as structures grew to accommodate their residents; rooms were added where and when they were needed. In England, wood for building was scarce, but the abundance of forests in North America created the conditions for a golden age of wood construction.

Photograph courtesy of the Peabody Essex Museum.
Narragansetts, and Wampanoags on restricted reservations. Northern Algonquians and Catholic Iroquois allied with the French in Québec, however, maintained a defensive barrier that prevented New Englanders from expanding northward into Maine, New Hampshire, and the region later called Vermont. Deerfield represented the far northern limit of safe settlement. By midcentury, then, as the result of growing population, New England was reaching the limit of its land supply.

The Middle Colonies

In striking contrast to the ethnically homogeneous colonies of Connecticut and Massachusetts, New York had one of the most ethnically diverse populations on the continent. At midcentury, society along the lower Hudson River, including the counties in northern New Jersey, was a veritable mosaic of ethnic communities, including the Dutch of Flatbush, the Huguenots of New Rochelle, the Flemish of Bergen County, and the Scots of Perth Amboy. African Americans, both slave and free, made up more than 15 percent of the population of the lower Hudson. Puritan, Baptist, Quaker, and Catholic congregations worshiped without legal hindrance, and in New York City, several hundred Jewish families attended services in North America’s first synagogue, built in 1730. There was a great deal of intermingling, but these different communities would long retain their ethnic and religious distinctions, making colonial New York something of a cultural “salad bowl” rather than a “melting pot.”

New York City grew by leaps and bounds in the eighteenth century, but because the elite who had inherited the rich lands and great manors along the upper Hudson chose to rent to tenants rather than to sell, it was less attractive to immigrants than neighboring Pennsylvania, described by one German immigrant as “heaven for farmers.” The colony’s Quaker proprietors were willing to sell land to anyone who could pay the modest prices. During the eighteenth century, the region along the Delaware River—encompassing not only Pennsylvania but New Jersey, Delaware, and parts of Maryland—grew more dramatically than any other in North America. Immigration played the dominant role in achieving the astonishing annual growth rate of nearly 4 percent. Boasting some of the best farmland in North America, the region was soon exporting abundant produce through the booming port at Philadelphia.

The Quakers who founded Pennsylvania quickly became a minority, but, unlike the Puritans, they were generally comfortable with religious and ethnic pluralism. Many of the founders of the Society of Friends had been imprisoned for their beliefs in pre-Restoration England, and they were determined to prevent a repetition of this injustice in their own province. The Society of Friends never became an established church. It was a perspective well suited to the ethnically and religiously diverse population of Pennsylvania. Most German immigrants were Lutherans or Calvinists, most North Britons were Presbyterians, and there were plenty of Anglicans and Baptists as well.

The institutions of government were another pillar of community organization. Colonial officials appointed justices of the peace from among the leading local
men, and these justices provided judicial authority for the countryside. Property-owning farmers chose their own local officials. Country communities were tied together by kinship bonds and by bartering and trading among neighbors. The substantial stone houses and great barns of the countryside testified to the social stability and prosperity of the Pennsylvania system. These communities were more loosely bound than those of New England. Rates of mobility were considerably higher, with about half the population moving in any given decade. Because land was sold in individual lots rather than in communal parcels, farmers tended to disperse themselves at will over the open countryside. Villages gradually developed at crossroads and ferries but with little forethought or planning. The individual settlement of Pennsylvania would provide the basic model for American expansion.

The Backcountry

By 1750, Pennsylvania’s exploding population was pushing beyond into the first range of the Appalachian highlands (see Map 5-4). Settlers were moving southwest, through western Maryland and into the great Shenandoah River Valley of Virginia. Although they hoped to become commercial farmers, these families began more modestly, planting Indian corn and raising hogs, hunting in the woods for meat and furs, and building log cabins. The movement into the Pennsylvania and Virginia backcountry that began during the 1720s was the first of the great pioneer treks that took white pioneers into the continental interior. Many, perhaps most, of them held no legal title to the lands they occupied. They simply hacked out and defended squatter’s claims from native proprietors and all other comers. To the Delawares and Shawnees, who had been pushed into the interior, or the Cherokees, who occupied the Appalachian highlands to the south, these settlers presented a new and deadly threat. Rising fears and resentments over this expanding population triggered a great deal of eighteenth-century violence and warfare.

One of the distinctive characteristics of the backcountry was the settlers’ disdain for rank. In their words, “the rain don’t know broadcloth from bluejeans.” But the myth of frontier equality was simply that. Most pioneers owned little or no land, whereas “big men” held great tracts and dominated local communities with their bombastic style of personal leadership. In the backcountry, the men were warriors, the women domestic workers. The story was told of one pioneer whose wife began to “jaw at” him. “He pulled off his breeches and threw them down to her, telling her to ‘put them on and wear them.’”

The South

The Chesapeake and the Lower South were triracial societies, with intermingled communities of white colonists and black slaves, along with substantial Indian communities living on the fringes of colonial settlement. Much of the population growth of the region resulted from the forced migration of enslaved Africans, who by 1750 made up 40 percent of the population. Colonial settlement had filled not only the Tidewater area of the southern Atlantic coast but a good deal of the Piedmont as well. Specializing in rice, tobacco, and other commercial crops, these colonies were overwhelmingly rural. Farms and plantations were dispersed across the countryside, and villages or towns were few.

How did the movement into the backcountry affect the relations among colonists, Indians, and English authorities?
English authorities made the Church of England the state religion in the Chesapeake colonies. Residents paid taxes to support the Church and were required to attend services. No other churches were allowed into Virginia and Maryland (despite the role of Catholics in its founding) and dissenters were excluded or exiled. Before the 1750s, the Toleration Act was little enforced in the South; at the same time, the Anglican establishment was internally weak. It maintained neither a colonial bishop nor local institutions for training clergy.

Along the rice coast, the dominant social institution was the large plantation. Transforming the tangle of woods and swamps along the region’s rivers into an ordered pattern of dams, dikes, and flooded fields required heavy capital investment. Consequently, only men of means undertook rice cultivation. By midcentury, established rice plantations typically were dominated by a large main house, generally located on a spot of high ground overlooking the fields. Drayton Hall near Charleston, a mansion of the period that still survives, was built of pink brick in classically symmetrical style, with hand-carved interior moldings of imported Caribbean mahogany. Nearby, but a world apart, were the slave quarters, rough wooden cabins lining two sides of a muddy pathway near the outbuildings and barns. In this contrast between “big house” and “quarters,” the Lower South was the closest thing in North America to the societies of the Caribbean sugar islands.

Because tobacco, unlike rice, could be grown profitably in small plots, the Chesapeake included a greater variety of farmers and a correspondingly diverse landscape. Tobacco quickly drained the soil of its nutrients, and plantings had to be shifted to fresh ground every few years. Former tobacco land could be planted with corn for several years but then required twenty years or more of rest before reuse. The landscape was a patchwork of fields, many in various stages of ragged second growth. The poorest farmers lived in wooden cabins little better than the shacks of the slaves. More prosperous farm families lived with two or three slaves in houses that nevertheless were considerably smaller than the substantial homes of New England.

Compared to the Lower South, where there was no community life outside the plantation, in the Chesapeake there were well-developed neighborhoods constructed from kinship networks and economic connections. The most important community institution was the county court, which held both executive and judicial power. On court day, white people of all ranks held a great gathering that included public business, horse racing, and perhaps a barbecue. The gentleman justices of the county, appointed by the governor, included the heads of the elite planter families. These men in turn selected the grand jury, composed of substantial freeholders. One of the most significant bonding forces in this free white population was a growing sense of racial solidarity in response to the increasing proportion of African slaves dispersed throughout the neighborhoods.

**Traditional Culture in the New World**

In each of these regional North American societies, family and kinship, the church, and the local community were the most significant factors in everyday life. Colonists throughout the continent tended to live much as they had in their European homelands at the time their colonies were settled. Thus, the residents of New Mexico, Québec, and New England perpetuated the religious passions of the seventeenth century long after the leaders of the mother countries had put them aside in favor of imperial geopolitics. Nostalgia for Europe helped to fix a conservative colonial attitude toward culture.

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**Map 5-4**

Colonists began moving into the backcountry as squatters. They simply hacked out and defended squatter’s claims from native proprietors and all other corners. To the Delawares and Shawnees, these settlers presented a new and deadly threat, breeding eighteenth-century violence and warfare. The colonists’ settlement of the backcountry, despite orders forbidding such movement, caused England to raise colonial taxes to protect settlement boundaries. These taxes, especially after 1763, were highly resented by the English colonists and lay the groundwork for the resistance of the American Revolution.

This two-story log house, built in Pennsylvania in the early eighteenth century, is one of the oldest surviving examples of the method and style of log construction introduced in America by the Scandinavian colonists on the lower Delaware River. Learning New World farming and woodland hunting techniques from the Indians, these settlers forged a tradition of settlement that proved enormously successful for pioneers.

Henry Glassie, *Pattern in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States.*
These were oral cultures, depending on the transmission of information by the spoken rather than the printed word, on the passage of traditions through oral story and song. North American colonial folk cultures, traditional and suspicious of change, preserved an essentially medieval worldview. The rhythms of life were regulated by the hours of sunlight and the seasons of the year. People rose with the sun and went to bed soon after sundown. The demands of the season determined their working routines. They farmed with simple tools and were subject to the whims of nature, for drought, flood, or pestilence could quickly sweep away their efforts. Experience told them that the natural world imposed limitations within which men and women had to learn to live. Even patterns of reproduction conformed to nature’s cycle (see Figure 5-1). In nearly every European colonial community of North America, the number of births peaked in late winter, then fell to a low point during the summer. Interestingly, African Americans had a contrasting pattern, in which births peaked in early summer. Historians have not yet provided an explanation for the difference, but apparently there was some “inner” seasonal clock tied to old European and African patterns. Human sexual activity itself seemed to fluctuate with the rural working demands created by the seasons.

These were also communal cultures. In Québec, villagers worked side by side to repair the roads; in New Mexico, they collectively maintained the irrigation canals; and in New England, they gathered in town meetings to decide the dates when common fields were to be plowed, sowed, and harvested. Houses offered little privacy, with families often sleeping together in the same chamber, sitting together on benches rather than in chairs, and taking their supper from a common bowl or trencher. For most North American colonists of the mid-eighteenth century, the community was more important than the individual.

Throughout North America, most colonists continued the traditional European occupation of working the land. Commercial agriculture was practiced on slave plantations, of course. And it developed in some areas of the northern colonies, such as fertile southeastern Pennsylvania, which became known as the breadbasket of North America, and in the hinterland surrounding colonial cities such as New York, Boston, and Québec. The majority of eighteenth-century North American farmers, however, grew crops and raised livestock for their own needs or for local barter, and communities were largely self-sufficient. Rather than specializing in the production of one or two crops for sale, most farmers attempted to remain as independent of the market as possible, diversifying their activities. The primary goal was ownership of land and the assurance that children and descendants would be able to settle on lands nearby.

Colonial cities, by contrast, were centers of commerce. Artisans and craftsmen worked at their trades full time, organizing themselves according to the European craft system. In Boston, New York, and Philadelphia carpenters, ironmakers, blacksmiths, shipwrights, and scores of other tradesmen had their own self-governing associations. A young man who wished to pursue a trade served several years as an apprentice, working in exchange for learning the skills and secrets of the craft. After completing their apprenticeships, these young men sought employment in shops. Their search often required them to migrate to some other area, thus becoming “journeymen.” Most craftsmen remained at the journeyman level for their whole careers. But by building a good name and carefully saving, journeymen hoped to become master craftsmen, opening shops and employing journeymen and apprentices of their own. As in farming, the ultimate goal was independence.
There were few opportunities for women outside the household. By law, husbands held managerial rights over family property, but widows received support in the form of a one-third lifetime interest, known as “dower,” in a deceased husband’s real estate (the rest of the estate being divided among the heirs). And in certain occupations, such as printing (which had a tradition of employing women), widows succeeded their husbands in business. As a result, some colonial women played active roles in eighteenth-century journalism. Ann Smith Franklin, Benjamin Franklin’s sister-in-law, took over the operation of her husband’s Rhode Island shop after his death. Widow Cornelia Smith Bradford continued to publish her deceased husband’s Philadelphia paper and was an important force in publishing throughout the 1750s.

**The Frontier Heritage**

The colonial societies of eighteenth-century North America also shared perspectives unique to their common frontier heritage. European colonists came from Old World societies in which land was scarce and monopolized by property-owning elites. They settled in a continent where, for the most part, land was abundant and cheap. This was probably the most important distinction between North America and Europe. American historians once tied the existence of this “free land” directly to the development of democracy. But the colonial experience encouraged assumptions that were anything but democratic.
One of the most important assumptions was the popular acceptance of forced labor. A woman of eighteenth-century South Carolina once offered advice on how to achieve a good living. “Get a few slaves,” she declared, and “beat them well to make them work hard.” As her comment suggests, labor was the key to prosperity, and it was in short supply throughout the colonies. In a land where free men and women could work for themselves on their own plot of ground, there was little incentive to work for wages. The use of forced labor was thus one of the few ways a landowner could secure an agricultural workforce. In the Spanish borderlands, captured Apache children became lifetime servants, and an Indian slave trade flourished through the eighteenth century. In Québec, African American slaves from the French Caribbean worked side by side with enslaved Indians from the Great Plains. In Philadelphia, according to Benjamin Franklin, wages for free workers were so high that most of the unskilled labor was “performed chiefly by indentured servants.” All the colonists came from European cultures that believed in social hierarchy and subordination, and involuntary servitude was easily incorporated into their worldview.

More than half the immigrants to eighteenth-century British America arrived as indentured servants. Agents paid for the Atlantic crossing of poor immigrants in exchange for several years of service in America. One historian, accounting for the cost of passage and upkeep, estimates that indentured servants earned their masters, on average, about fifty pounds sterling over four or five years of service, the equivalent of about a thousand dollars a year in today’s values. But at the conclusion of their indentures, eighteenth-century servants enjoyed considerably more opportunity than their seventeenth-century counterparts. The chance of a former servant achieving a position of moderate comfort rose from one in five in 1700 to better than fifty-fifty by 1750, probably because of the rise in overall prosperity in the British colonies.

A second important assumption was the general expectation of property ownership. It led to rising popular demands in all the colonial regions of the continent that land be taken from the Indian inhabitants and opened to colonial settlement. Some colonists justified wars of dispossession by arguing, as the Puritans had, that Indians deserved to lose their lands because they had failed to use them to the utmost capacity. Others simply maintained that Indians deserved to be dispossessed because they were “savages.” Whatever their specific justifications, the majority of colonists—whether British, Spanish, or French—endorsed the violence and brutality directed against Indian tribes as an essential aspect of colonial life. This attitude was as true of inclusive as exclusive societies, with the difference that in the former, native peoples were incorporated into colonial society, while in the latter, tribes were pushed from the frontier. Thus did the Puritan minister Cotton Mather praise Hannah Dustin, a New England woman who escaped her captors during King William’s War by killing and scalping nine sleeping Indians, including two women and six children. With this as the prevailing attitude, one can understand why Eunice Williams was hesitant to return to Deerfield after she had married an Indian.

DIVERGING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PATTERNS

Despite these important similarities among the colonial regions of North America, in the eighteenth century the experience of the British colonies began to diverge sharply from that of the French and Spanish. Immigration, economic growth, and provincial political struggles all pushed British colonists in a radically new direction.
CHAPTER 5
THE CULTURES OF COLONIAL NORTH AMERICA, 1700–1780

Population Growth and Immigration

All the colonial regions of North America experienced unprecedented growth in the eighteenth century. “Our people must at least be doubled every twenty years,” Benjamin Franklin wrote in a remarkable 1751 essay on population, and he was nearly right. In 1700, there were 290,000 colonists north of Mexico; fifty years later they had grown to approximately 1.3 million, an average annual growth rate of about 3 percent. Typical preindustrial societies grew at rates of less than 1 percent per year, approximately the pace of Europe’s expansion in the eighteenth century. But the colonial societies of North America experienced what English economist Thomas Malthus, writing at the end of the century, described as “a rapidity of increase probably without parallel in history.”

High fertility and low mortality played important roles. Women in the British colonies, in the French villages along the St. Lawrence River, or the towns of New Mexico, typically bore seven or more children during their childbearing years. And blessed with an abundance of food, colonists enjoyed generally good health and low mortality. In most colonial areas, there were fewer than 30 deaths for every 1,000 persons, a rate 15 or 20 percent lower than those of Europe.

Yet, the British colonies grew far more rapidly than those of France or Spain (see Figure 5-2). It was immigration that made the difference. Fearful of depleting their population at home, the Spanish severely limited the migration of their own subjects, and absolutely forbade the immigration of foreigners. The French, dedicated to keeping their colonies exclusively Catholic, ignored the desire of Protestant Huguenots to emigrate. Instead they sent thousands of Catholic engagés to New France, but most returned, discouraged by the climate and the lack of commercial opportunity. The English, however, dispatched an estimated 400,000 of their own countrymen to populate their North American colonies during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Moreover, the British were the only imperial power to encourage the immigration of foreign nationals to the colonies. In the 1680s, William Penn was the first colonial official to promote the immigration of western Europeans, sending agents to recruit settlers in Holland, France, and the German principalities along the Rhine River. His experiment proved so successful that the leaders of other British colonies soon were emulating him. By the second quarter of the eighteenth century, shippers had developed a system that contemporaries called the “trade in strangers.” Carrying migrants provided English and Dutch merchants with a way of making a profit on the westbound voyage of vessels sent to bring back tobacco, rice, indigo, timber, and flour from North America. The eighteenth-century trade in strangers was the prototype for the great movements of European immigrants in the nineteenth century.

Further encouraging this development, early in the eighteenth century a number of British colonies enacted liberal naturalization laws that allowed immigrants who professed Protestantism and swore allegiance to the British crown to become free “denizens” with all the privileges of natural-born subjects. In 1740, Parliament passed the Plantation Act, providing for naturalization procedures for all the British colonies. The new law continued to prohibit the naturalization of Catholic and Jewish immigrants, however, and these groups remained tiny minorities. Still, immigration to the

Engagés Catholic immigrants to New France.

AP Guideline 3.1
Lecture Suggestion 5.3, Population and Economic Growth

Class Discussion Question 5.2

Quick Review

Population Growth

- 1700: 290,000 colonists north of Mexico.
- 1750: 1.3 million colonists north of Mexico.
- High fertility rates fueled population growth.


FIGURE 5-2
Estimated Total Population of New Spain, New France, and the British North American Colonies, 1700–1780

Although the populations of all three North American colonial empires grew in the eighteenth century, the explosive growth of the British colonies was unmatched.
British colonies was characterized by extraordinary diversity (see Map 5-5 and Figure 5-3).

First there were the Africans, the largest group to come to North America in the colonial period, larger even than the English. Forced relocation brought an estimated 600,000 Africans to the colonies before the official end of the slave trade to the United States in 1807. Then there was the massive emigration from the northern British Isles. Squeezed by economic hardship, an estimated 150,000 Highland Scots and Protestant Irish from the Ulster region (known as the “Scots-Irish”) emigrated to North America in the eighteenth century. German-speakers were next in importance; at least 125,000 of them settled in the colonies, where they became known as the “Dutch” (from Deutsch, the German-language term for “German”). It is worth noting again that a majority of these European immigrants came as bonded servants or slaves.

The European crossing of the Atlantic was nowhere near as traumatic as the African Middle Passage, but it was harrowing. One immigrant described a voyage to Philadelphia in which several hundred people were packed like sardines in the ship’s hold. “The ship is filled with pitiful signs of distress,” he wrote, “smells, fumes, horrors, vomiting, various kinds of sea sickness, fever, dysentery, headaches, heat, constipation, boils, scurvy, cancer, mouth-rot, and similar afflictions. In such misery all the people on board pray and cry pitifully together.” In 1750, Pennsylvania was finally compelled to pass a law to prevent the overcrowding of ships filled with indentured passengers.

The results of the first federal census of the United States in 1790 provide a summary of the eighteenth-century experience of immigration. Less than 50 percent of the population was English in origin, and nearly 20 percent was African; 15 percent was Irish, Scots-Irish, or Scots and 7 percent German, with other ethnic backgrounds making up the remainder. There were significant differences by region. New England remained more than three-quarters English, but Pennsylvania was nearly 40 percent German. The backcountry was populated largely by Scots-Irish. The population of the coastal South was nearly half African. The legacy of eighteenth-century immigration to the British colonies was a population of unprecedented ethnic diversity.

**Social Class**

Although traditional working roles were transferred to North America, attempts to transplant the European class system were far less successful. In New France, the landowning seigneurs (lords) claimed privileges similar to those enjoyed by their aristocratic counterparts at home; the Spanish system of encomienda and the great manors created by the Dutch and continued by the English along the Hudson River also represented attempts to transplant European feudalism to North America. But because in most areas settlers had free access to land, these monopolies proved difficult or impossible to maintain. North American society was not aristocratic in the European fashion, but neither was it without social hierarchy.

In New Spain the official criterion for status was racial purity. Españoles (Spaniards) or gente de razón (literally, “people of reason”) occupied the top rung
of the social ladder, with mestizos, mulattoes, and others on descending levels. African slaves and Indians were at the bottom. In the isolated northern borderlands, however, these distinctions tended to blur, with castas (persons of mixed background) enjoying considerably more opportunity. Mestizos who acquired land might suddenly be reclassified as españoles. Even so, Spanish and French colonial societies were cut in the style of the Old World, with its hereditary ranks and titles. The landlords of New France and the Spanish borderlands may have lacked the means to accumulate real wealth, but they lived lives of elegance compared to the hard toil of the people who owed them labor service or rent.

In the British colonies the upper class was made up of large landowners, merchants, and prosperous professionals. In the eighteenth century, property valued at £2,000 marked a man as well-to-do, and £5,000 was real wealth. Leading merchants, with annual incomes in excess of £500, lived in opulence. Despite their lack of titles, the wealthy planters and merchants of the British colonies lived far more extravagantly than the seigneurs of New France or the dons of the Spanish borderlands. What separated the culture of class in the British colonies from that of New France or New Mexico was not so much the material conditions of life as the prevailing attitude toward social rank. In the Catholic cultures, the upper class attempted to obscure its origins, claiming descent from European nobility. But British North America celebrated social mobility. The class system was remarkably open, and the entrance of newly successful planters, commercial farmers, and merchants into the upper ranks was not only possible but common, although by midcentury most upper-class families had inherited, not earned, their wealth.

There was also a large and impoverished lower class in the British colonies. Slaves, bound servants, and poor laboring families made up 40 percent or more of the population. For them, the standard of living did not rise above bare subsistence. Most lived from hand to mouth, often suffering through seasons of severe privation. Enslaved African Americans stood apart from the gains in the standard of living enjoyed by immigrants from Europe. Their lives in America had been degraded beyond measure from the conditions that had prevailed in their native lands.

The feature of the class system most often commented on by eighteenth-century observers was not the character or composition of the lower ranks, but rather the size and strength of the middle class, a rank entirely absent in the colonies of France and Spain. As one Pennsylvanian wrote at midcentury, “The people of this province are generally of the middling sort.” More than half the population of the British colonies, and nearly 70 percent of all white settlers, might have been so classified. Most were landowning farmers of small to moderate means, but the group also included artisans, craftsmen, and small shopkeepers. Households solidly in the center of this broad ranking owned land or other property worth approximately £500 and earned the equivalent of £100 per year. They enjoyed a standard of living higher than that of the great majority of people in England and Europe. As one economic historian recently concluded, the British colonies “were much better places to live, with probably a much higher standard of living than the mother country.”

**Economic Growth and Increasing Inequality**

One of the most important differences among North American colonial regions in the eighteenth century was the economic stagnation of New France and New Spain.
compared with the impressive economic growth of the British colonies. Weighed down by royal bureaucracies and overbearing regulations, the communities of the French Crescent and New Spain never evidenced much prosperity. In eighteenth-century British North America, however, per capita production grew at an annual rate of 0.5 percent. Granted, this was considerably less than the average annual growth rate of 1.5 percent that prevailed during the era of American industrialization, from the early nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century. But as economic growth increased the size of the economic pie, most middle- and upper-class British Americans began to enjoy improved living conditions. Improving standards of living and open access to land encouraged British colonists to see theirs as a society where hard work and savings could translate into prosperity, thus producing an upward spiral of economic growth.

At the same time, this growth produced increasing social inequality (see Table 5.2). In the commercial cities, for example, prosperity was accompanied by a concentration of assets in the hands of wealthy families. In Boston and Philadelphia at the beginning of the century, the wealthiest 10 percent of households owned about half of the taxable property; by about midcentury this small group owned 65 percent or more. In the commercial farming region of Chester County in southeastern Pennsylvania, the holdings of the wealthiest 10 percent of households increased more modestly, from 24 percent of taxable property in 1700 to 30 percent in 1750; but at the same time the share owned by the poorest third fell from 17 percent to 6 percent (see Figure 5-4). The general standard of living may have been rising, but the rich were getting richer and the poor poorer. The greatest concentrations of wealth occurred in the cities and in regions dominated by commercial farming, whether slave or free, while the greatest economic equality continued to be found in areas of self-sufficient farming such as the backcountry.

Another eighteenth-century trend worked against the hope of social mobility in the countryside. As population grew and as generations succeeded one another in older settlements, all the available land was taken. Under the pressure of increased demand, land prices rose beyond the reach of families of modest means. And as a family’s land was divided among the heirs of the second and third generations, parcels became ever smaller and more intensively farmed. Eventually, the soil was exhausted. In New England, where this pattern was most pronounced, there were notable increases in the number of landless poor, as well as the disturbing appearance of what were called the “strolling poor,” homeless people who traveled from town to town looking for work or handouts. Destitute families crowded into Boston, which by 1750 was spending more than £5,000 annually on relief for the poor, who were required to wear a large red “P” on their clothing. In other regions, land shortages in the older settlements almost inevitably prompted people to leave in search of cheap or free land.

**Contrasts in Colonial Politics**

The administration of the Spanish and French colonies was highly centralized. French Canada was ruled by a superior council including the royal governor (in charge of military affairs), the intendant (responsible for civil administration), and the bishop of Québec. New Spain was governed by the Council of the Indies, which sat in Spain, and direct executive authority over all political affairs was exercised by the viceroy in Mexico City. Although local communities had informal
independence, these highly bureaucratized and centralized governments left little room for the development of vigorous traditions of self-government.

The situation in the British colonies was quite different. During the early eighteenth century, the British government of Prime Minister Robert Walpole decided that decentralized administration would best accomplish the nation’s economic goals. Contented colonies, Walpole argued, would present far fewer problems. With the exception of Connecticut and Rhode Island, both of which retained their charters and continued to choose their own governors, the colonies were administered by royally appointed governors. But taxation and spending were controlled by elected assemblies. The right to vote was restricted to men with property, but the proportion of adult white males who qualified was 50 percent or higher in all the colonies. Proportionally, the electorate of the British colonies was the largest in the world.

That did not mean, however, that the colonies were democratic. The basic principle of order in eighteenth-century British culture was the ideal of deference to natural hierarchies. The common metaphor for civil order was the well-ordered family, in which children were to be strictly governed by their parents, and wives by their husbands. Members of subordinate groups, such as women, non-English immigrants, African American slaves, servants, and Indians—who in some colonies constituted nine of every ten adults in the population—were not allowed to vote or hold public office. Moreover, for the most part, the men who did vote chose wealthy landowners, planters, or merchants to serve as their leaders. Provincial assemblies were controlled by colonial elites.

To educated British colonists, the word “democracy” implied rule by the mob, the normal order of things turned upside-down. Over the century there was, however, an important trend toward stronger institutions of representative government. By midcentury, most colonial assemblies in British North America had achieved considerable power over provincial affairs, sharing authority with governors. They collected local revenues and allocated funds for government programs, asserted the right to audit the accounts of public officers, and in some cases even acquired the power to approve the appointment of provincial officials. Because the assemblies controlled the finances of government—the “purse strings”—most royal governors were unable to resist this trend. The royal governors who were most successful at realizing their agendas were those who became adept at playing one provincial faction off against another. All this had the important effect of schooling the colonial elite in the art of politics. It was not democratic politics, but rather training in the ways of patronage, coalition building, and behind-the-scenes intrigue that would have important implications for the development of American institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5.2</th>
<th>WEALTH HELD BY RICHEST 10 PERCENT OF POPULATION IN BRITISH COLONIAL AMERICA, 1770</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frontier</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural subsistence farming</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>Rural commercial farming</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cities</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>45</td>
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Lecture Suggestion 5.2, British America versus Britain

Class Discussion Question 5.3

FIGURE 5-4
Distribution of Assessed Taxable Wealth in Eighteenth-Century Chester County

This graph charts the concentration of assets in the hands of wealthy families. From 1693 to 1802, the percentage of total wealth held by the richest 10 percent of taxpayers rose from 24 to 38 percent, while the percentage held by the poorest 60 percent of taxpayers fell from 39 to 18 percent. This pattern was typical for regions dominated by commerce.

The Cultural Transformation of British North America

Despite broad similarities, the colonial regions of North America developed along divergent lines during the eighteenth century. The British colonies were marked by increasing ethnic diversity, economic growth, social tensions, and self-government. And by the middle decades of the eighteenth century, a significant cultural transformation had begun to take place. New ideas and writings associated with the Enlightenment made their way across the Atlantic on the same ships that transported European immigrants and European goods. In New Spain and New France, by contrast, colonial officials worked diligently to suppress these challenging new ideas and writings. The Catholic Church effectively banned the works of hundreds of authors. In Mexico, officials of the Inquisition conducted house-to-house searches in pursuit of prohibited texts that they feared had been smuggled into the country.

The Enlightenment Challenge

Drawing from the discoveries of Galileo, Copernicus, and the seventeenth-century scientists René Descartes and Isaac Newton, Enlightenment thinkers in Britain and in Europe argued that the universe was governed by natural laws that people could understand and apply to their own advantage. John Locke, for example, articulated a philosophy of reason in proposing that the state existed to provide for the happiness and security of individuals, who were endowed with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and property. Enlightenment writers emphasized rationality, harmony, and order, themes that stood in stark contrast to folk culture’s traditional emphasis on the unfathomable mysteries of God and nature and the inevitability of human failure and disorder.

Enlightenment thinking undoubtedly appealed most to those whose ordered lives had improved their lot. The colonial elite had good reason to believe in progress. Many sent their sons to college, where the texts of the new thinkers were promoted. In the eighteenth century, Harvard (founded 1636) was joined by the College of William and Mary in Virginia (1693), founded by Anglicans, and Yale College (1701), founded by Connecticut Puritans who believed Harvard had grown too liberal. A mixture of traditional and Enlightenment views characterized the colonial colleges, as it did the thought of colonial intellectuals, men such as the Puritan minister Cotton Mather. A conservative defender of the old order, Mather wrote a book supporting the existence of witches. But he was also a member of the Royal Society, an early supporter of inoculation against smallpox, and a defender of the Copernican sun-centered model of the universe. On hearing a scientific lecture of Mather’s that could be construed as raising conflicts with a literal reading of the Bible, one old Boston minister noted in his diary, “I think it inconvenient to assert such problems.”

This clergyman’s views probably characterized a majority of the reading public. About half the adult men and a quarter of the adult women of the British colonies could read, a literacy rate that was comparable to rates in England and Scandinavia. In striking contrast, in the French and Spanish colonies, reading was a skill confined to a tiny minority of upper-class men. In New England, where the Puritans were committed to Bible reading and developed a system of public education, literacy rates were 85 percent among men and approximately 50 percent among women—the highest
in the entire Atlantic world. The famous *New England Primer* (1689), one of the more influential books ever printed in America, was part of the most successful literacy campaign in history.

But the tastes of ordinary readers ran to traditional rather than Enlightenment fare. Benjamin Harris, the Boston publisher of the *New England Primer*, also printed the laws of Massachusetts, religious works by Cotton Mather, broadsides, ballads, and in 1690, the first newspaper in the colonies, *Public Occurrences both Foreign and Domestick*, which authorities suppressed after just one issue. In 1704, under a friendlier administration, however, the *Boston News-Letter* became the first continuously published newspaper in North America. By midcentury, there were more than twenty newspapers in the British colonies. These papers did not employ reporters, but depended on official government announcements, travelers’ and correspondents’ reports, and articles reprinted from other papers. The Pennsylvania *Chronicle* summed up its coverage in this description: “Containing the freshest Advices, both Foreign and Domestic; with a Variety of other Matters, useful, instructive, and entertaining.” Newspaper readership in the colonies was sizable. By the mid-eighteenth century most literate people had access to newspapers, and they were often read aloud in local taverns, making their information available to all within hearing.

Another popular literary form was the *almanac*, a combination calendar, astrological guide, and sourcebook of medical advice and farming tips that reflected the concerns of traditional folk culture. The best remembered is *Poor Richard’s Almanac* (1732–57), published by Philadelphia publisher Benjamin Franklin, but it was preceded and outlived by many others. What was so innovative about Franklin’s almanac, and what made it so important, was the manner in which the author used this traditional literary form to promote the new Enlightenment emphasis on useful and practical knowledge. Posing as the simple bumpkin Poor Richard, the highly sophisticated Franklin was one of the first Americans to bring Enlightenment thought to ordinary folk.

Not surprisingly, the best-selling book of the colonial era was the Bible. But in second place was a unique American literary form, the captivity narrative. The genre originated with the appearance of *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682), Mary Rowlandson’s story of her captivity among the Indians during King Philip’s War, a kind of “pilgrim’s progress” through the American wilderness. Appearing in fifteen editions during the colonial period, Rowlandson’s account stimulated the publication of at least 500 other similar narratives (including the Reverend John Williams’s *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*, discussed in the introduction of this chapter), most with a lot less religion and a great deal more gore.

The growth of the economy in the British colonies and the development of a colonial upper class stimulated the emergence of a more cosmopolitan Anglican culture, particularly in the cities of the Atlantic coast. A rising demand for drama, poetry, essays, novels, and history was met by urban booksellers who imported British publications. In Boston bookshops at midcentury, one could buy the works of William Shakespeare and John Milton, the essays of Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Jonathan Swift, and Samuel Johnson, and editions of the classics. In shops elsewhere around the colonies, one might also find editions of satirical and somewhat salacious novels such as *Moll Flanders* by Daniel Defoe or *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding—but not in New England, where such works were considered indecent. Many of these works were excerpted and reprinted in colonial newspapers.
A Decline in Religious Devotion

At the same time that these new ideas were flourishing, enthusiasm for religion seemed in decline. South of New England, the Anglican Church was weak, its ministers uninspiring, and many families were “unchurched.” A historian of religion has estimated that only one adult in fifteen was a member of a congregation. Although this figure may understate the impact of religion on community life, it helps keep things in perspective.

The Puritan churches of New England also suffered declining membership and falling attendance at services, and many ministers began to warn of Puritanism’s “declension,” pointing to the “dangerous” trend toward the “evil of toleration.” By the second decade of the eighteenth century, only one in five New Englanders belonged to an established congregation. When Puritanism had been a sect, membership in the church was voluntary and leaders could demand that followers testify to their religious conversion. But when Puritanism became an established church, attendance was expected of all townspeople, and conflicts inevitably arose over the requirement of a conversion experience. An agreement of 1662, known as the Half-Way Covenant, offered a practical solution: members’ children who had not experienced conversion themselves could join as “half-way” members, restricted only from participation in communion. Thus the Puritans chose to manage rather than to resolve the conflicts involved in becoming an established religion. Tensions also developed between congregational autonomy and the central control that traditionally accompanied the establishment of a state church. In 1708, the churches of Connecticut agreed to the Saybrook Platform, which enacted a system of governance by councils of ministers and elders rather than by congregations. This reform also had the effect of weakening the passion and commitment of church members.

In addition, an increasing number of Congregationalists began to question the strict Calvinist theology of predestination—the belief that God had predetermined the few men and women who would be saved in the Second Coming. In the eighteenth century, many Puritans turned to the much more comforting idea that God had given people the freedom to choose salvation by developing their faith and by doing good works. This belief, known as Arminianism, was in harmony with the Enlightenment view that men and women were not helpless pawns but rational beings who could actively shape their own destinies. Also implicit in these new views was an image of God as a loving rather than a punishing father. Arminianism became a force at Harvard in the early eighteenth century, and soon a new generation of Arminian ministers began to assume leadership in New England’s churches. These liberal ideas appealed to groups experiencing economic and social improvement, especially commercial farmers, merchants, and the comfortable middle class with its rising expectations. But among ordinary people, especially those in the countryside, where traditional patterns lingered, there was a good deal of opposition to these unorthodox new ideas.

The Great Awakening

The first stirrings of a movement challenging this rationalist approach to religion occurred during the 1730s, most notably in the movement sparked by Reverend Jonathan Edwards in the community of Northampton in western Massachusetts. As the leaders of the community increasingly devoted their energies to the pursuit of wealth, the enthusiasm seemed to go out of religion. The congregation adopted rules allowing church membership without evidence of a conversion experience and adopted a seating plan for the church that placed wealthy families in the prominent pews, front and center. But the same economic forces that made the “River Gods”—as the wealthy landowners of the Connecticut Valley were known—also impoverished...
Young people from the community’s poorer families grew disaffected as they were forced to postpone marriage because of the scarcity and expense of the land needed to set up a farm household. Increasingly they refused to attend church meetings, instead gathering together at night for “frolics” that only seemed to increase their discontent.

Reverend Edwards made this group of young people his special concern. Believing that they needed to “have their hearts touched,” he preached to them in a style that appealed to their emotions. For the first time in a generation, the meetinghouse shook with the fire and passion of Puritan religion. “Before the sermon was done,” one Northampton parishioner remembered about one notable occasion, “there was a great moaning and crying through the whole house—What shall I do to be saved?—Oh I am going to Hell!—Oh what shall I do for Christ?” Religious fervor swept through the community, and church membership began to grow. There was more to this than the power of one preacher, for similar revivals were soon breaking out in other New England communities, as well as among German Pietists and Scots-Irish Presbyterians in Pennsylvania. Complaining of “spiritual coldness,” people abandoned ministers whose sermons read like rational dissertations for those whose preaching was more emotional.

These local revivals became an intercolonial phenomenon thanks to the preaching of George Whitefield, an evangelical Anglican minister from England, who in 1738, made the first of several tours of the colonies. By all accounts, his preaching had a powerful effect. Even Benjamin Franklin, a religious skeptic, wrote of the “extraordinary influence of [Whitefield’s] oratory” after attending an outdoor service in Philadelphia where 30,000 people crowded the streets to hear him. Whitefield began as Edwards did, chastising his listeners as “half animals and half devils,” but he left them with the hope that God would be responsive to their desire for salvation. Whitefield avoided sectarian differences. “God help us to forget party names and become Christians in deed and truth,” he declared.

Historians of religion consider this widespread colonial revival of religion, which later generations called the Great Awakening, to be an American version of the second phase of the Protestant Reformation (see Chapter 2). Religious leaders condemned the laxity, decadence, and officialism of established Protestantism and reinvigorated it with calls for piety and purity. People undergoing the economic and social stresses of the age, unsure about their ability to find land, marry, and participate in the promise of a growing economy, found relief in religious enthusiasm.

In Pennsylvania, two important leaders were William Tennent and his son Gilbert. An Irish-born Presbyterian, the elder Tennent was an evangelical preacher who established a school in Pennsylvania to train like-minded men for the ministry. His lampooned “Log College,” as it was called, ultimately evolved into the College of New Jersey—later Princeton University—founded in 1746. In the early 1740s, disturbed by what he called the “presumptuous security” of the colonial church, Tennent toured with Whitefield and delivered the famous sermon “The Dangers of an Unconverted Ministry,” in which he called on Protestants to examine the religious convictions of their own ministers.

Among Presbyterians, open conflict broke out between the revivalists and the old guard, and in some regions the church hierarchy divided into separate organizations. In New England, similar factions, known as the New Lights and the Old Lights, accused each other of heresy. The New Lights railed against Arminianism as a rationalist heresy and called for a revival of Calvinism. The Old Lights condemned...
emotional enthusiasm as part of the heresy of believing in a personal and direct relationship with God outside the order of the church. Itinerant preachers appeared in the countryside, stirring up trouble. The followers of one traveling revivalist burned their wigs, jewelry, and fine clothes in a bonfire, then marched around the conflagration, chanting curses at their opponents, whose religious writings they also consigned to the flames. Many congregations split into feuding factions, and ministers found themselves challenged by their newly awakened parishioners. In one town, members of the congregation voted to dismiss their minister, who lacked the emotional fire they wanted in a preacher. When he refused to vacate his pulpit, they pulled him down, roughed him up, and threw him out the church door. Never had there been such turmoil in New England churches.

Although recently historians have raised questions about how cohesive these revivals were, they were so widespread and were typical of so many communities that they might be seen as one of the first national events in American history. They began somewhat later in the South, developing first in the mid-1740s among Scots-Irish Presbyterians, then achieved full impact with the organizational work of Methodists and particularly Baptists in the 1760s and early 1770s. These revivals not only affected white southerners but also introduced many slaves to Christianity for the first time. Local awakenings were often a phenomenon shared by whites and blacks. The Baptist churches of the South in the era of the American Revolution included members of both races and featured spontaneous preaching by slaves as well as masters. In the nineteenth century, white and black Christians would go their separate ways, but the joint experience of the eighteenth-century Awakening shaped the religious cultures of both groups.

Many other “unchurched” colonists were brought back to Protestantism by eighteenth-century revivalism. But a careful examination of statistics suggests that the proportion of church members in the general population probably did not increase during the middle decades of the century. While the number of churches more than doubled from 1740 to 1780, the colonial population grew even faster, increasing three-fold. The greatest impact was on families already associated with the churches. Before the Awakening, attendance at church had been mostly an adult affair, but throughout
in the colonies the revival of religion had its deepest effects on young people, who flocked to church in greater numbers than ever before. For years, the number of people experiencing conversion had been steadily falling, but now full membership surged. Church membership previously had been concentrated among women, leading Cotton Mather, for one, to speculate that perhaps women were indeed more godly. But men were particularly affected by the revival of religion, and their attendance and membership rose. “God has surprisingly seized and subdued the hardest men, and more males have been added here than the tenderer sex,” wrote one Massachusetts minister.

The Politics of Revivalism

Revivalism appealed most of all to groups who felt bypassed by the economic and cultural development of the British colonies during the first half of the eighteenth century. The New Lights tended to draw their greatest strength from small farmers and less prosperous craftsmen. Many members of the upper class and the comfortable “middling sort” viewed the excesses of revivalism as indications of anarchy, and they became even more committed to rational religion.

Some historians have argued for important political implications of revivalism. In Connecticut, for example, Old Lights politicized the religious dispute by passing a series of laws in the General Assembly designed to suppress revivalism. In one town, separatists refused to pay taxes that supported the established church and were jailed. New Light judges were thrown off the bench, and others were denied their elected seats in the assembly. The arrogance of these actions was met with popular outrage: by the 1760s, the Connecticut New Lights had organized themselves politically and, in what amounted to a political rebellion, succeeded in turning the Old Lights out of office. These New Light politicians would provide the leadership for the American Revolution in Connecticut.

Such direct connections between religion and politics were rare. There can be little doubt, however, that for many people revivalism offered the first opportunity to participate actively in public debate and public action that affected the direction of their lives. Choices about religious styles, ministers, and doctrine were thrown in the colonies the revival of religion had its deepest effects on young people, who flocked to church in greater numbers than ever before. For years, the number of people experiencing conversion had been steadily falling, but now full membership surged. Church membership previously had been concentrated among women, leading Cotton Mather, for one, to speculate that perhaps women were indeed more godly. But men were particularly affected by the revival of religion, and their attendance and membership rose. “God has surprisingly seized and subdued the hardest men, and more males have been added here than the tenderer sex,” wrote one Massachusetts minister.

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Patrick Campbell, a Scottish gentleman traveler, included this plate in the account of his tour of the American backcountry, published in 1793. The illustration provides a composite view of the raw frontier farms he visited, entirely typical of the eighteenth century. Note the way the pioneers hacked out their farms from the forest, leaving stumps standing in the fields. See how they fenced their fields to keep out livestock, which were allowed to forage freely. The engraving illustrates four different types of fencing: plain log (marked 4), worm fence made of split poles (5), post-and-rail (6), and Virginia rail fence of crossed stakes (7). The use of wood from the abundant forest was an essential economic strategy. Campbell was notably free of the prejudice of many British visitors to the frontier, but he could not disguise his scorn of pioneer cabins, which he described as “miserable little hovels covered with bark.” He included one of them in the engraving (14), one of the first illustrations of a log cabin to appear in print. Also notable here are the Indian canoes, one poled by a man, the other paddled by two women with what Campbell’s note mistakenly labels a “Babose.” Campbell made the entire trip with his own hunting dog, seen in the front of the canoe on the left. Note also the wonderful little “Indian dog” (15).

open for public discourse, and ordinary people began to believe that their opinions actually counted for something. Underlying the debate over these issues were insecurities about warfare, economic growth, and the development of colonial society. Revivalism empowered ordinary people to question their leaders, an experience that would prove critical in the political struggles to come.

**Conclusion**

By the middle of the eighteenth century, a number of distinct colonial regions had emerged in North America, all of them with rising populations who demanded that more land be seized from the Indians. Some colonies attempted to ensure homogeneity, whereas others embraced diversity. Within the British colonies, New England in particular seemed bound to the past, whereas the Middle Colonies and the backcountry pointed the way toward pluralism and expansion. These developments placed them in direct competition with the expansionist plans of the French and at odds with Indian peoples committed to the defense of their homelands.

The economic development of the British colonies introduced new social and cultural tensions that led to the Great Awakening, a massive revival of religion that was the first transcolonial event in American history. Thousands of people experienced a renewal of religious passions, but rather than resuscitating old traditions, the Awakening pointed people toward a more active role in their own political futures. These transformations added to the differences between the British colonies, on the one hand, and New Spain and the French Crescent, on the other.

**AP* DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION**

Directions: This exercise requires you to construct a valid essay that directly addresses the central issues of the following question. You will have to use facts from the documents provided and from the chapter to prove the position you take in your thesis statement.

Identify, compare, and contrast the differences that separated Spanish and French colonial societies from those colonial societies established by the British in North America. Select two of the following specific characteristics on which to build your position:

(a) Manner in which each European group interrelated with the aboriginal Indian societies that occupied the lands they colonized.

(b) Governmental structures established by each European group and the role of the individual within that political system.

(c) Economic systems that dominated each colonial group and allowed individuals to sustain themselves or even prosper.

**Document A**

I have shown in my former letters how vindictive the Savages are towards their enemies, with what fury and cruelty they treat them, eating them after they have made them suffer all that an incarnate fiend could invent. This fury is common to the women as well as to the men...
The Savages are slanderous beyond all belief; I say, also among themselves, for they do not even spare their nearest relatives, and with it all they are deceitful. . . .
Lying is as natural to Savages as talking, not among themselves, but to strangers. . . . I would not be willing to trust them, except as they would fear to be punished. . . .

—Father Paul Le Jeune, Québec, August 1634

Father Le Jeune was a Jesuit priest who worked among the Indians of Canada. Although there was much that Le Jeune found admirable among the Indians, he held the same prejudices as all Europeans who came into contact with them. The French had better relations with the Indians than either the Spaniards or the English, Father Le Jeune's report notwithstanding. French settlers intermingled with the Indians, as did the Spanish.

- Why did the French hold such good relations with the Indians?
- What systems did the French establish in the French Crescent (see map on page 138) for social and political organization?
- What form of government did they establish in New France?

Look at the photograph on page 137 and notice the "long lot."

- What was the purpose of this form of property organization in New France?
- What economic incentives drew French settlers to the New World?
- Why did the French develop a fairly sizable mestizo population while the English did not?
- Explain the extraordinary imbalance in populations between French, Spanish, and English colonies by the middle of the eighteenth century.

**Document B**

They (the Indians) are not ignorant, inhuman, or bestial. Rather, long before they had heard the word Spaniard they had properly organized states, wisely ordered by excellent laws, religion, and custom. They cultivated friendship and, bound together in common fellowship, lived in populous cities in which they wisely administer the affairs of both peace and war justly and equitably, truly governed by laws that at very many points surpass ours. . . .

I call the Spaniards who plunder that unhappy people torturers. Do you think that the Romans, once they had subjugated the wild and barbaric peoples of Spain, could with secure right divide all of you among yourselves, handing over so many head of both males and females as allotments to individuals? And do you then conclude that the Romans could have stripped your rulers of their authority and consigned all of you, after you had been deprived of your liberty, to wretched labors, especially in searching for gold and silver lodes and mining and refining the metals?

—Friar Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Thirty Very Judicial Propositions*, 1552

Las Casas defended the Indians of the New World and attacked the treatment that Spaniards handed out to them as cruel torture. Las Casas criticisms were the source of the “Black Legend” concerning Spanish cruelty to the Indians used so well by the British as propaganda against Spain. The image of the Black Legend was not without merit. Las Casas eventually became bishop of Guatemala and used that position to continue his fight for the rights of Indians. Look at the photo of the Church of San Xavier del Bac on page 136. This mission is in Arizona; others were in Texas, Mexico, and California. Read about Father Junípero Serra on page 136.

- How were Indians treated under these missions?
- What was the organization of these missions?
Look at the painting on page 149 of the mestizo family.
• Why did the Spanish regularly intermingle and establish families with the Indians while the British did not?
• What were “espanoles” and “castas”? Where did they fit into Spanish society on the frontier?
• What was the social and political structure of the Spanish world on the frontier?

**Document C**

Look at the photo of the House of the Seven Gables on page 139 and the Pennsylvania log cabin on page 142.
• What was different about English settlement of North America from the kind of settlement that occurred in New France or New Spain?
• What was different about the kinds of settlers who arrived in British North America?
• Why was self-government more common in British colonies than in those of Spain or France?
• What differences existed in how the governments of the British colonies were organized against those of France and Spain?

Read the report of the Deerfield raid on page 130.
• How did the British, Spanish, and French differ in their relationships with the Indians? Why?

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**AP* PREP TEST**

Select the response that best answers each question or best completes each sentence.

1. Eighteenth-century America was:
   a. fairly homogeneous with the exception of the French settlements in the lower Mississippi Valley.
   b. composed of more English colonists than French or natives combined, leaving the English culture dominant.
   c. a truly New World as colonists quickly established a new culture with few links to European tradition.
   d. remarkable in that very few substantive conflicts existed between the disparate cultures present there.
   e. made up of a wide variety of Indian groups and settlers from a number of European nations.

2. One of the first Americans to advocate religious toleration was:
   b. Cotton Mather.
   c. Roger Williams.
   d. John Winthrop.
   e. John Locke.

3. The development of Pennsylvania was strongly influenced by the:
   a. Society of Friends.
   b. Congregationalist Church.
   c. Ursaline Order.
   d. Illuminati.
   e. Baptist Church.

4. The Chesapeake settlements and the colonies of the Lower South were:
   a. fairly urban with the vast majority of the people living in the major coastal cities.
   b. populated primarily by imported African slaves working on the large plantations.
   c. ethnically diverse because of the presence of Africans, Europeans, and Indians.
   d. for the most part biracial since most of the Indians had been completely wiped out.
   e. densely populated and shifted movement to the coast to escape Indian attacks.

5. In colonial America:
   a. women made advancements toward equal opportunity, particularly in the church.
   b. women made quick strides toward equality, especially in their right to own property.
   c. women were relegated to the domestic sphere and had no social rights at all.
   d. women were treated as equal to men in social, political, and economic affairs.
   e. women were generally denied careers or opportunities outside of the household.

6. The presence of the frontier and the availability of land in the colonies:
   a. made British North America the first true democracy in the history of the world.

---

**Answer Key**

1-E 4-C 7-C 10-B 13-B 2-C 5-E 8-B 11-D 14-A 3-A 6-D 9-E 12-D
b. meant that everybody had an equal opportunity to obtain property in America.

7. During the eighteenth century:
   a. the colonies of England, France, and Spain remained similar to each other in their political and social experiences.
   b. sharp decreases in the populations of all of the European regions of North America retarded political development.
   c. for a variety of reasons the British colonies began to differ socially and politically from New France and New Spain.
   d. France’s tolerance toward Indians created stability in New France, and that region was the most populated in America.
   e. English reluctance to deplete their population at home limited the migration of their own subjects in North America.

8. One striking thing about British North America in the 1700s was:
   a. that there was no poverty in the colonies.
   b. the presence of a dynamic middle class.
   c. how wealthy all the settlers had become.
   d. the emergence of a classless society.
   e. that social mobility was highly dejected.

9. In North America during the eighteenth century:
   a. the English and French struggled with authority between the governors and assemblies.
   b. the European nations encouraged the creation of strong local governments in their colonies.
   c. the English and Spanish continued to rely on powerful centralized colonial administrations.
   d. the European colonies developed similar political institutions based on their common experiences.
   e. the English colonies began to develop the institutions of representative government.

10. The intellectual movement that led to a significant transformation in British North America was:
    a. pan-Americanism.
    b. the Enlightenment.
    c. Existentialism.
    d. the Scientific Revolution.
    e. the Renaissance.

11. By early in the 1700s:
    a. the English colonies all had governments based on theocratic principles.
    b. the Puritan Church remained the fastest-growing denomination.
    c. most Americans were secularists who had no interest in religion.
    d. America was experiencing an apparent decline in religious devotion.
    e. the growth and principles of the Quakers rivaled that of the Puritans.

12. The Anglican minister who helped spread the Great Awakening throughout the English colonies was:
    a. Ethan Frost.
    c. John Wesley.
    d. George Whitefield.
    e. Calvin Williams.

13. The Great Awakening:
    a. created the first true political and social consensus in the North American colonies.
    b. provided many Americans with their first opportunity to engage in public debate and action.
    c. introduced for the first time concepts of pietism and humility to the Christian faith.
    d. strengthened the influence of the social and economic elite in the American colonies.
    e. allowed for the introduction of women’s rights and social advancement.

14. The expansionism of colonies in British North America during the eighteenth century:
    a. created the potential for competition with the French and with the Indians.
    b. meant that other European nations no longer played a role in colonial affairs.
    c. led to numerous direct conflicts with the Spanish settlements in the Caribbean.
    d. led to an English alliance with the Spanish against French interests in America.
    e. created a distinct number of colonial regions that sought an alliance with the Dutch.
CHAPTER 6

From Empire to Independence

1750–1776
CHAPTER OUTLINE

THE SEVEN YEARS’ WAR IN AMERICA
- The Albany Conference of 1754
- Colonial Aims and Indian Interests
- Frontier Warfare
- The Conquest of Canada
- The Struggle for the West

THE IMPERIAL CRISIS IN BRITISH NORTH AMERICA
- The Emergence of American Nationalism
- The Press, Politics, and Republicanism
- The Sugar and Stamp Acts
- The Stamp Act Crisis
- Repeal of the Stamp Act

“SAVE YOUR MONEY AND SAVE YOUR COUNTRY”
- The Townshend Revenue Acts
- Nonimportation: An Early Political Boycott
- The Massachusetts Circular Letter
- The Politics of Revolt and the Boston Massacre

FROM RESISTANCE TO REBELLION
- Intercolonial Cooperation
- The Boston Tea Party
- The Intolerable Acts
- The First Continental Congress
- Lexington and Concord

DECIDING FOR INDEPENDENCE
- The Second Continental Congress
- Canada, the Spanish Borderlands, and the Revolution
- Fighting in the North and South
- No Turning Back
- The Declaration of Independence
The opening minutes of the First Continental Congress did not bode well. A delegate moved they begin with prayer, but others responded that “we were so divided in religious sentiments, some Episcopalians, some Quakers, some Anabaptists, some Presbyterians, and some Congregationalists, that we could not join in the same act of worship.” The delegates who arrived in Philadelphia in September 1774 hailed from many communities with different identities and loyalties. Was the Congress to be stymied, here at the very beginning, by the things separating them? John Adams’s cousin and fellow Massachusetts delegate Samuel Adams leapt to his feet. He was no bigot, he proclaimed, and was willing to hear a prayer “from any gentleman of piety and virtue who was at the same time a friend to his country.” There was a larger identity at stake here—their common identity as British Americans. Suspending their religious differences, the delegates agreed to a prayer from a local clergyman, who took as his text the Thirty-fifth Psalm: “Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me; fight against them that fight against me.” He “prayed with such fervor, such Ardor, such Earnestness and Pathos, and in Language so elegant and sublime,” John Adams wrote to his wife, that “it has had an excellent Effect upon every Body here.”

The incident highlighted the most important task confronting the First Continental Congress—emphasizing the common cause without compromising local identities. The delegates were like “ambassadors from a dozen belligerent powers of Europe,” noted Adams. They represented distinct colonies with traditions and histories as different as those of separate countries. Moreover, these lawyers, merchants, and planters, leaders in their respective colonies, were strangers to one another. “Every man,” he worried, “is a great man, an orator, a critic, a statesman, and therefore every man, upon every question, must show his oratory, his criticism, and his political abilities.” As a result, he continued, “business is drawn and spun out to an immeasurable length. I believe that if it was moved and seconded that we should come to a resolution that three and two make five, we should be entertained with logic and rhetorick, law, history, politicks and mathematics concerning the subject for two whole days.”

Britain’s North American colonies enjoyed considerable prosperity during the first half of the eighteenth century. But in 1765—in the aftermath of the great war for empire in which Great Britain soundly defeated France, forcing the French to give up their American colonies—the British government began to apply new trade restrictions and levy new taxes, generating increasing resistance among the colonists. By 1774, peaceful protest had escalated into violent riot, most notably in the city of Boston, and in an attempt to force the colonists to acknowledge the power of Parliament to make laws binding them “in all cases whatsoever,” the British proclaimed a series of repressive measures, including the closure of ports in Massachusetts and the suspension of that colony’s elected government. In this atmosphere of crisis, the twelve colonial assemblies elected fifty-six delegates for a “Continental Congress” to map out a coordinated response. If they failed to act collectively, delegate Arthur Lee of Virginia declared, they would be “attacked and destroyed by piece-meal.” Abigail Adams, the politically astute wife of John Adams, a delegate from Massachusetts, agreed. “You have before you,” she wrote her husband, “the greatest national concerns that ever came before any people.”

Despite their regional and religious differences, during seven weeks of deliberations, the delegates succeeded in forging an agreement on the principles and policies they would follow in this, the most serious crisis in the history of the British North American colonies. At the outset they resolved that each colony
would have one vote, thereby committing themselves to the preservation of provincial autonomy. Their most vexing problems they sent to committees, whose members could sound each other out without committing themselves on the public record. They added to their daily routine a round of dinners, parties, and late-night tavern-hopping. And in so doing they began to create a community of interest. “It has taken us much time to get acquainted,” John Adams wrote to Abigail, but he left Philadelphia thinking of his fellow representatives as “a collection of the greatest men upon this continent.”

These were the first steps toward the creation of an American national political community. Communities are not only local, but also regional, national, even international. In a town or village, the feeling of association comes from daily, face-to-face contact, but for larger groups, those connections must be deliberately constructed. In their final declaration the delegates pledged to “firmly agree and associate, under the sacred ties of virtue, honor and love of our country.” They urged their fellow Americans to “encourage frugality, economy, and industry, and promote agriculture, arts and the manufactures of this country,” and to “discountenance and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation.” They asked their countrymen to remember “the poorer sort” among them during the troubles they knew were coming. And in demanding that patriotic Americans “break off all dealings” and treat with contempt anyone violating this compact, they drew a distinction between “insiders” and “outsiders,” one of the essential first acts in the construction of community.

Patrick Henry of Virginia, a delegate strongly committed to American independence, was exuberant by the time the Congress adjourned in late October. “The distinctions between Virginians, Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers, and New Englanders, are no more,” he declared. “I am not a Virginian, but an American.” He exaggerated. Local, provincial, and regional differences would continue to clash. As yet there was no national political community. But Henry voiced an important truth. With its repressive actions, Great Britain had forced the colonists to recognize a shared community of interest distinct from that of the mother country. As the colonies cautiously moved toward independence, the imagined community of America would be sorely tested, and during the difficult months and years of warfare, the differences among the former colonies would frequently threaten to destroy the nation even as it was being born. But the First Continental Congress marked the point when Americans began the struggle to transcend their local and regional differences in pursuit of national goals.

KEY TOPICS

- The final struggle among Great Britain, France, and American Indian tribes for control of eastern North America
- American nationalism in the aftermath of the French and Indian War
- Great Britain’s changing policy toward its North American colonies
- The political assumptions of American republicanism
- The colonies’ efforts to achieve unity in their confrontation with Great Britain

THE SEVEN YEARS’ WAR IN AMERICA

The first attempt at cooperation among the leaders of the British colonies occurred in 1754, when representatives from New England, New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland met to consider a joint approach to the French and Indian challenge. Even as the delegates met, fighting between French Canadians and Virginians began on the Ohio River, the first shots in a great global war for empire, known in Europe as the Seven Years’ War, that pitted Britain (allied with Prussia) against the combined might of France, Austria, and Spain. In North America this would be the
final and most destructive armed conflict between the British and the French before the French Revolution. Ultimately, it decided the future of the vast region between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River, and lay the groundwork for the conflict between the British and the colonists that led to the American Revolution.

**The Albany Conference of 1754**

The 1754 meeting, which included an official delegation from the Iroquois Confederacy, and took place in the New York town of Albany on the Hudson River, was convened by the British Board of Trade. British officials wanted the colonies to consider a collective response to the continuing conflict with New France and the Indians of the interior. High on the agenda was the negotiation of a settlement with the leaders of the Iroquois Confederacy, who had grown impatient with colonial land grabbing. Because the powerful Iroquois Confederacy, with its Covenant Chain of alliances with other Indian tribes, occupied such a strategic location between New France and the British colonies, the British could ill afford Iroquois discontent. But the official Iroquois delegation walked out of the conference, refusing all offers to join a British alliance.

The Albany Conference did adopt [Benjamin Franklin’s Plan of Union](#), which proposed that Indian affairs, western settlement, and other items of mutual interest be placed under the authority of “one general government” for the colonies, consisting of a president-general appointed and supported by the Crown, and a Grand Council, a legislative body empowered to make general laws and raise money for the defense of the whole, its delegates chosen by the several colonial legislatures, the seats allocated by population and wealth. Franklin, who had been appointed by the British government as deputy postmaster general for all of British North America and charged with improving intercolonial communication and commerce, had become extremely sensitive to the need for cooperation among the colonies. British authorities were suspicious of the plan, fearing it would create a very powerful entity that they might not be able to control. They had nothing to worry about, for fearing the loss of their autonomy, the colonial assemblies rejected the Albany Plan of Union. As one British official noted, each colony had “a distinct government, wholly independent of the rest, pursuing its own interest and subject to no general command.”

**Colonial Aims and Indian Interests**

The absence of cooperation among the colonies in North America would prove to be one of the greatest weaknesses of the British Empire, because the ensuing war would be fought at a number of widespread locations and required the coordination of command. There were three principal flash points of conflict in North America. The first was along the northern Atlantic coast. In 1713, France had ceded to Britain its colony of Acadia (which the British renamed Nova Scotia), but France then built the fortress of Louisburg, from which it guarded its fishing grounds and the St. Lawrence approach to New France. New Englanders had captured this prize in 1745 during King George’s War, but the French then reclaimed it upon the settlement of that conflict in 1748. They subsequently reinforced Louisburg to such an extent that it became known as the Gibraltar of the New World.

A second zone of conflict was the border region between New France and New York, from Niagara Falls to Lake Champlain, where Canadians and New Yorkers were in furious competition for the Indian trade. Unable to compete effectively against superior English goods, the French resorted to armed might, constructing fortifications on Lake George and reinforcing their base at Niagara. In this zone, the strategic advantage was held by the Iroquois Confederacy.

It was the Ohio country—the trans-Appalachian region along the Ohio River—that became the primary focus of British and French attention. This rich land was a
prime target of British backcountry settlers and frontier land speculators. The French worried that their isolated settlements would be overrun by the expanding British population and that the loss of the Ohio River would threaten their entire Mississippi trading empire. To reinforce their claims, in 1749, the French sent a heavily armed force down the Ohio River to ward off the British, and in 1752, supported by their northern Indian allies, they expelled a large number of British traders from the region. To prevent the British from returning to the west, they began the next year to construct a series of forts running south from Lake Erie to the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, the site known as the Forks of the Ohio River.

The French “have stripped us of more than nine parts in ten of North America,” one British official cried, “and left us only a skirt of coast along the Atlantic shore.” In preparation for a general war, the British established the port of Halifax in Nova Scotia as a counter to Louisburg. In northern New York, they strengthened existing forts and constructed new ones. Finally, the British king decided to directly challenge the French claim to the upper Ohio Valley. He conferred an enormous grant of land on the Ohio Company, organized by Virginia and London capitalists, and the company made plans to build a fort at the Forks of the Ohio River.

The impending conflict involved more than the competing colonial powers, however, for the Indian peoples of the interior had interests of their own. In addition to its native inhabitants, the Ohio country had become a refuge for Indian peoples who had fled the Northeast—Delawares, Shawnees, Hurons, and Iroquois among them. Most of the Ohio Indians opposed the British and were anxious to preserve the Appalachians as a barrier to westward expansion. They were also disturbed by the French movement into their country. The French outposts, however, unlike those of the British, did not become centers of expanding agricultural settlements.

The Iroquois Confederacy as a whole sought to play off one European power against the other, to its own advantage. In the South, the Creeks carved out a similar role for themselves among the British, the French in Louisiana, and the Spanish in Florida. The Cherokees and Choctaws attempted, less successfully, to do the same. It was in the interests of these Indian tribes, in other words, to perpetuate the existing colonial stalemate. Their position would be greatly undermined by an overwhelming victory for either side.

**Frontier Warfare**

At the Albany Congress, the delegates received news that Colonel George Washington, a young militia officer sent by the governor of Virginia to expel the French from the region granted to the Ohio Company, had been forced to surrender his troops to a French force near the headwaters of the Monongahela River. The Canadians now commanded the interior country from their base at Fort Duquesne, which they had built at the Forks of the Ohio.

Taking up the challenge, the British government dispatched two Irish regiments under General Edward Braddock across the Atlantic in 1755 to attack and capture Fort Duquesne. Meanwhile, colonial militias (the equivalent of today’s National Guard) commanded by colonial officers were to strike at the New York frontier and the North Atlantic coast. An army of New England militiamen succeeded in capturing two French forts on the border of Nova Scotia, but the other two prongs of the campaign were failures. The offensive in New York was repulsed. And in the worst defeat of a British army during the eighteenth century, Braddock’s force was destroyed by a smaller number of French and Indians on the upper Ohio, and Braddock himself was killed.

Braddock’s defeat was followed by the outbreak of full-scale warfare between Britain and France in 1756 (see Map 6-1). Known as the Seven Years’ War in Europe,
Indian trade was vital to both the English and French. The Indians, however, realized this and utilized it to their advantage. The Indians disliked both European powers and sought to play one against the other, to its own advantage. The French suffered a major defeat at Oswego on Lake Ontario, thereby preventing the Canadians from resupplying their western posts. Indian allies, encouraged by British promises, abandoned the French alliance and France was forced to give up Fort Duquesne, a large British force took control of this strategic post at the Forks of the Ohio River. The last of the French forts on the New York frontier fell in 1759.

**Map 6-1**

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**French and Indian War** The last of the Anglo-French colonial wars (1754–1763) and the first in which fighting began in North America. The war ended with France’s defeat.

**MAP 6-1**

**The War for Empire in North America, 1754–1763** The Seven Years’ War in America (also known as the French and Indian War) was fought in three principal areas: Nova Scotia and what was then Acadia, the frontier between New France and New York, and the upper Ohio River—gateway to the Old Northwest.

**HOW DID** the Indian trade affect the war? Which military defeats dealt the worst blows to the French?

in North America it came to be called the **French and Indian War**. The fighting of 1756 and 1757 was a near catastrophe for Great Britain. Canadians captured the British forts in northern New York. Indians pounded backcountry settlements, killed thousands of settlers, and raided deep into the coastal colonies, throwing British colonists into panic. The absence of colonial cooperation greatly hampered the British attempt to mount a counterattack. When British commanders tried to exert direct control over provincial troops in order to coordinate their strategy, they succeeded only in angering local authorities.

In this climate of defeat, the British adopted a harsh policy of retribution against the French-speaking farmers of Acadia, who had lived peacefully under British rule for over forty years. The Acadians’ refusal to bear arms in defense of the British crown was now used as an excuse for their expulsion. In the fall of 1755, troops from New England began the forcible removal of approximately 18,000 Acadians, selling their farms at bargain prices to immigrants from New England. Suffering terrible
hardship and heartbreak, the Acadians were dispersed throughout the Atlantic world, a substantial number of them ending up in Louisiana, then under Spanish control, where they became known as “Cajuns.” The Acadian expulsion is one of the most infamous chapters in the British imperial record in North America.

**The Conquest of Canada**

In the darkest days of 1757, William Pitt, an enthusiastic advocate of British expansion, became prime minister of Great Britain. “I know that I can save this country,” Pitt declared, “and that no one else can.” Deciding that the global war could be won in North America, he subsidized the Prussians to fight the war in Europe, and reserved his own forces and resources for naval and colonial operations. Pitt committed the British to the conquest of Canada and the elimination of all French competition in North America. Such a goal could be achieved only with a tremendous outpouring of men and money. By promising that the war would be fought “at His Majesty’s expense,” Pitt was able to buy colonial cooperation. A massive infusion of British currency and credit greatly stimulated the North American economy. Pitt dispatched over 20,000 regular British troops across the Atlantic. Combining them with colonial forces, he massed over 50,000 armed men against Canada.

The British attracted Indian support for their plans by “redressing the grievances complained of by the Indians, with respect to the lands which have been fraudulently taken from them,” in the words of a British official. In 1758, officials promised the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ohio Indians that the crown would “agree upon clear and fixed boundaries between our settlements and their hunting grounds, so
that each party may know their own and be a mutual protection to each other of their respective possessions.”

Thus did Pitt succeed in reversing the course of the war. Regular and provincial forces captured Louisburg in July 1758, setting the stage for the penetration of the St. Lawrence Valley. A month later, a force of New Englanders captured the strategic French fort at Oswego on Lake Ontario, thereby preventing the Canadians from resupplying their western posts. Encouraged by British promises, many Indian tribes abandoned the French alliance. The French were forced to give up Fort Duquesne, and a large British force took control of this strategic post at the Forks of the Ohio, renaming it Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh today) in honor of the prime minister. “Blessed be God,” wrote a Boston editor. “The long looked for day is arrived that has now fixed us on the banks of the Ohio.” The last of the French forts on the New York frontier fell in 1759. In the South, regular and provincial British troops invaded the homeland of the Cherokees and crushed them.

British forces now converged on Quebec, the heart of French Canada. In the summer of 1759, British troops—responding to General James Wolfe’s order to “burn and lay waste the country”—plundered farms and shelled the city of Quebec. Finally, in an epic battle fought on the Plains of Abraham before the city walls, more than 2,000 British, French, American, and Canadian men lost their lives, including both Wolfe and the French commander, the Marquis de Montcalm. The British army prevailed and Quebec fell. The conquest of Montreal the next year marked the final destruction of the French empire in America.

In the final two years of the war, the British swept French ships from the seas, invaded Havana and conquered Cuba, took possession of several other important Spanish and French colonies in the Caribbean, achieved dominance in India, and even captured the Spanish Philippines. In the Treaty of Paris, signed in 1763, France lost all its possessions on the North American mainland. It ceded its claims east of the Mississippi to Great Britain, with the exception of New Orleans. That town, along with the other French trans-Mississippi claims, passed to Spain. For its part, in exchange for the return of all its Caribbean and Pacific colonies, Spain ceded Florida to Britain. The imperial rivalry in eastern North America that had begun in the sixteenth century now came to an end with complete victory for the British Empire (see Map 6-2 on page 172).

The Struggle for the West

When the Ohio Indians heard of the French cession of the western country to Britain, they were shocked. “The French had no right to give away [our] country,” they told a British trader. They were “never conquered by any nation.” A new set of British policies soon shocked them all the more. Both the French and the British had long used gift-giving as a way of gaining favor with Indians. The Spanish officials who replaced the French in Louisiana made an effort to continue the old policy. But the British military governor of the western region, General Jeffery Amherst, in one of his first official actions, banned presents to Indian chiefs and tribes, demanding that they learn to live without “charity.” Not only were Indians angered by Amherst’s reversal of custom, but they were also frustrated by his refusal to supply them with the ammunition they required for hunting. Many were left starving.

In this climate, hundreds of Ohio Indians became disciples of an Indian visionary named Neolin (“The Enlightened One” in Algonquian), known to the English as the Delaware Prophet. The core of Neolin’s teaching was that Indians had been corrupted by European ways and needed to purify themselves by returning to their traditions and preparing for a holy war. “Drive them out,” he declared of the settlers.
A confederacy of tribes organized by chiefs who had gained influence by adopting Neolin’s ideas laid plans for a coordinated attack on British frontier posts in the spring of 1763. The principal leader of the resistance was the Ottawa chief Pontiac, renowned as an orator and political leader. “We tell you now,” Pontiac declared to British officials, “the French never conquered us, neither did they purchase a foot of our Country, nor have they a right to give it to you.”

In May 1763, the Indian confederacy simultaneously attacked all the British forts in the West. Warriors, in a surprise attack, overran Fort Michilimackinac, at the narrows between Lakes Michigan and Huron, by scrambling through the gates supposedly in pursuit of a lacrosse ball, cheered on by unsuspecting soldiers. In raids throughout the backcountry, Indians killed more than 2,000 settlers. At Fort Pitt, General Amherst proposed that his officers “send the smallpox among the disaffected tribes” by distributing infected blankets from the fort’s hospital. This early instance of germ warfare resulted in an epidemic that spread from the Delawares and Shawnees to the southern Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, killing hundreds of people. Although they sacked and burned eight British posts, the Indians failed to take the key forts of Niagara, Detroit, and Pitt. Pontiac and his followers fought on for another year, but most of the Indians sued for peace, fearing the destruction of their villages. The British came to terms because they knew they could not overwhelm the Indian peoples. What became known as Pontiac’s Rebellion thus ended in stalemate.

Even before the uprising, the British had been at work on a policy they hoped would help to resolve frontier tensions. In the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the British government set aside the region west of the crest of the Appalachian Mountains as
“Indian Country.” It was “essential to our interest,” the Proclamation declared, “that the several nations or tribes of Indians with whom we are connected, and who live under our protection, should not be molested or disturbed.” The specific authorization of the crown would be required for any purchase of these protected Indian lands.

Colonists had expected that the removal of the French threat would allow them to move unencumbered into the West, regardless of the wishes of the Indian inhabitants. They could not understand why the British would award territory to Indian enemies who had killed more than 4,000 settlers during the previous war. In an act emblematic of the anger backcountry settlers felt about these restrictions, a mob of Pennsylvanians known as the Paxton Boys butchered twenty Indian men, women, and children at the small village of Conestoga on the Susquehanna River in December 1763. When colonial authorities moved to arrest them, 600 frontiersmen marched into Philadelphia in protest. Negotiations led by Benjamin Franklin helped to prevent a bloody confrontation.

In fact, the British proved unable and ultimately unwilling to prevent the westward migration that was a dynamic part of the colonization of British North America. Within a few years of the war, New Englanders by the thousands were moving into the northern Green Mountain district known as Vermont. In the middle colonies, New York settlers pushed ever closer to the homeland of the Iroquois, while others settled within the protective radius of Fort Pitt in western Pennsylvania. Hunters, stock
herders, and farmers crossed over the first range of the Appalachians in Virginia and North Carolina, planting pioneer communities in what are now West Virginia and eastern Tennessee.

Moreover, the press of population growth and economic development turned the attention of investors and land speculators to the area west of the Appalachians. In response to demands by settlers and speculators, British authorities were soon pressing the Iroquois and Cherokees for cessions of land in Indian Country. No longer able to play off rival colonial powers, Indians were reduced to a choice between compliance and resistance. Weakened by the recent war, they chose to sign away lands. In the Treaty of Hard Labor in 1768, the Cherokees ceded a vast tract on the waters of the upper Tennessee River, where British settlers had already planted communities. In the Treaty of Fort Stanwix of the same year, the Iroquois gave up their claim to the Ohio Valley, hoping thereby to deflect English settlement away from their own homeland.

The individual colonies were even more aggressive. Locked in a dispute with Pennsylvania about jurisdiction in the Ohio country, in 1773, Virginia governor John Murray, Earl of Dunmore, sent a force to occupy Fort Pitt. In 1774, in an attempt to gain legitimacy for his dispute with Pennsylvania, Dunmore provoked a frontier war with the Shawnees. After defeating them, he forced their cession of the upper Ohio River Valley to Virginia. The Iroquois and Ohio Indians angrily complained about the outcome of what came to be known as Dunmore’s War. The English king, they argued, had guaranteed that the boundary between colonial and Indian land “should forever after be looked upon as a barrier between us.” But the Americans “entirely disregard, and despise the settlement agreed upon by their superiors and us.” They “are come in vast numbers to the Ohio, and [give] our people to understand that they would settle wherever they pleased. If this is the case, we must look upon every engagement you made with us as void and of no effect.” This continuing struggle for the West would be an important issue in the coming American Revolution.

The Imperial Crisis in British North America

No colonial power of the mid-eighteenth century could match Britain in projecting imperial power over the face of the globe. During the years following its victory in the Seven Years’ War, Britain turned confidently to the reorganization of its North American empire. This new colonial policy plunged British authorities into a new and ultimately more threatening conflict with the colonists, who had begun to develop a sense of a separate identity.

The Emergence of American Nationalism

Despite the anger of frontier settlers over the Proclamation of 1763, the conclusion of the Seven Years’ War had left most colonists proud of their place in the British empire. But during the war, many had begun to note important contrasts between themselves and the mother country. The soldiers of the British army, for example, shocked Americans with their profane, lewd, and violent behavior. But the colonists were equally shocked by the swift and terrible punishment that aristocratic officers used to keep these soldiers in line. Those who had witnessed such savage punishments found it easy to believe in the threat of Britain enslaving American colonists.

Colonial forces, by contrast, were composed of volunteer companies. Officers tempered their administration of punishment, knowing they had to maintain the
enthusiasm of their troops. Discipline thus fell considerably below the standards to which British officers were accustomed. “Riff-raff,” one British general said of the colonials, “the lowest dregs of the people, both officers and men.” For their part, many colonial officers believed that the British ignored the important role the Americans had played in the Seven Years’ War. Massachusetts, for example, lost between 1,500 and 2,000 fighting men. This mutual suspicion and hostility was often expressed in name calling: British soldiers called New Englanders “Yankees,” while colonists heckled the red-coated British with taunts of “Lobster.” It was during the war that many colonists began to see themselves as distinct from the British.

The Seven Years’ War also strengthened a sense of identity among the colonies. Farmers who never before had ventured outside the communities of their birth fought in distant regions with men like themselves from other colonies. Such experiences reinforced a developing nationalist perspective. From 1735 to 1775, while trade with Britain doubled, commerce among the colonies increased by a factor of four. People and ideas moved along with goods. The first stage lines linking seaboard cities began operation in the 1750s. Spurred by Postmaster Benjamin Franklin, many colonies built or improved post roads for transporting the mails.

**The Press, Politics, and Republicanism**

One of the most important means of intercolonial communication was the weekly newspaper. Early in the eighteenth century, the colonial press functioned as a mouthpiece for the government. Editors who criticized public officials could land in jail. In 1735, New York City editor John Peter Zenger was indicted for seditious libel after printing antigovernment articles. But as it turned out, the case provided the precedent for greater freedom of the press. “Shall the press be silenced that evil governors may have their way?” Zenger’s attorney asked the jury. “The question before the court is not the cause of a poor printer,” he declared, but the cause “of every free man that lives under a British government on the main of America.” Zenger was acquitted. By 1760, more than twenty highly opinionated weekly newspapers circulated in the British colonies, and according to one estimate, a quarter of all male colonists were regular readers.

The midcentury American press focused increasingly on intercolonial affairs. One study of colonial newspapers indicates that intercolonial coverage increased sixfold over the four decades preceding the Revolution. Editors of local papers increasingly looked at events from what they called a “continental” perspective. This trend accelerated during the Seven Years’ War, when communities demanded coverage of events in distant colonies where their men might be fighting. During these years the British colonists of North America first began to use the term “American” to denote their common identity. More than any previous event, the Seven Years’ War promoted a new spirit of nationalism and a wider notion of community. This was the social base of the political community later forged at the First Continental Congress.

The pages of the colonial press reveal the political assumptions held by informed colonists. For decades governors had struggled with colonial assemblies over their respective powers. As commentary on the meaning of these struggles, colonial editors often reprinted the writings of the radical Whigs of eighteenth-century England, pamphleteers such as John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, political theorists such as James Franklin began publishing *The New-England Courant* in Boston in 1721. When Franklin criticized the government, he was jailed, and the paper continued under the editorship of his brother Benjamin. *The Courant* ceased publication in 1726, and the Franklin brothers went on to other papers—James to *The Rhode Island State Gazette*, Benjamin to *The Pennsylvania Gazette* in Philadelphia. Before the Zenger case in 1735, few editors dared to challenge the government.


**Whigs** The name used by advocates of colonial resistance to British measures during the 1760s and 1770s.
as John Locke, and essayists such as Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift. They warned of the growing threat to liberty posed by the unchecked exercise of power. In their more emotional writings they argued that a conspiracy existed among the powerful—kings, aristocrats, and Catholics—to quash liberty and institute tyranny. Outside the mainstream of British political opinion, these ideas came to define the political consensus in the British colonies, a point of view called “republicanism.”

Republicanism declared that the truly just society provided the greatest possible liberty to individuals. As the power of the state, by its very nature, was antithetical to liberty, it had to be limited. John Locke argued that the authority of a ruler should be conditional rather than absolute and that the people had the inherent right to select their own form of governance and to withdraw their support if the government did not fulfill its trust. The best guarantee of good government, then, was the broad distribution of power to the people, who would not only select their own leaders but vote them out as well. In this view, republican government depended on the virtue of the people, their willingness to make the health and stability of the political community their first priority, and was possible only for an “independent” population that controlled its own affairs. As Thomas Jefferson once wrote, “. . . dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition.” Individual ownership of property, especially land, he argued, was the foundation of an independent and virtuous people.

This was a political theory that fit the circumstances of American life, with its wide base of property ownership, its tradition of representative assemblies, and its history of struggle with royal authority. Contrast the assumptions of republicans with those of British monarchists, who argued that the good society was one in which a strong state, controlled by a hereditary elite, kept a vicious and unruly people in line.

**The Sugar and Stamp Acts**

The emerging sense of American political identity was soon tested by British measures designed to raise revenues in the colonies. To quell Indian uprisings and stifle discontent among the French and Spanish populations of Quebec and Florida, 10,000 British troops remained stationed in North America at the conclusion of the Seven Years’ War. The cost of maintaining this force added to the enormous debt Britain had run up during the fighting and created a desperate need for additional revenues. In 1764, Chancellor of the Exchequer George Grenville, deciding to obtain the needed revenue from America, pushed through Parliament a measure known as the Sugar Act.

The **Sugar Act** placed a duty on sugar imported into the colonies and revitalized the customs service, introducing stricter registration procedures for ships and adding more officers. In fact, the duty was significantly less than the one that had been on the books and ignored for years, but the difference was that the British now intended to enforce it. In anticipation of American resistance, the legislation increased the jurisdiction of the vice-admiralty court at Halifax, where customs cases were heard. These courts were hated because there was no presumption of innocence and the accused had no right to a jury trial. These new regulations promised not only to squeeze the incomes of American merchants but also to cut off their lucrative smuggling operations. Moreover, colonial taxes, which had been raised during the war, remained at an all-time high. In many cities, merchants as well as artisans protested loudly. Boston was especially vocal: in response to the sugar tax, the town meeting proposed a boycott of certain English imports. This movement for nonimportation soon spread to other port towns.

James Otis Jr., a Massachusetts lawyer fond of grand oratory, was one of the first Americans to strike a number of themes that would become familiar over the next
fifteen years. A man’s “right to his life, his liberty, his property” was “written on the heart, and revealed to him by his maker,” he argued in language echoing the rhetoric of the Great Awakening. It was “inherent, inalienable, and indefeasible by any laws, pacts, contracts, covenants, or stipulations which man could devise.” He declared that “an act against the Constitution is void.” There could be “no taxation without representation.”

But it was only fair, Grenville argued in return, that the colonists help pay the costs of the empire, and what better way to do so than by a tax? Taxes in the colonies were much lower than taxes at home. In early 1765, unswayed by American protests, he followed the Sugar Act with a second and considerably more sweeping revenue measure, the Stamp Act. This tax required the purchase of specially embossed paper for all newspapers, legal documents, licenses, insurance policies, ship’s papers, and even dice and playing cards.

The Stamp Act Crisis

During the summer and autumn of 1765, the American reaction to the Stamp Act created a crisis of unprecedented proportions. The stamp tax had to be paid in hard money, and it came during a period of economic stagnation. Many colonists complained of being “miserably burdened and oppressed with taxes.”

Of more importance for the longer term, however, were the constitutional implications. Although colonial male property owners elected their own assemblies, they did not vote in British elections. But the British argued that Americans were subject to the acts of Parliament because of “virtual representation.” That is, members of Parliament were thought to represent not just their districts, but all citizens of the empire. As one British writer put it, the colonists were “represented in Parliament in the same manner as those inhabitants of Britain are who have not voices in elections.” But in an influential pamphlet of 1765, Considerations on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes, Maryland lawyer Daniel Dulany rejected this theory. Because Americans were members of a separate political community, he insisted, Parliament could impose no tax on them. Instead, he argued for “actual representation,” emphasizing the direct relationship that must exist between the people and their political representatives.

It was just such constitutional issues that were emphasized in the Virginia Stamp Act Resolutions, pushed through the Virginia assembly by the passionate young lawyer Patrick Henry in May 1765. Although the Virginia House of Burgesses rejected the most radical of Henry’s resolutions, they were all reprinted throughout the colonies. By the end of 1765, the assemblies of eight other colonies had approved similar measures denouncing the Stamp Act and proclaiming their support of “no taxation without representation.”

In Massachusetts, the leaders of the opposition to the Stamp Act came from a group of upper- and middle-class men who had long opposed the conservative leaders of the colony. These men had worked years to establish a political alliance with Boston craftsmen and workers who met at taverns, in volunteer fire companies, or at social clubs. One of these clubs, known as the Loyall Nine, included a member named Samuel Adams, an associate and friend of James Otis, who had made his career in local politics. Using his contacts with professionals, craftsmen, and laboring men, Adams helped put together an anti-British alliance that spanned Boston’s social classes. In August 1765, Adams and the Loyall Nine were instrumental in organizing a protest of Boston workingmen against the Stamp Act.

Stamp Act Law passed by Parliament in 1765 to raise revenue in America by requiring taxed, stamped paper for legal documents, publications, and playing cards.

Virtual representation The notion that parliamentary members represented the interests of the nation as a whole, not those of the particular district that elected them.

Actual representation The practice whereby elected representatives normally reside in their districts and are directly responsive to local interests.
Whereas Boston’s elite had prospered during the eighteenth century, the conditions for workers and the poor had worsened. Unemployment, inflation, and high taxes had greatly increased the level of poverty during the depression that followed the Seven Years’ War, and many were resentful. A large Boston crowd assembled on August 14, 1765, in the shade of an old elm tree (soon known as the “Liberty Tree”) and strung up effigies of several British officials, including Boston’s stamp distributor, Andrew Oliver. The crowd then vandalized Oliver’s office and home. At the order of Oliver’s brother-in-law, Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson, leader of the Massachusetts conservatives, the town sheriff tried to break up the crowd, but he was pelted with paving stones and bricks. Soon thereafter, Oliver resigned his commission. The unified action of Boston’s social groups had had its intended effect.

Twelve days later, however, a similar crowd gathered at the aristocratic home of Hutchinson himself. As the family fled through the back door, the crowd smashed through the front with axes. Inside they demolished furniture, chopped down the interior walls, consumed the contents of the wine cellar, and looted everything of value, leaving the house a mere shell. As these events demonstrated, it was not always possible to keep popular protests within bounds. During the fall and winter, urban crowds in commercial towns from Halifax in the North to Savannah in the South forced the resignation of many British tax officials (see Map 6-3).

In many colonial cities and towns, groups of merchants, lawyers, and craftsmen sought to moderate the resistance movement by seizing control of it. Calling themselves the Sons of Liberty, these groups encouraged moderate forms of protest. They circulated petitions, published pamphlets, and encouraged crowd actions only as a last resort; always they emphasized limited political goals. Then in October 1765, delegations from nine colonies (New Hampshire and Georgia declined the invitation to attend, and the governors of Virginia and North Carolina prevented their delegates from accepting) met at what has been called the Stamp Act Congress in New York City, where they passed a set of resolutions denying Parliament’s right to tax the colonists, arguing that taxation required representation. They agreed to stop all importations from Britain until the offending measures were repealed. But the delegates also took a moderate stance, declaring that the colonies owed a “due subordination” to measures that fell within Parliament’s just ambit of authority. The Congress thus defused the radicals, and there were few repetitions of mob attacks, although by the end of 1765 almost all the stamp distributors had resigned or fled, making it impossible for Britain to enforce the Stamp Act.

**Repeal of the Stamp Act**

Pressed by British merchants, who worried over the effects of the growing nonimportation movement among the colonists, in March 1766, Parliament repealed the Stamp Act and reduced the duties under the Sugar Act. This news was greeted with celebrations throughout the American colonies, and the nonimportation associations were disbanded. Overlooked in the mood of optimism, however, was the fact that the repeal was coupled with a Declaratory Act, in which Parliament affirmed its full authority to make laws binding the colonies “in all cases whatsoever.” The notion of absolute parliamentary supremacy over colonial matters was basic to the British theory of empire. Even Pitt, friend of America that he was, asserted “the authority of this kingdom over the
colonies to be sovereign and supreme, in every circumstance of government and legislation whatsoever." The Declaratory Act signaled that the conflict had not been resolved but merely postponed.

**“SAVE YOUR MONEY AND SAVE YOUR COUNTRY”**

Colonial resistance to the Stamp Act was stronger in urban than in rural communities, stronger among merchants, craftsmen, and planters than among farmers and frontiersmen. When Parliament next moved to impose its will, as it had promised to do in the Declaratory Act, imposing new duties on imported goods, the American opposition again adopted the tactic of nonimportation. But this time resistance spread from the cities and towns into the countryside. As the editor of the *Boston Gazette* phrased the issue, “Save your money and you save your country.” It became the slogan of the movement.

**The Townshend Revenue Acts**

During the 1760s, there was a rapid turnover of government leaders that made it difficult for Britain to form a consistent and even-handed policy toward the colonies. In 1767, after several failed governments, King George III asked William Pitt to again become prime minister. Pitt enjoyed enormous goodwill in America, and a government under his leadership stood a good chance of reclaiming colonial credibility. But, suffering from a prolonged illness, he was soon forced to retire, and his place as head of the cabinet was assumed by Charles Townshend, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

One of the first problems facing the new government was the national debt. England suffered massive unemployment, riots over high prices, and tax protests. The large landowners forced a bill through Parliament slashing their taxes by 25 percent. The Townshend government feared unrest at home far more than opposition in America. So as part of his plan to close the budget gap, in June 1767, Townshend proposed a new revenue measure for the colonies that placed import duties on commodities such as lead, glass, paint, paper, and tea. By means of these new Revenue Acts, Townshend hoped to redress colonial grievances against internal taxes such as those imposed by the Stamp Act. For most colonists, however, it proved to be a distinction without a difference.

The most influential colonial response came in a series of articles by wealthy Philadelphia lawyer John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, that were reprinted in nearly every colonial newspaper. Posing as a humble farmer, Dickinson conceded that Parliament had the right to regulate trade through the use of duties. It could place prohibitive tariffs, for example, on foreign products. But, he argued, it had no constitutional authority to tax goods in order to raise revenues in America. As the preface to the Revenue Acts made clear, the income they produced would be used to pay the salaries of royal officials in America. Thus, Dickinson pointed out, since colonial assemblies were no longer paying their salaries, colonial administrators would not be subject to the financial oversight of elected representatives.

Other Americans warned that this was part of the British conspiracy to suppress American liberties. Their fears were reinforced by Townshend’s stringent enforcement of the Revenue Acts. He created a new and strengthened Board of Commissioners of the Customs, and established a series of vice-admiralty courts at Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston to prosecute violators of the duties—the first time those hated institutions had appeared in the most important American port cities. To demonstrate his power, he also suspended New York’s assembly. That body...
had refused to vote public funds to support the British troops garrisoned in the colony. Until the citizens of New York relented, Townshend declared, they would no longer be represented.

In response to these measures, some men argued for violent resistance. But it was Dickinson’s essays that had the greatest effect on the public debate, not only because of their convincing arguments but also because of their mild and reasonable tone. “Let us behave like dutiful children,” Dickinson urged, “who have received unmerited blows from a beloved parent.” As yet, no sentiment for independence existed in America.

**Nonimportation: An Early Political Boycott**

Associations of nonimportation and nonconsumption, revived in October 1767 when the Boston town meeting drew up a long list of British products to boycott, became the main weapon of the resistance movement. Over the next few months other port cities, including Providence, Newport, and New York, set up nonimportation associations of their own. Artisans took to the streets in towns and cities throughout the colonies to force merchants to stop importing British goods. The associations published the names of uncooperative importers and retailers. These people then became the object of protesters, who sometimes resorted to violence. Coercion was very much a part of the movement.

Adopting the language of Protestant ethics, nonimportation associations pledged to curtail luxuries and stimulate local industry. These aims had great appeal in small towns and rural districts, which previously had been uninvolved in the anti-British struggle. In 1768 and 1769, colonial newspapers paid a great deal of attention to women’s support for the boycott. Groups of women, some calling themselves Daughters of Liberty, organized spinning and weaving bees to produce homespun for local consumption. The actual work performed at these bees was less important than the symbolic message. “The industry and frugality of American ladies,” wrote the editor of the *Boston Evening Post*, “are contributing to bring about the political salvation of a whole continent.” Other women renounced silks and satins and pledged to stop serving tea to their husbands. Nonimportation appealed to the traditional values of rural communities—self-sufficiency and independence—and for the first time brought country people into the growing community of resistance.

Nonimportation was greatly strengthened in May 1769 when the Virginia House of Burgesses enacted the first provincial legislation banning the importation of goods enumerated in the Townshend Acts, and slaves and luxury commodities as well. Over the next few months, all the colonies but New Hampshire enacted similar associations. Because of these efforts, the value of colonial imports from Britain declined by 41 percent.

**The Massachusetts Circular Letter**

Boston and Massachusetts were at the center of the agitation over the Townshend Revenue Acts. In February 1768, the Massachusetts House of Representatives approved a letter, drawn up by Samuel Adams, addressed to the speakers of the other provincial assemblies. Designed largely as a propaganda device and having little practical significance, the letter denounced the Townshend Revenue Acts, attacked the British plan to make royal officials independent of colonial assemblies, and urged the colonies

This British cartoon, *A Society of Patriotic Ladies*, ridiculed the efforts of American women to support the Patriot cause by boycotting tea. The moderator of the meeting appears coarse and masculine, while an attractive scribe is swayed by the amorous attention of a gentleman. The activities under the table suggest that these women are neglecting their true duty.

**QUICK REVIEW**

- Sugar Act followed by more sweeping revenue measure, the Stamp Act.
- Response to Stamp Act overwhelming and intense.

Class Discussion Question 6.4
to find a way to “harmonize with each other.” Massachusetts governor Francis Bernard condemned the document for stirring up rebellion and dissolved the legislature. In Britain, Lord Hillsborough, secretary of state for the colonies, ordered each royal governor in America to likewise dissolve his colony’s assembly if it should endorse the letter. Before this demand reached America, the assemblies of New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Connecticut had commended Massachusetts. Virginia, moreover, had issued a circular letter encouraging a “hearty union” among the colonies and urging common action against the British measures that “have an immediate tendency to enslave us.”

Throughout this crisis there were rumors and threats of mob rule in Boston. Because customs agents enforced the law against smugglers and honest traders alike, they enraged merchants, seamen, and dockworkers. In June 1768, a crowd assaulted customs officials who had seized John Hancock’s sloop Liberty for nonpayment of duties. So frightened were the officials that they fled the city. Hancock, reportedly the wealthiest merchant in the colonies and a vocal opponent of the British measures, had become a principal target of the customs officers. In September the Boston town meeting called on the people to arm themselves, and in the absence of an elected assembly it invited all the other towns to send delegates to a provincial convention. There were threats of armed resistance, but little support for it in the convention, which broke up in chaos. Nevertheless the British, fearing insurrection, occupied Boston with infantry and artillery regiments on October 1, 1768. With this action, they sacrificed a great deal of good will and respect and added greatly to the growing tensions.

**The Politics of Revolt and the Boston Massacre**

The British troops stationed in the colonies were the object of scorn and hostility over the next two years. There were regular conflicts between soldiers and radicals in New York City, often focusing on the Sons of Liberty. These men would erect “liberty poles” festooned with banners and flags proclaiming their cause, and the British troops would promptly destroy them. When the New York assembly finally bowed to Townshend in December 1769 and voted an appropriation to support the troops, the New York City Sons of Liberty organized a demonstration and erected a large liberty pole. The soldiers chopped it down, sawed it into pieces, and left the wood on the steps of a tavern frequented by the Sons. This led to a riot in which British troops used their bayonets against hundreds of New Yorkers armed with cutlasses and clubs. Several men were wounded.

Confrontations also took place in Boston. Sam Adams played up reports and rumors of soldiers harassing women, picking fights, or simply taunting residents with versions of “Yankee Doodle.” Soldiers were often hauled into Boston’s courts, and local judges adopted a completely unfriendly attitude toward these members of the occupying army. In February 1770, an eleven-year-old boy was killed when a customs officer opened
fire on a rock-throwing crowd. Although no soldiers were involved, this incident heightened the tensions between citizens and troops.

A persistent source of conflict was the competition between troops and townspeople over jobs. Soldiers were permitted to work when off duty, putting them in competition with day laborers. In early March 1770, an off-duty soldier walked into a ropewalk (a long narrow building in which ropes are made) in search of a job. Instead of receiving an offer for work, he was rudely rejected and sent away. The soldier left but returned with his friends, and a small riot ensued. Fighting continued over the next few days in the streets between the wharf and the Common, where the soldiers were encamped. On the evening of March 5, 1770, a crowd gathered at the Customs House and began taunting a guard, calling him a “damned rascally scoundrel lobster” and worse. A captain and seven soldiers went to his rescue, only to be pelted with snowballs and stones. Suddenly, without orders, the frightened soldiers began to fire. Five of the crowd fell dead, and six more were wounded, two of these dying later. The first blood shed was that of Crispus Attucks, whose mother was Indian and father was African American. The soldiers escaped to their barracks, but a mob numbering in the hundreds rampaged through the streets demanding vengeance. Fearing for the safety of his men and the security of the state, Thomas Hutchinson, now governor of Massachusetts, ordered British troops out of Boston. The Boston Massacre became infamous throughout the colonies, in part because of the circulation of an inflammatory print produced by the Boston engraver Paul Revere, which depicted the British as firing on a crowd of resisting civilians. But for many colonists, the incident was a disturbing reminder of the extent to which relations with the mother country had deteriorated. During the next two years, many people found themselves pulling back from the brink. “There seems,” one Bostonian wrote, “to be a pause in politics.”

The growth of American resistance was slowed as well by the news that Parliament had repealed most of the Townshend Revenue Acts on March 5, 1770—the same day as the Boston Massacre. In the climate of apprehension and confusion, there were few celebrations of the repeal, and the nonimportation associations almost immediately collapsed. Over the next three years, the value of British imports rose by 80 percent. The parliamentary retreat on the question of duties, like the earlier repeal of the Stamp Act, was accompanied by a face-saving measure—retention of the tax on tea “as a mark of the supremacy of Parliament,” in the words of Frederick Lord North, the new prime minister.

**From Resistance to Rebellion**

There was a lull in the American controversy during the early 1770s, but the situation turned violent in 1773, when Parliament again infuriated the Americans. This time it was an ill-advised Tea Act, and it propelled the colonists onto a swift track from resistance to outright rebellion.

**Intercolonial Cooperation**

In June 1772, Governor Hutchinson inaugurated another controversy by announcing that henceforth his salary and those of other royally appointed Massachusetts officials would be paid by the crown. In effect, this made the executive and judiciary branches of the colony’s government independent of elected representatives. In October, the Boston town meeting appointed a Committee of Correspondence to communicate with other towns regarding this challenge. The next month, the
meeting issued what became known as the *Boston Pamphlet*, a series of declarations written by Samuel Adams and other radicals, concluding that British encroachments on colonial rights pointed to a plot to enslave Americans.

In March 1773, the Virginia House of Burgesses appointed a standing committee for correspondence among the colonies “to obtain the most early and authentic intelligence” of British actions affecting America, “and to keep up and maintain a correspondence and communication with our sister colonies.” The Virginia committee, including Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, and young Thomas Jefferson, served as a model, and within a year all the colonies except Pennsylvania, where conservatives controlled the legislature, had created committees of their own. These committees became the principal channel for sharing information, shaping public opinion, and building cooperation among the colonies before the Continental Congress of 1774.

The information most damaging to British influence came from the radicals in Boston. In June 1773, the Boston committee obtained from Benjamin Franklin in London a set of letters Hutchinson had sent to the ministry. The letters had come to Franklin anonymously, and to protect himself he asked that the committee keep them private, but they were soon published in the local press, resulting in Franklin’s dismissal from his position as colonial postmaster general. But the British cause in the colonies suffered much more than Franklin’s reputation. The letters revealed Hutchinson’s call for “an abridgment of what are called English liberties” in the colonies. “I wish to see some further restraint of liberty,” he had written, “rather than the connection with the parent state should be broken.” This statement seemed to be the “smoking gun” of the conspiracy theory, and it created a torrent of anger against the British and their officials in the colonies.

**The Boston Tea Party**

It was in this context that the colonists received the news that Parliament had passed a Tea Act. Colonists were major consumers of tea, but because of the tax on it that remained from the Townshend duties, the market for colonial tea had collapsed, bringing the East India Company to the brink of bankruptcy. This company was the sole agent of British power in India, and Parliament could not allow it to fail. The British therefore devised a scheme in which they offered tea to Americans at prices that would tempt the most patriotic tea drinker. The radicals argued that this was merely a device to make palatable the payment of unconstitutional taxes—further evidence of the British effort to corrupt the colonists. In October, a mass meeting in Philadelphia denounced anyone importing the tea as “an enemy of his country.” The town meeting in Boston passed resolutions patterned on those of Philadelphia, but the tea agents there, including two of Governor Hutchinson’s sons, resisted the call to refuse the shipments.

The first of the tea ships arrived in Boston Harbor late in November. Mass meetings in Old South Church, which included many country people drawn to the scene of the crisis, resolved to keep the tea from being unloaded. Governor Hutchinson was equally firm in refusing to allow the ship to leave the harbor. Five thousand people on December 16, 1773, crowded into the church to hear the captain of the tea ship report to Samuel Adams that he could not move his ship. “This
meeting can do nothing more to save the country,” Adams declared. This was the signal for a disciplined group of fifty or sixty men, including farmers, artisans, merchants, professionals, and apprentices, to march to the wharf disguised as Indians. There they boarded the ship and dumped into the harbor 45 tons of tea, valued at £10,000, all the while cheered on by Boston’s citizens. “Boston Harbor’s a tea-pot tonight,” the crowd chanted.

Boston’s was the first tea party, but other incidents of property destruction soon followed. When the Sons of Liberty learned that a cargo of tea had landed secretly in New York, they followed the example of their brothers in Massachusetts, dressed themselves as Indians, and dumped the tea chests into the harbor. At Annapolis, a ship loaded with tea was destroyed by fire, and arson also consumed a shipment stored at a warehouse in New Jersey. But it was the action in Boston at which the British railed. The government became convinced that something had to be done about the rebellious colony of Massachusetts.

The Intolerable Acts

During the spring of 1774, an angry Parliament passed a series of acts—called the Coercive Acts, but known by Americans as the Intolerable Acts—that were calculated to punish Massachusetts and strengthen the British hand. The Boston Port Bill prohibited the loading or unloading of ships in any part of Boston Harbor until the town fully compensated the East India Company and the customs service for the destroyed tea. The Massachusetts Government Act annulled the colonial charter: delegates to the upper house would no longer be elected by the assembly, but henceforth were to be appointed by the king. Civil officers throughout the province were placed under the authority of the royal governor, and the selection of juries was given over to governor-appointed sheriffs. Town meetings, an important institution of the resistance movement, were prohibited from convening more than once a year except with the approval of the governor, who was to control their agendas. With these acts, the British terminated the long history of self-rule by communities in the colony of Massachusetts. The Administration of Justice Act protected British officials from colonial courts, thereby encouraging them to vigorously pursue the work of suppression. Those accused of committing capital crimes while putting down riots or collecting revenue, such as the soldiers involved in the Boston Massacre, were now to be sent to England for trial. Additional measures affected the other colonies and encouraged them to see themselves in league with suffering Massachusetts. The Quartering Act legalized the housing of troops at public expense, not only in taverns and abandoned buildings, but in occupied dwellings and private homes as well.

Finally, in the Quebec Act, the British authorized a permanent government for the territory taken from France during the Seven Years’ War (see Map 6-4 on page 184). This government was both authoritarian and anti-republican, with a royal government and an appointed council. Furthermore, the act confirmed the feudal system of land tenure along the St. Lawrence. It also granted religious toleration to the Roman Catholic Church and upheld the church’s traditional right to collect tithes, thus, in effect, establishing Catholicism as the state religion in Quebec. To the American colonists, the Quebec Act was a frightening preview of what imperial authorities might have in store for them, and it confirmed the prediction of the Committees of Correspondence that there was a British plot to destroy American liberty.

In May, General Thomas Gage arrived in Boston to replace Hutchinson as governor. The same day, the Boston town meeting called for a revival of nonimportation measures against Britain. In Virginia the Burgesses declared that Boston was enduring

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In this excerpt, George Hewes, a shoemaker, tells his account of the destruction of the tea in the Boston harbor.

There appeared to be an understanding that each individual should volunteer his services, keep his own secret, and risk the consequences for himself. No disorder took place during that transaction, and it was observed at that time, that the stillest night ensued that Boston had enjoyed for many months.

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Coercive Acts

Legislation passed by Parliament in 1774; included the Boston Port Act, the Massachusetts Government Act, the Administration of Justice Act, and the Quartering Act of 1774.

Quartering Act

Acts of Parliament requiring colonial legislatures to provide supplies and quarters for the troops stationed in America.

Quebec Act

Law passed by Parliament in 1774 that provided an appointed government for Canada, enlarged the boundaries of Quebec, and confirmed the privileges of the Catholic Church.

Committees of Correspondence

Committees formed in Massachusetts and other colonies in the pre-Revolutionary period to keep Americans informed about British measures that would affect the colonies.
a “hostile invasion” and made provision for a “day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, devoutly to implore the divine interposition for averting the heavy calamity, which threatens destruction to our civil rights and the evils of civil war.” For this expression of sympathy, Governor Dunmore suspended the legislature. Nevertheless, throughout the colony on the first of June, funeral bells tolled, flags flew at half mast, and people flocked to the churches.

**The First Continental Congress**

It was amid this crisis that town meetings and colonial assemblies alike chose representatives for the Continental Congress. The delegates who arrived in Philadelphia in September 1774 included the most important leaders of the American cause. Cousins Samuel and John Adams, the radicals from Massachusetts, were joined by Patrick Henry and George Washington from Virginia and Christopher Gadsden of South Carolina. Many of the delegates were conservatives: John Dickinson and Joseph Galloway of Philadelphia and John Jay and James Duane from New York. With the exception of Gadsden, a hothead who proposed an attack on British forces in Boston, the delegates wished to avoid war and favored a policy of economic coercion.

After one of their first debates, the delegates passed a Declaration and Resolves, in which they asserted that all the colonists sprang from a common tradition and enjoyed rights guaranteed “by the immutable laws of nature, the principles of the English constitution, and the several charters or compacts” of their provinces. Thirteen acts of Parliament, passed since 1763, were declared in violation of these rights. Until these acts were repealed, the delegates pledged, they would impose a set of sanctions against the British. These would include not only the nonimportation and nonconsumption of British goods, but also a prohibition on the export of colonial commodities to Britain or its other colonies.

To enforce these sanctions, the Continental Congress urged that “a committee be chosen in every county, city, and town, by those who are qualified to vote for representatives in the legislature, whose business it shall be attentively to observe the conduct of all persons.” This call for democratically elected local committees in each community had important political ramifications. The following year, these groups, known as Committees of Observation and Safety, took over the functions of local government throughout the colonies. They organized militia companies, called extralegal courts, and combined to form colonywide congresses or conventions. By dissolving the colonial legislatures, royal governors unwittingly aided the work of these committees. The committees also scrutinized the activities of fellow citizens, suppressed the expression of Loyalist opinion from pulpit or press, and practiced other forms of coercion. Throughout most of the colonies, the committees formed a bridge between the old colonial administrations and the revolutionary governments organized over the next few years. Committees began to link localities together in the cause of a wider American community. It was at this point that people began to refer to the colonies as the American “states.”

**LEXINGTON AND CONCORD**

On September 1, 1774, General Gage sent troops from Boston to seize the stores of cannon and ammunition the Massachusetts militia had stored at armories in Charlestown.
and Cambridge. In response, the Massachusetts House of Representatives, calling itself the Provincial Congress, created a Committee of Safety empowered to call up the militia. On October 15, the committee authorized the creation of special units, to be known as "minutemen," who stood ready to be called at a moment's notice. The armed militia of the towns and communities surrounding Boston faced the British army, quartered in the city. It was no rabble he was up against, Gage wrote to his superiors, but "the freeholders and farmers" of New England who believed they were defending their communities. Worrying that his forces were insufficient to suppress the rebellion, he requested reinforcements. The stalemate continued through the fall and winter.

But King George was convinced that the time had come for war. "The New England governments are in a state of rebellion," he wrote privately. "Blows must decide whether they are to be subject to this country or independent." In Parliament, Pitt proposed withdrawing troops from Boston, but was overruled by a large margin. Attempting to find a balance between hard-liners and advocates of conciliation, Lord North organized majority support in the House of Commons for a plan in which Parliament would "forbear" to levy taxes for purposes of revenue once the colonies had agreed to tax themselves for the common defense. But simultaneously Parliament passed legislation severely restraining colonial commerce. "A great empire and little minds go ill together," Edmund Burke quipped in March 1775 in a brilliant speech in Parliament opposing this

### OVERVIEW

#### Eleven British Measures that Led to Revolution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislation</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sugar Act</td>
<td>1764</td>
<td>Placed prohibitive duty on imported sugar; provided for greater regulation of American shipping to suppress smuggling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stamp Act</td>
<td>1765</td>
<td>Required the purchase of specially embossed paper for newspapers, legal documents, licenses, insurance policies, ships' papers, and playing cards; struck at printers, lawyers, tavern owners, and other influential colonists. Repealed in 1766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaratory Act</td>
<td>1766</td>
<td>Asserted the authority of Parliament to make laws binding the colonies “in all cases whatsoever”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townshend Revenue Acts</td>
<td>1767</td>
<td>Placed import duties, collectible before goods entered colonial markets, on many commodities including lead, glass, paper, and tea. Repealed in 1770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea Act</td>
<td>1773</td>
<td>Gave the British East India Company a monopoly on all tea imports to America, hitting at American merchants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercive or Intolerable Acts</td>
<td>1774</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Port Bill</td>
<td></td>
<td>Closed Boston Harbor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts Government Act</td>
<td></td>
<td>Annullled the Massachusetts colonial charter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administration of Justice Act</td>
<td></td>
<td>Protected British officials from colonial courts by sending them home for trial if arrested</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quartering Act</td>
<td></td>
<td>Legalized the housing of British troops in private homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec Act</td>
<td></td>
<td>Created a highly centralized government for Canada</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Map 6-4

The Quebec Act appointed an anti-republican government for Canada and confirmed the privileges of the Catholic Church, establishing Catholicism as the state religion in Quebec. By enlarging the boundaries of Quebec, the American colonists were prohibited to settle the newly acquired Ohio River Valley, land won in the French and Indian War. The American colonists were angry that they lost access to land they successfully fought a war for and saw this enlargement of Quebec as a violation of colonies sea-to-sea boundaries of many colonial charters.

**Committee of Safety** Any of the extralegal committees that directed the revolutionary movement and carried on the functions of government at the local level.

**Minutemen** Special companies of militia formed in Massachusetts and elsewhere beginning in late 1744.
“Let it be once understood that your government may be one thing and their privileges another, that these two things may exist without any mutual relation.” Then he declared in prophetic words, “The cement is gone, the cohesion is loosened, and everything hastens to decay and dissolution.”

In Virginia, at almost the same moment, Patrick Henry predicted that hostilities would soon begin in New England. “Gentlemen may cry peace, peace!—but there is no peace,” he thundered in prose later memorized by millions of American schoolchildren. “Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!” Three weeks later, on April 14, General Gage received orders to strike at once against the Massachusetts militia.

On the evening of April 18, 1775, Gage ordered 700 men to capture the store of American ammunition at the town of Concord. Learning of the operation, the Boston committee dispatched two men, Paul Revere and William Dawes, to alert the militia of the countryside. By the time the British forces had reached Lexington, midway to their destination, some seventy armed minutemen had assembled on the green in the center of town, but they were disorganized and confused. “Lay down your arms, you damned rebels, and disperse!” cried one of the British officers. The Americans began to withdraw in the face of overwhelming opposition, but they took their arms with them. “Damn you, why don’t you lay down your arms!” someone shouted from the British lines. “Damn them! We will have them!” No order to fire was given, but shots rang out, killing eight Americans and wounding ten others.

The British marched on to Concord, where they burned a small quantity of supplies and cut down a liberty pole. Meanwhile, news of the skirmish at Lexington had spread through the country, and the militia companies of communities from miles around converged on the town. Seeing smoke, they mistakenly concluded that the troops were burning homes. “Will you let them burn the town!” one man cried, and the Americans moved to the Concord bridge. There they attacked a British company, killing three soldiers—the first British casualties of the Revolution. The British immediately turned back for Boston, but were attacked by Americans at many points along the way. Reinforcements met them at Lexington, preventing a complete disaster, but by the time they finally marched into Boston, 73 were dead and 202 wounded or missing (see Map 6-5). The British troops were vastly outnumbered by the approximately 4,000 Massachusetts militiamen, who suffered 95 casualties. The engagement forecast what would be a central problem for the British: they would be forced to fight an armed population defending their own communities against outsiders.

**Deciding for Independence**

We send you momentous intelligence,” read the letter received by the Charleston, South Carolina, Committee of Correspondence on May 8, reporting the violence in Massachusetts. Community militia companies mobilized throughout the colonies. At Boston, thousands of militiamen from Massachusetts and the surrounding provinces besieged the city, leaving the British no escape but by sea; their siege would last for nearly a year. Meanwhile, delegates from twelve colonies reconverged on Philadelphia.

**The Second Continental Congress**

The members of the Second Continental Congress, which opened on May 10, 1775, represented twelve of the British colonies on the mainland of North America. From
New Hampshire to South Carolina, Committees of Observation and Safety had elected colonywide conventions, and these extralegal bodies in turn had chosen delegates. Consequently, few conservatives or Loyalists were among them. Georgia, unrepresented at the first session of the Continental Congress, remained absent at the opening of the second. The newest mainland colony, it depended heavily on British subsidies, and its leaders were cautious, fearing both slave and Indian uprisings. But in 1775, the political balance in Georgia shifted in favor of the radicals, and by the end of the summer the colony had delegates in Philadelphia.

Among the delegates at the Continental Congress were many familiar faces and a few new ones, including Thomas Jefferson, a plantation owner and lawyer from Virginia, gifted with one of the most imaginative and analytical minds of his time. All the delegates carried news of the enthusiasm for war that raged in their home provinces. “A frenzy of revenge seems to have seized all ranks of people,” said Jefferson. George Washington attended all the sessions in uniform. “Oh that I was a soldier,” an envious John Adams wrote to his wife, Abigail. The delegates agreed that defense was the first issue on their agenda.

On May 15, the Second Continental Congress resolved to put the colonies in a state of defense, but the delegates were divided on how best to do it. They lacked the power and the funds to immediately raise and supply an army. After debate and deliberation, John Adams made the practical proposal that the delegates simply designate as a Continental Army the militia forces besieging Boston. On June 14, the Congress resolved to supplement the New England militiamen with six companies of expert riflemen raised in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. The delegates agreed that in order to emphasize their national aspirations, they had to select a man from the South to command these New England forces. All eyes turned to George Washington. Although Washington had suffered defeat at the beginning of the Seven Years’ War, he had subsequently compiled a distinguished record. On June 15, Jefferson and Adams nominated Washington to be commander-in-chief of all Continental forces, and he was elected by a unanimous vote. He served without salary. The Continental Congress soon appointed a staff of major generals to support him. On June 22, in a highly significant move, the Congress voted to finance the army with an issue of $2 million in bills of credit, backed by the good faith of the Confederated Colonies. Thus began the long and complicated process of financing the Revolution.

During its first session in the spring of 1775, the Continental Congress had begun to move cautiously down the path toward independence. Few would admit, even to themselves, however, that this was their goal. John Adams, who was close to advocating independence, wrote that he was “as fond of reconciliation as any man” but found the hope of peaceful resolution unreasonable. “The cancer is too deeply rooted,” he thought, “and too far spread to be cured by anything short of cutting it out entire.” Still, on July 5, 1775, the delegates passed the so-called Olive Branch Petition, written by John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, in which they professed their attachment to King George and begged him to prevent further hostilities so that there might be an accommodation. The next day they approved a Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms, written by Jefferson and Dickinson. Here the delegates adopted a harder tone, resolving “to die freemen rather than to live slaves.” Before the Second Continental Congress adjourned at the beginning of August, the delegates appointed commissioners to negotiate with the Indian nations in an attempt to keep them out of trouble.

The engraving of the first session of the Continental Congress, published in France in 1782, is the only contemporary illustration of the meeting. Peyton Randolph of Virginia presides from the elevated chair, but otherwise there are no recognizable individuals. The Congress had to find a way to form a community among the leaders from each of the colonies without compromising their local identities.

Courtesy of Library of Congress.

QUICK REVIEW

The Second Continental Congress

- Opened on May 10, 1775.
- May 15: Congress resolved to put the colonies in a state of defense.
- June 15: George Washington nominated to be commander-in-chief.

Class Discussion Question 6.5
Soon after the fighting at Lexington and Concord, the artist Ralph Earl and the engraver Amos Doolittle visited the location and interviewed participants. They produced a series of four engravings of the incident, the first popular prints of the battles of the Revolutionary War. This view shows British troops marching to occupy Concord.

The Granger Collection, New York.

Quick Review

Fighting in 1775 and 1776
- Americans forced back from Canada.
- British forced out of Boston to Halifax.
- Americans turns back British assault in Charleston.

of the conflict. They also reinstated Benjamin Franklin as postmaster general in order to keep the mails moving and protect communication among the colonies.

Canada, the Spanish Borderlands, and the Revolution

How did the rest of North America react to the coming conflict? The Continental Congress contacted many of the other British colonies. In one of their first acts, delegates called on “the oppressed inhabitants of Canada” to join in the struggle for “common liberty.” After the Seven Years’ War, the British treated Quebec as a conquered province, and French Canadians felt little sympathy for the empire. On the other hand, the Americans were traditional enemies, much feared because of their aggressive expansionism. Indeed, when the Canadians failed to respond positively and immediately, the Congress reversed itself and voted to authorize a military expedition against Quebec to eliminate any possibility of a British invasion from that quarter, thus killing any chance of the Canadians’ joining the anti-British cause. This set a course toward the development of the separate nations of the United States and Canada.

There was some sympathy at first for the American struggle in the British island colonies. The legislative assemblies of Jamaica, Grenada, and Barbados declared themselves in accord with the Continental Congress, but the British navy prevented them from sending representatives. A delegation from Bermuda succeeded in getting to Philadelphia, but the Americans were so preoccupied with more pressing matters they were unable to provide any assistance, and the spark of resistance on the island sputtered out. The island colonies would remain aloof from the imperial crisis, largely because the colonists there were dependent on a British military presence to guard
against slave revolts. Things at first seemed more promising in Nova Scotia (not then a part of Canada), where many New Englanders had relocated after the expulsion of the Acadians. There had been Stamp Act demonstrations in Halifax, and when the British attempted to recruit among the Nova Scotians for soldiers to serve in Boston, one community responded that since “almost all of us [were] born in New England, [we are] divided betwixt natural affection to our nearest relations and good faith and friendship to our king and country.” The British naval stronghold at Halifax, however, secured the province for the empire. Large contingents of British troops also kept Florida (which Britain had divided into the two colonies of East and West Florida) solidly in the empire.

In Cuba, some 3,000 exiled Spanish Floridians, who had fled rather than live under British rule in 1763, clamored for Spain to retake their homeland. Many of them were active supporters of American independence. (Two centuries later, there would be thousands of Cuban exiles in Florida.) Spanish authorities in Cuba, who also administered the newly acquired colony of Louisiana, were somewhat torn in their sympathies. They certainly felt no solidarity with the cause of rebellion, which they understood posed a great danger to monarchy and empire. But with painful memories of the British invasion of Havana in 1763, they passionately looked forward to working revenge on their traditional enemy, as well as to regaining control of the Floridas and eliminating the British threat to their Mexican and Caribbean colonies. In 1775, Spain adopted the recommendation of the Havana authorities and declared a policy of neutrality in the looming independence struggle.

Secretly, however, Spain looked for an opportunity to support the Americans. That presented itself in the late spring of 1776, when a contingent of Americans arrived in Spanish New Orleans via the Mississippi River bearing a proposal from patriot forces in Virginia. British naval supremacy was making it impossible to obtain supplies from overseas. Would the Spanish be willing to quietly sell guns, ammunition, and other provisions to the Americans in New Orleans and allow them to be shipped by way of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers? If they were cooperative, the Americans might be willing to see the Spanish retake possession of the Floridas and administer them as a “protectorate” for the duration of the independence struggle. Authorities forwarded the proposal to Spain, where a few months later the Spanish king and his ministers approved the plan. Havana and New Orleans became important supply centers for the patriots.

**Fighting in the North and South**

Both North and South saw fighting in 1775 and early 1776. In May 1775, a small force of armed New Yorkers under the command of Ethan Allen of Vermont surprised the British garrison at Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain, demanding—“in the name of Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress”—that the commander surrender. The Continental Congress, in fact, knew nothing of this campaign, and when news of it arrived, members of the New York delegation were distressed at this New England violation of their territorial sovereignty. With great effort, the Americans transported the fort’s cannon overland to be used in the siege of Boston.

At Boston, the British hastened to reinforce Gage’s forces and by the middle of June 1775 had approximately 6,500 soldiers in the city. By that time the American forces had increased to nearly 10,000. Fearing Gage would occupy the heights south of town, the Americans countered by occupying the Charlestown peninsula to the north. On June 17, British ships in the harbor began to fire on the American positions, and Gage decided on a frontal assault to dislodge them. In bloody fighting that, although it occurred at Breed’s Hill, has since been known as the Battle of Bunker Hill, the
British finally succeeded in routing the Americans, killing 140 men, but not before suffering over a thousand casualties of their own, including 226 dead. The fierce reaction in England to this enormous loss ended all possibility of any last-minute reconciliation. In August 1775, King George rejected the Olive Branch Petition and issued a royal proclamation declaring the colonists to be in “open and avowed rebellion.” “Divers wicked and desperate persons” were the cause of the problem, said the king, and he called on his loyal subjects in America to “bring the traitors to justice.”

In June 1775, the Continental Congress assembled an expeditionary force against Canada. One thousand Americans moved north up the Hudson River corridor, and in November, General Richard Montgomery forced the capitulation of Montreal. Meanwhile, Benedict Arnold set out from Massachusetts with another American army, and after a torturous march through the forests and mountains of Maine, he joined Montgomery outside the walls of Quebec. Unlike the assault of British General Wolfe in 1759, however, the American assault failed to take the city. Montgomery and 100 Americans were killed, and another 300 were taken prisoner. Although Arnold held his position, the American siege was broken the following spring by British reinforcements who had come down the St. Lawrence. By the summer of 1776, the Americans had been forced back from Canada.

Elsewhere there were successes. Washington installed artillery on the heights south of Boston, placing the city and harbor within cannon range. General William Howe, who had replaced Gage, had little choice but to evacuate the city. In March, the British sailed out of Boston harbor for the last time, heading north to Halifax with at least 1,000 American Loyalists. In the South, American militia rose against the Loyalist forces of Virginia’s Governor Dunmore, who had alienated the planter class by promising freedom to any slave who would fight with the British. After a decisive
From Empire to Independence, 1750–1757  Chapter 6  191

defeat of his forces, Dunmore retreated to British naval vessels, from which he shelled and destroyed much of the city of Norfolk, Virginia, on January 1, 1776. In North Carolina, the rebel militia crushed a Loyalist force at the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge near Wilmington in February, ending British plans for an invasion of that province. The British decided to attack Charleston, but at Fort Moultrie in Charleston Harbor an American force turned back the assault. It would be more than two years before the British would try to invade the South again.

No Turning Back

Hopes of reconciliation died with the mounting casualties. The Second Continental Congress, which was rapidly assuming the role of a new government for all the provinces, reconvened in September 1775 and received news of the king’s proclamation that the colonies were in formal rebellion. Although the delegates disclaimed any intention of denying the sovereignty of the king, they now moved to organize an American navy. They declared British vessels open to capture and authorized privateering. The Congress took further steps toward de facto independence when it authorized contacts with foreign powers through its agents in Europe. In the spring of 1776, France, hoping that the creation of a new American nation might provide the opportunity of gaining a larger share of the colonial trade while also diminishing British power, joined Spain in approving the shipping of supplies to the rebellious provinces. The Continental Congress then declared colonial ports open to the trade of all nations but Britain.

The emotional ties to Britain proved difficult to break. But in 1776, help arrived in the form of a pamphlet written by Thomas Paine, a radical Englishman recently arrived in Philadelphia. In Common Sense, Paine proposed to offer “simple fact, plain argument, and common sense” on the crisis. For years, Americans had defended their actions by wrapping themselves in the mantle of British traditions. But Paine argued that the British system rested on “the base remains of two ancient tyrannies,” aristocracy and monarchy, neither of which was appropriate for America. Paine placed the blame for the oppression of the colonists on the shoulders of King George, whom he labeled the “royal Brute.” Appealing to the millennial spirit of American Protestant culture, Paine wrote: “We have it in our power to begin the world over again. A situation, similar to the present, hath not happened since the days of Noah until now.” Common Sense was the single most important piece of writing during the Revolutionary era, selling more than 100,000 copies within a few months of its publication in January 1776. It reshaped popular thinking and put independence squarely on the agenda.

In April, the North Carolina convention, which operated as the revolutionary replacement for the old colonial assembly, became the first to empower its delegates to vote for a declaration of independence. News that the British were recruiting a force of German mercenaries to use against the Americans provided an additional push toward what now began to seem inevitable. In May, the Continental Congress voted to recommend that the individual states move as quickly as possible toward the adoption of state constitutions. When John Adams wrote, in the preamble to this statement, that “the exercise of every kind of authority under the said crown should be totally suppressed,” he sent a strong signal that the delegates were on the verge of approving a momentous declaration.

Declaration of Independence  The document by which the Second Continental Congress announced and justified its decision to renounce the colonies’ allegiance to the British government.

Class Discussion Question 6.6

Royal Proclamation of Rebellion (1775)

Understanding that the coming struggle would require the steady support of ordinary people, in the Declaration of Independence, the upper-class men of the Continental Congress asserted the right of popular revolution and the great principle of human equality.

The Granger Collection.

The Declaration of Independence  The document by which the Second Continental Congress announced and justified its decision to renounce the colonies’ allegiance to the British government.
In this excerpt, Thomas Paine directly blames King George III for colonial suffering. Paine urges his readers to abandon the king.

To the evil of monarchy we have added that of hereditary succession; and as the first is a degradation and lessening of ourselves, so the second, claimed as a matter of right, is an insult and an imposition on posterity. For all men being originally equals, no one by birth could have a right to set up his own family in perpetual preference to all others for ever . . .

Out of Class Activity 6.1, Origins and Context of the Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence
On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia offered a motion to the Continental Congress: “That these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.” After some debate, a vote was postponed until July, but a committee composed of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, and Robert Livingston of New York was asked to prepare a draft declaration of American independence. The committee assigned the writing to Jefferson.

The intervening month allowed the delegates to sample the public discussion and debate and receive instructions from their state conventions. By the end of the month, all the states but New York had authorized a vote for independence. When the question came up for debate again on July 1, a large majority in the Continental Congress supported independence. The final vote, taken on July 2, was twelve in favor of independence, none against, with New York abstaining. The delegates then turned to the declaration itself and made a number of changes in Jefferson’s draft, striking out, for example, a long passage condemning slavery. In this and a number of other ways, the final version was somewhat more cautious than the draft, but it was still a stirring document.

Its central section reiterated the “long train of abuses and usurpations” on the part of King George that had led the Americans to their drastic course; there was no mention of Parliament, the principal opponent since 1764. But it was the first section that expressed the highest ideals of the delegates:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights,
that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

There was very little debate in the Continental Congress about these principles. The delegates, mostly men of wealth and position, realized that the coming struggle for independence would require the steady support of ordinary people, so they asserted this great principle of equality and the right of revolution. There was little debate about the implications or potential consequences. Surely no statement would reverberate more through American history; the idea of equality inspired the poor as well as the wealthy, women as well as men, blacks as well as whites.

But it was the third and final section that may have contained the most meaning for the delegates: “For the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.” In voting for independence, the delegates proclaimed their community, but they also committed treason against their king and empire. They could be condemned as traitors, hunted as criminals, and stand on the scaffold to pay for their sentiments. On July 4, 1776, these men approved the text of the Declaration of Independence without dissent.

On July 9, 1776, shortly after the Declaration of Independence was signed, General Washington gathered his troops at the present-day City Hall Park in Manhattan and had the document read to them. An unruly group of soldiers and townspeople then marched to the south end of Broadway and pulled down a large gilded lead statue of King George III. The head impaled upon a stake and the rest hauled to Connecticut to be melted down for bullets. The event became a favorite scene for historical painters of the nineteenth century. William Walcutt, Pulling Down the Statue of George III at Bowling Green, 1857. Oil on canvas, 51 5⁄8” × 77 5⁄8” Lafayette College Art Collection, Easton, Pennsylvania.

The Bostonians Paying the Excise-Man, or Tarring and Feathering

Political cartoons played an important role in the public controversy leading to the American Revolution. This print, published in London in 1774 and sold on the streets for a few pennies, depicts the violent attack of a Boston mob on customs commissioner John Malcolm several weeks after the “Tea Party.” Malcolm, an ardent Loyalist, had been the frequent target of protests. That night a mob dragged Malcolm from his house and covered him with tar and feathers, a ritual of public humiliation. Hot tar produced painful blistering of the skin, and the effort to remove it made the condition worse. The feathers made the victim into an object of ridicule. Hauled to the Liberty Tree in Boston Common, Malcolm was threatened with hanging if he did not apologize and renounce his commission. When he did he was allowed to return home. The pro-Loyalist print includes a number of telling details. Malcolm is attacked by a group that includes a leather-aproned artisan. A broadside announcing the Stamp Act is posted upside down on the Liberty Tree. A hangman’s noose dangles from a branch. The Boston Tea Party takes place in the background. In the foreground is a tar bucket and a pole topped by a “liberty cap,” a symbol of freedom adopted by American protesters (and later an icon of the French Revolution). These details were intended to mock the Americans. But when the print found its way to North America it was embraced by Patriots and became an enduring American favorite. In the nineteenth century it was reprinted as a celebration of the righteous violence of the Revolution.

How could this image, intended to ridicule and shame the American patriots, have been embraced and celebrated by them?

CONCLUSION

Great Britain emerged from the Seven Years’ War as the dominant power in North America. Yet despite its attempts at strict regulation and determination of the course of events in its colonies, it faced consistent resistance and often complete failure. Perhaps British leaders felt as John Adams had when he attended the first session of the Continental Congress in 1774: how could a motley collection of “ambassadors from a dozen belligerent powers” effectively organize as a single, independent, and defiant body? The British underestimated the political consensus that existed among the colonists about the importance of “republican” government. They also underestimated the ability of the colonists to inform one another, to work together, to build a sentiment of nationalism that cut across the boundaries of ethnicity, region, and economic status. Through newspapers, pamphlets, Committees of Correspondence, community organizations, and group protest, the colonists discovered the concerns they shared, and in so doing they fostered a new, American identity. Without that identity it would have been difficult for them to consent to the treasonous act of declaring independence, especially when the independence they sought was from an international power that dominated much of the globe.

AP* DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

Directions: This exercise requires you to construct a valid essay that directly addresses the central issues of the following question. You will have to use facts from the documents provided and from the chapter to prove the position you take in your thesis statement.

Either defend or attack the proposition that the conflict between Great Britain and her North American colonies begun in 1776 was a “revolution.” Take a position on this issue, develop a viable thesis statement, and proceed to defend your stand. Use outside facts and the documents to support your position.

DOCUMENT A

The following association is signed by a great number of the principal gentlemen of the city, merchants, lawyers, and other inhabitants of all ranks:

1st. Resolved, That whoever shall aid, or abet, or in any manner assist, in the introduction of tea, . . . to the payment of a duty, . . . he shall be deemed an enemy to the liberties of America.

2d. Resolved, That whoever shall be aiding, or assisting, in the landing, or carting of such tea, from any ship, or vessel, . . . he shall be deemed an enemy to the liberties of America.

3d. Resolved, That whoever shall sell, or buy, or in any manner contribute to the sale, or purchase of tea, subject to a duty as aforesaid, . . . he shall be deemed an enemy to the liberties of America.

Suggested Answer:

Successful essays should note:
• The definition of “revolution”
• The treatment of British officials in the American colonies (Image p.182, Document A)
• Political propaganda issued in the colonies after the Boston Massacre (Image p.180)
• The status and types of people involved in political upheaval (Document A)
• Who stood to gain the most from American independence (Document A)
• Who are the “enemies of the liberties of America” (Document A)
• Public opinion of women during the era, both in Britain and America (Image p.179 and Document B)
• Women’s advocacy for social change through writing and protests (Document B)
• Roles of minorities: Mulattos, Indians, and African Americans in eighteenth century society (Document C)
• John Dickinson’s words to dissuade independence and aggression (p. 178–179 and Document C)
• Colonist political cartoons released in Britain alluding to their fighting capabilities (Document C)
4th. Resolved, That whether the duties on tea, imposed by this act, be paid in Great Britain or in America, our liberties are equally affected.

5th. Resolved, That whoever shall transgress any of these resolutions, we will not deal with, or employ, or have any connection with him.

—Resolutions of the New York Sons of Liberty, Nov. 29, 1773

The question asks you to determine if the struggle between the colonies and Britain was a revolution. There are three alternatives here. It was a revolution. It was not a revolution. It contained some elements of a revolution and some characteristics were not revolutionary. You will have to arrive at some definition of what revolution means. Look at this declaration of the Sons of Liberty of New York. It has the traditional complaints against the tea tax.

- Who was protesting? Was it the elite of society or the average person?
- Did they want to change society or keep it exactly as it existed? Who signed this document?

Now look at the political broadside on page 182 that protests the tea tax and praises the Boston Tea Party. Look at the people who are tarring the tax collector.

- Are they the upper class?
- Does that have anything to do with the question of a revolution?

Look at the Revere drawing of the Boston Massacre on page 180. Read the textbook account of the event.

- Who were the people involved in the events leading up to the Boston Massacre?
- What issues caused the event? Who were the people who died in that event?
- Did you have people in the lower classes resisting folks from the wealthier classes in these events?
- Who were the "enemies of the liberties of America"?

**Document B**

Look at the political cartoon on page 179 of the Edenton, North Carolina women protesting the tea tax. Printed in Britain in 1775 by Philip Dawes as a satire, titled "A Society of Patriotic Ladies," it shows American women responding to a 1774 call by the Continental Congress to boycott British goods.

- Was this kind of role typical of women in that day?

Look at these two poems.

*Throw aside your topknots of pride,*  
*Wear none but your own country linen.*  
*Of economy boast, let your pride be the most,*  
*To show clothes of your own make and spinning.*

*Stand firmly resolv'd, and bid Grenville to see,*  
*That rather than freedom we part with our tea,*  
*And well as we love the dear draught when a-dry,*  
*As American patriots our taste we deny.*

- Did women take political roles in society in the eighteenth century?

Look back at the Boston Massacre discussion.

- Did mulattos take political roles in society in the eighteenth century?
- Is this a revolution or a rebellion?
Document C

This is a pro-American cartoon printed in London by James Gillray in 1782 just after the surrender at Yorktown. The cartoon carries the image of the snake boasting: "Two British Armies I have thus Burgoynd, And room for more I’ve got behind." The sign hanging from the snake's tale above the third coil claims: "An Apartment to Lett(rent) for Military Gentlemen." It is portraying a military victory. Look at pages 178–179 at the advice John Dickinson gave his fellow colonists: “Let us behave as dutiful children who have received unmerited blows from a beloved parent.” But, here, the colonists have raised armies and fought their king.

- Was this a revolution?
- Was this a warning to the King and British government that something revolutionary had happened in the thirteen colonies?

AP* PREP TEST

Select the response that best answers each question or best completes each sentence.

1. An important task facing the First Continental Congress was:
   a. defining the issues that would justify a declaration of independence from England.
   b. emphasizing the common cause Americans had without compromising local identities.
   c. funding the ongoing war that the patriots were fighting against the British military.
   d. creating a form of republican government that would ensure a more perfect union.
   e. creating a strong federal government at the expense of state autonomy.

2. The Seven Years’ War:
   a. was just the first in a long series of armed conflicts between the French and British.
   b. marked the first open split between Great Britain and the American colonies.
   c. resulted in a military defeat that led to the demise of France as a global power.
   d. came to an end as a result of the Albany Plan that Benjamin Franklin proposed.
   e. had tremendous implications for the French empire and for British North America.
3. The primary focus in America that led to conflict between France and England in 1754 was:
   a. the effort by British Americans to seize East Florida from France’s long-time ally, Spain.
   b. control over the fishing resources of the Grand Banks near the province of Newfoundland.
   c. disputes between Catholic settlers in Quebec and Congregationalists in New England.
   d. the vast and wealthy region west of the Appalachian Mountains and along the Ohio River.
   e. control of the fur trade in the northeastern Canadian provinces.

4. As a result of the Seven Years’ War:
   a. Great Britain acquired all of the territory east of the Mississippi River except Florida.
   b. the French gave up claims to Canada but continued to hold the Mississippi Valley.
   c. France relinquished to England and Spain all claim to territories in North America.
   e. France relinquished all claims to territories in America, but retained their Canadian provinces.

5. The English set aside an Indian Reserve in North America with the:
   a. Act of Union and Amity.
   b. Indian Removal Program of 1765.
   c. Declaratory Act of 1766.
   d. Treaty of Fort Stanwix.
   e. Royal Proclamation of 1763.

6. During the mid- to late eighteenth century, many Americans came to believe in republicanism, a form of government that:
   a. guaranteed that all people in America would be treated equally.
   b. proposed that individuals should have the greatest liberty possible.
   c. was based on the direct political participation of all white adults.
   d. advocated that the state should control all forms of economic activity.
   e. promoted a good society in which a strong state, controlled by a hereditary elite, kept a vicious and unruly people in line.

7. The constitutional debate that arose out of the Stamp Act Crisis was about:
   a. modern democracy versus traditional republicanism.
   b. separation of power and term limits in government.
   c. virtual representation and actual representation.
   d. monarchial rulers versus participatory government.
   e. the enumerated powers of congress.

8. During the 1760s, the main American weapon of resistance to British policy was:
   a. economic boycotts.
   b. military action.
   c. political petitions.
   d. violent demonstrations.
   e. diplomatic alliances.

9. The Boston Massacre in 1770 was:
   a. a heinous act of British violence committed against all of the American people.
   b. the event that led to the most heightened sense of anti-British sentiment prior to the war.
   c. the most violent act ever committed by American Indians against the British colonies.
   d. the event that led to an immediate break with England and American independence.
   e. an unfortunate and tragic incident that developed out of numerous colonial tensions.

10. The English response to rebellious activity in Massachusetts was the:
    a. Force Bill.
    b. Declaratory Act.
    c. Coercive Acts.
    d. Quartering Bill.
    e. Townshend Acts.

11. The battles of Lexington and Concord:
    a. forecast the violent nature that would characterize the war that followed.
    b. led to the arrests of most of the important and influential patriot leaders.
    c. occurred within just two weeks of the Declaration of Independence.
    d. resulted in a number of American casualties but none for the British.
    e. elicited little immediate response from militia in surrounding communities.
12. In July 1775, the Second Continental Congress:
   a. declared that the colonies had a right to be, and were now, independent states.
   b. continued to look for a peaceful resolution between the colonies and England.
   c. called upon Parliament to depose King George III and thereby avert a war.
   d. formed a military alliance with France and signed trade agreements with Spain.
   e. opened with full participation from all of the British mainland colonies.

13. The pamphlet that reshaped American popular thinking about independence was:
   b. *A Seditious Libel* by John Peter Zenger.
   c. *Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death* by Patrick Henry.
   e. *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine.

14. A critical event in the years following 1763 was the:
   a. emergence of a unique American identity that helped bring about the movement for independence.
   b. realization by most Americans that they no longer had anything at all in common with the English.
   c. understanding that the English had created the most tyrannical government in the history of the world.
   d. insistence that the only effective government was one that gave all the people a direct role to play.
   e. shared recognition of the equality of all races.