

Name _____ Date _____

Colonial America

The New England, Middle & Southern Colonies

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. The Puritans were the first colonists to come to Boston. Across the ocean in England, everyone had to practice the religion of the Church of England. The Puritans were unhappy with this church, and they wanted to change it and practice their religion differently. The King of England was in charge of the church and the government. If the Puritans didn't obey the church, they would have been in danger. In 1630, about 1,000 Puritans set sail for America, looking for a place where they could have religious freedom. They set up the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which included parts of other present-day states like Maine.

Notes

2. Winters in New England were cold and harsh, and the soil was rocky. Because of the harsh climate and difficult growing conditions, farmers in New England couldn't grow enough crops to sell for money. However, the New England colonies were covered in forests, and the water off the coast was full of fish. So instead, colonists fished and hunted whales. They used the lumber from the trees to build ships. New England became a major center for trading, buying and selling products. In the port city of Boston, ships came and left carrying goods. The New England colonies sold goods to the other colony regions and to England.

Notes

3. A slave is someone who is owned by another person and forced to work for them for no pay. During colonial times, Europeans and Americans kidnapped people from Africa. They forced these people to work as slaves in the colonies. In the New England colonies, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island had the most slaves. Slaves in New England were owned mostly by ministers, doctors and merchants, people who were involved in trade. They worked in houses and did other skilled jobs like shipbuilding. Not all black people in New England were enslaved. Some won their freedom by serving their masters for a certain number of years. However, free blacks still had a lower status than white people.

Notes

4. While white colonists in New England came mostly from England, the Middle Colonies were more diverse. They attracted people from many different European backgrounds: Dutch, Scot-Irish, Scandinavian, German and French. Colonists practiced many different religions. There were Quakers, Lutherans, Mennonites, Presbyterians and Jews. Some people who came to the Middle Colonies didn't bring their families from Europe. They worked in the region's factories and shipyards. There were also African slaves in the Middle colonies. They had jobs like laborer, servant, driver and sailor but were not paid.

Notes

5. In the Middle colonies, the climate was warmer, and the soil was better for farming than it was in New England. Colonists could grow more crops and sell them. Farmers stockpiled wheat and grains like barley, oats and rye. Because of the large supply of grains, the Middle colonies earned the nickname "the breadbasket." In the Middle colonies, iron, paper, textiles (cloth and fabric) and glass were also produced in factories. Merchants bought and sold goods. Artisans were skilled at making things by hand. They included blacksmiths, who worked with iron, silversmiths and shoemakers.

Notes

6. The Southern colonies' rich soil and warm climate made them good for growing crops. As a result, the Southern economy was almost completely based on farming. An economy is a system for producing, buying and selling goods and services. In the Southern colonies, farmers could produce many more crops than they needed for their families. They could sell these crops to make a lot of money. These cash crops were grown on large farms called plantations. They included cotton, tobacco, rice, sugar cane and indigo.

Notes

7. Not everyone in the Southern colonies lived on plantations. In fact, many colonists lived on small farms. Farms in the Southern colonies were far away from one another. As a result, religion didn't play as big a role in colony life as it did in the New England or Middle colonies. Because people lived so far apart, it was harder to gather to practice religion. Similarly, the distance made it hard to set up community schools. Wealthy plantation owners were able to hire tutors to teach their children at home. Boys learned languages and subjects like math, science and geography. Girls learned enough reading, writing and math to run a household. Children of less wealthy farmers learned to read and write if their parents taught them.

Notes

8. Southern plantations relied on the work of African and African-American slaves. There were many more slaves in the Southern colonies than there were in the New England and Middle colonies. By 1750, slaves made up almost half of the population of the Southern colonies. Slaves worked long hours in the hot fields harvesting cash crops, powering the Southern economy. They were not paid for their labor. If they made a small mistake, they were often beaten and whipped by the overseer, the person watching over the slaves' work. When slaves had children, these children were born enslaved. It was also illegal for slaves to learn to read and write. The first slaves arrived in the colonies in 1619, and slavery didn't end until almost 250 years later.

Notes