

Life in the Colonies

What was life really like in the colonies?

PREVIEW

Suppose you are living in England in the 1700s. You have just finished reading “The Untold Story of Life in the American Colonies,” a special edition of the *London Chronicle*. Below are eight headlines from this edition of the newspaper. Using a scale from 1 to 3, rate how accurate you think each headline is. (Although some of the headlines reflect actual events to some extent, all of them are made up.)

1: mostly accurate **2:** partly accurate **3:** mostly inaccurate

_____ Study Shows Farmers Spend Several Hours Playing Cards Each Day

_____ Unemployment Rises in Cities—Colonists Return to Mother Country

_____ Colonists Ignore Principles of Self-Government

_____ African Merchants Make Fortunes Trading Cloth for Rum

_____ Preachers Stir Colonists into a Frenzy

_____ Shocking Investigation: New England Schools Lack Spelling, Reading, and Arithmetic

_____ New Survey: American Wives Say They Work Harder Than Servants

_____ Colonists Use Honeybees to Get Work Done

READING NOTES

Social Studies Vocabulary

As you complete the Reading Notes, use these terms in your answers.

right

Parliament

Great Awakening

Magna Carta

English Bill of Rights

Sections 1 to 8

If your class is doing the activity for this lesson, complete all the questions for these sections. (Note: If your class is not doing the activity, skip Questions 1 and 4 in each of these sections.)

Section 1

1. *Key Question:* How accurate is the headline “Study Shows Farmers Spend Several Hours Playing Cards Each Day”: mostly accurate, partly accurate, or mostly inaccurate? Use evidence from Placard A to explain your answer.
2. What proportion of the colonial population lived on small family farms?
3. List two ways life on a farm in the 1700s was different from your life today.
4. If the headline about farm life is inaccurate, write a new, more accurate headline about this topic.

Section 2

1. *Key Question:* How accurate is the headline “Unemployment Rises in Cities—Colonists Return to Mother Country”: mostly accurate, partly accurate, or mostly inaccurate? Use evidence from Placard B to explain your answer.
2. What proportion of the colonial population lived in cities?
3. Describe what a person living in a colonial city might see, hear, smell, taste, and touch there.
4. If the headline about city life is inaccurate, write a new, more accurate headline about this topic.

Section 3

1. *Key Question:* How accurate is the headline “Colonists Ignore Principles of Self-Government”: mostly accurate, partly accurate, or mostly inaccurate? Use evidence from Placard C to explain your answer.
2. How did colonists see themselves? Why was this important for their rights?
3. How were the rights of English citizens strengthened during each of these years? Include the words in parentheses in your answers.

1215 (Magna Carta, king):

1265 (Parliament, laws):

1689 (English Bill of Rights, taxes):
4. If the headline about colonists’ rights is inaccurate, write a new, more accurate headline about this topic.

Section 4

1. *Key Question:* How accurate is the headline “African Merchants Make Fortunes Trading Cloth for Rum”: mostly accurate, partly accurate, or mostly inaccurate? Use evidence from Placard D to explain your answer.
2. In which colonial regions was slavery found? In which region did it expand most rapidly, and why?
3. What was the status of enslaved people according to colonial law? How did people cope with being enslaved?
4. If the headline about life for African Americans is inaccurate, write a new, more accurate headline about this topic.

Section 5

1. *Key Question:* How accurate is the headline “Preachers Stir Colonists into a Frenzy”: mostly accurate, partly accurate, or mostly inaccurate? Use evidence from Placard E to explain your answer.
2. What two adjectives best describe Puritan church services? Explain.
3. How did the Great Awakening help pave the way for the American Revolution? Follow these two steps to reveal the answer.
 - Number the sentences below from 1 to 5 to show the order in which they occurred. One of them is numbered for you.
 - Paraphrase the sentences (reword them) and write each in the correct space in the flowchart.

_____ These new ideas strengthened the principles of liberty, equality, and self-reliance.

_____ There was a feeling that people had lost their religious faith.

_____ New ideas, such as “all people are equal in the eyes of God,” spread through the colonies.

5 _____ By the 1770s, colonists valued the ideals of the Great Awakening, helping pave the way for the American Revolution.

_____ The Great Awakening began in the colonies in the 1730s.

Causes and Effects of the Great Awakening**1****2****3****4****5**

These ideals helped set off the American Revolution.

4. If the headline about religion is inaccurate, write a new, more accurate headline about this topic.

Section 6

1. *Key Question:* How accurate is the headline “Shocking Investigation: New England Schools Lack Spelling, Reading, and Arithmetic”: mostly accurate, partly accurate, or mostly inaccurate? Use evidence from Placard F to explain your answer.
2. Explain how education was provided in each region. Put a ★ next to the region in which people supported public education because of their religious faith.
New England Colonies:

Middle Colonies:

Southern Colonies:
3. Name two ways in which a colonial school in New England was different from your school.
4. If the headline about education is inaccurate, write a new, more accurate headline about this topic.

Section 7

1. *Key Question:* How accurate is the headline “New Survey: American Wives Say They Work Harder Than Servants”: mostly accurate, partly accurate, or mostly inaccurate? Use evidence from Placard G to explain your answer.
2. Give one interesting fact about colonial marriage, and tell how marriage in the United States today is different.
3. What is one reason why colonial families were so large?
4. If the headline about colonial families is inaccurate, write a new, more accurate headline about this topic.

Section 8

1. *Key Question:* How accurate is the headline “Colonists Use Honeybees to Get Work Done”: mostly accurate, partly accurate, or mostly inaccurate? Use evidence from Placard H to explain your answer.
2. Write a definition for the “bee” described in this section.
3. Draw and label two leisure activities you would have enjoyed as an American colonist.
4. If the headline about leisure is inaccurate, write a new, more accurate headline about this topic.

P R O C E S S I N G

You will now write your conclusions about the American colonies in a newspaper article entitled “What Life Is *Really* Like in the Colonies.” In this article, you will correct some of the inaccurate statements that were printed in the *London Chronicle*. Write your article *on a separate piece of paper* and include:

- an introductory paragraph that previews what is to follow and organizes ideas into broader categories. This should introduce the well-chosen facts, definitions, and quotations you may choose to incorporate as well.
- an accurate description of two or three aspects of life in the colonies. Write one paragraph for each aspect. In your descriptions, include your own conclusions. Support them with information from the primary and secondary sources and your Reading Notes.
- appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify relationships.
- a formal historical narrative style with an objective tone.
- precise language and social studies vocabulary.
- a short concluding paragraph about your overall understanding of life in the colonies.
- at least one image that supports your conclusions. This image can be a sketch, a tracing, or a copy of an appropriate illustration or photograph that you find.

READING FURTHER

Preparing to Write: Analyzing Speeches

In the 1730s, George II was the King of England. Few, if any, colonists questioned their loyalty to the king—even though he was more than 3,000 miles away.

However, colonists soon began to think differently about the king. In less than 50 years, they would declare independence from English rule altogether.

Historians believe that some of the seeds of that new way of thinking were planted during the Great Awakening. Read these two excerpts from sermons at the time.

The wrath of kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute monarchs, who have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in their power . . . But the greatest earthly potentates [rulers] in their greatest majesty and strength . . . are but feeble, despicable worms of the dust, in comparison of the great and almighty Creator and King of heaven and earth.

—Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” 1741

The essence of government (I mean good government . . .) consists in the making and executing of good laws [that provide for the common welfare] of the governed . . . We may very safely assert . . . that no civil rulers are to be obeyed when they [make laws] inconsistent with the commands of God . . . All commands running counter to the declared will of the Supreme Legislator of heaven and earth are null and void, and therefore disobedience to them is a duty, not a crime. Another thing may be [argued] with equal truth and safety, is, that no government is to be submitted to at the expense of that which is the sole end of all government—the common good and safety of society.

—Jonathan Mayhew, “A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers,” 1750

What does Jonathan Edwards say about the power of kings?

According to Edwards, which is greater: the power of God or the power of kings? Why?

What is the duty of good government, according to Jonathan Mayhew?

According to Mayhew, when should citizens disobey their government?

If you believed the teachings of Edwards and Mayhew, would you think you had a right—or even a duty—to disobey the king? If so, under what circumstances?

Writing an Article

Suppose you are a journalist visiting the 13 colonies. Write an article about the Great Awakening's effects on colonists. In your article, do the following:

- Describe how colonists have reacted to the sermons of the Great Awakening.
- Explain how colonists' attitudes toward authority have been affected by the Great Awakening.

Use this rubric to evaluate your article. Make changes in your article if you need to.

Score	Description
3	The article identifies the effects of the Great Awakening on colonists. It addresses the points listed. It is well constructed and has no spelling or grammar errors.
2	The article identifies some of the effects of the Great Awakening on colonists. It addresses most of the points listed. It is fairly well constructed and has few spelling or grammar errors.
1	The article does not identify the effects of the Great Awakening on colonists. It addresses few of the points listed. It is not well constructed and has many spelling and/or grammar errors.