

# The Colonies Come of Age

## MAIN IDEA

Even though both Northern and Southern colonies prospered, many colonists began to question British authority.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Regional differences between Northern and Southern colonies have survived in the culture and politics of the modern United States.

## Terms & Names

- triangular trade
- middle passage
- Enlightenment
- Benjamin Franklin
- Great Awakening
- Jonathan Edwards
- French and Indian War
- William Pitt
- Pontiac
- Proclamation of 1763

## One American's Story

In 1773, Philip Vickers Fithian left his home in Princeton, New Jersey, for the unfamiliar world of Virginia. Fithian, a theology student, had agreed to tutor the children of Robert Carter III and his wife at their magnificent brick manor house. In Fithian's journal of his one-year stay there, he recalled an evening walk along the property.

### A PERSONAL VOICE PHILIP VICKERS FITHIAN

**"We stroll'd down the Pasture quite to the River, admiring the Pleasantness of the evening, & the delightful Prospect of the River, Hills, Huts on the Summits, low Bottoms, Trees of various Kinds, and Sizes, Cattle & Sheep feeding some near us, & others at a great distance on the green sides of the Hills."**

—*Journal & Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian*

Plantations, or large farms, like the Carters' played a dominant role in the South's economy, which had come to rely heavily on agriculture. The development of this plantation economy led to a largely rural society, in which enslaved Africans played an unwilling yet important role.




▲ The Shirley plantation house in Virginia is representative of many old Southern mansions. Built in 1723, it was the birthplace of Ann Hill Carter, the mother of Civil War general Robert E. Lee.

## A Plantation Economy Arises in the South

While there were cities in the South, on the whole the region developed as a rural society of self-sufficient plantations. Plantations sprang up along the rivers, making it possible for planters to ship their goods directly to the Northern colonies and Europe without the need for public dock facilities. Because plantation owners produced much of what they needed on their property, they did not often need shops, bakeries, and markets.

**LIFE IN A DIVERSE SOUTHERN SOCIETY** In addition to English settlers, thousands of German immigrants as well as Scots and Scots-Irish settled in the South. Women in Southern society, as in the North, endured second-class citizenship. For the most part they could not vote, preach, or own property.

At the bottom of Southern society were enslaved Africans. In the 18th century, Southerners turned increasingly to slavery to fill the labor needs of their agricultural economy. By 1690, about 13,000 slaves were working in the Southern colonies. By 1750, the number of slaves had increased to more than 200,000. 

The voyage that brought Africans to the West Indies and later to North

▶ This plan and section of the British slave ship *Brookes* was published in London around 1790 by a leading British antislavery advocate named Thomas Clarkson. The image effectively conveys the degradation and inhumanity of the slave trade, which reduced human beings to the level of merchandise.





**MAIN IDEA****Making Inferences**

**B** If 13 percent of the enslaved Africans died on the journey to America, why did the merchants treat them so badly?

brutal trip to the New World. One enslaved African, Olaudah Equiano, recalled the inhumane conditions on his trip from West Africa to the West Indies in 1762 when he was 12 years old. **B**

**A PERSONAL VOICE** OLAUDAH EQUIANO

**“The closeness of the place and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died. . . .”**

—*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*



Olaudah Equiano

**AFRICANS COPE IN THEIR NEW WORLD** Africans who survived the ocean voyage entered an extremely difficult life of bondage in North America. Probably 80 to 90 percent worked in the fields. The other 10 to 20 percent worked as domestic slaves or as artisans. Domestic slaves worked in the houses of their masters, cooking, cleaning, and helping to raise the master’s children. Artisans developed skills as carpenters, blacksmiths, and bricklayers and were sometimes loaned out to the master’s neighbors.

In the midst of the horrors of slavery, Africans developed a way of life based on their cultural heritage. They kept alive their musical, dance, and storytelling traditions. When a slave owner sold a parent to another plantation, other slaves stepped in to raise the children left behind.

Slaves also resisted their position of subservience. Throughout the colonies, planters reported slaves faking illness, breaking tools, and staging work slowdowns. A number of slaves tried to run away, even though escape attempts brought severe punishment. **C**

Some slaves even pushed their resistance to open revolt. One uprising, the Stono Rebellion, began on a September Sunday in 1739. That morning, about 20 slaves gathered at the Stono River just south of Charles Town (later Charleston), South Carolina. Wielding guns and other weapons, they killed several planter families and marched south, beating drums and inviting other slaves to join them in their plan to flee to Spanish-held Florida. Many slaves died in the fighting that followed. Those captured were executed. Despite the rebellion’s failure, it sent a chill through many Southern colonists and led to the tightening of harsh slave laws already in place.

## Commerce Grows in the North

The development of thriving commercial cities and diverse economic activities gradually made the North radically different from the South. Grinding wheat, harvesting fish, and sawing lumber became thriving industries. By the 1770s, the colonists had built one-third of all British ships and were producing more iron than England did. Many colonists prospered. In particular, the number of merchants grew. By the mid-1700s, merchants were one of the most powerful groups in the North. In contrast to the South, where Charles Town was the only major port, the North boasted Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.

**COLONIAL CITIES AND TRADE** The expansion of trade caused port cities to grow. Philadelphia became the second largest port in the British empire, after London. Toward the end of the 1700s, Yankee traders were sailing around Cape Horn at the tip of South America to trade with Spanish missionaries as far away as California. There they exchanged manufactured goods for hides, tallow, wine, olive oil, and grain raised with the help of the Native American labor on the missions.

**MAIN IDEA****Drawing Conclusions**

**C** How did enslaved Africans maintain their sense of self esteem?

**Vocabulary**

**tallow:** fat from livestock used to make candles and soap

## Daily Urban Life in Colonial Times

By the mid-18th century, colonial cities were prosperous and growing. Brick rowhouses were replacing the wooden structures of the 17th century, while large mansions and churches, built of brick or stone, were rising everywhere.

English colonists had brought with them a preference for houses (as opposed to apartments, which were the norm in the cities of other European countries). As in Britain, the size of the house indicated the social position of its occupant.



▲ In contemporary Philadelphia, Elfreth's Alley preserves the scale and appearance of a mid-18th-century city street. Narrow rowhouses like these were occupied by artisans and shopkeepers. A neighborhood like this could have commercial and residential uses. Many people lived above the shops where they worked.

◀ The house known as Cliveden, also in Philadelphia, was completed in 1767. In contrast to the artisan or lower-middle-class housing of Elfreth's Alley, this large freestanding mansion shows the kind of building that the rich could afford.

The Northern colonies attracted a variety of immigrants. During the 18th century, about 463,000 Europeans migrated to America. Before 1700, most immigrants came as indentured servants from England, but by 1755, over one-half of all European immigrants were from other countries. They included large numbers of Germans and Scots-Irish. Other ethnic groups included the Dutch in New York, Scandinavians in Delaware, and Jews in such cities as Newport and Philadelphia.

**FARMING IN THE NORTH** Unlike Southern plantations, a farm in New England and the middle colonies typically produced several cash crops rather than a single one. Because growing wheat and corn did not require as much labor as did growing tobacco and rice, Northerners had less need to rely on slave labor. However, slavery did exist in New England and was extensive throughout the middle colonies, as was racial prejudice against blacks—free or enslaved. As in the South, women in the North had extensive work responsibilities but few legal or social rights.