

History
UNFOLDING

DAILY LIFE IN COLONIAL AMERICA



MindSparks
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

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Introduction

Daily Life in the 13 Colonies

In the 1600s and 1700s, thousands of people arrived in North America from Europe. Except for African slaves, most came willingly in search of a better life. A few came hoping to get rich and return home quickly. Far more came to start life over in the colonies. However, few settlers planned to create an entirely new society. Religious sects such as the Puritans did hope to establish more godly communities. Yet even they brought with them their past knowledge and assumptions, and they set about building villages and colonial societies based on what was already familiar to them.

Nevertheless, they did create something new. In adapting to conditions along the Atlantic coast of North America, they developed new ways of life and new ideas about religion, society, family, work and citizenship. In so doing, they began to lay the foundations of a new nation. That new nation evolved slowly at first. Its form and its values emerged out of the way in which the colonists adjusted day by day to their new circumstances. It is that daily life that this booklet seeks to help students better understand and appreciate.

The twelve illustrations in this booklet focus on several key areas of daily life in the 13 American colonies. The illustrations are presented in four lessons. Each lesson uses three of the illustrations to explore one broad topic in the overall story. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

Settlements

The illustrations in this section call attention to two things—the initial contacts between Europeans and Native Americans, and the early villages and towns the colonists established.

Religion

The focus here is primarily on the Puritan beliefs and practices of most New Englanders. Nevertheless, themes touched on—the importance of theological concerns, or missionary work among the Indians—were central matters to nearly all the colonists.

Family Life

The family was the central institution in colonial life. It was the basic unit of economic production, the key social “safety net” for most people, and the main educator, as well as a household and a home.

Work

Work was primarily small in scale and based on the household. Except for large-scale plantations in the southern colonies, farms tended to be small, primitive and geared mainly to produce what the household itself needed. Even in the towns, much of the crafts work took place in small shops connected to the workers’ own homes. Colonial society was largely a society of small farmers, traders, shopkeepers, and craftsmen, along with a small class of wealthier professionals, merchants and planters.

Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DIGITAL IMAGES The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better understand the nature of the earliest communities established by colonists in North America.
2. Students will discuss the first contacts between colonists and Native Americans.

Settlements

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

This 1635 scene shows a first meeting between English colonists and a group of Native Americans. The illustration is of Roger Williams landing at what would come to be the colony of Rhode Island. Williams had just been banished from Massachusetts Bay Colony in part for his support for religious toleration. Williams also called on settlers to accept and live in peace with all of the Native American tribes. This illustration shows him greeting some Indians as he gets off the boat. The scene is a hopeful one. Each side seems to be making gestures of peace and friendship toward the other. Some might see this drawing as misleading, given the harsh way Indians and settlers often dealt with one another. Yet many of the first contacts between the newcomers and the original inhabitants in America actually were quite friendly. Trade and cooperation were as common as mistrust and warfare in these first contacts.

Illustration 2

These images give an idea of the simple life colonists lived in the earliest villages they built. The images also illustrate the communal and religious values of those settlers. Notice the stark simplicity of the Pennsylvania church in the upper right. Notice also the sense of a close-knit Pilgrim community conveyed by the 1893 painting on the left. The centrally located church (and meetinghouse) was a key part of the ideal the New England Puritans and many other colonial groups hoped to realize in the New World. Of course, not all colonial settlements were like this—especially the large plantations and small farms in the Southern colonies.

Illustration 3

Even the largest “cities” in the American colonies were small by our standards today—as this street scene of Philadelphia in 1800 makes clear. Yet these colonial towns were very important. They were centers of trade and of other kinds of contact with the outside world. They were places where merchants and other wealthy leaders of colonial society gathered. And they were places where different groups could mingle, where people could learn about the world beyond the colonies, and where they could exchange views and hear new ideas.

Lesson 1 — Settlements

Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustration

1. This drawing drawing shows Roger Williams greeting some Native Americans as he lands in what would come to be Rhode Island. Briefly, explain who Roger Williams was and why he moved to Rhode Island.
2. This scene is one of several we have showing a first meeting between English colonists and a group of Native Americans. Notice the gestures Roger Williams is making as he gets off the boat. Look also at the pipe the Indian hands him and the expressions on the faces of the other people in this scene. From all of these details, what view does this picture give of what this first meeting was like? What do the two groups seem to be feeling about one another? What do they seem to want to have happen?
3. What point about Roger Williams does the drawing help to make? From what you know about Williams, is this point true? Why or why not? In what ways is drawing accurate in the idea it presents of a first meetings between Europeans and Indians? In what ways is it inaccurate?

Follow-up Activities

1. In 1635, the Massachusetts Bay colony banished Roger Williams. Read a biography of Williams. Pay particular attention to the arguments he had with the Puritan leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Also pay attention to the key ideas he followed as the leader of Rhode Island. Based on what you learn, write a brief essay about this illustration. In the essay, explain why you think the illustration does or does not present an accurate view of what Roger Williams was like.
2. Do some research in the library by looking through books with photos, drawings and other illustrations of past times in U.S. history. Find as many illustrations as you can showing Europeans and American settlers meeting with Native Americans. Make copies of these illustrations and use them in a bulletin board display called "First Contacts: How We Have Pictured Them." Write your own ideas about the illustrations and include these in your bulletin board display.

Lesson 1—Settlements

Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustrations

1. In the upper right is an old church in Pennsylvania. On the left is an 1893 depiction of 1600s village life among the Pilgrims in New England. What features of these scenes help show how different colonial life was from that in typical small villages today?
2. In most New England towns, the homes were close together and near public buildings such as the church or town meetinghouse. Most people were farmers, but each household's lands were often scattered in fields outside the center of town. Why do you think New Englanders so often set up their towns in this way?
3. What evidence do you see that the Pilgrims worried about safety and the need for protection against attacks from outside the town? What kinds of attacks do you think they feared?
4. What do you think you would have liked about living in such settlements? What would you have disliked? Why?

Follow-up Activities

1. Communities in the northern colonies differed in many ways from those in southern colonies, such as Virginia or South Carolina. Using various history books or collections of illustrations from U.S. history, find two or three more pictures of New England villages. Now find several pictures of communities or groups of settlers in the southern colonies. Read as much as you can about the differences between these two regions. Based on what you find, create a bulletin board display called "Colonial Community Life: North and South." Write paragraphs explaining each of the illustrations used in your display.
2. Pretend you have suddenly appeared back in time in the lower left drawing. Create an imaginary diary entry about your first day in this village. Describe your efforts to get help and to find a way to live in this community. Think of all the questions you might have to ask people there, and think about how they might react to you. Be as imaginative as you can.

Lesson 1 — Settlements

Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustration

1. Most colonial Americans lived in small villages or on farms in the countryside. But by the mid-1700s, a number of larger towns like this one had grown up. Name some of those larger towns.
2. In what ways would life in this town be like life in a city of similar size today? In what ways would it be different from life in such a city today?
3. In what ways would people in this town be like the colonists in the village in Illustration 2 for this lesson (on page 6)? In what ways would the people in the town differ from those in the village? Why?
4. Pretend you are a citizen of that small colonial village. And pretend you have just arrived in this city for a visit. What would be confusing about it to you? What would frighten or upset you about it? What would you like most about it? Overall, how would you feel about moving to it for good? (Remember, answer as if you were a resident of the colonial village in Illustration 2.)

Follow-up Activities

1. This drawing by William Birch shows a street scene in Philadelphia in 1800. Philadelphia was set up in the 1680s by the Quaker leader William Penn. Read more about William Penn and the early work that went into planning and building Pennsylvania. Think about Penn's ideas and hopes for this city. Now study the above drawing carefully. Do you think William Birch agreed with Penn's dreams for Philadelphia? Do you think he felt that Philadelphia actually was what Penn hoped it would be? What in the drawing helps you answer these questions.
2. One of colonial Philadelphia's most famous citizens was Benjamin Franklin. Franklin moved there in 1729 from another important colonial town, Boston. Read Franklin's famous autobiography. Based on this book, and on anything else you read about Franklin, write a brief essay on him. In the essay, explain how you think his experiences in these two colonial towns affected his life and his ideas.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better understand how important religion was in colonial America.
2. Students will debate both the positive and negative aspects of the strong religious ideas of the colonists.

Religion

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

These New England gravestones give a good idea of how important religion was in the lives of most colonial Americans. The top left gravestone shows an angel fighting to stop death from putting out a flame that stands for spiritual life. On the bottom right gravestone, a winged face stands for the soul rising to heaven. The words say, in part, “Serve God in Truth, while in your youth & till your life doth end.” The gravestones show how serious the Puritans were about religious matters. For them, questions about religion and about right and wrong were matters of life and death. This may seem grim, but these attitudes led the Puritans to work very hard to live good lives. It also led them to put a high value on learning, and on discussing important ideas of all sorts.

Illustration 2

The missionary spirit was a key aspect of colonial religions. In this illustration, Puritan John Eliot is shown doing missionary work among the Indians. Eliot was a strict Puritan in Massachusetts in the early 1600s. He learned the language of the local Indians, translated the Bible into that language, and helped set up 14 small towns for Native Americans who wanted to become Christians. Those Native Americans came to be known as “praying Indians.” Then in 1675, King Philip’s War broke out. It was a battle between New England colonists and many of the nearby Indian tribes. In the course of the fighting, Eliot’s Christian Indian towns were almost all destroyed. This illustration shows Eliot’s concern for these Indians and their interest in his teachings. But it may also hint at the tensions between the two cultures—as shown in the expressions on the faces of some of the Indians and in the differences in dress and manner of Indians and the Puritan John Eliot.

Illustration 3

The Salem Witch Trials of 1692 show how cruel the strict Puritan ideas about religion could at times become. However, belief in witches had been common throughout Europe for centuries. Yet, in fact, not many people in New England were killed for being witches before 1692. Salem was changing in the late 1600s, as was all of New England. The Salem trials may have been a last gasp for an older Puritan view of the world at a time when that view was actually starting to fade away.

Lesson 2—Religion

Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustrations

1. Many English colonists who settled North America came in search of greater religious freedom. For them, religion was easily the most important part of life. New Englanders especially, had very strict forms of religion—as these New England gravestones should make clear. What main religious group settled in New England in the 1600s?
2. The top left gravestone shows death fighting with an angel. Can you guess which figure stands for death?
3. In this scene, the angel stops death from putting out a flame, which can be seen as lighting up the world. What do you think the flame is supposed to stand for?
4. On the bottom right gravestone, a winged face stands for the soul rising to heaven. The words say, in part, “Serve God in Truth, while in your youth & till your life doth end.” How do these words help to show what the Puritans felt and what their religious beliefs were really like? Which gravestone tells you the most about the Puritans? Explain your answer.

Follow-up Activity

1. Here is a description of a Puritan church:

*“The meetinghouse, usually built of wood . . . was situated in the center of town. It was at first a plain, unadorned, rectangular structure, sometimes painted and sometimes not, without tower or steeple. . . . The interior was usually bare and unattractive; the pulpit stood on one side high above the pews. . . . Assignment of pews followed social rank; front seats were reserved for the deacons; convenient (seats) were set apart for the deaf; the side seats were for those of lesser (status) and the gallery for children”**

Using this description, draw your idea of what this church looked like. Share the drawings in a class discussion about religion in the daily life of New England Puritans.

* From *Colonial Folkways: A Chronical of American Life in the Reign of the Georges*, by Charles M. Andrews (1919), quoted in *Life in the American Colonies: Daily Lifestyles of the Early Settlers*, Jeanne Munn Bracken, ed., Discovery Enterprises, Ltd., Carlisle, MA, 1995.

Lesson 2—Religion

Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustration

1. In this illustration, a Puritan named John Eliot is shown doing missionary work among the Indians. What does it mean to say he was doing missionary work with the Indians?
2. Eliot was a strict Puritan in Massachusetts in the early 1600s. He learned the language of the local Indians, translated the Bible into that language, and helped set up several towns for those Indians who wanted to become Christians. Why do you suppose he wanted so strongly to do this kind missionary work?
3. Along with the language differences, what other problems might have made it hard for Eliot to succeed in his missionary work with these Indians?
4. Look closely at the way the Indians and Eliot are drawn—at their dress, gestures, and expressions. What does the artist seem to think about the Indians? What does he seem to think of Eliot? Do you think he expects Eliot to succeed in his missionary work with these Indians? Explain your answers.

Follow-up Activities

1. Eliot and those working with him set up 14 small towns for Christian Native Americans. These Native Americans came to be known as “praying Indians.” Then in 1675, King Philips War broke out. This was a war between angry whites and other groups of Indians. Read more about this war, and find out what happened in it to John Eliot and his groups of “praying Indians.” Then think about this statement:

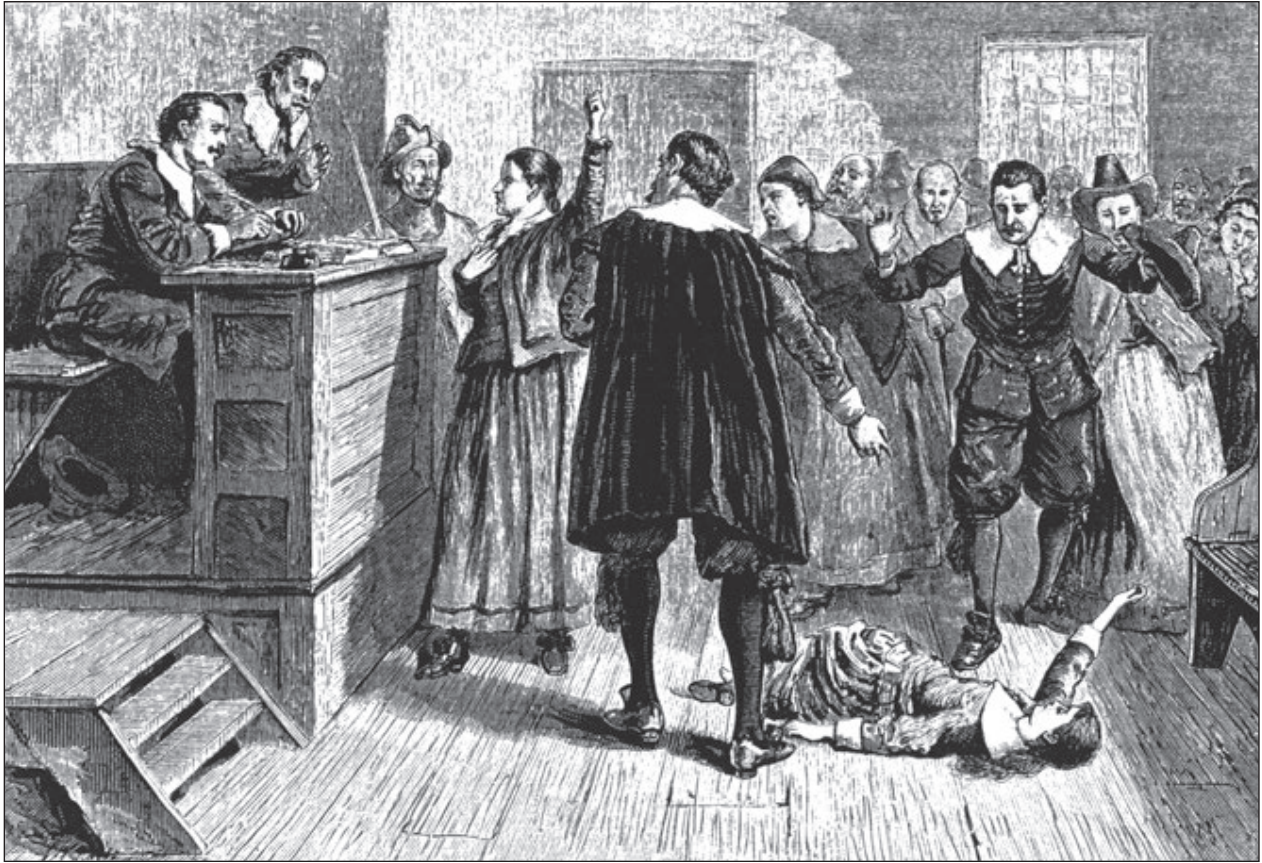
“King Philips War proves that John Eliot was wrong to do missionary work among the Indians.”

Write a brief essay either agreeing or disagreeing with this statement.

2. Rent the movie *Black Robe* (1991). This movie is about Catholic missionaries among the Indians in Canada in the 1600s. Write a review of this movie. In your review, describe the way the movie portrays the Indians, the missionaries, and the other colonists. Do you think it portrays these groups accurately? Why or why not?

Lesson 2—Religion

Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustration

1. This drawing is one artist's idea of what a famous group of trials might have looked like. These trials took place in Salem Village in Massachusetts in 1692. What were the people on trial there accused of?
2. In the 1600s, most people throughout Europe and the colonies believed in witches and witchcraft. Exactly what did they think a witch was? And what powers did they believe witches had?
3. By the time the Salem witchcraft trials ended, 20 people had been executed and more than a hundred others had been imprisoned. In this drawing, who do you think the bewitched person is, and who do you think the person accused of witchcraft is? Why?
4. The fears about witches in Salem began when a group of young girls playing at magic started to act strangely and accuse others of bewitching them. Nearly all the accusers and most of those accused were women. That was often the case in witchcraft trials. Why do you suppose that was so?

Follow-up Activity

1. The events in Salem were far worse than in any earlier outbreak of fears about witches in New England. Historians say that a number of problems in Salem added to fears there about witches. Three kinds of problems they mention are the following:

Social Factors (Conflicts between different social, or racial groups in the Salem Village.)

Economic Factors (Conflicts about property and land in the village.)

Religious Factors (Conflicts with the minister and others over various religious issues.)

Read more about the Salem trials and conditions in Salem Village in the 1690s. A good source is *Cry Witch: The Salem Witchcraft Trials—1692*, Juliet Mofford, ed., (Discovery Enterprises, Ltd., Carlisle, MA. 1995). Based on what you learn, write a brief essay explaining how each of the factors listed above might have added to fears about witchcraft in Salem Village in the 1690s.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better appreciate the central role of the family in colonial life.
2. Students will understand that the family performed many roles, economic, educational and religious.

Family Life

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

This is a drawing of the marriage of Dr. Francis Le Baron and Mary Wilder at Plymouth in 1695. The family was all important in colonial life. And as this illustration suggests, marriage was seen as a highly public matter, something to be witnessed by community elders as well as the immediate family. Divorce was almost never allowed in colonial society. Yet men and women often married more than once, since death frequently took away one or the other partner at a young age. Each family member was important, including the large numbers of children common in colonial families. Children were put to work at an early age and were expected to take care of their parents in old age. The family was the key support system for most individuals from birth to death.

Illustration 2

The family scene on the left helps to show how close-knit and deeply religious family life in colonial America was. It also shows how primitive it was, with all family members involved in surviving from day to day. The crucial importance of the family could have a harsh side, however. This was especially so for women. The slightly mocking image of an old maid on the right suggests that life for a woman with no husband or family could be lonely. It could also leave her poor, desperate, and a target of ridicule or even fear by the rest of the community.

Illustration 3

The colonists in New England held children to very high standards, both in learning and in moral conduct. This page from a primer was used to teach the alphabet to very young children in so-called “dame schools” run by young women in most villages. This primer page makes clear how important learning to read was thought to be in colonial New England. It also shows that these colonists did not see the training of the mind as separate from character education and religious training. In other colonies, the specific religious theology would have been different. But methods would not have varied all that much.

Lesson 3—Family Life

Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustration

1. This is a picture of a colonial wedding. It is the marriage of Dr. Francis Le Baron and Mary Wilder at Plymouth in 1695. What about this wedding seems similar to weddings today? What seems different?
2. Divorce was almost never allowed in colonial society. Yet the bride or the groom in this wedding was likely to marry one or even two more times in a lifetime. Why do you think that was likely?
3. Couples like this one were likely to have very large families. It was not unusual for a woman to bear twenty children or more in her lifetime. And both husband and wife usually wanted these large families. Why do you suppose that was so?
4. In general, both husbands and wives in colonial America agreed that a wife was supposed to obey and serve her husband. As one woman put it: "I am but a wife and therefore it is sufficient for me to follow my husband." Why do you think most people in colonial America felt that way?

Follow-up Activities

1. Many women did spend their lives raising children and taking care of the household. However, the early death of many husbands meant that women would often be widows, at least for part of their lives. Such women often ran taverns or got other kinds of jobs to support themselves. What problems do you think women in this situation faced? Make a list of these problems. Now, write a letter to the bride in this drawing and give her advice about how to prepare herself for these problems.
2. In the small New England towns of colonial times, personal behavior and family life were of real concern to the entire community. Many aspects of life that we think of as private were not seen that way then. But was this true of family life in the other colonies? To learn about family life among plantation owners in the South, read George Washington's Mother, by Jean Fritz (Grosset, 1992). Write a brief report on this book and answer the question asked here.

Lesson 3—Family Life

Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustrations

1. The illustration on the left shows the inside of a Pilgrim home in the 1600s. How is this home similar to and different from the ones you are used to? How is the family similar to or different from those you know?
2. What tasks would these people have had to do that most of us today do not have to do or that are done outside the home in other ways?
3. Colonial families were often very close. However, living alone or outside of any family could be very difficult, especially for women. Why do you suppose that was so?
4. The drawing on the right helps to show why women might have feared being alone as they grew older. One historian says it shows "the pity and ridicule such women endured. They brought out very mixed feelings in people." What do you think he means? Do you think the illustration shows what he says it shows? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activity

1. **Small-group activity:** Your task is to learn as much as you can about daily life for the average family in Puritan New England in the 1600s. Below is a group of books to look through for ideas. As you read more, your group should work on a short skit to act out in front of the class. The skit is to be a scene of a day in the life of the family shown in the above illustration. The characters in your skit must include the figures shown in the illustration. You may add others—for example, some neighbors, a minister, Native Americans, etc. Try to make your skit both entertaining and informative.

Books to Consult

Bracken, Jeanne Munn, ed. *Life in the American Colonies: Daily Lifestyles of the Early Settlers*. Discovery Enterprises, Ltd., 1995.

Earle, Alice Morse. *Home Life in Colonial Days*. Corner House, 1975.

Hawke, David Freeman. *Everyday Life in Early America*. Harper & Row, 1988.

Lesson 3—Family Life

Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustration

1. Education was important to most colonists. But it was especially important to the Puritans in New England. This is a page from a typical New England primer. What do you think the purpose of these primers was?
2. How similar is this primer's way of teaching the alphabet to the way that you learned the alphabet, or to the way the alphabet is generally taught to young children today?
3. The New England settlers did not separate the teaching of spelling, reading or other subjects from the teaching of morality and religion. What about this primer page helps to make that clear?
4. The saying for the letter "A" is, "In Adams Fall, We sinned all." For the letter "F" we get, "The idle Fool Is whipt at School." And for "G" we have, "As runs the Glass, Man's Life doth pass." Explain these sayings. How do they help you to better understand colonial attitudes toward young children? What do you think about those attitudes? Explain your answer.

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Many Puritan attitudes toward children seem harsh to us today. But your group's task is to conduct a debate about these practices in which you criticize *and* defend them as best you can. As a group, learn all you can about the way children were raised and educated in Puritan New England. Half of your group must defend this way of raising children, while the other half criticizes it. But both sides must present a clear description of Puritan childrearing practices before either praising or attacking them. Once the group is ready, hold your debate in front of the class and invite others to ask questions and make comments.
2. Read a biography of Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, or some other member of the wealthy class of Virginia planters in the 1700s. How was your subject educated? Compare this form of education to schooling in New England. Why do you think the education of these southern planters was so different from education in New England?

OBJECTIVE

1. Students will better understand the small scale and household-centered nature of much of the work performed in colonial America.

Work

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

On the left, a farmer near the frontier uses a simple plow drawn by a team of oxen. His land appears to be only partly cleared and settled. Simple farms like this were typical on the American frontier well into the 1800s. After a time, the log cabin would give way to a larger and more comfortable house. In some regions, large plantations worked by slaves arose—such as George Washington's, on the right. However, the vast majority of colonial Americans worked small family farms. No machinery existed to take the place of backbreaking labor—for the women and children in the family as well as for the men. All worked to produce goods mainly for their own household use. Only small surpluses, if any, would be available for sale.

Illustration 2

As the colonies grew, many people made life better for themselves through hard work. Slaves were the big exception to this. In the colonial period, several forms of servitude existed for a time. But these soon faded away, leaving two starkly different labor systems. Most whites owned their own lands or shops, or they worked for wages at jobs freely chosen. But nearly all African Americans were owned outright. They faced a lifetime of unpaid labor for others. And as this illustration of a slave ship makes clear, slavery was not just a matter of economics. It was a violent relationship in which one group of human beings dominated another totally.

Illustration 3

The American colonies were settled by leaders who were often quite “modern” in outlook for their times. In the 1700s, especially, they took a strong interest in the new scientific knowledge and enlightened ideas that were altering Western society. But as these drawings show, those new ideas had still done little to change the working lives of ordinary colonists. Even in the few larger towns, business activity was still very small in scale. Master craftworkers made clothing, shoes, furniture, iron implements and other goods using simple tools, often working alone or employing just a few “journeymen” and apprentices. Many shops were set up in the home. And workplace relationships were direct and personal, often merging with those of the household family itself.

Lesson 4—Work

Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustrations

1. In the 1700s and early 1800s, most Americans were farmers who worked their own lands. Many lived in settled areas. However, like the one in the upper left, a large number of them lived in unsettled frontier regions. Why do you think so many people came here from Europe to become farmers in wilderness regions?
2. This drawing shows a farmer using a simple plow drawn by a team of oxen. What other kinds of work would men and women have had to do at different times during the year on a simple rural homestead such as this one?
3. Not all farms in colonial America were worked by their owners alone. Some were very large and used a very different sort of labor system. From the scene on the right, can you explain what this system was? Can you identify the famous plantation owner shown supervising in this scene?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Your task is to pretend you are a group of people in London in the 1600s and you are planning to emigrate to America. You hope to establish a farm community of your own. As a group, learn all you can about the geographical and social conditions in the colonies. Based on what you learn, make a group decision about where to locate your settlement. Prepare a brief report to the rest of the class describing the location of your settlement and carefully explaining your reasons for choosing it.
2. Not all colonial farms looked like the ones shown here. Read more about farming in either Pennsylvania or New York. Write a brief essay describing how farms in those areas would have differed from those shown here. Describe the major crops grown, the average size of farms, the key farm implements used, the role of slave or indentured labor, and how much was usually grown for sale versus amounts grown for the immediate use of the farmer's family.

Lesson 4—Work

Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustration

1. One group of people did not come to America willingly. And they never got to choose the kind of work they would do. This drawing should help you explain who they were and how they got to America.
2. What in the picture shows that these passengers did not choose to make this trip on their own?
3. What do you know about conditions on the ships that took slaves to the new world in the 1600s and 1700s? How good is this picture at giving you an idea of what those conditions were like? What does it show? What, if anything, does it leave out?
4. What do you imagine the people shown in this drawing were feeling at the time? What thoughts about their past might they have had? What thoughts about the future? What, if anything, could they do about the situation facing them?
5. Suppose a few of these slaves decided to try to take over the ship and go home? What problems would have made this hard to do?

Follow-up Activities

1. First, read more on the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Now, pretend you were one of the slaves shown in this drawing. It is many years later. You have learned to read and write, and you decide to write the story of your life. As part of this story, write a brief account of your trip to America on this ship. In what you write, describe how you wound up on board this ship, how you were treated on it, what was going on in the scene shown in this drawing, and what your thoughts were on that particular day. As a class, share some of these brief accounts.
2. **Small-group activity:** Pretend you are a group of slaves in this drawing and you have just led a successful take over of the ship. Now you are in charge and must decide what to do. What will you do with any of the crew members you have captured? Where will you go? How will you get there? What will you do once you are there? One of your group members should take notes and report to the class on the decisions your group makes.

Lesson 4—Work

Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Discussing the Illustrations

1. In colonial America, most people lived and worked in the countryside. However, if you were living in a colonial town the 1700s, you might have seen many workers like the two shown here. In what ways are these two work scenes similar to and different from most kinds of jobs today?
2. The man on the right is hammering a brass vessel into shape. The woman on the left is using a machine that makes pins. In the 1700s and early 1800s, many other crafts were practiced in small workshops such as the ones you see here. What were some of the more common of those crafts or trades?
3. Master craftsmen who owned workshops such as those shown here often took on apprentices or hired one or more helpers called “journeymen.” Labor conflicts (such as strikes or protests) between masters and journeymen were not common. Why do you think these kinds of labor conflict were rare in work settings like these?

Follow-up Activities

1. Read more about one of the following occupations in colonial America in the 1700s:

Ship builder	Weaver
Shoemaker	Carpenter
Blacksmith	Printer
Silversmith	Innkeeper

Based on your reading, prepare a brief report to the class answering these questions: Did the owner and any hired workers in this occupation usually work together under the same roof? What main tools did they use, and how expensive were they? How hard was it for a new worker to become an owner or master worker in this occupation? As a class, discuss the answers to these questions.

2. Benjamin Franklin began his career as a printer. Read *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. In what ways, if any, do you think Franklin’s experiences as a printer affected his political ideas and his involvement in the American Revolution?

Image Close-ups

Settlements

Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Settlements

Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the
Library of Congress

Settlements

Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Religion

Illustration 1



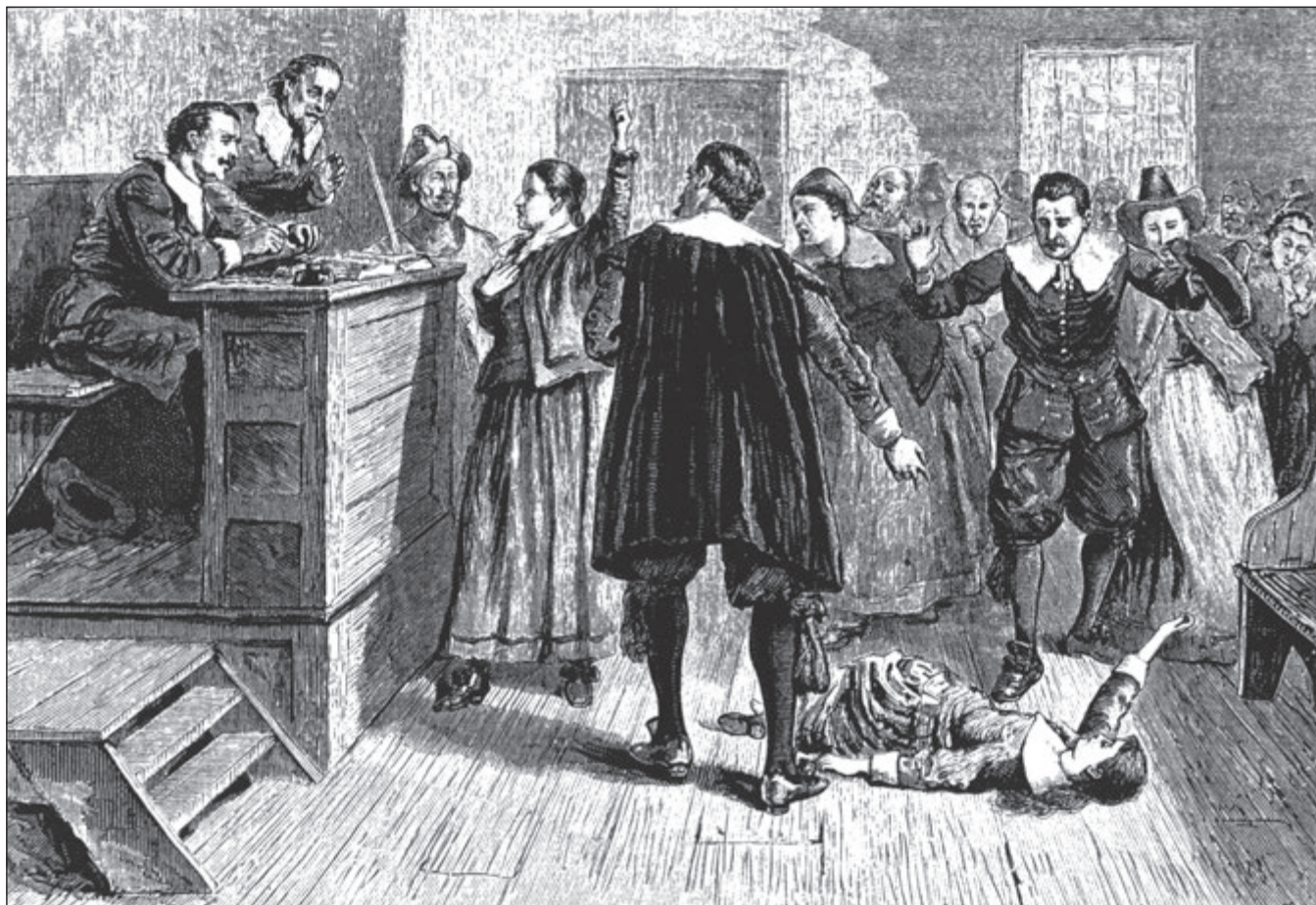
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Religion Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Religion
Illustration 3



WITCHCRAFT AT SALEM VILLAGE

Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Family Life

Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Family Life Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the
Library of Congress

Family Life

Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Work Illustration 1

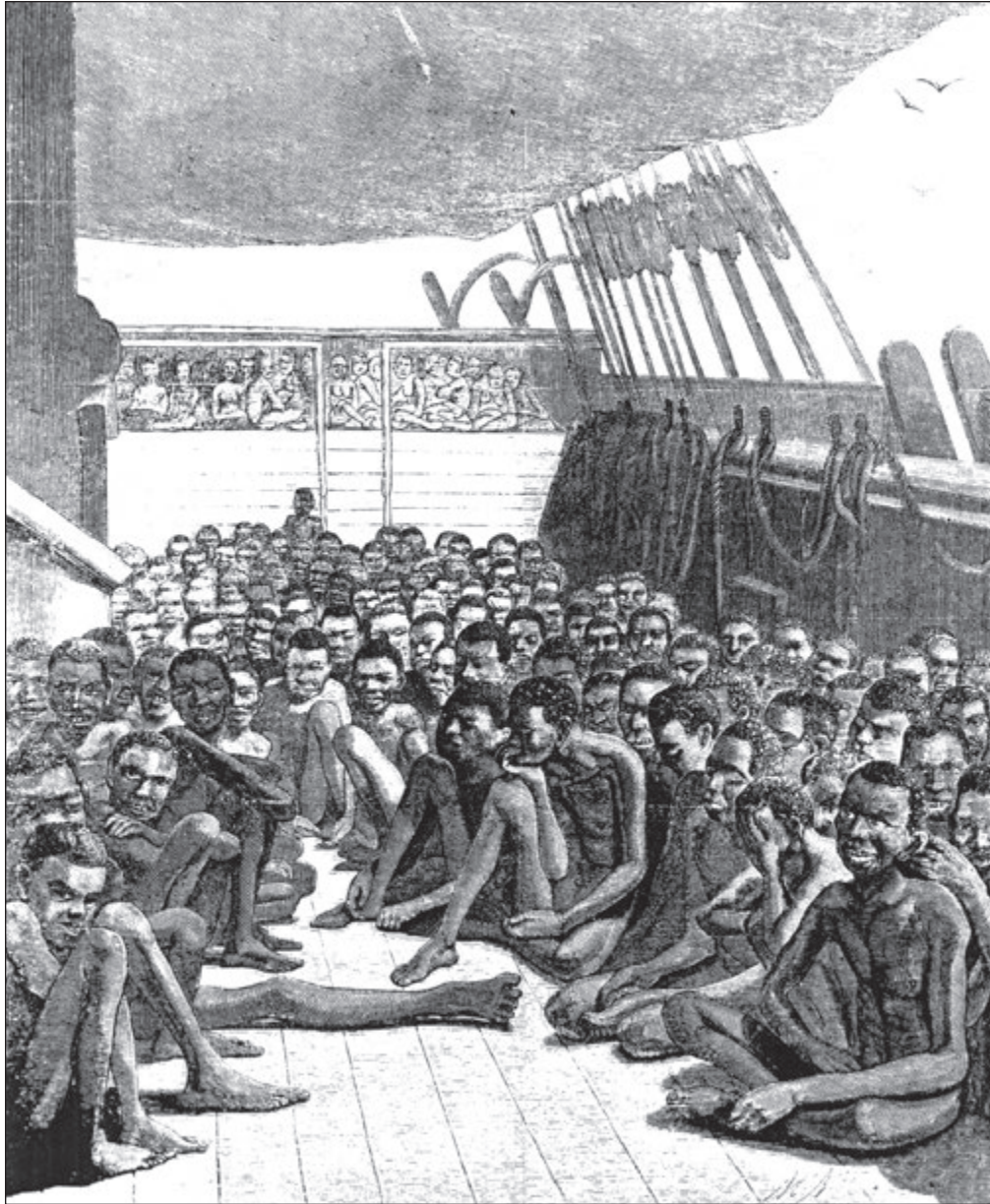


Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Work Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Work Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



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