Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

**LO 1** Describe the development of the English colonies during the 1700s, including a discussion of each group of colonies: New England, the Middle Colonies, the Chesapeake, and the Southern Colonies.

**LO 2** Discuss the impact of the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening on colonial society in America.

**LO 3** Chronicle the development of slavery in the American colonies, and analyze the reasons for changes in attitudes and in the legal system that helped the distinctively American slave system to flourish.

**LO 4** By 1763, American colonists had become used to making their own decisions and taking care of their own needs. Describe the events in England that contributed to this situation, and explain their effects on the colonists.
As the last chapter discussed, British colonial America gradually evolved into four unique regions. This chapter explores the development of these regions from 1700 to 1763, the expansion of an intellectual and cultural life distinct from that of Britain, and the ways in which African slavery became ingrained in the life of colonial North America. It concludes with Britain’s attempts to regain control of its increasingly feisty and independent-minded colony, an effort that would eventually foster a revolution.

What do you think?

It was slavery that led to racism, not racism that led to slavery.

Strongly Disagree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Agree
| 6 | 7 |

diversified farming
System in which a single home could farm various crops to sustain the household throughout the year

LO Expansion of Colonial Economy and Society, 1700–1763

As colonial society grew, by 1700 four distinct regions had developed: New England (Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Connecticut), the Middle Colonies (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware), the Chesapeake (Virginia and Maryland), and the Southern Colonies (North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia) (see Map 4.1). Each region had a unique economy based on its geographical location and its founding ideology, and each region’s society developed in response to those two factors. The idea that all colonists possessed “natural rights” as Englishmen was perhaps the only unifying feature in colonial North America. Otherwise, the colonists lived incredibly distinct lives, based largely on the region in which they resided. These regional distinctions would remain significant, and would perhaps even lead to the American Civil War nearly a century later.

New England

New England’s terrain, climate, and founding ideology encouraged the development of certain types of agriculture, business, trade, and society.

Economy

Like most other colonists, most New Englanders were farmers. New England’s hilly land and a short growing season encouraged diversified farming, a system in which...
a single home could farm many different crops that would sustain the household throughout the year. Farmers lived in towns and walked each day to their fields to tend their crops. Livestock was allowed to graze on community-owned land, such as the town common. New Englanders were consistently alert to new economic opportunities. They grew surplus agricultural goods to trade for tools and other finished goods such as furniture. At first their surplus was limited to grains and cereals, but by the early 1700s New Englanders were trading meat, dairy, and orchard products as well. In the mid-1600s and throughout the early 1700s, New Englanders also maintained an active trade in furs, fish, and timber.

In this highly agrarian society, New Englanders often produced their own furniture and agricultural implements, and spun their family’s flax and wool to make clothing. Over time, some small industries developed around New England’s two principal products: fish and lumber. New Englanders used local timber to establish a shipbuilding industry, and by the mid-1700s, one-third of all ships used by England were built in New England, a truly remarkable statistic.

Developing industries require money, salesmen, and trade routes, and the merchants who met these needs became prominent players in the development of New England from 1700 to 1763. They brought in capital and managerial expertise, and when land opened up in the west, the commercial leaders of New England were some of the first speculators, originating the practice of western land speculation around 1670.

These commercial adventurers also participated in a pattern of trade that came to be called the **Triangular Trade**, although it was much more complicated than a simple triangle. The New England colonies traded fish and grains to England and to southern Europe in return for wine, spices, and gold. They also sold their goods to the West Indies in return for sugar and molasses. The New Englanders then distilled the molasses to make rum and traded it, along with other manufactured goods, to Africa in return for slaves and gold. The gold from this trade allowed New Englanders to purchase manufactured goods, tools, and linens from England, which in turn bought New England’s manufactured ships. By 1763, this was a thriving arena of commerce that gave the colonies a good deal of economic independence, which later supported their insistent demands for increased political independence. New Englanders had also established a diversified economy that possessed but was not dependent upon slave labor.

**Society**

In 1660, New England had a population of more than 30,000 people of European descent. These people lived a mostly provincial life in small, family-centered towns. By 1700, the population had tripled to 90,000, and by 1760 it had reached 450,000. Still, most of these people lived in small towns.

By the mid-1700s, one-third of all ships used by England were built in New England.
The dramatic increase in population reflected the stability and importance of families and an environment hospitable to life and commerce. Some immigrants came, and slaves were forced to come, but most of the growth was due to a high birthrate. This burgeoning population was the impetus for rapid westward expansion. A family with six sons could not divide its land six ways and bequeath a plot of land large enough for each son to ensure his prosperity or success. Some of the children had to strike out on their own.

One English import that crossed the Atlantic successfully was a social system demarcated by class. Theoretically at the top of the system was a small group of aristocrats—governors, judges, and wealthy businessmen with English backgrounds—who endeavored to live a properly refined life above the rest of the population. The wealthiest attempted to recreate the privileged life of urban England, building large homes and filling them with English furnishings. To flaunt their wealth, some possessed slaves.

A bigger group in New England society was what the colonists called the “natural aristocracy”—merchants and wealthy landholders who made their fortunes in the New World and were not deemed special because of their titles. These men dominated economic affairs and owned an increasingly larger and larger percentage of the area’s wealth.

A group of commercial middlemen, farmers, and artisans constituted the class in the middle and made up the majority of the population. They may have owned their own farms or small businesses that produced handmade goods. Beneath them was a laboring class that consisted mostly of young men waiting to inherit land from their fathers or preparing to enter a craft. In time, most of this laboring class would own property and enjoy some level of wealth. Slaves, employed by the wealthiest members of the natural aristocracy, dwelled at the bottom of the social structure.

Life in New England

With the growth that occurred between 1660 and 1763, the now-idealized image of an agricultural and religiously orthodox New England receded into the past. In its place emerged an increasingly commercialized society characterized by economic mobility and social differentiation. Although New England remained overwhelmingly agricultural, the small towns became increasingly connected to one another.

This was a significant transition from a century earlier. In the 1660s, colonial New England was a provincial land freckled with unconnected towns. There were few roads in the 1660s, and they connected only the largest towns. By the 1700s, this had begun to change. Commerce had grown exponentially, as colonists tracked the markets in England and knew which ships were carrying which goods. One historian has called this developing society “an empire of goods” because of the large number of goods newly available for purchase.

As the population multiplied, colonists pushed westward and developed one town after another, creating a large half-circle of small towns around any large Atlantic port city. These hinterland towns lay on the margins of the bustling economic and social world of New England’s cities.

Such robust growth meant that the religious and social orthodoxy enforced by the Puritans could not last. Prosperity weakened the younger generations’ commitment to the strict religious practices of their forefathers. Ministers slowly lost stature, no longer defining New England life as they had when the Puritans first arrived. Although the number of church congregants remained stable, by the mid-1660s some church leaders attempted to stimulate membership growth. They instituted “halfway covenants,” whereby baptized individuals who had

processes by which baptized individuals who had never had a personal conversion to Christ were counted as partial members of a Protestant church and were allowed to have their children baptized.
never had a personal conversion to Christ were counted as partial members of the church and were allowed to have their children baptized as well. These “halfway” members were usually brought to the front of a church, where members could watch to see if they were about to experience a conversion. By 1700, Puritan ministers had also begun to rely on the jeremiad—a long speech emphasizing society’s fall from purity and grace to its current, depraved state—as a way to stir up congregations.

Despite the decline of the church’s importance, the slow growth of the cities, and the rise of New England, commerce helped New Englanders maintain their commitment to family life. If all else was changing, these values remained constant. The sexual division of labor continued (as imported from England): women remained in charge of “indoor affairs” (raising children, preparing food, cleaning house, doing laundry) and men took charge of “outdoor affairs” (cultivating fields, chopping wood, and conducting the daily business transactions, such as buying horses and selling crops). In sum, New England consisted mostly of stable, agriculturally based families, an expanding economy that led to the growth of some cities, and a rapid westward migration to accommodate the growth of the population. And of course there continued to be the presence of Indians, who although being pushed west, still occupied significant terrain in all the colonies.
Some families were slaveholders, and by the 1760s slavery was generally well established in the Middle Colonies, although most families owned only small numbers of slaves.

**Society**

In 1660, just 5,000 non-Indian people lived in the Middle Colonies. In 1710, that number had grown to 70,000, and by 1760 it was 425,000. The high rate of childbirth fueled this growth as well as (unlike New England) continued immigration from Scotland, Ireland, Germany, and England.

In the Middle Colonies, several members of the natural aristocracy owned enormous tracts of land. These people grew wealthier and wealthier throughout the 1700s as they sold some of their extensive lands. Below them socially were urban merchants and small family farmers, who comprised the majority of the population. Below these groups were tenant farmers who rented the farms they worked. And in the cities there was a growing number of poor. There were also around 35,000 slaves in the Middle Colonies in 1770, most of whom worked in the agricultural areas of New York, usually cultivating wheat. Slavery was also visible in the cities, usually because the wealthiest colonists liked to have a servant in tow to show off their wealth. By 1750, New York City was a major hub of the American slave trade.

**Life in the Middle Colonies**

Life in the Middle Colonies can be differentiated by looking at the big cities (Philadelphia and New York) on the one hand, and everywhere else on the other. Family farms owned and worked by one family produced huge amounts of grain. In New York, however, large landowners owned baronial estates and had tenants work their lands. As in New England, the population boom propelled youngsters off family plots and farther west. Some tried to purchase farms, and some were reduced to tenant farming. In most areas, the sexual division of labor continued, with women controlling indoor activities and men controlling outdoor activities. Families remained generally stable, and, in the absence of large villages, the number of people living on a farm grew.

The cities were booming as well. In 1765, almost one out of every five Pennsylvanians lived in a sizeable town. A professional class of lawyers, craftsmen, and millers emerged. The populace founded urban institutions such as centers of public education, newspapers, theaters, fire departments, and libraries. More so than the other colonies, the Middle Colonies’ thriving population was diverse. In New York City and Philadelphia, many languages were spoken, and people often grouped together by language. In general, the laboring people of the Middle Colonies exerted an impressive amount of control over civic life, as a ruling elite was slow to emerge. This civic input combined with devotion to family and to individual happiness and formed the cornerstone of Middle Colonies society.

**The Chesapeake**

The Chesapeake, with more fertile soil than either New England or the Middle Colonies, had fewer towns and more land devoted to a single crop: tobacco.
Economy

Tobacco was the chief product of the Chesapeake area, and, rather than developing a diversified economy, farmers in the Chesapeake remained tied to this single lucrative crop. For instance, in the late 1600s, tobacco generated 90 percent of the enormous wealth in Virginia and Maryland. Flour and grains came in a distant second as exports, growing in importance only in the mid-1700s. From 1660 to 1763, tobacco was king of the Chesapeake, its production influencing everything else in the colony. Because people lived on huge stretches of land that grew tobacco, there were few towns and hardly any developed industries in the Chesapeake. Virginia did mine some iron ore, and after 1730, when grain became profitable, mills sprang up along the rivers. Indeed, just before the American Revolution, the Chesapeake's mills had developed into one of the strongest sectors of the economy. But this was a late development. The Chesapeake relied on its staple crop for its wealth, and the anemic growth of other industries would suffer because of it.

Cities, too, failed to develop. By the middle 1700s, the Chesapeake had only one sizeable city in Baltimore, which was developed as a port town for the area's grain. Other than that, most of the Chesapeake's cities (such as Norfolk) were little more than small towns.

Instead of living in cities or towns, the people of the Chesapeake settled on farms. Key to a farm's success was access to a riverbank where product could be transported to market. Thus, a developmental map of the Chesapeake would show a number of large farms moving farther and farther up the major rivers. In 1660, there were around 35,000 non-Indians living in the Chesapeake. By 1760 that number had reached 500,000. Just under two-fifths of this total (about 190,000) were slaves, most of whom worked on tobacco plantations that lined the major waterways.

Society

In this economically minded society, social relations were based on knowing one's place in the social hierarchy and deferring to one's superiors. At the top of the structure were the few families with access to public land who profited from selling tobacco and grain. They increased their wealth throughout the 1700s, constructing a visible structure of leadership and power and modeling their lives after those of the landed English gentry, not wealthy Londoners. By setting themselves up as an elite with social responsibilities, they gained total control over political and religious institutions. By the mid-1700s, commentators were noting the extravagance and indulgences of this elite. They sat high above the less affluent free colonists, who were usually small landholders and who were, in turn, socially above the slaves.

Life in the Chesapeake

The majority of the people in the Chesapeake lived on widely scattered farms and plantations. Because settlements were scattered, individual households grew larger and larger in size, and it was common to live with one's siblings for most of one's life. Throughout the 1700s, kinship networks among neighbors prospered.

As roads slowly developed, settlements began to spring up farther from the rivers. Horses provided the main mode of transportation. By the 1750s, the Chesapeake supported a rural commercial network along these roads, where merchants, innkeepers, and traders could hawk their wares. Life was slowly moving away from being entirely agricultural, although in contrast to New England and the Middle Colonies, urban life in the Chesapeake was nonexistent.

Until 1700, there were many more men than women in the Chesapeake. This meant that many people married late and that women possessed ample power. The region...
suffered from high death rates, economic inequality among free people, and weak social institutions, such as churches (where a sense of community could develop). This began to change around 1700. A temporary lull in tobacco prices slowed the rush of new arrivals, allowing Chesapeake society to settle down as its sex ratio evened out. In addition, after 1675 slavery replaced indentured servitude as the preferred type of labor. By 1720, slaves made up 25 percent of the population, a percentage that stabilized at about 40 percent by 1760, when almost 50 percent of families owned slaves, usually in small numbers. The declining number of indentured servants meant the eventual decline of a class of free white people, who would have constituted the region’s middle rung of society. Because of the growth of slavery, this middle rung remained narrow in the Chesapeake; there was little middle class to speak of.

For women, this meant a changed domestic life, and a less influential one. Following the model of the landed English gentry, Chesapeake society viewed men as benign patriarchs presiding over their flock of dependents. The result was that women’s roles in the region declined in importance from 1660 to 1760.

As opposed to the variety of religions in the Middle Colonies and, increasingly, New England, throughout the 1700s the Anglican Church became entrenched in the life of the Chesapeake. Unlike Puritans, Anglicans did not demand strict adherence, and the Chesapeake institutions remained generally secular. This situation was aided by the fact that there were few ministers in the growing region, and the gentry did not care to pay for more to come.

Throughout the 1700s, then, the Chesapeake developed a strongly aristocratic social structure and a largely rural, English model of living. This stood in contrast to New England, which featured small towns and social mobility. It also stood in contrast to the Middle Colonies, which relied on New York and Philadelphia as central urban hubs to support the many middle-rung farmers. Life in the Chesapeake was more deferential regarding status, more rural, and, at the top, more luxurious and comfortable.

The Southern Colonies

Impressive as it was, the wealth of the Chesapeake could not compete with that of the Southern Colonies. Like the Chesapeake, the Southern Colonies relied overwhelmingly on a few staple crops, but life was generally so miserable that few colonists resided there permanently. Only two towns of any size were established, and no social models of leadership developed. The wealthy landowners enjoyed the profits, but they chose to live elsewhere.

Economy

The staple crops of the Southern Colonies were tobacco, rice, and indigo, and they dominated the region’s economic life. Cotton
would become significant only after 1793, when Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin, which allowed the cultivation of the crop on lower-quality land, thus expanding the amount of cotton that could be grown. By the early 1700s, however, large plantations started springing up to grow those staple crops. Slave labor was the key to their development, allowing a few successful farmers to develop large plantations of over a thousand acres.

There was little industrial development in the Southern Colonies. Local artisans and their apprentices developed small establishments for manufacturing guns and other ironware. For the most part, however, the people of the Southern Colonies relied on trade with England for their industrial goods. This led to the creation of well-developed routes of commerce along waterways. It also allowed the Southern Colonies to participate in the Triangular Trade, shipping their tobacco, rice, and indigo to England in return for manufactured goods.

**Society**

Because of the miserable living conditions, including the heat, humidity, and insects, the Southern Colonies were slow to grow in population. In 1660, there were very few non-Indian settlers. In 1710, there were 26,000, and in 1760 there were just 215,000, about 95,000 of whom were slaves. The social structure reflected this differentiation. Plantation bosses were heads of large fiefdoms. Under them was a tiny middle class of lawyers, merchants, and skilled workers who usually lived in the region’s few small towns or worked in the lumber mills of North Carolina. The bulk of the working class was made up of slaves imported from Africa.

**Life in the Southern Colonies**

There was a difference in lifestyle between the upper and lower Southern Colonies. In the lower colonies (today’s South Carolina and Georgia), life expectancy continued to be perilously short. Few people lived to be sixty, and many died before they were twenty. This meant that, for the most part, those who could live elsewhere did.

Nevertheless, the lucky and the entrepreneurial amassed great wealth in the Southern Colonies. The commercial gentry who enjoyed this wealth lived a stylish life, usually in the manner of the English elite, enjoying West Indian accent pieces for their home’s furnishings. They customarily owned two homes: one on their plantation (where they spent little time), and one in either Charleston or Savannah. To make use of the gentry’s wealth and leisure time, these two cities developed such institutions as libraries, theaters, social clubs, and concert houses.

In the Southern Colonies, communities were not always based around families, mostly because there was no certainty that parents would survive long. Law enforcement was slack, depth of religious commitment was shallow, and interest in public education was limited. The wealthy frequently sent their children to England to be educated.

In dramatic contrast to this pleasant life they were leading, white Southerners developed draconian slave codes to govern the lives of their slaves. Punishment for slave insurrections was severe, travel for slaves was limited, and accumulation of wealth denied. Yet, there were few slave revolts, probably because most slaves did not yet work in gangs. The single major uprising, the Stono Rebellion of 1739 in South Carolina, was put down brutally and spurred the reinforcement of strict slave codes (see page 75).
Map 4.2. Forms of Government and Religions in the Colonies, 1720
However, because of the high rates of white absenteeism from their plantations, there was little owner oversight, meaning that slaves actually led a slightly freer life than the laws dictated.

**LO2 Expansion of Colonial Intellectual and Cultural Life**

The expanding economic and social life of the 1700s gave some people the time and inclination to engage in intellectual and cultural pursuits. It also allowed Americans to participate in a monumental transition affecting much of the Western world, a movement away from medieval thought toward that of the Enlightenment. This was important for American history because Enlightenment ideals played a substantial role in the American Revolution and in the development of the American political system that was to come.

**The American Enlightenment**

The American Enlightenment stemmed from the European Enlightenment, which was a movement to prioritize the human capacity for reason as the highest form of human attainment. In the early 1600s, most people of the Western world believed (1) in the unquestioned primacy of rulers (spiritual and secular); (2) in humans’ incapacity for social change; and (3) that our time here on earth is a temporary interlude on our journey toward either eternal salvation or damnation. In the 1500s, European scientists, most notably Copernicus, began to question these beliefs, and by the 1600s educated people were postulating whether natural laws (not divine ones) governed society and the universe, and whether these natural laws were accessible to humans through the use of reason.

The most prominent of these thinkers were John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Locke argued that one’s environment was more significant than divine decree in the development of one’s character, and Rousseau contended that individuals had “natural rights” to life, liberty, and property, which even a king or a pope could not deny. The key Enlightenment economist was Adam Smith, who postulated a natural balance in the economy determined by laws of supply and demand. Each of the central ideas put forward by these thinkers implied that progress was possible as people achieved more and more of their natural rights and that people had a stake in their own life and were entitled to reject authority if certain rights were denied.

**The American Enlightenment and Religion**

These ideas inspired both harmony and conflict with religious leaders, and many of the most consequential American intellectual outpourings from the colonial period are either rejections of or support for the Enlightenment. Cotton Mather, for instance, produced important sermons as he refined a Puritan theology that articulated the centrality of God to an individual’s well-being. William Bradford, John Winthrop, and Edward Johnson wrote histories of New England, giving special testament to the sacrifices made to religion by the colonial founders, but also hedging a bit toward the Enlightenment by praising the individual fortitude of those founders. And religion animated the poems of Anne Bradstreet, Edward Taylor, and Michael Wigglesworth. The American Enlightenment did not produce many atheists or agnostics, but it did begin a process whereby religious thinkers tried to find a balance between science and religion.

**Education**

The necessity of training ministers, especially in New England, led to the creation of an educational system, and the Enlightenment ideals of individual progress and human reason prodded the slow democratization of the system over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Reflecting this balance between religious and secular ideals, America’s first college, Harvard, was founded in 1636, not as an official church school, but under the prevailing Puritan philosophy and with a mission to create a literate ministry. In 1642, Massachusetts passed a law requiring parents to teach their children to read. In 1647, it passed a law requiring towns to maintain a primary school. Although they did so more slowly than New England, the Middle Colonies also launched endeavors in public education.

Over time, the presence of schools grew, especially in New England. Secondary schools opened there in the 1700s. They would not be established southward in significant numbers until after the revolution. Nine colleges were founded during the colonial period, four of them in New England. All, like Harvard, were in some way church schools.
The Secular Press

At the same time, Enlightenment ideals took hold with many laypeople, as did the secular practices of politics and commerce. This trend was reflected in the expansion of nonreligious newspapers throughout the 1700s, especially in New England. The first newspaper was published in Boston by Benjamin Harris in 1690, and the first regularly published paper was the Boston News-Letter, begun in 1704. By the middle of the 1700s, every major town had its own newspaper (although they published more about events in Europe than about those in the colonies). In 1741, Andrew Bradford published the first magazine, the American Magazine. The title alone reflects the unity that the colonists were beginning to feel.

The freedom encouraged by Enlightenment ideals also led to expansion of liberties, as in the case of John Peter Zenger, a New York newspaperman who was arrested after publishing an attack on the governor. Zenger was acquitted of the crime (because his attack was factually correct), setting a crucial precedent for freedom of the press; truth became a legitimate defense against a charge of libel, no matter how elevated in rank the alleged libel victim was. Illustrating the deep anti-authoritarianism that ran through the case, the jury, in coming to its decision, defied the wishes of the judge.

The Great Awakening

During this expansion of Enlightenment ideals, American churches experienced a revival. A combination of Enlightenment ideals and a general unhap-
Happiness with social and economic developments bred dissatisfaction with the direction American life was taking. Many colonists felt that the established religions had overly accommodated the Enlightenment, allowing rationalization too much free rein in the spiritual world; many colonists had also begun to feel alienated from the mainstream establishment and the traditions that ensconced them in power.

In response, ministers and laypeople alike originated a Protestant revival that emphasized the notion that individuals could find heaven if they worked hard enough (not just if they were predestined to go) and that allowed—even invited—emotional expressions of religion. Ignoring tradition, this new group of preachers stressed that all were equal in Christ. The result was the growth and development of several new Protestant denominations that invariably emphasized the laity’s role in matters both spiritual and temporal, as well as a more emotional type of religion. Called the Great Awakening, it was America’s first large-scale religious revival.

**Old Lights versus New Lights**

Jonathan Edwards was the intellectual leader of the Great Awakening, although itinerant evangelical preachers such as George Whitefield played a considerable role in fomenting the revival. These itinerants advocated an emotional style of religion and sometimes attacked local ministers. By the time it had run its course (by about 1745), the Great Awakening had opened a tremendous rift among Protestants. On one side were the Old Lights, who condemned emotionalism and favored a more rationalistic theology favored by elements of the Enlightenment; on the other were the New Lights, who supported evangelism, the new methods of prayer, and equality before Christ. The revival slowed during the 1750s, but it is significant for at least five reasons (see “The reasons why . . .” on the next page).

**African Slavery**

Alongside the American Enlightenment and the Great Awakening, an intricate and harsh slave system developed. Although slavery existed everywhere in colonial North America, it was especially brutal in the Southern Colonies. Numerically speaking, the colonies that would become the United States were a tiny part of a much larger Atlantic slave trade, a huge system of trade and migration that brought millions of slaves to the New World and Europe and that served as a pillar in the economy of one of the earliest forms of globalization. Europeans and colonials forced perhaps as many as 12 million Africans to cross the Atlantic. Many died during the arduous passage, masking the true number of forced migrants.
About 75 percent of slaves came from West Africa, and the other 25 percent came from Southwest Africa. A majority of the Africans went to colonies controlled by Spain or Portugal: about 2 million to Brazil and 3 million to the West Indies, usually to work on sugar plantations. Roughly 350,000 Africans, less than 5 percent of the total, came to the future United States. Of this 350,000, Europeans forced 10,000 Africans to come during the 1600s and the remainder during the 1700s. Although some would become free after earning enough money to purchase their freedom, more than 95 percent of colonial Africans remained slaves for life.

Enslavement

Enslavement was a brutal process in all three of its stages: initial capture in Africa, the middle passage across the ocean, and the period of adjustment to the New World.

Capture

The process by which the captured slaves came to North, South, and Central America was rationalized by the profits to be made. Acquired either through barter between a European slave trader and an African kingdom or through kidnapping, the enslaved Africans were bound at the neck in a leather brace. The slave trader connected a gang of slaves together by chains attached to these neck braces. Then the chained gang was marched to the coast, a journey sometimes as long as 550 miles, which could take up to two months. Once on the African coast, the traders herded their captives into stucco pens to be inspected and sorted by desirability. Some traders branded the slaves with hot irons to mark their property. Then the slaves waited in captivity for cargo ships to arrive.

The Middle Passage

When the ships arrived, slave traders forced the slaves from their pens and onto canoes and then paddled them out to the larger ships. At this point, some slaves jumped overboard, keeping themselves under water long enough to drown.

Once aboard the transport ship, slaves faced the “middle passage,” their horrible journey across the Atlantic. Traders packed the ships until they were overfilled. They cuffed the slaves and kept them below decks, away from fresh air. The captives were denied access to latrines, and the stench in the holds became unbearable. Many captives vomited in response, making the stench even worse. The Europeans also fed the slaves paltry food and threw sick slaves overboard to try to prevent the spread of diseases. They force-fed with a mouth wrench those who sought to commit suicide by starvation. Because the slaves came from varied tribes, it was likely they did not speak one another’s language, cutting them off completely from the life they once knew. The middle passage took between four and eight weeks,

The Great Awakening was significant for at least five reasons:

**Growth of churches.** As ministers formed new sects to meet the demands of the population, they greatly increased the number of churches in colonial America.

**Rise of lower churches.** Many of these new churches emerged from evangelical sects, such as the Baptists, who became prominent in the Chesapeake and sought to overturn the aristocratic social structure.

**Development of colleges.** Seeking to train all these new ministers, many religious orders established several colleges, many of which still exist today (for example, Princeton, Brown, Rutgers, and Dartmouth).

**Religion and science.** In the North American colonies, the Great Awakening aligned nicely with the Enlightenment, demonstrating the persistence of religion in conjunction with Enlightenment ideals in America.

**Decline of authority.** The Great Awakening also severed colonial ties to established structures of authority (religious authority, in this case), serving in some ways as a precursor to revolution.
African Slavery

To meet the labor demands of the New World, European merchants developed the Atlantic slave trade, which would eventually force as many as 12 million Africans to cross the Atlantic where they would work as human property. Of this huge number, roughly 5 percent came to land that would eventually become the United States.

Atlantic journey was perilous and potentially fatal, but especially so for the captured Africans.

### To a New Life

Once in the New World, slave traders auctioned off their cargo in public squares, chiefly in New York and Charleston, but in several other cities as well. Potential buyers inspected the captured men and women's teeth, underarms, and genitals. Strong young men were the most valuable, but women of childbearing age were also prized because they could have children who, by law in the 1700s, were also the slaveholder's property. Then the buyer transported the slaves to what lay ahead: a life of ceaseless labor. In total, the journey from African village to New World plantation routinely took as long as six months.

The process began in the 1600s and continued into the 1800s, although the 1780s were the years of the Atlantic slave trade's peak. Before the American

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To read a doctor's account of the middle passage, visit: [North Wind/North Wind Picture Archives](http://www.northwindpicturearchives.com).

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To see slave traders packed their ships tightly to maximize profits, visit: [North Wind/North Wind Picture Archives](http://www.northwindpicturearchives.com).
Revolution, there were only a few scattered movements to protest the slave trade and the practice of slavery (primarily by the Quakers, the Mennonites, and a few other religious groups). Much of European society simply accepted the horrors of slavery as a necessary cost of colonial expansion.

The Spread of Slavery

Tobacco, rice, and indigo—the three staple crops of the Southern and Chesapeake colonies—all demanded significant labor, and by the late 1600s, the favored form of labor in the American colonies was rapidly becoming African slaves. Between 1680 and 1700, the average number of slaves transported on English ships rose from 5,000 slaves a year to more than 20,000.

Although slavery was most common in the Southern Colonies and the Chesapeake, it was legal in all English colonies in America. In the North, slaves worked as field hands on farms and as domestic servants, dockworkers, and craftspeople in cities. But because of their labor-intensive cash crops, the market for slaves was much more lucrative in the South and the Chesapeake. Nevertheless, many northerners were involved in the trade. Northern traders, especially from Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island, engaged in and profited from the slave trade before the United States outlawed the importation of slaves in 1808.

Life Under Slavery

The daily life of a slave in colonial America depended on where he or she lived. In New England, where only about 3 percent of the population was African during the colonial era, slaves worked as field hands on small farms, as house servants for wealthy colonists, or as skilled artisans. Slaves could be isolated from one another (and most were), or they could live in a port town like Newport, Rhode Island, where slaves made up 18 percent of the population.

In the Middle Colonies, some slaves worked as field hands on small farms, while smaller numbers worked in cities in nearly every labor-intensive occupation. Neither of these regions relied on gang labor.

In the Southern Colonies and the Chesapeake, most slaves were field hands who grew sugar cane, rice, tobacco, or cotton. Some were house servants who cooked, cleaned, and helped care for children. A very few were skilled artisans. As arduous as the southern labor system was, however, plantation life allowed for development of a slave culture. This was possible because of the large number of slaves who could gather together after working hours.

Plantation Life

The plantations where slave life developed most fully were entirely in the South, especially in the lower South, where slaves outnumbered other colonists. Many slaves here spoke Gullah, a hybrid language of several African tongues. They preserved several African religious traditions, such as a couple’s jumping over a broomstick to seal a marriage. Over time, these traditions merged with Christianity in the same way that Catholic images merged with the traditional beliefs of Native America.

For slaves, family life was unpredictable, fragile, and subject to the arbitrary whims of their owners. Children typically stayed with their family until they were eight, at which time they were sometimes sold. Masters occasionally raped or coerced female slaves into sexual relations, further demonstrating their limitless power over their property. Nevertheless, families did struggle through, and wherever possible, strong family structures emerged. The hazards and difficulties inherent in the process of sustaining a family life under these conditions led slave men and women to take on roles different from those of...
their masters. Slave women, for instance, worked both in the field and in the home. Slave men, meanwhile, took on occasional domestic duties.

**Rebellion and Resistance**

Despite the horrific nature of slave life, slave revolts were infrequent, principally because slave owners had taken such drastic measures to maintain control over their slaves. The few slave revolts that did arise met with violent resistance and led to even tighter controls. One planned insurrection in New York City in 1740 ended with the burning of thirteen slaves and the hanging of eighteen others (along with four white allies).

The most notable slave revolt of the 1700s—the **Stono Rebellion**—occurred in Stono, South Carolina, in 1739, when, on a quiet Sunday morning, a group of mostly newly arrived slaves marched into a firearms shop, killed the colonists manning the shop, stole several firearms, and marched south, probably in an effort to get to Florida, where the Spanish government promised England's slaves freedom. After traveling only a few miles, the number of slaves had grown to more than one hundred. They marched from house to house, murdering slave owners and their families as they went. After 10 miles, the band was met by an armed militia, which killed at least thirty of the rebelling slaves and captured almost all of the rest. Nearly all who were captured were killed.

In response to the rebellion, South Carolina passed the **Negro Act**, which consolidated all of the separate slave codes into a single code that forbade slaves from growing their own food, assembling in groups, or learning to read. This sharp response to the Stono Rebellion continued a pattern of harsh legal retributions for slave insurrections.

**Slavery and Racism**

In the end, slavery promoted the rise of extreme, sustained racism against African Americans in North America. Since their arrival in the Chesapeake in 1619, dark-skinned people had been considered of lower status by Europeans. But because until the 1680s there were so few African slaves in the American colonies, they were generally not treated harshly. During this early period, a few slaves broke the bonds of enslavement and became landowners and politically active freedmen. Yet as the cost of indentured servants went up and that of slaves went down (for the reasons why, see Chapter 3), slaves were employed as the central labor force of the South and the Chesapeake.

As the number of slaves rose, so did restrictions on Africans and African Americans. Rabid manifestations of racism emerged out of owners' growing fears. The result was the creation of a caste-like system of segregation in which African Americans were considered inherently inferior to Europeans and Euro-Americans, and sometimes less than human. At the same time, religious writers, philosophers, scientists, and lay writers (among them, Thomas Jefferson) concocted theories about the “inferior” nature of African Americans, thus creating an intellectual framework to support the economic reality. Slavery lasted until the Civil War, and elements of this racial caste system have persisted well into the present day.
Salutary Neglect

Any attempt by the Crown to reassert control of the colonies would aggravate the colonists because they had become accustomed to a hands-off style of relations between the Crown and the colonies, a relationship labeled salutary neglect. The principle developed in the late 1680s, when, upon King Charles II’s death in 1685, his brother, James II, became king and promptly attempted to make England Catholic once again. This change created such a severe rift within England that it almost fell into civil war. Unlike the Cromwellian revolution of the 1650s, however, this second revolution was bloodless, and in the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688, Protestant factions forced James II to flee England. His exit left the Crown to his Protestant daughter and son-in-law, William of Orange and Mary II, more commonly referred to as William and Mary.

For the colonists, the result of the Glorious Revolution was looser governance by the Crown and the removal of many of the proprietors who had founded the colonies. William and Mary continued to have a definite economic interest in the colonies, establishing a Board of Trade to oversee affairs and collect data. They also established a privy council to administer colonial laws. But, in general, royal administration over the colonies grew much looser with the decline of the proprietors.

The colonists loved, advocated, and fought for the loose system of oversight that came to be called salutary neglect. The concept is simple: the Crown would essentially ignore governance of its colonies and enforcement of its trade laws so long as the colonies continued to provide England with sufficient cash and produce. Politically, this system gave colonial assemblies a high level of legitimacy, which was accomplished at the expense of the royal governors. Of course, the risk of salutary neglect was that, if England ever decided to enforce the laws on its books, a serious conflict was inevitable. This is exactly what would happen in the French and Indian War, yet another of the “Wars for Empire” that occurred from 1754 to 1763.

The French and Indian War, 1754–1763

The truce from Queen Anne’s War lasted nearly thirty years, but the battles between the European powers were not over. In King George’s War (1744–1748) England and France continued their New World spat, but the war ended with resolutions concerning only Europe; the exact New World ramifications remained unclear.

Meanwhile, English colonists pushed deeper into the Ohio Valley, further infuriating the French, who were already established traders there. Eventually the French attempted to build a series of military strongholds that would intimidate the English, the largest of which was Fort Duquesne in today’s southwest Pennsylvania. They wanted to keep the English out. Virginian colonists who were speculating on lands in the west retaliated by building Fort Necessity nearby. When the Virginians sent an inexperienced young militia colonel named George Washington to deter the French from building more forts, a skirmish between the French and the English ignited yet another war, with more consequences than before.

George Washington was swiftly forced to surrender, and it seemed that the French were going to control trade relations in the American interior for the foreseeable future. But English merchants in London lobbied to use this backwoods dispute to forge a war that would eject the French from North America once and for all. Without the French, London merchants would have a monopoly on much of the New World trade, which promised to be incredibly lucrative. They succeeded in their lobbying, and a hesitant Crown used this minor provocation to start a major war. It was in this contrived way that a skirmish on the Pennsylvania frontier exploded into a world war that involved France, England, Austria, Russia, Prussia, Spain, and numerous Indian tribes. In Europe, the war was called the Seven Years’ War; in North America, it was the French and Indian War.

The Albany Congress

The coming war put the English colonists on high alert. To discuss the matter, seven of the colonies sent representatives to Albany, New York, in the summer of 1754. The meeting, called the
Albany Congress, represented the first time the mainland English colonies met for a unified purpose.

The Albany Plan

Part of their purpose was to convince the Iroquois to join the English side in the battle, but the Iroquois chose to remain neutral to preserve their trade routes. Another part of the colonists’ strategy was to develop what would have been the first-ever colonial union under the Albany Plan, drafted by the printer, scientist, and, later, politician Benjamin Franklin. The plan would have placed all of England’s colonies in America under a single president-general, appointed by the Crown, whose responsibility would be to manage all activity on the frontier and handle negotiations with Indians. It also would have created a single legislature, made up of representatives from each of the colonies, whose number would depend on how much in taxes each colony paid.

The union failed to materialize, however, mainly because the colonists felt allegiance only to their particular colony and (to a lesser extent) to the Crown. They did not yet fully identify with their fellow colonists. England was unhappy with the prospect of colonial unity, but slowly, the colonists were beginning to perceive the need for it. The French and Indian War did much to solidify the feeling that the English colonies along the Atlantic Coast would share one fate and should, perhaps, unite.

Results

As the colonists had foreseen, war came, and under the leadership of General James Braddock, the English fared badly. Braddock’s attempts to raise money from the colonists to help supply his troops provoked colonial ire, and his patronizing attempts to work with Indian tribes also failed. Worse, he bumbled his way from one military defeat to another. Within three years, two-thirds of his troops were dead, including Braddock himself.

In 1758, the English began to take the conflict more seriously and sent a large army under the leadership of Jeffrey Amherst to take over military operations. What followed was warfare marked by extreme brutality on all sides. After a year, the English were prevailing, and a year later, in 1760, hostilities largely ended. In 1763 the three warring nations (Spain, England, and France) signed the Treaty of Paris (Map 4.3), which laid out the so-called Proclamation Line giving England the western interior of North America, Canada, and Florida. Spain received Louisiana from France, and the Mississippi River became the boundary between England’s holdings and Spain’s. France had been evicted from North America.
The French and Indian War was significant for several reasons (see “The reasons why . . .” box).

**Pan-Indianism**

With all the lands east of the Mississippi River now belonging to England, Indian tribes had to adapt. No longer could one tribe negotiate with one group of colonists and play the European nations off against one another to win concessions. Now Indian-colonial relations were centralized in London. The Indians recognized this transition and began to realize an increased unity between tribes in opposition to the English. Simply put, in the aftermath of the French and Indian War, many of the tribes of Native America shifted from favoring a tribal identity to assuming a racial one, or *pan-Indianism*. This was especially true in the Northwest, between the Great Lakes and the Appalachian Mountains, where contact with the colonists was most sustained.

**Neolin**

In the late 1750s and 1760s, Neolin, a Delaware prophet, began preaching a return to old Indian ways, as they were before Europeans had come to America. Central to this revitalization movement was the notion of purging all European habits, such as reliance on material goods, use of alcohol, and belief in Christianity. Neolin traveled to several tribes preaching his message of *pan-Indianism* and anti-Europeanism.

**Pontiac’s Rebellion**

By 1763, several Indians had followed Neolin’s advice and come together to present a unified front against the colonists. Under the leadership of Pontiac, chief of the Ottowa, they were ready to protest English intrusion into their lands and attempt to drive the colonists back across the Appalachians. The resulting battles in *Pontiac’s Rebellion* were brutal, with the English attempting to introduce smallpox into Indian communities (through infected blankets) and Indians deliberately poisoning English troops’ drinking water (by putting rotten meat in springs upriver from English camps). The English troops were better equipped for warfare, however, and the tribes of Native America, without the French available to help, could not withstand the English armies. They were beaten back, pushed farther west in yet another battle of what one historian has called “the long war for the west.”

**And in the end . . .**

Little did England suspect that, although it had won the Wars for Empire, it had done so at great cost:

*The reasons why . . .*

- **France removed and Indians lose a strategy.** France was forced to give up its land claims in Canada. This was disastrous for Indians in the north, because they had been surviving by playing one European power off another. Freed from competing with the French, the English could dictate the terms of trade and land possession. The Iroquois, for instance, tried to maintain their trading power but were suddenly without leverage now that the French were gone.

- **Colonial ire toward England.** During the war, the colonists gained experience dealing with the English army. They disliked its hierarchical style, especially after having experienced extensive self-rule in the colonies. For their part, the English saw the colonists as ragtag and undisciplined, and contempt between the two peoples increased.

- **Colonial unity.** The French and Indian War allowed the English colonies to see themselves as a united body distinct from England. The Albany Congress proved to be the first demonstration of an increasingly unified colonial identity.

- **The British financial burden.** The war was costly for England, and its attempts to recoup its losses through taxes on the colonies led directly to the Revolution.

- **French anger.** The French would greatly want revenge against the British for this battle, a chance they would get by helping the Americans during the American Revolution.

- **Pan-Indianism.** The French and Indian War led to increased feelings of *pan-Indianism* against white settlers.
Map 4.3. Territories after the Treaty of Paris, 1763

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As the French and Indian War was fought on American soil, many colonists began to feel themselves a people apart from their Mother Country. The initial and uncertain itching for political independence had begun. Many colonists could not, or would not, fathom the idea of independence—they had too much to lose. But many outspoken colonists felt that if England persisted in proclaiming the end of salutary neglect, and intended to intrude upon colonial affairs more pointedly, there would be trouble.

**What else was happening . . .**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1709</td>
<td>Bartolomeo Cristofori invents the piano.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1712</td>
<td>The last execution of an accused witch takes place in England.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1751</td>
<td>Benjamin Franklin sends up a kite during a thunderstorm and discovers that lightning is a form of electricity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1752</td>
<td>The first eraser is put on the end of a pencil.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It had sparked the process of colonial unification. The fight for political freedom was about to begin. During the years between 1700 and 1763, the North American colonies had developed into a stable, manufacturing economy that could potentially rival many European nations. It had large numbers of free white farmers and slave laborers performing much of the backbreaking labor. It also had a growing class of merchants and wealthy landowners who provided leadership and governance.