CHAPTER 5

Colonial Society on the Eve of Revolution, 1700–1775

# PART I: Reviewing the Chapter

## A. Checklist of Learning Objectives

After mastering this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Describe the demographic, ethnic, and social character of Britain’s colonies in the eighteenth century, and indicate how colonial society had changed since the seventeenth century.

2. Explain how the economic development of the colonies altered the patterns of social prestige and wealth, and brought growing class distinctions and class conflict to British North America.

3. Identify the major religious denominations of the eighteenth-century colonies, and indicate their role in early American society.

4. Explain the causes of the Great Awakening, and describe its effects on American religion, education, and politics.

5. Describe the origins and development of education, culture, and journalism in the colonies.

6. Describe the basic features of colonial politics, including the role of various official and informal political institutions.

7. Indicate the key qualities of daily existence in eighteenth-century colonial America, including forms of socialization and recreation.

## B. Glossary

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms.

1. **sect** A small religious group that has broken away from some larger mainstream church, often claiming superior or exclusive possession of religious truth. (A **denomination** is a branch of the church—usually Protestant—but makes no such exclusive claims.) “They belonged to several different Protestant sects. . . .”

2. **agitators** Persons who seek to excite or persuade the public on some issue. “Already experienced colonizers and agitators in Ireland, the Scots-Irish proved to be superb frontiersmen. . . .”

3. **stratification** The visible arrangement of society into a hierarchical pattern, with distinct social groups layered one on top of the other. “. . . colonial society . . . was beginning to show signs of stratification. . . .”

4. **mobility** The capacity to pass readily from one social or economic condition to another. (Social mobility may be **upward**, from a lower status to higher, or **downward**, from higher status to lower.)“. . . barriers to mobility . . . raised worries about the ‘Europeanization’ of America.”

5. **elite** A small, identifiable group at the top of a society or particular institution, usually possessing wealth, power, or special privileges. “. . . these elites now feathered their nests more finely.”

6. **almshouse** In the premodern era, a home for the poor, supported by charity or public funds. “Both Philadelphia and New York built almshouses in the 1730s. . . .”

7. **gentry** Landowners of substantial property, social standing, and leisure, but not titled nobility. “Wealth was concentrated in the hands of the largest slaveowners, widening the gap between the prosperous gentry and the ‘poor whites’. . . . ”

8. **tenant farmer** One who rents rather than owns land. “. . . the ‘poor whites’ . . . were increasingly forced to become tenant farmers.”

9. **penal code** The body of criminal laws specifying offenses and prescribing punishments. “But many convicts were the unfortunate victims . . . of a viciously unfair English penal code. . . .”

10. **veto** The executive power to prevent acts passed by the legislature from becoming law. “Thomas Jefferson, himself a slaveholder, assailed the British vetoes. . . .”

11. **profession** An occupation traditionally characterized by specialized skill, mastery of a body of knowledge, and publicly defined privileges and responsibilities. “Most honored of the professions was the Christian ministry.”

12. **apprentice** A person who works under a master to acquire instruction and skill in a trade or profession. “Aspiring young doctors served for a while as apprentices to older practitioners. . . .”

13. **speculation** Buying land or anything else in the hope of profiting by an expected rise in price. “Commercial ventures and land speculation . . . were the surest avenues to speedy wealth.”

14. **revival** In religion, a movement of renewed enthusiasm and commitment, often accompanied by special meetings or evangelical activity. “The stage was thus set for a rousing religious revival.”

15. **secular** Belonging to the worldly sphere, as distinct from the specifically sacred or churchly. “A more secular approach was evident late in the eighteenth century. . . .”

# Part II: Checking Your Progress

## A. True-False

Where the statement is true, circle **T**; where it is false, circle **F**.

1. T F Most of the spectacular growth of the colonial population came from immigration rather than natural increase.

2. T F The Scots-Irish were uprooted Scottish Protestants who largely settled in the Appalachian frontier and back country.

3. T F Compared with the seventeenth-century colonies, the eighteenth-century colonies were becoming more socially equal and democratic.

4. T F The lowest class of whites in the colonies consisted of the paupers and convicted criminals involuntarily shipped to America by British authorities.

5. T F When some North American colonists attempted to curtail the transatlantic slave trade, their efforts were thwarted by British government vetoes.

6. T F The most highly regarded professionals in the colonies were doctors and lawyers.

7. T F Besides agriculture, the most important colonial economic activities were fishing, shipping, and ocean-going trade.

8. T F The British government’s passage of the Molasses Act and other economic regulations effectively ended American merchants’ lucrative trade with the French West Indies.

9. T F The clergy of the established Anglican Church in the South and New York had a reputation for serious theology and high ethical standards.

10. T F The Great Awakening was a revival of fervent religion after a period of religious decline caused by clerical dullness and overintellectualism and lay liberalism in doctrine.

11. T F Great Awakening revivalists like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield tried to replace the older Puritan ideas of conversion and salvation with more rational and less emotional beliefs.

12. T F The Great Awakening was the first mass movement across the thirteen colonies to create a strong sense of common American identity and shared destiny.

13. T F By the late eighteenth century, the nine American colleges were comparable to the best university education offered in Europe.

14. T F The conviction of newspaper printer John Peter Zenger for seditious libel of a colonial governor stirred Americans’ opposition to British censorship of the press.

15. T F The central point of conflict in colonial politics was the relation between the democratically elected lower house of the assembly and the governors appointed by the king or colonial proprietor.

## B. Multiple Choice

Select the best answer and circle the corresponding letter.

1. The primary reason for the spectacular growth of America’s population in the eighteenth century was

a. the conquering of new territories.

b. the natural fertility of the population.

c. the increased importation of white indentured servants and black slaves.

d. new immigration from Europe.

e. increased longevity due to better diet and health care.

2. German settlement in the colonies was especially heavy in

a. Massachusetts.

b. Maryland.

c. New York.

d. Pennsylvania.

e. North Carolina.

3. Which of the following is *not* true of the colonial Scots-Irish?

a. They were not really Irish, but Scottish Presbyterians who had temporarily migrated to Ireland.

b. They tended to settle in the Appalachian frontier, mountains, and valleys from Pennsylvania southward.

c. They hated the British government and frequently rebelled against colonial authorities.

d. Their hostility to Indians and encroachment on Indian land often sparked frontier warfare.

e. They fervently practiced their Calvinist religion, which forbade dancing, gambling, and liquor consumption.

4. The two largest non-English white ethnic groups in the colonies were the

a. French and the Dutch.

b. Germans and the Scots-Irish.

c. Arabs and the Jews.

d. Welsh and the Irish.

e. Swedes and the Germans.

5. One way in which Indians and Africans were similar to whites in eighteenth-century North America was they

a. were committed to the Christian religion as their basic belief system.

b. increasingly mingled and intermarried with people from beyond their original ethnic group or tribe.

c. fundamentally disliked violence and looked to government to establish law and order.

d. increasingly found greater opportunities for freedom and upward mobility.

e. tended to prefer stable, homogenous communities.

6. Compared to the seventeenth century, American colonial society in the eighteenth century showed

a. greater domination by small farmers and artisans.

b. greater equality of wealth and status.

c. greater gaps in wealth and status between rich and poor.

d. greater opportunity for convicts and indentured servants to climb to the top.

e. growing divisions by race and ethnicity rather than social class.

7. The most honored professional in colonial America was the

a. lawyer.

b. college professor.

c. doctor.

d. journalist.

e. clergyman.

8. The primary source of livelihood for most colonial Americans was

a. manufacturing.

b. agriculture.

c. lumbering.

d. commerce and trade.

e. fishing.

9. Which of the following was *not* among the generally small-scale manufacturing enterprises in colonial America?

a. Carriage manufacturing

b. Liquor distilling

c. Beaver hat making

d. Iron making

e. Spinning and weaving

10. An unfortunate group of involuntary immigrants who ranked even below indentured servants on the American social scale were

a. the younger sons of English gentry.

b. French-Canadians forcibly removed from Quebec.

c. convicts and paupers.

d. prostitutes.

e. impressed sailors and seamen.

11. The triangular trade involved the sale of rum, molasses, and slaves among the ports of

a. Virginia, Canada, and Britain.

b. the West Indies, France, and South America.

c. New England, Britain, and Spain.

d. New England, Africa, and the West Indies.

e. South Carolina, the Mediterranean, and the Black Sea.

12. The passage of increasing British restrictions on trade encouraged colonial merchants to

a. organize political resistance in the British Parliament.

b. find ways to smuggle and otherwise evade the law by trading with other countries.

c. turn to domestic trade within the colonies.

d. turn from trading to such other enterprises as fishing and manufacturing.

e. establish branch offices in London that were not covered by the restrictions.

13. Besides offering rest, refreshment, and entertainment, colonial taverns served an important function as centers of

a. news and political opinion.

b. trade and business.

c. medicine and law.

d. religious revival.

e. dating and social relations with the opposite sex.

14. The Anglican Church suffered in colonial America because of

a. its strict doctrines and hierarchical church order.

b. its poorly qualified clergy and close ties with British authorities.

c. its inability to adjust to conditions of life in New England.

d. its reputation for fostering fanatical revivalism.

e. the succession of corrupt and incompetent bishops who ran the church.

15. The two denominations that enjoyed the status of established churches in various colonies were the

a. Quakers and Dutch Reformed.

b. Baptists and Lutherans.

c. Mennonites and Church of the Brethren.

d. Roman Catholics and Presbyterians.

e. Anglicans and Congregationalists.

16. Among the many important results of the Great Awakening was that it

a. broke down sectional boundaries and created a greater sense of common American identity.

b. contributed to greater religious liberalism and toleration in the churches.

c. caused a decline in colonial concern for education.

d. moved Americans closer to a single religious outlook.

e. made Americans suspicious of eloquent preachers and traveling evangelists.

17. A primary weapon used by colonial legislatures in their conflicts with royal governors was

a. extending the franchise to include almost all adult white citizens.

b. passing laws prohibiting the governors from owning land or industries.

c. voting them out of office.

d. using their power of the purse to withhold the governor’s salary.

e. appealing over the heads of the governors to the British Parliament.

## C. Identification

Supply the correct identification for each numbered description.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Corruption of a German word used as a term for German immigrants in Pennsylvania

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Ethnic group that had already relocated once before immigrating to America and settling largely on the western frontier of the middle and southern colonies

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Rebellious movement of North Carolina frontiersmen against eastern domination that included future President Andrew Jackson

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Popular term for convicted criminals dumped on colonies by British authorities

5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Dread disease that afflicted one out of every five colonial Americans, including George Washington

6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Lucrative profession, especially prevalent in New England, that marketed its product to the Catholic nations of southern Europe

7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Small but profitable trade route that linked New England, Africa, and the West Indies

8. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Popular colonial centers of recreation, gossip, and political debate

9. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Term for tax-supported condition of Congregational and Anglican churches, but not of Baptists, Quakers, and Roman Catholics

10. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Spectacular, emotional religious revival of the 1730s and 1740s

11. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Ministers who supported the Great Awakening against the old light clergy who rejected it

12. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Followers of a Dutch theologian who challenged traditional Calvinist doctrine by arguing for free will and the dispensation of divine grace beyond a few elect

13. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ The case that established the precedent that true statements about public officials could not be prosecuted as libel

14. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ The first American college not to be sponsored by a religious denomination, strongly supported by Benjamin Franklin

15. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Benjamin Franklin’s highly popular collection of information, parables, and advice

## D. Matching People, Places, and Events

Match the person, place, or event in the left column with the proper description in the right column by inserting the correct letter on the blank line.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. \_\_\_ Philadelphia2. \_\_\_ African Americans3. \_\_\_ Scots-Irish4. \_\_\_ Paxton Boys and Regulators5. \_\_\_ Patrick Henry6. \_\_\_ Molasses Act7. \_\_\_ Anglican church8. \_\_\_ Jonathan Edwards9. \_\_\_ George Whitefield10. \_\_\_ Phillis Wheatley11. \_\_\_ Benjamin Franklin12. \_\_\_ John Peter Zenger13. \_\_\_ Quakers14. \_\_\_ Baptists15. \_\_\_ John Singleton Copley | a. Itinerant British evangelist who spread the Great Awakening throughout the coloniesb. Colonial printer whose case helped begin freedom of the pressc. Colonial painter who studied and worked in Britaind. Leading city of the colonies; home of Benjamin Frankline. Largest non-English group in the coloniesf. Dominant religious group in colonial Pennsylvania, criticized by others for their attitudes toward Indiansg. Former slave who became a poet at an early ageh. Scots-Irish frontiersmen who protested against colonial elites of Pennsylvania and North Carolinai. Attempt by British authorities to squelch colonial trade with French West Indiesj. Brilliant New England theologian who instigated the Great Awakeningk. Group that settled the frontier, made whiskey, and hated the British and other governmental authoritiesl. Non-established religious group that benefited from the Great Awakeningm. Author, scientist, printer; “the first civilized American”n. Eloquent lawyer-orator who argued in defense of colonial rightso. Established religion in southern colonies and New York; weakened by lackadaisical clergy and too-close ties with British crown |

## E. Putting Things in Order

Put the following events in correct order by numbering them 1 to 10.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Epochal freedom of the press case is settled.

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ First southern college to train Anglican clergy is founded.

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Britain vetoes colonial effort to halt slave importation.

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Scots-Irish protestors stage armed marches.

5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ First medical attempts are made to prevent dreaded disease epidemics.

6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Parliament attempts to restrict colonial trade with French West Indies.

7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Princeton College is founded to train new light ministers.

8. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ An eloquent British preacher spreads evangelical religion through the colonies.

9. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Benjamin Franklin starts printing his most famous publication.

10. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ A fiery, intellectual preacher sets off a powerful religious revival in New England.

## F. Matching Cause and Effect

Match the historical cause in the left column with the proper effect in the right column by writing the correct letter on the blank line.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Cause | Effect |
| 1. \_\_\_ The high natural fertility of the colonial population2. \_\_\_ The heavy immigration of Germans, Scots-Irish, Africans, and others into the colonies3. \_\_\_ The large profits made by merchants as military suppliers for imperial wars4. \_\_\_ American merchants’ search for non-British markets5. \_\_\_ Dry over-intellectualism and loss of religious commitment6. \_\_\_ The Great Awakening7. \_\_\_ The Zenger case8. \_\_\_ The appointment of unpopular or incompetent royal governors to colonies9. \_\_\_ Upper-class fear of democratic excesses by poor whites10. \_\_\_ The lack of artistic concerns, cultural tradition, and leisure in the colonies | a. Prompted colonial assemblies to withhold royal governors’ salariesb. Created the conditions for the Great Awakening to erupt in the early eighteenth centuryc. Resulted in the development of a colonial melting pot, only one-half English by 1775d. Was met by British attempts to restrict colonial trade, such as the Molasses Acte. Increased the wealth of the eighteenth-century colonial elitef. Led to the increase of American population to one-third of England’s in 1775g. Forced the migration of colonial artists to Britain to study and pursue artistic careersh. Marked the beginnings of freedom of printed political expression in the coloniesi. Reinforced colonial property qualifications for votingj. Stimulated a fervent, emotional style of religion, denominational divisions, and a greater sense of inter-colonial American identity |

## G. Developing Historical Skills

### Learning from Map Comparison

By comparing two similar maps dealing with the same historical period, you can derive additional information about the relations between the two topics the maps emphasize. The map on p. 89 shows immigrant groups in 1775, and the map on p. 94 shows the colonial economy. By examining both maps, you can learn about the likely economic activities of various immigrant groups. Answer the following questions.

1. To what extent were Scots-Irish immigrants involved in tobacco cultivation?

2. What agricultural activities were most of the Dutch immigrants involved in?

3. With what part of the agricultural economy were African American slaves most involved?

4. Which major immigrant group may have had some involvement in the colonial iron industry?

## H. Map Mastery

### Map Discrimination

Using the maps and charts in Chapter 5, answer the following questions.

1. Which section contained the fewest non-English minorities?

2. The Scots-Irish were concentrated most heavily on the frontiers of which four colonies?

3. In which colony were German and Swiss immigrants most heavily concentrated?

4. Which colony contained the largest concentration of French immigrants?

5. Which four colonies had the greatest concentration of tobacco growing?

6. Which was the larger minority in the colonies: all the non-English white ethnic groups together or the African Americans?

7. Which twosocial groups stood between the landowning farmers and the slaves in the colonial social pyramid?

8. Which of the following religious groups were most heavily concentrated in the middle colonies: Lutherans, Dutch Reformed, Quakers, Baptists, or Roman Catholics?

9. How many years after the Declaration of Independence in 1776 was the last church officially disestablished?

10. How many of the colonial colleges were originally founded by established denominations?

### Map Challenge

Using the map on p. 89, write a brief essay in which you compare the ethnic mix in each of the following colonies: North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts.

# Part III: Applying What You Have Learned

1. What factors contributed to the growing numbers and wealth of the American colonists in the eighteenth century?

2. Describe the structure of colonial society in the eighteenth century. What developments tended to make society less equal and more hierarchical?

3. What attitudes toward government and authority did eighteenth-century Americans most commonly display. Cite specific developments or events that reflect these outlooks.

4. What were the causes and consequences of the Great Awakening? How was religious revival linked to the development of a sense of American uniqueness and identity?

5. What features of colonial politics contributed to the development of popular democracy, and what kept political life from being more truly democratic?

6. What were Americans’ essential attitudes toward education, professional learning, and higher forms of culture and science. Why were colonial newspapers and publications like Benjamin Franklin’s *Poor Richard’s Almanack* so popular?

7. Some historians claim that eighteenth-century American society was actually becoming more European than it had been in the previous century, while others contend that developments like the Great Awakening and the rise of colonial assemblies made the colonies truly American for the first time. Which of these interpretations is more persuasive, and why?

8. Compare and contrast the social structure and culture of the eighteenth century with that of the seventeenth century (see Chapter 4). In what ways was eighteenth-century society more complex and in what ways did it clearly continue earlier ideas and practices?