

Chapter 5: The Eighteenth Century World: Economy, Society, and Culture, 1700-1775

Overview

The world American colonists lived in during the eighteenth century was changing and becoming more complex. Between 1700 and 1750 the population in the English colonies increased from 250,000 to one million. In the seventeenth century most of the immigrants to English North America came from England. In the eighteenth century they came instead from Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, and Germany. In 1660 there were approximately 2,920 Africans living in the colonies. By 1760 there were 300,000 -- an increase of 1700 percent! In the southern colonies Africans made up 40 per cent of the total population and by 1720 Africans were the majority population in South Carolina. Most of the population increase in the colonies came from natural increase. The American colonial economy was built on and sustained by trade and these capitalist societies were tied increasingly to the economic network that spanned the Atlantic. Two revolutions took place during the eighteenth century: a consumer revolution and an industrious revolution. American religious, intellectual, and cultural life in the eighteenth century changed because of two movements: the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening. Both contributed to the humanitarianism that emerged at the end of the century and both were products of the world that capitalism created.

Key Topics The information in chapter 5 introduces your students to the following key topics:

- The dramatic growth of the colonial population, both black and white, from both immigration and natural increase in the eighteenth century.
- The maturing and diversification of the colonial capitalist economy, as it produced for, and consumed from, the North Atlantic market.
- The development of a public sphere in the cities and its relationship to new ideals of gentility and sociability.
- The importance of slavery to the colonial economy and the contributions of Africans to the colonial world.
- The Enlightenment and the Great Awakening as two different responses to the world created by the market economy and eighteenth century consumer culture.

Chapter Outline

George Whitefield: Evangelist for a Consumer Society

The Population Explosion of the Eighteenth Century

The Dimensions of Population Growth

Bound for America: European Immigrants

Bound for America: African Slaves

“The Great Increase of Offspring”

The Trans-Atlantic Political Economy: Producing and Consuming

The Nature of Colonial Economic Growth

The Transformation of the Family Economy

Sources of Regional Prosperity

Merchants and Dependent Laborers

Consumer Choices and the Creation of Gentility

The Varieties of Colonial Experience

Creating an Urban Public Sphere

The Diversity of Urban Life

The Maturing of Rural Society

The World that Slavery Made

Feature: Where they lived, Where they worked: The Chesapeake Plantation Village

Georgia: Frontier Outpost to Plantation Society

The Head and the Heart in America: The Enlightenment and Religious Awakening

Ideas of the Enlightenment

The Enlightenment and the Study of Political Economy

Enlightened Institutions
Origins of the Great Awakening
The Grand Itinerant
Cultural Conflict and Challenges to Authority
What the Awakening Wrought

Conclusion

Annotated chapter outline with review questions

George Whitefield: Evangelist for a Consumer Society: One of the most influential preachers in the history of Christianity, George Whitefield's preaching broke down the boundaries of small communities and helped create a mass public in America. His sermons appealed to men and women, rich and poor, slaves and masters, and those who were creating a new market economy and those who were suffering from the economic changes.

The Population Explosion of the Eighteenth Century: The world American colonists lived in during the eighteenth century was changing and becoming more complex. One of the most important changes that came about during this time was the dramatic increase in population. More people meant more manufactured goods were produced and it meant there were more consumers to purchase them. Between 1700 and 1750 the population in the English colonies increased from 250,000 to one million. This was a 300 percent increase. Most of the population growth came from the increased numbers of unfree immigrants: indentured servants and slaves. Of the immigrant population 90 percent were unfree. Increasingly this immigrant population was not English

- In the 1600s most of the immigrants to the English colonies came from England. In the 1700s they came from Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, and Germany; 50,000 of the 425,000 immigrants were Scots-Irish. German immigrants settled primarily in Pennsylvania. Those English who emigrated came as indentured servants; 50,000 were convicts whose sentence was served in the colonies.
- In 1660 there were approximately 2,920 Africans living in the colonies. By 1760 there were 300,000 -- an increase of 1700 percent! In the southern colonies Africans made up 40 percent of the total population and by 1720 Africans were the majority population in South Carolina. It is estimated that 523,000 Africans went to America between 1619 and 1808; two thirds of those arrived before 1776.
- Most of the population increase in England's colonies came from natural increase. Men and women married at a younger age and they bore more babies. Although the infant mortality rate was high most babies lived to adulthood. The American population was exceptionally young -- the average age was sixteen. The African population in the colonies enjoyed the same increase in population.

} What were the primary sources of population increase in the eighteenth century?

The Trans-Atlantic Political Economy: Producing and Consuming: The American colonial economy was built on and sustained by trade. This trade shaped the American colonies and they developed into capitalist societies, tied increasingly to the network that spanned the Atlantic. So that they could buy more manufactured products they reoriented their lives and their labor. Two revolutions took place during the eighteenth century: a consumer revolution and an industrious revolution.

- Population growth led to an expansion of the economy. As the economy matured, urban merchants and large plantation owners became more wealthy. The urban poor and tenant farmers began to slip toward poverty. The economic expansion of the eighteenth century came about without any significant changes in technology. People organized themselves to produce goods for the market.
- The colonial economy was shaped by three factors: abundance of land, shortages of land, and shortages of capital. Southern farmers made enough money so they could buy more land and slaves; northern farmers found few profits and they looked for other opportunities. The northern economy became more diversified than in the south. For the time, the southern economy was more prosperous.
- The family was the basic economic unit and work was organized by gender. When people decided to produce goods for sale (instead of personal consumption) they changed their family economies. It accounted for more than 60 percent of colonial exports. Slave labor accounted for most of the south's agricultural output and depending on the type of agriculture (tobacco or rice for example) determined the nature of the slaves' work.

- The middle colonies grew prosperous raising wheat and other grains to sell on the market. Farmers in this region relied on indentured servants, cottagers, and slaves. Pennsylvania was particularly prosperous and access to land was the colonists primary concern. In New England farming was the primary occupation and the labor was done by male family members. In most New England farm families outside sources of income paid for all that they wished to buy. With the exception of newly opened farming regions, almost all regions of the colonies participated in the trans-Atlantic economy.
 - The result of eighteenth century economic development was the creation of a complex economy which created greater opportunities for success and failure. The eighteenth century economic changes also changed the way that people saw themselves. They wanted the goods that made life more interesting and pleasant: sugar for tea or tobacco for smoking and they were willing to work for the money necessary to acquire these goods. Whether in the colonies or in England, men and women worked to acquire the money to buy the exotic goods they believed they needed.
-] What was the “industrious revolution?” How did it shape the development of the colonial economy? What were the other key factors shaping the development of the colonial economy? What effect did this development have on the lives of ordinary men and women?

The Varieties of Colonial Experience: The industrious and consumer revolutions tied people together and gave them common experiences but it also made for a considerable variety. Such things as climate, geography, immigration, economic development, and population density contributed to this diversity. Rural American life was changing. Some Americans began to live in small towns and cities while others moved further west on to the frontier.

- By 1760, America could boast a number of cities with impressive population figures. Between 1720 and 1760 Boston, for example, had grown from 12,000 to 16,000; Philadelphia from 10,000 to 30,000 and many villages had become small cities. Social life in America’s cities was characterized by two contradictory trends: social stratification was pronounced and some institutions brought all urban classes together. The creation of “public spheres” challenged the social hierarchy. The market economy created those with wealth and those who seemed to be permanently poor. Paupers became more common as did almshouses for the poor. Slaves were increasingly common and so, too, were slave rebellions or the threat of slave rebellions.
- The economic conditions that made urban society possible also changed rural society. Older more settled regions became over-crowded and land that had once seemed so abundant was now rare; poor farming techniques also made land infertile. Land pressure caused a number of social changes: young men and women postponed marriage but not necessarily sexual relations. Young men and women, pushed from the farm, found employment in the cities, outside the home as wage farmers or household help for girls. Even rural society had become divided economically. Affluent slave owners sold their crops on the international market and used their profits to fill their plantations with elegant furniture and dress themselves in elegant clothes.

] What were the primary changes in urban and rural life in the eighteenth century?

The Head and the Heart in America: The Enlightenment and Religious Awakening:

American religious, intellectual, and cultural life in the eighteenth century changed because of two movements: the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening. They were separate and distinct movements that appealed to different populations but both movements criticized established authority and valued the experience of the individual. Both contributed to the humanitarianism that emerged at the end of the century and both were products of the world that capitalism created.

- Enlightened thinkers believed in the power of rational thinking. They looked to reason and science and believed that God and his world were knowable. They believed knowledge should be used to improve the world. Scientific inventions could and should improve the human condition. That science could alleviate pain and suffering or cure diseases created a revulsion for suffering and encouraged humanitarian reform. This resulted in the belief in human equality. John Locke, an enlightenment political philosopher, was among the first to link society, politics, and the economy into a theory of political economy. He also developed a new economic theory that was a full scale defense of consumption. His writings led others, such as Adam Smith, to argue in favor of free markets and free labor -- ultimately they argued that humans

were happiest when they lived under free governments which protected private property but left the market unregulated. The Enlightenment also effected organized religion.

- The colonial population had become so large and spread out over such a large area that there were not enough churches or ministers. Population demand for access to religious services led to a series of revivals known as the Great Awakening. George Whitefield arrived in Philadelphia in 1739. He was enthusiastically received and toured all of the colonies from Maine to Georgia. He preached to all members of the community, stressing man's sinfulness and God's mercy. He also attacked ministers, arguing that not all of them had been saved, and the result was the splitting of congregations. The widespread appeal of Whitefield's message was that he challenged authority but did not challenge the system that supported it. He antagonized the religious elite without toppling the entire church or doctrine.
- The Great Awakening had its greatest impact in those regions that had experienced the most profound change: the cities, the frontier, and the older over-crowded cities. Spiritual rebirth provided men and women with a sense of joy and fulfillment that their competitive and changing world had been unable to supply. George Whitefield was a slave owner who argued that it was immoral to enslave Africans but not to own them provided one treated them well and Christianized them.
- Slaves and poor whites had been left out of the society that the more prosperous had created but evangelical religion placed the individual in a community of believers. It also allowed slaves the possibility of leadership in a biracial world as Africans became preachers. The Great Awakening turned the world upside down.

} What were the chief ideas of the Enlightenment? Why did some men and women find them attractive?

} What were the sources of the Great Awakening? Why were some men and women drawn to it?

Feature: Where they lived, Where they worked: The Chesapeake Plantation Village: The eighteenth century Chesapeake plantation was a self-supporting village. Tobacco was grown for sale in Europe and bricks, nails, and cloth were produced for consumption on the plantation. English as well as African architecture and planning characterized the look of the plantation. Not only did the location of houses one to another reflect African patterns but so, too, did things like barbeques and musical instruments (fiddles and banjos). Although most claimed otherwise, sexual relations between whites and blacks were common. In the Low Country, land owners were not always on the plantation and their absence allowed many Africans a certain degree of autonomy. It also gave them more opportunities to run away. Spanish Florida provided a haven for runaway slaves. Slave autonomy also gave them the needed freedom to foment slave rebellions like the Stono Rebellion of 1739. Soon it resembled South Carolina.

Conclusion: Both the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening paved the way for the Revolution. The Enlightenment stimulated optimism; the Great Awakening told its followers to look inward and scrutinize their hearts. They encouraged an individualism that would come to characterize Americans.

Making links to other ideas Using the maps and websites, in addition to your prepared lectures and other assignments, can give you more resources to enable your students to see that history is much more than memorizing names and dates. You will find that the websites are even more comprehensive and adaptable than described and because they have been collected here in one volume you have a world of information no further away than the click of your mouse. If you are new to the web's opportunities, you will be pleasantly surprised at the breadth and depth of the information available in these sites.

Map 01: What does this map tell you about the growth of the British colonies? What accounts for this growth?

Map 02: What colonial exports went to other British colonies? to Great Britain? Did Parliament have any sort of legislation regarding the transportation of goods from its colonies to England and the rest of Europe? What were those laws?

Map 03: What happened to the number of newspapers published between 1760 and 1775? What accounts for this increase?

Map 04: What does this map tell you about population settlement patterns in Philadelphia in the 1760s? Why is the population spread up and down the Delaware River instead of further west?

Map 05: What information does this map convey? Are the stops at the largest cities in the colonies? If so, why; if not, why not?

Web connections and resources Consider using these websites to supplement your students' reading and analytical skills. The sites were chosen because of their relevance to the material in the chapter -- not just to mirror it but to provide additional materials and perspectives. Questions from the student study guide have been included so that you can use or amend them to your own needs. Your students may find it insightful for you to guide them through the site as you help them develop research strategies.

“The Eighteenth-Century World” www.prenhall.com/boydston/greatawakening

In the early 1740s British evangelist George Whitefield brought the “Methodist” message of John Wesley to the colonies. Thousands flocked to his sermons, became convinced of their own sinfulness, and eagerly accepted the grace of salvation Whitefield assured them their Savior held out to them. Whitefield was joined in the field by scores of lesser known preachers who, nonetheless, enjoyed comparable success. Other ministers, dubbed “Old Lights,” charged that the conversions owed less to grace than to hysteria. This was the “Great Awakening.” What were the roots of this stirring, controversial, and influential event?

“The Exercise of a School Boy” <http://www.history.org/life/manners/rules2.htm>

This site lists the text of the etiquette book entitled Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation. As a youth, George Washington transcribed these rules as a lesson of colonial gentility.

1. It did not matter to what class one was born if one could acquire the things that made one appear to be a member of the genteel class. How would rules concerning civility and decent behavior help to remake one's behavior so that one would appear to be genteel?

“Immigrant Communities in Maryland” <http://www.clis.umd.edu/~mddl/791/communities/html/index.html#jewish>

In addition to exploring the origins of Maryland and its social, political, and cultural characteristics, this site offers a detailed look into the colonial immigrants from Germany and enslaved Africans. Of special interest is the story of a slave named Job who tells of his capture in Africa and his enslavement in Maryland.

1. For what reason would Thomas Bluett write the book entitled Some Memoirs of Job, the Son of Soloman, the High Priest of Boonda in Africa which was published in 1750?

“The European Enlightenment” <http://www.wsu.edu/%7Eedee/ENLIGHT/ENLIGHT.HTM>

On this comprehensive site, read about the general tenets of Enlightenment philosophy, excerpts from the works of Enlightenment thinkers, and a glossary of terms and concepts. This site links to several others on the subject.

1. From this site, define the following terms: capitalism, economics, rights, and tolerance.

“Religion and the Founding of the American Republic” <http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel02.html>

This Library of Congress site explores religion in Eighteenth-Century America and chronicles the coming of the religious movement known as the Great Awakening. It features many of the best known religious leaders of this movement, including Johnathan Edwards and George Whitfield. The site also offers the views of critics of this movement.

1. In this site, find “The Emergence of American Evangelism: The Great Awakening.” What accounts for George Whitefield's phenomenal popularity in the American colonies?

Analytical reading Your students may need more experience analyzing a short reading passage so that he or she can determine its component parts. They may need help identifying primary and supporting information as well as the author's analysis. The analytical reading passages and the questions from the student study guide have been duplicated in the instructor's manual for your use. Your students may need direction and encouragement in using them.

Increasingly, the American colonies were tied into a political economy that spread across the North Atlantic world, bringing dramatic changes everywhere it went. One of the most important changes was the increase in population. This population produced goods for the world economy and provided a market for them as well. This population boom was both the product of American prosperity and the precondition for its further growth.

The population in the American colonies grew at a rate unprecedented in human history. In 1700 there were just over 250,000 people living in all of the colonies, but by 1750 the population had grown more than 300 percent, to more than 1 million. The rate of growth was highest in the free population in the most prosperous farming regions. It grew rapidly everywhere, however, even among the slaves, in spite of the harsh conditions of their lives.

Much of the colonies' population growth was caused by their unquenchable thirst for labor. The colonies attracted an extraordinary number of immigrants, and when free labor did not satisfy the demand, unfree labor (slaves, indentured servants, and redemptioners) filled the gap. In fact, when the number of Africans who came in chains is added to the Europeans who migrated as indentured servants and redemptioners, 90 percent of the immigrants to the British colonies between 1580 and 1775 were unfree at the time of their arrival.

Increasingly, these immigrants reflected the broad reach of the North Atlantic political economy. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the population of the American colonies was primarily English in origin. By the beginning of the Revolution, the character of the population had changed significantly. Now there were small numbers of a large variety of nationalities and backgrounds, including Finns, Swedes, French, Swiss, and Jews. There were also large numbers of other non-English peoples as well, including Welsh, Scotch-Irish, Germans, Dutch, and Africans. In fact, half the population south of New England was non-English. The foundation for the subsequent diversity of the American population had been laid.

1. Where would the authors have located these population figures?
2. Why would so many Europeans emigrate to the British colonies in America? What were they hoping to find in America that they could not find at home?
3. What can we assume about the fact that the majority of immigrants to the American colonies were indentured servants of some sort?
4. What evidence can you use to justify your assumption? (Do not limit your answer just to this chapter.)

Writing The questions or writing prompts from the student study guide have been duplicated here for your use. These writing topics make good lecture topics especially if you help your students see the development of the idea in lecture format before they refine the idea in their writing assignments.

1. Compare and contrast urban and rural life in America during the eighteenth century.
2. How did the “industrious revolution” contribute to these changes?
3. What was it about the Enlightenment that so many Americans found appealing?
4. What was it about the Great Awakening that so many Americans found appealing?

Lecture Strategies Ultimately the lecture is where you impart, or profess, your knowledge for the benefit of your students. These strategies were designed around the textbook and if your classroom strategy is to use the organization of the text to organize your course content, these lecture ideas may prove helpful. However, if you lecture around themes please see the section entitled “Thematic Lecture Topics.” You may find that you are more comfortable with and your students are more responsive to a combination of the two. Consider, too, the projects suggested in the student study guide. If your students complete these before your lecture, their comprehension will surely be enhanced.

Chapter Five focuses on three topics of importance to the bigger topic of colonial America: colonial demography, economic development and diversity, and the influence of the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening. Your students should understand that the colonial American story is approaching an end and that these three topics in particular are responsible for pushing the Americans closer to independence. The population growth and economic growth are tied closely to one another. You and your students could examine the factors that

contributed to such an impressive growth in the colonies' population. Having established the population figures for each area or colonies, then help them see that this is not a monolithic cultural and ethnic population -- by the eve of the revolution America is unlike many other nations in the world in its cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. Thomas Paine commented on this and used America's multiethnic population as one reason for our difference from the Old World. Environmental diversity is another reason for our population growth and difference region to region.

Population growth also relates to the two economic revolutions of the eighteenth century: the consumer revolution and the industrious revolution. Show your students how these two revolutions exist hand in hand (that you can not have one without the other). Ask them to consider the remarkableness of these changes without a technological impetus for the change.

Also related to economic development and again our unique development are the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening. Both of these movements resonate in the American society of the eighteenth century because they make so much sense to the Americans. Colonists had learned to rely on their practical knowledge of their world in order to survive and the Enlightenment focuses on observation and reason for its understanding of the world and the universe. So, too, the Great Awakening. George Whitefield preached on topics that Americans understood first hand -- that through one's own initiative, temporal salvation was possible; why not spiritual salvation? Perhaps these two movements are more important in America because they are so akin to the colonists' own experiences.

Penguin Classics

See Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, editor. *Women's Indian Captivity Narratives*, edited with an introduction and notes by Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola. New York: Penguin Books, 1998. Here are ten captivity narratives written by women between the years 1682 and 1892. See especially "Panther Captivity" by Abraham Panther, Jemima Howe's "Genuine and Correct Account of the Captivity, Sufferings, and Deliverance of Mrs. Jemimah Howe" by Bunker Gay, and Mary Kinnan's "A True Narrative of the Sufferings of Mary Kinnan" by Shepard Kollock.

See also Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative and other Writings*, edited with an introduction and notes by Vincent Carretta, New York: Penguin Books, 1995. Published in 1789, Equiano's account is among the earliest autobiographical accounts of the colonial slave trade and the effects on its victims. Equiano's slavery spans the period from about 1755 to 1766 but it is also his life story that is interesting.

For a collection of slave narratives, see Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Classic Slave Narratives*, edited with an introduction by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: A Mentor Book, 1987. The first-hand stories of Olaudah Equiano, Mary Prince, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Jacobs introduce the reader to slavery from the inside (and over the period of American slavery) and more importantly what it means to be free.

The political philosophy of the American Revolution is found, among other places, in Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, edited with an introduction by Isaac Kramnick. New York: Penguin Books, 1976. Short, provocative, and timeless, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* became an immediate best-seller in 1776. It articulated what Americans believed and inspired them to do the "common sense" thing: declare independence from Great Britain.

See also L. Jesse Lemisch, *Benjamin Franklin: The Autobiography and Other Writings*, selected and edited by L. Jesse Lemisch. New York: A Signet Classic, 1961. Lemisch presents Franklin in his own words and those of others.

For a documentary history of the war for independence see Richard Wheeler, *Voices of 1776*, with a foreword by Bruce Catton. New York: Meridian, 1991. "The Story of the American Revolution in the Words of Those Who Were There" brings the war for independence back down to the level of the men who fought it.