Chapter 5: The Eighteenth-Century World, 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. Immigrants to English North America came from Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, and Germany. The number of African-Americans living in the colonies increased 1700 percent. 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.

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

Review Questions
✓ What were the primary sources of population increase in the eighteenth century?
✓ 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?
✓ What were the primary changes in urban and rural life in the eighteenth century?
✓ 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?

Annotated chapter outline
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.
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. Of the immigrant population 90 percent were unfree. Increasingly this immigrant population was not English.
- In the 1700s immigrants came from Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, and Germany; 50,000 of the 425,000 immigrants were Scots-Irish. German immigrants settled primarily in Pennsylvania.
- In the southern colonies Africans made up 40 percent of the total population and by 1720 Africans were the majority population in South Carolina.
- Most of the population increase in England’s colonies came from natural increase.
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. Two revolutions took place during the eighteenth century: a consumer revolution and an industrious revolution.

- Population growth led to an expansion of the economy.
- The colonial economy was shaped by three factors: abundance of land, shortages of land, and shortages of capital.
- The family was the basic economic unit and work was organized by gender.
- 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.

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.

- By 1760, America could boast a number of cities with impressive population figures. The market economy created those with wealth and those who seemed to be permanently 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.


- Enlightened thinkers believed in the power of rational thinking. They believed knowledge should be used to improve the world. John Locke, an Enlightenment political philosopher, was among the first to link society, politics, and the economy into a theory of political economy. It 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.
- The Great Awakening had its greatest impact in those regions that had experienced the most profound change: the cities, the frontier, and the older overcrowded cities.
- 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.

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.

Analytical reading These questions refer to the passage “The Dimensions of Population Growth” on pages 100-101.

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.)

Lecture Strategies

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 Americas’ 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 cannot have one without the other). Ask them to consider the remarkable nature 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.

Supplements: Prentice Hall has developed a number of supplements that can enhance your lectures as well as your students’ comprehension and performance.

**Penguin Classics**


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 its 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.


the Words of Those Who Were There" brings the war for independence back down to the level of the men who fought it.

**American Stories: Biographies in United States History** by Katheryn A. Abbott and Patricia Hagler Minter. See Chapter 3, Colonial America, 1700-1780, for biographical sketches of John Woolman, Martha Ballard, and Benjamin Franklin.

Documents Collection see Era Four: Prelude to Revolution
- *John Peter Zenger and the Responsibility of the Press* 1734
- *Declaration of the Injured Frontier Inhabitants [of Pennsylvania]* 1764
- *Benjamin Franklin, Testimony Against the Stamp Act* 1766
- *“Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania”* 1767
- *John Dickinson, from Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* 1768
- *The Boston “Massacre” or Victims of Circumstance?* 1770
- *Address of the Inhabitants of Anson County to Governor Martin* 1774

The documents of particular relevance to this chapter are identified with an asterisk, although previous and subsequent parts have relevant documents.