



1 Early American Culture

TERMS & NAMES

apprentice
Great Awakening
Jonathan Edwards
George Whitefield
Enlightenment
Benjamin Franklin
John Locke

MAIN IDEA

The British colonies were shaped by prosperity, literacy, and new movements in religion and thought.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

These forces began to create an American identity that is still developing today.

ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

On October 2, 1704, Sarah Kemble Knight set out on horseback from her home in Boston. She was riding all the way to New Haven, Connecticut. Today the ride is two hours by car, but then it took five days.

In her journal, Madam Knight described her travel hardships and commented on people she met—country girls, tobacco-chewing farmers, and rude housewives.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

We hoped to reach the french town and Lodg there that night, but unhapily lost our way about four miles short. . . . A surly old shee Creature, not worthy the name of woman, . . . would hardly let us go into her Door, though the weather was so stormy none but shee would have turnd out a Dogg.

Sarah Kemble Knight, *The Journal of Madam Knight*

Her attitude toward people from other colonies was typical. In the early 1700s, people of the different British colonies did not think of themselves as living in one country. They were separated by distance and customs. In this section, you will learn what began to draw the colonies together.

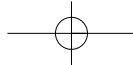
Land, Rights, and Wealth

At the time of Madam Knight's journey, the colonies were thriving. Cheap farmland and plentiful natural resources gave colonists a chance to prosper. They would have had less opportunity in Europe. In England, fewer than 5 percent of the people owned land. In fact, land rarely went up for sale. By contrast, in the colonies, land was plentiful—once Native American groups were forced to give up their claims. Colonists who owned land were free to use or sell whatever it produced.

Land ownership gave colonists political rights as well as prosperity. Generally, only white male landowners or property owners could vote. There were some exceptions. City dwellers could vote by paying a fee.



This reprint of *The Journal of Madam Knight* is a 1920 edition.



Colonial Social Ranks	
HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • large landowners • church officials • government officials • wealthy merchants
UPPER MIDDLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • small farmers • tradespeople
LOWER MIDDLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • renters • unskilled workers
LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indentured servants • slaves

Land ownership also helped determine colonists' social position. Unlike England, America had no class of nobles whose titles passed from parent to child. But people were still divided into high, middle, and low ranks, as they were in England. Large landholders were high in rank. Small farmers who owned their land were in the middle rank. Most colonists fit this category. People who did not own land, such as servants, slaves, or hired workers, were low in rank. Colonial women held the same rank as their husbands or fathers.

Colonists showed respect to their "betters" by curtsying or tipping a hat, for example. Seats in church were assigned by rank, with wealthy families in the front pews and poor people in the back. Despite such divisions, the wealthy were expected to aid the poor.

Women and the Economy

Although women were not landholders, their work was essential to the colonial economy. As you learned

in Chapter 4, enslaved African women helped raise cash crops such as tobacco and indigo. Most white women were farm wives who performed tasks and made products their families needed. They cooked, churned butter, made soap and candles, spun fibers, wove cloth, sewed and knitted clothes, and did many other chores. They usually tended a garden and looked after farm animals. At harvest time, they often worked in the fields alongside men and older children.

Because cash was scarce, farm wives bartered, or traded, with their neighbors for goods and services. For example, a woman who nursed a sick neighbor or helped deliver a baby might be paid in sugar or cloth.

Women in towns and cities usually did the same types of housework that rural women did. In addition, some urban women ran inns or other businesses. Madam Knight, whose journey was described in *One American's Story* on page 119, sold writing paper, taught handwriting, and rented rooms to guests. A few women, usually the wives or widows of tradesmen, practiced trades themselves.

Although women contributed to the colonial economy, they did not have many rights. Women could not vote. In most churches, they could not preach or hold office. (Quaker meetings were an exception.) A married woman could not own property without her husband's permission. By law, even the money a woman earned belonged to her husband.

Young People at Work

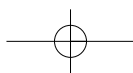
Children's work also supported the colonial economy. Families were large. New England families, for example, had an average of six to eight children. More children meant more workers. Children as young as three or four were expected to be useful. They might help look after farm animals, gather berries, and watch younger children.

Reading History

A. Finding Main Ideas What did colonists gain by owning land?

Reading History

B. Finding Main Ideas In what ways was women's work essential to the economy?



Around age six, boys were “breeched.” This meant that they no longer wore the skirts or smocks of all young children but were given a pair of pants. They then began to help their fathers at work. Sons of farmers worked all day clearing land and learning to farm. Sons of craftsmen tended their fathers’ shops and learned their fathers’ trades.

Around age 11, many boys left their fathers to become apprentices. An **apprentice** learned a trade from an experienced craftsman. The apprentice received food, clothing, lodging, and a general education, as well as training in the specific craft or business. He worked for free, usually for four to seven years, until his contract was fulfilled. Then he could work for wages or start his own business.

Girls rarely were apprenticed. They learned sewing and other household skills from their mothers. In New England, girls of 13 or 14 often were sent away to other households to learn specialized skills such as weaving or cheese making. Orphaned girls and boys worked as servants for families who housed and fed them until adulthood.

ReadingHistory

C. Contrasting

How did the training of boys and girls differ?

Colonial Schooling

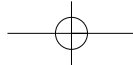
If land, wealth, and hard work were valued across the colonies, so was education. Most children were taught to read so that they could understand the Bible. Only children from wealthy families went beyond reading to learn writing and arithmetic. These children learned either from private tutors or in private schools. Poorer children sometimes learned to read from their mothers.

HISTORY throughART

This drawing shows the inside of an 18th-century one-room schoolhouse.

What does the picture suggest to you about colonial schooling?





daily *life*

THE SCHOOL OF MANNERS

Colonial children learned proper behavior from *The School of Manners*, a book published in 1701. Here are examples of rules and an illustration from the book.

“Spit not in the Room, but in a corner, and rub it out with thy Foot, or rather go out and do it abroad.”

“If thou meetest the scholars of any other School jeer not nor affront them, but show them love and respect and quietly let them pass along.”



Or they attended “dame schools,” where women taught the alphabet and used the Bible to teach reading. Most children finished their formal education at age seven.

Children’s textbooks emphasized religion. The widely used *New England Primer* paired the letter *A* with the verse “In *Adam’s* fall / We Sinned all.” Beside the letter *B* was a picture of the Bible. The primer contained the Lord’s Prayer and *The Shorter Catechism*, more than 100 questions and answers about religion.

Colonial America had a high literacy rate, as measured by the number of people who could sign their names. In New England, 85 percent of white men were literate, compared with 60 percent of men in England. In the Middle Colonies, 65 percent of white men were literate, and in the South, about 50 percent were. In each region of the colonies, roughly half as many white women as men were literate. Most colonists thought schooling was more important for males. Educated African Americans were rare. If they were enslaved, teaching them to read was illegal. If they were free, they were often kept out of schools.

Newspapers and Books

Colonial readers supported a publishing industry that also drew the colonies together. In the early 1700s, the colonies had only one local newspaper,

the *Boston News-letter*. But over the next 70 years, almost 80 different newspapers appeared in America. Many were published for decades.

Most books in the colonies were imported from England, but colonists slowly began to publish their own books. Almanacs were very popular. A typical almanac included a calendar, weather predictions, star charts, farming advice, home remedies, recipes, jokes, and proverbs. In 1732, Benjamin Franklin began to publish *Poor Richard’s Almanack*. It contained sayings that are still repeated today, such as “Haste makes waste.”

Colonists also published poetry, regional histories, and autobiographies. Most personal stories told of struggles to maintain religious faith during hard times. A form of literature unique to the Americas was the captivity narrative. In it, a colonist captured by Native Americans described living among them.

Mary Rowlandson’s 1682 captivity narrative, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God*, was one of the first colonial bestsellers. Native Americans attacked Rowlandson’s Massachusetts village in 1676, during King Philip’s War. They held her hostage for 11 weeks. During that time, she was a servant to a Narragansett chieftain, knitting stockings and making shirts for his family and others. “I told them it was Sabbath day,” she recalled, “and desired them to let me rest, and told them I

ReadingHistory

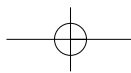
D. Contrasting

How was colonial education different from education today?

ReadingHistory

E. Categorizing

What were some types of colonial literature?



Vocabulary

ransom: to pay for a captive's release

would do as much more tomorrow. To which they answered me, they would break my face.” After townspeople raised money to ransom Rowlandson, she was released. Although she mourned a young daughter who had died in captivity, she praised God for returning her safely.

The Great Awakening

Mary Rowlandson's religious faith was central to her life. But in the early 1700s, many colonists feared they had lost the religious passion that had driven their ancestors to found the colonies. Religion seemed dry, dull, and distant, even to regular churchgoers.

In the 1730s and 1740s, a religious movement called the **Great Awakening** swept through the colonies. The traveling ministers of this movement preached that inner religious emotion was more important than outward religious behavior. Their sermons appealed to the heart and drew large crowds. **Jonathan Edwards**, one of the best-known preachers, terrified listeners with images of God's anger but promised they could be saved.

Background

Religious meetings with large, intensely emotional crowds remain part of American religious tradition.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

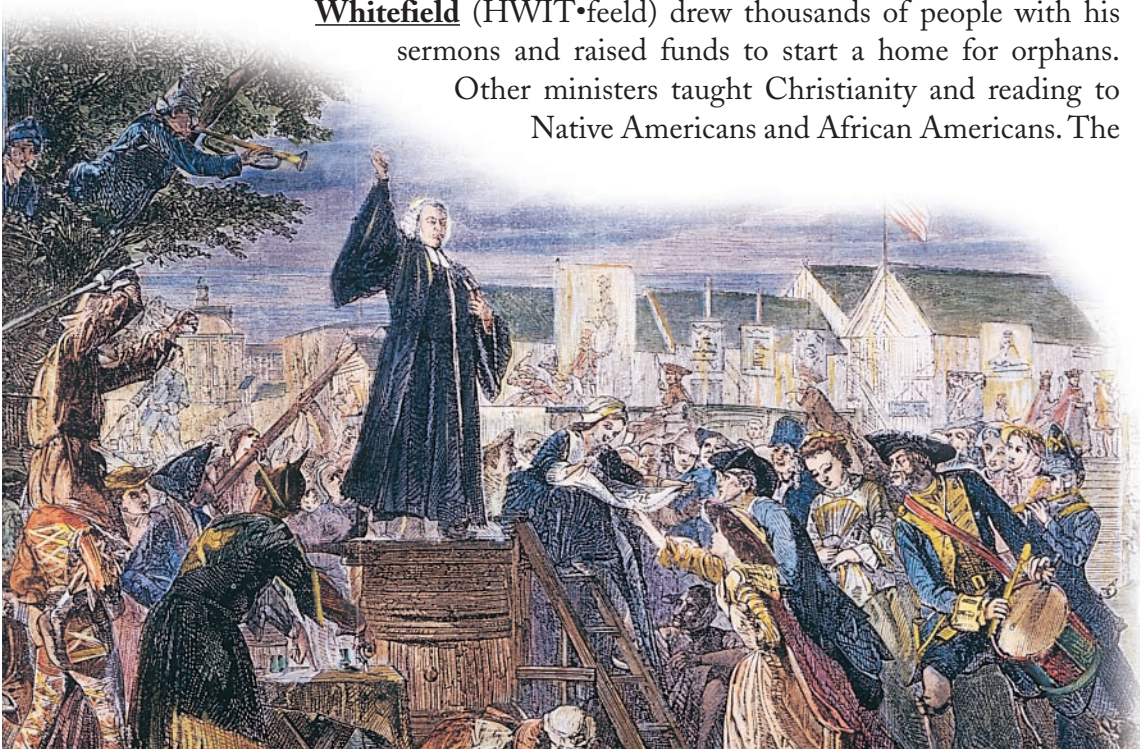
And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands in calling and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners. . . . How awful it is to be left behind at such a day!

Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"

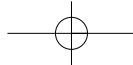
The Great Awakening lasted for years and changed colonial culture. Congregations argued over religious practices and often split apart. People left their old churches and joined other Protestant groups such as Baptists. Some of these groups welcomed women, African Americans, and Native Americans. Overall, churches gained 20,000 to 50,000 new members. To train ministers, religious groups founded colleges such as Princeton and Brown.

The Great Awakening inspired colonists to help others. **George Whitefield** (HWIT•feeld) drew thousands of people with his sermons and raised funds to start a home for orphans.

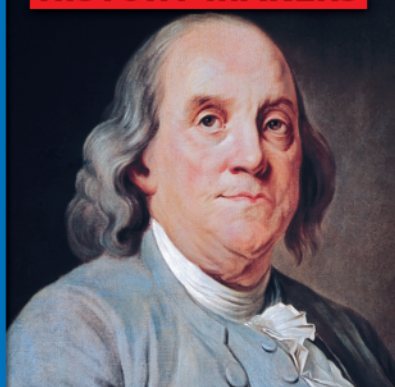
Other ministers taught Christianity and reading to Native Americans and African Americans. The



George Whitefield preaching to a crowd



AMERICA'S HISTORY MAKERS



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
1706–1790

As an Enlightenment thinker, Benjamin Franklin used reason to improve society. At 42, he retired from business to devote his life to science and public service. He proved that lightning was a form of electricity. Then he invented the lightning rod to protect buildings. The Franklin stove and bifocal eyeglasses were also his inventions. He organized a fire department, a lending library, and a society to discuss philosophy. Later he helped draft the Declaration of Independence.

How did Franklin help improve colonial society?

Great Awakening encouraged ideas of equality and the right to challenge authority. In this way, the movement contributed to the revolutionary fervor of the colonists when they declared independence from England years later.

The Enlightenment

Unlike the Great Awakening, which stressed religious emotion, the **Enlightenment** emphasized reason and science as the paths to knowledge. **Benjamin Franklin** was a famous American Enlightenment figure. This intellectual movement appealed mostly to wealthy, educated men. But it, too, had far-reaching effects on the colonies.

The Enlightenment began in Europe, as scientists discovered natural laws governing the universe. Isaac Newton, for example, explained the law of gravity.

Other Enlightenment thinkers applied the idea of natural law to human societies. The English philosopher **John Locke** argued that people have natural rights. These are rights to life, liberty, and property. People create governments to protect their natural rights, he claimed. If a government fails in this duty, people have the right to change it. Locke challenged the belief that kings had a God-given right to rule.

Enlightenment ideas of natural rights and government by agreement influenced leaders across Europe and the colonies. As you will see in Section 2, colonists began to wonder whether the British government protected their rights and freedoms. Eventually, they would rebel and form a new government.

ReadingHistory

F. Recognizing Effects What were five effects of the Great Awakening?

Section 1 Assessment

1. Terms & Names

Explain the significance of:

- apprentice
- Great Awakening
- Jonathan Edwards
- George Whitefield
- Enlightenment
- Benjamin Franklin
- John Locke

2. Taking Notes

Describe the parts of colonial culture in a chart.

Economy	
Education	
Publishing	
Religion	

Why was each important in colonial culture?

3. Main Ideas

- a.** Why was land ownership so important to the colonists?
- b.** How did women and young people contribute to the colonial economy?
- c.** How did the Great Awakening affect the colonies?

4. Critical Thinking

Contrasting How were the Great Awakening and the Enlightenment different?

THINK ABOUT

- the ideas each movement promoted
- the people to whom each movement appealed

ACTIVITY OPTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS
ART

Make up a **saying** that reflects some part of colonial culture, or draw an **illustration** of a saying from colonial times.