

Name: _____

Life in the American Colonies

By Anita Kim Venegas

Imagine sailing across the Atlantic Ocean in the early 1600s. With hopes of owning land and religious freedom, people sailed for 60 days or more. Babies cried, food rotted, sailors shouted, and families waited on deck to catch sight of the New World.



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for edible plants while children chased one another.



The first attempt at colonization in 1607 was a failure. Settlers in Jamestown faced tension with Native Americans who already lived in the area. There was also a lack of fresh water. A second settlement in present-day Massachusetts became the setting and story of Thanksgiving. Colonists were fortunate to find fields ready for planting and a helpful Native American named Squanto to teach them to plant corn, beans, and squash. Even so, nearly half of the settlers died before the winter of 1620 ended. These first two settlements focused on survival while later settlements focused on making products and growing crops to sell to England.

A Native American named Squanto helped teach colonists to plant crops in present day Massachusetts.

Near present-day Boston, a third attempt to establish a colony was an economic success. Throughout the Massachusetts Bay Colony, families built homes and started businesses. The town needed craftsmen to work as blacksmiths and shipbuilders, as well as fishermen and fur trappers.

Climate and geography influenced the type of work settlers did. Settlers in the north cleared forests for timber to build furniture and to export to England. Farmers in the south grew tobacco to export to England on the ships that were built in



This drawing shows Native Americans trading with the first European settlers.



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For many years, the colonies were profitable for England. Some raw goods were sent across the Atlantic, and the British sold them in the European market. When England raised their prices for the colonists, and colonists found they could pay less than what England charged, the colonists bought from other countries. England reminded the colonies that they were established to make a profit for the King of England and not for themselves. England began imposing restrictions on colonists, writing laws that forbade the colonists to buy from other countries besides England.

After leaving their homeland in search of new opportunities and freedoms, the English laws angered the colonists. While they had no voice in the laws that were made, they were forced by England to obey the laws, and pay the taxes. Colonists were unhappy and began to speak of independence — at first in whispers, and then in public meetings. Revolution was coming to the North American colonies.

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1. What is the author's purpose for writing this article?
 - a. to persuade readers to move to America
 - b. to teach readers how to establish a colony
 - c. to entertain readers with an amusing story in American history
 - d. to inform readers about the history of English colonists in America



2. List three items mentioned in the article that were exported from the American



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4. Which statement about life in the American colonies is an opinion?
 - a. Life was difficult for all settlers in the American colonies.
 - b. Native Americans traded furs in exchange for axes and guns from the settlers.
 - c. England imposed laws and taxes on the American colonists.
 - d. Farmers in the southern American colonies grew tobacco.
5. Reread the following sentence from the article.

Climate and geography influenced the type of work the settlers did.

What do the words climate and geography mean?

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Match each vocabulary word from the reading passage with the correct definition.

_____ 1. New World

a. having to do with money

_____ 2. failure

b. buying and selling goods



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_____ 5. economic

e. people who makes things from iron

_____ 6. blacksmiths

f. not a success

_____ 7. trade

g. people who live in England

_____ 8. revolution

h. people who make a home in a new place

_____ 9. British

i. an event in which citizens attempt to overthrow the government

ANSWER KEY

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What do the words climate and geography mean?

Climate is the general weather patterns in an area over a long period of time.

Geography is the location of an area and its features.

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