

STUDY GUIDE: Colonial America & Independence

Main Topics

- Reading Like a Historian
- **Sourcing:** The first thing I want to do is think about who wrote it, when it was written, who is the audience, and what the author's purpose might have been.
- **Contextualizing:** The Setting. read through the document and see if I can learn what was going on at the time. What were people thinking and doing? What did people believe?
- **Close Reading:** Annotating. Interacting with the Text
- **Corroboration:** Crosschecking; Do the documents agree? Do they tell the same or different stories? Which is more believable?

- The earliest colonies in North America were:
 - **JAMESTOWN, Virginia** – settled by businessmen from England who sought to make money by growing and selling tobacco (Brown Gold); the area had fertile soil and Virginia grew into a powerful colony of tobacco plantations (large farms where slaves did most of the work).
 - **MASSACHUSETTS BAY (sometimes called Plymouth)** – settled by Puritans from England who were seeking religious freedom for themselves; the Puritans built towns, with small farms on the outskirts.
- Each of these colonies was built on the Atlantic Coast, close to the water (better for trade).
- The policy that the British followed toward the colonies was called **mercantilism** – this means that a “mother country” (like England) had colonies (like America) for two main reasons: 1. to get raw materials; 2. to create new markets (places to sell their products); it also meant that the colony was not allowed to compete economically with the mother country.
- The British also followed a policy of **salutary neglect** toward the American colonies – this meant that the British pretty much left the Americans alone in their day-to-day lives, as long as raw materials kept being shipped to England and as long as Americans bought British-made products.
- What are the most important differences between the Northern / New England, Middle and Southern Colonies, based on yesterday's map reading?
- **New England Colonies** – people mainly lived in fishing villages and small towns surrounded by family farms.
- **Middle Colonies** – large farms, but also large urban centers with merchants and traders.
- **Chesapeake and Southern Colonies** – large plantations growing single crops.
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- The French and Indian War, 1754-1763
 - British/Americans vs. French/Indians
 - The war was over control of North America.
 - The British & Americans won, but their victory led to problems between them.
 - The British had a lot of **debt** after the war ended.
 - They decided to place greater restrictions and new taxes on the Americans, which led to conflicts between them.
- 1763 marked the end of the French and Indian War – a war where the Americans and British fought against the French and Indians; the Americans and British won, but the war had a negative effect on their relationship (see next bullet point).
- After 1763 the British abandoned their policy of salutary neglect – because they felt that they had spent a lot of money on the French and Indian War and that the Americans should pay the cost; so, the British put lots of **new taxes** on the Americans – for example, the Stamp Act, the Sugar Act, and the Tea Act.
- The American colonists thought the new British taxes were unfair because they had no one to represent them in the British government (“No taxation without representation!”).
- Eventually, the American colonists became so unhappy with the British taxes that they began to protest – Boycotts of British products, the Sons of Liberty an extreme Patriotic group that used the torture method of Tar and Feathering, the Boston Tea Party, the First Continental Congress, the Second Continental Congress.
- The Second Continental Congress decided that America should break away from England and become an independent country; they assigned Thomas Jefferson the job of writing a document that described the reasons for American independence – this document was called the **Declaration of Independence**.
- The main ideas contained in the Declaration of Independence are:
 - “All men are created equal” – every human being has **natural rights** – rights that they are born with and which are “unalienable,” meaning they can’t be taken away (“life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”); this idea of natural rights comes from John Locke and the European Enlightenment which developed the idea of the Social Contract.
 - The **social contract** – it says that people owe loyalty only to a government that acts in their best interests.
 - The Declaration says that the main job of the government is to protect people’s natural rights; if the government fails to do this, then the people have the right to “alter or abolish” (change or get rid of) that government and create a new one.
 - Lastly, the Declaration of Independence argues that the government gets its power from the people.

Important Terms & People

mercantilism	Tea Act	"Committees of Correspondence"
salutary neglect	Intolerable Acts	Parliament
Puritans	Boston Massacre	John Winthrop
Indentured Servitude	Proclamation of 1763	"City Upon a Hill"
natural rights	"Brown Gold"	Push and Pull Factor
unalienable rights	John Adams	Boston Tea Party
social contract	Minutemen	democracy
Loyalists	Lexington and Concord	King George III
Patriots	Tyranny	Thomas Jefferson
Moderates	American Revolution	John Locke
Stamp Act	Militias	
Sugar Act	Quartering Act	
Democrat		
Republican		
Conservative		
Liberal		

Study Questions

1. What were the two primary reasons for British settlement in the colonies?
1. What was the main goal of the British policy of mercantilism toward the American colonies?
2. What were the main differences between the Massachusetts and Virginia colonies?
3. Who did the work on the early plantations in Virginia?
4. How was the British policy of salutary neglect good for both the British king and the American colonies?
5. Why did the British decide to raise taxes on the American colonists? How did the Americans react? Give specific examples for both questions.
6. How did Enlightenment ideas influence the Declaration of Independence?.
7. Identify and describe the five founding ideals of the United States?
8. Where does the government get its power from, according to the Declaration?
9. According to the Declaration, what is the primary responsibility of the government? What do people have the right to do if the government fails to live up to this responsibility?
10. Why did the British policies of mercantilism and salutary neglect make both Britain and America happy?
11. Why did the British change their attitude toward the American colonies after 1763? What were some of the results of this change in attitude?