



## The Thirteen Colonies Reader

Core Knowledge History and Geography™ 3

# Chapter 1 The English Colonies

**Thirteen in All** The United States began as a group of thirteen English colonies. These thirteen colonies did not begin all at once. Explorers and **traders** came first. Then slowly,

over time, the colonies were created.

The first colony was founded in Virginia in 1607, and the last of the thirteen colonies was founded in Georgia in 1732.

### Vocabulary

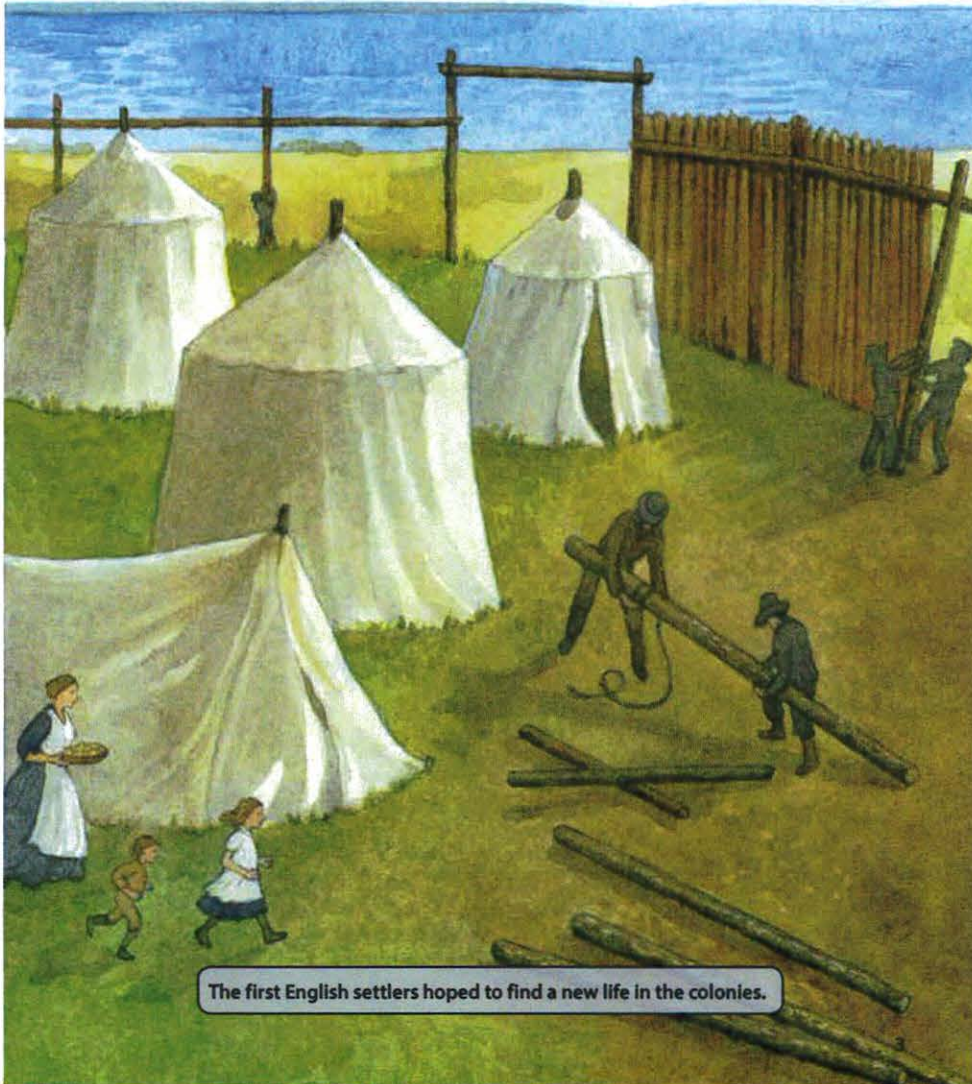
**trader**, n. a person who buys and sells things

### The Big Question

Why did people come to settle in the English colonies?

The first European settlers came here from England. They brought with them everything they owned. When the settlers arrived, they had no family to greet them. Sometimes the Native Americans who already lived in North America welcomed the settlers. Other times, however, the Native Americans were not happy to see newcomers settling on their land.

There were no houses to live in, so many of the first settlers lived in tents. Some even lived in caves to survive. Their living conditions were harsh, especially during the winter. Many died of hunger, cold, and disease.



Even though life in the early colonies could be hard, most settlers did not return to England. They started a new life in a new place instead.

### **Why They Came**

Early settlers had different reasons for coming to America. Some people came because they had been very poor in their homeland. In England and other countries, there were often not enough jobs or land. The new colonies needed workers, and as far as the settlers were concerned, there was enough land for everyone who wanted to stay. People who settle in a new place on behalf of another country are called colonists. The settlers were, in fact, colonists.

Some colonists came because they thought they could get rich in America. Some hoped to find gold and silver. Others hoped that farming would make them wealthy. Some were people who had broken the law in England and, as part of their punishment, they were sent to the colonies in North America.



Some people hoped to become very rich in this new land.



Even though it was not easy to live in the colonies, many people believed they would have a better life.

Colonists came for religious reasons, too. In England, not everyone could practice their religion in the way that they wanted. Some people came to America because they wanted to worship in their own way. For these colonists, living in a land where they could have religious freedom was important.

Not everyone who crossed the Atlantic Ocean found opportunity and freedom. As the colonies developed and grew larger, some people from Africa were forced to settle in America. They did not choose to settle here. Instead, they were kidnapped from their homes and brought across the ocean to be enslaved workers.

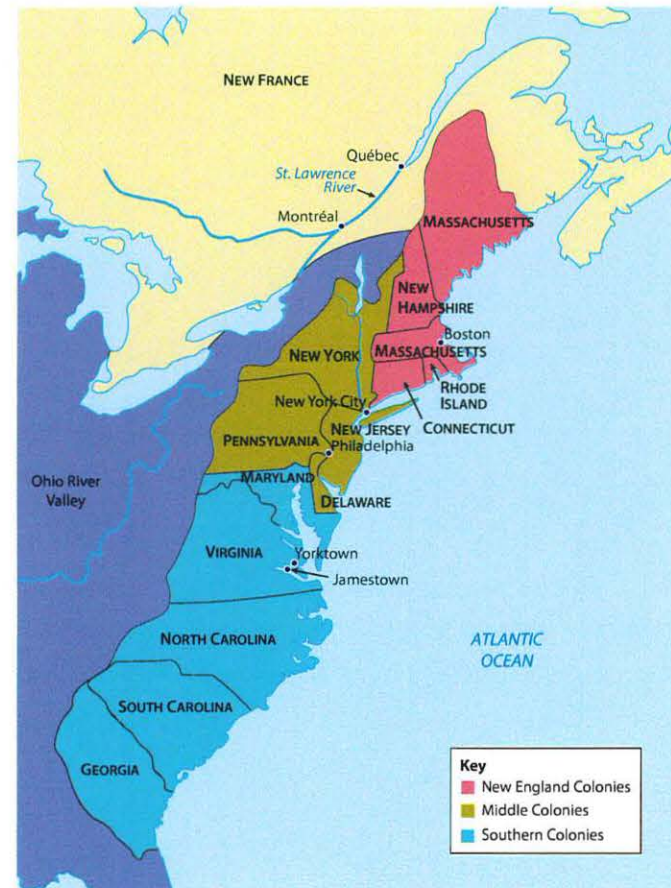
## The New England Colonies

The map shows that the colonies were divided into three groups, or **regions**.

The New England Colonies made up the northern region. They included Massachusetts, New Hampshire,

### Vocabulary

**region**, n. a large area that may have certain characteristics related to its geography, form of government, or traditions that set it apart from other places



The English colonies were divided into three regions.

Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Originally, there was another colony in New England called Plymouth, which you will read about later. Plymouth eventually became part of Massachusetts.

In New England, the winters were long and cold. The soil was rocky. The short growing season and poor soil made it difficult for the colonists to grow **crops** there.

Usually, New England colonists grew only enough vegetables and grains to feed their own families. They were unable to grow extra food to sell to others.

Just like today, the New England region had a long coastline with many natural **harbors**. Fish were plentiful in the rivers and in the coastal waters.

When the colonists first arrived, they found many forests in the region. The colonists cut down trees for **timber**. They used the timber to build ships, houses, and other buildings. Timber was also used for firewood.

As the colonies grew, trading ships sailed in and out of the busy New England harbors. The ships carried timber to the West Indies, the Caribbean, and Europe.

## The Middle Colonies

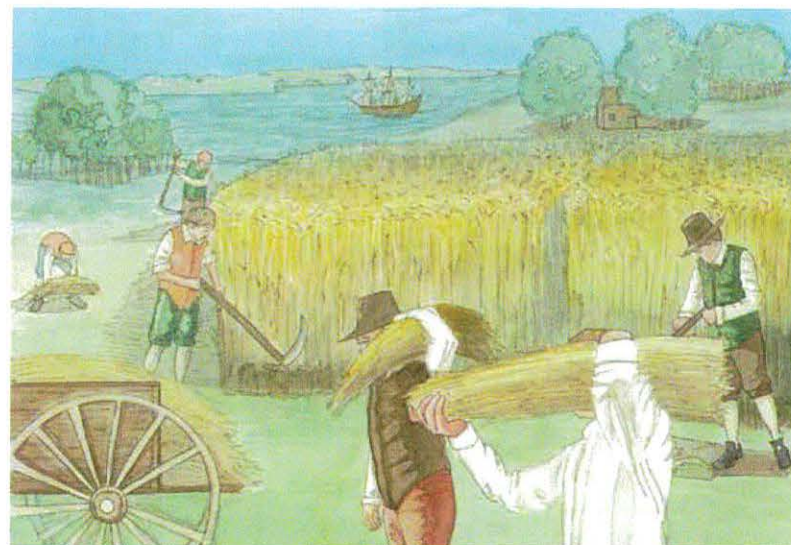
The colonies in the middle region were called the Middle Colonies. They were New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.

### Vocabulary

**crop**, n. a plant that is grown in large quantities for food or other use

**harbor**, n. a part of a body of water that is next to land and provides a safe place for ships to anchor

**timber**, n. wood that is cut from trees and used for building; lumber



Because of the climate and soil, wheat grew well in the Middle Colonies.

Winters in the Middle Colonies were not as long and cold as the winters in New England. Warm, rainy summers and fertile soil made growing crops much easier in this region. Colonists in the Middle Colonies could grow enough food to feed themselves and still have crops left over to sell. The Middle Colonies also had a coastline for fishing and ports for ships.

## The Southern Colonies

The Southern Colonies were made up of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

The Southern Colonies were perfect for farming. They had mild winters and fertile soil. Crops grew so well that some colonists

built large farms called plantations. Many plantations grew large amounts of a single crop that was then sold to make a profit.

### **Port Cities**

As more people from England and other European countries came to America, the colonists built towns that often grew into cities. Have you heard of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston? These cities became known as port cities. This is because they were built along waterways or on harbors on the coast. The colonists used waterways for transportation.

### **Centers of Trade**

Port cities became centers for trade, too. They also became places where news and information were shared. Ships traveling between the port cities kept the colonies connected with each other and with the rest of the world.

New ideas spread from the port cities throughout the colonies. One of the ideas that developed over time was that the colonists could govern themselves. When you learn about the American Revolution, you will read about how the colonists fought to create an independent nation.

## **Chapter 2**

# **Starting the Virginia Colony**

**An Ocean Apart** It was September in the year 1607, and Hannah was not happy at all. She was trying to read a new book, but it was too difficult for her.

### **The Big Question**

What challenges did the colonists in Jamestown face?

If Thomas were home, here in London, he would have helped her. But Thomas had gone away last year, when she was seven, to a place called Virginia. Hannah often thought about Thomas. Sometimes she worried about him because he had set off on a dangerous voyage across the giant ocean.

Thomas was Hannah's uncle, her father's younger brother. But he had always lived with her family in London, and Hannah thought of him as her big brother. Thomas was eighteen years old, and Hannah was eight. She missed Thomas.