CHAPTER 2

American Society in the Making

ANTICIPATION/REACTION

Directions: Before you begin reading this chapter, place a check mark beside any of the following seven statements with which you now agree. Use the column entitled “Anticipation.” When you have completed your study of this chapter, come back to this section and place a check mark beside any of the statements with which you then agree. Use the column entitled “Reaction.” Note any variation in the placement of check marks from anticipation to reaction and explain why you changed your mind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipation</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____ 1. Most European immigrants to England’s southern colonies in North America in the seventeenth century were indentured servants, not free men.</td>
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<td>_____ 2. English colonists were racists and that explains why they enslaved black Africans.</td>
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<td>_____ 3. Southern colonists faced the constant danger of slave rebellion.</td>
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<td>_____ 4. Most colonial planters were idle aristocrats concerned chiefly with the conspicuous display of their wealth.</td>
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<td>_____ 5. In colonial America, wives were expected to be subordinate to their husbands, and children were expected to be obedient to their parents.</td>
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<td>_____ 6. There is no rational explanation for the outbreak of witchcraft hysteria in colonial Salem.</td>
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<td>_____ 7. All of England’s North American colonial governments in the seventeenth century included elected representative assemblies.</td>
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 2 you should be able to:

1. Identify the influences that transformed seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century European immigrants into “Americans.”
2. Explain why slavery came to be the dominant labor system in England’s southern North American colonies.
3. Compare and contrast the demographic characteristics, political institutions, and economic pursuits of the New England, middle, and southern colonies.


5. Explain the origins and assess the impact of the several domestic rebellions that occurred in England’s North American colonies.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

What is an American?

What was the process by which the colonists fashioned for themselves a new identity and the outlines of a distinct civilization in North America? The answer lies in America’s distance from Europe, its landscape, and its population patterns, all of which gradually shaped a new mosaic of social arrangements.

Spanish Settlement

Franciscan friars who established missions from Florida to the upper Rio Grande shaped life in Spanish North America. The friars were dedicated to converting the Indians to Catholicism, but in so doing undermined the Indians’ traditional way of life and exacted a heavy price in Indian labor. Poor treatment led to Indian rebellions in the late seventeenth century, but the Spanish regained control and learned to deal less harshly with their Indian charges.

The Chesapeake Colonies

The seventeenth-century colonial South included the tidewater around Chesapeake Bay, the low country of the Carolinas, and the backcountry west of the fall line. Only gradually did a common South emerge, characterized by cash crop agriculture, black slavery, and a rural and small town society. In the disease-ridden Chesapeake colonies, life expectancy was short and women were scarce. Life there was precarious, frustrating, and often violent.

The Lure of Land

Agriculture was the bulwark of life in the colonial South. The offer of land had the effect of encouraging immigration; therefore, all southern colonies adopted the headright and indentured servant systems to trade their plentiful land for the labor they needed. Indentured servants who came to America under the terms of these systems were often abused, but court-enforced binding contracts limited their time of service to a few years. Well over half of the white settlers of the southern colonies came as indentured servants. Most eventually became small landowners, but
poor land, low tobacco prices, and high taxes kept them impoverished. As their number increased and many squatted on unclaimed western land, the resulting conflicts caused the large landowners to seek an alternative source of labor.

“Solving” the Labor Shortage: Slavery

Blacks first came to England’s North American colonies in 1619, but slavery was not codified into law until the 1660s. The English were already racially prejudiced against blacks, and they followed the Portuguese and Spanish example of enslaving Africans. These factors, and the demand for a reliable labor force, eventually spread slavery throughout the colonies. Still, until late in the seventeenth century, white indentured servitude remained the primary source of labor because Africans were so utterly alien, and slaves were relatively expensive. But when England’s economic conditions improved in the 1670s, few indentured servants left for the colonies. Africans now became a more attractive labor force because the Royal African Company made slaves more readily available; plus the realization grew that, as life-long slaves, they would never compete with whites for land and political power.

Prosperity in a Pipe: Tobacco

Though discouraged at first, tidewater tobacco was exported when English merchants and Virginia colonists recognized its marketability. It was easy to plant and grow, but it required intensive human labor. In fact, overproduction of tobacco caused prices to fall in the late seventeenth century. This drove many small farmers out of business, but it improved the position of large landowners who could absorb the losses. Unfortunate losers in this competition moved to the frontier where they became involved in conflicts with the Indians.

Bacon’s Rebellion

In 1676, Virginia’s western planters rebelled against the colony’s governor, William Berkeley, because he was insensitive to their problems with the Indians. In defiance of Berkeley’s authority, westerners rallied behind Nathaniel Bacon. They attacked the troublesome Indians, then raided Jamestown and briefly unseated Berkeley, but Bacon died and the rebellion collapsed. Nevertheless, the rebellion helped fix slavery and the plantation system on the colony, and it produced a harmony among whites that was based on white supremacy and black exclusion.

The Carolinas

As in the Chesapeake, Scotch-Irish settlers in North Carolina grew tobacco, but South Carolina’s cash crop was rice. Together with furs, indigo, and timber products, the rice crop was traded to English factors for manufactured goods. But the factor system made southerners dependent on
European middlemen, inhibited the development of a diversified economy, and retarded the growth of cities. Slavery was used in South Carolina from the beginning, and by 1730 blacks were a majority of the colony’s population. There, as throughout the South, as slaves grew in numbers, regulations governing their behavior became more restrictive and severe.

Slaves resented their condition, but their response to it depended on their place in slave society. Acculturation to white society made a slave more valuable to the owner, but it also increased the slave’s independence and mobility; most runaways were slave artisans, not field hands. Organized slave rebellions were rare, although whites exaggerated their danger and were always on guard. Whites accepted their “peculiar institution” of slavery as a fact of life and, except for a few Quakers, talk of abolishing slavery was rare.

**Home and Family in the South**

Life for most people in the colonial South was isolated, crude, and uncomfortable. Houses were small and furniture was crudely built, but there was plenty of food. White women rarely worked in the fields; they maintained the household and, in rare instances, managed the farm or plantation. Children were not as strictly disciplined as in New England; there were few schools, and most southerners were illiterate. The Anglican Church was the established religion in the southern colonies, but churches were few and far between and were not a powerful force. Large planters led more comfortable lives and controlled the region’s politics, but they were usually responsible leaders and hardworking plantation managers, not idle grandees.

**Georgia and the Back Country**

The South’s backcountry included land that lay west of the fall line—the Virginia Piedmont and Georgia. Georgia was founded as a buffer between Spanish Florida and South Carolina, and to provide a new opportunity for debtors released from English prisons. Hoping to build a colony of sober and industrious yeomen, James Oglethorpe and Georgia’s trustees limited the size of land grants, banned liquor, prohibited slavery, and regulated trade with the Indians. But settlers rejected these restrictions and Georgia’s economy gradually developed along the lines of South Carolina’s.

Movement to the backcountry was delayed as long as Indians were a threat and cheap land remained available in the tidewater and low country. But a rush to the frontier began in the 1750s, headed by Scotch-Irish and German immigrants. The result was frequent conflict between politically underrepresented western settlers, called Regulators, and the governing elite in the eastern counties.
Puritan New England

New England, with its dependable water supply, was a healthier place to live than the southern tidewater or low country. With early death less of a threat, New England settlers found it easier to attend to their spiritual, economic, and social well being.

The Puritan Family

Central to the Puritans’ plan for the proper order of society was a covenant—an agreement to insure the good behavior of everyone in the community. The primary vehicle for achieving this was the Puritan family. Each New England household was nuclear—containing one family, and each family was patriarchal—the father was boss. The woman’s role was subordinate—she was to be an obedient wife and loving mother.

Puritan Women and Children

The infant mortality rate in New England was lower than in the Chesapeake or in Europe; consequently, New England families were often quite large. More than in the Chesapeake, New England children were expected to be obedient; and corporeal punishment, chore assignments, and apprenticeships were used to train and discipline them.

The Puritans’ Great Migration ended in the early 1640s, and population growth in New England thereafter resulted from a high birth rate and low mortality rate. Unlike in the South, the male/female ratio was nearly equal.

Visible Puritan Saints and Others

The first arrivals in New England had to meet strict standards to become members of the Puritan church and qualify their children for baptism. Third-generation settlers were less often members of the church, and, in 1657, the ministers adopted a Half-Way Covenant so that they and their children could be baptized. This new covenant reflected a loss of some religious intensity in New England, but church membership rose.

Democracies Without Democrats

New England governments used their relative independence from British supervision to protect the prerogatives of the Puritan church and enforce its system of laws and values. The primary responsibility for monitoring the peace and good order of Puritan society fell to local town governments.
The Dominion of New England

In the 1680s, the English government tried to bring its American colonies under firmer control. The Massachusetts charter was annulled and the New England colonies were placed in the Dominion of New England, governed by Edmund Andros. Andros made himself unpopular by abolishing popular assemblies, enforcing religious toleration, and altering the land grant system. But the Glorious Revolution in England in 1688 toppled Andros from power, and Massachusetts became a royal colony.

Salem Bewitched

In Salem Village, social and generational discord resulted in a series of witchcraft trials that led to 20 executions. The mass hysteria associated with this event marred the reputation of the Puritan ministers. The witchcraft episode highlights the Puritans’ anxiety toward women. They feared Satan worked his will through the allure of female sexuality, especially those who—like many in the Salem affair—lived apart from the patriarchal authority of men.

Higher Education in New England

New England Puritans established schools to train ministers. Both Harvard College and new laws requiring local towns to provide grammar schools appeared in the mid-seventeenth century. With the help of the family and church, these schools produced a highly literate population in New England. Generally, schooling promoted secularism and religious toleration in New England. Puritan minister Cotton Mather invoked modern science when he advocated inoculation against smallpox and Boston’s Ben Franklin satirized the pretentious intellectualism of New England’s leaders.

Prosperity Undermines Puritanism

Most New Englanders were farmers who produced their own food. They also fished the Atlantic and generally had plenty to eat and a nutritious diet. Unlike in the South, however, New Englanders did not produce surplus cash crops for export. This was not a problem for the earliest Puritan settlers since theirs was a spiritual mission, not a commercial enterprise, and they held the accumulation of wealth in low regard.

A Merchant’s World

The first generation of New Englanders tried to establish direct trade links to Europe, then turned to indirect trading schemes. Their “triangular trade” became immensely profitable and it brought
New England merchants both wealth and status. Boston was the commercial hub of the region, and it became the home of wealthy merchants, middle-class artisans and shopkeepers, and propertyless sailors, workers, and transients. This had not been the social vision of the Puritans.

The Middle Colonies: Economic Basis

The Middle Colonies were similar to New England in that most people were farmers who grew their own food for consumption, or worked in seacoast cities and interior towns. They were similar to the southern colonies in that they owned slaves, grew a cash crop for export, and lived on the land they cultivated.

The Middle Colonies: An Intermingling of Peoples

The Middle Colonies were distinctive for their ethnic and religious diversity. This mixing of ethnic groups gave rise to many prejudices; however, the different groups generally got along peacefully. “The Best Poor Man’s Country”

Ethnic differences in the Middle Colonies seldom produced conflict because they seldom limited economic opportunity. Non-English settlers came to America for the promise of prosperity, and, especially in Pennsylvania, they found it. Most became farmers, but others became artisans. Countless opportunities existed in cities like New York and Philadelphia, cities that benefited from navigable rivers that penetrated deep into the back country.

The Politics of Diversity

Politics in the Middle Colonies was more contentious and sophisticated than in New England or the South. Like the colonies in New England and the South, the Middle Colonies all had popularly elected representative assemblies and adult white male suffrage. As in the Chesapeake, representatives were elected from counties, but in the Middle Colonies, voters did not defer to the leadership of the landed gentry.

In New York, politics first became polarized after Jacob Leisler’s Rebellion in 1689, then polarized again between large landowners and wealthy merchants. Their squabbles produced John Peter Zenger’s trial for seditious libel—a celebrated test of freedom of the press in America.

Two interest groups also contested for power in Pennsylvania: William Penn, the proprietor, battled a coalition of Philadelphia Quakers and Pennsylvania Dutch who controlled the assembly. In their standoff, popular opinion became important. The colony’s leadership was tested by the
Paxton Boys’ uprising in 1763—a revolt triggered by eastern indifference to the western settlers’ Indian problems. Benjamin Franklin brought the crisis to a peaceful resolution.

Rebellious Women

This politically disputatious and contentious era suffered anxiety over the role of women. Anne Hutchinson and the Salem witch trials agitated New Englanders, and there was widespread uneasiness toward women among the power-conscious planter elite. The general trend was away from patriarchal authority in the household, but mid-eighteenth-century white women were being pushed to the margins of political life and were expected to confine themselves to private matters within the home.

People, Places, and Things

*Define the following:*

- headright system

- quitrent

- indentured servitude

- squatters’ rights

- slavery

- peculiar institution

- covenant
nuclear family

town meeting

triangular trade

Describe the following:

Royal African Company

Bacon’s Rebellion

Half-Way Covenant

Dominion of New England

Glorious Revolution

Leisler’s Rebellion

Paxton Boys’ uprising
Identify the following:

William Berkeley ________________________________

______________________________

Eliza Lucas ________________________________

______________________________

factors ________________________________

______________________________

James Oglethorpe ________________________________

______________________________

Edmund Andros ________________________________

______________________________

Cotton Mather ________________________________

______________________________

Scotch-Irish ________________________________

______________________________

Ben Franklin ________________________________

______________________________

John Peter Zenger ________________________________

______________________________

Pennsylvania Dutch ________________________________

______________________________
SELF-TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Franciscan friars who staffed Spanish missions in the regions that are now part of the Southwestern United States were committed to all the following EXCEPT
   A. instructing Indians in the rudiments of the Catholic faith.
   B. using Indian labor to serve the needs of the friars and other Spanish colonists.
   C. protecting the lives of individual Indians.
   D. preserving the Indians’ traditional way of life.

2. Most early immigrants to England’s seventeenth-century North American colonies
   A. intended to develop a new civilization.
   B. were not from England.
   C. wanted to improve the condition of their own lives.
   D. settled in the backcountry.

3. In which of the following pairs is the geographical subdivision NOT correctly matched with one of the colonies in it?
   A. tidewater—Virginia
   B. Chesapeake—New York
   C. low country—South Carolina
   D. back country—Georgia

4. In contrast to the New England colonies, the Chesapeake colonies had a
   A. low mortality rate.
   B. scarcity of women.
   C. high birth rate.
   D. healthy environment.

5. Indentured servants
   A. were bound by temporary labor contracts.
   B. were given headrights when they agreed to migrate to the American colonies.
   C. had no legal rights.
   D. constituted a small part of the southern colonies’ population.

6. Slavery in England’s North American colonies was first used on a large scale
   A. in 1619 when the first blacks arrived.
   B. late in the seventeenth century when the demand for labor increased.
   C. in the Middle and New England colonies.
   D. in the mid-eighteenth century when England began losing control over the colonies.
7. In 1676, frontier settlers rebelled against the royal governor of Virginia. This was
A. Bacon’s Rebellion.
B. the Paxton Boys’ uprising.
C. the Regulator movement.
D. Leisler’s Rebellion.

8. The enactment and severity of slave codes in each colony was closely related to the
A. kind of crops grown there.
B. structure of that colony’s government.
C. ethnic origins of the white settlers.
D. size of the black population.

9. Skilled slaves were generally LESS __________ than field hands.
   A. valuable
   B. independent
   C. mobile
   D. satisfied

10. In the colonial South,
    A. white women often worked in the fields.
    B. food was scarce.
    C. most people were illiterate.
    D. children were more strictly disciplined than in New England.

11. Georgia’s original trustees did NOT restrict their settlers’
    A. ownership of slaves.
    B. access to land.
    C. religious freedom.
    D. use of liquor.

12. In New England families it was usual that
    A. the father and mother equally shared authority.
    B. more than one family inhabited a household.
    C. children were held to strict obedience.
    D. wives had servants to do their housework.

13. As compared to the Chesapeake colonies, New England had
    A. a high infant mortality rate.
    B. smaller families.
    C. a low birth rate.
    D. a balanced gender ratio.
14. The Half-Way Covenant was intended to allow the baptism of
   A. the children of those who were not church members.
   B. adult church members only.
   C. the children of church members only.
   D. adult women.

15. The primary local governing institution of the New England colonies was the
   A. governor’s council.
   B. county court.
   C. Congregational Church.
   D. town meeting.

16. In the 1680s, the English monarchy tried to gain greater control over the New England colonies by appointing Edmund Andros to govern the
   A. New England Confederation.
   B. House of Burgesses.
   C. Dominion of New England.
   D. Congregational Church.

17. The driving force of New England’s economy in the early eighteenth century was
   A. local agriculture.
   B. fishing.
   C. production of cash crops for export.
   D. the “triangle trade.”

18. The Middle Colonies were similar to South Carolina in all the following ways EXCEPT
   A. slavery was legal.
   B. they grew a cash crop for export.
   C. most people were farmers.
   D. the majority of the population was black.

19. The most distinctive feature of the Middle Colonies was
   A. the ethnic and religious diversity in their populations.
   B. the absence of ethnic and religious prejudice among their inhabitants.
   C. the limited economic opportunity there.
   D. their lack of cities.

20. John Peter Zenger was charged with
   A. organizing an armed rebellion.
   B. religious heresy.
   C. seditious libel.
   D. advocating the abolition of slavery.
Essay Questions

1. Explain how Europeans who settled in England’s North American colonies were “Americanized” by that experience. Write a statement that defines a colonial “American.”

2. Explain the origins of slavery in England’s North American colonies.

3. Compare and contrast the economic, political, and social features of life in the New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies.

4. Explain why the religious fervor of New England Puritans declined after 1660. Show how the Salem witchcraft trials were related to this decline.

5. Account for the several little rebellions that broke out periodically in England’s North American colonies; notably, Bacon’s Rebellion, Leisler’s Rebellion, and the Paxton Boys’ uprising.

CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISE

Comparing and Contrasting

Comparing and contrasting is a fundamental critical thinking skill. It involves classifying information into two categories: similarities (comparisons) and differences (contrasts). Comparative and contrasting relationships help historians relate facts and generalizations in a way that promotes greater understanding of both items being compared.

There are at least three specific ways that this form of classification is useful to historians. First, it helps define or clarify key terminology. For example, comparing and contrasting the characteristics of each of the two labor systems can clarify both “slavery” and “indentured servitude.” Second, comparing and contrasting helps generate useful generalizations. For example, contrasting the number of blacks as a percentage of the population in each colony helps produce the generalization, “Black codes were more strict where the percentage of blacks in the population was highest.” Third, comparing and contrasting helps establish a frame of reference; it always poses the question, “Compared to what?” For example, any information or generalization about slavery in England’s southern colonies in the seventeenth century can be better understood by comparing and contrasting it to slavery in the middle colonies and New England, or to southern slavery in the eighteenth century, or to slavery in the British West Indies, or to Spanish and Portuguese slavery in the Americas, or to slavery in antiquity, and so on.

Thus, comparing and contrasting helps clarify the characteristics of a topic of study, and like classification, of which it is a special kind, comparing and contrasting helps the historian order otherwise seemingly unrelated facts.
A matrix is a useful way to represent information for comparing and contrasting. It helps organize the similarities and differences of two or more topics being compared. Chapter 2 considers two topics we can compare: the development of life in colonial New England, and the southern colonies in the seventeenth century. Along the way, the authors discuss each regions’ economy, society, demography (characteristics of the population), and politics. A matrix will help us quickly determine the similarities and differences between seventeenth-century New England and the southern colonies.

Your task is to draw information from throughout Chapter 2 that helps you complete the boxes in the matrix on the following page. Some boxes have been filled in to cue you to specific areas of comparison and contrast.
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SOUTH</th>
<th>NEW ENGLAND</th>
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<td>slavery vital to the economy</td>
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<td>female subordination</td>
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