



# Colonial Society in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

The English Colonies on  
the Eve of Revolution

# What is an American?

*It is a “strange mixture of blood,  
which you will find in no other  
country... What then is the American,  
this new man?”*

- M.G. de Crevecoeur

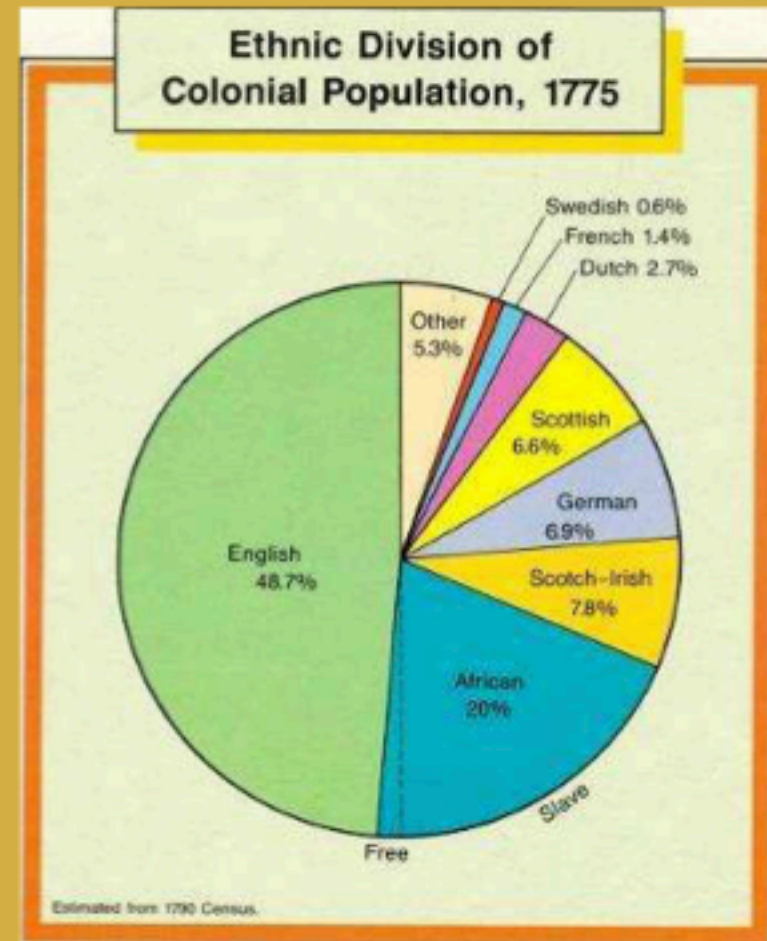
# Essential Question

- By 1754, to what extent had the British colonies developed a sense of an “American” identity?



# Population Growth

- Doubling every 25 years
- By 1700: 250,000. Free & Slave
- By 1775: 2.5 million (500,000 African)
- Causes:
  - Reproduction rate (unparalleled in modern world history)
  - Immigration





# European Immigrants

- Most Settled in Middle Colonies
- English
  - Limited numbers
- Germans
  - Pennsylvania
- Scotch-Irish
  - Virginia, Carolinas, Georgia
- Others
  - French Protestants, Dutch, Swedes



# Africans

- Largest non-English group
  - 20% of population
    - 90% in South
    - Majority in SC & GA
- In North, occupations ranged
  - Enslaved
  - Laborers
  - Tradesmen
  - wage earners

## The Interesting Narrative of The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African

...At last, when the ship we were in had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not see how they managed the vessel. But this disappointment was the least of my sorrow. The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us...

# Structure of Colonial Society

- General Characteristics:
  - Self-Government
  - Religious Toleration
  - No Hereditary Aristocracy
  - Social Mobility





# The Family

- More than 90% of colonists lived on farms
  - High standard of living
- Men
  - English common law gave most power to men
    - Landowning, politics
- Women
  - Avg # of children = 8
  - Household work, education of children
    - Origins of “cult of domesticity”



# The Economy

- Mercantilism & British restrictions
  - Navigation Acts (1651, 1660, 1663)
  - Molasses Act (1733)
- New England
  - Small farms, logging, shipbuilding, fishing, trade
- Middle Colonies
  - Wheat, corn, family farms, small manufacturing, trade (Philadelphia & New York)



# The Economy

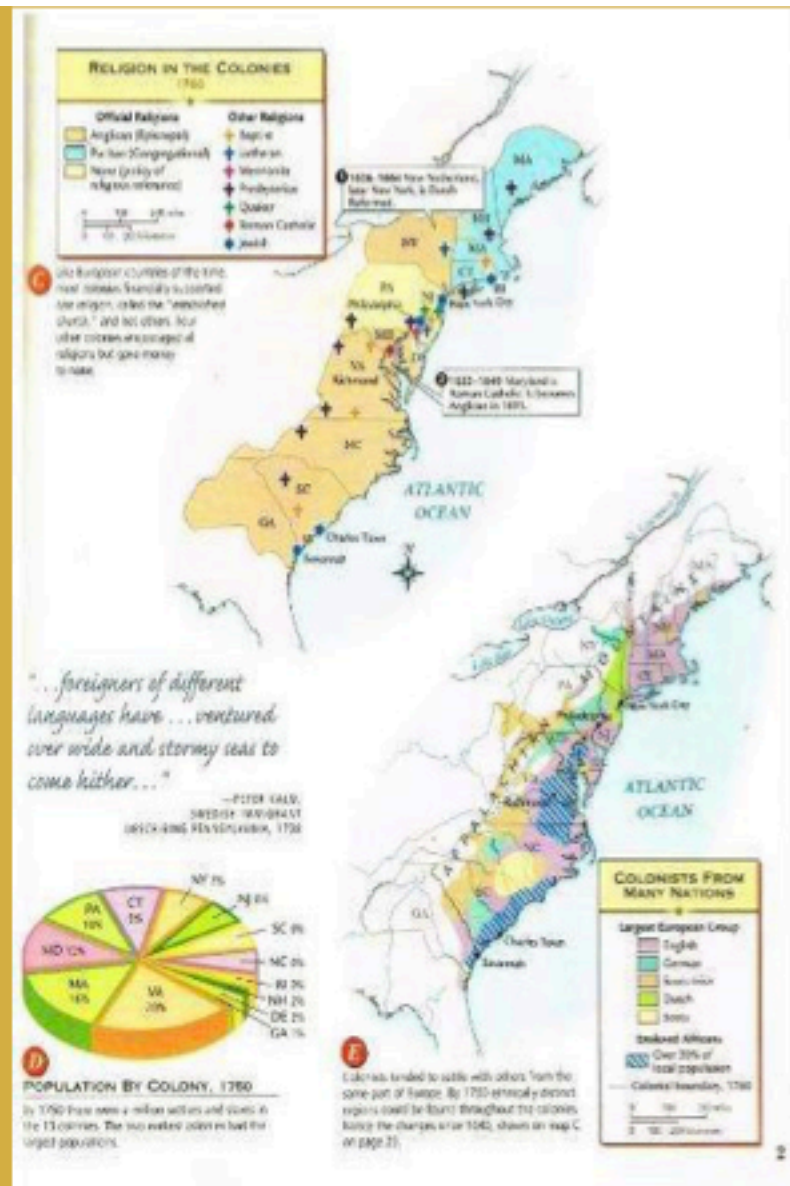
- Southern Colonies
  - Smalls subsistence farming, large plantations, cash crops
- Monetary System
  - Limited hard currency
  - Many developed paper currency
- Transportation
  - Deficient over land
  - Important ports for sea trade:
    - Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston
  - Importance of taverns





# Religion

- Religious Diversity
  - Especially in Middle Colonies
- Witches in Salem (1692)
- Challenges to Established Churches
  - Protestants vs. Congregationalists
  - Expansion of Protestant evangelism
  - Anti-Anglican sentiments







“The Salem trials, now being busily commemorated, were not the first or the last time that charges of witchcraft were heard in New England, but the extent of the alarm was unparalleled in the American colonies. The trials were the theme of Arthur Miller’s play “The Crucible”, written in the 1950s, which implicitly connected the 17th-century witch hunt with the communist scare triggered by Senator Joseph McCarthy. Since then, a spate of new studies has appeared. Feminists see the frenzy as part of the misogyny of Puritan culture, and the witch-hunts as a backlash against unconventional women--or those climbing the economic ladder. Racial interpretations see in Salem a colonial outpost where the slave Tituba embodies white fears of alien peoples in an unconquered continent.

Religious and political historians are having their say, too. The town of Salem was becoming prosperous (and secular) more quickly than the surrounding rural areas. Rivalries had developed, and the charges of witchcraft, which came first from the poorer, more devout countryside, helped to feed the tension...

The climate was ripe for an emotional eruption, and here medical science steps in. Some physicians...suggest that the wet winter may have led to the growth of ergot, a delusion-causing fungus, in the local grain supply.”

--“the Salem Witch-trials: Misogyny, Ergot, or Envy?” [the Economist](#), published 1992

# The Great Awakening

- Characteristics:
  - Fervent expression of religious beliefs
  - Mass movement
  - Itinerant preachers
- Jonathan Edwards
  - “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”
- George Whitefield
  - Large outdoor audiences
- Impact:
- Trans-atlantic exchanges
  - “New Lights” vs. “Old Lights”
    - Rise of Baptists and Methodists
    - New Institutions - Colleges
  - Greater independence and diversity of thought (religious beliefs)
    - Challenges to authority



# Primary Source

“The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.”

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

# A Divine and Supernatural Light

“That there is such a thing as a supernatural and divine light, immediately imparted to the soul by God, of a different nature from any that is obtained by natural means... I would show what this spiritual and divine light is...

There is therefore in the spiritual light: a true sense of the divine and superlative excellency of the things of religion; a real sense of the excellency of God and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God revealed in the gospel. There is a divine and superlative glory in these things; an excellency that is of a vastly higher kind, and more sublime nature, than in other things; a glory greatly distinguishing them from all that is earthly and temporal. He that is spiritually enlightened truly apprehends and sees it, or has a sense of it. He does not merely rationally believe that God is glorious, but he has a sense of the gloriousness of God in his heart...”

--Jonathan Edwards, 1733



# Cultural Life

- Arts and Sciences
  - Architecture
    - Borrowed (Georgian)
    - Frontier Log Cabins





# M/C Question

- Jonathan Mayhew
- AMSCO p. 59
- Read stimulus and answer questions #7-10
- 4 minutes

# Cultural Life

**Benjamin West**

*Benjamin Franklin  
Drawing Electricity  
from the Sky, 1816*



# Cultural Life

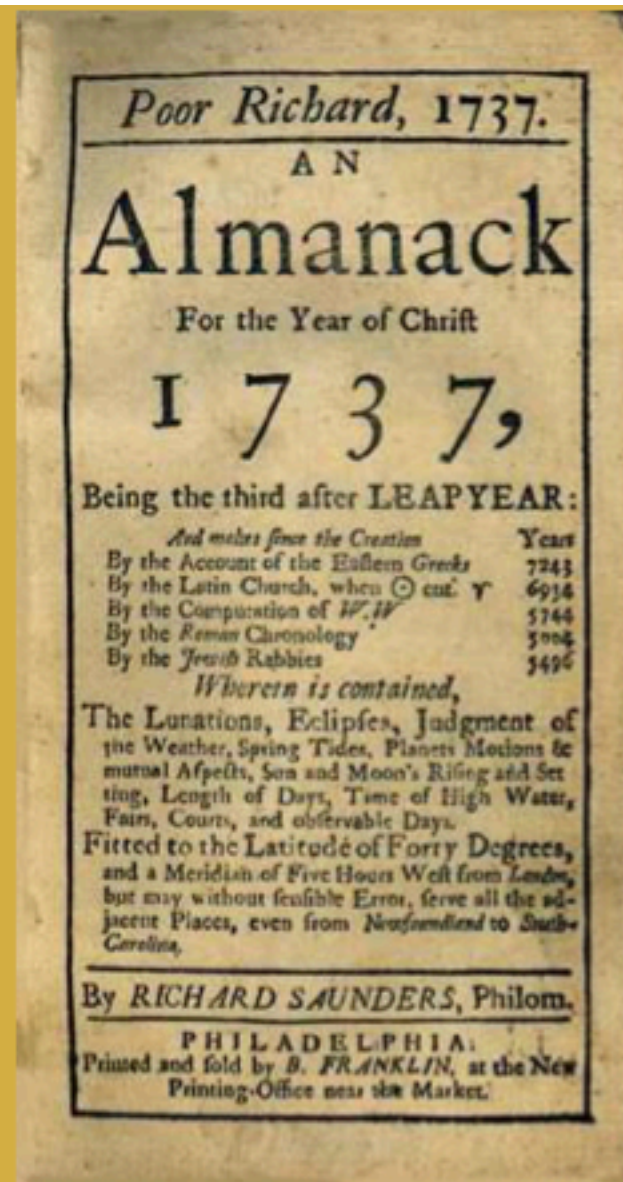
**John Copley**

*Watson and the  
Shark,*  
1778



# Cultural Life

- Literature
  - Religious (Mather & Edwards)
  - Writers
    - Otis, Dickinson
  - Poetry (Wheatley)
- Science
  - Benjamin Franklin





# Elementary Education

- The Old Deluder Act & Massachusetts School Law (1647)
- Middle Colonies: private or church schools
- South: limited; owner's children on plantations





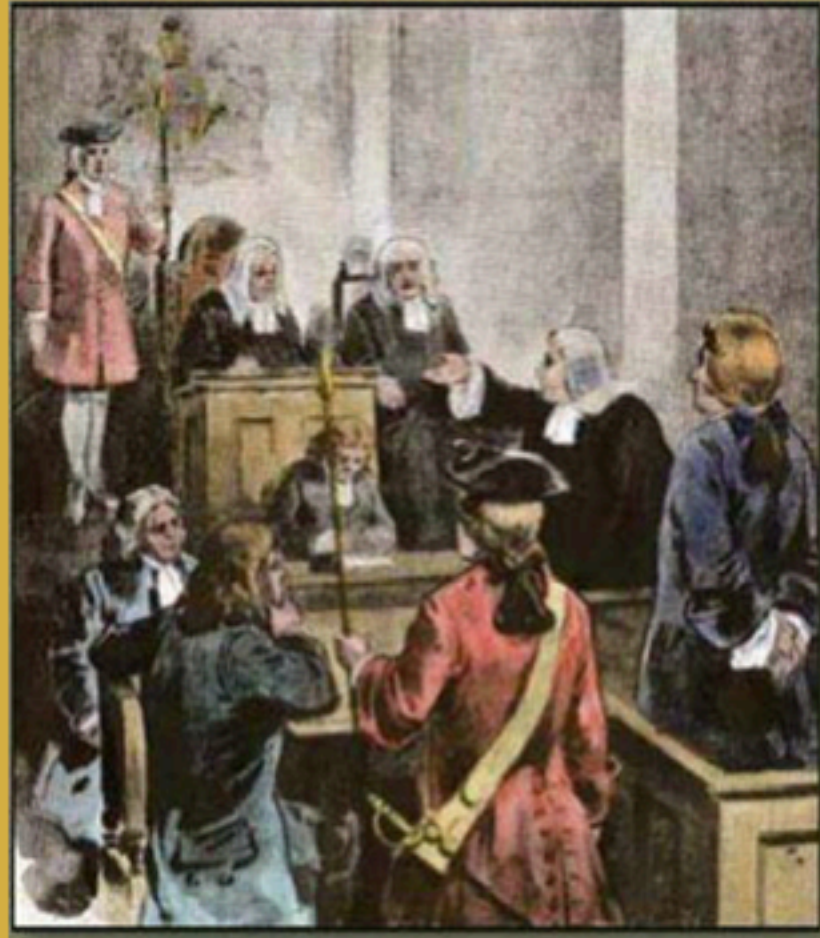
# Higher Education

- **Sectarian Colleges:**
  - Harvard (1636)
  - William and Mary (1694)
  - Yale (1701)
  - **New Light Colleges:**
    - Princeton, Columbia, Brown, Rutgers, & Dartmouth
- **First Liberal Arts College:**
  - Pennsylvania (1765)
- Ministry
- Physicians
- Lawyers



# Colonial Folkways

- The Press
  - Newspapers
  - Zenger Trial (1735)
- Rural Life
  - Reliance on Seasons
  - Entertainment (wealthy):
    - Card-playing, horse-racing
- Influence of the Enlightenment
  - Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau
- Emergence of a National Character
  - “Freedoms”



# M/C Question

- Zenger Trial
- AMSCO p. 58
- Read stimulus and answer questions #4-6
- 3 minutes

# Second Treatise of Government

“The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges everyone. That law is reason, and it teaches all mankind, that since we are all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another’s life, health, liberty or possessions. Since men are, as has been said, by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent. Giving this consent is done by agreeing with other men, to join and unite into a community to promote their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living, and a secure enjoyment of their property. When any number of men have so consented to make one government, the majority has a right to act and conclude the rest.

Wherever law ends, tyranny begins. A situation may arise in which the law is transgressed and someone is harmed, and then the monarch exceeds the power given him by the law by making use of force to compass that upon the subject which the law allows not. If this occurs, the monarch may be opposed, just as would any other man who by force invades the right of another.”

--John Locke, 1690



# Politics

- Structure of Government
  - 8 Royal
  - 3 Proprietary
  - 2 Popularly Elected (CT, RI)
  - All had bicameral legislatures
- Local Governments
  - Town meetings
  - Counties/parishes
- Voting
  - Restrictions
  - Removal of religious restrictions





# M/C Question

- John Locke
- AMSCO p. 57
- Read stimulus and answer questions #1-3
- 3 minutes

# Analysis: Historical Perspectives

## Was colonial America “democratic”?

### *In favor:*

- New England Town Meetings
- Universal manhood suffrage?
  - Class did not determine voting rights

### *Opposed:*

- Little political conflict nor debate
- Limited voting rights
- Emergence and dominance of new elite

# End of Session 2

- **Review Assignment:** Answer question 3 (a, b, c) on p. 61

# Tension & Conflict

- Class Tensions:

- Bacon's Rebellion: Virginia (1676)
- Coode's Rebellion: Maryland (1689)
- Leisler's Rebellion New York (1690)
- Tenant Riots
  - New Jersey (1746)
  - Vermont (1760)
  - New York (1765-6)
- Paxton Boys: Pennsylvania (1760's)
- The Regulators: Carolinas (1760)

- Slave Revolts

- Stono Rebellion (1739)
- New York Conspiracy (1741)



GOVERNOR TRYON AND THE REGULATORS



# Writing/Discussion Assessment

- By 1754, to what extent had the British colonies developed a sense of an “American” identity?

**Provide evidence**



# Writing/Discussion Assessment

**Support, amend or refute the following statement with supporting evidence**

- The British colonies participated in political, social, cultural, and economic exchanges with Great Britain that encouraged both stronger bonds with Britain and resistance to Britain's control.