

Three Colonial Regions, Three Economies

Geography, trade, and labor in British North America

Learning Targets

★ Compare how geography shaped work across three colonial regions.

★ Explain why New England relied on the sea and commerce.

★ Explain why the Middle Colonies sold grain abroad.

★ Connect plantation crops to coerced labor in Southern colonies.

★ Judge how a 1775 writer described colonial work.

One Coast, Different Conditions

Mercantilism

An imperial system that directed colonial trade to increase the parent country's wealth

Climate

The length and reliability of growing seasons

Soil

The ease of producing food and a saleable surplus

Waterways

Routes that lowered the cost of moving heavy goods to market

Key Concept: Geography created possibilities; institutions and choices shaped outcomes.

New England: Sea, Timber, and Household Plots

Subsistence farming

Raising food mainly to feed a household rather than to sell for profit

Sea

Coastal waters and good harbors supported fishing and shipping

Forest

Timber supplied boards, masts, and shipbuilding material

Mixed work

Households combined agriculture, maritime trades, and crafts

Did You Know: The 1775 account valued fishery at more than half of one New England total.

Middle Colonies: Grain and Market Towns

1

Harvest conditions

Fertile valleys and longer seasons supported grain surpluses.

2

Staple crop

A major product produced in large amounts for a region's trade

3

Cash crop

A crop grown mainly to be sold rather than consumed by the grower

4

Routes to buyers

Rivers and merchants moved wheat toward coastal towns and overseas markets.

Key Concept: Fertile land mattered because transport and buyers turned surplus grain into trade.

Southern Colonies: Tobacco, Rice, and Indigo

- Tobacco, rice, and indigo brought revenue from distant buyers.
- Long growing seasons supported tobacco and, farther south, rice and indigo.
- Large landholdings concentrated production for Atlantic buyers.
- Export agriculture required planting, tending, harvesting, and processing.
- Colonial laws enabled landowners to command other people's labor.

Warning: Climate helps explain crop choice, but it does not excuse systems of coercion.

Labor Was Not One System

Production setting

- Large estates organized land and workers for saleable output.
- Large landholdings concentrated authority.
- Slavery existed in every region; its importance differed sharply.

Different forms of coercion

- Some laborers served under time-limited contracts.
- Racial bondage imposed lifelong, inheritable status.
- Violence and law denied freedom and family security.

Warning: Both systems coerced labor, but duration, legal status, race, and heredity made them fundamentally unequal.

Connecting Colonies to Atlantic Markets

Triangular trade

A network of Atlantic routes linking Europe, Africa, the Americas, and the Caribbean

Regional economy

The pattern of work, production, and trade that develops in a particular area

Imperial rules

Trade laws that favored English ships and channels

Forced migration

The coerced movement of enslaved Africans through Atlantic routes

Remember: A three-sided diagram is a model of a much larger and less tidy network.

Read a Map as an Argument



1. Source it

John Mitchell made the map for a British imperial audience in 1755.



2. Find exchange

Port - A coastal or river city where ships load, unload, and exchange goods.



3. Trace routes

Follow coasts and rivers that connected settlements with inland areas.

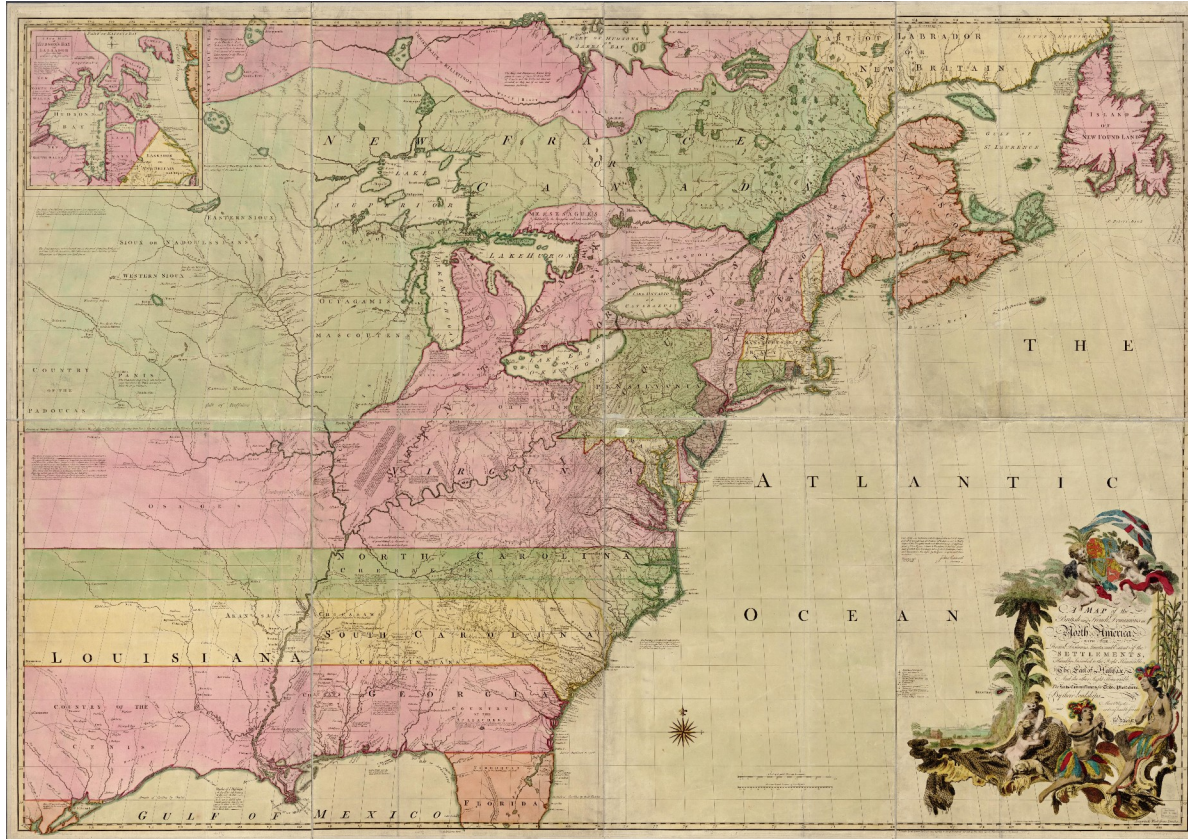


4. Read power

Notice which boundaries, place names, and territorial claims receive emphasis.

Note: Deck page 10 is the full-page map; record map observations in Section 7.

Mitchell's Map of British North America, 1755



Who Wrote American Husbandry?

Publication	A two-volume work issued in London in 1775 under the description 'by an American'
Authorship	The writer's name is not established; the classroom citation identifies Anonymous
Citation	Anonymous, American Husbandry (1775).
Plantation	A large agricultural estate organized to produce crops for sale with a controlled labor force
Source lens	Commercial observations that also reduce enslaved people to labor inputs

Warning: A detailed source can still carry harmful assumptions and a limited viewpoint.

Three Passages, Three Patterns

Region or term	Evidence or meaning
New England	Fishery, ships, livestock, and timber show mixed production
New York	High-quality wheat in large exports shows a grain surplus
Virginia and Maryland	Tobacco, grain, and lumber show diverse output
Indentured servant	A worker bound by contract to labor for a set term, often in exchange for passage
Writer's lens	Totals and rankings value people and land by commercial output

Key Concept: The passages offer regional evidence and reveal the writer's commercial priorities.

Why Economic Patterns Diverged



1. Geography

Climate, soil, forests, rivers, and coastlines changed production opportunities.



2. Production and land

Colonial production expanded on Indigenous homelands through purchases, coercive law, broken agreements, and violence.



3. Markets

Merchants and imperial rules connected local goods to distant buyers.



4. Labor and law

Chattel slavery - A hereditary system that legally treated enslaved people as property for life.

Remember: A cause chain explains interaction; no single link explains an entire region by itself.

Key Takeaways

- ★ On Wampanoag and other Native homelands, New England mixed sea and farm work.
- ★ Lenape and Haudenosaunee trade routes shaped Middle Colony farms and ports.
- ★ Chesapeake growth on Powhatan homelands tied land, seasons, and coercive law.
- ★ Enslaved labor reached every region, tied by Atlantic trade and imperial rules.
- ★ The 1775 account offers evidence through a commercial, dehumanizing lens.