

Lesson 4: Daily Life in the Colonies

☐ Getting Started

A tremendous number of the things that we buy from stores today were made at home in colonial times. Importing goods from England was expensive, and few people had the cash available to buy a lot of expensive imported goods. So colonists provided for themselves, their families, and their communities by making the most of the natural resources available to them. In this lesson, you'll learn more about how colonial people obtained the things they needed; you'll also create either a costume or models of items from daily life that you can use in your final project for this unit.

Stuff You Need

- *Great Colonial Projects You Can Build Yourself!* by Kris Bordessa

Ideas to Think About

- In what ways can the change of place of a physical migration inspire or make possible changes in culture, community, and ways of life?

Things to Know

- Imported goods were extremely expensive in colonial America, so people grew or made much of what they needed at home or bought them locally.
- Some colonial activities, like candle-making, were necessary but also served as opportunities for social interaction.
- Clothing was very expensive in the colonies -- most people had only a couple of outfits, rather than a whole wardrobe of clothes!

☐ Reading and Questions

Read Chapters 3 and 4 in *Great Colonial Projects You Can Build Yourself!* by Kris Bordessa and then answer these questions.

1. Describe a typical colonial house.

2. In Puritan New England, what would happen if a woman committed a felony?

3. How did aristocrats show off their wealth in their attire?

4. What materials could be used to make clothing?

Activities

☐ Activity 1: Colonial Goods

Think about all of the things that you need in your daily life — fresh water, food, clothing, shelter, fuel for heat, transportation, household furnishings, and the things you need for work, education, and entertainment. In colonial America, many of those things would be made within the household or purchased from local businesses. (See page 73 in *Great Colonial America Projects You Can Build Yourself!* for a partial list of trades that might have been common in a colonial town.) What couldn't be made in the home or bought from a tradesman would have to be purchased from a merchant's shop.

The merchant might have obtained some goods from other colonies but would have had to import many goods, especially luxury items, from England.

On the "Colonial Goods" activity page, think through how you might obtain necessary items for a colonial household.

☐ **Activity 2: Props or Costume for Your Final Project**

For your final project, you will be giving a "living history" performance in which you will pretend to be a person living in colonial times. If you would like, your performance can include a colonial costume, or you can wear 21st century clothing and show your audience props representing life in colonial America. You will choose either a colonist from any colony or a soldier returning home from the Revolution. You might decide to be the wife of a minister in Connecticut, the son of a tobacco farmer in Virginia, a Quaker in Pennsylvania, a woman who dressed as a man to fight in the revolution, or a Boston man who signed up for the militia after being angered by the presence of British soldiers in his home community. In this activity, you will use the projects listed in Chapters 3 and 4 of *Great Colonial America Projects You Can Build Yourself!* to create either a costume (Option 1) or props (Option 2) that you could use for your performance.

Option 1: Colonial Costumes

If you think you would like to wear a costume for your final project, work with a parent to determine which of the choices below will work best for the materials you have available, your skills, and your interests, and then create one or more pieces of a colonial costume for your final project:

- Colonial-style pocket (page 52)
- Tricorn hat (pages 54-55)
- Mobcap (page 56)
- Cuffs (page 57)
- Fan (page 58)

If you want to make a more elaborate costume, work with a parent to find a sewing pattern or instructions for costume making. Be creative and have fun!

**Extension Activity**

www.beyondthepage.com/link/1729/

If you would like, you can visit the website of Plimoth Plantation and learn more about the clothing worn by settlers and local Wampanoag Indians in and near Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Option 2: Colonial Props

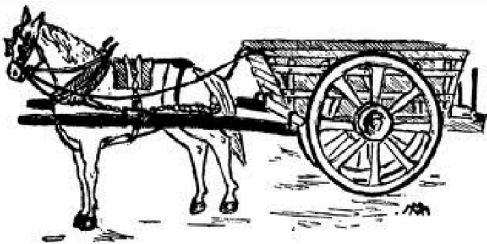
In this option, you'll create props that you can use to show your audience specific details about colonial life. Choose one of the following projects listed in Chapter 3. Work with a parent to determine which projects are most appropriate for the materials you have available and your skills and interests. Some activities may require parental assistance — with a parent, read over the instructions for the activity you plan to do and make sure that a parent is available to assist you if the instructions indicate that parental guidance is required:

- Miniature wattle-and-daub house (page 28)
- Bricks (page 29)
- Straw tick (page 30)
- Dipped candles (page 32)
- Candle holder (page 33)
- Silhouette (page 35)
- Broom (page 37)
- Braided rug (page 39)

Wrapping Up

Do you think you would have liked to live in the colonies? Think about what challenges you would have faced that you don't face today. Are there parts of colonial life that appeal to you? If so, what are they? In the next lesson, you'll learn more about life on colonial farms and in growing towns.

Colonial Goods



Choose a colony that you would have most liked to live in:

What did the colony have available for natural resources: _____

What did the colony produce for trade: _____

Imagine you lived in this colony. How might you obtain the following items? Consider how each item would have been made. Could it have been produced in a home? Would it require special equipment or skills to make it? Could local craftsman have done the work? Would some goods need to be imported? Draw a line from each item to some ways you might obtain it in your colony. You may draw more than one line if you think an item may have been available from more than one source.

Good	Source
Wool for clothing 	Bought at a shop (Imported from England)
Animal pelts	
Hosiery	
A mattress	Grown / made at home
Fine lace	
Tea 	Bought at a shop (Imported from another colony)
Rice	
Fresh vegetables 	
Furniture	Bought from a local craftsman
Horseshoes for your horse 	
Shoes for your family	Traded with native people

Lesson 4: Daily Life in the Colonies

Getting Started

? Ideas to Think About

- In what ways can the change of place of a physical migration inspire or make possible changes in culture, community, and ways of life?



Things to Know

- Imported goods were extremely expensive in colonial America, so people grew or made much of what they needed at home or bought them locally.
- Some colonial activities, like candle-making, were necessary but also served as opportunities for social interaction.
- Clothing was very expensive in the colonies -- most people had only a couple of outfits, rather than a whole wardrobe of clothes!

⦿ Skills

- Analyze the important geographic, political, economic, and social aspects of life in the region prior to the Revolutionary Period. (SS)
- Assess the impact of geography on the settlement and developing economy of the Carolina colony. (SS)
- Identify and describe American Indians who inhabited various colonies and assess their impacts on those colonies. (SS)
- Identify geographic and political reasons for the creation of various colonies and evaluate the effects on the government and economics of the colony. (SS)
- Describe the roles and contributions of diverse groups, such as American Indians, African Americans, European immigrants, landed gentry, tradesmen, and small farmers to everyday life in various colonies. (SS)

Introducing the Lesson

In this lesson, your child will learn more about daily life in the colonies and how colonial people obtained the things they needed; she will also create either a costume or models of items from daily life that she can use in her final project for this unit.

Reading and Questions

1. Describe a typical colonial house.

Answers will vary: See pages 25-30 for information your child might include.

2. In Puritan New England, what would happen if a woman committed a felony?

Her husband would be punished.

3. How did aristocrats show off their wealth in their attire?

Fancy clothing details -- such as bodices with stays, layered gowns, petticoats, paniers, and fine fabrics -- all showed off the wealth of an aristocratic colonist. Gentlemen might wear a doublet, a cape, or other fine clothing.

4. What materials could be used to make clothing?

Flax or wool for common people, or finer fabrics like silk for the wealthy.

Activities

Activity 1: Colonial Goods

In this activity, your child will consider how she might obtain various goods if she lived in colonial times. An answer key for the activity page has been provided.

Answer key:

Wool for clothing — Grown/Made at Home

Animal pelts — Traded with Native People

Hosiery — Bought at a Shop (Imported from England)

A mattress — Grown/Made at Home

Fine lace — Bought at a Shop (Imported from England)

Tea — Bought at a Shop (Imported from England)

Rice — Grown/Made at Home (if in a southern colony) or Bought at a Shop (Imported from Another Colony)

Fresh vegetables — Grown/Made at Home

Furniture — Made at Home or Bought from a Local Craftsman (esp. if in a northern colony) or Bought at a Shop (Imported from Another Colony)

Horseshoes for your horse — Bought from a Local Craftsman

Shoes for your family — Bought from a Local Craftsman

Activity 2: Props or Costume for Your Final Project

In this activity, your child will create a costume or colonial-era props for her final project, a living history performance about life in colonial America. Please read over the instructions and materials list for each project in the book and decide which projects will be most suitable for your child and whether you will need to be available to provide support or ensure safety. Some projects, like candle-making, require adult supervision, so be available to assist your child.

Option 1: Colonial Costumes

In this option, your child will create parts of a costume that she can use in her final project.

Option 2: Colonial Props

In this option, your child will create a prop for her final project on colonial life. Some of these projects, like candle making, require parental assistance and others may require either a second person to help or unusual materials, so be sure to work closely with your child to choose an appropriate project. Read over the instructions with her carefully and be available to provide assistance and supervision.

Wrapping Up**Questions to Discuss**

- How was life in the colonies different from life in Europe? (Answers will vary, but it was much harder to obtain many things easily and cheaply. People lived off the land and more simply. Colonists from other countries often lived nearby, so people had the chance to see how those in other parts of Europe might have lived. Your child may mention other differences.)
- How did people get clothing in the colonies? (Only the wealthy could afford to buy clothes made by someone else. You could pay a local shopkeeper to make clothes from wool, silk, cotton, or flax. Alternatively, you could buy cloth and make your own clothing or, most cheaply, raise sheep or grow flax and turn the wool or flax into thread and then into cloth and cut and sew the clothing at home.)
- Do you think you would have liked to live in colonial times? Why or why not?

Things to Review

- Review your child's responses to the reading questions.
- Review your child's "Colonial Goods" activity page.
- Review your child's costume project or prop project.