

## CHAPTER 4

# American Society Transformed, 1720–1770

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After you have studied Chapter 4 in your textbook and worked through this study guide chapter, you should be able to:

1. Indicate the factors that contributed to population growth in the American colonies during the eighteenth century, and discuss the characteristics and consequences of that growth.
2. Discuss the characteristics of the major non-English ethnic groups that came to the colonies during the period from 1720 to 1770, and explain their contributions to and impact on colonial society.
3. Examine the economic evolution of the American colonies from 1720 to 1770, and discuss the major factors that contributed to the economic development of each colonial region (New England, the Middle Colonies, the Chesapeake, and the Lower South).
4. Distinguish between the culture of the genteel and that of ordinary folk in eighteenth-century colonial America.
5. Identify the basic tenets of Enlightenment thought, and explain the impact of this thought on eighteenth-century American society.
6. Identify the divergent cultural traditions that emerged in eighteenth-century colonial America and explain the impact of race and ethnicity on such traditions.
7. Discuss and explain the importance of the religious, political, economic, and intercultural rituals in which eighteenth-century colonial Americans participated.
8. Discuss the similarities and differences among Indian, mixed-race, European American, and African American families.
9. Examine the impact of place of residence (rural vs. urban), gender, socioeconomic status, and race on the daily lives of eighteenth-century colonial Americans.
10. Discuss the rise of colonial assemblies, and explain the characteristics of representative government in eighteenth-century colonial America.
11. Examine the causes and consequences of the Stono Rebellion, the New York conspiracy, the land riots, the Regulator movements, and the First Great Awakening.

### THEMATIC GUIDE

In Chapters 2 and 3, we looked at American society in its infancy. Though this society was shaped by many forces, its basic belief system and value system came from England. At the end of Chapter 3, we saw that colonial society was showing signs of evolving in its own unique direction, a fact that caused England to formulate some rules and regulations (the Navigation Acts, for example) designed to control colonial behavior.

In Chapter 4, the authors analyze the internal makeup of colonial society to show more clearly how certain forces interacted to create the unique American society.

In the first section of the chapter, “Population Growth and Ethnic Diversity,” we note the reasons behind the dramatic population growth in the colonies in the eighteenth century. By examining the migration of a variety of ethnic groups that made up that migration, we see the development of the cultural pluralism that distinguishes American society. At the same time we recognize some of the internal dynamics produced by that pluralism (the question of assimilation, as well as the emergence and consequences of ethnic antagonisms).

The economic evolution of the colonies is the main theme of the second section. Although there was slow economic growth, between 1720 and 1750 the growth was uneven. We examine in detail the economic forces operating in (1) New England; (2) the middle colonies; (3) the Chesapeake area; and (4) the Lower South. The forces affecting the economy as a whole interacted with regional characteristics to create a separate set of economic dynamics within each region. Consequently, the colonies were not a unified whole and had no history of unity or sense of common purpose.

An examination of the characteristics of genteel and ordinary culture leads to a discussion of the religious, political, economic, and intercultural rituals in which eighteenth-century colonial residents participated and through which they forged their cultural identities. Due to differences in the historical experiences of Indians, people of mixed race, European Americans, and African Americans, different family forms emerged within each group. Ethnicity, gender, and place of residence (rural vs. urban) also affected patterns of daily life in eighteenth-century colonial America.

In the penultimate section, “Politics: Stability and Crisis in British America,” we turn to political developments—chiefly the emergence of colonial assemblies as a powerful political force. We also look at the contrasts between the ideal and the reality of representative government in eighteenth-century colonial America.

Then we return to the theme that underlies all the sections in this chapter: the seeds of tension, conflict, and crisis present within eighteenth-century American society. If you look back at the earlier sections, you can see the potential for conflict in (1) ethnic diversity; (2) the increase of urban poverty despite general economic growth, as well as the economic variations among the four regions; (3) the differences between city and rural life, between the status of men and women, and between white and African American families; (4) the clashing of the older and the newer cultures and of the genteel and the ordinary; and (5) the conflict between the ideal and the reality of the role of colonial assemblies. The crises and conflicts resulting from this diversity are exemplified in the Stono Rebellion, the New York conspiracy, the land riots, and the Regulator movements.

Finally, we consider the crisis that was the most widespread—the First Great Awakening. This was a religious crisis, but its causes resembled those of the other crises of the period.

## IDENTIFICATION AND SIGNIFICANCE

After studying Chapter 4 of *A People and a Nation*, you should be able to identify *and* fully explain the historical significance of each item listed below.

- Identify each item in the space provided. Give an explanation or description of the item. Answer the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, and *when*.
- Explain the historical significance of each item in the space provided. Establish the historical context in which the item exists. Establish the item as the result of or as the cause of other factors existing in the society under study. Answer this question: *What were the political, social, economic, and/or cultural consequences of this item?*

1. eighteenth-century colonial population growth
2. the Enlightenment
3. *Two Treatises of Government*
4. the Stono Rebellion
5. the New Jersey, Vermont, and Hudson River valley land riots
6. the First Great Awakening
7. Jonathan Edwards
8. George Whitefield
9. “New Lights” and “Old Lights”

## IDEAS AND DETAILS

### Objective 1

1. Which of the following was the main reason for the natural increase in the population of the British colonies in North America during the eighteenth century?
  - a. The nutritious diet of the colonists
  - b. The young age at which colonial women began to bear children
  - c. The high sex ratio in the colonies
  - d. The healthy disease environment, especially in the South

### Objective 2

2. Which of the following is true of German immigrants?
  - a. They were drawn to the urban areas of the middle colonies.
  - b. They were a destabilizing force because of their radical political ideas.
  - c. They contributed to the religious diversity of colonies such as Pennsylvania.
  - d. Most were young, single men seeking economic opportunity.

### Objective 2

3. Non-Anglo immigrants to the British colonies in North America often did not become naturalized British citizens because
  - a. Parliament never officially allowed them to become British citizens.
  - b. they were prevented from doing so by upper-class Anglo-colonists who did not want them to gain a voice in colonial government.
  - c. many such immigrants could not meet the strict naturalization requirements.
  - d. even though they immigrated to the British colonies, they continued to have a great deal of animosity toward the British and had no desire to become British citizens.

### Objective 3

4. Which of the following factors had a stabilizing influence on the eighteenth-century American economy?
  - a. European wars
  - b. The slave system
  - c. The growing American population
  - d. International trade

### Objectives 2 and 3

5. In contrast to seventeenth-century immigrants, immigrants to the colonies in the eighteenth century
  - a. had fewer opportunities for advancement.
  - b. were seldom able to assimilate into Anglo-American culture.
  - c. always came by choice.
  - d. were primarily of English origin.

### Objective 3

6. The demand for foodstuffs during King George’s War had a positive economic impact on
- Massachusetts.
  - Pennsylvania.
  - South Carolina.
  - Connecticut.

### Objective 5

7. The Enlightenment emphasized
- revealed religion.
  - faith.
  - reason.
  - intuitive knowledge.

### Objective 5

8. In his *Two Treatises of Government*, John Locke argued that
- government was created by God.
  - government was created for the sole purpose of bringing order and stability to human society.
  - the people created government and placed absolute power in the hands of the monarch.
  - the people have the right to oust a ruler if he does not protect their rights.

### Objective 7

9. Tea served as a sign of status in colonial America because
- upper-class colonists drank it hot while lower-class colonists drank it cold.
  - the drinking of tea was considered to be a lower-class activity.
  - tea was served only in salons frequented by those of genteel status.
  - the items necessary for its “proper” consumption were expensive.

### Objective 9

10. Which of the following distinguished urban life from rural life in eighteenth-century America?
- Work schedules in the city were governed by the sun rather than by the clock.
  - The incidence of epidemic diseases was lower in the city.
  - Urban dwellers had more contact with the world at large.
  - The distance between the ordinary and the genteel was less noticeable in the city.

### Objectives 10 and 11

11. The Regulator movements, the Stono Rebellion, and the Hudson Valley land riots provide evidence that
- colonial assemblies had the means to control internal disorder.
  - colonial assemblies did not live up to the ideal of protecting the rights of *all* the people.
  - there were few ethnic tensions in eighteenth-century colonial America.
  - political rights were gradually being extended to more and more people.

**Objective 11**

12. Which of the following was a consequence of the First Great Awakening?
  - a. It brought intellectualism into religion.
  - b. It created a new sense of unity between England and the colonies.
  - c. It led to the founding of an established church throughout the colonies.
  - d. It fostered a willingness to question traditional beliefs.

**ESSAY QUESTIONS****Objective 2**

1. Discuss the characteristics of the Scots-Irish, German, and Scottish immigrants to the American colonies in the eighteenth century. Why did they come? Where did they settle? How did their immigrant status affect their lives?

**Objective 3**

2. Examine the similarities and differences between the economic development of New England and that of the Lower South during the eighteenth century.

**Objective 5**

3. Discuss the ideas associated with the Enlightenment and the impact of those ideas on mid-eighteenth-century colonial society.

**Objective 7**

4. Discuss the importance of church attendance in the lives of eighteenth-century colonial Americans. In what way were colonial church services an expression of community values?

**Objective 9**

5. Examine gender roles in mid-eighteenth-century colonial America.

**Objectives 2 and 8**

6. Examine the characteristics of the lives of African Americans in mid-eighteenth-century colonial America.

**Objective 9**

7. Discuss the similarities and differences between rural life and city life in mid-eighteenth-century colonial America.

**Objective 11**

8. Defend the following thesis statement: The Stono Rebellion and the land riots in New Jersey, Vermont, and the Hudson Valley exposed the ethnic, racial, and economic tensions in early eighteenth-century colonial America.

## ANSWERS

### Multiple-Choice Questions

1. b. Correct. Most European American women began to bear children in their early twenties, most African women in their late teens. Since married women usually became pregnant every two or three years, the young age at which women began to bear children was a factor in the rapid population growth in eighteenth-century America.
  - a. No. The diet of colonists was not nutritious by today's standards and relied heavily on pork and beef, fat, salt, and, since water was often unhealthy, alcohol. Green vegetables were seldom eaten, and when they were they were boiled for a long time with bacon, ham, or fatback.
  - c. No. Throughout the colonial period there was an equal sex ratio in the northern colonies. Although there was a high sex ratio in the southern colonies in the seventeenth century, that changed in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, a high sex ratio means there are more men than women; therefore, a high sex ratio would not be conducive to a dramatic increase in population.
  - d. No. Even though the healthy disease environment in colonial America, especially in the North, did contribute to the natural increase in the colonial population, this was not the main reason for such an increase.
2. c. Correct. The German immigrants came from a variety of Protestant sects, and as they settled in middle colonies such as Pennsylvania and New York they added to the religious diversity that already existed in that region.
  - a. No. Although settlers of German descent were most heavily concentrated in Pennsylvania, they were not necessarily drawn to the urban areas of the colony; and during the eighteenth century they spread into the western areas of Maryland and Virginia and settled in the interior of South Carolina and Georgia.
  - b. No. Although some colonists were prejudiced against Germans and expressed a fear of them, the German immigrants were not political radicals and were not a destabilizing influence in the colonies.
  - d. No. Although the text does not indicate the gender of the German immigrants and does not indicate whether they came singly or in groups, many German immigrants came as redemptioners (a variant form of indentured servitude) and often traveled in family groups.
3. b. Correct. Naturalization laws were rather generous in the British colonies; however, the Anglo-elites often prevented immigrants from taking advantage of these laws because they did not want them to gain a voice in colonial government.
  - a. No. Parliament passed a naturalization law in 1709 and another more generous law in 1740.
  - c. No. Naturalization requirements were not strict. As a result of a law passed by Parliament in 1740, a colonist of non-English origin could become a naturalized British citizen by living in the colonies for seven years, paying a small fee, taking an oath of allegiance to the king, and giving evidence of accepting Protestant beliefs.
  - d. No. Many of the immigrants of non-English origin did become naturalized citizens and did not necessarily have an undue amount of animosity toward the British.
4. c. Correct. As stated in the text: "The dramatic increase in the population of Anglo America served as one of the few sources of stability for the colonial economy... ."

- a. No. Rather than having a stabilizing influence on the American economy, European wars caused sharp economic fluctuations in the eighteenth-century American economy and affected different colonial regions in different ways.
- b. No. The presence of racial slavery was a source of constant tension between black slaves and white masters. In areas of the South where slaves constituted a large proportion of the total population, the fear of slave uprisings was ever present. Such tension was not a source of economic stability.
- d. No. Foreign trade was the major “energizing” influence on the eighteenth-century colonial economy, but it was also a destabilizing influence.
5. a. Correct. By the mid-eighteenth century, an elite group had emerged that dominated the political, economic, and social life of the colonies. The presence of the dominant elite meant that colonial society was more stratified in the 1750s than it had been in the seventeenth century, making it more difficult for new immigrants to find advancement opportunities.
- b. No. A variety of factors determined whether or not migrants were readily assimilated into Anglo-American culture. Huguenots were quickly absorbed, while colonial Jews were not. However, it is a misstatement to say that eighteenth-century immigrants were “seldom” able to assimilate.
- c. No. All blacks and some whites were brought to the colonies against their will. Therefore, it is estimated that about one-third of the migrants during the colonial period came involuntarily.
- d. No. The statistics offered in the textbook do not support the conclusion that immigrants to the colonies in the eighteenth century were primarily of English origin.
6. b. Correct. The fertile soil of the middle colonies, including Pennsylvania, meant that commercial farming was the norm in this area in the 1740s and 1750s. Farmers in colonies like Pennsylvania were in an excellent position to profit from the wartime demand for foodstuffs.
- a. No. Because of the nature of the New England soil, New England farmers did not normally produce surplus farm products for the international marketplace. Therefore, wartime demand for foodstuffs did not have a positive economic impact on Massachusetts.
- c. No. As a result of the King George’s War, trade with Europe was disrupted, rice prices plummeted, and South Carolina entered a severe depression.
- d. No. Connecticut, a New England colony, had rocky soil and relatively small landholdings. The farmers there did not normally produce a surplus of foodstuffs for the international marketplace.
7. c. Correct. Those who adhered to Enlightenment thought rejected spiritual revelation, faith, and intuitive knowledge as faulty and filled with superstition. All knowledge was to be based on observations of the real world and on reason.
- a. No. The Enlightenment emphasized “natural religion” or, in other words, intellectual religion rather than religion based on spiritual revelation (revealed religion).
- b. No. Enlightenment thought rejected faith in favor of something that Enlightenment thinkers believed to be much more reliable.
- d. No. Those who adhered to Enlightenment thought rejected intuitive knowledge as faulty and unreliable.
8. d. Correct. Locke believed that people entered into a contract with each other through which they created government. Through this contract, Locke said, government had a contractual



obligation to protect the rights of the people. If government did not fulfill this obligation, the people had the right to rise in rebellion against government and institute a new government.

- a. No. Locke believed that government was established as the result of a contract among people and between people and government. Therefore, Locke's theory of government is secular rather than religious.
  - b. No. Locke believed that people were basically good and that before the creation of government there was relative order and stability. Therefore, according to Locke, government was created for a purpose other than to impose order and stability on human society.
  - c. No. Although Locke did believe that government was created by people, he did not believe that the contract through which people established government placed absolute power in the hands of the monarch.
9. d. Correct. Although colonists of all classes drank tea, the equipment used to serve the beverage was expensive and not affordable to colonists of lower-class status. Therefore, the more elaborate one's tea service the higher one's social status.
- a. No. Whether one drank tea hot or cold was not a sign of social status in colonial America.
  - b. No. People of all classes drank tea in colonial America.
  - c. No. Tea was readily available for home consumption and was not served exclusively in salons.
10. c. Correct. Many colonial cities were port cities and subject to the influences of merchants and sailors from other parts of the world. In addition, the presence of newspapers in major cities gave urban dwellers more contact with the outside world.
- a. No. The work schedules of city workers were largely governed by the clock rather than by the sun and the seasons.
  - b. No. Because people lived in closer proximity to each other in the cities and many colonial cities were ports into which sailors and travelers brought communicable diseases, the incidence of epidemic diseases was greater in the cities than in the countryside.
  - d. No. Because people lived closer together in the cities, the differences between the ordinary and the genteel were more apparent.
11. b. Correct. Aggrieved groups were at the core of each of the crises mentioned. The presence of aggrieved groups is an indication that colonial assemblies, controlled by the genteel, did not live up to the ideal of protecting the rights of all the people.
- a. No. Notice that in the Hudson Valley Land Riots of 1765 and 1766, British troops from New York City had to intervene to crush the rebellion. This does not indicate that colonial assemblies had the means to control internal disorder.
  - c. No. There was an ethnic dimension to the Regulator movements of the Carolinas and an ethnic and racial dimension to the Stono Rebellion.
  - d. No. There is no indication in any of these crises that political rights were being extended to more and more people. In each crisis the aggrieved group rightly felt that it had little or no political power.

12. d. Correct. The Great Awakening emphasized emotion rather than learning, faith rather than reason. Those influenced by this thought began to question the people who had traditionally held positions of authority in the church and in secular society. Therefore, as a result of the Great Awakening, there was more of a willingness to question traditional beliefs.
- a. No. The Enlightenment, with its emphasis on reason, gave rise to “intellectual religions” such as deism and Unitarianism. The Great Awakening was a reaction against such religious movements and emphasized emotion and faith.
- b. No. The Great Awakening was an important element in the creation of an American culture distinctively different from English culture. This and other characteristics of the Great Awakening opened the cultural distance between England and its North American colonies.
- c. No. The Great Awakening led to more religious diversity throughout the colonies, not to the founding of an established church.