Of the People
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1944-2008
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Preface

We are grateful that the first and second editions of Of the People have been welcomed by instructors and students as a useful instructional aid. Enhanced with even greater emphasis on American democracy and diversity, the third edition includes a new democracy feature and a version of the text is available with end-of-chapter primary source documents, both textual and visual, which help students draw connections among topics and think critically. In preparing the third edition, our primary goal has been to maintain the text’s overarching focus on the evolution of American democracy, people, and power; its strong portrayal of political and social history; and its clear, compelling narrative voice. To that end, the broad representation of Native Americans, African Americans, and other minority groups in this text shows the full diversity of the American people. One of the text’s strengths is its critical-thinking pedagogy because the study of history entails careful analysis, not mere memorization of names and dates.

History continues, and the writing of history is never finished. For the third edition, we have updated the following elements based on the most recent scholarship:

- **Chapters 10 and 11** integrate content on slavery and national development, as well as the politics of slavery and the abolition movement.
- **Chapters 13 through 15** were restructured and now include increased coverage of westward expansion, the growth of railroads and what this meant in terms of economic growth for the North and South (as well as the political economy of the Civil War), the emergence of the Republican Party, and a revised explanation for Reconstruction’s demise.
- **Chapter 30** now covers the span of years between 1989 and 2001 and includes increased coverage of domestic terrorism, an expanded discussion of African Americans in the post-civil rights era, as well as gay and lesbian rights.
- The Epilogue covers the onset of the war on terror, from September 11, 2001, to the present and provides an account of the Obama administration through 2014, the nation’s continuing response to challenging economic circumstances, including income inequality, and national security issues such as the controversy surrounding government surveillance and the emergence of ISIS.

At Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln dedicated a memorial to the more than 3,000 Union soldiers who had died turning back a Confederate invasion in the first days of July. There were at least a few ways that the president could have justified the sad loss of life in the third year of a brutal war dividing North and South. He could have said it was necessary to destroy the Confederacy’s cherished institution of slavery, to punish Southerners for seceding from the United States, or to preserve the nation intact. Instead, at this crucial moment in American history, Lincoln gave a short, stunning speech about democracy. The president did not use the word, but he offered its essence. To honor the dead of Gettysburg, he called on Northerners to ensure “that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”
With these words, Lincoln put democracy at the center of the Civil War and at the center of American history. The authors of this book share his belief in the centrality of democracy; his words, “of the people,” give our book its title and its main theme. We see American history as a story “of the people,” of their struggles to shape their lives and their land.

Our choice of theme does not mean we believe that America has always been a democracy. Clearly, it has not. As Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address, most African Americans still lived in slavery. American women, North and South, lacked rights that many men enjoyed; for all their disagreements, white southerners and northerners viewed Native Americans as enemies. Neither do we believe that there is only a single definition of democracy, either in the narrow sense of a particular form of government or in the larger one of a society whose members participate equally in its creation. Although Lincoln defined the Northern cause as a struggle for democracy, Southerners believed it was anything but democratic to force them to remain in the Union at gunpoint. As bloody draft riots in New York City in July 1863 made clear, many Northern men thought it was anything but democratic to force them to fight in Lincoln’s armies. Such disagreements have been typical of American history. For more than 500 years, people have struggled over whose vision of life in the New World would prevail.

It is precisely such struggles that offer the best angle of vision for seeing and understanding the most important developments in the nation’s history. In particular, the democratic theme concentrates attention on the most fundamental concerns of history: people and power.

Lincoln’s words serve as a reminder of the basic truth that history is about people. Across the 30 chapters of this book, we write extensively about complex events. But we also write in the awareness that these developments are only abstractions unless they are grounded in the lives of people. The test of a historical narrative, we believe, is whether its characters are fully rounded, believable human beings.

The choice of Lincoln’s words also reflects our belief that history is about power. To ask whether America was democratic at some point in the past is to ask how much power various groups of people had to make their lives and their nation. Such questions of power necessarily take us to political processes, to the ways in which people work separately and collectively to enforce their will. We define politics quite broadly in this book. With the feminists of the 1960s, we believe that “the personal is the political,” that power relations shape people’s lives in private as well as in public. Of the People looks for democracy in the living room as well as the legislature, and in the bedroom as well as the business office.

Focusing on democracy, on people and power, we have necessarily written as wide-ranging a history as possible. In the features and in the main text, Of the People conveys both the unity and the great diversity of the American people across time and place. We chronicle the racial and ethnic groups who have shaped America, differences of religious and regional identity, the changing nature of social classes, and the different ways that gender identities have been constructed over the centuries.

While treating different groups in their distinctiveness, we have integrated them into the broader narrative as much as possible. A true history “of the people” means not only acknowledging their individuality and diversity but also showing their interrelationships and their roles in the larger narrative. More integrated coverage of Native
Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and other minority groups appears throughout the third edition.

*Of the People* also offers comprehensive coverage of the different spheres of human life—cultural as well as governmental, social as well as economic, environmental as well as military. This commitment to comprehensiveness is a reflection of our belief that all aspects of human existence are the stuff of history. It is also an expression of the fundamental theme of the book: the focus on democracy leads naturally to the study of people’s struggles for power in every dimension of their lives. Moreover, the democratic approach emphasizes the interconnections between the different aspects of Americans’ lives; we cannot understand politics and government without tracing their connection to economics, religion, culture, art, sexuality, and so on.

The economic connection is especially important. *Of the People* devotes much attention to economic life, to the ways in which Americans have worked and saved and spent. Economic power, the authors believe, is basic to democracy. Americans’ power to shape their lives and their country has been greatly affected by whether they were farmers or hunters, plantation owners or slaves, wage workers or capitalists, domestic servants or bureaucrats. The authors do not see economics as an impersonal, all-conquering force; instead, we try to show how the values and actions of ordinary people, as well as the laws and regulations of government, have made economic life.

We have also tried especially to place America in a global context. The history of America, or any nation, cannot be adequately explained without understanding its relationship to transnational events and global developments. That is true for the first chapter of the book, which shows how America began to emerge from the collision of Native Americans, West Africans, and Europeans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is just as true for the last chapter of the book, which demonstrates how globalization and the war on terror transformed the United States at the turn of the twenty-first century. In the chapters in between these two, we detail how the world has changed America and how America has changed the world. Reflecting the concerns of the rest of the book, we focus particularly on the movement of people, the evolution of power, and the attempt to spread democracy abroad.

Abraham Lincoln wanted to sell a war, of course. But he also truly believed that his audience would see democracy as quintessentially American. Whether he was right is the burden of this book.

**New to the Third Edition**

**“Struggles for Democracy” Feature**

This feature focuses on moments of debate and public conversation surrounding events that have contributed to the changing ideas of democracy, as well as the sometimes constricting but overall gradually widening opportunities that evolved for the American people as a result. It appears in each chapter.

**Number of Chapters**

The book has been condensed from 31 to 30 chapters: content from former Chapter 12, Slavery and the Nation, 1790–1860, has been distributed throughout Chapters 10 and 11 in order to improve the chronological sequence of Volume I. Chapter 30, The Globalized Nation, has been revised to cover the span of years from 1989 to 2000.
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Epilogue
We have made the addition of an Epilogue, “A Nation Transformed,” which covers the span of years from 2001 to 2014 and includes a limited number of features.

New Additions to “American Portrait,” “American Landscape,” and “America and the World” Features
These popular boxed features from the second edition have been updated with five new “American Portraits” and six new “American Landscapes.” “America and the World” remains as a feature in select chapters.

Photos
Approximately 10 percent of the photos have been revised throughout the chapters.

Primary Sources
A version of the text is available with end-of-chapter primary source documents, both textual and visual, designed to reinforce students’ understanding of the material.

Hallmark Features
- Each chapter opens with an “American Portrait” feature, a story of someone whose life in one way or another embodies the basic theme of the pages to follow.
- Select chapters include an “American Landscape” feature, a particular place in time where issues of power appeared in especially sharp relief.
- To underscore the fundamental importance of global relationships, select chapters include a feature on “America and the World.”
- Focus questions at chapter openings
- Time Lines in every chapter
- “Who, What”: This list of chapter-ending key terms helps students recall the important people and events of that chapter.
- Critical-thinking pedagogy: All chapters end with both Review Questions, which test students’ memory and understanding of chapter content, and Critical-Thinking Questions, which ask students to analyze and interpret chapter content.

Supplements

For Students
Oxford University Press offers a complete and authoritative package of supplementary material for students, including print and new media resources designed for chapter review, primary source reading, essay writing, test preparation, and further research.

Student Companion Website at www.oup.com/us/oakes
The open-access Online Study Center designed for Of the People: A History of the United States, Third Edition helps students to review what they have learned from the textbook as well as explore other resources online. Note-taking guides help students focus their
attention in class, whereas interactive practice quizzes allow them to assess their knowledge of a topic before a test.

- **Online Study Guide**, including
  - Note-taking outlines
  - Multiple-choice and identification quizzes (two quizzes per chapter, 30-question quizzes—different from those found in the Instructor’s Manual/Test Bank)
- **Primary Source Companion and Research Guide**, a brief online Research Primer, with a library of annotated links to primary and secondary sources in US history.
- **Interactive Flashcards**, using key terms and people listed at the end of each chapter; these multimedia cards help students remember who’s who and what’s what.

**Oxford First Source**

*Oxford First Source* is an online database—with custom print capability—of primary source documents for the US History Survey Course.

These documents cover a broad variety of political, economic, social, and cultural topics and represent a broad cross section of American voices. Special effort was made to include as many previously disenfranchised voices as possible. The documents in this collection are indexed by date, author, title, and subject, allowing instructors to identify and select documents best suited for their courses. Short documents (one or two pages) are presented in their entirety while longer documents have been carefully edited to highlight significant content.

Each document is introduced with a short explanatory paragraph and accompanied with study questions. The collection includes an *Introduction to Reading and Interpreting Primary Documents*, which introduces students to the concept of primary documents and explains several methods for reading, interpreting, and understanding them. It also explains how to set documents into their historical context and how to incorporate primary documents into papers, exams, and other assignments.

**For Instructors**

For decades American history professors have turned to Oxford University Press as the leading source for high-quality readings and reference materials. Now, when you adopt Oakes’s *Of the People: A History of the United States*, Third Edition, the Press will partner with you and make available its best supplemental materials and resources for your classroom. Listed here are several resources of high interest, but you will want to talk with your sales representative to learn more about what can be made available and about what would suit your course best.

**Ancillary Resource Center (ARC) at www.oup-arc.com**

This convenient, instructor-focused website provides access to all of the up-to-date teaching resources for this text—at any time—while guaranteeing the security of grade-significant resources. In addition, it allows Oxford University Press to keep instructors informed when new content becomes available. The following items are available on the ARC:

- Digital copy of Instructor’s Manual
**Computerized Test Bank** including:

- **Quizzes** (two per chapter, one per half of the chapter, content divided somewhat evenly down the middle of the chapter: 30 multiple-choice questions each)
- **Tests** (two per chapter, each covering the entire chapter contents, offering 10 identification/matching: 10 multiple choice; five short answer; two essay)

- Chapter-by-chapter **PowerPoint Presentations** with images and videos to illustrate important points
- **Sample Syllabi**
- **Chapter Outlines**
- **In-Class Discussion Questions**
- **Lecture Ideas**
- **Oxford’s Further Reading List**

**Dashboard**

Online homework made easy! Tired of learning management systems that promise the world but are too difficult to use? Oxford offers you Dashboard, a simple, nationally hosted, online learning course—including study, review, interactive, and assessment materials—in an easy-to-use system that requires less than 15 minutes to master. Assignment and assessment results flow into a straightforward, color-coded grade book, allowing you a clear view into your students’ progress. The system works on every major platform and device, including mobile devices.

Available for sale on its own or as a package. Contact your local Oxford University Press representative to order *Of the People*, Third Edition + the Access Code Card for Dashboard. Please use the following package ISBNs to order.


A complete **Course Management cartridge** is also available to qualified adopters. Instructor’s resources are also available for download directly to your computer through a secure connection via the instructor’s side of the companion website. Contact your Oxford University Press sales representative for more information.

**Other Oxford Titles of Interest for the US History Classroom**

Oxford University Press publishes a vast array of titles in American history. The following list is just a small selection of books that pair particularly well with Oakes's *Of the People: A History of the United States*, Third Edition. Any of these books can be packaged with *Of the People* at a significant discount to students. Please contact your Oxford University Press sales representative for specific pricing information or for additional packaging suggestions. Please visit www.oup.com/us for a full listing of Oxford titles.

**WRITING HISTORY: A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS, FOURTH EDITION,**
**BY WILLIAM KELLEHER STOREY, PROFESSOR OF HISTORY**
**AT MILLSAPS COLLEGE**

Bringing together practical methods from both history and composition, *Writing History* provides a wealth of tips and advice to help students research and write essays for history.
classes. The book covers all aspects of writing about history, including finding topics and researching them, interpreting source materials, drawing inferences from sources, and constructing arguments. It concludes with three chapters that discuss writing effective sentences, using precise wording, and revising. Using numerous examples from the works of cultural, political, and social historians, Writing History serves as an ideal supplement to history courses that require students to conduct research. The third edition includes expanded sections on peer editing and topic selection, as well as new sections on searching and using the Internet. Writing History can be packaged with Oakes’s Of the People: A History of the United States, Third Edition. Contact your Oxford University Press sales representative for more information.

THE INFORMATION-LITERATE HISTORIAN: A GUIDE TO RESEARCH FOR HISTORY STUDENTS, SECOND EDITION, BY JENNY PRESNELL, INFORMATION SERVICES LIBRARY AND HISTORY, AMERICAN STUDIES, AND WOMEN’S STUDIES BIBLIOGRAPHER, MIAMI UNIVERSITY OF OHIO

This is the only book specifically designed to teach today’s history student how to most successfully select and use sources—primary, secondary, and electronic—to carry out and present their research. Written by a college librarian, The Information-Literate Historian is an indispensable reference for historians, students, and other readers doing history research. The Information-Literate Historian can be packaged with Oakes’s Of the People: A History of the United States, Third Edition. Contact your Oxford University Press sales representative for more information.

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American Republic (1990); coauthor of The Limits of Sisterhood: The Beecher Sisters on Women’s Rights and Woman’s Sphere (1988), and coeditor of Root of Bitterness: Documents in the Social History of American Women, second edition (1996). Her most recent article is “Gender as a Category of Historical Analysis,” Gender History (2008). She taught courses in women’s and gender history, the histories of the early republic and the antebellum United States, and global and comparative history, and she was the recipient of numerous awards for teaching and mentoring. Her BA and MA were from the University of Tennessee, and her PhD was from Yale University.

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The Eighteenth-Century World
1700–1775

COMMON THREADS
What were some of the choices that individual men and women made in the eighteenth century—for example, about where to live, how to work, what to purchase, what to believe—and how did those choices affect their society?

How did such choices make everyday life more democratic? What were the forces that worked against such democratization?

How were free Americans able to become wealthier even without significant technological innovations?

Was it possible yet to talk about a common American experience or culture?

OUTLINE

AMERICAN PORTRAIT: George Whitefield: Evangelist for a Consumer Society
The Population Explosion of the Eighteenth Century
  The Dimensions of Population Growth
  Bound for America: European Immigrants
  Bound for America: African Slaves

AMERICAN LANDSCAPE: The Slave Ship
The Great Increase of Offspring

The Transatlantic Economy: Producing and Consuming
  The Nature of Colonial Economic Growth
  The Transformation of the Family Economy
  Sources of Regional Prosperity
  Merchants and Dependent Laborers in the Transatlantic Economy
  Consumer Choices and the Creation of Gentility

The Varieties of Colonial Experience
  Creating an Urban Public Sphere
  The Diversity of Urban Life
  The Maturing of Rural Society
  The World That Slavery Made
  Georgia: From Frontier Outpost to Plantation Society

The Head and the Heart in America: The Enlightenment and Religious Awakening
  The Ideas of the Enlightenment
  The Economic and Social Foundations of Democracy
  Enlightened Institutions

STRUGGLES FOR DEMOCRACY: Books Become More Accessible
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Conclusion
A M E R I C A N  P O R T R A I T

George Whitefield:
Evangelist for a Consumer Society

In 1740 there were no more than 16,000 people living in Boston, yet on October 12, some 20,000 people filled the Common to hear an English minister preach. Everywhere he went, the crowds were unprecedented—8,000 in Philadelphia, 3,000 in the little Pennsylvania village of Neshaminy. Those who could not see the evangelist in person read about him in the newspapers. If there was one binding experience for the American people in the decades before the Revolution, it was George Whitefield’s ministry.

Born in Bristol, England, in 1714, George Whitefield would become not only a leading preacher of the Great Awakening of religion in the American colonies but also one of the most influential preachers in the history of Christianity. Because of the growth of the market economy, men and women on both sides of the Atlantic could now participate in a consumer culture that offered many ways to spend money and leisure time. To those schooled in a traditional Calvinist religion, the consumer society was both attractive and frightening. Could one serve God and oneself at the same time?

At 17, when Whitefield discovered he had no aptitude for trade, the career he had chosen, the boy from a poor family faced a personal crisis. One morning, he blurted out, “God intends something for me which we know not of.” Whitefield then prepared for the ministry. He enrolled at Oxford University, paying his way by working as a servant to wealthy students. He became friendly with the Methodists, a group of religious young men planning a mission to the new colony of Georgia. Under their influence, Whitefield turned his back on consumer culture. “Whatsoever I did,” Whitefield explained, “I endeavoured to do all to the glory of God.” Whitefield was determined to share what he had learned with all who would hear.

Whitefield helped create a mass public that broke down the boundaries of small communities in which each minister or priest had typically addressed only his own congregation. The crowds Whitefield drew were often so large that he preached outdoors, with a voice so loud that Benjamin Franklin calculated that it could be heard by 25,000 people at a time. Although Whitefield spoke directly to the heart of each individual, he also drew together entire communities in a way no one had ever done before.

Whitefield embodied the great contradictions of his age without threatening the political or economic order that sustained them. He appealed to men as well as women, to the poor as well as the rich, to slaves as well as their masters, and to those who were suffering from capitalism as well as those who were benefiting from it. Whitefield’s strategy was to criticize the individual without attacking the system. In Philadelphia, he preached, “Do not say, you are miserable, and poor, and blind and naked, and therefore ashamed to come, for it is to such that this Invitation is now sent. The Polite, the Rich, the Busy, Self-Righteous Pharisees of this Generation have been bidden already, but they . . . are too deeply engaged in going one to his Country House, another to his Merchandize.”
The Population Explosion of the Eighteenth Century

George Whitefield could speak to the hearts of the American colonists because he understood their world. As the colonies matured, they were tied in to the North Atlantic world and brought dramatic changes. One of the most important changes was the increase in population, from both immigration and natural increase. This population produced products for the world economy and provided a market for them as well, and its boom was both the product of American prosperity and the precondition for its further growth.

The Dimensions of Population Growth

The population in the American colonies grew at a rate unprecedented in human history, from just over 250,000 people in 1700 to more than 1 million by 1750. The rate of growth was highest in the free population in prosperous farming regions, but it was rapid everywhere, even among slaves.

Much of the colonies’ population growth was caused by their unquenchable thirst for labor. They attracted an extraordinary number of immigrants, and when free labor did not meet the demand, unfree labor (slaves, indentured servants, and redemptioners) filled the gap. Increasingly, these immigrants reflected the broad reach of the North Atlantic political world. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the population of the American colonies was primarily English in origin. By the beginning of the American Revolution, the population had changed significantly. There were small numbers of people with Finnish, Swedish, French, Swiss, and Jewish heritage, and large numbers of Welsh, Scotch-Irish, Germans, Dutch, and Africans. The foundation for American diversity had been laid.

Bound for America: European Immigrants

In the eighteenth century, about 425,000 Europeans migrated to the colonies, with large numbers from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and Germany. The largest numbers of European immigrants were Scotch-Irish, that is, Scottish people who had moved to Northern Ireland to escape famine in their own country. As many as 250,000 came to seek a better life and to escape the religious persecution they experienced as Presbyterians in an Anglican society. At first, Massachusetts invited the Scotch-Irish to settle on its borders, as a buffer between...
the colony and the Indians. Once the impoverished Scotch-Irish began to arrive in large numbers, however, the English inhabitants worried that they would have to provide for them. In 1729 a Boston mob turned away a shipload of Scotch-Irish immigrants, and in 1738 the Puritans of Worcester burned down a Presbyterian church. Thereafter, the vast majority of Scotch-Irish immigrants headed for the more welcoming middle colonies and the South.

Going where land was the cheapest, the Scotch-Irish settled between the English seacoast settlements and the Indian communities to the west, from Pennsylvania to Georgia (see Map 5–1). As their numbers increased, the Scotch-Irish pressed against the Indians,

Map 5–1 Expansion of Settlement, 1720–1760 By 1760, the colonial population made up an almost continuous line of settlement from Maine to Florida and was pushing west over the Appalachian Mountains.
seizing their lands. Like the Scotch-Irish, most German migrants settled in the backcountry from Pennsylvania to the Carolinas. Between 1700 and the start of the Revolution, more than 100,000 Germans arrived, and by 1775, a third of Pennsylvania’s population was German. Including not only Lutherans and Catholics but also Quakers, Amish, and Mennonites, Germans established prosperous farming communities wherever they settled. Indeed, colonies such as Pennsylvania that welcomed the widest variety of immigrants became not only the most prosperous but also the ones in which prosperity was most widely shared. Unlike most seventeenth-century migrants, a large proportion of eighteenth-century migrants were artisans drawn to America by the demand for their labor. The majority of European migrants to the colonies were unfree—not only indentured servants and redemptioners but also the 50,000 British convicts whose sentences were commuted to a term of service in the colonies. Most English and Welsh migrants were single men between the ages of 19 and 23 who came as indentured servants. The Scotch-Irish migration included a larger number of families, and three-fourths of the Germans came in family groups. For all, the passage to America, which could take three months or more, was grueling and profoundly unhealthy. Once the migrants arrived, servants and convicts were sold for terms of service at auctions (see Figure 5–1).

**Bound for America: African Slaves**

The increase in the African population was even more dramatic than that of Europeans. In 1660 there were only 2,920 African or African-descended inhabitants of the mainland.

**Figure 5–1 The Importation of Servants from Europe into British America, 1580–1775** By the time of the American Revolution, 350,000 servants had been imported into the colonies, most of whom came from the British Isles. *Source: Richard S. Dunn, “Servants and Slaves,” in Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, *Colonial British America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1984), p. 159.*
The African slave trade was a profitable and well-organized segment of the world economy. Until the eighteenth century, when demand from the New World increased, the transatlantic slave trade was controlled by Africans, in the sense that slaves were brought to the coast by other Africans for sale to Europeans. African nations had to participate in this activity because it was the only way they could purchase guns, and without guns, they were vulnerable to neighbors who had already bought them. Some nations supplied a steady stream of slaves, whereas others offered them intermittently, stopping when they had enough arms to defend themselves for a while. Most slaves were captives of war, and as the demand for slaves increased, the tempo of warfare in Africa intensified in response. The New World preferred male slaves, leaving most of the female captives to the African slave market, where they became domestic slaves or plural wives to wealthier Africans.
We do not usually think of a ship as part of a landscape, but the slave ship was one of the most important places in the eighteenth century. It was at once a floating factory, prison, and fortress. It was there that Africans were transformed into slaves.

Any ship, small or large, could be made into a slave ship. Because the cost of transporting slaves across the Atlantic was so high, accounting for three-quarters of the price of a slave, slave merchants tried to crowd as many Africans as possible into each ship—300, 400, or even 600. The English were particularly efficient, carrying twice as many slaves as crew members and half again as many slaves per ship as the other nations, thereby increasing the profits.

To maximize the number of Africans on each ship, platforms were built between decks, thus doubling the surface area upon which the slaves could be placed. With perhaps only four and a half feet between the platform and the ceiling, the Africans could not stand up. They were packed so tightly that they could not move from side to side. Even the smallest spaces were filled with children.

Packing so many human beings into such tight quarters created the risk of suffocation. But if the hatches were kept open, the Africans might escape confinement and overpower the crew. Hence, grates were placed over the hatches, and small air openings were cut into the sides of the ship. Later, some ships used large funnel tubes to carry air below decks.

Men and women were kept separate, divided by partitions. Male slaves were shackled and confined below deck for most of each day. Chained together and without enough room to stand up, many were unable to reach the large buckets that served as latrines. Some captains let the slaves lie in their own filth until the voyage’s end. Heat and disease compounded the misery. One ship’s doctor reported that the slaves’ deck “was so covered with the blood and mucus which had proceeded from them in consequence of the flux, that it resembled a slaughterhouse.” The women were left unshackled but were often prey to the sailors’ lust. When slaves were brought above deck, some would jump overboard. Captains stretched netting around their ships to prevent such suicides.

To protect the crew in case of insurrection, slave ships often had thick, 10-foot-high walls—barricados—to separate the crew from the human cargo. Armed sailors patrolled atop the barricado. Ship captains gathered their human cargo from different regions, each with its own language, to make sure that the captives could not communicate with each other and foment rebellion. At the same time, the captains had to be careful not to bring together groups who might fight each other. With resistance from the enslaved the norm, ship captains used terror to maintain order. Flogging—a punishment for sailors as well—was common. Some captains used instruments of torture, such as the thumbscrew, “a dreadful engine, which, if the screw be turned by an unrelenting hand, can give intolerable anguish.” The object was not only to punish the disobedient but also to
frighten their shipmates. That was surely the result after some of the Africans aboard the Brownlow rebelled. The captain dismembered the rebels with an axe “till their bodies remained only like a trunk of a tree when all the branches are lopped away,” and he threw the severed heads and limbs at the other slaves, chained together on the deck.

Such terror hardened captain and crew. Few sailors signed on to a slave ship if they had better options, and one captain described his crew as the “very dregs of the community.” The life of a sailor was hard enough; service on a slave ship—a floating prison—was even harder. Yet even the lowest sailor was superior to the enslaved. Even though many sailors were dark-skinned men from Asia, the Caribbean, or India, at sea, they were all known as “white people.” Over time, both captain and crew became practiced in the ways of cruelty. Silas Todd was apprenticed to a slave ship captain at the age of 14 and hoped to become a captain himself. Then, ashore in Boston in 1734, he was “saved” in the Great Awakening. Had he not been, he later reflected, he might have become “as eminent a savage” as the captains under whom he had served.

Enslaved Africans Bound for the New World This group is being force marched by an African slave trader from the interior of Africa to a European trading post on the coast.

Because African slaves were unwilling and sometimes rebellious passengers on the ships that transported them across the Atlantic, European slave ships needed larger crews and heavier weapons than usual. This resistance by slaves increased the cost of transporting them so much that the higher prices may have spared half a million Africans’ enslavement.
As bad as the voyage to America was for indentured servants, the trip for enslaved Africans was worse. Perhaps 10 percent died before reaching the African coast. Many had never seen an ocean or a white man, and both sights terrified them. They were confined in pens or forts for as long as half a year while waiting for a ship.

The voyage, or “middle passage,” proved lethal to many more. As the slave trade became more efficient in the eighteenth century, the mortality rate dropped, from perhaps 20 percent to half that amount. Those who survived were ready to begin their lives as New World slaves.

**The Great Increase of Offspring**

Most of the extraordinary increase in the colonies’ population, European and African alike, came not from immigration or the slave trade but from natural increase.

For European Americans, population increase was mainly due to the lower age of marriage for women and the higher proportion of women who married. In England, for example, as many as 20 percent of women did not marry by age 45, compared with only 5 percent in the colonies. The age of marriage for women in the colonies was also considerably lower, with women marrying in their late teens or early 20s, compared to the late 20s in England. Because more women married, and married earlier, they bore more babies, on average seven or eight each, with six or seven surviving to adulthood. As a rule, the more economic opportunity, the earlier the age of marriage for women and men, and the more children. In the better climate, more children survived to adulthood, but child mortality rates were high. Thanks to rapid population growth, the American population was exceptionally young.

In many ways, the African American population resembled the European American population. Slaves born in the colonies married young and established families as stable as slavery permitted. By the time they were 18, most slave women had had their first child. They might not form a lasting union with the father, but within a few years many settled into long-lasting relationships with the men who would father the rest of their children. Slave women bore between six and eight children, on average. With child mortality even higher for African Americans than for European Americans, between 25 and 30 percent of slave children died before reaching adulthood. Even so, the slave population more than reproduced itself, and by the middle of the eighteenth century it was growing more from natural increase than from the importation of slaves. Only a tiny fraction of the Africans sold into slavery in the Americas ended up in mainland British colonies. Nonetheless, when slavery was abolished after the Civil War, the United States had the largest population of African descent in the New World.

**The Transatlantic Economy: Producing and Consuming**

In the eighteenth century, as the colonies matured, they became capitalist societies in an Atlantic trade network. More and more, people produced for the market, so that they could buy the goods the market had to offer. Throughout the Atlantic world, ordinary people reshaped their lives so they could buy more goods. Historians talk about two economic revolutions in this period: a consumer revolution—a steady increase in the demand for and purchase of consumer goods—and an industrious revolution (not
industrial but industrious revolution), in which people worked harder and organized their households (their families, servants, and slaves) to produce goods for sale so that they would have money to pay for items they wanted. Income went up only slightly in the eighteenth century, yet people were buying more. In the process, they created a consumer society, in which most people eagerly purchased consumer goods.

The Nature of Colonial Economic Growth

Throughout human history, population growth has usually led to a decline in the standard of living as more people compete for a finite supply of resources. In the American colonies, however, population growth led to an expansion of the economy, as more of the continent’s abundant natural resources were brought under human control. The standard of living for most free Americans probably improved, although not dramatically. As the economy matured, a small segment—urban merchants and owners of large plantations—became wealthy. At the same time, the urban poor and tenant farmers began to slip toward poverty.

All of these changes took place, however, without any significant changes in technology (such as the power looms that would be invented later in the century). Most wealth was made from shipping and agriculture. Eighty percent of the colonies’ population worked on farms or plantations, areas with no major technological innovations. Virtually all gains in productivity came instead from labor; more people were working, and they were working more efficiently.

The economy of colonial America was shaped by three factors: abundance of land and shortages of labor and of capital. The plantation regions of the South and the West Indies were best situated to take advantage of these circumstances, and the small-farm areas of New England were the least suitable. Tobacco planters in the Chesapeake and rice and indigo planters in South Carolina sold their products on a huge world market. Their large profits enabled them to purchase more land and more slaves to work it.

Because northern farmers raised crops and animals that were also produced in Europe, profits from agriculture alone were too low to permit them to acquire large tracts of land or additional labor (see Table 5–1). Northerners had to look to other opportunities for wealth. They found them in trade, exchanging their raw goods for European manufactured ones and selling them to American consumers.

The Transformation of the Family Economy

In colonial America, the family was the basic economic unit, and all family members contributed to it. Work was organized by gender. On farms, women were responsible for the preparation of food and clothing, child care, and care of the home. Women grew vegetables and herbs, provided dairy products, and transformed flax and wool into clothing. Daughters worked under their mothers’ supervision, perhaps spinning extra yarn to be sold for a profit.

Men worked the rest of the farm. They raised grain and maintained the pastures. They cleared the land, chopped wood for fuel, and built and maintained the house, barn, and other structures. They took crops to market. Men’s and women’s work were complementary and necessary for survival. For example, men planted apple trees, children picked apples, and women pressed the apples into cider. When a husband was disabled,
Table 5-1 How Wealthy Were Colonial Americans?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property-Owning Class</th>
<th>New England</th>
<th>Mid-Atlantic Colonies</th>
<th>Southern Colonies</th>
<th>Thirteen Colonies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults 45 and older</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults 44 and younger</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esquires, gentlemen</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>1,223</td>
<td>1,281</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professions, sea captains</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers only, planters</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer-artisans, ship owners, fishermen</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop and tavern keepers</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisans, chandlers</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miners, laborers</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Numbers given are in pounds sterling.

The eighteenth century’s industrious revolution transformed the family economy: when people decided to produce goods to sell, they changed their family economies. Historians believe that increased production in this period came primarily from the labor of women and children, who worked harder and longer than they had before.

**Sources of Regional Prosperity**

The South, the most productive region, accounted for more than 60 percent of colonial exports (see Map 5–2). Tobacco was its chief cash crop. Next came cereals such as rice, wheat, corn, and flour, and then indigo, a plant used to dye fabric.

Slave labor accounted for most of the southern agricultural output and was organized to produce for the market. When tobacco profits began to slip because of falling prices and the depletion of the soil, planters worked their slaves harder and, in the Chesapeake, began to plant corn and wheat. By diversifying their crops, planters were able to make maximum use of their slave labor force by keeping slaves busy throughout the year.

The work routine of slaves depended on the crops they tended. On tobacco plantations, where careful attention to the plants was necessary to ensure high quality, planters...
or white overseers worked the slaves in small gangs carefully selected and arranged to maximize productivity.

In the rice-growing lower South, however, the enslaved were usually assigned specific tasks, which they would work at until the job was completed. Rice growing required far less supervision than did tobacco planting. Because many Africans had grown rice in Africa and had likely taught Europeans how to grow it in America, rice planters let the slaves set their own pace. Once finished for the day, the enslaved people could use their time as they pleased. Many planted gardens to supplement their own diets or to earn a small income. Slaves trafficked in a wide range of products, from rice, corn, chickens, hogs, and catfish to canoes, baskets, and wax.

The inhabitants of the middle colonies grew prosperous by raising and selling wheat and other grains. The ports of Baltimore, Philadelphia, Wilmington, and New York became thriving commercial centers that collected grain from regional farms, milled it into flour, and shipped it to the West Indies, southern Europe, and other American colonies. Farmers relied on indentured servants, cottagers, and slaves to supplement the labor of family members. Cottagers were families who rented out part of a farmer's land, which they worked for wages.

As long as land was cheap and accessible, the middle colonies enjoyed the most evenly shared prosperity on the continent. Most inhabitants fell into the comfortable middle class, with the gap between the richest and the poorest relatively small. Pennsylvania, which offered both religious toleration and relatively simple ways to purchase land, was particularly prosperous. The energy that elsewhere went into religious conflict here fueled work and material accumulation. Gottlieb Mittelberger, who endured a
horrendous journey to Pennsylvania, described his new home as a sort of paradise: “Our Americans live more quietly and peacefully than the Europeans; and all this is the result of the liberty which they enjoy and which makes them all equal.”

When land became expensive or difficult to obtain, however, conflict might ensue. In the 1740s and 1750s, both New Jersey and New York experienced land riots when conflicting claims made land titles uncertain. In the Chesapeake and southeastern Pennsylvania, increasing land prices drove the poor into tenancy or to the urban centers. Widespread prosperity led Americans to expect that everyone who wished to would be able to own a farm. When land ownership was not fully possible, tension and anger grew.

New England was also primarily a farming region. Here, however, male family members, rather than indentured servants, cottagers, or slaves, provided most farm labor. Although farms in some regions, such as the Connecticut River valley, produced surpluses for the market, most farm families had to look for other sources of income to pay for consumer goods.

Town governments in New England encouraged enterprise, sometimes providing gristmills, sawmills, and fields on which cattle could graze. The region prospered, and New Englanders came to expect their governments to enhance the economy. Agricultural exports were relatively slight, although both grain and livestock were sold to the slave plantations of the West Indies, which received more than 25 percent of the American colonies’ exports (and more than 70 percent of New England’s).

The other major colonial exports in the eighteenth century were fur and hides. By the eve of the Revolution, 95 percent of the furs imported into England came from North America—most of them provided by Indians, who traded them to European middlemen.

**Merchants and Dependent Laborers in the Transatlantic Economy**

Almost all colonies participated in a transatlantic economy. In each region, those most involved in the market were those with the most resources: large planters in the southern colonies, owners of the biggest farms in the middle colonies, and urban merchants in the northern colonies. The wealthiest never made their fortunes from farming or planting alone but always added income from activities such as speculating in land, practicing law, or lending money.

If some economic development was spurred from above, by enterprising individuals or by governments, much was also created by ambitious ordinary men and women. New England’s mixed economy of grain, grazing, fishing, and lumbering required substantial capital improvements such as gristmills, sawmills, and tanneries to be profitable. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, shipbuilding was a major activity, and by 1775, one-third of the English merchant fleet had been built in the colonies.

The shipbuilding industry, in turn, spurred further economic development, such as lumbering, sail making, and rope making. Linked economic development occurs when an enterprise is tied to a variety of other local businesses. Furthermore, the profits generated by shipbuilding and trade were reinvested in sawmills to produce more lumber, in gristmills to grind grain into flour, and, of course, in more trading voyages. The growth of shipping in port cities such as Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston created an affluent merchant class, but trading was a risky business, and few who tried it rose to the top. One ship lost to a storm could ruin a merchant, as could a sudden turn in the market. Insurance companies were born as a result.
The seafaring trades led capitalist development. A wealthy, risk-taking merchant class emerged, as well as another distinguishing mark of a capitalist economy, a wage-earning class. As long as there was a labor shortage in the colonies, workers had an advantage. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, rapid population increase led to a growing supply of labor. Although they were free to shop around for the best wages, workers became part of a wage-earning class, dependent on others for employment and income. Only a small portion of Americans were wage earners on the eve of the Revolution, but they were a sign of things to come.

**Consumer Choices and the Creation of Gentility**

Under the British mercantilist system (see Chapter 4), the colonies were supposed to export raw materials to the empire and import finished products back, sending West Indian sugar, tobacco, wheat, lumber, fish, and animal pelts to Britain in exchange for cloth and iron. Yet within this general pattern, individual men and women made choices about what to buy.

On both sides of the Atlantic, demand for plantation products and consumer goods was insatiable. At first only the wealthy could afford such luxuries as sugar and tobacco. But as more and more labor was organized to produce for the market, ordinary people had the added income needed to purchase luxury products. Tea, imported into both Britain and the colonies from Asia, became, like tobacco and sugar, a mass-consumed luxury. By the time of the Revolution, annual sugar consumption in England had skyrocketed to 23 pounds per person, and tobacco consumption was about 2 pounds per person. Demand for these plantation products led directly to the traffic in African slaves.

As plantation products flowed to England, so manufactured goods came back to the colonies. Consumer behavior on both sides of the Atlantic was similar: people smoked tobacco; sweetened their tea with sugar; and bought more clothing, household items, books, and every sort of manufactured goods.
This consumer revolution was not due to higher wages. Instead, people chose to work harder and choose work that brought in money. They decided what they would do with that money—they chose to buy particular items. Increasingly, people bought items that their friends and neighbors could see and that they could use in entertaining them. In seventeenth-century America, extra income was spent on items of lasting value, such as tablecloths and bed linens kept folded away in a chest, to pass on to one’s children. In the eighteenth century, men and women bought more clothing made out of cheaper, less durable fabrics. Until this time, most people had only a few outfits. The wealthy, of course, always had large wardrobes made from fine fabrics. In the eighteenth century, however, fabric prices fell, and clothing made from cheaper fabrics satisfied growing consumer demand. Then people needed new pieces of furniture in which to store their new garments. Chests of drawers, or dressers, first available to the wealthy in the 1630s and 1640s, had, by 1760, become a standard item for the middle class.

People became increasingly interested in how they appeared to others. Ordinary people began to pay attention to the latest fashions, once a concern only of the wealthy. By 1700, two new items made it easier for those with the time and money to attend to their appearance: the dressing table and the full-length mirror. For the first time, people could see how they looked, head to toe. Washing oneself and styling one’s hair or periwig became standard rituals for all who hoped to appear “genteel.”

In the eighteenth century, the prosperous on both sides of the Atlantic created and tried to follow the standards of a new style of life, gentility. Gentility represented all that was polite, civilized, refined, and fashionable. It was everything that vulgarity, its opposite, was not. Gentility meant not only certain sorts of objects, such as a dressing table or a bone china teapot, but also the manners needed to use such objects properly. Standards of gentility established boundaries between the genteel and the vulgar. Those who considered themselves genteel looked down on those whose style of living seemed unrefined and became uncomfortable when required to associate with social inferiors.

Yet if the public display of gentility erected a barrier between people, it also showed the vulgar how to become genteel. All they needed to do was to acquire the right goods and learn how to use them. Throughout the colonies, ordinary people began to purchase goods that established their gentility. Even relatively poor people often owned a mirror, a few pieces of china, or a teapot. The slaves executed in New York City in 1741 (discussed subsequently) were probably conspiring not to burn the city down but to steal clothing and other fancy goods they could resell to poor people in the underground economy. This mass consumption and widespread distribution of consumer goods created and sustained the consumer revolution.

The consumer revolution had another egalitarian effect: it encouraged sociability. Throughout the Atlantic world, men and women, particularly those with a little leisure and money (perhaps half the white population), began to cultivate social life. Many believed that the purpose of life was the sort of society they created during an evening shared with friends and family in their parlors.

To put all of their guests on an equal footing, people began to purchase matching sets of dinner plates, silverware, glasses, and chairs. Until the eighteenth century, the most important people at the table—the man of the house, his wife, and high-ranking men—got the best chairs. Children, servants, and those of lower social standing sat on stools, benches, or boxes, or they stood. Dishes, utensils, and mugs rarely matched. Matched sets of tableware and chairs underscored the symbolic equality of all guests.
The New Gentility In 1750 in Charleston, South Carolina, Mr. Peter Manigault and his friends toasted each other, demonstrating their civility and their knowledge of the rules of polite behavior, including how to drink punch from a stem glass.

The newest and most popular consumer goods made their way quickly to America—forks, drinking glasses, and teapots, each with its own etiquette. Such rules were daunting for the uneducated, but once they were mastered, a person could enter polite society anywhere in the Atlantic world and be accepted. The eighteenth-century capitalist economy created a trade not only in goods and raw materials but in styles of life as well.

Historians debate the effects of the consumer revolution, but on balance it was a democratic force. Ordinary men and women and even slaves came to think it was their right to spend their money as they pleased. As one Bostonian put it in 1754, the poor should be allowed to buy “the Conveniencies, and Comforts, as well as Necessaries of Life . . . as freely as the Rich.” After all, “I am sure we Work as hard as they do . . . ; therefore, I cannot see why we have not as good a natural Right to them as they have.”

The Varieties of Colonial Experience

Although the eighteenth-century industrious and consumer revolutions tied the peoples of the North Atlantic world together, climate, geography, immigration, patterns of
economical development, and population density made for considerable variety. Although
the vast majority of Americans lived in small communities or on farms, an increasing
number lived in cities that played a critical role in shaping colonial life. At the same time,
farming regions were maturing, changing the character of rural life, and the growing
population continued to push at the frontiers, leading to the founding of Georgia, the
last of the thirteen colonies.

Creating an Urban Public Sphere

At the end of the seventeenth century, Boston, with 7,000 people, was the only town that
was much more than a rural village. By 1720, Boston’s population had grown to 12,000,
Philadelphia had 10,000 inhabitants, New York had 7,000, and Newport and Charleston
almost 4,000 each. Forty years later, other urban centers had sprung up, each with popu-
lations around 3,000—Salem, Marblehead, and Newburyport in Massachusetts; Ports-
mouth, New Hampshire; Providence, Rhode Island; New Haven and Hartford,
Connecticut; Albany, New York; Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Baltimore, Maryland; Nor-
folk, Virginia; and Savannah, Georgia. By the eve of the Revolution, Philadelphia had
30,000 residents, New York had 25,000, and Boston had 16,000 (see Map 5–3). All of
these cities were either ports or centers for the fur trade. Colonial cities were centers of
commerce; that was their reason for being.

Social life in colonial cities was characterized by two somewhat contradictory
trends. On the one hand, nowhere in the colonies was social stratification among free
people more pronounced. By the eve of the American Revolution, each city had an afflu-
ent elite, made up of merchants, professionals, and government officials, and each city
also had a class of indigent poor. On the other hand, cities brought all classes of society
together at theaters, in taverns, and at religious revivals such as the one led by George
Whitefield. This civic life became one of the seedbeds of the Revolution because it pro-
vided a forum for the exchange of ideas.

Affluent city dwellers created a life as much like that of London as they could. They
imported European finery and established English-style institutions, founding social
clubs, dancing assemblies, and fishing and hunting clubs. Although many of these as-
sociations were for men only, some brought men and women together. Such organiza-
tions helped the elite function as a class.

Urban associations reflected the ideals of the Enlightenment (see “The Ideas of the
Enlightenment,” later in this chapter). Some, such as the Masons, a European fraternal
order with branches in all the major colonial cities, espoused the ideal of universalism,
that all people were by their nature fundamentally the same. Other institutions advoc-
cated self-improvement. Whereas some urban institutions separated out the elite and
others challenged the ruling hierarchy, still others brought together all members of soci-
ety in a “public sphere.” City dwellers could see stage plays in Williamsburg by 1716, in
Charleston and New York by the 1730s, and in Philadelphia and Boston by the 1740s.
Taverns brought all ranks even closer. By 1737, Boston had 177 taverns, one for every 99
inhabitants. (Between 30 percent and 40 percent were owned by women, usually widows.)
Taverns became true public institutions in which people could meet and discuss the
issues of the day.

Newspapers also played a critical role in creating a public sphere and extending it
beyond the cities. The first newspaper was the Boston News-Letter, which appeared in
This map illustrates the close connection between commerce—note how many docks there are along the Delaware River—and culture. By 1760, Philadelphia was home to churches of many different denominations, as well as an array of enlightened institutions—a hospital, a college, and two libraries.

1704. By the time of the Revolution, 39 newspapers were being published, and the chief
town in each colony except Delaware had at least one newspaper.

Strict libel laws prohibited the printing of opinions critical of public officials, or even the
truth if it cast them in a bad light. John Peter Zenger, editor of the New-York Weekly Journal,
was tried in 1735 for criticizing the governor. Zenger’s flamboyant attorney, Andrew
Hamilton, persuaded the jury that they should rule not simply on the facts of the case (Zenger
had criticized the governor) but on whether the law itself was just. When the jury ruled in
Zenger’s favor, cheers went up in the courtroom. Although it would be many years before
freedom of the press would be guaranteed by law, the Zenger case was a milestone in the
developing relationship between the public and government officials. The verdict expressed
the belief that in the contest between the two, the press spoke for the people, and hence it was
the people themselves, not government, that would hold the press accountable.

City dwellers came to think of themselves as a “public” that had certain rights or
liberties, such as making their views known and enjoying a fair price for their goods. At
times, working people, acting as a public, and sometimes with support from the elite,
used mob action to assert their political views. Mobs in both New York and Boston re
acted violently to press gangs that scoured the waterfront for additional hands for the
Royal Navy. By the time of the Revolution, city dwellers had a long history of asserting
their rights in public.

The Diversity of Urban Life

Periodic downturns in the urban economy, especially after the middle of the century, led
to increased activism by workers and the urban poor. Colonial politics had been pre
mised on the deference of the less powerful to their social and economic “betters,” but by
the middle of the eighteenth century, the increasing wealth of those at the top and the
appearance of a small class of permanently poor at the bottom of the economic hierarchy
began to undermine the assumption of a common interest and that the wealthy and well
educated could be trusted to govern for the benefit of everyone.

Although by today’s standards the colonial population, even in the cities, was re
markably equal economically, in the eighteenth century it became more stratified. At the
beginning of the eighteenth century, none of the cities had a substantial number of poor
people. In New York, in 1700, there were only 35 paupers, almost all of whom were aged
or disabled. Over the course of the century, however, colonial wars sent men home dis
abled and left many women widowed and children orphaned. Each city responded to the
growth in poverty by building almshouses for the poor who could not support them-
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educated could be trusted to govern for the benefit of everyone.

All the major cities had slaves, and in some cities the black population was consider-
able. By 1746, 30 percent of New York City’s working class consisted of enslaved people.
After a serious slave revolt in 1712 and a rumored revolt in 1741, the white population
responded with harsh punishments (but without halting the slave trade). In the wake of
the 1712 revolt, which had left 9 white men dead, city officials executed 18 convicted
rebels, burned 3 at the stake, let 1 starve to death in chains, and broke 1 on the wheel, a
medieval instrument of torture. Six more committed suicide. The response to a rumored
slave insurrection in 1741 resembled Salem’s witchcraft trials: 18 slaves and 4 whites were
hanged, and 13 slaves were burned at the stake.

New York enacted a stringent slave code after the 1712 revolt, and Boston and Penn-
sylvania imposed significant import duties on slaves. Nonetheless, the importation of
slaves continued into all the port cities, where they were in demand as house servants
and artisans. Almost all of Boston’s elite owned at least one slave, as did many members
of the middle class. Wealthy white artisans often purchased slaves instead of enlisting
free whites as apprentices.

In Charleston, where more than half the population was enslaved, many masters let
their slaves hire themselves out in return for a portion of their earnings. Such slaves set
their own hours, chose their own recreational and religious activities, and participated in
the consumer economy by selling their products and making purchases with the prof-
its. Some whites complained about the fancy dresses of the black women at biracial
dances attended by “many of the first gentlemen” of Charleston. Interracial sex in
Charleston seems to have been common. Although white city dwellers were troubled by
what they called the “impudence” of urban slaves, urban slavery flourished.

The Maturing of Rural Society

Population increases had a different impact in rural areas than in cities. During the eigh-
teenth century, some long-settled regions became relatively overcrowded. Land that once
seemed abundant had been carelessly farmed and had lost some of its fertility. This rela-
tive overcrowding, which historians call land pressure, led to a number of changes in
colonial society, felt most acutely in New England. Population density increased, and
with no additional farmland available, migration from farms to newly settled areas and
cities increased. Both the concentration of wealth and social differentiation intensified,
dividing the farm community into rich and poor.

Such broad economic changes had a direct impact on individual men and women.
Families with numerous children were hard pressed if the original plot of land could not
be divided into homesteads large enough for each son. (Daughters were given movable
property such as farm animals, household equipment, and slaves.) Some sons migrated
to cities, looking for employment. Others worked on other men’s farms for wages or, in
the South in particular, became tenant farmers. Daughters became servants in other
women’s households. In such older regions, the average age of marriage crept upward.

As young men and women in long-settled regions had to defer marriage, increasing
numbers had sexual relations before marriage. In some towns, by the middle of the eigh-
teenth century, between 30 percent and 50 percent of brides bore their first child within
eight months of their wedding day. The growing belief that marriage should be based
primarily on love probably encouraged some couples to become intimate before they
married, especially if poverty required them to postpone marriage. Young women who
engaged in sexual relations before marriage took a huge risk, however. If their lovers
decided to marry them, they would be disgraced, and their futures would be bleak.

The World That Slavery Made

The rural economy of the South depended on slave labor. Whites and their black slaves
formed two distinctive cultures, one in the black-majority lower South and the other in
the Chesapeake region. In both regions, the most affluent slave masters sold their crops on the international market and used the profits to buy elegant furniture and the latest London fashions.

Chesapeake planters modeled themselves after English country gentlemen, whereas low-country planters imitated the elite of London. Chesapeake planters designed their plantations to be self-sufficient villages, like English country estates. Because slaves produced most of the goods and services the plantation needed, planters such as William Byrd II imagined themselves living “in a kind of independence on everyone but Providence.” But unlike English country gentlemen, southern slave owners were wholly dependent on both slave labor and the vagaries of the market for their fortunes. South Carolina planters used their wealth to build elegant homes in Charleston and other coastal cities, where they spent much time and established a flourishing urban culture. By the eve of the Revolution, the area around Charleston was the most affluent in the mainland colonies. In spite of their affluence, the southern planter elite never achieved the secure political power enjoyed by their English counterparts. In England the social elite dominated the government: not only the hereditary positions but also the appointive and elective ones. With noble rank inherited and voting rights limited to male property owners, the English government was remarkably stable. The colonial elite, however (in the North as well as the South), were cut off from the top levels of political power, which remained in England. The colonists were at the mercy of whichever officials the Crown happened to appoint.

Unable to count on support from above, the colonial elite needed to guarantee the loyalty of those below them. In Virginia, the elite acted as middlemen for lesser planters, advancing them credit and marketing their tobacco. In general, they wielded their authority with a light hand, and punishments for crimes committed by whites were light.

Although members of the Virginia gentry tried to distance themselves from their slaves, whom they considered “vulgar,” some whites crossed the color line in a dramatic way, despite eighteenth-century racial views. Sexual relations between whites and blacks were common. Several prominent Virginians acknowledged and supported their mixed-race children. Some interracial relationships were affectionate; most were coerced. All the resulting offspring were in a vulnerable position; like all slaves, they were dependent on the will of whites.

In the low country, the absenteeism of the planters combined with the task system to give plantation slaves an unusual degree of autonomy. As a majority, slaves in the low country were better able to retain their own religions, languages, and customs than were those in the Chesapeake. For example, the Gullah language, still spoken today on the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, combined English, Spanish, Portuguese, and African languages.

The mainland colonies’ bloodiest slave revolt, the Stono Rebellion, took place in 1739 in South Carolina. The uprising was led by about 20 slaves born in Kongo (present-day Angola). The rebels were probably Catholics, for the king of Kongo, converted by the Portuguese, made Catholicism his nation’s religion. Early in the morning of September 9, the rebels broke into a store near the Stono Bridge, taking weapons and ammunition and killing the storekeepers. The rebels moved south toward St. Augustine, killing whites and gathering blacks into their fold. Although the main body of the rebels was dispersed that evening and many were executed on the spot,
skirmishes took place for another week, and the last of the ringleaders was not captured for three years.

The authorities reacted with predictable severity, putting dozens of slave rebels “to the most cruel Death” and revoking many liberties the slaves had enjoyed. A prohibitive duty was placed on the importation of slaves, and the immigration of white Europeans was encouraged. Although slave imports dropped significantly in the 1740s, by 1750 they rose to pre-Stono levels.

**Georgia: From Frontier Outpost to Plantation Society**

Nowhere was the white determination to create and maintain a slave society stronger than in the colony of Georgia. It is sometimes said that the introduction of slavery in North America was an unthinking decision, that the colonies became slave societies slowly, as individual planters purchased Africans already enslaved, and without society as a whole ever committing itself to slavery. Although there is some truth to this analysis, it is not accurate for Georgia, where the introduction of slavery was a purposeful decision.

The establishment of the English colony at South Carolina had, of course, made the Spanish nervous because of its proximity to their settlement at St. Augustine, Florida. With the French founding of New Orleans (1718) and Fort Toulouse (1717), Carolinians felt increasingly threatened. They were therefore eager for the English to establish a colony to the south, which would both serve as a buffer between Florida and South Carolina and, if extended far enough west, cut the French colonial empire in two.

The British Crown issued a 21-year charter to a group of trustees led by James Oglethorpe, who had achieved prominence by bringing about reforms in England’s debtors’ prisons. The colony, Georgia, was designed as a combination philanthropic venture and military-commercial outpost. Its colonists, who were to be drawn from Britain’s “deserving poor,” were supposed to protect South Carolina’s borders and to make the new colony a sort of Italy on the Atlantic, producing wine, olives, and silk.

Unfortunately, Oglethorpe’s humanitarianism was not matched by an understanding of the world economy. Because it was well known that excessive indulgence in alcohol was undermining the cohesion of many Indian tribes, Oglethorpe had banned liquor from the colony. However, without a product to sell, the colony could not prosper. South Carolina’s wharves, merchants, and willingness to sell rum enabled it to dominate the trade with local Indians. Oglethorpe had also banned slavery for humanitarian reasons (making it the only colony expressly to prohibit slavery). As a result, Georgia farmers looked enviously across the Savannah River at South Carolinians growing rich off slave labor. The settlers were also angry that, contrary to colonial practice, women were not allowed to inherit property and that Georgia’s trustees had made no provision for self-government. Georgia, despite its founders’ noble intentions, lacked everything that the thriving colonies enjoyed: a cash crop or product, large plots of land, slaves to work the land, and laws of its own devising.

Never able to realize their dream of a colony of small and contented farmers, the trustees surrendered Georgia back to the Crown in 1752. With Oglethorpe’s laws repealed and slavery introduced, the colony soon resembled the plantation society of South Carolina. Savannah became a little Charleston, with its robust civic and cultural life and its slave markets.
The Head and the Heart in America: The Enlightenment and Religious Awakening

American life in the eighteenth century was shaped by two movements, the Enlightenment and a series of religious revivals known as the Great Awakening. In many ways, these movements were separate, even opposite, appealing to different groups of people. The Enlightenment was a transatlantic intellectual movement that held that the universe could be understood and improved by the human mind. The Great Awakening was a transatlantic religious movement that held that all people were born sinners, that all could feel their own depravity without the assistance of ministers, and that all were equal in the eyes of God. Although the movements might seem fundamentally opposite, with one emphasizing the power of the human mind and the other disparaging it, both contributed to the humanitarianism that emerged at the end of the century.

The Ideas of the Enlightenment

The roots of the Enlightenment can be traced to the Renaissance and its spirit of inquiry and faith in science that led explorers like Columbus halfway around the globe. Men and women of the Enlightenment, on both sides of the Atlantic, contrasted the ignorance, oppression, and suffering of the Middle or “Dark” Ages, as they called them, and their own enlightened time. Thomas Jefferson described the earlier period as “the times of Vandalism, when ignorance put everything in the hands of power and priestcraft.” Enlightened thinkers believed fervently in the power of rational thinking and scoffed at superstition.

People of the Enlightenment believed that God and his world were knowable. Rejecting revelation as a guide, the Enlightenment looked instead to reason. Jefferson’s “trinity of the three greatest men the world had ever produced” included not Jesus Christ but Isaac Newton, the scientist responsible for modern mathematics and physics; Francis Bacon, the philosopher who outlined the scientific method; and John Locke, the political philosopher of democracy. The Enlightenment was interested in knowledge not for its own sake but for the improvements it could make in human happiness.

Enlightened thinkers were more interested in what all people had in common than in what differentiated them. No passage in the Bible was more important to them than Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in his own image.” It was the basis not only for overcoming Calvinism’s belief in humanity’s innate depravity but also for asserting the principle of human equality. The Enlightenment encouraged a broad toleration of religion. Benjamin Franklin said that “if the Mufti of Constantinople were to send a missionary to preach Mahometanism to us, he would find a pulpit at his service.”

Humanity’s duties were clear and simple. Chief among them, according to Benjamin Franklin, was “doing good to [God’s] other children.” In fact, people served God best not by praying, which, as Thomas Paine put it, “can add nothing to eternity,” but “by endeavouring to make his creatures happy.” Scientific inquiry and experiments such as Franklin’s with electricity all had as their object the improvement of human life.

Although there had been some improvements in the quality of life, life in the eighteenth century was still violent and filled with pain. The Enlightenment responded to the pain and violence of the world in two ways. First, it attempted to alleviate and curtail
them. Scientists eagerly sought cures for diseases. The Reverend Cotton Mather of Boston learned about the procedure of inoculating against smallpox (using a small amount of the deadly virus) from a scientific article and from his African slave Onesimus, who knew of its practice in Africa. An epidemic gave him an opportunity to try out the technique. The revulsion against pain and suffering also encouraged humanitarian reform, such as James Oglethorpe’s reform of English debtors’ prisons and, eventually, the antislavery movement.

Men and women of the Enlightenment also cultivated a stoic resignation to the evils they could not change and a personal ideal of moderation, so that they would neither give nor receive pain. The gentility and politeness of the urban elite were expressions of this ideal of moderation. Both gentility and the Enlightenment were espoused by the same set of people, the urban elite: professionals, merchants, and prosperous planters tied in to the global economy.

The Economic and Social Foundations of Democracy

Enlightenment thinkers began to study the connections among society, politics, and the economy. John Locke, the English philosopher, was the first to link these in a theory. He argued that there was a systematic connection between social institutions (such as the family), political institutions, and property rights. He began with the claim that each person has the right to life and the right to preserve that life. To sustain their lives, people form families, and to support themselves and their families, they labor. The basic right to life thus gives people the right to the product of their labor: property. To protect their lives and their property, people create governments. They give up some of their liberty but receive protection of their lives and property in return.

Locke also developed a new economic theory. His idea that money has no intrinsic value was a departure from mercantilism, which said that the value of money was fixed. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Scottish philosophers such as Francis Hutcheson and Adam Smith carried Locke’s ideas even further, arguing that human beings should be free to value the things that made them happy.

Using happiness as their standard for human life, the Scots argued that people should be free to produce. Adam Smith’s influential The Wealth of Nations (1776) was both a critique of mercantilism and a defense of free markets and free labor. For Smith and other Enlightenment theorists, the best incentive to hard work was the increased wealth and comforts it would bring. Human beings were happiest, they said, when they lived under free governments, which protected private property but left the market largely unregulated. These ideas became increasingly popular around the time of the Revolution.

Enlightened Institutions

The Enlightenment spurred the creation of institutions that embodied its principles. Humanitarianism led to the building of the Pennsylvania Hospital in 1751 and the Eastern State Mental Hospital at Williamsburg in 1773. In 1743 Benjamin Franklin proposed a society of learned men, modeled after the Royal Society of London, to study and share information about science and technology. He also helped establish the Library Company of Philadelphia in 1731, the first lending library in the colonies. Philadelphia acquired a second library in 1751 when the Quaker James Logan bequeathed his library,
In the eighteenth century, very few people had ever held a book in their hands. Even fewer had the experience of reading and recognizing a connection between themselves and someone who lived either long ago or far away, or of quickly and efficiently gaining access to desired knowledge or expertise. These forms of empowerment were reserved for the very wealthy.

In July 1731, Benjamin Franklin and some of his friends and colleagues met in Philadelphia to try to change that situation. They were members of a philosophical club called the Junto. Most were avid readers of the newspapers and leaflets that came off the ships coming in from England, and they had learned of an interesting recent development in London and other British towns. Libraries were relatively rare, even in Europe, and where they did exist in connection with certain institutions, they were not open to the public, and the books did not circulate. In the last few decades, however, that had begun to change, as collectives formed to buy books that all members of the group would then have access to. Inspired, fifty members of the Junto promised to contribute 40 shillings each to start a circulating library. In addition, each man committed himself to giving 10 more shillings per annum to buy newly printed works and to maintain the collection. Their motto was a Latin phrase meaning “To support the common good is divine.”

The master tradesmen, doctors, and small merchants who belonged to the Junto were certainly not poor, but they were not wealthy enough to buy large numbers of books, which were expensive at the time. By creating this institution, these men would have access to Enlightenment thinking in regards to law, science, and other subjects to an extent that they never could have managed on their own. Their ambitions of improving “the common good,” however, extended beyond their own collectivity. They were also thinking of the improvement of the people of Philadelphia in general. The library was open to everyone on Saturday evenings from four to eight o’clock. Members could borrow books freely; visitors who were not members could also borrow a book, but they had to leave some sort of collateral, something of value that could be sold if the book was never returned.

The founding of “the Library Company,” as the new institution was called, inspired the establishment of more libraries, both in Philadelphia and in other colonies. Circulating libraries grew increasingly common in America, and due to their presence, Enlightenment ideas spread far more rapidly than they otherwise would have. Only about 10 percent of the Library Company’s books concerned theology, whereas in traditional institutional libraries—such as Harvard’s—most of the titles were religious in nature. Instead, the Library Company offered books on history, geography, and science. Furthermore, the majority of the books were in English, rather than Latin, because the purpose in this case was not for readers to display their erudition but to gain access to what they viewed as practical knowledge. Eventually, circulating libraries helped to spread the patriots’ ideas during the American Revolution. The continued
Library Company, for example, loaned out its copy of Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense.*

Of course, those who came to the library to read were generally middle-class citizens or even well-to-do. They were not the very poor, slaves, or former slaves, nor were they women. However, expanding access to knowledge from a tiny group to a substantially larger one was a necessary first step in democratizing access to education. Later, in the nineteenth century, the circulating library supported by subscription inspired the creation of the public libraries we know today.

books and building both, to the city. By the time of the Revolution, Newport, New York, Charleston, and Savannah all had libraries.

The Enlightenment had a significant effect on organized religion as well. The Anglicans, in particular, were receptive to its ideals of moderation and rationalism. In England, John Tillotson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, preached a comforting and simple Christianity: God was “good and just” and required nothing “that is either unsuitable to our reason or prejudicial to our interest . . . nothing but what is easy to be understood, and is as easy to be practiced by an honest and willing mind.”

This message became popular in the colonies, even among Congregationalist ministers, who abandoned the Calvinism of their forefathers. John Wise, the minister of Ipswich, Massachusetts, insisted that “to follow God and to obey Reason is the same thing.” Arminianism, the belief that salvation was partly a matter of individual effort rather than entirely God’s will, enjoyed a new popularity. Harvard University became a hotbed of liberal theology, and, in response, religious conservatives founded Yale University in 1701 to guarantee ministers a proper Calvinist education.

**Origins of the Great Awakening**

The problem with rational religion was that it was not emotionally fulfilling. In addition, rapid population growth had left the colonies without enough churches and ministers. Popular demand for more and better religion led to a series of revivals known as the Great Awakening, which swept through the colonies between 1734 and 1745. At first, church leaders looked with pleasure on the stirrings of spiritual renewal. In the winter of 1734–1735, some of the rowdiest young people in Northampton, Massachusetts, who carried on parties for “the greater part of the night,” began seeking religion at the church of a brilliant young minister, Jonathan Edwards. Everyone rejoiced at such signs of spiritual awakening.

**The Grand Itinerant**

When George Whitefield arrived in Philadelphia in 1739, the local ministers, including those of his own Anglican church, welcomed him. Whitefield drew audiences in the thousands everywhere he spoke. In the 15 months of his grand tour, he visited every colony from Maine to Georgia, met all the important ministers, and was heard at least
Map 5–4  George Whitefield’s Itinerary  In the 15 months between October 30, 1739, and January 18, 1741, Whitefield covered thousands of miles, visiting every colony from New Hampshire to Georgia, and stopping in some states such as Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Georgia several times.

once by most of the people of Massachusetts and Connecticut (see Map 5–4). He spoke to the entire community—rich, poor, slave, free, old, young, male, and female—acting out simple scripts based on biblical stories. The message was always the same: the sinfulness of man and the mercy of God.

In a calculated move, perhaps to increase his audiences, Whitefield began speaking out against some in the ministry, accusing them of being unconverted. He started with
the deceased Archbishop of Canterbury, John Tillotson. Following his lead, Gilbert Ten- 
nent, on a preaching tour of New England, warned about “The Danger of an Uncon- 
verted Ministry.” Tennent implied that some ministers were in it for the money and that 
true Christians should leave their churches for those of honest preachers.

Even sympathetic ministers were shocked by these accusations, which turned their 
congregations against them and split their churches. Some leading ministers, who 
already had reservations about the revivalists because of their emotional style, now 
condemned the revival. That only made the revivalists more popular and attracted larger 
crowds.

**Cultural Conflict and Challenges to Authority**

The Great Awakening walked a fine line between challenging authority and supporting 
it, which may well explain its widespread appeal. It antagonized the most powerful and 
arrogant but did not challenge the fundamental structures of society. By attacking min-
isters but not government officials, the revivalists criticized authority without suffering 
any real consequences.

The Great Awakening appealed to all classes of people. Its greatest impact, however, 
was in areas facing the greatest change—in particular, cities (especially among the lower 
orders), the frontier, and older towns beginning to suffer from overcrowding. Here lived 
the people most disrupted by economic changes. Disturbed by an increasingly competi-
tive society, men and women were attracted to the democratic fellowship of the revivalist 
congregation.

While criticizing the materialism and competitiveness of eighteenth-century soci-
ety, the revival told people to look inside themselves for change, not to the structures of 
society. For example, a woman named Sarah Osborn blamed herself for her woes, which 
she saw as punishment for her sinful singing and dancing. After her spiritual rebirth, she 
trusted in God and accepted her poverty. Spiritual rebirth provided such people the joy 
and fulfillment that their world had been unable to supply.

The revival also walked a fine line in its treatment of slavery. Early in his travels, 
Whitefield spoke out against the cruelties of slavery and harangued slaveholders. At the 
same time, however, he maintained a slave plantation in South Carolina and pestered the 
trustees to permit slavery in Georgia. Like many slave owners after him, Whitefield
argued that it was immoral to enslave Africans, but not to own them, provided that one treated them well and Christianized them. By linking humanitarianism, Christianity, and slavery, the Great Awakening anchored slavery in the South, at least for the time being.

Although it is hard to say whether slaves were treated more humanely on the plantations of evangelicals, beginning in the 1740s large numbers of slaves were converted to Christianity, and by some point in the nineteenth century virtually all slaves had become Christians. Although some may have converted to please their masters and to get Sundays off, blacks were attracted to evangelical religion for the same reason that whites were. It offered them a way to order and find meaning in their lives.

To a great extent, poor whites and slaves, especially in the South, had been left out of the society that more prosperous people had created. Evangelical religion placed the individual in a community of believers. It offered slaves the opportunity for church discipline and personal responsibility on almost the same terms as whites and gave some blacks the possibility of leadership in a biracial community. Africans grafted some of their religious practices, such as shouting and ecstatic visions, onto the revival, so that worship in southern Baptist and Methodist churches became a truly African American phenomenon.

What the Awakening Wrought

The opponents of the Great Awakening feared that it would turn the world upside down, but the leaders of the revival disciplined their own wildest members, such as New London’s James Davenport. Davenport had led his flock through the streets late at night, singing at the tops of their lungs. They also made a bonfire to rid themselves of heresy, by burning the books of their opponents, and idolatry, by burning the clothes they were wearing. The stripping party was stopped by evangelicals in the crowd, and Davenport was brought back to his senses by his fellow ministers. In general, the Great Awakening took colonial society in the direction in which it was already heading: toward individualism. Church after church split into evangelical and traditional factions, and new denominations appeared. Choosing a religion became a personal matter, and colonies with established churches tolerated dissenters. Religion, as a general force, was strengthened, making the colonies simultaneously the most Protestant and the most religiously diverse culture in the world.
The Great Awakening also spurred the establishment of educational institutions. Princeton, chartered in 1748 as the College of New Jersey, grew out of an evangelical seminary. Next came Brown in 1764, and Rutgers, chartered in 1766, to advance “true religion and useful knowledge.” Dartmouth was established in 1769, building on a former school for Native Americans run by evangelicals. Columbia College, chartered in 1754, represented the Anglicans’ response. The focus of higher education was slowly shifting from preparation for the ministry to the training of leaders more generally. The Great Awakening diminished the power of ministers while increasing the influence of personal religion.

At the height of the Awakening, religious enthusiasm was both attacked and defended. Yet the conflict was hardly a battle of the pious against the godless or the well-educated against the uninformed. Jonathan Edwards, one of the greatest minds of his age, drew from the Enlightenment, as well as from Calvinist ideas. For Edwards, however, reason and good habits were not enough, and reason had to be supplemented by emotion, in particular the emotion of God’s grace. By insisting that religious salvation and virtue were more matters of the heart than of the head, Edwards opened the way for a popular religion that was democratic, intensely personal, and humanitarian.

Conclusion

Eighteenth-century America was part of an expanding world market and a capitalist political economy. A growing population sustained a vigorous economy, one that produced for and purchased from the world market. As participants in an “industrious revolution,” white Americans worked themselves and their slaves harder to purchase consumer goods. These new goods enabled people to live more genteelly and to cultivate a social life. Especially in the cities, this new emphasis on social life spawned an array of institutions in which people could acquire and display learning and gentility. The benefits of the economy were not shared equally, however. Enslaved people produced for the market economy but were denied its rewards. The increasing stratification of urban society and land pressures in rural regions meant many were too poor to profit from the expanding economy.

The eighteenth-century world spawned two different but related intellectual responses, the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening. Both were critical in shaping the eighteenth-century colonial world, and both paved the way for the Revolution. The Enlightenment led some to believe that rational thought and the scientific method would conquer human ills. At the same time, the Great Awakening reminded men and women that life was short and ultimately beyond their control. In different ways, the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening both encouraged the individualism that would characterize American life.
Who, What

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Jonathan Edwards 146
James Oglethorpe 142
George Whitefield 122
Consumer revolution 129
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The Great Awakening 143
Industrious revolution 129
Linked economic development 133
The Wealth of Nations 144

Review Questions

1. What were the primary sources of population increase in the eighteenth century? Compare the patterns of population growth of Europeans and Africans in the colonies.

2. What was the “industrious revolution”? How did it shape the development of the colonial economy? What were the other key factors shaping the development of the colonial economy? What effect did this development have on the lives of ordinary men and women?

3. What were the primary changes in urban and rural life in the eighteenth century?

Critical-Thinking Questions

1. Was the development of the eighteenth-century consumer culture a democratizing force—or the opposite?

2. Why were some eighteenth-century men and women drawn to the ideas of the Enlightenment while others were drawn to the Great Awakening?

3. Analyze the relationship between humanitarianism and slavery, which developed at the same time.

For further review materials and resource information, please visit www.oup.com/us/oakes
CHAPTER 5: THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY WORLD, 1700–1775

Primary Sources

5.1 BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1771–1790)

Benjamin Franklin began writing his autobiography in 1771 and returned to the task periodically until he died in 1790. In this selection from the first pages, he describes how he came to read and write with the flair that made him one of the eighteenth century’s leading men of letters. The excerpt provides some insight into life in the first half of the eighteenth century in Boston, Massachusetts, despite the fact that it was written at a much later date.

From a child I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was ever laid out in books. Pleased with the Pilgrim’s Progress, my first collection was of John Bunyan’s works in separate little volumes. I afterward sold them to enable me to buy R. Burton’s Historical Collections; they were small chapmen’s books, and cheap, 40 or 50 in all. My father’s little library consisted chiefly of books in polemic divinity, most of which I read, and have since often regretted that, at a time when I had such a thirst for knowledge, more proper books had not fallen in my way since it was now resolved I should not be a clergyman. Plutarch’s Lives there was in which I read abundantly, and I still think that time spent to great advantage. There was also a book of De Foe’s, called an Essay on Projects, and another of Dr. Mather’s, called Essays to do Good, which perhaps gave me a turn of thinking that had an influence on some of the principal future events of my life.

This bookish inclination at length determined my father to make me a printer, though he had already one son (James) of that profession. In 1717 my brother James returned from England with a press and letters to set up his business in Boston. I liked it much better than that of

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I have since observed, seldom fall into it, except lawyers, university men, and men of all sorts that have been bred at Edinburgh.

A question was once, somehow or other, started between Collins and me, of the propriety of educating the female sex in learning, and their abilities for study. He was of opinion that it was improper, and that they were naturally unequal to it. I took the contrary side, perhaps a little for dispute’s sake. He was naturally more eloquent, had a ready plenty of words; and sometimes, as I thought, bore me down more by his fluency than by the strength of his reasons. As we parted without settling the point, and were not to see one another again for some time, I sat down to put my arguments in writing, which I copied fair and sent to him. He answered, and I replied. Three or four letters of a side had passed, when my father happened to find my papers and read them. Without entering into the discussion, he took occasion to talk to me about the manner of my writing; observed that, though I had the advantage of my antagonist in correct spelling and pointing (which I ow’d to the printing-house), I fell far short in elegance of expression, in method and in perspicuity, of which he convinced me by several instances. I saw the justice of his remark, and thence grew more attentive to the manner in writing, and determined to endeavor at improvement.

About this time I met with an odd volume of the Spectator.1 It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With this view I took some of the papers, and, making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, try’d to compleat the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my Spectator with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them.


5.2 SANSOM OCCUM, EXCERPTS FROM A SHORT NARRATIVE OF MY LIFE (1768)

Sansom Occum was a Mohegan Indian from Connecticut. By the eighteenth century, the Mohegans had lost their land and with it their way of life. In the 1740s, Occum was educated at the school that would later become Dartmouth College and became a minister to Indians on Long Island. In 1768, he penned a brief autobiography, revealing that in his experience, hard work did not pay off as well as it had for Benjamin Franklin: when a white friend and ally advocated for him with the society for missionaries, asking for more reasonable pay, he was rebuffed.

The Reverend Mr. Buell was so kind as to write in my behalf to the gentlemen of Boston; and he told me they were much Displeased with him, and heard also once again that they blamed me for being Extravagant; I Can’t Conceive how these gentlemen would have me Live. I am ready to forgive their Ignorance, and I would wish they had Changed Circumstances with me but one month, that they may know, by experience what my Case really was; but I am now fully convinced, that it was not Ignorance, For I believe it can be proved to the world that these Same Gentlemen gave a young Missionary a Single man, One Hundred Pounds for one year; and

1This was a popular daily published in London from 1711 to 1712.
fifty Pounds for an Interpreter, and thirty Pounds for an Introducer, so it Cost them One Hundred & Eighty Pounds in one Single Year, and they Sent too where there was no Need of a Missionary.

Now you See what difference they made between me and other missionaries; they gave me 180 pounds for 12 Years Service, which they gave for one years Services in another Mission.— In my Service (I speak like a fool, but I am Constrained) I was my own Interpreter. I was both a School master and Minister to the Indians, yea I was their Ear, Eye & Hand, as well as Mouth. I leave it with the World, as wicked as it is, to Judge, whether I ought not to have had half as much, they gave a young man just mentioned which would have been but 50 pounds a year; and if they ought to have given me that, I am not under obligations to them, I owe them nothing at all; what can be the Reason that they used me after this manner? I can’t think of anything, but this as a Poor Indian Boy said, Who was Bound out to an English Family, and he used to Drive Plow for a young man, and he whipt and beat him almost every Day, and the young man found fault with him, and Complained of him to his master and the poor Boy was Called to answer for himself before his master, and he was asked, what it was he did, that he was So Complained of and beat almost every Day. He Said, he did not know, but he Supposed it was because he could not drive any better; but says he, I Drive as well as I know how; and at other Times he Beats me, because he is of a mind to beat me; but says he believes he Beats me for the most of the Time “because I am an Indian.”


### 5.3 OLAUDAH EQUIANO, EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERESTING NARRATIVE AND OTHER WRITINGS (1789)

The late eighteenth-century autobiography of Gustavus Vassa, or Olaudah Equiano, is probably the most famous slave narrative ever published. He claimed to have been born in Africa and brought to America, but scholars have recently demonstrated that it is far more likely that Equiano was American-born and made this claim about himself so as to be able to speak about—and criticize—the slave trade with “authenticity.” In any case, having been at sea during the French and Indian War, acting first as a naval officer’s personal servant and then as a fighter, he assumed he was to be freed by his master but was disappointed instead.

Our ship having arrived at Portsmouth, we went into the harbour and remained there till the latter end of November, when we heard great talk about peace, and to our very great joy in the beginning of December we had orders to go up to London with our ship to be paid off. We received this news with loud huzzas and every other demonstration of gladness, and nothing but mirth was to be seen throughout every part of the ship. I too was not without my share of the general joy on this occasion. I thought now of nothing but being freed and working for myself, and thereby getting money to enable me to get a good education: for I always had a great desire to be able at least to read and write, and while I was on ship-board I had endeavoured to improve myself in both. While I was in the Ætina particularly, the captain’s clerk taught me to write, and gave me a smattering of arithmetic as far as the rule of three. There was also one Daniel Queen, about forty years of age, a man very well educated, who messed [that is, ate] with me on board this ship, and he likewise dressed and attended the captain. Fortunately this man soon became very much attached to me and took very great pains to instruct me in many things. He taught me to shave and dress hair a little and also to read in the Bible, explaining
many passages to me which I did not comprehend. I was wonderfully surprised to see the laws and rules of my country written almost exactly here, a circumstance which I believe tended to impress our manners and customs more deeply on my memory. I used to tell him of this resemblance, and many a time we have sat up the whole night together at this employment. In short, he was like a father to me, and some even used to call me after his name; they also styled me the black Christian. Indeed I almost loved him with the affection of a son. Many things I have denied myself that he might have them, and when I used to play at marbles or any other game and won a few halfpence, or got any little money, which I sometimes did, for shaving anyone, I used to buy him a little sugar or tobacco, as far as my stock of money would go. He used to say that he and I never should part, and that when our ship was paid off, as I was as free as himself or any other man on board, he would instruct me in his business by which I might gain a good livelihood. This gave me new life and spirits, and my heart burned within me while I thought the time long till I obtained my freedom. For though my master had not promised it to me, yet besides the assurances I had received that he had no right to detain me, he always treated me with the greatest kindness and reposed in me an unbounded confidence; he even paid attention to my morals, and would never suffer me to deceive him or tell lies, of which he used to tell me the consequences; and that if I did so God would not love me; so that from all this tenderness, I had never once supposed, in all my dreams of freedom, that he would think of detaining me any longer than I wished.

Source: Library of Congress Rare Book and Special Collections Division Washington, D.C.
In pursuance of our orders we sailed from Portsmouth for the Thames and arrived at Deptford 10 December, where we cast anchor just as it was high water. The ship was up about half an hour, when my master ordered the barge to be manned, and all in an instant, without having before given me the least reason to suspect anything of the matter, he forced me into the barge, saying I was going to leave him, but he would take care I should not. I was so struck with the unexpectedness of this proceeding that for some time I did not make a reply, only I made an offer to go for my books and chest of clothes, but he swore I should not move out of his sight, and if I did he would cut my throat, at the same time taking his hanger [a short sword]. I began, however, to collect myself, and plucking up courage, I told him I was free and he could not by law serve me so. But this only enraged him the more, and he continued to swear, and said he would soon let me know whether he would or not, and at that instant sprung himself into the barge from the ship to the astonishment and sorrow of all on board. The tide, rather unluckily for me, had just turned downward, so that we quickly fell down the river along with it till we came among some outward-bound West Indians, for he was resolved to put me on board the first vessel he could get to receive me. The boat’s crew, who pulled against their will, became quite faint, different times, and would have gone ashore, but he would not let them. Some of them strove then to cheer me and told me he could not sell me, which revived me a little, and I still entertained hopes, for as they pulled along he asked some vessels to receive me, but they could not. But just as we had got a little below Gravesend, we came alongside of a ship which was going away the next tide for the West Indies; her name was the Charming Sally, Captain James Doran, and my master went on board and agreed with him for me, and in a little time I was sent for into the cabin. When I came there Captain Doran asked me if I knew him; I answered that I did not; “Then,” said he, “you are now my slave.” I told him my master could not sell me to him, nor to anyone else. “Why,” said he, “did not your master buy you?” I confessed he did. “But I have served him,” said I, “many years, and he has taken all my wages and prize-money, for I only got one sixpence during the war; besides this, I have been baptized, and by the laws of the land no man has a right to sell me.” And I added that I had heard a lawyer and others at different times tell my master so. They both then said that those people who told me so were not my friends, but I replied, “It was very extraordinary that other people did not know the law as well as they.” Upon this Captain Doran said I talked too much English, and if I did not behave myself well and be quiet he had a method on board to make me. I was too well convinced of his power over me to doubt what he said, and my former sufferings in the slave-ship presenting themselves to my mind, the recollection of them made me shudder. However, before I retired I told them that as I could not get any right among men here I hoped I should hereafter in Heaven, and I immediately left the cabin, filled with resentment and sorrow. The only coat I had with me my master took away with him, and said if my prize-money had been £10,000 he had a right to it all and would have taken it. I had about nine guineas which, during my long seafaring life, I had scraped together from trifling perquisites and little ventures, and I hid it that instant lest my master should take that from me likewise, still hoping that by some means or other I should make my escape to the shore; and indeed some of my old shipmates told me not to despair for they would get me back again, and that as soon as they could get their pay, they would immediately come to Portsmouth to me, where this ship was going: but, alas! all my hopes were baffled and the hour of my deliverance was yet far off. My master, having soon concluded his bargain with the captain, came out of the cabin, and he and his people got into the boat and put off; I followed them with aching eyes as long as I could, and when they were out of sight I threw myself on the deck, while my heart was ready to burst with sorrow and anguish.

George Whitefield, the leading preacher of the Great Awakening, maintained a diary in which he recorded his travels to spread the word of the Lord. He edited and published these journals in regular installments so as to reach a wider audience. Though an Englishman by birth, he visited America seven times. This 1740 selection comes from his second trip to the thirteen colonies, which was very successful, in that he drew large crowds and made many converts. Yet in this selection we see that not everyone was inclined to hear Whitefield’s message, and that he himself was not always disposed to see all souls as equal.

Tuesday, January 1, 1740. Rode about ten miles, and where we baited, met with one who had great reason to believe, was a child of God. It grieved me that I could stay no longer, but being in haste, we passed over a half-mile ferry. About sunset, we came to a tavern, five miles within the province of South Carolina. Here I immediately perceived the people were more polite than those we generally met with; but I believe the people of the house wished I had not come to be their guest that night; for, it being New Year’s Day, several of the neighbours were met together to divert themselves by dancing country dances. By the advice of my companions, I went in amongst them whilst a woman was dancing a jig. At my first entrance I endeavoured to shew the folly of such entertainments, and to convince her how well pleased the devil was at every step she took. For some time she endeavoured to outbrave me; neither the fiddler nor she desisted; but at last she gave over, and the musician laid aside his instrument. It would have made any one smile to see how the rest of the company, one by one attacked me, and brought, as they thought, arguments to support their wantonness; but Christ triumphed over Satan. All were soon put to silence, and were, for some time, so overawed, that after I had discoursed with them on the nature of baptism, and the necessity of being born again, in order to enjoy the Kingdom of Heaven, I baptized, at their entreaty, one of their children, and prayed afterwards as I was enabled, and as the circumstances of the company required. I and my companions then took a little refreshment; but the people were so bent on their pleasure, that notwithstanding all that had been said, after I had gone to bed, I heard their music and dancing, which made me look back upon my own past follies with shame and confusion of face; for such an one, not long since, was I myself. Lord, for Thy mercies’ sake, shew all unhappy formalists of standing all that had been said, after I had gone to bed, I heard their music and dancing, which made me look back upon my own past follies with shame and confusion of face; for such an one, not long since, was I myself. Lord, for Thy mercies’ sake, shew all unhappy formalists of standing all that had been said, after I had gone to bed, I heard their music and dancing, which made me look back upon my own past follies with shame and confusion of face; for such an one, not long since, was I myself. Lord, for Thy mercies’ sake, shew all unhappy formalists of standing all that had been said, after I had gone to bed, I heard their music and dancing, which made me look back upon my own past follies with shame and confusion of face; for such an one, not long since, was I myself. Lord, for Thy mercies’ sake, shew all unhappy formalists of standing all that had been said, after I had gone to bed, I heard their music and dancing, which made me look back upon my own past follies with shame and confusion of face; for such an one, not long since, was I myself. Lord, for Thy mercies’ sake, shew all unhappy formalists of standing all that had been said, after I had gone to bed, I heard their music and dancing, which made me look back upon my own past follies with shame and confusion of face; for such an one, not long since, was I myself. Lord, for Thy mercies’ sake, shew all unhappy formalists of standing all that had been said, after I had gone to bed, I heard their music and dancing, which made me look back upon my own past follies with shame and confusion of face; for such an one, not long since, was I myself. Lord, for Thy mercies’ sake, shew all unhappy formalists of
Phyllis Wheatley was brought as a slave from Africa to America in 1761, when she was about eight years old. She was purchased by the wealthy Boston merchant John Wheatley to be a companion to his wife. Wheatley proved to be an excellent student, and they tutored her in English, Latin, history, and Christianity. During this time, the students at Harvard University were becoming increasingly known for their wild and destructive behavior. Here, Wheatley reminds them what people of African descent would do with the education they were being offered if it was given to them. Years later, she would receive her freedom from the Wheatley family.

To the University of Cambridge, in New England

While an intrinsic ardor prompts to write,
The muses promise to assist my pen;
'Twas not long since I left my native shore
The land of errors, and Egyptian gloom:
Father of mercy, 'twas thy gracious hand
Brought me in safety from those dark abodes.

Students, to you 'tis giv'n to scan the heights
Above, to traverse the ethereal space,
And mark the systems of revolving worlds.
Still more, ye sons of science ye receive
The blissful news by messengers from heav'n,
How Jesus' blood for your redemption flows.
See him with hands out-stretched upon the cross;

Immense compassion in his bosom glows;  
He hears revilers, nor resents their scorn:  
What matchless mercy in the Son of God!  
When the whole human race by sin had fall’n,  
He deign’d to die that they might rise again,  
And share with him in the sublimest skies,  
Life without death, and glory without end.

Improve your privileges while they stay,  
Ye pupils, and each hour redeem, that bears  
Or good or bad report of you to heav’n.  
Let sin, that baneful evil to the soul,  
By you be shunn’d, nor once remit your guard;  
Suppress the deadly serpent in its egg.  
Ye blooming plants of human race devine,  
An Ethiope tells you ’tis your greatest foe;  
Its transient sweetness turns to endless pain,  
And in immense perdition sinks the soul.