

Summary: English Colonies

The First English Settlements

In 1607, English settlers founded Jamestown in present-day Virginia. The colonists did not know how to farm. Many died of disease or hunger. The climate and soil were good for growing tobacco. This cash crop helped the settlers create a permanent settlement. In 1620, Puritans came to present-day Massachusetts on a ship called the Mayflower. They wanted to worship freely. Many died of hunger the first winter. Later, an American Indian taught them to raise crops, hunt, and fish.

Three Regions

In the 1600s, new colonists settled in three regions: New England, the Middle Colonies, and the Southern Colonies. In New England, Puritans started the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Some people didn't like its religious laws. They started other colonies. The region was not very good for farming. Most colonists grew enough crops to survive. Many New England colonists earned a living by fishing, shipbuilding, or trading. The Middle Colonies were settlements that spread south and west of New England. The climate and soil were good, and many colonists earned a living by farming. William Penn was the proprietor of Pennsylvania, where religious tolerance was practiced. In the South, new colonies started near Virginia. Maryland was a place where Catholics could worship freely. In Georgia, poor English people began new lives. In the Southern Colonies, the climate was good for growing crops on farms and plantations.

The Beginnings of Democracy

The Virginia House of Burgesses was the first representative government in the colonies. In Massachusetts, colonists signed the Mayflower Compact, the first written plan for self-government in North America. Representative governments were not fair to everyone. Women, enslaved Africans, and poor men could not vote or be elected.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

cash crop *noun*, a crop that is grown and sold to earn income

proprietor *noun*, a person who owned and controlled all the land of a colony

tolerance *noun*, respecting beliefs that are different from your own

plantation *noun*, a big farm on which crops are raised by workers who live there

self-government *noun*, a system in which a group of people make laws for themselves



After You Read

REVIEW What cash crop helped Jamestown settlers create a lasting settlement?

Draw a box around the name of the cash crop.

REVIEW In what ways did New England colonists earn a living?

Circle three ways they earned a living.

REVIEW What was the Mayflower Compact?

Highlight the words that tell the answer.