New England Colonies Economy

- **Subsistence farming/living.** New England farmers often depended on their children for labor. Everyone in the family worked—spinning yarn, milking cows, fencing fields, and sowing and harvesting crops. Women made cloth, garments, candles, and soaps for their families.
- Many **small businesses.** Nearly every town had a mill for grinding grain or sawing lumber. People used waterpower from streams to run the mills.
- Large towns attracted **skilled craftspeople.** Among them were blacksmiths, shoemakers, furniture makers, and gunsmiths.
- **Shipbuilding** was an important New England industry. The lumber for building ships came from the region's forests. Workers floated the lumber down rivers to shipyards in coastal towns.
- The Northern coastal cities served as centers of the **colonial shipping trade,** linking the Northern Colonies with the Southern Colonies—and America with other parts of the world.
- **Fishing** was also important. Some New Englanders ventured far out to sea to hunt whales for oil and whalebone.
- Turned **molasses** from the West Indies into **rum.**
New England Card

Specializations

- Subsistence Farming
- Ship Building
- Fishing
- Molasses making, esp. for rum.
- Large towns had skilled craftspeople (not mfg though)
The New England Colonies
The Middle Colonies

- Most people in the Middle Colonies were farmers. This region enjoyed more fertile soil and a slightly milder climate than New England. Farmers here plowed and planted larger areas of land and produced bigger harvests than did New Englanders. In New York and Pennsylvania, farmers grew large quantities of wheat and other cash crops—crops that could be sold easily in markets in the colonies and overseas.

- Farmers sent wheat and livestock for shipment to New York City and Philadelphia, which became busy ports. By 1760, New York, with 14,000 people, and Philadelphia, with 19,000 people, were two of the largest cities in the American colonies.

- Like the New England Colonies, the Middle Colonies also had industries. Some were home-based crafts, such as carpentry and flour making. Others were larger businesses—lumber mills, mines, ironworks, small-scale manufacturing, and so on.

- The Middle Colonies attracted many Scotch-Irish, German, Dutch, and Swedish settlers. Using agricultural methods developed in Europe, these immigrants became successful farmers. They gave the Middle Colonies a cultural diversity or variety, not found in New England.
The Middle Colonies Card

- Farming - larger farms than in New England = Cash crops like wheat.
- Small industry: Carpentry, flour making, etc.
- Large industry: Lumber mills, mines, ironworks, small-scale manufacturing.
- Livestock
The Middle Colonies
Life in the Southern Colonies

- The Southern Colonies had rich soil and a warm climate well suited to certain kinds of farming. Southern farmers could plant large areas and produce harvests of cash crops, such as tobacco or rice. Most settlers in the Southern Colonies made their living from farming.

- Little commerce or industry developed there. For the most part, London merchants rather than local merchants from the colonies managed Southern trade.

- Most large plantations were located in the Tidewater, a region of flat, low-lying plains along the seacoast. Planters built their plantations on rivers so they could ship their crops to market by boat. A plantation was like a small village. It had fields stretching out around a cluster of buildings, including cabins, barns, and stables, as well as carpenter and blacksmith shops, storerooms, and kitchens. A large plantation might have its own chapel and school. Small plantations often had fewer than 50 enslaved workers. Large ones typically had 200 or more.

- Tobacco was the principal cash crop in Maryland and Virginia. Growing tobacco and preparing it for sale required a lot of labor. At first, planters used indentured servants to work in the fields. These servants worked for a time and then went free. When indentured servants became scarce and expensive, Southern planters began using enslaved Africans instead.
The Southern Colonies Card

- Large-scale farming - plantations next to rivers to help transport crops to market.
- Large slave labor force
- (Very little mfg. - cash crops the main focus.)
- Warm climate helped farmers grow an abundance of hearty cash crops.
- (Rice, indigo, corn, wheat, cotton, tobacco.)
The Southern Colonies
More on the Southern Colonies

- Slaveholders with large farms grew wealthy by growing tobacco. They sold most of it in Europe. Sometimes, though, there was too much tobacco on the market—more than buyers wanted. To sell the extra tobacco, planters had to lower their prices. As a result, their profits fell.
- Some planters switched to other crops, such as corn and wheat.
- The geography of South Carolina and Georgia helped make rice the main cash crop there. In low-lying areas along the coast, planters built dams to create rice fields, called paddies. Planters flooded the fields when the rice was young and drained them when the rice was ready to harvest.
- Work in the rice paddies was very hard. It involved standing knee-deep in the mud with no protection from the blazing sun or biting insects. To do this hard work, rice growers relied on slave labor.
- Rice proved to be an even more profitable crop than tobacco. Prices rose steadily as rice became popular in Europe. By the 1750s, South Carolina and Georgia had the fastest-growing economies in the colonies.
Backcountry Areas

- Between the Tidewater and the Appalachian Mountains lay a region of hills and forests known as the backcountry.
- Its settlers included hardy newcomers to the colonies.
- They grew corn and tobacco on small family farms.
- Some had one or two enslaved Africans to help with the work. Backcountry farmers greatly outnumbered large plantation owners. Still, the plantation owners were wealthier and more powerful. They controlled the economic and political life of the region.
The British West Indies

- Slaves did almost all of the work.
- The major industry was the growing, harvesting, and shipping sugar. The colonial plantations would produce the raw cane, which was then bundled onto ships for refining back in Europe.
- In that time period, the idea of humane labor laws was still centuries off, and so the colonial authorities permitted the use of native slaves, and imported slaves from Africa, in sugar cultivation.
- Because the cost of using slaves was significantly less than that of using laborers, the cost of production went down, and the sugar trade exploded.
- The reason for this is that the cost of sugar went down as the cost of producing it dropped. With costs lowered, production went up, sugar became more accessible, and people in the middle classes were now able to buy it. In the eighteenth century alone, the consumption of sugar rose more quickly than the consumption of dairy, bread or meat products. In Wales and England, sugar consumption increased 2000% during the 1700's!
The British West Indies Card

- Mainly grew sugar on large plantations under brutal slave labor.
- Slave trade.
The Backcountry of America

- Rice, tobacco grown on smaller farms with just a few slaves
- Hunting
- Grew foods stuffs on a small scale too
The British West Indies
England’s Economy/Manufacturing.

● Because England was relatively small and had a limited supply of natural resources and a growing populations, it relied heavily on the triangular trade. Through this system of trade, Britain gathered natural resources, created manufactured goods in England, and sold them at a profit to the colonies in the Americas.

● These goods included: teas and spices imported the Asia, tools, manufactured goods, furniture, and cloth, etc.
Britain Card

- Wool
- Manufacture goods
- Spices and tea from Asia
- Tools, furniture, cloth.
The Triangular Trade