

Life in the Thirteen Colonies

Grade 4 • SOCIAL-STUDIES • Students compare the New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies by geography, daily life, resources, and economic activities. • Standards: D2.His.2.3-5, D2.Geo.4.3-5, D2.Eco.3.3-5

Read each question carefully and think about what you learned about the New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies. Write your answers using complete sentences when asked.

1. Which colonial region had the coldest winters and rockiest soil: New England, Middle, or Southern?
2. The Southern Colonies grew large amounts of tobacco and rice. What type of climate helped these crops grow well?
3. In New England, many colonists worked as fishermen, shipbuilders, and merchants. Why did they choose these jobs instead of farming large fields of crops?
4. The Middle Colonies were called the breadbasket colonies because they grew wheat, barley, and oats. Which geographic feature made this possible?
5. Large plantations in the Southern Colonies used enslaved people to grow crops like tobacco, rice, and indigo. Why did plantation owners rely on this forced labor?
6. A colonial family lives near Boston. The father builds ships, the mother spins wool, and the children help make candles to sell. Which region do they most likely live in, and what clue tells you?
7. Compare how a typical farm family in the Middle Colonies and a plantation owner in the Southern Colonies used labor. Describe one important difference.
8. A merchant in Philadelphia trades flour and grain to the Caribbean islands and receives sugar and molasses in return. Explain how geography helped Philadelphia become a trade center.
9. In 1750, a visitor noticed that the Southern Colonies had fewer large towns than New England or the Middle Colonies. Using what you know about plantations and

geography, explain why this pattern developed.

10. A colonial leader says, 'Our region benefits from both good farmland and busy port cities where we welcome people of many backgrounds.' Based on geography and diversity, which colonial region is the leader most likely describing, and why?

Answer Key — Life in the Thirteen Colonies

For the teacher / parent. Do not distribute with the worksheet.

1. New England (*New England had cold winters and rocky soil that made large-scale farming difficult.*)
2. Warm climate with a long growing season (*The Southern Colonies had warm weather and long growing seasons ideal for tobacco and rice.*)
3. The rocky soil and cold climate made it hard to farm large fields, so they used the ocean and forests for work. (*New England's geography led people to ocean-based and trade work rather than large farms.*)
4. Fertile soil and good farmland (*The Middle Colonies had rich, fertile soil perfect for growing grain crops.*)
5. Growing these cash crops required many workers, and plantation owners used enslaved labor to make profits without paying wages. (*The plantation system depended on the brutal practice of slavery to produce profitable crops.*)
6. New England; shipbuilding was a major industry there because of forests and the Atlantic coast. (*Boston is in New England, and shipbuilding was a key New England occupation.*)
7. Middle Colony farms were usually smaller and worked by family members, while Southern plantations were large and relied on enslaved people to do the work. (*The scale and labor systems differed significantly between these regions.*)
8. Philadelphia had a natural harbor on a river, fertile land nearby for growing grain, and a location between New England and the Southern Colonies. (*The Middle Colonies' rivers, harbors, and central location supported trade.*)
9. Plantations were spread out along rivers so crops could be shipped directly from docks, so people did not need to gather in large towns for trade. (*The plantation economy and river transportation reduced the need for urban centers in the South.*)
10. The Middle Colonies, because they had fertile soil for farming, port cities like New York and Philadelphia, and were known for religious and ethnic diversity. (*The Middle Colonies uniquely combined productive agriculture, major ports, and diverse populations.*)