Land and Laws

How place and people shaped the colonial regions

SS24.6.4 "Compare and contrast the key characteristics, including political structures, of the New England, Middle, Chesapeake, and Southern colonies. 4a Explain how climate and geography shaped the economic identities of the colonial regions..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one land or weather clue and its linked job for each of the four regions, circle three examples of self-government, and put a star beside the change Roger Williams made.

Four Regions, Different Choices

1. Along New England's rocky coast, thin soil and short growing seasons made large farms difficult. Families ran small farms, while fishing, shipbuilding, and trade grew around harbors. In the Middle colonies, warmer weather, rich soil, and broad rivers supported wheat farms and busy ports. Farmers could send grain down rivers to market. Both regions traded, but New England relied more on the sea, while the Middle colonies sold more grain. These differences were not simply choices: land and weather shaped which work could pay.

2. Farther south, the Chesapeake colonies of Virginia and Maryland had fertile land and long, warm growing seasons. Rivers reached inland, so tobacco growers could ship their crop from plantations. In the Southern colonies, including South Carolina and Georgia, warm weather and low, wet coastal land supported rice and indigo. Tobacco, rice, and indigo required hard labor. Plantation owners profited from the forced labor of enslaved Africans; in some places, indentured servants also worked. Unlike New England's smaller farms, these plantations produced crops mainly for sale overseas.

3. Colonial governments differed. Royal governors were appointed by the king; Pennsylvania was a proprietary colony under William Penn's charter. Settlers also found limited ways to govern themselves. In 1620, Mayflower passengers agreed to make and follow shared laws in the Mayflower Compact. New England town meetings let some residents vote on local matters, while Virginia's House of Burgesses let elected representatives help make laws. Voting often excluded women, enslaved people, and many men. Banished after challenging Massachusetts leaders on religion, Roger Williams founded Providence, where government protected religious freedom.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did land and weather lead to different kinds of work in New England and the Middle colonies?

2. What did the Chesapeake and Southern colonies have in common economically, and how did their main crops differ?

3. How did the Mayflower Compact and the Virginia House of Burgesses give colonists different ways to govern themselves?

4. How did Roger Williams's actions change what people could do in Providence?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a colony with hilly land, cool summers, and a fast river. In four sentences, propose two jobs that fit the land, choose a way residents could make local decisions, and explain how one rule could make that system fairer than the colonial examples in the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Land and Laws

GRADE 6 · SS24.6.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one land or weather clue and its linked job for each of the four regions, circle three examples of self-government, and put a star beside the change Roger Williams made. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did land and weather lead to different kinds of work in New England and the Middle colonies?	**New England's rocky coast, thin soil, and short growing seasons encouraged fishing, shipbuilding, and trade. The Middle colonies' richer soil, warmer weather, and rivers supported wheat farming and grain trade.**
2	What did the Chesapeake and Southern colonies have in common economically, and how did their main crops differ?	**Both had plantations that grew crops for sale overseas and profited from enslaved labor. Chesapeake plantations grew tobacco; Southern plantations grew rice and indigo.**
3	How did the Mayflower Compact and the Virginia House of Burgesses give colonists different ways to govern themselves?	**Mayflower passengers agreed to make and follow shared laws. In Virginia, elected representatives helped make laws through the House of Burgesses.**
4	How did Roger Williams's actions change what people could do in Providence?	**After challenging Massachusetts leaders on religion, Williams founded Providence, where people could practice different religions without government punishment.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Families could raise sheep on the hills instead of planting large fields. Workers could use the fast river to power a sawmill. Residents could elect a local council to decide how to care for roads. A rule letting women and men vote would give more people a say than in the colonies described.

Accept other accurate links between geography and work. For the open task, look for two plausible jobs, a way to make local decisions, and a rule that expands participation or freedom.