

Lives and Choices

Examine the varied experiences of African Americans in the colonial era.

SS.5.AA.1.1 "Examine the life of African Americans in the colonial era."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that show limits African Americans faced. Circle details that show ways they built communities, preserved culture, contributed work, or sought freedom.

African Americans in Colonial America

- ① During the colonial era, most African Americans lived in slavery, a system that treated people as property. Enslaved people worked in homes, on farms, at ports, and in skilled trades. Their work helped build colonial communities and wealth. Laws restricted where they could travel, gather, learn, or make choices about their labor. Families could be separated when an owner sold a parent, child, or spouse.
- ② Some African Americans were free, although freedom did not bring equal rights. Free Black people formed families, worked for pay, owned property in some places, and built churches and mutual-aid groups. In cities such as Philadelphia, free people found jobs as sailors, craftspeople, and laborers. They still faced unfair laws and prejudice, and officials could limit their movement or opportunities.
- ③ African Americans also made choices to protect their families and seek freedom. Some preserved African traditions through music, food, stories, and religious practices. Some resisted slavery by slowing work, running away, or helping others escape. During the American Revolution, Black men served on both sides, often hoping military service would lead to freedom. These experiences show both severe limits and determined efforts to shape their own lives.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 What are two ways that slavery limited the lives of enslaved African Americans?

2 How did the work of enslaved African Americans affect colonial communities? Use one detail from the passage.

3 What are two ways free Black people built lives and communities despite unfair treatment?

4 How did African Americans try to protect their culture or seek freedom? Give two examples.

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write a three-sentence museum label titled *African Americans in the Colonial Era*. Explain one limit people faced, one way they contributed or built community, and one action they took to protect culture or seek freedom.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details that show limits African Americans faced. Circle details that show ways they built communities, preserved culture, contributed work, or sought freedom. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What are two ways that slavery limited the lives of enslaved African Americans?	Laws limited travel, gathering, learning, and choices about labor. Families could also be separated when an owner sold family members.
2	How did the work of enslaved African Americans affect colonial communities? Use one detail from the passage.	Their work in homes, on farms, at ports, and in skilled trades helped build colonial communities and wealth.
3	What are two ways free Black people built lives and communities despite unfair treatment?	They formed families, worked for pay, owned property in some places, and built churches and mutual-aid groups. Any two are acceptable.
4	How did African Americans try to protect their culture or seek freedom? Give two examples.	They preserved African traditions through music, food, stories, and religious practices. They also resisted by slowing work, running away, helping others escape, or serving in the Revolution while hoping for freedom. Any two are acceptable.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

African Americans in the Colonial Era Enslaved African Americans faced laws that limited their travel and could separate families through sale. Their labor on farms, at ports, and in skilled trades helped build colonial communities. Many people preserved traditions through stories and music, while others resisted slavery or sought freedom.

Accept accurate three-sentence labels that include one limit, one contribution or community-building detail, and one action to preserve culture or seek freedom. Students may use different accurate details from the passage.