

Builders of Colonial Life

Trace how key groups shaped work, community, and culture.

SS.8.A.2.7 "Describe the contributions of key groups (e.g., Africans, Native Americans, women, and children) to the society and culture of colonial America."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each contribution made by Africans, Native Americans, women, or children. Write A, N, W, or C in the margin beside each underlined contribution to show which group it describes.

Many Hands, Many Communities

- ① Colonial farms, towns, and ports depended heavily on the labor of Africans, most of whom were enslaved. In the Chesapeake and Lowcountry, enslaved people planted and processed tobacco, rice, and indigo, creating wealth for plantation owners and colonial exporters. They also brought farming knowledge, craft skills, music, foodways, and religious traditions. Some free Africans worked as sailors, artisans, or traders. Even under harsh control, African Americans formed families and communities that shaped colonial culture in lasting ways.
- ② Native American nations shaped colonial life through trade, diplomacy, and the sharing or withholding of knowledge about local land and crops. Colonists adopted foods such as corn, beans, and squash, while Native traders exchanged furs and other goods. Native allies sometimes guided expeditions or joined wars, acting for their own communities' interests. Women of many backgrounds managed households, made clothing, preserved food, kept businesses, and worked in fields or shops. Enslaved women performed demanding labor while supporting families and passing on cultural practices.
- ③ Children also contributed labor and learned roles that kept colonial communities going. On farms, they gathered firewood, tended animals, planted or harvested crops, and carried water. In towns, some helped in family shops or were apprenticed to learn trades. Schooling was limited and unequal, but children learned customs, stories, skills, and beliefs at home, work, and worship. Together, the work and traditions of Africans, Native Americans, women, and children made colonial society function and gave its culture many distinct voices.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did enslaved Africans contribute to the colonial economy? Name two crops they planted or processed.

2 Besides labor, what two kinds of contributions did Africans make to colonial culture?

3 Give one economic contribution and one travel- or government-related contribution made by Native American nations.

4 Compare women's and children's contributions. Give one way each group helped colonial communities.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose Africans, Native Americans, women, or children. Write a five-sentence museum label explaining how this group contributed to colonial society and culture, using at least two facts from the passage and one sentence about how the group's experiences varied by status or setting.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each contribution made by Africans, Native Americans, women, or children. Write A, N, W, or C in the margin beside each underlined contribution to show which group it describes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did enslaved Africans contribute to the colonial economy? Name two crops they planted or processed.	They planted or processed tobacco, rice, and indigo. Any two crops are correct.
2	Besides labor, what two kinds of contributions did Africans make to colonial culture?	They contributed such things as farming knowledge, craft skills, music, foodways, religious traditions, families, and communities. Any two are correct.
3	Give one economic contribution and one travel- or government-related contribution made by Native American nations.	Economic contributions include trading furs or other goods. Travel- or government-related contributions include guiding expeditions, diplomacy, or joining wars for their communities' interests.
4	Compare women's and children's contributions. Give one way each group helped colonial communities.	Women managed households, made clothing, preserved food, kept businesses, or worked in fields or shops. Children did farm labor, helped in shops, or learned trades through apprenticeship.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Colonial women were essential to the daily life of their communities. Many managed households, made clothing, and preserved food, which supported family survival. Some kept businesses or worked in fields and shops, adding to the economy. Enslaved women faced forced, demanding labor, yet they also supported families and passed on cultural practices. These different experiences show that women's contributions depended on their status and circumstances.

Accept accurate five-sentence labels that identify both social or cultural and economic contributions from the passage. The response should explain variation within the chosen group, rather than treating all members of that group as having identical experiences.