Colonial Communities

Read how government and daily life differed across three regions.

5.G.9 "Describe the political and social organization of each region (i.e., New England, Middle, Southern) that comprised the 13 British colonies."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB In each paragraph, underline a detail about how people made government decisions and circle a detail about how people lived or worked.

Life Across the Colonies

1. Imagine walking into a New England town in the 1700s. Neighbors might gather at a town meeting to decide local matters, such as paying for a road or school. Only some men, usually white men who met voting rules, could vote there. Colonists also elected representatives to a colonial assembly. Many families lived in small towns, where churches and schools often served as gathering places.

2. In the Middle Colonies, a busy street might carry several languages. Families from different European backgrounds lived near one another, alongside free and enslaved Black people. People practiced different religions, including Quakerism and Judaism. Colonial assemblies made laws, while governors held important power. Towns and counties handled many local needs. Voting in assembly elections was limited, mostly to white men who met property rules.

3. In the Southern Colonies, large plantations and small farms shaped many communities. Enslaved Africans and their descendants were forced to work on plantations and had no political rights. Wealthy white landowners often held the most power. Colonists elected assembly members, but voting was limited to white men who met property rules. County courts managed local matters, including roads, because farms were often spread far apart.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did people make local decisions in New England, and what brought many families together in its towns?

2. How was the Middle Colonies' government organized, and what made their communities diverse?

3. Who handled local matters in the Southern Colonies, and who held the most power in society there?

4. How did community life in the Middle Colonies differ from life in New England towns, and what kind of government did both regions have?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences proposing a fairer way to hear residents' ideas in either New England or the Southern Colonies. Describe how the region made local decisions, a feature of life there, a group left out of decisions, and your proposal.

ANSWER KEY

Colonial Communities

GRADE 5 · 5.G.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

In each paragraph, underline a detail about how people made government decisions and circle a detail about how people lived or worked. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did people make local decisions in New England, and what brought many families together in its towns?	**Some eligible men voted at town meetings about local matters. Churches and schools often brought families together.**
2	How was the Middle Colonies' government organized, and what made their communities diverse?	**Colonial assemblies made laws, governors held power, and towns and counties handled local needs. Communities included people from different backgrounds who spoke different languages and practiced different religions.**
3	Who handled local matters in the Southern Colonies, and who held the most power in society there?	**County courts handled local matters, including roads. Wealthy white landowners often held the most power.**
4	How did community life in the Middle Colonies differ from life in New England towns, and what kind of government did both regions have?	**Middle Colony communities included people with different languages and religions, while many New England families lived in small towns where churches and schools were gathering places. Both regions had colonial assemblies.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In the Southern Colonies, county courts handled local matters such as roads. People lived on scattered farms and plantations, where enslaved people were forced to work. Enslaved people had no political rights, so their ideas were left out of government decisions. I would have county courts hear their concerns and include them in decisions about local roads.

Accept accurate paraphrases of the passage. For the open task, the proposal should address a group excluded from political decisions and fit the region the student chose.