

## NORTH AMERICAN CULTURE –Early Modern Period

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**Overview** The time between the arrival of the Europeans and the nineteenth century was a time of dramatic change in the North American continent. Many different nations claimed various parts of the continent as their own territory as they sought to find sources of raw materials for their factories and gold for their national treasuries. The Spanish looked primarily for gold, silver, and precious stones; the English looked for ways to set up plantations to provide cotton, tobacco, indigo, sugar, and rum to their markets; the Dutch sought trade and commerce through joint stock companies; the French sought raw materials as well as fur trading. In addition to commercial motives, many English, Dutch, French, Germans, and more came to North America in quest of religious freedom. In stark contrast with those seeking freedom, Africans were forcibly transported to the Americas after having been kidnapped and/or sold into slavery. With the arrival of new peoples, and the development of new technology and ways of viewing the world, the different groups began to create their own niche cultures, resulting in a fascinating new array of verbal, visual, and performative arts.

### VERBAL ARTS

#### Literature

**Puritans and Pilgrims:** The Puritans were perhaps the most well-represented of the religious writers in Colonial America. The Puritans wrote extensive essays, sermons, and at times poems. John Winthrop, who was the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony wrote a number of sermons and essays that expounded the goals and purposes of the Great Migration to New England in the 1630s and 1640s. William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*, which was a detailed journal of the experience of the Pilgrim colonists from 1621 to 1646. While it was an autobiographical account, it also contains literary and Biblical allusions. Cotton Mather, a grandson of the Massachusetts Bay Colony founders, wrote more than 450 essays and sermons on a number of topics ranging from natural science to ethics and Biblical exegesis. Unfortunately, Cotton Mather is remembered for his leading role in the Salem witch trials. Ann Bradstreet was the first published poet who was widely acknowledged in England. Her forms were Elizabethan, and she wrote of being a mother, wife, and general observer of life in the colonies. Michael Wigglesworth was one of the first to put the philosophical concepts that informed the Puritans (the apocalyptic narrative, the "jeremiad") into verse form. His "Day of Doom" is a long poem that explores the mindset of the Puritans, the "true believers" who would be the only ones spared at the Day of Judgement and the God's destruction of the world and the unbelievers. The first American satire, *The Sotweed Factor* was written by Ebenezer Cooke in 1708. It is a poem written in couplets that responds to the greed and "get rich quick" schemes that inspired many people to settle in America and also to strike up trade with the settlers and the Native Americans. The "Sot-weed Factor" is a tobacco merchant. In the end, his schemes and dreams come to naught as he is swindled by a lawyer.

**Slave Narrative:** Phillis Wheatley wrote a remarkable and very valuable narrative of her experiences as woman born in West Africa, then sold to a slave trader who transported her to Boston. She took her name from the slave ship in which she traveled, *The Phillis*. The Wheatley family purchased her to be a servant, and she was taught to read and write by Mary Wheatley, the daughter of the family. By the age of 12, Phillis was reading Greek and Latin classics and by 14 she wrote her first poem. Wheatley's poetry reflected classical themes, but it also incorporated West African philosophies into poems that honor events, people, and Christianity. In particular, she incorporates a veneration of the solar gods and West African sun worship.

Personal narratives: Benjamin Franklin was a very influential presence in pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary America. His Poor Richard's Almanack and many other personal writings were aphoristic, salutatory, and positive. Thomas Paine authored influential pamphlets, "Common Sense" and "The American Crisis," which were instrumental in uniting people in a common cause and inspiring a breakaway from Britain.

## Discussion / Questions

Literature: The literature of Puritans, Pilgrims and other settlers was highly normative, which is to say that it concerned itself with the “correct” values and beliefs. As such, there were definitely examples of what might happen if one deviated from the values. Examples include sermons and poems that incorporate the “jeremiad” (repent now, or all will be condemned and punished!). Identify examples of normative texts and explain how they illustrative the values and beliefs, as well as potential rewards and punishment.

## Readings

Literature:

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## Language

**Indigenous Languages:** The core indigenous languages continued to evolve and differentiate themselves into sub-sets of the larger linguistic blocks. Many times the tribes that shared the same root languages were also involved in alliances – for defense and also cooperation. This was most particularly the case in the Eastern Woodlands and in the Pacific Northwest. The major language groups in the indigenous peoples include the Macro-Algonquian, the Muskogean, the Na-Dene, and the Aleut. There were more than 300 individual languages at the time of first contact by the Europeans, with a great deal of linguistic diversity.

**Dutch Colonies:** Dutch was spoken in New Amsterdam (New York) and up the Hudson River. The extent of the language use was evidenced by place names, which to this day persist. For example, the suffix “kill” denotes a stream or a river.

**Spanish Colonies:** Spanish was spoken and it was very much the same as that of the Iberian Peninsula, a fact that is supported by the fact that the isolated Spanish speaking communities living in the southern reaches of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado and New Mexico do not speak Mexican Spanish, but one that resembles the Spanish of the conquistadores of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**French Colonies:** French, and a kind of Creole that blended Native American languages with French. The French spoken in the Americas was spoken by Catholic trappers, fur traders, priests, and government officials in Canada and in some of the colonies. It was very connected to that of bourgeois France. However, another dialect of French emerged, and that was one that was spoken by the Protestant Huguenots who had fled Holland, England, and Belgium to escape religious persecution. French was their adopted language, and it was a blend of French and other languages.

**English Colonies:** The English colonists spoke various dialects of English, along with Gaelic (Irish) and Welsh. The English settlers in New England spoke what was very close to a Kings English. Many younger sons and dissidents from Ireland, Wales, and Scotland emigrated to the colonies where they clustered together in communities, often united by their denomination of Protestantism (Scottish – Presbyterian, Northern English – Methodist, Anabaptists – Baptists, just to name a few). The English of the entitled class usually practiced High Church of England, which was Anglican, or Episcopalian in the colonies. The Irish were largely Catholic, with a few Anglican / Episcopalian.

## Discussion / Questions

Language:

Identify the four main languages spoken in the colonies and describe how the language created unity and a sense of identity, and how the language created a critical bond between the settlers and those sent to protect the Europeans who were settling the lands that belonged to Indian nations.

### Readings

Language:

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Mithun, Marian. (2001) *The Languages of Native North America*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP.

### **Script**

**Political broadsides and pamphlets:** In the years approaching the Revolutionary War, a unique type of writing / printing emerged. It was called a "broadside" and it was a one-page political poster that was designed to be nailed to prominent locations where it would have maximum impact. Inspired by the broadsides in England, the American broadsides were unique in their designs and use of symbolism and different fonts. They were highly effective as propaganda.

**Calligraphic documents** – Inspired by the elaborate calligraphy of Europe, the American documents of historical importance were, without exception, executed in a prodigy-level calligraphy, thus rendering the document something on the level of fine art. An example is the Declaration of Independence, which has been reproduced many times as a work of art to display in government buildings and in conference rooms.

**Early printing press and the development of fonts:** It is often overlooked as a bona fide aspect of art, but the printing press relied on the development of unique fonts that would be effective in attracting attention. Fonts were often named after the printing press that made them famous, and they were used to create a kind of brand recognition that connoted reliability and veracity.

### Discussion / Questions

Script / Writing:

For the indigenous peoples, the ability to tell a story and also to explain our relationship to the earth, the sky, animals, people, and the Great Spirit was very important, not just in religious ceremonies, but also in everyday life. For the people of the Desert Southwest, the stories that were told by means of sand painting instructed the people of their beliefs, values, and also the proper way to interact with the physical and spiritual world. Describe how the discourse by means of creating meaningful patterns that are intended to interact with you (rather than being passive transmitters of meaning) might take place. For example, you might describe the reasons for creating a wampum belt or a sand painting.

### Readings

Script / Writings:

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Ancient Origins: Reconstructing the Story of Humanity's Past (2018) Did Humans Speak Through Cave Art? Ancient Drawings and Language's Origins <http://www.ancient-origins.net/news-evolution-human-origins/did-humans-speak-through-cave-art-ancient-drawings-and-languages-021844>

## Mythology

**Origin myth:** According to the myth of origin, America came into existence when Christopher Columbus landed and brought civilization to a wild, untamed land. In reality, Columbus was not the first European explorer to land in North America. In fact, Norsemen from Iceland established a settlement in Newfoundland, Canada, around 1000 AD.

**Pocahontas:** The myth holds that Pocahontas, the daughter of a powerful chief, Powhatan, intervened to save the life of her true love, the founder of the Jamestown colony, John Smith. The truth was that Smith was not in danger of being killed. Nor did they fall in love. After all Pocahontas was only 12 and Smith was 28 when they met.

**George Washington and the Cherry Tree:** Legend has it that the first president of the United States, was an upstanding war hero and also a paragon of honesty, exemplified by his behavior when he was a child. Supposedly, he cut down a cherry tree, and when his mother asked him about it, he said, "Mother, I cannot tell a lie. I cut it down." This legend was so important to American culture that it used to be a tradition on Washington's birthday (February 22), to eat cherry pie. In reality, there is no evidence that this happened, and in fact, Washington was a spymaster who organized a ring of spies before and during the conflict with England. In fact, his deception skills were of immense importance to the war effort and helped convert the volunteers into a unified army.

**Betsy Ross and the First American Flag:** In 1776, Betsy Ross was credited with designing the first American Flag (the Stars and Stripes) and writing the first national anthem of the United States. Although there was no evidence that any was true, the legend supports the idea of democracy and full support and participation of the people, including women and children. This legend masks the fact that the population was very divided and there were many supporters of King George III amongst the citizens, even after independence.

## Discussion / Questions

### Mythology:

Colonial and post-colonial America was a place of many different myths. Describe the myths of origin and also those of the people who were made into heroes. What did the invented heroes share in common? What were their prevailing characteristics, and what did they reveal about the way that the new American republic wished to see itself?

### Readings

#### Mythology:

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Donovan, James. (2013). The Blood of Heroes: The 13-Day Struggle for the Alamo and the Sacrifice that Forged a Nation. Boston: Back Bay Books.

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## Folklore (and Oral Narrative)

**American Jeremiad:** Early Puritan narratives were filled with apocalyptic tales, telling the people in no uncertain terms that their community was one of true believers, and the only one that would be saved in a sinful world. Like the Old Testament's Jeremiah, the Puritan preachers exhorted their people to repent of their sins because the end was nigh, and only the true believers would be spared perdition.

**Ghost stories:** Ghost stories were a prevalent feature of Colonial oral narrative, especially in New England. Some were recorded by authors such as Washington Irving, and they included the "Headless Horseman" and other ghosts, mainly of Native Americans and of doomed lovers.

**Salem Witch narratives:** The Salem Witch trials codified the oral narratives that had been circulating for years. Looking at the trials from a 20<sup>th</sup> century perspective, it was clear that they were a way to enforce a behavioral code among women, and also to not allow any woman to threaten male dominance or patriarchy. The social narrative of exclusion and norming, which is an extreme form of bullying, becomes internalized quite easily, leading to destructive attitudes about women and creative self-expression (and especially non-conformity).

**Old Testament:** Old Testament narratives were transmitted by oral means. There were several that almost all would know: The Creation, Adam and Eve and the Expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Jacob's Ladder, Moses and the Burning Bush, Noah's Ark, just to name a few. The common knowledge of the key Biblical narratives created a shared knowledge base, and the possibilities of alluding to them via art, architecture, sculpture, and literature.

**New Testament:** Most people in Colonial America (and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) would have been familiar with the Nativity Story, Birth of Jesus, Wise Men, Woman at the Well, Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son, Loaves and Fishes, Crucifixion, and Resurrection.

## Discussion / Questions

### Oral Narrative / Folklore

During Colonial times, the Bible was a foundational document and its stories were known, shared, and used in daily narratives. Explain how the stories of the Bible could be used to bring together a community, and also to reinforce ethics and a moral code, either for good or for bad.

## Readings

### Oral Narrative

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## VISUAL ARTS

### Painting

**Colonial:** Portraiture influenced by Dutch and Flemish. Example: John Singleton Copley, *Paul Revere* (c. 1768-70). Landscape and tableaux of important historical events: Benjamin West, *The Treaty of Penn with the Indians*, 1771-72.

**Revolutionary War Period:** War scenes and heroic portraiture. Lighting used to indicate heroic actions and the moment of sacrifice. John Trumbull, *The Death of General Montgomery in the Attack on Quebec*, 1775.

**Federal Period:** Nation-building portraiture, following the techniques of European artists who painted the aristocracy and heroes. Edward Savage, *The Washington Family*, 1789. Scenes of ordinary life (influenced by Dutch and Flemish painters). Gilbert Stuart, *The Skater*, 1782.

## Discussion / Questions

### Painting:

Art in colonial America was very much influenced by European traditions. And yet, it was clear that the artists in America were eager to differentiate themselves from their European counterparts. To begin, the subject matter was often different, as were the landscapes and scenery. What were some of the ways in which art in Colonial America was different than art in Europe?

## Readings

### Painting:

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## **Sculpture**

**Folk art** -- gravestones / tombstone, mainly in the New England. Examples – skull with wings carved on marble tombstone. The main themes and motifs included a skull flanked by wings and also depictions of Heaven (trees, leaves, fountains). They were characterized as being low-relief and utilitarian.

**Wood carvings:** Mainly religious, used in Spanish colonial from churches and missions. Example: Nuestra Senora de los dolores ... painted wood carvings of the Virgin Mary, Christ on the Cross, Three Wise Men, nativities, also the Saints.

**Italian influence:** Several American sculptors working in colonial times and in the early years of the new republic were deeply influenced by the Classical and Neo-Classical sculpture they saw in Italy. The themes and techniques were applied to statuary and building motifs, especially those used for government purposes, to contribute to the architecture that embodied the values. Sculptors included Hiram Powers, Horatio Greenough, and Thomas Crawford.

## Discussion / Questions

### Sculpture:

The first Europeans in North America creates sculptures that had to do with religious ceremonies and the continuity / emotional assurance of religious beliefs and values. Please compare and contrast the use of sculptures in the early Catholic missions versus the low-relief carvings on marble tombstones in New England.

## Readings

### Sculpture:

Falk, Peter Hastings, ed. *Who Was Who in American Art*. Madison, Conn.: Sound View Press, 1999.

Groce, George C., and David H. Wallace, eds. *The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America, 1564–1860*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957.

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## **Architecture**

**Dutch Colonial:** The Dutch settled in what is now New York, first along Long Island and then far up the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers. They built forts, trading / commercial centers that utilized a great deal of stone and brick, following models in Holland, Belgium, and Flanders.

**Spanish Colonial:** Consistency with Spain was very important to the early conquistadores and priests who settled the Spanish-dominated parts of North America. By incorporating the baroque style of the most impressive cathedrals of Spain, they were able to communicate a message of power, wealth, and an unassailable connection to the monarchy in Spain. Structures in the Spanish-controlled part of North America included missions, cathedrals, churches, governmental buildings, and homes.

**French Colonial:** For the French, it was a matter of deep importance to send the message that French culture, language, and way of life were in all ways superior to all others. While no French architects in America attempted to copy of Versailles in America, the French did leave a very unique style in New Orleans and also in Quebec. In the colonial era, the French built forts, trading centers, governmental centers, and churches which often echoed the chateau styles and also the Gothic cathedrals such as Notre Dame.

**New England Colonial:** The settlers constructed homes using oak frames and clapboard siding which were copied from English country and town houses. The fact that the settlers opted for the familiar rather than inventing new forms certainly suggests a lingering sense of affiliation if not outright nostalgia for one's origins. At the same time, the American colonial styles began incorporating Neoclassical elements which suggests a break from tradition and a need to legitimize this grand new experiment.

**Georgian:** The primary function of the early use for the Georgian style during Colonial times was to indicate class and connections to wealth, titles, and property in England. The incorporation of the Georgian styles also reflects an admiration for George III who was a champion of progressive architecture, focusing on labor-saving hygienic innovations. The Baroque followed the examples of Sir Christopher Wren. The Palladian was typified by balance and symmetry, as in the works of Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio. The most famous example is The White House in Washington, D. C.

#### Discussion / Questions

##### Architecture:

Colonial era architecture represented rather contradictory feelings about their relationship with Europe. On the one hand, they established a connection to the elements of culture they wanted to affirm. They did that by imitating or modifying European examples. At the same time, there was a strong desire to break from the traditions of the past and establish a uniquely American identity. Please identify examples of colonial architecture that adopts European traditions. Then identify examples of architecture that makes a break from the past by using new materials and by focusing on functionalism.

#### Readings

##### Architecture:

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## PERFORMING ARTS

### Dance

**Native Americans:** Traditional Native American dances began to incorporate some of the narrative dances imported by the Europeans. The first was the Matachinas, adopted by the Pueblo Indians of the Southwest. Imported from the Spanish Conquistadores, the dance depicts the victory of the Christians over the Moors. Perhaps the largest influence that the Europeans had was the use of materials. The beads, silver ornaments, and woven cloth represented new materials for the Native Americans, and they embraced the materials for their costumes.

**Louisiana / Cajun Jig:** French immigrants from a part of French Canada referred to as “Acadia” moved to Louisiana, where they established French-speaking enclaves. They developed new instruments and integrated the accordion and other instruments to create a dance that resembled dances from France.

**Eastern Seaboard / Contra Dance:** Settlers in the plantation-growing areas, the tobacco farms, and the Appalachian highlands adopted Scottish highland dances using improvised instruments and percussion. The most popular was the Contra Dance, which involves couples positioned in lines or in circles. They dance and jig about, and the change partners throughout the dance. It became very popular because it required no formal training and was accessible to dancers of all ages. Further, it was possible to dance with just a single violin or piano as the source of music.

### Discussion / Questions

Dance:

Dance served important social functions within all levels and groups of society. For the recent immigrants, the European dances provided a familiar cultural connection. For African American slaves, the dances served as social connection as well as a point of resistance. For isolated communities, dance served as a method of connection and communication. For the elites, dance was a way of demonstrating one’s privileged education. Describe how each one of those types of dances evolved over time in North America.

### Readings

Dance:

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## Music

**Southern religious: Charles Theodore Pachelbel:** Charles was the son of the famous German composer, Johann Pachelbel, who is very well known for his Canon in D. His son, who lived in Boston and later in Charleston, South Carolina. His most famous work is Magnificat.

**Pilgrims: Songs from the Book of Psalms, Henry Ainsworth, 1612** The Pilgrims came together with their own songs, many of which were focused on the Psalms and were monophonic rather than polyphonic. The Ainsworth Psalter (hymns based on Psalms) were cherished by the Pilgrims who came to America.

**Puritans: Bay Psalm Book, 9<sup>th</sup> edition, 1698.** The Puritans also treasured their hymns based on verses in the Old Testament book of Psalms, which they called a Psalm Book or a Psalmody. Many times, the Psalms were worship-focused verses that praised the glory of God and God's creation and the satisfaction of following God's will. The Puritans collected their favorite Psalms in the Bay Psalm Book.

**Yankee Doodle (1750s):** Yankee Doodle is one of the earliest and most popular American song which dates before the American Revolution. It was first written even before the French-Indian Seven Year Wars. The melody is a very old one and can be traced back to European folk tunes. The lyrics refer to an unsophisticated man who would like to be seen as a dandy. The lyrics capture life as it was during the Revolutionary War, and its general jolliness has made it a great favorite.

**Appalachia Broadside Ballads:** In the Appalachia, ballads developed and were very popular. They were circulated by one-page broadside. They brought their music with them from England and Scotland, and they eventually evolved into the distinctive style we now know as Bluegrass.

**Barbara Allen:** It is possible that this popular folk song originated in England and was further developed in small towns in the Appalachias and in the coastal areas of the South. Barbara Allen is a sad ballad about a hard-hearted woman who becomes aware of how her rejection harmed her love-sick suitor as he lies dying.

**Matty Groves:** The song, "Matty Groves" first appeared as a folk song / bluegrass in the Appalachias in the early years of the American republic. It was very popular and the melody was later used in the song, "House of the Rising Sun," made popular in the 1960s.

**Banjo:** The banjo was developed by the African slaves who modified their "kora" to create what was known as a "mbanza" or "banza" in Portuguese. It was modified with more strings and a bigger body (round) and used in folk music. It was later incorporated into bluegrass music as well as in other traditional American folk music.

**Dulcimer:** The hammered dulcimer is a kind of stringed instrument that can be played with a kind of keyboard. It has the advantage of being able to be played with a bow and also strummed and hammered. It's considered an ancestor of the piano and has the advantage of being very portable.

Discussion / Questions

Music:

Music during colonial times often was performed in conjunction with religious ceremonies. However, not all religious music was the same. Compare and contrast the music used by the early Puritans in their gatherings with those used by those of other religious groups, such as Anglican (Episcopalian), Catholic, or Lutheran.

### Readings

Music:

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### **Theatre**

**Spanish Colonies:** Theatre in the form of religious pageants was prevalent in the Spanish-controlled parts of North America, especially during in Semana Santa (Holy Week). The missions of Texas and California used productions to instruct the indigenous peoples in Biblical stories, and they illustrated history and lessons. The theatres incorporated elements of indigenous beliefs and traditions, and many of the saints took on aspects of the indigenous deities.

**English Colonies:** The earliest theatre in the English colonies in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1716. Later, Charleston, South Carolina, the Dock Street Theatre. Performances included plays by Shakespeare. Theatre was not allowed by the Puritans in Massachusetts.

**Revolutionary War theatre** –Some of the anxiety about theatre (and potential decadence) was overcome by the staging of political (and highly propagandistic) plays by Hugh Henry Brackenridge which were about heroism, sacrifice, and nation-building.

### Discussion / Questions

Theatre:

The theatre that was considered dangerously decadent in Restoration England became acceptable in Colonial America, primarily because it became a place to reinforce values and a sense of identity apart from England. Explain how that happened, and why.

### Readings

Theatre:

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## **WORLDVIEW**

### **Religion**

**Dutch Colonies:** Facing persecution in Catholic France, the French Huguenots, who were Protestant, emigrated to countries where they were likely to receive better treatment. Many relocated to the Dutch

Republic, where they lived before relocating again to North America. The Huguenots settled in South Carolina and also in New Amsterdam (New York) along the Hudson River and in Long Island as early as the 1560s.

**Spanish Colonies:** The missions (Franciscan in California, Dominicans, Jesuits) were supported by the Viceroyalty of New Spain with the shared desire to convert and conquer the Southwest part of what is now the United States. They extended from what is now Mexico to as far north as San Francisco. Three orders of Spanish priests established missions, including the Jesuits, Franciscans, and Dominicans. There are missions in Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, New Mexico, and Texas. The Franciscans were the first to arrive, and they focused on education, and conversion through meditation and contemplation, which was a slow and respectful way to convert the indigenous people. The Spanish government became impatient with them. The Jesuits were the “warrior priests” and had a very different philosophy of conversion. They established “reductions” (something like prison camps) where the indigenous peoples were compelled to convert and provide free labor. The Dominicans were primarily in the Caribbean and in Florida. They were champions of the rights of the native peoples and protested the “encomienda” system which enslaved indigenous peoples.

**French Colonies:** The French-controlled regions of North America were predominantly Catholic, with some exceptions (Acadia in Nova Scotia, for example) where Protestants fled for their lives, echoing what had happened in France itself. The French Catholicism was very different than the Catholicism of Spain and Ireland. There were no missions, for example, and the relationship with the indigenous was more commercial than compelled (as in the case of the encomiendas).

**English Colonies:** The English colonies were populated by a panoply of pragmatists and utopian thinkers who found themselves in the “out” group, not only for their religious thinking, but for their desire to participate more fully in the economy of England. They were a destabilizing force, particularly since they rejected the unification of church and state as represented in the Church of England fashioned by Henry VIII. The first group to emigrate en masse was the Puritans, who established not only churches, but also art, literature, and a philosophical framework for a new world. Later the free-thinkers represented by Roger Smith who was also an advocate of the dignified treatment of the American Indians. William Penn was granted a charter by Charles II in 1681 for what was to become Pennsylvania. He encouraged religious dissidents from all of Europe to settle that land, thus attracting Quakers and others from Europe as well as oppressive colonies such as the Massachusetts Bay Colony (Puritans).

### Discussion / Questions

Religion:

The Eastern Woodland indigenous peoples believed in a “Great Spirit” that not only created the world but also unified it, with the idea that the spirit world resides in everything and that it is the responsibility of the individual to maintain harmony. Imagine yourself in that world. How might it change the way that you perceive animals, trees, and natural phenomena such as clouds and storms?

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## Philosophy

### Puritans:

**John Winthrop:** The first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, was a strict Puritan and thus upheld and promulgated the notion of strict adherence to the Puritan rules and regulations. His vision was both utopian and socially reactionary in that he supported individual self-expression and absolute loyalty to the Puritan precepts.

**Jonathan Edwards's *Freedom of the Will (1754)*** incorporates Calvinism, Newtonian Principia and Locke's *Essay Concerning the Human Understanding*. It was a key writing, but unfortunately not well understood and often appropriated (and bastardized) to use to justify American independence from England, and to form breakaway states.

**William Bradford:** As the founder of the Plymouth Colony settlement, Bradford was first and foremost a Separatist, and as such he incorporated his ideas and core philosophy with the two-volume work, "Of Plymouth Plantation." Essentially, his philosophy was that of individual freedom, freedom of will, and the absence of the notion of the "providential plan" of the Puritans. He was remembered for his "middle course" and tolerance.

**Influence of the French Philosophes:** In the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, ideas from France and England were beginning to influence colonists, especially those who feared that being a colony of England meant the inability to ever achieve self-determination, and also being limited economically, first through confiscatory taxation and later through demanding ownership in prosperous businesses. The French "philosophes" and their writings provided a foundation from which to argue separation from England, self-reliance and independence. Influential works included *The Federalist Papers* by John Madison and Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776), the writings of Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* (1776).

### Discussion / Questions

#### Philosophy:

The philosophies that the Puritans, the Pilgrims, and the Spanish explorers espoused were often rather self-serving and helped rationalize the particular utopian experiment / social experiment / new colony that they wanted to establish. Explain how the philosophies that seemed to promise a better life for all were in reality easily twisted so that they could rationalize punishing anyone who disagreed with the core concepts or the hierarchy and its leaders.

### Readings

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## Science

**Samuel Winslow (1641):** From the beginning, perhaps because of its isolation and perhaps because of the aspirational nature of their quest to establish themselves in the New England colonies, there were many innovations and inventions. Samuel Winslow developed a new way of making salt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Later, understanding the value of intellectual property, the new nation created the U.S. Patent Office in 1790, which issued its first patent to Samuel Hopkins (born in Vermont) who developed a new process for making potash.

**Benjamin Franklin:** Franklin was a persistent writer, researcher, and inventor. His inventions included swim fins (wooden), shaped like lily pads and intended for use on the hands. He also invented the Franklin stove, the lightning rod, and bifocals. He also invented the flexible urinary catheter to help his brother when he suffered with bladder stones.

**Thomas Jefferson:** A student of agronomy, Jefferson's estate at Monticello contains examples of his interest in optimizing crops and being a scientific farmer.

**David Rittenhouse:** Rittenhouse was a student of astronomy and developed telescopes that he used in conjunction with investigations of the stars and planetary bodies.

**Charles Willson Peale:** A truly diversified scholar, Peale was an accomplished painter as well as scientists. He was interested in chemistry, physics, and engineering, and used his knowledge and curiosity to develop a mechanical drawing device (the physiognotrace). Peale was very interested in natural history, and one of his paintings, "The Exhumation of the Mastadon", is a valuable record of early archeological excavations. It was the world's first fully articulated prehistoric skeleton. It was found near Montgomery, New York.



Charles Willson Peale. "The Exhumation of the Mastadon" (1806). (source: wikipedia)

**Benjamin Rush:** One of the Founding Fathers of the United States, Rush was a practicing medical doctor who was one of the first to believe that mental illness is a disease of the mind and has neurological origins. Rush wrote extensively to support a scientific approach to mental illness and to counter the belief that mental illness was caused by the "possession of demons."

### Discussion / Questions

Science:

"Gentleman farmers" were important innovators in the English colonies because they grew the crops (tobacco, cotton, indigo, sugar) that made lucrative commerce with the mills of England possible. In order to be able to provide the volume and quality of raw materials needed, the "gentleman farmers" often turned into quite formidable agronomists. Describe three examples of innovations and scientific investigation in the plantations and large farms in the North America.

### Readings

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