**Northern, Middle, and Southern Colonies**

Historical Background

Colonial America depended on the natural environment to meet basic needs of the people and the colony. The available natural resources provided (or in essence dictated) what each region’s unique specialty would be or become. Specialized economies quickly emerged as a result of human and environmental interaction.

Colonial America also had regional differences among culture or historical reason for establishment as a colony.

**Life In The Northern Colonies**

Geography led New England to develop into a commercial and industrial region. The land and climate doesn't support large-scale farming, but natural harbors made fishing, shipping, and shipbuilding profitable. Fast-moving rivers ran mills and machinery to manufacture goods such as such as woven cloth and metal tools. A strong working class developed.

Immigrants tended to come in families, and 90% of them lived in or near small villages along these rivers. Homes and businesses were literally built in rings around a common building, and there were often shared woodlands and pasture lands for livestock. Since New England farms were fairly small, homes were pretty close together.

This compact design encouraged commerce and made community schools practical. New England was the first region in which public education appeared. Literacy rates were high in the Northern Colonies.

But the most important aspect of community life may have been the town meeting, held in the common building. These provided an opportunity for townsmen to voice their concerns and interests and planted the seeds of democratic government.

New England women enjoyed a higher social standing than their counterparts in Europe. A competent wife was an important asset in the new world. All women were educated, since everyone needed to study the Bible. They were even allowed to cast their husband's vote at town meetings if he were absent.

The early New England colonists were primarily religious reformers and separatists. They were seeking a new way of life to glorify God and for the greater good of their spiritual life.

**Wrap-up:** As these regions developed highly specialized economies, each could not supply everything that was needed – they relied on each other for certain items or skills.

Notable differences are found in the way social life was structured among regions. For the people of the South, life emerged as rugged and rural while people of the North are heavily connected to the Church and village community. These cultural differences remained and shaped some of the confrontations that needed to be addressed during the Civil War.

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**Life In The Southern Colonies**

The Southern Colonies were established as economic ventures and were seeking natural resources to provide material wealth to the mother country and themselves. Adult male immigrants to the South outnumbered female immigrants by seven to one.

The Southern Colonies were primarily agricultural with few cities and limited schools. The Southern colonies had fertile farmlands which contributed to the rise of cash crops such as rice, tobacco, and indigo.

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The plantation system limited commerce (trade) and discouraged creating cities. Plantations developed as nearly subsistent communities. Planters could import directly from European markets, and they could buy or hire a skilled servant to create items that weren't practical to import. Slavery allowed wealthy aristocrats and large landowners to cultivate huge tracts of land.

But few Southerners achieved the dream of owning a plantation. The overwhelming majority of Southern people were indentured servants, slaves, or yeoman farmers. A lucky few became wealthy planters who owned fabulous houses and vast stretches of land with their own access to the waterways.

When strictly examining the geography of New England compared to the South, it is plausible that the vast space of the Southern region influenced the way it remained rural and still today holds that as a sense of pride or shared experience/identity.

With few cities, there was only a small middle class of urban professionals like teachers, merchants, artisans, or lawyers. This meant there was almost no opportunity for social mobility. The distance between plantations made community schools and sometimes even churches impractical.

Women were still a minority group that played no role in the political process. For all of its uncertainty, many poor Englishmen thought life in the Southern colonies was still more attractive than life in the Old World.

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### middle colonies.jpgLife in the Middle Colonies

The Middle colonies welcomed people from various and diverse lifestyles.

The people who founded the Middle Colonies were looking to practice their own religion (Pennsylvania mainly) or to make money. Many of these people didn't bring their families with them from England and were the perfect workers for the hard work required as farmers, fisherman, and merchants.

The Middle Colonies were part agriculture, part industrial. Factories in Maryland produced iron, and factories in Pennsylvania produced paper and textiles. Trade with England was plentiful in these colonies as well.

Farmers in the Middle Colonies were the most prosperous of all. The middle colonies had rich farmland and a moderate climate. This made it a more suitable place to grow grain and livestock than New England. Wheat and other grains grew on farms in Pennsylvania and New York. Their environment was ideal for small to large farms. The Middle Colonies were often called the "breadbasket" because they grew so much food. Wheat could be ground to make flour, and both wheat and flour could be sold in other colonies or in Europe.

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