Chapter 4
Life in the Colonies
TERMS

1. Economy
2. Magna Carta
3. Parliament
4. English Bill of Rights
5. Petition
6. Blue laws
7. Social class
8. First Great Awakening
Life on a Farm

- Nine out of ten colonists lived on farms.
- Most families produced everything they needed themselves.
- Farm families had to clear land of trees.
- Farm homes were simple.
- A fire was kept burning all the time for heat and cooking.
- Farm life involved many chores
Life in Cities

• One in 20 colonists lived in cities.
• The waterfront was the heart of the city.
• City features included marketplaces, taverns, and shops.
• Cities were noisy and smelly.
• Fire was a constant danger.
Rights of Colonists

• Colonists saw themselves as English citizens and expected the same rights, including a voice in their government.

• English citizens had a voice in their government as a result of the Magna Carta, the founding of Parliament, and the English Bill of Rights.
Crime and Punishment

- Each colony had its own laws, but most laws were similar throughout the colonies.
- Murder, treason, and piracy were punished with death.
- Theft and forgery were punished with jail, whipping, or branding.
- Lesser crimes were punished with fines, short jail terms, or time in the stocks.
- Puritans were the strictest of the colonists and had many religious laws.
- “Blue Laws” were laws that forbid certain activities on Sunday.
Class Differences

• In the colonies, wealth and success mattered more than family background.
• People’s clothes showed their social position, especially the fancy clothes of the upper class.
• Middle-class farmers and artisans owned their own land or business, and many could vote.
• Lower-class workers depended on others for wages and often did not own enough property to vote.
• Indentured servants and slaves were at the bottom of society
Life for African Americans

• Slavery existed throughout the colonies, but grew much more rapidly in the Southern Colonies.
• Ships sailed from the colonies to West Africa, where goods were traded for slaves.
• The Middle Passage was a horrible journey for Africans, and many of them died.
• Slaves had little hope of achieving a better position in colonial society.
Religion

- Religion was an important part of colonial life.
- All Puritans were required to attend church, which was held in the meetinghouse and lasted for up to five hours.
- The First Great Awakening spurred religious feeling and popularized the idea that all people were equal in God’s eyes.
- The passion for equality aroused by the Great Awakening may have contributed to the Revolutionary War.
Education

• Many colonial children received little formal education.
• In the Southern Colonies, families were too spread out to have public education. Wealthy colonists educated their children privately.
• In the Middle Colonies, religious differences slowed public education.
• In New England, Puritans wanted their children to be able to read the Bible, so they established public schools.
• New England parents contributed what they could to the village school, which had few supplies.
• Boys received more education than girls.
Colonial Families

• People generally married in their early 20s.
• There were more men than women.
• Families had many children, who were expected to help with family work.
• Many children died before becoming adults.
• People remarried quickly if a husband or wife died.
• Life focused around the family.
Leisure

- “Bees,” “frolics,” and house and barn raisings were enjoyable, social ways to share work.
- Children had simple toys and played games.
- Adults played versions of lawn bowling, billiards, and backgammon.
- In the Southern Colonies, people also took part in fox hunting, cards, and horseracing.
- Colonial fairs focused on competitions of skill.
Food

• Corn was a major colonial food. Colonists learned about corn from Native Americans.
• Meat was obtained from hunting or raising animals and had to be treated with spices to keep it from going bad.
• Apples, berries, and grapes were common fruits. Peaches grew in the Southern Colonies.
• Vegetables included squashes, beans, peas, sweet potatoes, parsnips, carrots, turnips, and onions.
• Stew, the main meal, cooked all day to prevent spoiling.