Colonial Life in North America
Lesson Plan
Grades 3–5

Social Studies
History, Culture, Citizenship Focus
Students will learn about colonial life in North America. They will explore similarities and differences between types of colonies and compare everyday life in the colonies to life today.

Content Standards
- Examine significant ideas, beliefs, and themes; organize patterns and events; and analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time.
- Use historical thinking skills to understand how individuals and events have changed society over time.

Learning Objectives
- Research, write, and report on the daily lives of people in the early American colonies.
- Compare the daily lives of people in the colonies to our daily lives today.

Technology Components
- Computer with LCD projector and color printer
- Access to Internet for teacher-based research
- Discovery Education unitedstreaming account (http://www.unitedstreaming.com)
- Presentation software such as Microsoft PowerPoint
- Graphic organizing software such as Inspiration (optional)

Lesson Starter
- Begin the lesson by showing students video segments or pictures of early American life. Search for terms like “Plymouth,” “Pilgrims,” or “Jamestown” for unitedstreaming images. Have students describe the scene in each image and discuss what they think life was like for people living at that time. How did they meet their basic needs of obtaining food, clothing, and shelter? How was everyday life different than it is today?
  - Suggested unitedstreaming content:
    - Exploring the World: The English Come to America: Jamestown and Plymouth. 2000
    - Image: Pilgrims Landing at Plymouth, December 21, 1620
    - Image: Landing at Jamestown, Virginia, 1607
Prior Knowledge

- Discuss what students already know about life in the colonies. Use Microsoft PowerPoint to display images of turkeys or pilgrims. Ask students what ideas come to mind when they see a turkey, or a person with a tall, pointy hat dressed in black.
- Tell students they are going to begin to explore life in the early American colonies. Some people lived in cities, while others lived on farms. Some people had different jobs and religions.
- Tell students they will discover the answers to two essential questions:
  - What was everyday life like for people who lived in colonial America?
  - How did their lives compare to the way we live our lives today?

Present New Content

- Discuss important ideas related to understanding the nature of colonial life. What were the colonists’ needs? How did the colonists meet their needs? What were their roles and responsibilities?
- Have students identify any questions that they have about colonial life that they would like to answer. Chart their responses.
  - Suggested unitedstreaming content:
    - American History: Colonial America. 2006

Independent Learning Experience

- Divide students into three- to four-person groups. Explain that each group is going to research a different aspect of colonial life: Life on a Farm; Colonial Government; Life on a Plantation; Life in a Colonial City; Religion in the Colonies; Education, Gender, Leisure, or Class Differences; and Trade in the Colonies. As a class, they will make a multimedia presentation about colonial life, and each of the topics will be a chapter.
  - Provide trade books, encyclopedias, Web sites, and video clips for students to visit to conduct research.
  - Suggested unitedstreaming content:
    - Diversity of Colonial Communities, The: 1700-1750, 1999

- Provide each group with required components for each presentation. Each group will get five slides in the presentation for pictures and text.
- Teach students about text features during the Language Arts block and have groups discuss options for presenting information.
- Have students partner and provide peer feedback for each chapter’s content and design.
- Work with students to determine the required components and specific content. Pose a “what if” scenario for each group that would require students to decide as a group how they would react. For example, how would a natural disaster such as a hurricane affect their particular aspect of life had it occurred during colonial times?
Feedback
Circulate around the room, providing ongoing feedback to small groups.

Assessment
Have each student use information from the class book to write about how his or her life would be different if he or she had lived in colonial times. Score the work on a rubric shared with students in advance.

Transfer
Have students compare and contrast their lives today with what they think their lives will be like in 50 years.

Citations


