

## Life in the American Colonies

### Lesson 2 Colonial Government

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

*How do new ideas change the way people live?*

#### GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. *Why are protected rights and representative government important principles?*
2. *How did the colonists react to England's economic policies?*

#### Terms to Know

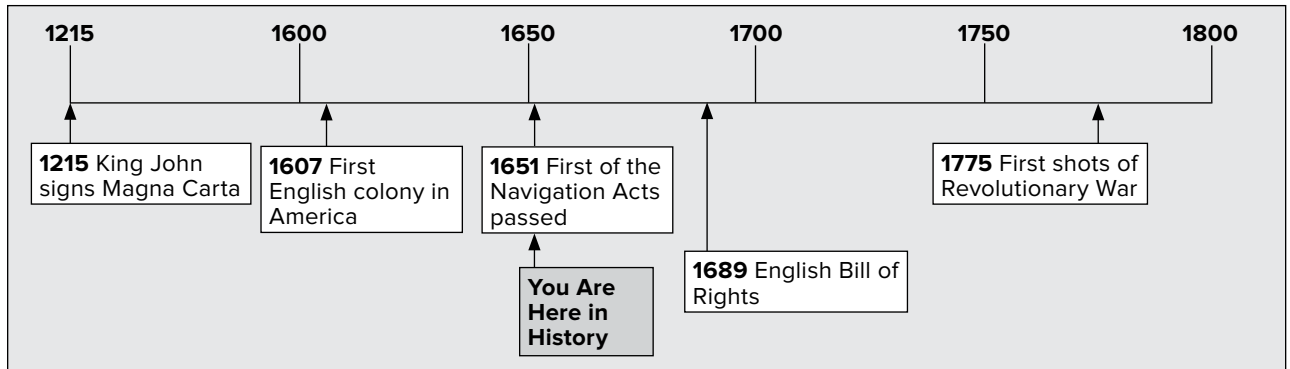
**representative government** a system by which people elect delegates to make laws and conduct government

**mercantilism** an economic theory whose goal is building a state's wealth and power by increasing exports and accumulating precious metals in return

**export** to sell to other countries

**import** to bring in from foreign markets

#### When did it happen?



#### What do you know?

Before you read, decide whether the following statements are true or false. Write a T or an F before each one. After you read, look at your answers again. Were they right or wrong?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. English colonists in America believed the government should respect their rights.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. English colonists in America believed the king should make all the laws.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The king of England controlled all the English colonies in America.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Everyone in the colonies could vote.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. England forced the colonists to sell their raw materials to England.

**Life in the American Colonies**

**Lesson 2** Colonial Government, *Continued*

**English Principles of Government**

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English colonists brought their ideas about government with them. Two beliefs were especially important to the English system of government. The first was in protected rights (rights that are protected by law), such as the right to a trial by jury. The second belief was in **representative government**. This is a system where voters elect people to make laws and run the government. Colonists believed that their lawmakers should represent the common people. Later, these two beliefs became important parts of the U.S. Constitution.

The colonists believed that government must respect the rights of the people it governs. Laws made sure these rights were protected.

The idea of protected rights began with the Magna Carta. Its name means *Great Charter*. King John signed this document on June 15, 1215. The Magna Carta protected the English people from unfair treatment by the government and unfair punishment. Even kings and queens had to follow the law.

Besides protected rights, the colonists believed in representative government. In a representative government, the citizens choose people to make laws and run the government. These people represent (act or speak for) the wishes of those who elected, or chose, them.

In England, these representatives gathered in the Parliament. It was made up of two parts, or houses: the House of Lords and the House of Commons. The House of Commons included commoners (everyday people). Most of these were property owners and merchants. The people in the House of Lords were members of the aristocracy—dukes, earls, barons, and so forth. Together, as Parliament, these two houses had the power to make laws.

Parliament was a model for the lawmaking branches of government in America. Like Parliament, the U.S. Congress has two houses: the House of Representatives and the Senate.

In the mid-1600s, King James II and Parliament struggled for control of the government. At last, in 1688, Parliament removed King James II from power. William and Mary became king and queen. The English call this peaceful change the Glorious Revolution. William and Mary promised to rule by the laws agreed upon in Parliament. From then on, no king or queen had more power than Parliament.

**FOLDABLES®**

1. Place a two-tab Foldable along the dotted line under the title “English Principles of Government.” Write *Colonists Brought Ideas* on the anchor tab. Label the two tabs *protected rights* and *representative government*. On the tabs, explain each idea. Use the Foldable to help answer Check for Understanding.



**Explaining**

2. In a representative government, whom do the lawmakers represent?

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**Reading Check**

3. How did the Magna Carta influence government in the colonies?

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## Life in the American Colonies

### Lesson 2 Colonial Government, *Continued*



#### Identifying

4. In the colonies, whose wishes did the upper house usually represent?

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#### Drawing Conclusions

5. Why might a decision by the upper house upset the lower house?

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#### Finding Examples

6. Name two exports from the colonies.

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#### Explaining

7. If a colonist bought cloth from France, what happened to it under the rules of the Navigation Acts?

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In 1689, an important document set clear limits on a ruler's power. This was the English Bill of Rights. It limited the ruler's ability to set aside Parliament's laws. Rulers could no longer require taxes without Parliament's say-so. The bill said that members of Parliament would be freely elected. It gave citizens the right to a fair trial by jury. It banned cruel and unusual punishment.

How did these ideas of government work in the colonies? Some of the thirteen colonies were owned by an individual or group. They were called proprietary colonies. These colonies set up most of their own rules. Pennsylvania was a proprietary colony. Other colonies, like Massachusetts, had been started by a company with permission of the English king. They were called charter colonies.

In time, some colonies in America became royal colonies. This put them under direct English control. Virginia was a royal colony. In every royal colony, Parliament appointed (chose) a governor and a council. This was called the upper house. The colonists chose an assembly, called the lower house. The upper house usually did what the king and Parliament told them to do. Often this went against the wishes of the lower house.

Not everyone in the colonies had a voice in government. Only white men who owned property could vote. Even so, a large share of the population did take part in government in some way. In towns, people often met to talk about local issues. In time, town meetings turned into local governments. What they learned was useful when the colonies became independent.

### English Economic Policies

In the early 1600s, many European nations followed an idea called **mercantilism**. Mercantilism is a system for building wealth and power by building supplies of gold and silver. To do this, a country must **export**, or sell, to other countries more than it **imports**, or buys, from them. A country must also set up colonies. Colonies have two purposes. They provide raw materials and are a market for exports.

The English followed this system of mercantilism. The American colonies provided raw materials. These raw materials might be crops such as tobacco and rice. They might be natural resources, too, like lumber and fur. The colonies also bought English-made goods such as tools, clothing, and furniture.

**Life in the American Colonies**

**Lesson 2 Colonial Government, *Continued***

In the 1650s, the English passed laws to control Colonial trade. These were the Navigation Acts. They forced colonists to sell their raw materials to England. Also, if a colonist bought goods from a country in Europe, those goods went to England first. Here they were taxed, then shipped to the colony. In addition, all ships carrying trade goods had to be built in England or the colonies. The crews on these ships had to be English.

The colonists welcomed the trade laws at first. The laws made sure that the colonists had a place to sell their raw materials. Later, the colonists felt the laws limited their rights. They wanted to make their own products to sell. Also, they wanted to sell their products to countries other than England. Many colonial merchants began smuggling—shipping goods without paying taxes or getting permission from the English government. Later, controls on trade would cause problems between the colonies and England.

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**Check for Understanding**

**How do people benefit from a limited government?**

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**Why did colonists begin smuggling goods into and out of the colonies?**

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**Explaining**

**8.** How did the trade laws help the colonists?

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**Reading Check**

**9.** What was the purpose of the Navigation Acts?

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**10.** Use a two-tab Foldable and place it along the dotted line to cover Check for Understanding. Write the title *Colonial Government* on the anchor tab. Label the two tabs—*British Actions* and *Colonial Reactions*. Write one thing that you remember about each. Use the Foldable to help answer Check for Understanding.