

Colonial Towns & Townspeople Introduction

Over the next few weeks you will be learning about what life was like in America hundreds of years ago. Hundreds of years ago, people made most of what they needed at home. Living back then meant doing chores every day. Do you have chores at home? Has anyone ever helped cook dinner or taken care of pets? Today's read aloud will describe a lot of the chores a family would have done hundreds of years ago on a farm in the country.

Colonial Towns & Townspeople Introduction

Over the next few days you will be learning about towns, places where farmers could go to buy things that would make life easier at home. Where do you get your food and clothes? Hundreds of years ago, there were only a few kinds of stores, called shops, and they were only found in towns, which could sometimes be very far from a farmer's house. A very large town might have several different shops, but most towns were small, often with only one shop.

Colonial Towns & Townspeople Introduction

This one shop carried just about every type of good a farmer could need--flour, cloth, seeds, tools, and so on. Unlike today's stores which require money for the purchase of any goods, during colonial times these shops traded their goods for a farmer's crops, a practice called bartering. In towns, people lived and worked in buildings and shops that were close together. In the country, homes and farms were far apart.

Colonial Towns & Townspeople Introduction

Over the next few weeks, you will learn about tradespeople, people who had special jobs like making clothes or building houses. Farmers liked going to town because tradespeople made and sold things farmers needed so they didn't have to make them at home. A farmer went to town for a lot of the same reasons we go to stores today.

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Colonial Towns & Townspeople **Essential Background Information or Terms**

Over the next few weeks you will be reading stories about people who lived in America long ago. Let's plot it on a timeline along with other key time periods in American history that you have already studied. We have 1492 marked. What happened in 1492? We have 1620 marked. What happened then (Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock)? Where would markers 1000 and 2000 go in relation to the dates we already have? Let's add our current year.

Colonial Towns & Townspeople **Essential Background Information or Terms**

The Colonial Towns and Townspeople read alouds take place in the 1700s. Let's add a card for 1700.

Native Americans lived in America for hundreds of years. Many tribes were nomadic, meaning they moved frequently, finding new hunting grounds, looking for new sources of fish or vegetation, and moving when the seasons changed. Other tribes settled in one location, developing large farming communities that became large towns over time.

Colonial Towns & Townspeople **Essential Background Information or Terms**

When European explorers like Columbus came, they set up settlements in which they stayed each time they came to claim lands and goods on their voyages, but many of these settlements were temporary and didn't last. Years later, other groups of Europeans sailed to America to stay and live here permanently. One such group was the Pilgrims. Groups like the Pilgrims set up colonies or towns in America that were ruled by England. Native Americans continued to live in America on lands near these colonies, but they didn't live in the same kinds of towns that European Americans did.

Colonial Towns & Townspeople **Essential Background Information or Terms**

The first towns established by European settlers were small with a few common buildings and land to grow crops. As the years passed, more colonies were established along the East Coast of America. The farms and the towns grew larger, and people who lived there grew to depend more on each other for the things they needed. The colonial towns we will read about were formed in the early 1700s, when these colonies were still under English rule.

Colonial Towns & Townspeople **Essential Background Information or Terms**

Listen carefully to the read aloud so you will be able to name the chores that children had to do long ago in colonial times if they lived on a farm.

Colonial Towns & Townspeople **Essential Background Information or Terms**



The Country Family

Today we're going to take an imaginary trip back in time, about three hundred years ago, to an early American farm. If you lived in the country long ago, you and your family did most of the work necessary for survival right at home.



The Country Family

The country is an area of land with few buildings and several farms. Country also means a nation, like the United States. In the country, houses were far apart from one another, so you couldn't rely on neighbors or stores to get everything you needed--you had to make most things at home.



The Country Family

Everything you needed—food to eat, water to drink or use for cooking and cleaning, lighting to help you see after dark, heat when it turned cold, and clothing—required a lot of work by the family. Even young children had to help out, because there was so much work to do!



The Country Family

There was no electricity for lamps or lights, and there were no flashlights! The only way to see anything after it got dark was to light candles that you made at home. See the woman making candles? There were no electric ovens or stoves, like we have today, so you had to build a fire to heat your home and cook your meals.



The Country Family

There were no sinks or faucets with running water inside the house, like we have in kitchens and bathrooms today, so you had to fetch any water you needed for drinking, cooking, or cleaning from the nearby creek or the well outside. There were no malls with clothing stores, so you had to make your own clothes.



The Country Family

There were no supermarkets, so you had to grow your own vegetables, milk your own cows, and make your own cheese. Imagine doing all that work--every day!



The Country Family

At the start of a typical day in the country, the first thing a woman did was fetch wood to start the fire in the hearth, or fireplace. The hearth was the most important place in the home. Most of the chores to be done required fire, and especially in the winter, everyone needed to stay close to the hearth because it provided the only heat in the house.



The Country Family

After building the fire, a country woman would most likely start her day by baking bread. Sometimes she would make her own flour by grinding corn kernels or wheat into a fine powder. Then she would mix this flour and water with yeast, and let it rise for several hours. The dough would then be put into an iron pot with a tight lid and hung over the hearth to bake or cook.



The Country Family

One task that had to be done twice a day, no matter what, was milking the cows. This task took a long time and was usually left for children to do.

Once the milk was collected, the milk that was not drunk was either made into cheese or butter.



The Country Family

Making cheese involved a slow process of boiling and cooling the milk to produce curds or clumps of soured milk that look sort of like cottage cheese. These curds were pressed into forms to make the cheese.



The Country Family

To make butter, milk was left to sit until the fatty cream floated to the top. Then the cream was poured into a tall, wooden container called a churn. Today, we use the word churn to mean mix. A child usually had to pump the handle of the butter churn, called the dasher, up and down for a long time until the fat in the cream separated into butter. The leftover liquid, called buttermilk, was used for cooking or drinking.



The Country Family



The Country Family

People in the country ate mostly vegetables and grains. They only ate meat if the men or nearby neighbors had butchered or killed an animal for food. Because there were no refrigerators, the meat had to be preserved so it would not spoil, or go bad. This was done by hanging it in strips above the fire or in a separate shed like this one called a smokehouse.



The Country Family

The smoke from the fire dried out the meat, which prevented spoiling. The fire kept the meat from going bad. Beef jerky is an example of dried out, smoked meat. Other foods were preserved by covering them in salt, canning them, or storing them in a cool, dark cellar. Canning is sealing food tightly in jars so no air can get in.



The Country Family

After all those chores were done, it was time for the sewing. In colonial times, women had to make their own thread and cloth before they could sew anything! Men and boys picked cotton from the fields or sheared the sheep, or cut the wool off sheep, and women cleaned and dyed this cotton or wool. To dye cotton or wool means to color it.



The Country Family

Then women made the cotton or wool into thread or yarn. After that, they would weave the yarn into cloth to be used for clothing. To weave means to join threads in an alternating pattern to make cloth. Girls were taught to sew and weave usually before the age of ten, so they could help make their own clothes.



The Country Family

Because it was so much work to make clothes and so expensive to buy new clothes in town, much of the sewing work was patching or fixing old clothes that had become worn out and had holes and tears.



The Country Family

Because children were expected to help out with every one of those chores, they did not have a lot of time to play. Do you get time to play daily? In colonial times, children had very little time to play if any. The few toys they had, they usually made themselves.



The Country Family

Sometimes girls made dolls like these out of parts of a corn plant, and sometimes boys carved small toys out of wood. Most boys worked the farm alongside their fathers, taking over the family farm when they became older. If the family lived near a large town, some boys only lived at home until they were eleven or twelve years old. Then they were expected to learn a trade.



The Country Family

A trade is a special job that uses certain skills, knowledge and tools. Each boy would become an apprentice for several years, working with a master tradesperson in town to learn his job. A tradesperson is an expert in his or her job, or trade, and is the one who trains an apprentice.



The Country Family

The country family in colonial times worked hard every day. Sometimes a trip into town was a welcome relief or break from their daily tasks. In town, the family was able to trade or buy things they needed so they could save the time and effort it took to make them. In the next read aloud, you will hear about what happened when a farmer took a trip into town.



The Country Family

Comprehension Questions:

Literal

PLEASE answer in
COMPLETE sentences.

In colonial times, what kinds of chores did children who lived on a farm have to do?

The Country Family

Comprehension Questions:

Inferential

PLEASE answer in
COMPLETE sentences.

Was the farm we heard about in the read aloud a farm that existed a long time ago or one that exists today? How can you tell?

The Country Family

Comprehension Questions:

Inferential

PLEASE answer in
COMPLETE sentences.

Was the farm we heard about today in town or in the country? Name one way the country was different from towns.

The Country Family

Comprehension Questions:

Inferential

PLEASE answer in
COMPLETE sentences.

Long ago, there was no electricity. What did farmers use for light to see at night?

The Country Family

Comprehension Questions:

Inferential

PLEASE answer in
COMPLETE sentences.

Long ago, there were no furnaces or heaters to heat the houses. What did people use to warm their houses? What else was the hearth used for?

The Country Family

Comprehension Questions:

Inferential

PLEASE answer in
COMPLETE sentences.

Long ago, there were no sinks or faucets with running water inside the house. How did people get water?

The Country Family

Comprehension Questions:

Inferential

PLEASE answer in
COMPLETE sentences.

Long ago, there were no grocery stores. Where did milk and eggs come from? Where did cheese and butter come from?

The Country Family

Comprehension Questions:

Inferential

PLEASE answer in
COMPLETE sentences.

Long ago, it was very expensive to buy clothes.
How did people get clothes?

Word Work

Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

The Country Family

In the read aloud you heard, "If you lived in the **country** long ago, you and your family did most of the work necessary for survival at home."

Say the word **country** with me.
Whisper country to the ceiling.
Whisper country to your neighbor.
Let's clap it out.

The Country Family

Country is an area of land with few buildings, where homes are distant or far apart from one another, and most of the land is made up of farms.

I love being out in the country at night--there isn't any traffic, so it's quiet, and there aren't many lights, so you can see the stars really well.

The Country Family

Tell me about one thing you might see in the country. Use the word **country** when you tell about it.

“I might see_____ in the country.”

The Country Family

*What's the word we have been talking
about?*

Let's clap it out.

The Country Family

I'm going to name some things. If the thing I describe is something you might see in the country, thumbs up. If it is not something you'd see in the country, thumbs down.

The Country Family



Thumbs Up = In the Country

Thumbs Down = Not in the Country



A cow



The Country Family



Thumbs Up = In the Country

Thumbs Down = Not in the Country



A skyscraper



The Country Family



Thumbs Up = In the Country

Thumbs Down = Not in the Country



A field of wildflowers



The Country Family



Thumbs Up = In the Country

Thumbs Down = Not in the Country



A traffic jam of cars

