

Name _____



Social Classes in Colonial America

By Cathy Pearl

A lot of people started to move to Colonial America. Social classes started to develop after a lot of people arrived. A social class is a way of ranking people. Some people are more powerful, and some people are less powerful. The people can be ranked on how much money they make, the jobs they have, or whether they own land. In Colonial America, there were three main social classes. They were the gentry, the middle class, and the poor.

The highest class was the gentry. They could vote. They were rich enough to own their own mansions and carriages. In the mansion, they might have a library and a collection of furniture. This furniture was shipped from England. The gentry also liked to wear clothes from London. These clothes were made in the newest style. They thought it showed how important they were.

Below the gentry was the middle class. They also owned property, but they were not as rich as the gentry. The middle class worked at skilled jobs. A skilled job was being a teacher or craftsmen. Craftsmen could make things others couldn't, like shoes and wagon wheels.

The women in the middle class also worked hard. They would make their own cloth, candles, and cheese. The women sold the extras to make more money for their families.

This class was the biggest in Colonial America. Almost 75% of the people belonged to the middle class. The men in this class could also vote. The people in the middle class did well. Their jobs were very important. People wanted the products they made.

The lowest class was the poor. The poor were unskilled laborers, indentured servants, or slaves. Indentured servants were people who could not afford to pay for their trip. Another person would pay for the trip. The indentured servant would work for that person from four to seven years. This would pay for the cost of the trip.

Very few of the poor owned any property. Most of them could not

read, write, or vote. They would move around a lot in order to find work. These people had to work very hard to survive in Colonial America.

After many people came to Colonial America, social classes started to develop. The highest was the gentry. Then there was the middle class. The lowest class was the poor. People were in a social class based on how much money they made or what their jobs were. Social classes continue to affect the United States today.

Social Classes in Colonial America

Questions

- _____ 1. What was the largest class in Colonial America?
 - A. Poor
 - B. Middle class
 - C. Gentry
- _____ 2. Which class usually could *not* vote?
 - A. Gentry
 - B. Poor
 - C. Middle class
- _____ 3. What was a job that someone in the middle class might have?
 - A. Indentured servant
 - B. Craftsmen
 - C. Lawyer
- _____ 4. What is the correct order of social classes, from highest to lowest?
 - A. Gentry, middle class, poor
 - B. Middle class, poor, gentry
 - C. Poor, gentry, middle class

