

Name: _____

Colonial Perspectives: Women

In Colonial America the lives of women was extremely different than it had been in England. In England they were responsible for taking care of their homes and their children. When the colonists first came to America they were amazed at how hard Native American women worked in their fields. Native American women worked just as hard in the fields as the men. They cared for the crops, animals, and children. Most women in England did not want to come to America where they would have to work that hard. However, some came with their husbands with dreams of having a large plantation and a great deal of money. But, when they arrived they were faced with hardships and hard work! But, the colonists knew if they were going to stay in the new country of America forever that they had to have women and children. Less than one in five people that came to America were women.

The Colonial farms needed every available worker to produce the crops that were needed to survive. That meant that women had to help grow the crop and they were still expected to come in from the fields and cook the meals for their family as well. They were responsible for the roles of taking care of the house and the children and now they were expected to help with the farming as well. At least until the slaves arrived in America.

When slave women arrived Colonial women were allowed to return to just tending to the home. Large land owners would pay a great amount of money for women slaves because any children they had were automatically their slaves as well. Slave women were treated very poorly. They had to work the entire time they were pregnant and could be separated from their children at any time if they were sold.

Women in the Middle and Northern Colonies were treated more like they were in England. They were not exposed to such harsh work conditions but they also did not have any rights. Women were not allowed to vote and were not considered as important citizens. They were allowed to be milliners, a specific type of artisan, and own fabric and clothing stores. Women would eventually earn rights to vote and go on to hold important political offices but in Colonial times they were not treated equally.



Name: _____

Colonial Perspectives: Charlotte

Most women hate being in the colonies. I see them walking around with their heads down and usually complaining to their husbands about something they don't have here. But not me. I love being here. My mom and dad were some of the first colonists to come over. I was just a little girl so I don't remember too much. We've been here over ten years now and things are getting so much better.

I remember when we first got here we were so hungry. We ate so much corn I thought I would turn into a corn stalk! I think what the women hate the most is that they have to work as hard as the men here. I hear that in England they had to stay in the house and keep the house up but they didn't have to do all the hard work that we have to do now.

Me and mama have to help Daddy with pretty much everything. We get up in the morning get breakfast for the family and then we ALL go to the fields. Daddy is a farmer so if the farm does not grow like it should then we won't have any money so everyone has to help. If we don't work then we don't eat.

What's even worse about the colonies for women is that we work just as hard but no one treats us like equals. Daddy is part of the town council but mama and I can't go to the meetings with him. They don't ask the women what we think even though we work here too! Mama is always telling me that when I get older they will have to find me a suitable husband to take care of me, but I want to get my own job.

I want to be a silversmith. I told daddy that one time and he said that's no job for a woman. But I see all the fancy silver in the shops and I watched the local silversmith one day when mama had to go in to town for supplies. It was so beautiful to watch him turn the silver into something so fancy and smooth. I saw another woman in town who owns her own shop. She sells fabric and makes gowns and fancy clothes for the rich people and I intend to own my shop one day. I think that's what I like about the colonies. Being here is changing people. People came here so they could be free and make their own futures. That's what I intend to do. I may be a woman but one day I'm also going to be a silversmith!

