

# HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

## NORTH AMERICAN HISTORY – Early Modern

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In Colonial (or Early Modern) times, North American behavior was deeply linked to either a quest for economic advancement (and adventure) or religious belief systems. For that reason, although much of the early literature of North American writers could be considered imitative of European forms, the content and underpinning philosophical and psychological realities are quite different. The Early Modern in North America been characterized by a combination of practicality, creative self-expression, and a desire to use all aspects of scientific, artistic, and business innovative activity as a way to embody the values and beliefs of their culture and society. Identity has been at the heart of the behavior of the colonizers of America. In contrast, survival and the quest to achieve human dignity were at the core of the experience for the Native Americans and Africans.

### POLITICAL HISTORY

#### GOVERNMENT

**Native Americans:** Native American tribes or groups were those separated by language, tradition, culture, and leadership. The tribes were governed by different bands, usually related by family, and they were self-sufficient. Some tribes selected their chiefs through councils, while others selected them based on their prowess in war and raiding.

**French Colonial Empire:** The French colonies in North America were governed by the king of France, who was an absolute monarch, and also by a strict notion of cultural uniqueness, resulting in the imposition of Christianity (Catholicism) and French culture. The French were interested in protecting trade routes and the acquisition of furs and other exportable items, and so they were quick to establish a court system and a rule of law. The ultimate authority rested in the King of France. The French set up a system of fortifications along the Mississippi River that also served as protected trading posts.

**English Colonial Governments:** The British colonies were divided into separate colonies, and each had its Governor, court system, and systems of collecting taxes, as well as providing protection against attacks by Indians and the pesky French. The British government sought to encourage permanent settlements and the establishment of prosperous businesses that would result in increased wealth in Britain.

**Spanish Colonial Governments:** The Spanish monarchy was most interested in gold and silver, and so their system of government had much to do with establishing Viceroyalties and “latifundias” that maintained connections to Spain. Most important positions were filled by “peninsulares” (people from the Iberian Peninsula), and they were required to maintain order as well as to collect “la quinta” or the 20 percent tax on all production.

**Dutch Governance:** The Dutch established cities and trading networks along the Hudson River in

the state of New York. Their goal was to establish trade as well as a financial network, which included joint stock companies. Much of New York City's unique character was shaped by a sense of identity that based itself on creating joint stock companies and supporting trade networks.

**Early Post-Revolutionary Government:** The breakaway colonies formed a Continental Congress and a Continental Army. When the final battle of the Revolutionary War was fought (the Battle at Yorktown), and the Continental Army, together with French military members, Prussian mercenaries, and other, the United States was formed, which was in essence, a loose confederacy between the 13 colonies, now states. They were united through the U.S. Constitution, but the States preserved their right to have maintain control over local laws and government, although Federal government would supercede it.

### Discussion/Questions

The colonial governments were required to serve the needs of the imperial nations. For example, the French government benefited from trade networks that yielded very valuable furs as well as being able to establish control over waterways such as the Mississippi River. The British empire was dependent upon taxes to subsidize a series of very expensive wars. The Spanish relied on the quinta (20 percent tax) for their expenses at home. Describe how a dependency on funds from the colonies led to mistrust and poor relations between the colonists and the colonizing nations.

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## **MILITARY**

**Eastern Woodlands Native Americans:** The Native Americans in the Eastern Woodlands of northeastern North America were militarized by the French, who used them to attack the English who were competing for the territory. The French also attacked the Native Americans at times when they were not able to completely subjugate the Native Americans so that they provided furs and assistance in their own exploration and trapping ventures.

**Continental North America Native Americans:** Although some of the tribes created confederations in order to bolster their force size and impact and they strategically planned attacks on settlers and English / French troops, in general the Native Americans were positioned as underdogs and their stance was largely defensive. They were simply trying to keep from having their lands confiscated and their peoples enslaved or humiliated.

**Spanish / English conflicts in the South:** At first, some of the local tribes which came in contact with the Spanish explorers offered hospitality. After word spread of the Spanish explorers' disappointingly bloodthirsty and culture-extermimating interactions in New Spain (Mexico), the

local tribes did everything possible to defend their territories and their way of life. They were not successful in the end, but they were a feared and fearful adversary, mainly through their skillful use of guerrilla tactics and their adept use of gruesome tactics which were highly effective in psychological warfare.

**Revolutionary War -- new methods:** Perhaps developed from masters in the tactic, the Eastern Woodlands tribes during the French-Indian wars, guerrilla warfare, was adopted by the Continental Army. While some of the Continental Army followed the agreed upon Rules of Engagement, many did not. The Continental Army was the most formal. They had uniforms and even were paid stipends by the States. They were issued uniforms and weapons, and many were well funded. However, the American Militia troops were in a different category. Hessian (German) mercenaries constituted around one-third of the combatants on the side of the Colonists (the belligerents). They were paid by the German government, who loaned money to the Americans. French soldiers also served, and were regarded by all as the most decent and unlikely to commit war atrocities or steal property from civilians. They were provided by Louis XVI, who was promised repayment (it never happened, and the Americans never paid their debt). Finally, Americans at home got caught up in the war. Many of the American citizen-soldiers wore home-spun clothing. They were self-funded, and often gained their weapons by attacking the British and stealing their supplies. They had a reputation for cruelty. In addition to other guerrilla techniques both the Continental Army and the American Militia relied heavily on spies and spy networks

**Black Market and Informal Trading Networks: Outlaws, Pirates, Buccaneers, Corsairs:** The informal economy (contraband, smuggling, piracy, counterfeiting) thrived in the loose and lawless new nation and its territories. Because of the fragile fabric of self-defense in the colonial era and the early years of the new Republic, it was often necessary for the criminal (or at least illicit) enterprises to have their own security. In many cases, the security for the criminal enterprises was much better funded, manned, and equipped than the military forces that were supposed to keep criminal activity at bay.,

### Discussion/Questions

1. The Incas “franchised” their brand through an extensive confederation of city states, tribes, and outlying groups. Trade networks were held together by common beliefs, but more than that, by their “quipus”, the knotted string accounting, messaging, and inventorying system that allowed the groups to communicate by means of the language of math and calculations. Describe the potential strengths and weaknesses of an economy based primarily on relationships and accounting.
2. The American Revolution was fought by regular military forces (the Continental Army and the British), but it was won by informal forces – the Prussian mercenaries, the French consignees, and finally, the militia, which consisted of a ragtag collection of pioneers defending their own homes. Explain the ways in which the British forces had difficulties in winning the war.

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## **SOCIAL HISTORY**

### **SOCIAL STRUCTURE**

#### **English Colonies:**

Many of the inhabitants of the English colonies came to America to escape religious and political persecution or to pursue economic opportunities. Most would have been considered middle class but there were many who were considered landed gentry, even as there were many who simply wanted to try make their fortune in the New Land.

**Religious dissenters:** Perhaps the most cohesive group were the religious dissenters. They were middle class and tended to be free thinkers who educated their children at home. They included Puritans, Pilgrims, Quakers, and other independent groups.

**Younger sons of the landed gentry with charters from the Crown:** Younger sons who would not inherit the land in their families (thanks to entailed estates) often emigrated to America to make their fortune. They were often given charters from the Crown, which was essentially a permit to explore, stake, and claim any land that was not yet claimed by the Crown. This approach was encouraged because it set up a rivalry with the French, who were doing everything they could to win the “land grab.”

**Indentured servants:** Young men and boys from poorer classes did not have the funds to sail to America. So, their families helped them find position as apprentices to a tradesman in America. After a certain number of years of working and being trained in the profession, the contract was satisfied and the individual received his freedom again.

**Mercenary soldiers:** Prussian soldiers were extremely disciplined and skillful, and they trained the American Continental Army. Motivated by rancor toward England as well as funds from France, the Prussians were considered to be in the military class, and as such, the officers tended to be from nobility.

**Slaves:** Most slaves were descended from individuals who had been kidnapped and sold from their homes in West Africa. As slaves, and literally the property of another person, they occupied the lowest level of the social hierarchy. They could not own land, vote, have freedom of movement, and were often abused and treated worse than animals.

**African freedmen:** There were Africans and African Americans who were free, but they were few and far between. There were some freed slaves who came from the Caribbean who were of mixed race.

### **Dutch Colonies:**

**Entrepreneurs:** The great majority of Dutch colonists were entrepreneurs and businessmen, often setting up financing for commerce and trade. Their centers were along the Hudson River, with large settlements in New Amsterdam, now known as New York. There were also settlements near Albany in Voorheesville and Fort Orange.

**Religious dissenters:** Protestants who had been persecuted in France and in England often moved to the Holland. When they had the opportunity to move to America and set up colonies and potentially thrive, they happily did so. They were largely middle class and agrarian.

### **Spanish Colonies:**

**Peninsulares:** The Peninsulares were those from the Iberian Peninsula and they were at the top of the social hierarchy. They occupied positions of responsibility and trust for the Spanish crown.

**Criollos:** Criollos were considered “White” because they were descended from Peninsulares. They occupied, with the Peninsulares, the highest rungs of the social order.

**Mestizos:** Criollos who had children with the indigenous peoples were called “mestizos” and they soon became the most populous social class in the Spanish-controlled part of North America.

**Indios:** Unfortunately, the indigenous peoples had virtually no rights and were barred from owning land. They lived in tremendous poverty and misery.

### **French Colonies:**

**Catholics and priests:** The Catholic clergy occupied positions of authority in the French colonies.

**French governmental officials and appointees:** The representatives of the French monarchy occupied the highest levels of society and were able to make administrative and judicial decisions that affected the lives of all who lived in the French adjudicated areas.

**Indians / mixed race:** The Indians and mixed-race peoples were consigned to the destiny of all conquered peoples, which is to say that they had almost no status at all in the colonies.

**Fur traders and explorers:** They were important to the French monarchy and were often well-funded because their ability to explore and claim land for the French crown was vital to the health of the colonies.

### Discussion/Questions

The groups who emigrated to North America came from different backgrounds and they had different goals and purposes for coming. Many came to find their fortunes, while others sought to escape persecutions. Others were kidnapped and forced into slavery. Select four or five groups and discuss the degree of opportunity that coming to North America might have offered them.

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## **GENDER**

**Puritan Gender Roles:** Patriarchal, with man as head of household. Women considered the heads of home-making and child-rearing. Fear of women breaking out of traditional roles as evidenced by witchcraft ..

**Planter / Plantation Gender Roles:** Much depended on social status. Plantation owners: lord / lady equivalents. Servants similar to England. Sharecroppers and poor planters: shared roles (farming, etc.). Slaves – depended if field workers or house workers. Field: no gender roles – all

worked alike. In the house, women in kitchen and cleaning, men in labor / repair roles. Taking care of animals.

**Pioneer Gender Roles:** Long absences from home (hunting, employment as guides, trading trips, going back East, etc.) resulted in a great deal of independence for women. Women home-schooled as well as maintained house and farm. They trained the children to be part of the home labor force; children were important for farm labor. Unpaid.

**Native American Kidnappings:** There were unusual gender risks in colonial times in the form of kidnappings of girls and young women by Native American tribes. Child kidnappings happened primarily in the northern part of the U.S. during the seven-year French Indian war in the 1750s. The most publicized, Mary Jemison, was kidnapped near the Pennsylvania / New York border, and she wrote an autobiographical account. She, like many others, chose the Indian way rather than to return. Now, we may think of it as Stockholm Syndrome, but others viewed it as a genuine preference for the Indian philosophy and way of life.

**Revolutionary War Gender Roles:** Young soldiers, often as young as 12 years of age. Andrew Jackson was such a young boy forced into the armed conflict when British soldiers attacked his home and killed his mother and father in front of him. Women played important support roles, such as laundry, uniform repair, and more.

**Shakers:** celibate with gender apartheid (although visiting a preservation garden in the Shaker village near Albany, New York revealed many medicinal herbs targeted to induce miscarriages (!))

### Discussion/Questions

When the Europeans arrived in the Americas, there was a gender gap and males far outnumbered females. This imbalance was particularly the case in the frontier. What were some of the social implications of the gender imbalance?

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## **ECONOMIC HISTORY**

### **INNOVATION**

**Inventions:** Colonial America was a place where gentlemen farmers and entrepreneurs were motivated to develop inventions to improve productivity and quality of life. They often shared ideas with contacts in England.

**Atmospheric steam engine (1712):** Thomas Newcomen was the first to develop the atmospheric steam engine, which was the first practical steam engine. It was modified in the American colonies and used in iron-mongering.

**Flying Shuttle (1733):** John Kay's flying shuttle was developed in England for spinning. It was also implemented in the American colonies in areas that produced flax for linen, wool, and cotton.

**Improved steam engine (1769):** James Watt improved the steam engine in England, which was exported to the American Colonies where it was used primarily as a steam pump. The piston pump was used in milling and also to move paddles in the first experiments with paddleboats.

**Benjamin Franklin:** A tireless innovator, Franklin developed the lightning rod, bifocals, and Franklin stove, many of which became fixtures in American homes and lives.

**Robert Fulton:** In the 1790s, Robert Fulton developed the steamboat (a steam engine powered paddleboat) which he used on the Hudson River. His goal was to show how cargo boats could move from New York City to Albany, allowing the transport of raw materials, equipment, and finished goods.

**Agricultural Inventions:** Eli Whitney, born in Massachusetts, is credited for changing the face of American industry by inventing the cotton gin and turning cotton into a profitable crop, and making it possible to support a thriving textile industry in New England.

**Banking Innovations / Money:** Alexander Hamilton, one of the “Founding Financiers,” helped develop the Bank of North America and the Bank of New York (1794). They were limited in scope, and were used primarily as savings banks. Loans and insurance companies were not affiliated with banks. Loans were often made by the land owners, or by “monied” individuals.

### Discussion/Questions

The colonial settlers used innovations to make their production of raw materials for England to be more efficient. In the Northeast, the need to process the furs, skins, hides, and other materials led to innovations. In the South, the plantations needed improved technology in order to make their operational sustainable. Discuss 4 or 5 of the innovations during Colonial America.

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## **TRADE**

**Native Americans:** Trade networks were established between the French and the Indians of the Northeast, who exchanged fur for firearms, tools, and alcohol. Other fur trading was established with English colonists as well, who included cotton fabrics and beads in their exchanges. In the meantime, Indians continued to trade with each other, although their relationships were problematized by the persistent attacks and attempts by the French and the British to "divide and conquer" as well as outbreaks of smallpox and measles.

**Fur Trapping and Trade:** Many colonists of European descent used the fur trade as a way to earn a living, and also to gain access to new areas. In fact, many of the early explorers were also trappers and hunters. They sold their pelts (mainly beaver but also fox and mink) to traders who often exported them to Europe, where they were in very high demand.

**Plantation Products Trade:** Tobacco, cotton, indigo, rice, and sugar were in very high demand as raw materials for the small manufacturing facilities and tabacconist traders of England. As a result, the economy of the Eastern Seaboard, from Maryland south, was very dependent on that trade, to the point that the factories of Northern Europe dictated their crops.

**Quest for Gold:** The early quest for gold in the North American colonies and in New Spain (now New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado) resulted in expeditions by explorers such as Hernan De Soto, as well as the establishment of new trading posts and small communities.

**Missions and Trading Networks:** The Jesuit missionaries established missions throughout what is now Mexico, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. They used the missions as locations for churches and settlements for Europeans and Indians, as well as points for trade and banking.

**Slave Trade:** One reason why the slave trade was so persistent was the fact that the owners of the large cargo ships (sailing ships) could assure that each voyage would have passengers, meaning that there would not be any voyages with empty holds.

**Black Market and Informal Trading Networks: Outlaws, Pirates, Buccaneers, Corsairs:** Ships bearing gold coins from the mining regions of Mexico and Colombia were often attacked by pirates, resulting in a very lucrative black market. The same ships were also attractive targets for the hungry governments of Spain and France, who would not engage in piracy directly, but would issue licenses officially allowing attacking and stealing the cargo, plus pressing the crew into their own militaries (a kind of licensed kidnapping).

## **Discussion/Questions**

1. The beaver, fox, muskrat, and mink fur trade was enormously important for members of many different groups during Colonial America and in Canada. The French fur traders used the proceeds to finance their communities, and the French government was able to receive taxes from it. The Georgian government of the 18th century was also motivated by the taxes, plus by being able to issue permits and licenses for the fur trade. Describe the importance of the fur trade to the American colonists before, during, and after the Revolutionary war.

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## **CULTURAL HISTORY**

### SCIENCE

**Samuel Winslow (1641):** From the beginning, perhaps because of its isolation and perhaps because of the aspirational nature of their quest to establish themselves in the New England colonies, there were many innovations and inventions. Samuel Winslow developed a new way of making salt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Later, understanding the value of intellectual property, the new nation created the U.S. Patent Office in 1790, which issued its first patent to Samuel Hopkins (born in Vermont) who developed a new process for making potash.

**Benjamin Franklin:** Franklin was a persistent writer, researcher, and inventor. His inventions included swim fins (wooden), shaped like lily pads and intended for use on the hands. He also invented the Franklin stove, the lightning rod, and bifocals. He also invented the flexible urinary catheter to help his brother when he suffered with bladder stones.

**Thomas Jefferson:** A student of agronomy, Jefferson's estate at Monticello contains examples of his interest in optimizing crops and being a scientific farmer.

**David Rittenhouse:** Rittenhouse was a student of astronomy and developed telescopes that he used in conjunction with investigations of the stars and planetary bodies.

**Charles Willson Peale:** A truly diversified scholar, Peale was an accomplished painter as well as scientists. He was interested in chemistry, physics, and engineering, and used his knowledge and curiosity to develop a mechanical drawing device (the physiognotrace). Peale was very interested in natural history, and one of his paintings, "The Exhumation of the Mastadon", is a valuable record of early archeological excavations. It was the world's first fully articulated prehistoric skeleton. It was found near Montgomery, New York.



Charles Willson Peale. "The Exhumation of the Mastadon" (1806). (source: wikipedia)

**Benjamin Rush:** One of the Founding Fathers of the United States, Rush was a practicing medical doctor who was one of the first to believe that mental illness is a disease of the mind and has neurological origins. Rush wrote extensively to support a scientific approach to mental illness and to counter the belief that mental illness was caused by the "possession of demons."

### Discussion Question:

"Gentleman farmers" were important innovators in the English colonies because they grew the crops (tobacco, cotton, indigo, sugar) that made lucrative commerce with the mills of England possible. In order to be able to provide the volume and quality of raw materials needed, the "gentleman farmers" often turned into quite formidable agronomists. Describe three examples of innovations and scientific investigation in the plantations and large farms in the North America.

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## **RELIGION**

**Dutch Colonies:** Facing persecution in Catholic France, the French Huguenots, who were Protestant, emigrated to countries where they were likely to receive better treatment. Many relocated to the Dutch Republic, where they lived before relocating again to North America. The Huguenots settled in South Carolina and also in New Amsterdam (New York) along the Hudson River and in Long Island as early as the 1560s.

**Spanish Colonies:** The missions (Franciscan in California, Dominicans, Jesuits) were supported by the Viceroyalty of New Spain with the shared desire to convert and conquer the Southwest part of what is now the United States. They extended from what is now Mexico to as far north as San Francisco. Three orders of Spanish priests established missions, including the Jesuits, Franciscans, and Dominicans. There are missions in Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, New Mexico, and Texas. The Franciscans were the first to arrive, and they focused on education, and conversion through meditation and contemplation, which was a slow and respectful way to convert the indigenous people. The Spanish government became impatient with them. The Jesuits were the “warrior priests” and had a very different philosophy of conversion. They established “reductions” (something like prison camps) where the indigenous peoples were compelled to convert and provide free labor. The Dominicans were primarily in the Caribbean and in Florida. They were champions of the rights of the native peoples and protested the “encomienda” system which enslaved indigenous peoples.

**French Colonies:** The French-controlled regions of North America were predominantly Catholic, with some exceptions (Acadia in Nova Scotia, for example) where Protestants fled for their lives, echoing what had happened in France itself. The French Catholicism was very different than the Catholicism of Spain and Ireland. There were no missions, for example, and the relationship with the indigenous was more commercial than compelled (as in the case of the encomiendas).

**English Colonies:** The English colonies were populated by a panoply of pragmatists and utopian thinkers who found themselves in the “out” group, not only for their religious thinking, but for their desire to participate more fully in the economy of England. They were a destabilizing force, particularly since they rejected the unification of church and state as represented in the Church of England fashioned by Henry VIII. The first group to emigrate en masse was the Puritans, who established not only churches, but also art, literature, and a philosophical framework for a new world. Later the free-thinkers represented by Roger Smith who was also an advocate of the dignified treatment of the American Indians. William Penn was granted a charter by Charles II in 1681 for what was to become Pennsylvania. He encouraged religious dissidents from all of Europe to settle that land, thus attracting Quakers and others from Europe as well as oppressive colonies such as the Massachusetts Bay Colony (Puritans).

### Discussion/Questions

The Eastern Woodland indigenous peoples believed in a “Great Spirit” that not only created the world but also unified it, with the idea that the spirit world resides in everything and that it is the responsibility of the individual to maintain harmony. Imagine yourself in that world. How might it change the way that you perceive animals, trees, and natural phenomena such as clouds and storms?

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## PHILOSOPHY

### **Puritans:**

**John Winthrop:** The first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, was a strict Puritan and thus upheld and promulgated the notion of strict adherence to the Puritan rules and regulations. His vision was both utopian and socially reactionary in that he supported individual self-expression and absolute loyalty to the Puritan precepts.

**Jonathan Edwards's *Freedom of the Will* (1754)** incorporates Calvinism, Newtonian Principia and Locke's *Essay Concerning the Human Understanding*. It was a key writing, but unfortunately not well understood and often appropriated (and bastardized) to use to justify American independence from England, and to form breakaway states.

**William Bradford:** As the founder of the Plymouth Colony settlement, Bradford was first and foremost a Separatist, and as such he incorporated his ideas and core philosophy with the two-volume work, "Of Plymouth Plantation." Essentially, his philosophy was that of individual freedom, freedom of will, and the absence of the notion of the "providential plan" of the Puritans. He was remembered for his "middle course" and tolerance.

**Influence of the French Philosophes:** In the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, ideas from France and England were beginning to influence colonists, especially those who feared that being a colony of England meant the inability to ever achieve self-determination, and also being limited economically, first through confiscatory taxation and later through demanding ownership in prosperous businesses. The French “philosophes” and their writings provided a foundation from which to argue separation from England, self-reliance and independence. Influential works included *The Federalist Papers* by John Madison and Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* ( 1776), the writings of Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson’s *Declaration of Independence* (1776).

### Discussion/Questions

The philosophies that the Puritans, the Pilgrims, and the Spanish explorers espoused were often rather self-serving and helped rationalize the particular utopian experiment / social experiment / new colony that they wanted to establish. Explain how the philosophies that seemed to promise a better life for all were in reality easily twisted so that they could rationalize punishing anyone who disagreed with the core concepts or the hierarchy and its leaders.

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### ART

**Colonial:** Portraiture influenced by Dutch and Flemish. Example: John Singleton Copley, *Paul Revere* (c. 1768-70). Landscape and tableaux of important historical events: Benjamin West, *The Treaty of Penn with the Indians*, 1771-72.

**Revolutionary War Period:** War scenes and heroic portraiture. Lighting used to indicate heroic actions and the moment of sacrifice. John Trumbull, *The Death of General Montgomery in the Attack on Quebec*, 1775.

**Federal Period:** Nation-building portraiture, following the techniques of European artists who painted the aristocracy and heroes. Edward Savage, *The Washington Family*, 1789. Scenes of ordinary life (influenced by Dutch and Flemish painters). Gilbert Stuart, *The Skater*, 1782.

### Discussion/Questions

Art in colonial America was very much influenced by European traditions. And yet, it was clear that the artists in America were eager to differentiate themselves from their European counterparts. To begin, the subject matter was often different, as were the landscapes and scenery. What were some of the ways in which art in Colonial America was different than art in Europe?

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### LITERATURE

**Puritans and Pilgrims:** The Puritans were perhaps the most well-represented of the religious writers in Colonial America. The Puritans wrote extensive essays, sermons, and at times poems. John Winthrop, who was the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony wrote a number of sermons and essays that expounded the goals and purposes of the Great Migration to New England in the 1630s and 1640s. William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*, which was a detailed journal of the experience of the Pilgrim colonists from 1621 to 1646. While it was an autobiographical account, it also contains literary and Biblical allusions. Cotton Mather, a grandson of the Massachusetts Bay Colony founders, wrote more than 450 essays and sermons on a number of topics ranging from natural science to ethics and Biblical exegesis. Unfortunately, Cotton Mather is remembered for his leading role in the Salem witch trials. Ann Bradstreet was the first published poet who was widely acknowledged in England. Her forms were Elizabethan, and she wrote of being a mother, wife, and general observer of life in the colonies. Michael Wigglesworth was one

of the first to put the philosophical concepts that informed the Puritans (the apocalyptic narrative, the “jeremiad”) into verse form. His “Day of Doom” is a long poem that explores the mindset of the Puritans, the “true believers” who would be the only ones spared at the Day of Judgement and the God’s destruction of the world and the unbelievers. The first American satire, *The Sotweed Factor* was written by Ebenezer Cooke in 1708. It is a poem written in couplets that responds to the greed and “get rich quick” schemes that inspired many people to settle in America and also to strike up trade with the settlers and the Native Americans. The “Sot-weed Factor” is a tobacco merchant. In the end, his schemes and dreams come to naught as he is swindled by a lawyer.

**Slave Narrative:** Phillis Wheatley wrote a remarkable and very valuable narrative of her experiences as woman born in West Africa, then sold to a slave trader who transported her to Boston. She took her name from the slave ship in which she traveled, *The Phillis*. The Wheatley family purchased her to be a servant, and she was taught to read and write by Mary Wheatley, the daughter of the family. By the age of 12, Phillis was reading Greek and Latin classics and by 14 she wrote her first poem. Wheatley’s poetry reflected classical themes, but it also incorporated West African philosophies into poems that honor events, people, and Christianity. In particular, she incorporates a veneration of the solar gods and West African sun worship.

Personal narratives: Benjamin Franklin was a very influential presence in pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary America. His *Poor Richard’s Almanack* and many other personal writings were aphoristic, salutatory, and positive. Thomas Paine authored influential pamphlets, “Common Sense” and “The American Crisis,” which were instrumental in uniting people in a common cause and inspiring a breakaway from Britain.

### Discussion/Questions

The literature of Puritans, Pilgrims and other settlers was highly normative, which is to say that it concerned itself with the “correct” values and beliefs. As such, there were definitely examples of what might happen if one deviated from the values. Examples include sermons and poems that incorporate the “jeremiad” (repent now, or all will be condemned and punished!). Identify examples of normative texts and explain how they illustrative the values and beliefs, as well as potential rewards and punishment.

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