

Core Lesson 1

VOCABULARY

growing season
tidewater
fall line
backcountry

Vocabulary Strategy

tidewater

The word **tidewater** is a compound word. Break the word apart to help you remember its meaning.



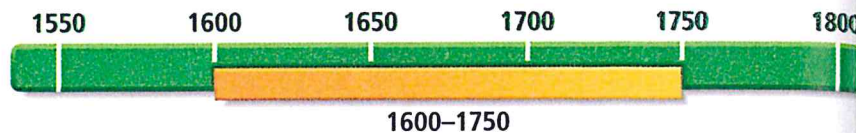
READING SKILL

Compare and Contrast

As you read, take notes to compare and contrast the three regions of the English colonies.

New England Coast
Rocky coasts are common in New England.

Geography of the Colonies



Build on What You Know What is the geography like where you live? Are you close to mountains or is the land flat for miles around? Think about where you live and how it affects the way you live.

The Thirteen Colonies

Main Idea The geography and climate of the thirteen colonies affected how colonists lived and worked.

During the 1600s and 1700s, many English settlers moved to North America. People believed that they had a better chance to make a living in North America or to find freedoms that they didn't have at home. These settlers established thirteen English colonies.

The colonies were located along the Atlantic Ocean, with New France to the north and New Spain to the south. The Appalachian Mountains formed a natural boundary to the west.

The geography and climate of the thirteen colonies separated them into three different regions: New England, the Middle Colonies, and the Southern Colonies.



New England

New England's geography was shaped by glaciers. During the Ice Age, thick sheets of ice covered much of North America. As the glaciers moved slowly across New England, they carried rocks trapped in the ice. The ice and rocks cut deep valleys through the mountains. They scraped up New England's rich soil and pushed it south, leaving a thin, rocky layer of dirt.

Farming was difficult in New England. Most of the land was filled with rocks or was too sandy to farm. The region's many forests and rugged mountains made it hard to find good farmland.

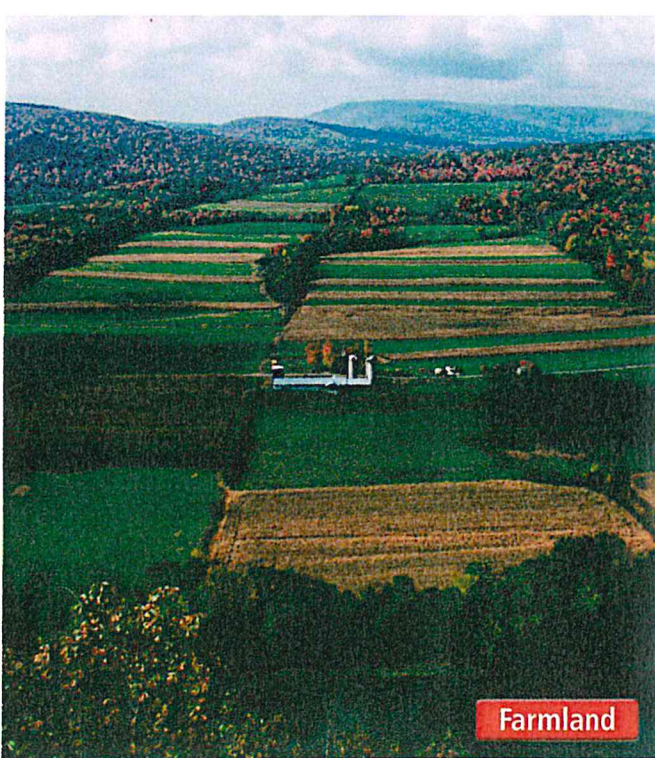
The climate also affected New England farming. Summers were warm, but winters were long and bitterly cold. The growing season was short. The **growing season** is the time of year when it is warm enough for plants to grow. In New England, the growing season lasted only from late May to early October. Most farmers could grow just enough food for their families, with a little left over to sell.

Farming in New England was hard, but the area had many natural resources. Colonists used these resources to make a living. They took wood from the thick forests to make buildings and ships. They caught fish and whales from the Atlantic Ocean to use for food and other products.

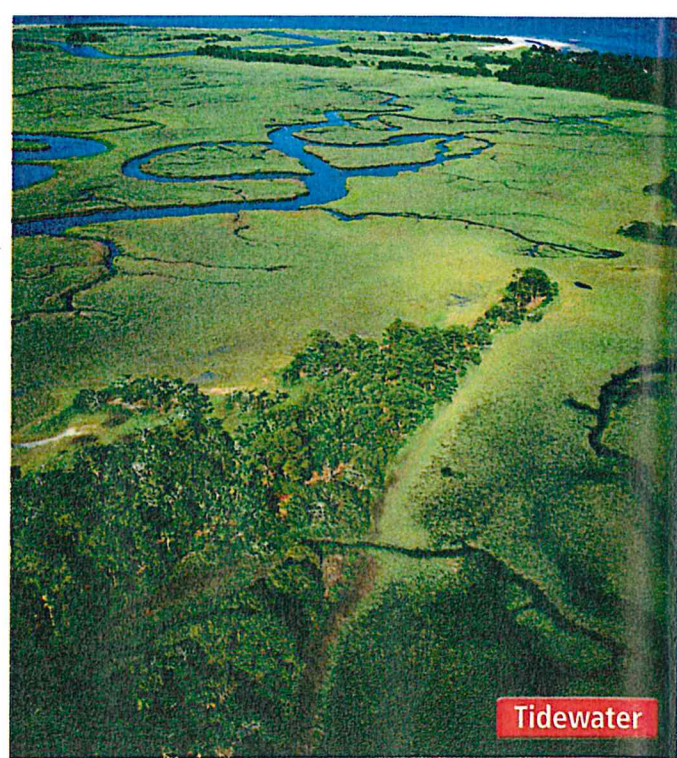
REVIEW Why was farming difficult for New England colonists?



Three Regions This map divides the colonies into three regions. Each region has its own geography and climate. **SKILL Reading Maps** Which were the New England Colonies?



Farmland



Tidewater

Middle and Southern Colonies Gentle, rolling hills were a common feature of the Middle Colonies (left). The tidewater of the Southern Colonies had many rivers (right).

The Middle Colonies

The glaciers that had scooped up soil from New England stopped in the Middle Colonies. When the glaciers melted, they dropped fertile soil on the area's rolling hills and valleys. Fertile soil is rich in the material that helps plants grow. Crops grew well in the Middle Colonies because of their fertile soil.

The climate also made the Middle Colonies a very good farming region. The growing season was much longer than in New England. The Middle Colonies had many sunny days and plenty of rain.

The Middle Colonies' wide rivers, such as the Delaware and the Hudson, were ideal for transportation. Farmers used riverboats to sell their crops in nearby towns and to bring supplies to their farms. The woods near these farms were full of wildlife. Colonists hunted and trapped animals such as deer and beaver.

The Southern Colonies

The geography of the Southern Colonies was very different from that of the other colonies. The southern coast is a watery world of rivers, bays, and wetlands. This area is called the tidewater. In the **tidewater**, the water in rivers and streams rises and falls every day with the ocean's tides.

The climate and soil of the tidewater were excellent for farming. Many southern colonists grew cash crops. The weather was warm for much of the year, and crops could grow for seven or eight months. Soil in the tidewater was rich and fertile, and the area received plenty of rain.

Colonists used the waterways in the tidewater to ship crops to markets in other towns and countries. The tidewater ended at the fall line, about 100 miles inland. At the **fall line**, rivers from higher land flow to lower lands and often form waterfalls.

The fall line followed the eastern edge of the Appalachian Mountains, from the Southern Colonies to New England. The higher land on the other side of the fall line was known as the **backcountry**. The backcountry was "in back of" the area where most colonists settled. The land in the backcountry was steep and covered with forests. Farms there were small, and colonists hunted and fished for much of their food.

REVIEW Why was farming in the Middle and Southern colonies better than in New England?



Lesson Summary

The thirteen English colonies in North America formed three unique regions. New England had poor soil and a cold climate, but plenty of forests and fish. The Middle Colonies had fertile soil, a warmer climate, and rivers for transportation. The Southern Colonies had an even warmer climate and many waterways in the tidewater.

Why It Matters ...

For the thirteen colonies to grow, colonists had to learn how to adapt to the geography and climate of each of these three regions.

Fall Line Waterfalls are common along the area where the backcountry and the tidewater meet.

Lesson Review

- 1 VOCABULARY** Complete the following sentence, using two of the words listed below.
fall line **tidewater** **backcountry**
The _____ was the higher land on the western side of the _____.
- 2 READING SKILL** Write a short paragraph that **compares** and **contrasts** the growing season and soil in each region.
- 3 MAIN IDEA: Geography** Why was the tidewater good for growing crops?
- 4 MAIN IDEA: Economics** In what ways did the geography and climate of the Southern Colonies affect how colonists made a living?
- 5 PLACES TO KNOW** What natural resources did colonists have in New England?
- 6 CRITICAL THINKING: Draw Conclusions** Why would colonists want to settle near rivers and other waterways? Use facts and details to support your answer.
- 7 CRITICAL THINKING: Analyze** Climate is one way to divide places into regions. What are some other ways?



ART ACTIVITY Use library resources to learn more about how glaciers changed New England's geography. Draw a picture to show what you learned.