

# CURRICULUM GUIDE: COLONIAL CHORES

Volume 2, Issue 3



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## An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

## Colonial Chores

*Kids Post Article: "The Good Old Days? Not Quite."*

**Lesson:** The contribution of colonial children to the economic livelihood of their families

**Level:** Low to middle

**Subjects:** Social Studies, Language Arts

**Related Activity:** Mathematics

### Procedure

#### Discuss

Ask students to share the chores they do at home. Do they do them for pay, for their allowance or to help their parents? Do they think they spend much time working for their families?

#### Read

Read "The Good Old Days? Not Quite."

#### Discuss

1. The writer says that colonial children began doing chores by the time they were three years old. List the jobs done by children.
2. Why was it important to know how to build a fire?
3. Why did children have only two or three outfits?
4. "Little was done on the colonial farm without the use of lard and tallow." For what was lard and tallow used?
5. The ten- or eleven-year-olds had "gender-oriented" tasks. What does the term "gender-oriented" mean? Why do you think this was true in colonial times? Are there still gender-oriented tasks for children and adults?
6. If the children in a family spent

a half hour collecting eggs, an hour chopping wood and two hours pulling weeds, how have they helped their family? In what ways did the chores of children help the family's finances?

#### Develop Vocabulary

Review the vocabulary words in the sidebar of this lesson. Give younger students "Work in Colonial Times," a word find. Older students may be given the crossword puzzle to complete. "Word Study: A Look at Chore" in this guide focuses on the distinction between "work," "task," "duty" and "chore."

#### Research Jobs

Rural residents often were more self-sufficient than colonists who lived in town. Some basics—food, clothing, warmth—were needed by all, whether grown or made by themselves or another. Divide the class into five groups. Each group is given one task to research. Give students "What a Job!" Clarify the assignment. To facilitate research, you may have five stations prepared with appropriate books at each one.

#### Discuss

After presentations are completed and your students have a better understanding of the time, tools and skill required to provide a few basics, ask them to explain how the chores of children benefited the family and helped the family's economic health. How do they think businesses developed from these necessary chores? How would a community benefit if someone was a weaver and someone else a candle maker?

## Vocabulary

**Bank:** Piled-up mass

**Card:** Wire-toothed brush or a machine with rows of wire teeth used to disentangle fibers prior to spinning (noun); To comb or brush with a card (verb)

**Chore:** Routine or minor duty; daily domestic tasks

**Gender:** Originally, used to refer to the grammatical categories of "masculine," "feminine" and "neuter." In recent use, used to refer to sex-based categories. Anthropologists reserve sex for reference to biological categories, while using gender to refer to social or cultural categories.

**Hackling:** To separate long, thin fibers from short, coarse fibers by pulling through a bed of nails; a break up of the whole to separate

**Kindle:** To build or fuel (a fire); ignite; to cause to glow

**Retted:** To moisten or soak in water to soften and to separate the fibers by partial rotting

**Scutching:** To separate the valuable fibers (flax, for example) from the woody parts by beating

**Shear:** To remove (fleece or hair) by cutting or clipping

**Tallow:** Hard fat obtained from parts of the bodies of cattle, sheep or horses

**Tinder:** fast burning material such as dry twigs, pine needles, rope fragment, used to kindle fires

*Definitions are from the American Heritage Dictionary*



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### Colonial Chores

*Continued*

#### Write

Select one of these topics for students to write a short essay.

- Chores of children in the 1700s
- Comparison and contrast of colonial and contemporary chores for children
- Why I would or would not want to live in colonial times
- If students do the research project, ask them to write a process paper, How to ....

#### Enrichment

1. Take a field trip back to colonial times. Check out the “Colonial Destinations” sidebar in this guide.

2. Read “Hands-On History Lessons at Colonial Camps,” a Post Style Plus article, to learn about the opportunities to “live” in colonial times. This January 14, 2003, article can be found at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A52351-2003Jan13.html>

3. Contrast life on a colonial farm with life on a mid-19th century farm. Visit Carroll County Farm Museum (<http://ccgov.carr.org/farm-mus/>) in Westminster, Md. In addition to a farmhouse, you can see a smokehouse, saddlery, broom shop and living history center. For Montgomery County Public School field trip information, visit [http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/socialstd/FT/Carroll\\_Farm.html](http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/curriculum/socialstd/FT/Carroll_Farm.html)

4. Contrast life on a colonial farm with life on an early 20th century farm. Visit Oxon Hill Farm (<http://www.nps.gov/oxhi/>) in Oxon

Cove Park, Oxon Hill, Md. Exhibits include barns, feed and livestock buildings to learn basic farming principles.

5. Visit a colonial archaeology site. The Lost Towns Archaeology Project’s goal is to find Anne Arundel County’s colonial period towns. Begin in London Town (<http://www.historiclondontown.com/>). To learn more about the Lost Towns of Anne Arundel Project visit <http://www.geocities.com/londontown.geo/>.

6. Read more about colonial clothing. In the KidsPost article, students read about making linen and woolen cloth. What were the styles of the clothes worn by adults and children? You might begin in Colonial Williamsburg at the millinery shop (<http://www.history.org/history/clothing/milliner/millinershop.cfm>). How would clothes worn in Annapolis and Williamsburg differ from those worn by rural colonialists?

7. The KidsPost article focused on chores. With what did children play? Read more about rag and corn husk dolls and items carved from wood. Learn how to play cricket, fives, shuttlecock, quoits and stool ball.

8. Analyze how much time students spend in a week doing chores or helping others. You might have students record how they spend their time for seven days. What percentage of each day do they spend in school and at home? How many hours per week do they

### Colonial Destinations

➤ <http://www.1771.org/>

#### The Claude Moore Colonial Farm at Turkey Run

This living history museum in McLean, Va., portrays family life on a small, low-income farm. Learn about Colonial Day (games, songs, clothing and projects), the 18th Century Encampment, visits and volunteering. Includes a “For Kids” section. When you visit the farm, expect staff and volunteers in period clothes to answer your questions as if you were an 18th century visitor.

➤ <http://www.mountvernon.org/>

#### Mount Vernon Estate & Gardens

Although no longer 8,000 acres, Mount Vernon is an impressive colonial estate. Take a virtual tour of Mount Vernon and learn of its special programs: Colonial Days at Mount Vernon for grades 2-6; Black History Month presentation of African American slave heritage; Down on the Farm, grades 3-9; Grist for the Mill, grades 4-6 and Digging Through Time: Archaeology at George Washington’s Mill, grades 4-6.

➤ <http://www.accokeek.org/ncf.htm>

#### The National Colonial Farm

An outdoor living history museum presents typical family life in the late 1700s. Pre-scheduled guided tours are available for this Accokeek, Md., farm.

➤ <http://www.history.org/>

#### Colonial Williamsburg

If you have a weekend or longer to spend in 1700s Virginia, go to Williamsburg. There are 500 restored and reconstructed buildings in which great and everyday people share their 18th century life and ideas. Special events, such as military reenactments, the Grand Illumination and museum exhibits are found at this Web site.



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### Colonial Chores

*Continued*

average studying, doing chores and playing? Have them chart how they spend their time.

NOTE: This activity could lead into a study of sleep. Colonial families went to bed earlier than contemporary families and got more sleep. Review the curriculum guide "Sleep" at [washpost.com/nie](http://washpost.com/nie).

DATE

\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_ Min. At School

\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_ Min. Exercise

\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_ Min. Homework

\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_ Min.

Music (practice and lessons)

\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_ Min.

Pleasure Reading

\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_ Min.

Television

\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_ Min.

Video Games

\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_ Min. Chores

\_\_\_\_ Hr. \_\_\_\_ Min. Sleep

\_\_\_\_ Time I went to bed

\_\_\_\_ Time I woke up for the day

"The Good Old Days? Not Quite." can be found at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/education/kidspost/nie/A52362-2003Jan13.html>

### Puzzle Answers

CROSSWORD

1	H	A	C	K	L	I	N	G		C	H	O	P			
12	A	N	T		13	Y	A	W	N		14	H	I	D	E	
15	R	V		16	S	E	W		17	A	V	O	N		S	
19	V	I	L	E				21	S	W	O	R	D		T	
22	E	L	B	A				P		23	L	E	E	R		
	S				S		25	S	I	N	G		27	R	E	D
	T		29	C	O	L	O	N	I	A	L			31	T	I
		32	M	A	N	N	A		C				33	I	T	E
34	C	A	N					P		35	H	I	N	D	I	
	A		38	D	A	Y		40	B	E		41	M	E	N	D
43	R	A	Y		44	E	W	E	S				45	A	G	O

WORD FIND

S	E	R	F	S	U	R	V	E	Y	O	R
C	L	K	A	H	H	O	R	S	E	E	T
U	D	C	R	E	K	A	M	G	I	W	A
T	N	I	M	E	S	E	L	D	E	E	N
C	I	R	E	R	K	R	E	P	O	O	C
H	P	B	R	A	F	A	S	L	A	G	F
I	S	W	E	S	W	A	M	W	Y	E	L
N	S	H	E	E	P	L	T	E	A	E	I
G	G	U	N	S	M	I	T	H	O	L	N
B	L	L	O	D	D	O	O	W	O	H	T
O	C	K	C	O	B	B	L	E	R	H	S
A	A	X	F	L	A	X	W	A	R	T	S
R	A	C	H	E	R	E	T	N	I	R	P
D	Y	S	E	A	M	S	T	R	E	S	S

### Colonial Destinations

*Continued*

► <http://www.historyisfun.org/JamestownSettlement&YorktownVictoryCenter>

► <http://www.nps.gov/colono>  
**Colonial National Historical Park**

Add another day to your Colonial Williamsburg visit, to go back further in time—to the beginning of colonial America at Jamestown (1607) and its end at Yorktown (1781). The 17th-century cultures of English settlers, Powhatan Indians and African are presented in exhibition galleries and outdoor living history experiences. Tours meet SOLs of grades 2-5 and 11.

► [http://www.nationaltrust.org/national\\_trust\\_sites/woodlawn.html](http://www.nationaltrust.org/national_trust_sites/woodlawn.html)

**Woodlawn Plantation**  
This imposing house was a gift from George Washington to his nephew Major Lawrence Lewis and his wife Eleanor "Nelly" Custis, a granddaughter of Martha Washington. Tours are available March-Dec., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.



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# What a Job!

Hard work was key to survival for the average rural family in the late 1700s. Children played a vital role in getting all the work done. By the time they were 11 years old, most children knew how to chop wood, hunt, sew and make candles.

Read more about how the work you have been assigned

was done in Colonial America. Draw pictures to illustrate different stages of your assigned task. Write and perform a skit to show how each chore was completed, the materials and skills needed, the dangers and benefits of the task. The assignment cards give you clues to what you should include.

## BUILD A FIRE

What wood is appropriate for burning in a fireplace?

How accessible is the wood?

What tools are needed to chop wood?

How do you get wood to your home?

How do you build and start a fire?

## MAKE DYE

For what are dyes used? Cloth? Candles?

What natural items are used to create dyes?

What color(s) does each create?

Demonstrate how one of these dyes is made.

Are the dyes permanent?

What is done to keep fabrics from bleeding?

## MAKE LINEN

From what is linen made?

From where do colonists get flax plants?

Does flax require special conditions to live?

Will it grow in all 13 colonies?

Explain harvesting and preparing flax.

How is flax turned into thread?

## MAKE WOOL CLOTH

Where do colonists get sheep?

What is needed to raise healthy sheep?

What tools are required to shear sheep?

What equipment is needed to prepare fleece?

How does fleece become thread?

## MAKE A WOOL JACKET

How does wool thread become cloth?

Does everyone have a loom?

Are there patterns to use?

Is everything sewn by hand?

Do you use buttons?

How do you make buttons?

## MAKE A CANDLE

Why do you need candles?

What is tallow?

Explain rendering to make tallow.

How do you prepare wicks?

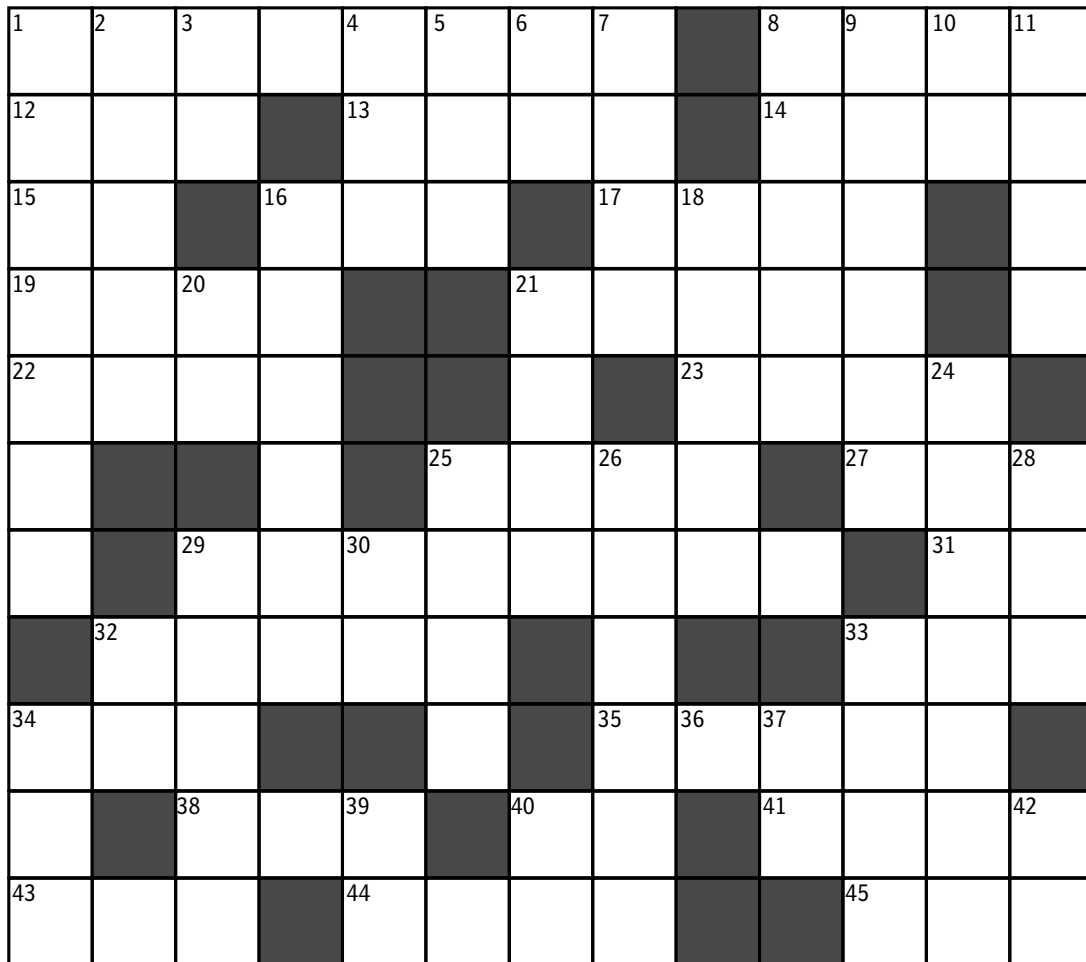
How long does dipping take?

How do you get different shapes?

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

## No Idle Hands

Colonial children played an important role in completing household duties. See if you can find the right words to identify some of their chores.



### ACROSS

1. Separate long, thin fibers from short, coarse fibers by pulling through a bed of nails
8. \_\_\_\_ wood to keep the house warm
12. Industrious insect that lives in a colony
13. Open mouth wide from fatigue or sleepiness
14. Skin of an animal
15. Recreational vehicle (abbrev.)
16. Use needle and thread to make or repair clothing
17. Stratford-upon-\_\_\_\_, Shakespeare's birthplace
19. Disgusting, wretched
21. Saber or cutlass
22. Island of Napoleon's first exile
23. Sly or knowing look

25. Sometimes done while working or in evenings
27. \_\_\_\_, white and blue
29. Time period of the 13 British colonies
31. Me, la, \_\_\_\_, do
32. Food provided in the wilderness for the Israelites
33. A suffix (see 32 across)
34. Able, physical and mental ability
35. Official language of northern India
38. When work was done
40. Exist
41. To repair
43. Beam of light
44. Female sheep
45. In the past

### DOWN

1. Time to gather a crop
2. Used to hammer horseshoes and nails
3. Connecticut (abbrev.)
4. Used as a bleach and to make soap
5. International Alliance of Women (abbrev.)
6. Northwest (abbrev.)
7. To bite or chew
8. Routine, daily task
9. Interfere, delay progress
10. Overdose (abbrev.)
11. Nuisance
16. One of four divisions of the year, such as summer
18. River northwest of Moscow
20. Pound (abbrev.)
21. Draw out and twist fibers into thread or yarn

24. Moisten or soak flax in order to soften and separate fibers
25. After colonial children made it, it was used to clean
26. Functions of an organism within an ecological community
28. No longer exist
29. Go to the confectionary shop to get this
30. Lane (abbrev.)
32. Massachusetts (abbrev.)
33. Thought
34. Vehicle not found in colonial times
36. First person singular pronoun
37. Nautical mile (abbrev.)
39. \_\_\_ Olde Candle Shoppe
40. Take place
42. Perform or fulfill a chore

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

### Work in Colonial Times

Colonial children played an important role in completing household duties. See if you can find the right words to identify some of their chores.

Awl	Cooper	Flint	Lye	board	Shoemaker	Wigmaker
Ax	Fat	Gunsmith	Needle	Seamstress	Spindle	Wood
Brick	Farmer	Horse	Printer	Sew	Straw	
Cobbler	Flax	Laws	Scutching	Sheep	Surveyor	

S E R F S U R V E Y O R  
C L K A H H O R S E E T  
U D C R E K A M G I W A  
T N I M E S E L D E E N  
C I R E R K R E P O O C  
H P B R A F A S L A G F  
I S W E S W A M W Y E L  
N S H E E P L T E A E I  
G G U N S M I T H O L N  
B L L O D D O O W O H T  
O C K C O B B L E R H S  
A A X F L A X W A R T S  
R A C H E R E T N I R P  
D Y S E A M S T R E S S

## Word Study ... a Look at Chore

In 1776, the word “colonial” first appeared in print in America. Actual colonization of America had begun in 1607 in Virginia. The individuals who established Jamestown were living the meaning of the Latin word *colonus*. Each was a “settler in new land.”

The image of Pilgrims celebrating a harvest meal presents an evocative portrait of the colonists who came across the Atlantic. But we should remember that not all who settled the 13 colonies were Puritans. Virginia was a legal colony of the Church of England. George Calvert, Lord Baltimore, established Maryland in 1634 as a home for Roman Catholics. Twenty-three people of Jewish faith fled from Portuguese Brazil in 1654 and found refuge in New Amsterdam where they began the first Jewish community in North America. Quaker William Penn took advantage of a debt that Charles II owed his father. He negotiated for land and a charter for the province of Pennsylvania where he created a haven for members of the Religious Society of Friends. Georgia was the destination of Lutherans in the 1730s.

What did these colonists and the Mennonites, Moravians and Baptists that came in the 1680s have in common? They would have to work to survive. The Latin verb from which *colonus* comes is *colere*, meaning “to inhabit, to cultivate.” These settlers worked the land and planted crops. Adults and children had to work for the good of each household. “Work” hasn’t changed much from its Middle English *werk* and Old High German *werc*, both



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of which meant to exert strength to perform or do something.

Children began doing chores by the age of three. “Chore” comes from Old English *cerr* or *cierr*, meaning “turn or occasion.” A chore is a daily or more routine job. Milking the family cow and collecting eggs were daily chores. Chopping wood was a daily or weekly chore.

In medieval Latin, a *tasca* was a tax or service imposed by a feudal superior. The landowner had the right to tax (*taxare*). By the late 1500s, “task” meant “any piece of work that has to be done.” The tasks that colonial children needed to do were responsibilities that parents expected they do when needed. Mending a fence or making soap was a task.

As children got older it become their duty to work. The Old French *deu*, meaning due, gave us the word “duty.”

Conduct due to parents and superiors and obligatory tasks are duties.

“Duty,” “chore” and “task” are closely related. There is even a tax on imports called a duty. These synonyms give different perspectives on work.

Benjamin Franklin compiled aphorisms. Tell what these wise sayings about work mean.

■ Hunger is the best pickle.

■ At the working man’s house, hunger looks in, but dares not enter.

■ Keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee.

■ Work as if you were to live a hundred years, pray as if you were to die tomorrow.

I hope this assignment hasn’t been a chore.



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**Academic Content Standards** (The main lesson addresses these academic content standards.)

*This lesson addresses academic content standards of Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. Among those that apply are:*

**Maryland***Social Studies*

United States History 2.3 Students demonstrate understanding of the political, religious, economic, and social institutions that evolved in Maryland and other colonies. In the context of Maryland up to contemporary times, and U.S. History through 1790, at the end of grade 5, students compare daily life in the New England, Mid-Atlantic, and Southern colonies, including the various ethnic and cultural perspectives (2.3.5.3)

*Language Arts*

Writing (3.0): Students produce informational, practical, persuasive and narrative writing. 3.5.1 Organization and Focus, By the end of grade 5, students know and are able to

- Create a paragraph that guides and informs the reader's understanding of key ideas and evidence;
- Create a clear organizing structure that includes descriptions placed in a logical, chronological or narrative sequence in ways that help the reader follow the line of thought.

A complete list of State Content Standards of Maryland can be found at <http://www.mdk12.org/mspp/standards/>.

**Virginia***History*

Virginia Studies: 1607 to Present, Grade 4: The standards for fourth-grade students allow them to explore the rich history of Virginia from 1607 to the present. 4.3 The student will explain the economic, social and political life of the Virginia colony, with emphasis on characteristics and contributions of various groups of people.

*English*

Writing, Grade 4.7 The student will write effective narratives and explanations.

- Focus on one aspect of a topic.
- Organize writing to convey a central idea
- Write several related paragraphs on the same topic.

A complete list of Standards of Learning of Virginia can be found on the Web at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/>.

**Washington, D.C.***Social Studies*

Scientific, Technological, and Economic Change, Content Standard 3: Students recognize scientific, technological, and economic changes and understand how they have affected societies, culture, and politics throughout history. By the end of Grade 3, the student will identify the various institutions that make up economic systems such as households, workers, banks, labor unions, etc.

*Social Diversity and Social Change*, Content Standard 4: Students understand how the origins, evolution, and diversity of societies, social classes and groups have been affected and changed by forces of geography, ideology and economics. By the end of Grade 5, the student will examine how individuals and groups value types of work.

*Reading/English Language Arts*

Language for research and Inquiry, Content Standard 3: The student produces a report that

- develops a controlling idea or theme that conveys a perspective on a subject;
- Includes appropriate facts and details;
- Uses a range of appropriate strategies, such as providing facts and details, describing, or analyzing the subject, and a relevant anecdote.

A complete list of Standards for Teaching and Learning of the District of Columbia Public Schools can be found at <http://www.k12.dc.us>.