

Plan a Colonial Day at Your School



Created by the Oklahoma History Center Museum
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Introduction

Prepare your students with these primary-source lesson plans and activities on colonial life. Students should understand who colonists were, what motivated them to come to the New World, the class system, the complicated relationships they had with both the British monarchy and American Indians, and the origins and consequences of chattel slavery in the colonies.

- [“Empire and Identity in the American Colonies: British Colonial Leaders, Colonists, and Native Americans,”](#) National Endowment for the Humanities
- [“Teaching Hard History: American Slavery,”](#) Teaching Tolerance
- [“Social Classes in the Colonies,”](#) College Sidekick

Play colonial games like marbles, hopscotch, spelling bees, sack races, tug-of-war, jackstraws (pick-up sticks), whirligig, and ninepins. You can also construct hoop and stick games or graces. These are all available in the Oklahoma History Center’s free Colonial Games and Music trunk.

Make traditional 17th- and 18th- century crafts like corn husk dolls and yarn dolls for younger students, or simple quilting, embroidery, or cross-stitch projects for older students.

Eat colonial staples and have students learn about how food was grown and processed. Students can make butter, shell peas, or shuck corn.

Reserve a free hands-on history traveling trunk from the Oklahoma History Center, full of historical items, clothing, books, and curriculum.

- [Colonial Agriculture traveling trunk](#)
- [Colonial Games and Music traveling trunk](#)
- [Colonial Life traveling trunk](#)
- [Continental Soldier traveling trunk](#)

Experience live demonstrations from museum educators, community guests, and experts. Students can learn about traditional crafts such as soap-making, spinning, and candle-making through hands-on presentations. The Oklahoma History Center offers colonial dance, continental soldier, and 1830s beadwork artist living history presentations at your school!

Ask for help from parents, volunteers, school administrators, museum educators, and community members.

Resources

John Smith's Map of Virginia, 1624

Created by explorer Captain John Smith, this ornate map depicts early Virginia. It includes illustrations of historical figures, place names of American Indian villages, the Royal Coat of Arms of England, and John Smith's own coat of arms. The map also features a Susquehannock man and paramount chief Powhatan.

loc.gov/item/99446115/

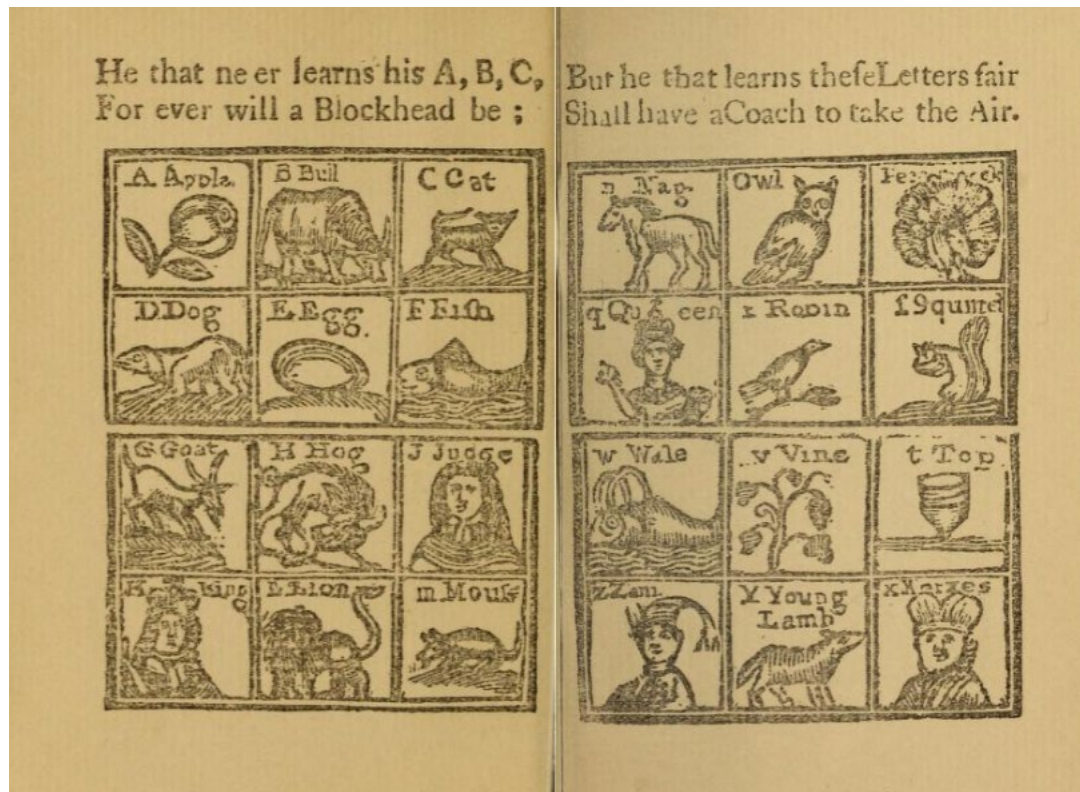
nps.gov/articles/000/smith-map-of-virginia.htm



The New England Primer, 1688

This publication was used by many colonists for over 100 years. It was written by Benjamin Harris, a journalist, in 1688. *The New England Primer* was 80 pages and included illustrations, religious text, and prayers.

archive.org/details/newenglandprimer00john



Advertisement, 1760

"To be sold, on board the ship *Bance Island*, ... negroes, just arrived from the Windward & Rice Coast"

This newspaper advertisement was published in 1760 to inform readers of the sale of enslaved people in South Carolina.

loc.gov/pictures/item/98503865/

TO BE SOLD, on board the
Ship *Bance Island*, on tuesday the 6th
of *May* next, at *Afbley-Ferry*; a choice
cargo of about 250 fine healthy

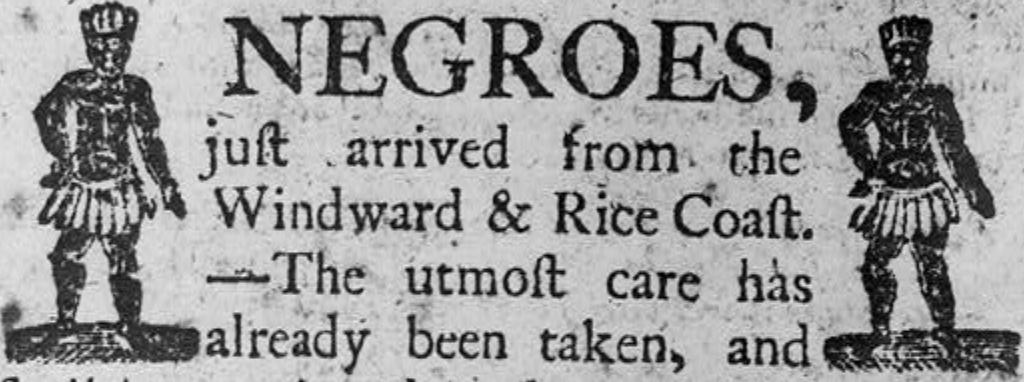
NEGROES,

just arrived from the
Windward & Rice Coast.

—The utmost care has
already been taken, and
shall be continued, to keep them free from
the least danger of being infected with the
SMALL-POX, no boat having been on
board, and all other communication with
people from *Charles-Town* prevented.

Austin, Laurens, & Appleby.

N. B. Full one Half of the above Negroes have had the
SMALL-POX in their own Country.



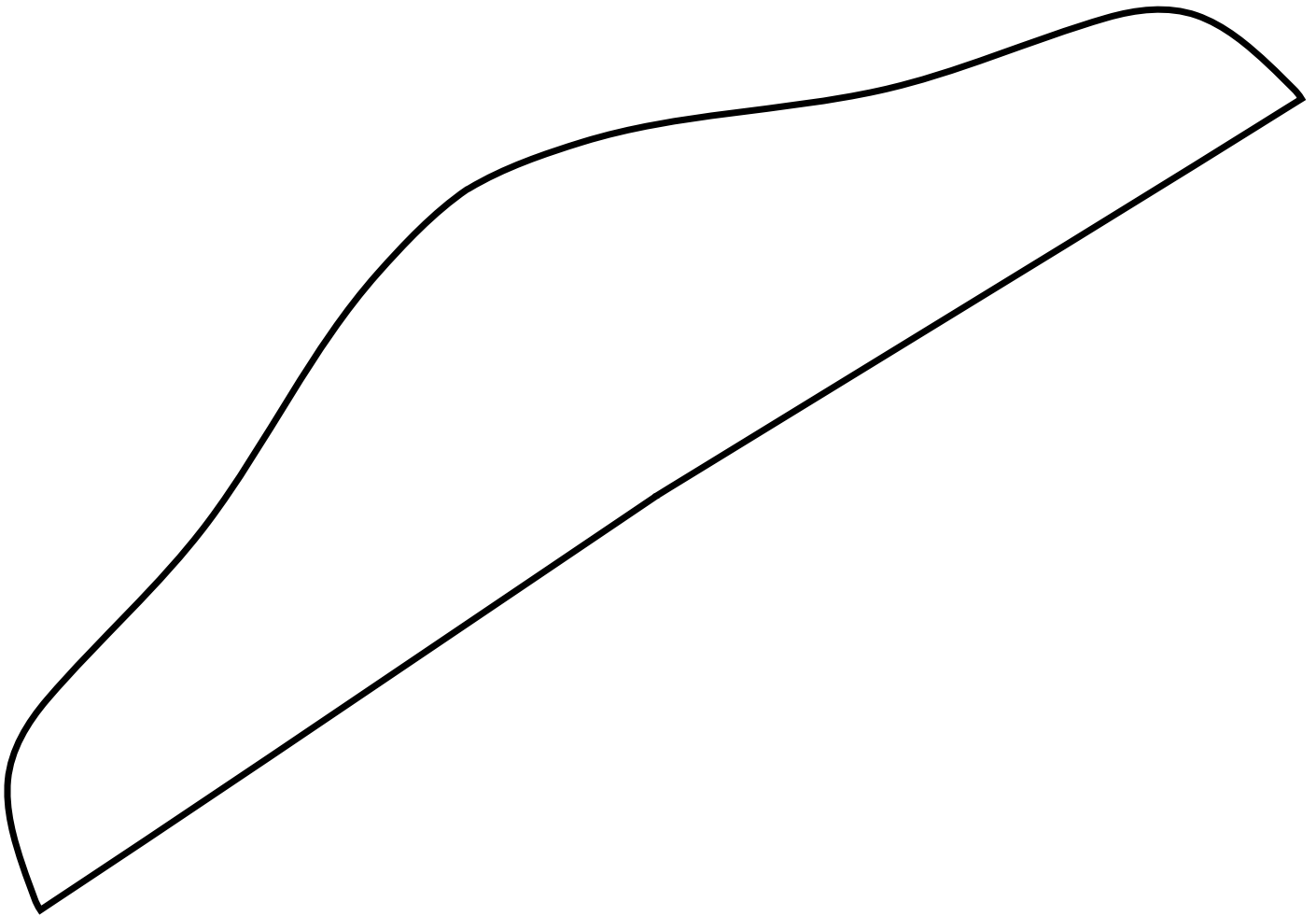
Activities

Make a Tricorn Hat

Three-cornered or tricorn hats were popular during the 18th century.

You will need three pieces for each hat. Print the template and trace around it on whatever kind of paper you choose. Decorate the hat and staple the ends to create a triangular hat.

For step-by-step photos and instructions, visit mountvernon.org/education/for-teachers/lessonplans/online-activities-for-kids-2/how-to-make-a-tricorn-hat



Make a Girls' Mob Cap

Video instructions are available at Home School in the Woods for a no-sew version:

youtu.be/_Ougzi-6PjY&t

Supplies

- One yard of cheap muslin, 44 to 45 inches wide, for every four caps (you can also use old sheets)
- Patterns cut out of cardboard or heavy cardstock
 - One 18-inch circle
 - One 15-inch circle
- Satin ribbon, 1/8 inch wide
- Large-eyed sewing needles

Directions

1. Cut an 18" diameter circle of fabric
2. Draw a pencil line around the centered 15" pattern
3. Pink, zigzag, hem, or apply lace to the edge of the cap
4. Stitch along the pencil line with ribbon, 1" to 1.5" apart
5. Pull the ribbon ends to tighten the fabric and tie ends in a bow

Make a Whirligig

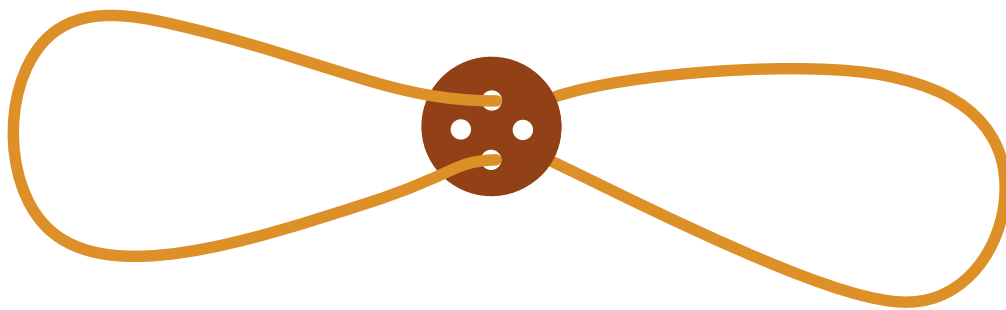
A whirligig is a kinetic toy that spins. You can make your own whirligig with just a string and a button. A video tutorial is available from the [Job Barr Cabin Museum on YouTube](#).

Supplies

- A large button with two or four holes, or a piece of cardboard/cardstock cut in a large circle
- 2.5 feet of string, yarn, or thin ribbon
- Scissors

Directions

1. If you are using a large button, skip to step 3. If you are using cardboard or cardstock, cut out a four-inch circle. The circle can be decorated using crayons or colored pencils
2. Punch two small holes in the circle, about $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch from the center
3. Thread the string into the holes and tie the ends together
4. Pull the string until the button/circle is in the middle
5. Tie a loop on each end of the string large enough for one or two fingers to fit inside
6. Attach the finger loops to each hand, and twirl/spin the string away from you to “wind up” the toy
7. Stop twirling/spinning, and pull the ends taut. The string will continue spinning or unwinding and may make a whirring sound.



Helpful Links

Colonial Recipes and Crafts

- ["Recipes," Scholastic](#)
- ["Arts and Crafts," Scholastic](#)

Colonial History Organizations and Resources

- ["Teacher Resources," Colonial Williamsburg](#)
- ["Teaching with Mount Vernon," George Washington's Mount Vernon](#)

Online Primary Sources

- ["The New Nation, 1783 to 1815" classroom materials, Library of Congress](#)
- ["Colonization and Settlement, 1585–1763," Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History](#)
- ["Toolbox Library: Primary Resources in US History and Literature," National Humanities Center](#)

Lesson Plans

- ["Life in Colonial America Stations," Brown Bag Teacher](#)
- ["Colonial House for Teachers," PBS](#)
- ["Divining America: Religion in American History," National Humanities Center](#)
- ["Powerful 13 Colonies Primary Sources for Students," The Clever Teacher](#)