



Day 16 Colonization Unit
70 Minutes

New England Colonies

Lesson Title

The New England Colonies: Geography, Religion, and Economy

Grade Levels: 5–9

Time: 60–70 minutes

Region: New England Colonies

Colonies Covered

- New Hampshire
 - Massachusetts
 - Rhode Island
 - Connecticut
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Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Locate the New England colonies on a map
- Explain how climate and geography affected life in New England
- Describe the role of Puritan religion in shaping society
- Identify key economic activities in the New England colonies
- Understand the importance of the triangular trade

Materials

- PowerPoint: *The New England Colonies*
- Article: *The New England Colonies* (provided text)
- Individual colony articles:
 - New Hampshire
 - Massachusetts
 - Rhode Island
 - Connecticut
- Reading comprehension exercises (teacher-selected, differentiated)
- Map of the 13 Colonies (print or digital)
- Student notebooks or organizers

Lesson Structure Overview

- **Map Review & Engagement:** 10 minutes
 - **PowerPoint & Guided Discussion:** 20 minutes
 - **Article Reading & Comprehension:** 25–30 minutes
 - **Wrap-Up / Discussion:** 5–10 minutes
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Part 1: Map Review – Locating the New England Colonies (10 Minutes)

Teacher Directions

Display a map of the New England Colonies. See image at our interactive 13 colonies map at:

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/admin/pages/american-history/13-colonies/13-colonies-interactive-map-and-scavenger-hunts>

Teacher Script:

“Before we talk about life in New England, we need to know where New England actually is. Let’s locate the four New England colonies on the map.”

As students identify the colonies, feel free to click on them to unlock additional information on each colony.

Optional: (20 minutes)

<https://learnaboutamerica.com/american-history/13-colonies/13-colonies-regions/new-england-colonies>

Allow students to complete the online scavenger that comes with our New England Colonies Interactive Historical Sites Map!

Guide students to:

- Identify **New Hampshire** (north)
- Identify **Massachusetts** (central, coastline)
- Identify **Rhode Island** (smallest, southern coast)
- Identify **Connecticut** (southwest of Massachusetts)

Quick Check:

- “Which colony has the longest coastline?”
 - “Which colony is the smallest?”
 - “Why might being near the ocean matter?”
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Part 2: PowerPoint – New England Colonies Overview (20 Minutes)

Use your PowerPoint to guide instruction. Below is a **teacher script aligned to typical slide topics**.

<https://mrnussbaum.com/explorers/plans/ne.pptx>

Slide: Climate and Geography

Teacher Script:

“The New England colonies had cold winters and mild summers. While the land near the coast was flatter, it became hilly and mountainous inland. The soil was rocky, which made farming difficult. However, cold winters also reduced the spread of disease, helping settlers survive.”

Slide: Religion in New England

Teacher Script:

“Religion shaped nearly every part of life in New England. Most colonists were Puritans, who wanted to purify Christianity. They followed very strict rules and expected everyone else to do the same. Church attendance was required, and people who disagreed with Puritan beliefs could face serious punishment.”

Slide: Daily Life Under Puritan Rule

Teacher Script:

“Puritans believed life should be serious and focused on God. Singing, celebrations, and holidays were often banned. This strict way of life created order, but it also caused conflict—especially for people who wanted religious freedom.”

Slide: Economy of New England

Teacher Script:

“Because farming was difficult, colonists turned to the sea. Fishing—especially cod—was extremely important. Other key jobs included whaling, shipbuilding, trapping, and logging. Forests provided lumber, and the ocean provided food and trade opportunities.”

Slide: The Triangular Trade

Teacher Script:

“Eventually, many New England merchants became involved in the triangular trade. This was a three-part trading system that connected New England, West Africa, and the West Indies. Rum was traded for enslaved Africans, who were sold for molasses, which was then turned into more rum.”

(Emphasize that this trade contributed to wealth **and** human suffering.)

Optional: Read students a differentiated article about any of the New England Colonies: (10 min.) Each article includes discussion questions and a glossary. If you are a member, students can simplify articles and save annotations.

[New Hampshire Colony](#) | [Massachusetts Bay Colony](#) | [Rhode Island Colony](#) | [Connecticut Colony](#)

Part 3: Reading Comprehension Options

[LearnAboutAmerica.com](#) offers numerous reading comprehension options for the New England colonies. For activities on the Plymouth Colony, Puritans or Puritan Wars, or Salem, please visit those pages.

[Comparing and Contrasting the 13 Colonies Regions Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 800

[Comparing and Contrasting the New England Colonies](#) - Lexile 800

[Connecticut Colony Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 900

[Connecticut Colony Online Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 900

[Colonial New Haven Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 820

[Colonial New Haven Online Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 820

[The Naming of Rhode Island Online Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 850

[The Naming of Rhode Island Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 850

[Rhode Island Colony Online Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1200

[Rhode Island Colony Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1200

[Cotton Mather Online Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1200

[Cotton Mather Printable Reading Comprehension](#) - Lexile 1200

Part 4: Wrap-Up Discussion (5–10 Minutes)

Use or adapt the discussion questions from the article:

- Why was farming difficult in the New England colonies?
- How did the Puritans influence daily life?

- What were the most important jobs in New England?
- Why was the triangular trade important to the economy?

Exit Question (oral or written):

“How did geography shape the way people lived and worked in New England?”