

Overview

Summary

It is 1769 and the fictional Wilcox family is living in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The colonists are asserting their desire for independence from the British. Wilcox family members share their daily experiences and reflect on the turbulence around them through fictional journal entries and letters. Twelve-year-old Benjamin Wilcox learns about life on a farm when he spends time with his uncle's family. Then Benjamin joins his father, a captain of a ship, for a voyage to Philadelphia, then to Charleston, and home again to Boston. In each place, he sees a different lifestyle. He also learns there are differences in how the colonists react to the increasing difficulties with British rule. In 1770, tensions explode in an event that came to be known as the Boston Massacre.

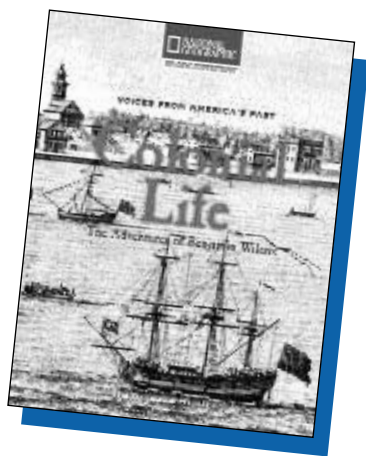
Background Information

Until the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, Britain's rule over its American colonies was weak. Now, straddled with a great war debt, Britain wanted the colonies to pay for their defense. In 1765, Parliament passed the Stamp Act, the first direct tax levied on American colonists. The law required that a tax stamp be affixed to all legal documents, newspapers, pamphlets, and even playing cards. This direct tax resulted in a colonial boycott of British goods. As a result, parliament repealed the Stamp Act, but a year later it passed the Townshend Acts, which taxed paint, paper, tea, and other items imported from Britain. As Britain tightened its control, tensions mounted. Minor clashes between colonists and British troops finally escalated into violence on the streets of Boston in 1770.

Colonial Life

The Adventures of Benjamin Wilcox

By Barbara Burt



Learning Objectives

Genre/Text Features

- first-person narrative/letters and diaries
- expository
- historical illustrations
- captions
- map
- contents and glossary

Reading Skills

Skill Focus

- recognize cause-and-effect relationships
- use specialized words

Supporting Skills

- infer
- compare and contrast
- summarize
- take notes

Writing Skills

Writing Focus

- write a speech (persuasive)

Supporting Skills

- prewrite
- conduct research

Speaking and Listening

- give oral presentation

Social Studies Skills

- compare and contrast life in the different colonies
- reconstruct past events from the perspective of colonists
- identify actions colonists took to influence British policy
- construct time lines
- explain the role the economy played in events leading up to the American Revolution

Focus on Reading

Before Reading

Activate Prior Knowledge

Create a simple time line to help students track events. Use dates from 1600 to the present in increments of 50 years.

Explain to students that they will be reading about events beginning around 1769. Place 1769 and this year's date on the time line. Ask:

How many years have passed since 1769?

Then list the dates provided, out of order, on the board. Have students order the dates and have volunteers add each date to the class time line. Add other dates students think are significant.

- 1787 The Constitutional Convention
- 1803 The Louisiana Purchase
- 1865 Civil War ends
- 1917 U.S. enters WWI
- 1941 Attack on Pearl Harbor
- 1969 First moon landing
- 1991 Operation Desert Storm

Preview

Give students time to preview the book. Have them look at the illustrations and locate the diaries, journals, and letters. Point out the Wilcox family pictures on page 6. Ask:

What time period will you be reading about? How do you know?

What kinds of information do you think you will learn from the letters and journal entries?


Set Purpose

Ask students whether this book reminds them of other books they have read. Help students set a purpose for reading. Ask:

What do you hope to learn?

Encourage students to give reasons for their answers.

Model your own purpose for reading, if necessary.

 **Vocabulary Strategy:**
Use specialized words
Activity Master, Page 188

Remind students that the economy is how a community or country manages its

resources, such as money, people, and crops. Discuss with students how the economies of the colonies and Britain played a major role in the events leading up to the American Revolution. A major question involved who had the right to control the economy of the colonies: the British or the colonists themselves.

Next explain that some words are used to describe a specific or "special" topic, and these words are called specialized words. Specialized words can be grouped together because their meanings can all relate. Have students use *Colonial Life* and the glossary to help them define each word and then write how each word relates to the colonial economy. Students will be using these words:

- | | |
|---------|------------|
| ban | plantation |
| boycott | repeal |
| imports | |

Correlation to National Standards

Language Arts

- read to be informed
- read a wide range of literature
- apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend and interpret texts
- use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes

Social Studies

- time, continuity, and change
- people, places, and environments
- production, distribution, and consumption
- civic ideals and practices

Geography

- places and regions (5)
- human systems (11)
- environment and society (15)

State/Local

See Standards Chart on pages 282–287.

During Reading

Read Strategically: Recognize cause-and-effect relationships Activity Master, Page 189

Assign each chapter of the book as independent reading. As students read, have them use the Activity Master on page 189 to focus on the cause-and-effect relationships between the British and the colonists. Remind students that the effect is what happens and the cause is why it happens. To model the process, you might want to work through one or two sections of the chart with the class. (See below.)

Strategy Tip: Take notes

Some students may have difficulty extracting the facts from the diaries, journals, and letters. For each chapter, suggest that students take notes. For example, for each place discussed, students can write down:

- ▶ the place name (for example, Waterloo, Maine)
- ▶ the date (for example, 1769)

- ▶ main events (for example, people begin to speak out against the British)

Then as you discuss the story, students will have information to refer to as they separate the characters' activities from the historical events.

Meeting Individual Needs

For specific strategies on meeting individual needs, see pages 264–269.

After Reading

Responding

Initiate discussion to assess reading comprehension. Ask:

What is a colony? (draw conclusions)

Why did many colonists boycott British goods? (cause and effect)

How did rebellious colonists try to convince others to join their cause? (summarize)

How was life in the northern colonies different from life in the southern colonies? (compare and contrast)

What were the events that led up to the Revolutionary War? (sequence)

Writing and Research: Write a speech

Activity Master, Page 190

Tell students to imagine they are colonists living in Boston in 1770. They are to write a persuasive speech that either argues for or against rebellion.

Students can use their books and other sources to plan their speeches. Remind students that a persuasive speech tries to convince others to think or behave in a certain way.

Communicating: Speaking/listening Give Oral Presentation

In small groups, students can read their speeches aloud.

Students reading aloud should

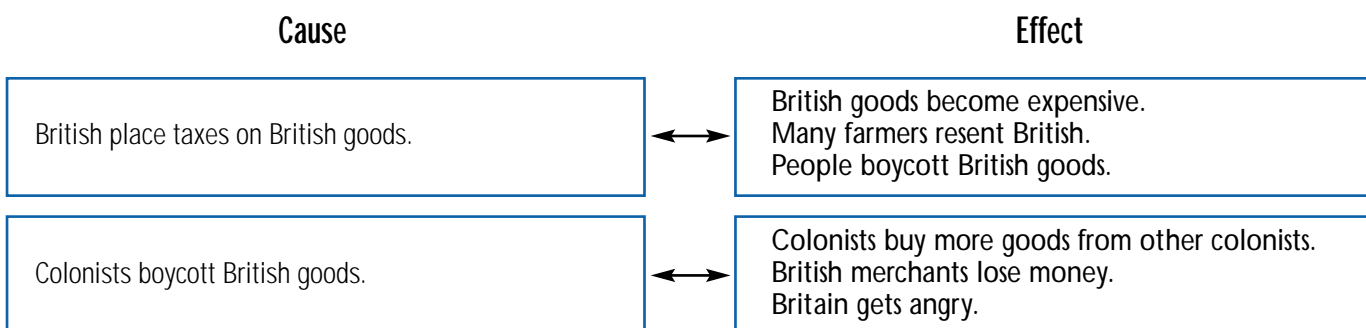
- ✓ speak clearly
- ✓ make eye contact with listeners
- ✓ read with conviction and appropriate emphasis and gestures

Listeners should

- ✓ determine main ideas
- ✓ ask questions to clarify ideas
- ✓ listen politely

After the speeches have been shared, talk about what aspects of the speeches were particularly effective.

The British and the Colonists



Extend and Assess

Focus on Social Studies

Research a Colony

Organize students into small groups to research a colony of their choice. Students can use references and library materials to find out about the life and economies of the colonies. Students should consider how each colony felt about the relationship of the colonies to Great Britain.

Students can present their information in a variety of ways: an oral report, an illustrated map, or a set of pictures with captions. Provide time for groups to share their information.

Projects should

- ✓ name the location and founder of the colony
- ✓ identify the economy
- ✓ highlight life and cultural aspects of the colony
- ✓ be presented in an organized fashion

Map Activity

Activity Master, Page 191

The activity helps students create a specialized map of colonial America. Students use the information provided to create a map showing major goods produced in the colonies' three regions. Encourage students to first read all the information provided and then sketch out their ideas before working directly on the map.

Assessment Options

Use the following assessment options.

Questions

During individual conferences ask the following questions or ask students to write the answers independently in their notebooks:

- 1 What happened when the British taxed goods?
- 2 What was the effect of the boycotts?
- 3 Why was Boston the center of the rebellion?
- 4 How was life in Charleston different from life in Philadelphia or Boston?
- 5 What events lead to the Revolutionary War?

Assessment Activity

Ask students to draw two pictures. One should illustrate how the British viewed the rebellious colonists; the other should show how the colonists viewed the British. Direct students to write a caption for each picture that summarizes the viewpoint, giving at least two reasons for the viewpoint.

Pictures and captions should

- ✓ be accurate
- ✓ clearly illustrate each viewpoint
- ✓ use words and images to communicate
- ✓ be carefully prepared

Multiple-Choice Test

Use the multiple-choice test in the Assessment Booklet.

Cross-Curricular Connection

Mathematics

In *Colonial Life* and in colonial times, the colonies depended on imported goods from Britain. Most colonies imported more goods than they exported. And the colonies had to buy certain goods from Britain. This helped Britain's economy but generally hurt the economies in the colonies. Have students create a bar graph that compares how much was imported to and exported from the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies.

Information for Graphs

Colonial Imports (goods bought), in British \$

▶ New England	About \$344,000
▶ Middle	About \$485,000
▶ Southern	About \$485,000

Colonial Exports (goods sold), in British \$

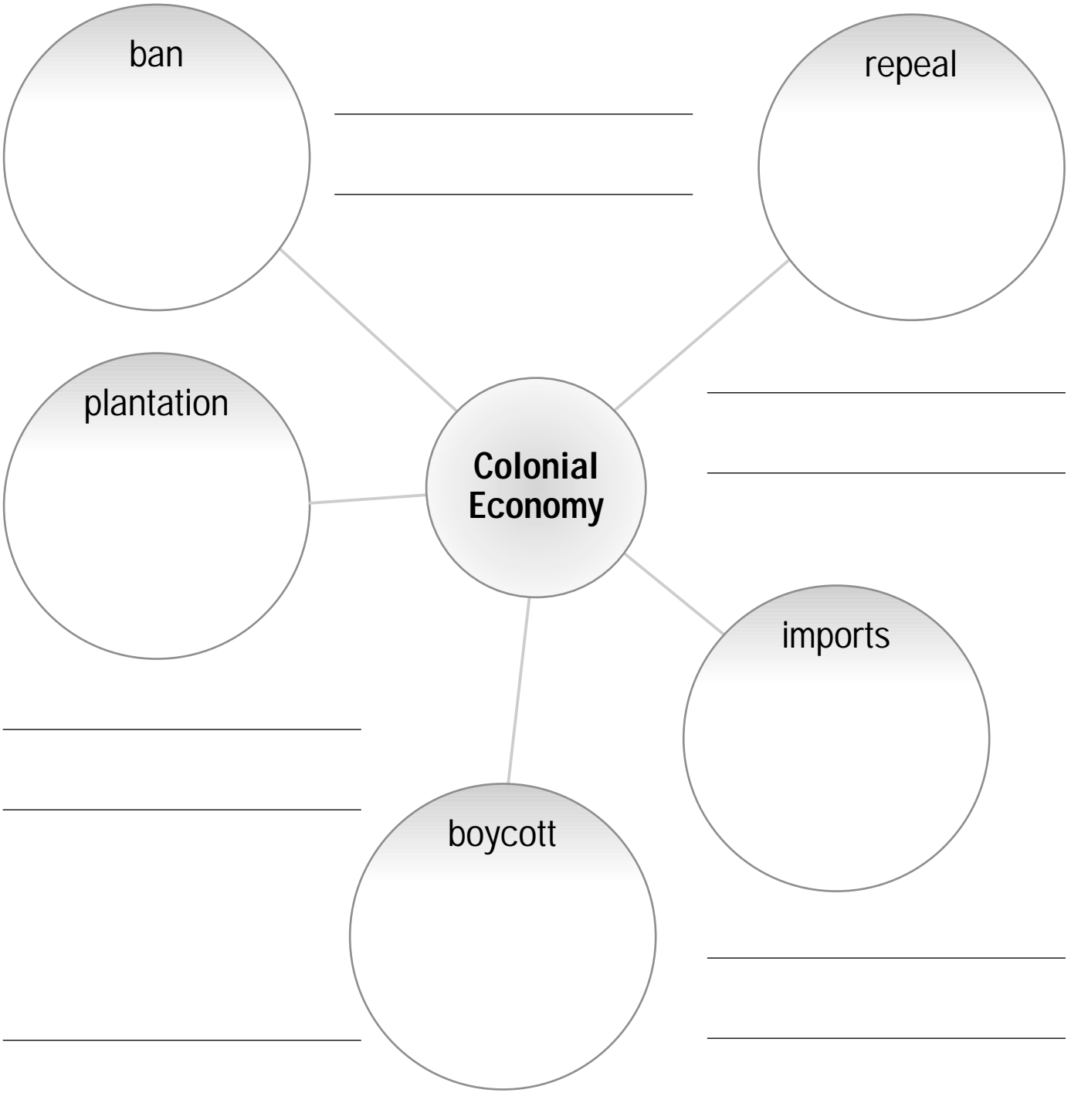
▶ New England	About \$48,000
▶ Middle	About \$64,000
▶ Southern	About \$702,000

Home-School Connection

Students and parents can rent a video that features events around or during the Revolutionary War. (Or they can read together a piece of historical fiction written about the period, for example, *Johnny Tremain*, by Esther Forbes.) Ask students to talk about how the events are portrayed. What side do the main characters favor?

Vocabulary: Specialized Words

The words below are from *Colonial Life: The Adventures of Benjamin Wilcox*. Each word has something to do with the colonial economies. In the circles, write a meaning for each word. On the lines, write a sentence that shows how the word relates to the colonial economy.



Reading: Cause-and-Effect Relationships

As you read *Colonial Life*, think about actions the British and colonists take and the effects they have on each other. To find the effects for each cause, read the cause and ask yourself, “What happened as a result of this?” To find the cause of the effects listed, ask yourself, “Why did this happen?” You may have more than one answer for each.

Cause	Effect
British place taxes on British goods.	
Colonists boycott British goods.	
	Boston becomes the center of the rebellion.
	Pennsylvania does not support the boycott of British goods.
	British soldiers shoot at colonists in the Boston Massacre.
	The Revolutionary War begins.

Writing: Prewriting

Speech

You are a colonist living in Boston in 1773. Great Britain has just enacted the Intolerable Acts. It's decision time. Will you join the rebels against Britain, or will you remain loyal to the mother country?

Write a speech to persuade others to join your cause, whether you are a rebel or a loyalist. You will need to support your ideas with reasons and examples. Fill out this page to plan your speech. Then write your speech.

My colonial name is _____

I am a loyalist or rebel (circle one) because _____

I feel this way about Britain's policies: _____

My side has tried to make things better by _____

Others should join my side because _____

Write your speech.

Social Studies: Label a Map

Use *Colonial Life* and the information provided below to complete this map. Use pictures, color, or other ways to make your map interesting, neat, and easy to understand.



Label these places

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New Hampshire
 Massachusetts
 New York
 Rhode Island
 Connecticut
 Pennsylvania
 New Jersey
 Delaware
 Maryland
 Virginia
 North Carolina
 South Carolina
 Georgia

1. Show that the Southern region, from Maryland to Georgia, produced rice and indigo.
2. Show that New England, which included New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, produced lumber and fish.
3. Show that the remaining Middle region produced grains.
4. Label each region.
5. Sketch the route Ben took on the *Sarah Margaret*. Decide how you will show where the ship started and the direction it took.