

Comparative settlement of new england and chesapeake colonies essay sample

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Compare the early development of New England with the Chesapeake as depicted in Massachusetts and Virginia colonies. How do the governing structures differ and what do they tell us about the early challenges the two colonies faced?

In 1606, King James I re-initiated England's efforts to establish a viable colony in the New World. The 1606 Charter was granted to the Virginia Company for the establishment of a colony in the Chesapeake region of North America. On May 14, 1607, the settlers landed on Jamestown Island and began the establishment of the Virginia English Colony. As political and religious oppression increased in England into the 1620s, the Puritans sought to leave England and establish an additional colony north of the Plymouth Plantation. In 1630, under the leadership of John Winthrop, these new settlers traveled to Massachusetts to establish the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Although the Virginia Colony and the Massachusetts Bay Colony were each settled and populated by people of English origin, the two regions developed into distinct societies due to their differing societal priorities, difficulties faced in settling and maintaining each colony, and their governing structures.

The Virginia Colony and the Massachusetts Bay Colony were formed with vastly different motivations and societal priorities. The Virginia Colony at Jamestown was prompted by the economic motives of the Virginia Company of London which sought to expand English trade and obtain wider markets for trade of goods. Naturally, they sought financial gain from their colony. The colony was, therefore, largely populated by young men seeking only financial gain. This singular focus nearly led to the early demise of the

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colony as men died of malnutrition due to having neglected agricultural needs during the first year. Additionally, the lack of women resulted in an almost absent birth rate which forced the colony to rely on reinforcements to repopulate the colony. By contrast, the Massachusetts Bay Colony was settled by the Puritans who wished for a theocracy in their government which would emphasize religion over trade. The colony was, therefore, settled largely by family units seeking religious or other freedoms. These family units were hard-working and capable of building the population, and thus greatly increased the viability of the colony.

Settlement and development of the new colonies was not easy for either group, as both colonies faced the hardships of disease, harsh winters, and environmental hazards resulting in early losses in both colonies. During their first year though, the economic focus of the Virginia Colony cost them greatly in additional lost lives. Their economic goals drew settlers with much inexperience and a profound lack of wilderness survival skills, resulting in insufficient agricultural development (lack of food), and rampant unwillingness to perform the difficult labors required to maintain the colony. Additionally, frequent bickering between competing settlers and the initial absence of family units further hindered quick development. This contrasted strongly with the early Massachusetts Bay Colony which benefited greatly from the strong work ethic and family values of their Puritan beliefs. The strong community support system and population growth added by the family units lent the colony a sustainability which helped the colony recover from their first winter and begin to thrive.

In addition to the societal priorities and settlement difficulties which effected the early development of these two colonies, their governmental structures further contributed to their developmental differences. Founded by a joint-stock company loyal to England, the Virginia Colony operated under a system led by a royal governor which, in theory, held almost complete authority. However, a colonial legislature comprised of property holding males controlled the salary of the governor and often used their power to control the governor's actions. As the colony grew, though, a new form of government developed in addition to the colonial governor: the House of Burgesses. This governmental body became the first representative government of the New World. The system initially served them well, especially with the boom of the tobacco industry to strengthen the profitability of the colony.

However, in 1622, the colony suffered a tragic year with a decline in tobacco trade, a second war with the Indians, and corruption of local officials all of which contributed to a collapse of the colony which forced King James to revoke his charter and remake Virginia as a royal colony in 1624. This failure and institution of a new colonial system contrasted greatly with the governmental system which characterized the Massachusetts Bay Colony. As part of their Puritan views, the Massachusetts colonists believed that the members of each church constituted a separate self-governing body, a system known as Congregationalism. This caused them to view the towns of Massachusetts as individual city-states with the churches as their centers and the church members as acting governors. This system was very effective for encouraging growth and development of the colony as each community

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was responsible for their own enterprise- building a church and cultivating surrounding land for the survival of the church families. Because this system draws on the basic human drive to provide for and protect the individual's own family, the system was very successful in cultivating growth and development for the Massachusetts Colony.

Though the Chesapeake and Massachusetts Bay areas were each settled by colonists of English origin, the two regions developed into distinct societies due to their differing societal priorities, difficulties faced in settling and maintaining each colony, and their governing structures. The economic focus of the Virginia Colony accentuated the difficulties of early settlement, while the religious focus and beliefs of the Massachusetts Bay settlers granted them great aid in surviving and rebuilding their colony as needed.

Additionally, the forms of government unique to the two colonies further influenced the success of the colonies. Virginia's individualized focus lacked the communal strength of Massachusetts' governmental structures, and, as a result, ultimately failed and had to be replaced by a new royal colony structure. While each colony ultimately developed into a stable entity, their vastly variant beliefs culminated in very different beginnings despite their similar origin in England. Thread #3: American Ideals

What do the different governing systems tell us about the motivations of those who started these two colonies? What are the ideas or motivating impulses between the two regions and how do they impact the development of government and/or society?

The governing systems of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the Virginia Colony were vastly different, and were very telling of the motivations of those who founded the colonies. The form of government of The Virginia Colony, largely unstructured and undefined, was founded upon values of economic profit and individual success. Motivations of self-interest resulted in many laws and government forces which were extremely harsh.

Disjunction and pure economic focus resulted in great struggles and hardships for the early settlers of the Virginia Colony who were ill-equipped to handle the harsh winters and environmental dangers of their new home. This contrasted with the unity of the Massachusetts Bay Colony which was founded upon the Puritan values of hard-work, commitment to God's work, and family. The governmental structure of Congregationalism allowed the settlers to form small, unified groups dedicated to their shared beliefs and mutual survival. While these settlers also dealt with the hardships of harsh winters and environmental dangers in the New World, their strength of community and their dedication to their mutual beliefs gave them the ability to stand firm against adversity and survive their struggles.