

Ap us colonial america dbq

Countries



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Anthony Edwards8/24/12 AP US History- Jones Colonial America DBQ An interesting characteristic of the colonies that the English founded during the 17th and 18th centuries on the eastern coast of modern day America is that while all were indeed settled by people from England they each developed their own very distinct cultures and ways of life. While the varying environments from each colony to the next certainly isn't a negligible factor in the diversification of the colonists' cultures in the New World, there are more striking factors that can be considered.

The colonists themselves it seems had very different viewpoints, goals and demeanor when several regions are compared. Examples of two regions that were both settled by the English that developed very different and arguably contrasting cultures are the New England and the Chesapeake colonies. It is apparent that the main goals and natures of the colonists in either region were dissimilar.

In New England colonists were primarily Puritans and focused on religion, self-government, family values, and cooperation for the good of the community where in the Chesapeake colonists often relied on the royal government and were focused on acquiring great wealth and furthering their own individual achievement. These dissimilarities as well as other factors like the environment caused the two cultures to develop in very separate ways. Every society is shaped by its environment and its culture can be greatly influenced by its surroundings.

The society of the New England colonies was formed in an area of temperate, generally cool temperatures, clean water, and rocky, infertile soil. This meant that the colonists weren't plagued by many diseases and relied

on the trade of furs, lumber, and fish. This contrasts to the unhealthy environment the Chesapeake colonists faced. The land of the Chesapeake was often mosquito infested and its inhabitants were constantly in the danger of outbreaks of disease.

The Chesapeake's economy focused on tobacco as its main export, meaning that the fate and the well-being of many Chesapeake colonies relied on the demand of tobacco products back in the Old World. Another factor that can shape a society is the actual makeup of the people within the society. The colonies in New England were primarily settled by entire families forming communities with other families. There are many accounts of the emigrants on board ships bound for America and very often the ships travelling to New England had examples of entire families seeking a fresh start with husbands, wives, sons, daughters, and occasionally servants (Document B). In contrast, the lists of emigrants bound for the Chesapeake usually held a majority of young men, unrelated to one another and a small portion of young women, again, unrelated. It seemed only individuals, most not even at the age of 35, came to the Chesapeake to start their new lives (Document C).

This of course meant that the society in New England was oriented around family and understandably focusing on the well-being of those related to the colonists. In the Chesapeake most colonists held no relation to each other and so didn't terribly care for anyone else but themselves. These factors by themselves would be enough to see an ostensible difference between the societies, however there are still more factors that led to the dissimilar developments of these two unique cultures. The Puritans that came to New

England had a history of cooperation and a focus on the good of the Puritan community.

After they left England to worship as they pleased and avoid persecution they went to the Netherlands. Eventually many Puritans became worried that their children would become “Dutchified” and wanted to retain their culture. To avoid further Dutchification the Puritans got a charter from the Virginia Company to settle in the New World. They landed off the mark however, perhaps to their benefit as they were supposed to land in the unhealthy Chesapeake, and found themselves in what would eventually become New England.

In 1630 a man on board a ship sailing to New England named John Winthrop wrote what he thought would be A Model of Christian Charity. His views of course pleased his fellow New Englanders as he was destined to become the Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony for many years. His views expressed in his writings seemingly portrayed most Puritans opinions on the ideal community where all families, rich and poor, ought to work cooperatively for everyone’s benefit and have the utmost brotherly affection for each other.

Failure in doing so would result in God’s withdrawal of his assistance and allow His enemies to speak ill of Him and His way of life (Document A). Clearly New Englanders held both God and cooperation in the highest reverence. In stark contrast, a certain Captain John Smith wrote an account of the history of Virginia in which he once described his colony in a manner that would surely displease Winthrop. Captain Smith describes the food of many of the colonists being merely meal and water, men focusing only on

finding and selling gold, and a group of deserters trying to return to England (Document F).

The colonists were ill prepared and focused more on wealth than provisions, showing no real sense of community or cooperation. It seems then that New England would be destined to develop into a series of tight knit, pious, cooperative communities where the Chesapeake would consist of those who eventually succeeded in finding their fortunes and those who would eventually have to be employed by them. While all colonies were ultimately under the control of the royal government there were varying degrees of control over each colony. Some colonies, like the ones in the Chesapeake area, were appointed a royal governor.

Others like the New England colonies elected their own officials and often had freemen participate in government. A common theme throughout the history of the Chesapeake colonies is their dependence on the royal government for protection and provisions. In 1673 Governor Berkeley of Virginia had written a declaration stating how vulnerable his colony was to attack to the royal government . Berkeley claimed that there was more land to defend than the amount of men could handle, and that there were as many servants as there were freemen protecting the frontiers (Document G).

Of course Berkeley was looking for royal intervention, something he in all likelihood did more often than not. However while the dependence on royal government of the Chesapeake colonies by itself may be enough to cause substantial amounts of unrest, there was also much corruption in the colonial government. There was eventually a rebellion of freemen and others who felt that the upperclass of the Chesapeake colonies were using the workers and

servants to benefit themselves and not the community. This rebellion was named Bacon's Rebellion after the man who led the revolt.

Bacon eventually wrote his "Manifesto" explaining why he led the revolt against Governor Berkeley. Bacon calls to attention the fact that many officials would suddenly gain much wealth and power that seemed almost impossible to achieve given their status entering the colony. Bacon also claims that the colonial officials were taking from public wealth and resources to increase their own power (Document H). Bacon and many others like him were tired of being controlled by those who they believed to be corrupt and thieving.

Both of these instances show how the Chesapeake colonies relied on royal officials to govern them. This may be due to the fact that the Virginia Company was basically in control of the Chesapeake while it was still at first being colonised, and most of the men didn't care about who was in charge so long as they could find a way to obtain their fortunes. The Chesapeake colonist's goals were shortsighted and put themselves in a prime position to be oppressed by disregarding the importance of their roles in government and focusing on their pursuit of wealth.

Where the Chesapeake colonist's actions are a prime example of how to allow a group of people to be oppressed, the New England colonists took a very hands on approach to their own government resulting in an overall better quality of life and community. There were many regulations and articles that the colonial government set forth to keep their communities running smoothly and fairly. In 1636 there were several Articles of

Agreement appointed in Springfield, Massachusetts that set forth a plan to make a proper, Puritan community.

The articles claimed that as soon as possible the community would procure a minister for the town, that the town would be comprised of forty families regardless of their financial standing, and these families will have a proportionate plot of land to live on and a section of the meadow or planting ground (Document D). The goal of these articles was to allow the town to maintain equal opportunity for all inhabitants to contribute to society in whatever way they could, and to live as comfortably as possible while doing it.

In 1676, Connecticut made regulations on wages and prices for its inhabitants to avoid tradesmen and merchants overpricing their goods only to benefit themselves. The regulations also stated that the tradesmen and sellers may receive a moderate profit in order to better serve the community and God as overpricing their wares would be sinful and oppressive (Document E). The New England colonists wished to not only make their new homes in the New World, but also to provide a place where all Puritans and New Englanders can live in tight knit, fair, and model Christian societies.

The New England colonists did not only set up model communities for themselves, but also for their children and their children's children and so on. This reflects the colonists focus on community, self-government, and family values. An important thing to remember about the colonists that settled the Chesapeake and New England is that they once did share a country and society in England even though it may seem that they might as well have come from completely different countries.

It is then important to note that simply because two groups of people come from the same country, doesn't mean they are alike in any way. To look at our own country now, although we are often taught that we can all find common ground amongst those in our society there are still blatant differences in culture between ethnicities, regions, and religions. However, it is more prevalent to look at one's goals and aspirations to truly see how unique each person or group of people can be.

The Chesapeake and New England colonists were both English and where England may seem to have a relatively homogenous culture the goals of the colonists were basically opposites. The New Englanders wanted a place where they can live and thrive in holy, cooperative, safe communities and provide a place where their people and their children can live the best lives possible. The Chesapeake colonists basically only wanted to find their fortunes and acquire wealth and power. These goals are reflected in both of the regions' development.

Lest we not forget then, that we as a people must now focus on what our goals are. If any lesson can be taken from the development of the New England and Chesapeake colonies now for our country it is that if we focus on short sighted goals like the corrupted American Dream of fortune or the corporations' and big businesses' main wishes of continued unsustainable destruction of resources and environments only for profit then we shall perhaps find ourselves in the position the Chesapeake colonists found themselves in.

However, if we take a lesson from the New England colonists and focus on building a better tomorrow for our children and society then perhaps we shall

thrive in model communities like the ones found in Massachusetts or Connecticut or elsewhere in colonial New England. It is important that we recognise what sort of path we are heading down, we must learn from our past to provide a better future for generations to come.