

England during the 1700s



England During The 1700s Discuss the structural weakness of the British colonial system. The British colonial system, in terms of its dealings with North America, was naturally weak: the vast distance between Britain and America, compounded by the technological limitations of the eighteenth century, allowed American colonies some measure of freedom when it came to self-government. The British Parliament was also characterized by inefficiency. High-ranking officials were not elected in the colonies, but rather selected by the British King from a small group of wealthy, entrenched settlers - problematic by itself, but given that from 1760, the King was the inept and sickly George III, this was a doubtless corrupt way to appoint judges, members of the Upper House, and councilors. Although these higher-ranking officials were usually more loyal to the English interest than other members of a settlement may have been, their word was not final: in a court, for example, a judge ruling in accordance with English precedent could have his say overturned by a colonial jury. On paper, the British governed the colonies, but in practice the English government was overrun with colonial legislation, as well as the aftermath of its seventeenth-century civil war. Even when the Crown attempted to interfere directly with colonies, for example to combine them, this failed, and even had the opposite effect - colonies split, such as Delaware and Pennsylvania in 1704, and the North and South Carolinas in 1712. British rule was more often than not ineffective, and could easily be swayed according to the wishes of the colonies. 2. What was the theory of mercantilism and its application to British colonies in North America? The theory of mercantilism, which can be strongly linked to ideas of nationalism, was a facile but nonetheless popular form of economics; it had a stronghold on economic thought from the Renaissance to the

nineteenth century. It prioritized a country's supply of raw materials, particularly gold and silver, and emphasized that self-sufficiency and trade were a nation's path to financial success. Over the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, England instituted the Navigation Acts, which were designed to manipulate mercantilist theory by ensuring that the English government strictly controlled all trade with and within the empire. Foreign goods and vessels were banned from colonial ports, and in 1663, all European trade items had to pass through England before moving on to the colonies; later, colonies were prohibited from certain forms of production, such as wool, hats, tobacco, and the 1750 Iron Act which outlawed construction of new rolling and slitting mills in North America. This created a balance of trade which, although beneficial for the 'Mother Country,' was unfavorable for the colonies themselves. However, this shortfall was made up for by England's willingness to invest capital in its colonies, and the fact that the Navigation Act laws simply didn't go that far - most colonial manufacturing remained unaffected. Those living in the colonies often complained, of course, but the innate inefficiency of British mercantilism softened its harsher potential effects. Overall, the mercantilist theory as demonstrated in the Navigation Acts boosted the imperial economy as a whole, at the expense of only very few, and it is safe to say that the control exercised by these laws probably reflected an eventuality which would have happened anyway, due to ties of language and heritage.

3. How did Europe's wars of the eighteenth century affect North America? In Europe, the eighteenth century was rife with warfare, many of which involved Great Britain. England was renowned for its superior naval strength and, it seems, used every opportunity possible to exercise this power. As several of these

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wars were between leading imperial nations, the colonies were often heavily influenced: wars between England and France in particular meant that several North American colonies were turned over from France to Britain, and during Queen Anne's War of 1702 to 1713, casualties in the colonies of New England and Canada were high, and not limited exclusively to those who fought. This war also caused inflation in Massachusetts. Overall, the plethora of European wars in this time period caused much ill-will amongst the colonies,