**The English Colonies in America**

***History Alive!* Chapter 3.1 and 3.2 (pages 35-38)**

**Read 3.1**

1. What is an indentured servant?
2. Describe the conditions of the voyage across the Atlantic.
3. Why were people making the journey across the Atlantic?

**Read 3.2**

1. Name the 3 distinct regions that the 13 English colonies are grouped into.
2. All English colonies were settled with whose permission?
3. Define Charter.
4. What is the purpose of a general assembly?
5. Define Theocracy.
6. Who was allowed to vote in early Colonial America?

**Read the article “From Indentured Servants to Slaves” (attached)**

1. Why was there a need (or demand) for indentured servants from England in the colonies?
2. What “cost” were indentured servants trying to work off?
3. What was the typical length of an indentured servants’ contract?
4. How did greed play a role in the creation of slavery in the early colonies?
5. What were the benefits of owning a slave instead of an indenture servant?
6. How did the institution of slavery affect social rank and class in the early colonies?

“From Indentured Servants to Slaves”

Early colonial history in American begins with the settlement of the English in Virginia.  Life was tough for the early Virginia colonists due to high death rates.  This, in turn, led to labor shortages in the colony.  Many Englishmen who wished to come to Virginia, and later other colonies, could not afford the cost of their passage to America.  They often became indentured servants, signing a contract to work from 3 – 7 years for those who had paid their passage to the colonies.  “Membership in this group was not demeaning; after all, servitude was a temporary status.”  Once their indenture contract had been fulfilled they were released from servitude, free to start a life and business of their own in the colony.  Most indentured servants came to America willingly and with some hope for a future of their own making.

The institution of slavery began to evolve in Colonial Virginia.  The first Africans brought in 1619 were not all enslaved.  Some probably had the status of indentured servants, as indentured servitude was the form of non-free labor most often used by the English of this period.  Over a period of fifty years or more, the Africans in Virginia slowly lost this status and move from temporary servitude to servitude for life: slavery.  Prejudice and greed may have contributed to the creation of slavery in the early colonies.  Greed appears to be the foremost reason, because of the desire for cheap labor to clear land for tobacco in Virginia, and rice in South Carolina.  Freeing servants who worked for an agreed time was expensive, so whites tried to find ways to keep Africans as servants for life.  For the first several decades, slave prices were high, but as they dropped many farmers and planters preferred slaves over indentured servants who were set free at the end of their contract.  Slaves could be purchased once and were “owned” for their entire life.  By the late 1600’s, the English wrote enslavement into law.  As the colonial period progressed, the ownership of slaves determined the amount of social prestige and influence one would have among whites.  The large planters were the dominant class and non-slaveholders were of lower social rank.

Most slaves brought to the English colonies were from the west coast of Africa.  They were often men and women taken captive during wars among various peoples, or tribes, in Africa. They did not come willingly and often had no hope for the future in a strange land.  Even those born in America, as children of slaves, had little hope for a free life.  Many slaves were brought to South Carolina because of their skill as rice workers.  In the 1700’s rice was the most important crop in South Carolina.  This “Carolina Gold” made the white planters wealthy.  The institution of slavery was important to early planters because of the Africans’ knowledge of growing rice, their resistance to the deadly diseases of malaria and yellow fever carried by mosquitoes in the low-lying rice fields, and their ability to tolerate the heat and hard work better than most Europeans.

Today, our society recognizes that slavery is illegal, immoral and horrific. However, during colonial times slaves were valuable property and often the main tools of production for a booming economy in various regions of Colonial America.