



## **American Life: A Comparison of Colonial Life to Today's Life**

Curriculum Unit 90.05.04  
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As part of the grade one social studies curriculum, there is a unit devoted to *Families-Then and Now* . However, the social studies book we use covers the unit in less than ten pages and does not cover it in any depth. The first lines of this unit begins "Families have changed over the years." <sup>1</sup> (Beverly Armento; *Living in Families* , Laidlow Publishers, Illinois, 1985, p.94) and that is about as fully as it is covered. The activity pages and questions in the book do not give the children a sense of discovery, and the Teacher's Edition includes very few good ideas to use in the teaching of this unit.

I have found that children of this age level do understand that families change over the years. Siblings move out as they get older or married, new children arrive, or a relative dies. But they cannot envision the changes in family life and style beyond their own small unit. I have found this especially true at Thanksgiving time when we do a cursory study of early American life, and then the entire subject is dropped forever. Yes, we teach about the Pilgrims and Indians and how the Pilgrims adjusted and learned to live in their new homeland. We make Indians headbands, vests, bonnets and hats, but rarely do we go beyond this superficial coverage.

My objective is to expand this unit, beginning with the study of the Pilgrims and their landing at Plymouth Rock, and to develop it into a more substantial unit on Colonial America, especially life in Colonial Connecticut. Because of the age level of the students, it will not be as comprehensive a unit as expected in an upper grade unit, but it will focus on things such as school, clothing, games and toys, cooking, furniture and homes. To bring the unit to life it will be a visual and hands-on unit, rather than a reading and research one. First graders need to see and touch, rather than to hear, talk and read. The logical start of the unit would be in November when we focus on Thanksgiving. It would probably carry through to its culmination at Christmas, approximately six weeks.

Since the unit will begin near Thanksgiving time, a study of life at the *Plymouth Plantation* becomes a logical point to start. Using my personal slides to the Plantation and additional visuals, we can begin our comparison study. This unit will be two pronged, Pilgrims and Thanksgiving and life in Colonial Connecticut.

## PLYMOUTH PLANTATION AND THE PILGRIMS

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The homes at Plymouth were built close together for safety and had broad streets between. These homes were small and sided with wide boards or narrow clapboards. The floors were made of wood or were just bare earth soaked with water and flattened smooth. The rooms were of wood and tended to be dark except for the light to the fire. The roof of the homes were shingled or thatched with sun-dried reeds. Windows in these homes were small, allowing in some light. In winter, they covered the windows with cloth soaked in linseed oil; in summer, the windows were left open. Just imagine the bugs and rain this allowed in!

Inside the homes, there was very little furniture. The husbands were the ones to have a good chair generally and the others sat on long benches. For eating, there was a table made of one long board set on two barrels (picture). For plates they used what was called a “trencher” made of wood or pewter (picture). Although they did use spoons, “the most useful utensil is our Hands.” <sup>2</sup> (Marcia Sewell, *Pilgrims of Plymouth*, MacMillan, New York, 1986, p.49). Beds in Plymouth were straw or feather mattresses put on the floor. Cradles however were placed near the hearth for added warmth. Additional furnishing might have included trunks, a cupboard and a *settle* or stool set around the room.

The hearth was not only used for warmth, but also cooking. This was done by the women and the fireplace was well furnished with lugpoles and andirons, pot hooks and trammels, spits and kettles, pipkins and potties used for all occasions. (These terms are explained in the vocabulary section. There are also slides and pictures.) Some typical foods were the *root crops*, under-growing crops such as potatoes that were gathered and stored, fish that was gutted, dried and salted (see slide), *fruits* that were pickled and preserved—a favorite for kids was *cowcumber pickle*, *pompions* that were cut into pieces, strung and hung from rafters to dry along with onions, corn and herbs for medicine and seasoning, *marigolds* which are yellow flowers and used to color butter, flavor food and strengthen hearts.

Children in Plymouth did not go to school, but that did not make their lives easy. They learned obedience from their parents, and if the child got into trouble, the father was punished by being put into the stockade (picture).

If children did not go to school, how did they spend their days? What did colonial children do during the day and what did they play with if not TV, VCRs, Nintendo, bikes and computers? Could our first graders of today do without their sophisticated games and toys? Would they be happy to sit quietly and sew or play cats-cradle? Interesting questions to ponder! Pictures and comparison charts will show children how different life is now.

What were the days like then? In spring, summer and fall, men and boys rose at sunlight and worked until sunset to get ready for winter. Men hunted, planted, caught fish; stronger boys gathered thatch for roofing, learned to work wood for fence clapboards, spoons and bowls, tubs and troughs. At dawn, children took buckets and got water from the spring, they fed the hens, milked cows and goats and took them to the meadow to graze. Some days they had to clean the animal pens. In springtime they helped poke seeds into the ground, they chased the crows from the seeds and they weeded. What they planted in the springtime, they harvested in the fall. In fall also the swine were killed for the women and girls to scald, scrape and cure. The fat from the swine was made into soap.

The girls at this time were taught *housewifery*. They learned to grind corn, barley and wheat into flour. Then they learned to measure flour in their hands for bread baking. (Can our girls do this? We can try to measure

specific amounts.) They were taught the difference between a warm and hot fire. To do this, put the hand into the oven and try to count to ten without getting burned. If you could do this, the oven was hot enough to cook, but not so hot as to burn pies or bread. They also learned how to cook outdoors, how to scour, scald and cook meats, dry fish, use herbs for cooking and cures. To add to this, they had to learn to spin wool and to knit, to do all types of stitchery, make samplers and mend clothes. Does this sound like a typical day for our New Haven children?

The Sabbath Day was the one day nothing was done except for Bible reading and tending livestock. Only on the few special days, or when all work for the season was complete, did they play. Some games are still played today! Hide and seek, blindman's bluff, tug of war (played by men and women, not kids), kite flying, rolling hoops and foot races, ice skating, coasting, doll playing and cat in the cradle. By use of pictures, we can easily see how different our skates, dolls and sleds look. Kites were made by the children not store bought. A trip to the New Haven Historical Society would be even more visual. One game I found intriguing was called *pillow pushing*— it was played by two young women who stood on a log high off the ground. They then pounded away at each other with pillows until one fell off the log. For a fun afternoon, we could spend time playing some of the games Colonial children played (or we can get the gym teacher involved)!

This would be my early introduction to the Unit. It focuses on the Pilgrims daily life at Plymouth. From this starting point, we will begin our journey down into Connecticut. We will trace the journey from England to Holland to the Cape area (Map lesson). Now will trace the Puritan Journey into Connecticut.

### ***Life in Colonial Connecticut***

The Dutch knew of Connecticut as early as 1613 when Adrian Block and Henrick Christiansen explored the QUA-NEH-TA-CUT (Connecticut River; Indian name, Long Tidal River). It was not until 1631 when the leader of the Podunk tribe of Indians invited the English of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colony to visit that any real growth in the area of Connecticut began.

In 1633, Thomas Hooker, a Puritan, decided to leave Massachusetts. One reason he gave was that he wanted religious freedom. (Wasn't this why the Pilgrims came?) Another reason given was the need for more land for the cattle. A third reason to leave, they didn't want the Dutch to claim the land. The earliest settlers began coming in 1633 reaching Windsor, Wethersfield in 1634 and 1635 Hartford. In May of 1635, Hooker left with 100 people and 160 head of cattle. They ate cornmeal mush and milk as their hot meal. The Indians were friendly and helped lead them to the trails. It took two weeks and they landed in Hartford.

By using our map, we can see why these were the first areas settled by the Puritans.

The families who came were rich and powerful, but they did share land with poorer families based on goods, services and needs. (Goods—money and possessions; Services—contribution to community; Needs—family size.) Using our social studies books, we can see how these terms have changed or not changed: (Needs—things families must fill in order to live such as food, clothing, shelter, Wants—what people wish for, Goods—things themselves, Services—jobs.)

In November 1636, Reverend John Davenport, a Puritan minister, founded New Haven. (Point out that Davenport Avenue was named for this person and that many street names came from people of this period. I will not make too much of this, since we are not studying New Haven history.) New Haven Colony was bought for 12 coats, 12 brass spoons, 12 hoes, 24 knives, 12 porringer dishes, 4 cases of French knives and forks. The colony was purchased from the Indians of the area. In 1664 they had the choice of joining New York Colony or

Connecticut Colony. Being English themselves they chose Connecticut over Dutch New York.

The Connecticut Colony was very independent, a land made up basically of farms. The settlers lived in close harmony and their behavior was similar. The colony became known as the *Land of Steady Habits*. Because of their strong belief in the Church, the desire to keep English ways, the Dutch called them JANKINS, but because they couldn't pronounce J they became Yankee, which survives today.

How did these early Connecticut people live? What were the homes and furniture like? What did they do for games and learning? These questions now become my comparison's of today's families to those of our colonial ancestors.

A walking tour of our school area will show the children that homes are not alike even in their own areas. They could discuss their relatives or friends home if they live in a different area. We would compare how homes differ on the outside and the inside from number of rooms and floors, to the types of furniture they have. A field trip to an Early American home such as Whitfield Home (Guilford), Pardee (New Haven) or Dickerman (Hamden) would help them better understand how different our homes would have become today. If money becomes available, a trip to Mystic would be an excellent source of discovery. Otherwise my slides and additional information from Mystic (and Sturbridge) would provide very good visuals.

The first homes in Connecticut were mainly made of logs; frame homes were only for the important and wealthy. The important people also tended to build their homes near the churches. Many homes in the area were made from stones. A number of homes had cellars not a storage area in the back. These cellars not only were for storage, but served to keep the house warmer. The cellar floors were dirt, but the walls were stone since those could be gotten free for the gathering. Since cement was not known, mud was used to keep the stone in place. (We could try doing this in the room to see how it works.)

The Puritans often had house raising times when the framework was fitted together and put up around the hearth and chimney. Then the family could continue building the rest of the walls of the house. (See picture of house raising.)

The earliest homes had one room, usually with the chimney in one corner. This room was generally the kitchen, since it served as the center of all home life. Windows were small in order to conserve heat and were made of oiled paper (another thing to try to see how these worked for letting in light). When glass was finally imported, it tended to be small and expensive. A question for the class—who used glass then? Windows made of glass were fitted together and shaped like diamonds. Doors were double oak planks and doubly fastened to keep out wild animals and Indians. Ceilings were made low, also to conserve heat and because people were not as tall. But the fireplaces were large for warmth and cooking. A connecting shed between the house and barn helped the families care for their animals even in the heaviest snowstorm.

When a house added on a second room, the new room became a parlor and the original room (Keeping Room) remained for cooking, eating and often sleeping. As families grew, often the house grew. Additional rooms were added onto the back (pantry, kitchen, bedroom) and a low attic over it all. This became known as a "salt box". (Get picture to see shape and design.) Children often ask "Where's the bathroom?" In our study of the house they'll learn there was no plumbing for sinks, tubs or toilets. Can they picture going out on a cold rainy night to use the Privy or outhouse? Or washing outside in a spring? Or bringing in water from a spring or well to use for cooking, drinking and cleaning? Baths and clothes washing was not a daily occurrence.

Inside the home, furniture was practical, not comfortable. Chairs were still mainly for men. Tables were long

and narrow and some converted into benches. Since men used the chair, the rest of the family used the benches (Forms) or stools. Another bench type was the *Settle* , long and narrow and hard to sit on. Its one advantage was its high back that served as protection, especially from drafts (see picture). Sometimes families ate standing up and often they ate directly from the pot or they used the trencher, their hands and lots of linen napkins. The food they ate and drank was what was available; what they hunted, grew and stored. Floors were bare, as only the wealthy had tapestry rugs, and these were hung on walls, not walked on. Rag rugs and braided rugs were popular in colonists homes when wood floors were laid down. Rag rugs are exactly what the name implies—rugs made of rags.

Beds were called “jack-beds” and were built into one corner of the main room. The head of the bed and one side used existing walls for support. Beds were high up and short since no one lay down flat to rest. Under most jackbeds was a *trundlebed* for a child and it was pulled out at night. Since most homes still had only one or two rooms, the bed occupied a corner of the room with the hearth for warmth. Babies cradles were still set near the fire. These beds are an improvement from the Pilgrims straw mattress.

Early homes had no closets—pegs set on the wall were used to hang extra clothing and capes. Linens and blankets were put into chests, not drawers.

Most popular in the winter was the warming pan used to keep beds warm during cold Connecticut winters. It was not enough to have many blankets—beds were still cold and the warming pan run over the entire bed made it warm. Of course, you had to be careful and not burn the sheets.

A typical day of food is not like ours. A comparison chart will show how different when we make it. Breakfast was often a soup of salt meat, beans and herbs and called *Bean Porridge* . There was no tea or coffee at this meal. Dinner was served at noon, and usually an Indian pudding with a sauce, plus a dish of beef or pork. Wild game with potato, turnip, or any vegetable was also a dinner. Many dishes were made of pumpkin, cooked, dried, fried or in soup. I often make pumpkin cookies, so we can try out other recipes too. Supper or tea was a cold meal, usually a cake made of corn meal, rye or buckwheat—similar to pancakes. How do these compare to our meals? How do we get our food if we don't go out and hunt or fish grow it? How do we store our food and how did we cook it? Early Americans feared the *Starving Time* , the last weeks of winter. Therefore they found methods to keep foods until spring growing-time. One way was to preserve foods, since there was no refrigeration. Foods were smoked, salted, dried, pickled or made into jam.

Smokehouses were extremely popular for storing meat. They often held venison, 500 turkeys, and a popular food of the day—pigeon. Families tried to own horses, hogs, cattle, cows and sheep so that everything they needed was near. How was each animal used? If there was no refrigeration how did they keep from having their food spoil? One way for the colonists to do this was to keep a pot of stew simmering on the fire day and night. As long as the stew stayed hot, it wouldn't spoil and the family could eat it all week, just adding a new vegetable or two. Another popular method was to make a trough in a nearby stream (this water being cold all the time). Here they put leftover food, milk and vegetables that were bunched in crocks and pans. Remembering that this is the same stream they used to get all the water, even for bathing, I wonder how our modern first graders would feel about this. Children did get sweets such as rock candy and licorice from England, plus prunes, figs, raisins, apples, pears and berries which were plentiful. In February and March when sap was gathered from maple trees and boiled into syrup, some was made into maple sugar which supposedly tasted like candy. Here is another recipe to try out, maybe not in the fall, but in the winter when we have fresh snow as the Colonists did.

There were no matches in those days, so a flint and steel was used. Fires were not allowed to go out since it

was so difficult to restart. The fireplace was still well stocked with pots and kettles “implements for pre-historic giants, rather than for a frail woman” <sup>3</sup> (Carl Holliday, *Woman’s Life*, Corner House, Mass., 1958, p.108). The brass or copper kettles often held 15 gallons; iron pots weighed 40 pounds (maybe the weight of some first graders). Could the kids imagine a fire going all year round in their kitchens without fans or air conditioners, or pots as heavy and as full as the ones the colonists used? I even have a hard time with this idea.

Although families were large and children worked hard, they did play. Many games were the same as the Pilgrims including kite flying and skating, as well as just old time hopping, skipping and jumping, swimming, hopscotch (called Scotch-hopper), marbles and dancing around the Maypole. Dolls were a favorite for the girls and were often rag dolls, corn husk dolls or apple dolls. (A dolls head was carved from an apple and allowed to dry then it was dressed in rag clothing. We may attempt this, but it is not easy to carve the heads. Corn husk dolls are not that easy to do unless we use our fifth grade buddies for both activities.) There were also singing games, including some familiar ones today: “Here we go round the mulberry bush,” “Oats, pease, beans and barley grows,” “Ring around the rosy,” and “London Bridge is falling down.” Great to play these and realize how old they are!

Clothing for the early Connecticut residents were not colorful and took a long time to make. Often they were patched or for children added onto to save time and material. By studying the pictures and slides of early clothing and visiting either the Historical Society or Art Gallery, we can get an idea of the clothing people wore. Children wore the same types of clothing after the age of six, when they were no longer thought of as babies. Until then boys and girls wore “petticoats” or skirts and “pinners” (aprons) and “hanging sleeves.” Hanging sleeves were not true sleeves, but rather was material attached to the shoulders and reached the ground. Their purposes was to act as a “handle” to help the children as they learned to walk. They also were a major reminder of babyhood. Vocabulary words explain the rest. The materials for the clothing came from animals and plants and when yarn was woven it did not have bright colors, but were rather dull tan or gray. Linen for sheets, napkins and curtains came from the flax plants and wool came from sheep which were protected by laws and could only be used for wool.

Young girls learned how to use spinning wheels early. The spinning wheel was used to turn fluffy pieces of flax or wool into thread. A Loom was used to knit or weave large pieces. Most often men did the weaving as a loom required much strength. Or they waited for the traveling weaver, who stayed with the family until all the yarn was woven. Sometimes it took as long as a year from start to finish to complete the process. To dye the yarn, women gathered barks, roots, berries and plants, they then boiled and strained them to make dyes. Browns, yellows and some reds and greens were most common. This is one of the projects I will outline in lesson plans as an activity to try.

When you think how long it took to make the material, one understands why no material was wasted or discarded. Clothes were patched, rag rugs made, rag dolls were made. Many times thread was unraveled, dyed again and rewoven into new pieces. One common item made from rags and scraps was the Quilt. Odd pieces were sewn together and decorated with embroidery. Pieces were put together to make squares and were even given names (Log Cabin, Tail of Ben’s Kite, Shoo Fly, Garden of Eden—see pictures). Small girls began sewing by stitching together small patchwork pieces with tiny, even stitches. All winter, women and girls worked on *piecing* or making the top layer. In spring and summer these were made into quilts using a large quilting frame set up outdoors. The frame was too large to set up indoors. Girls and women of the area gathered to help QUILT. (Quilting bee) Quilting helped turn the pieces into a warm bedcover. The back was plain fabric stretched across the frame, over this was laid the stuffing material. Then the quilt piece was put in place, pinned and everyone sat around the frame sewing tiny stitches. This is another activity that is included



in the lesson plan section and will become a permanent room decoration.

## EDUCATION

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Connecticut colony was a leader in education. The first public schools were established in 1642 in New Haven and in Hartford in 1643. Many of our private schools, such as Hopkins and Taft were established at this time. Their existence and history can be shown to the classes by brochure and picture.

The Puritans of Connecticut put heavy emphasis on education, specifically so that young and old would be able to read the Scriptures. They could learn God's laws and the laws of the men designed to enforce them only if they were educated. The father in a Puritan house prepared his children by teaching them the Bible once a week. Education was the ultimate responsibility of the parent and the Puritan homes were strict—a child could be seen not heard and spoke only when spoken to by an adult.

The Connecticut Code of 1650 made it a requirement that children and apprentices be taught to read. Connecticut also required children to be trained in an “honest calling” so that they could contribute to the colony, as well as taking care of themselves. This type of career education could be handled by artisans, shopkeepers or any professional person. Many children at the age of seven or eight (the age of my grade one kids) were sent to homes to work. They became *apprentices*. Even the wealthy parents followed this tradition. By this age, boys usually decided on a craft or trade and remained in it all their life. How different from today!

The wealthy colonist children, if not an apprentice, attended private schools, or they had private teachers (tutors). These students were headed for the university. Although public schools were supposed to be established, most children were educated at home where they learned obedience, religion and the skills for daily life. In some towns, there were “dame” schools which were taught by widows in their own homes. These women taught only the basic skills as that was all they knew; they learned the alphabet, spelling, writing and simple arithmetic. Boys who attended these schools paid a penny a day.

When laws establishing schools were written, two kinds of schools were specifically mentioned: those that provided training in reading and writing, and those that would train for entrance into the university. Here Latin was used, and not many continued on in this type of school. Any town that had fifty or more families had to establish a school for reading and writing, and those towns with 100 or more were to set up *grammar schools* to prepare boys for the university. (Is this how the name grammar school for elementary grades came about?) This was often expensive to establish, so the grammar schools usually even included “petty scholars”—those not continuing into college.

Parents were expected to provide pens (actually quills), papers, books and firewood in the winter. If a pupil performed a task properly, they got to sit nearer the fire for warmth. If the schoolmaster felt a child needed discipline he tapped them on the head or across the hands with a heavy ruler. If the school master thought it was really necessary, a child could be whipped. Discipline and strict obedience were expected at all times.

Schools in Colonial times were not like our schools today. They ran all year and they used all the same texts. Since students withdrew and reenrolled depending on family life, it was easy to resume study. Part of the lesson in learning about schools and education at the two time periods would include a description of our building, number of classes, teachers and the number and ages of their classmates. We then would learn

about the dame school and the one room school house or building that was often in need of repairs. There were no desks and nice backed chairs, only benches and tables and a seat for the schoolmaster, as well as a desk for the dictionary. There were not many children's books during this period. Cotton Mather wrote *Good Lessons for Children in Verse*, and there was the *New England Primer*. Also included in this list would be *Hughes Plain and Easy Directions to Faire Writing* or *Crocker's The Tutor to Writing and Arithmetic*. I found it interesting that *Aesop's Fables* were used in early classrooms (to teach morals?). The basic book was the *Hornbook* that had the alphabet and numbers on one side and the Lord's Prayer on the other. The hornbook was a little frame with a handle on it. A piece of paper was slipped into the frame, or sometimes just tacked onto what was a paddle. Sometimes letters were just drawn onto the wood itself. Paper was rare and was often made of rags. With the art teacher in our school, or the second grade teacher who has done this before, I would like to attempt making paper with the class. It could prove to be an interesting lesson. Spelling and simple arithmetic was taught using a hornbook also. In the enlargement picture of the hornbook, I would show the children that the lower case s was written as f except at the end of the word where s was used e.g. seffions. Lessons were often done in doggerel rhyme, one which even survives today, "Thirty days hath September . . ." Most lessons were done aloud and in rote with no understanding of why. The ABC's often included pictures and religious rhymes such as A "In Adam's Fall We Sinned All," B "Thy life to mend, This Book attend." Since this was a religious society this is not all odd. But we don't have computers, tape recorders, record players, crayons or a separation of church or state in these schools as we do now.

Who taught these schools with children of all ages in one room? We mentioned "dame" schools, but a regular one-room schoolhouse had a schoolmaster, often a young man, a graduate straight from Harvard or Yale, whose ultimate goal was to be a minister or lawyer. Generally he received only a Bible and a place to stay as payment. Sometimes they received corn or barley as a payment. They also received lodging in the homes of the towns folk. How would our children like it if their teacher boarded with them?

Schools however were generally for the boys. It was not customary to educate women since her place was the home. She didn't have any economic pressure to earn her own living since she was going to get married and raise a family and care for her home, often at an early age. Women then were basically illiterate; many could only sign their names with an x. If they did go to school, it was to a "dame" school where they taught some reading and knitting and maybe a little arithmetic, music and dancing. They were taught reading for Bible study and arithmetic for household expenses, not to encourage thinking! It was more important to learn how to be a housewife: to cook, to spin, to weave and to knit socks. Women and young girls during leisure time often embroidered samplers, they made fancy scarves and veils and did much quilting. I wonder how the boys and girls in my room would react to all these different learning methods, and how they would feel sitting all day on a chair without a back, and to strict adherence to rules? I plan to do a lesson on this with them.

## THE CONCLUDING UNIT

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Children today would find it difficult to believe that Colonial families did not make a big thing out of the Christmas holiday. It would seem even stranger to know that American Puritans had even passed a law forbidding the observance of this holiday in any way as it was frivolous. As years passed, this restriction faded and the holidays were celebrated, but not with the kinds of celebrations and gifts that we have today. There was no Santa and fancy lights or many gifts under the tree.

Each group of settlers had their own cultural customs that they brought with them. German's cut down



evergreen trees and brought them inside to cover with candles, popcorn chains and cranberry chains, and even apples. (We can decorate our room with these chains since I don't have a tree in the room.) Dutch settlers hollowed out eggs and filled the shells with scenes. They also decorated their homes with cookie wreaths (Play dough) and many nuts. English children waited for the first snows of December so that they could find a Yule log—the biggest log, since as long as it burned the Christmas celebration would last. How have we adapted these customs to our time now?

Fruitcakes, mincemeat pies and gingerbread shaped into birds, animals and soldiers were also popular.

Just before Christmas time we will make our own old fashioned gifts called a *Pomanader Ball* used as air fresheners, using fruit, cloves and cinnamon. (Colonial homes did not always smell great so these were piled in bowls and on shelves. This is one reason they made great gifts!) I would also like to finish up all the classroom cooking of the many colonial recipes I have found and plan to use and incorporate into a cookbook. I would also like the other first graders and our fifth grade buddies to try out some of our recipes or to help us with them throughout the unit. I would have to designate one day a week to use all my recipes! (Anyone who needs them will have to come to my classroom to get these recipes as there are many to choose from.) We can feast on just drinks and desserts for a Christmas treat.

There is so much material to cover and so many more years, but with the age level and comprehension skills of first graders, I'm limiting what will be covered and also putting an arbitrary limit of less than fifty years from Plymouth and settlement to our Connecticut unit. Much in this unit will be visual and hands-on activity, with many experience charts. Hopefully field trip money will become available so that they can visit places such as Mystic so that they can truly see these things, not just in pictures. There will not be a lot of research with books, paper and pencils, but rather fun activities outlined in the text and background information.

## VOCABULARY WORDS FOR COLONIAL AMERICA

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*Clothing* (pictures used to show both men and women dressed)

breeches—trousers slightly below knee-length

doublet—jacket of cloth or leather, usually with sleeves and open down the front

jerkin—jacket of cloth or leather, open at the neck, but without sleeves

woad—an herb grown for the blue dye stuff that was yielded by its leaves

Irish trousers—long, tight fitting pants

cassock—cape; both men and women had hoods on these for protection

petticoat—women's skirts, often worn several at a time, sometimes the top one was pinned up at intervals showing the one under

slip time—house slippers

patters—worn over regular shoes, but elevated an inch or two above with a flat iron ring that touched the ground, women who wore these walked very slowly

## *FOOD AND COOKING*

boulter—sifter

broach—to put on the spit for cooking purposes

lug pole—long pole the width of a chimney made of green wood or iron, from which pots and kettles hung

pipkins—saucepans of various shapes and sizes

pot hooks and trammels—devices that hung from lug pole and supported pots and kettles

spit—a long rod to stick through a piece of meat in order to cook it

peel—wide wooden shovel used to push bread and pies into the oven, also used in removing them from the oven

trencher—a piece of wood, hollowed out, for holding food

## *FOOD NAMES*

cheate bread—good bread, but not the best

cow cumber pickle—cucumber pickle

forced eggs—scrambled eggs, often used at breakfast after eggs were collected

light beer—a beer drunk in the colonies instead of polluted water

pompions—pumpkins

pottage—salad

sallats—spinach

vergi—vinegar

whortleberries—blueberries

flummery—fruit pudding, some were thin like soup while others were quite thick. Some were simply cooked fruit thickened with cornstarch, while others included ingredients such as lemons, sugar, milk, eggs and issinglass.

issinglass—gelatin for thickening

## LESSON PLANS

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### *Quilting*

Aim:

1. to give the students the feel of an “old fashioned quilting bee”
2. to develop a sense of cooperation

Materials necessary: crayons/markers

construction paper shapes and squares

large construction paper

newspaper for stuffing

Elmer’s glue

Method: Individually the children will make their own designs on construction paper shapes that have been glued into and onto paper squares. These are the quilting squares.

As designs are finished, they will break into larger groups and decide how each piece should fit on the larger construction paper being used as the quilt back. They would then glue their square into place, leaving an opening on the top so the quilt can be stuffed. When stuffed and flattened enough, the top will be glued shut and the quilts will be hung in the room.

If enough show an ability to do so, I may work with a small group with material they have dyed and decorated, and then show them how to actually sew them together and stuff it with rags. This will depend on the make-up of the group. It will also be an interesting activity to have our fifth grade buddies help out with.

### *Fabric Dyeing*

Aim:

1. to show the children why clothing in colonial days were not as colorful and decorative as today;
2. to demonstrate the natural materials and the process used to dye fabrics

Materials: vinegar

white hand

onion leaves regular and red ones

spinach leaves—goldenrod weed

pots with water

Process: remove enough skins from yellow and red onions to make about 1 cup of skins. Boil in 2 cups of water for a half hour. Remove skins from the dye pot and add 1/2 cup vinegar to the water. Place WET cotton fabric in the pot and simmer over a low heat until material reaches desired color (15 minutes for yellow; 30 minutes for brown.) Lift out and lay on paper on paper towel to remove excess moisture, then hang to dry. Experiment with the other natural materials for other colors. Since each piece has to be dyed in only small batches, this process will take some time, so the children should be able to get the understanding that this was not a quick thing to do.

I would discuss with the children their feelings about the colors that the materials have now become and the amount of time involved in this process. It may be possible to use some of these pieces to make a small friendship pillow.

### *Fruit Drying*

Aim:

1. to show how fruit was preserved for the winter months
2. to compare the weight of both fresh and dry fruit
3. to estimate the number of slices that we can get from each apple
4. to estimate the length of time it will take for the fruits to dry

Materials: cored apple slice

any other available fruit for drying

twine to hang the slices on to dry

Method: students can help out fruit and string on the yarn to dry. On a chart, each student will estimate the number of days they think it will take to get the fruit dry. Before we slice the apples, we will estimate the number of slices we can get from their apples and chart this with actual amount they get. We will then weigh each slice (or several slices) before stringing and include this in the chart. When the fruit is dry, we will reweigh the slices and compare the weights. We will also taste the dried fruit (hope to dry peaches and grapes but without the weight and estimation lessons). We will discuss the taste and how the colonists restored the fruit to a plump, moist state. (SOAK IN WATER)

From this dry fruit, we will make apples fritters. We will also make a batch of fritters using fresh fruit, and then compare the taste of the two. I won't tell them which one is made from fresh or restored fruit, but rather let

them taste and guess.

### *Geography and Map Skills*

Aim:

1. to develop a better understanding of geography and map skills by use of the globe, world map and map of the United States
2. to be able to identify specific areas on a map

Method: Throughout the unit we will be using the map and globe to trace the progress of the Pilgrims. We will begin with a description and understanding of what specific colors mean on the maps and globe e.g. blue for water, green for land.

We will discuss the use of the compass rose on the map and that not all directions are just north, south, east or west, but can be a combination. We should be able to label them around the room where things are located such as my desk in the southern part of the room.

Using our wax markers, we can trace the progress of the Pilgrims on their voyage to America via England, Holland, the Cape area in Massachusetts and down into Connecticut. We will locate certain cities on the map by going in all directions, e.g. from Hartford travel down to New Haven—what direction do you need to travel? This can become a game in the reading learning center in the room which I have set up.

Learning Centers are an individual study area set up in the room. It is usually set up for one child, but no more than five. I plan to use dioramas, math and listening areas to incorporate some of the ideas in this unit. The science area will be a great place to observe the fruit drying and for the children to write down their observations as the fruit is drying. These centers are student directed, the teacher only establishes the ground rules and provides the necessary materials and occasional guidance.

### ***Creative Writing and Journal Keeping***

Writing and journals have become an integral part of the first grade curriculum. The New Haven schools even have Writing to Read Labs where the children are taught to use the computers and word processors and not to be afraid to use creative, phonetic spellings. In the classroom and in the lab, there is a writing area where the children are able to put their ideas on paper before putting them on the word processor. In my room also, we have begun to use journals, even if just a picture journal at the beginning where I write in the words for them.

Aim:

1. to get children to express feelings about living in Colonial days
2. to get them to write stories about themselves as a child living in early Connecticut<sup>3</sup>
3. to incorporate these stories into a booklet for each child, as printed on the processor in Writing to Read.
4. to include in this unit a printed cookbook with class illustrations for the food we cooked.

5. to use my polaroid camera to take snapshots of the class doing cooking activities etc. and
6. to have the students write sentences explaining processes or feelings.

This would be displayed on a chart outside the room for all to see.

Method: This process will involve the help of the Writing to Read aid so that she can help in the lab and/or even in the room if time permitted. It will be an ongoing activity throughout the unit and will necessitate designating a period for writing in their journals. A center in the room and the lab will be designated the writing station so that the children may write or draw pictures of the work done to date.

With the use of my Polaroid camera, we can take action pictures of the class cooking, dyeing fabrics, making quilts etc. Using large sheets of butcher block paper or large construction paper this will become a record of the unit in progress for all to see. It will also encourage the children to discuss what they were doing and how they felt. They can either write their own sentences or I will chart it for them (spelling is not counted until the final drafting of anything that is to be displayed—this is part of the Writing Process).

A final aspect of the unit will be our own Colonial Cookbook which will incorporate all the recipes that we have tried in the classroom. Pictures of the cooking process and the children's comments about the foods made will be included, whether negative or positive. Included in the book will be such recipes as: hot spiced cider, flummery, apple fritters, butter, succotash, maple sugar candy, plum pudding, honey egg nog, pumpkin soup and cookies and maybe even stew.

This unit provides writing and reading and each child will be able to take home a recipe book and their own books to share at home with their parents. They can also share this unit with their fifth grade buddies and others in the school. We may even donate copies of the books we make to the school library for others to read.

### ***Mock Classroom***

This unit will incorporate the help of the art teacher who has already agreed to work with me on any aspect of the unit, especially customs and making the hornbook. We also will attempt to make a quill pen.

Aim: to show the actual learning processes used in the early classrooms.

Materials: crates or benches with no backs

hornbooks

preprinted lessons

costume



lots of patience

Method: Ground rules for this lesson must be established early. The teacher is in charge at all times, there is not a sound or movement in the room, most lessons will be done by rote and out loud, youngest will be in front and the oldest towards the back. Only those who have completed their written lessons can sit near the heat (November and heat is on, but I will not have them sit close. We can also work with the lights out since there was no light then). Copies of the lessons will include short vowel sounds, addition practice ( $1 + 1 = 2$ ,  $2 + 2 = 4$  etc.) and practice of the alphabet and consonant sounds B=ball, C=cow.

The girls will be shown how to draw fancy pictures within this time frame (if we can), just to demonstrate how girls were excluded and to see if they can tell how they felt not doing the learning.

This lesson will incorporate the morning time period, and most of the lessons for the morning will be taught this way.

## Childrens Bibliography

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Gibbons, Gail. *Thanksgiving Day*: Holiday House Book 1983. Beautiful illustrations help explain the first Thanksgiving and compares it to today's celebrations. Great for the lower grades as the text is simple and pictures are colorful and self-explanatory.

Halliburton, Warren J. *The People of Connecticut* : (a textbook) Ct. Yankee Publications Inc. Norwalk, Connecticut 1984. Great text for the middle grades, easy to understand and with good illustrations and

pictures.

Lowitz, Sadybeth and Anson. *The Pilgrim's Party : A really true story* . Lerner Publications Co. Minneapolis 1968. Black and white drawings tells the story of leaving England, landing in Plymouth and what happened after. Early primary grades can follow the pictures.

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## Teacher's Bibliography

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Cremin, Lawrence A. *American Education: The colonial experience 1607-1783* Harper and Row New York 1970  
As the name implies, this is a comprehensive study of the educational system in America and how it related back to England.

D'Amato, Janet and Alex. *Colonial Crafts for You to Make* : Messner Books United States 1975 An excellent resource book of crafts and some recipes to make. Step by stem instructions and illustrations, some historical background information included in the text.

Good, H.G. *A History of American Education* : 2nd edition Macmillan Co. New York 1962

Glubock, Shirley. *Home and Child Life in Colonial Days*: Macmillan Co. Toronto 1969

A good source book for all aspects of the child's life in colonial America. Nice illustrations enhance text.

Holliday, Carl. *Women's Life in Colonial Days* : Corner House Publisher, Massachusetts reprint 1968  
Fascinating account of the life of a woman in the days of the colonies, from sunrise to sunset.

Humpreville, Frances. *This is Connecticut* : L.W. Singer Co. Syracuse, New York 1963

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Taylor, Robert J. *Colonial Connecticut : A History*. KTO Press New York 1979 History of Connecticut towns, society, clothing and establishment of the entire colony.

Tunis, Edwin. *Colonial Living*: The World Publishing Co., Cleveland 1957

Comprehensive text of all aspects of colonial life, not only New England. Excellent illustrations help explain some of text.

## Additional Teacher Resources

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### *MacMillan Seasonal Activity Kit*

An excellent source of short stories, recipes and activities which are very good for individual children in the learning centers.

All craft books especially Hoople, Cheryl G. *The Heritage Sampler* ; A book of Colonial arts and crafts. The Dial Press New York 1975.

This book has excellent illustrations, background information and terrific ideas to use in the classroom or at home, including recipes and crafts.

Sturbridge Slide Show (rental) and teaching aids including the primary coloring book. 1-617-347-3362

New Haven Historical Society

114 Whitney Avenue

New Haven

562-4183

### *Field Trips*

1. New Haven Historical Society
2. Mystic Seaport  
Mystic 06455-0990  
562-0711
3. Yale Art Gallery
4. Henry Whitfield House (1639)—oldest stone dwelling  
Corner of Old Whitfield Street and Stonehouse Lane  
Guilford  
453-2457
5. Pardee Morris House  
325 Lighthouse Road  
New Haven  
526-4183
6. Dickerman House  
Sleeping Giant  
Hamden, CT 06514
7. Thomas Griswald House  
171 Boston Street  
Guilford  
453-3176

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