

1640

1670

1700

1752

1760

# The Colonial Economy

## Read Aloud

*The riches of the 13 English colonies poured into England. Fat bundles of tobacco, bags of rice, furs, and crates of blue indigo dye rolled off of ships, all for England's profit.*

## Focus Activity

### READ TO LEARN

*How did New Englanders use the sea?*

### VOCABULARY

- export
- import
- agriculture
- free enterprise
- industry
- triangular trade
- Middle Passage

### PEOPLE

- Elizabeth Lucas Pinckney

### PLACES

- West Indies

## THE BIG PICTURE

The economy of the English colonies grew. Some of their products appear in the Infographic on page 232. England set out to control all trade with its colonies by ruling that some products could only be **exported** to England. To export means to send goods to other countries for sale or trade.

In exchange for their products, the colonists **imported** cloth, metal tools, glass, and machines. To import means to bring goods from another country for sale or use. The English paid low prices for the goods, which they sold to other Europeans at higher prices. Even with the rules to control trade, some colonies traded with other countries.





## DIFFERENT ECONOMIES

① In the early 1700s, **agriculture**, or the business of farming, was the way about nine out of ten colonists made a living. Some farms had surplus crops to sell. By selling crops and other products, colonists were following a system of **free enterprise**. In a free enterprise system, people can decide what to make, how much to produce, and what price to charge.

② Each region of the colonies had different natural resources. Those resources helped each region to develop its own special economy.

### The Southern Colonies

③ The hot, humid climate and soil of the Southern Colonies were well-suited to growing crops. Farmers used much of their land for cash crops. They grew and exported tobacco, rice, and indigo to England.

④ In 1744 a woman named **Elizabeth Lucas Pinckney** grew indigo in South Carolina. English merchants needed dye from the indigo plants

This painting of a farm (below) was probably done about 1732. The indigo plant (right) probably came from South Carolina.

to make blue cloth. Indigo quickly became a major cash crop of the Southern Colonies.

### The Middle Colonies

⑤ Farmers in the Middle Colonies grew so much wheat and corn that people called their region the “breadbasket of the colonies.” These farmers sold their surplus grain to English colonies in the **West Indies**.

⑥ Colonists there needed grain to feed enslaved workers. Little land was available to grow food because most of it was used to plant cash crops, such as sugarcane. On Jamaica and Barbados, colonists ran huge farms with hundreds of enslaved African workers.







New England harbors in the 1700s (left) were busy fishing centers. Today they attract many tourists (below).



## NEW ENGLANDERS AND THE SEA

In the rocky soil of New England, farmers barely grew enough crops to feed themselves. As a result, many New Englanders used the forests or the sea to make a living. In the 1700s the coast of Massachusetts had some of the richest fishing areas in the world. Many people turned to fishing and ship building.

### Profits from the Sea

- ➔ ① New England needed ships. English ships cost too much. So workers cut down trees from New England's forests to build their own ships. By 1741 New England had a fleet of more than 800 fishing boats. The ships were built so well that soon English companies were buying them.
- ➔ ② New Englanders sold fish to Spain, Portugal, and the West

Indies. Their fishing and whaling **industries** made large profits.

An industry is all the businesses that make one kind of product or provide one kind of service.

- ➔ ③ Fishing and shipbuilding created other industries in New England. Ships needed ropes, sails, and other equipment. Soon Boston, the largest city in New England, became a busy trade center. Merchants from all over New England and the Middle Colonies came there to sell products.

### The Triangular Trade

- ➔ ④ Many New Englanders became rich in the **triangular trade**. The map on page 231 shows how the colonial trade routes made a triangle. The first leg of the triangle started at such ports as Boston and New York. Traders sailed to West Africa,



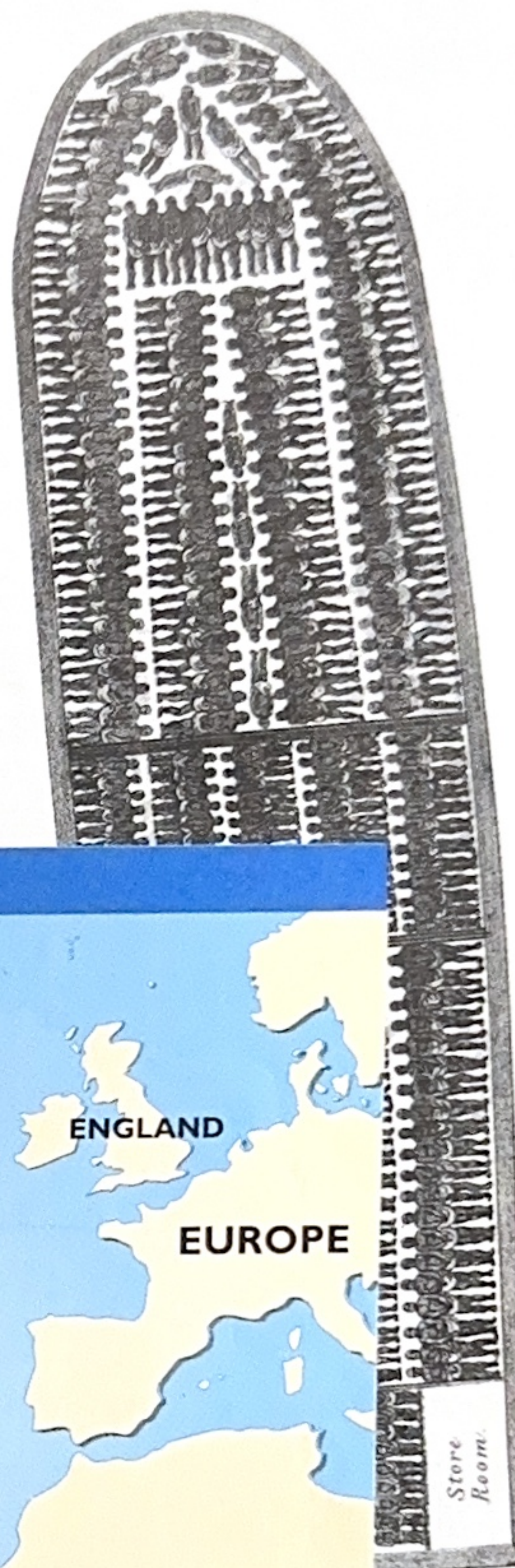
where they traded rum and guns for gold, ivory, and captives.

➤ The second leg of the triangle began in Africa. This was called the **Middle Passage**. It was the middle part of the trade route. Thousands of Africans died on the eight-week voyage to the Americas.

➤ In the West Indies, Africans were traded for molasses, a syrup made from sugarcane. In New England, molasses was bought for rum. This

was the last leg of the trade route. Port cities such as Boston grew very quickly from the triangular trade.

This drawing (right) shows how Africans were crowded into ships on the **Middle Passage**.



### THE TRIANGULAR TRADE ROUTE, 1700s



#### MAP WORK

Trace the colonial routes of the **triangular trade** on the map.

1. How long was the route between Africa and the West Indies?

2. What was the destination of most of the enslaved Africans?

3. What products were shipped from ports in New England to Africa? From the West Indies to Boston and New York?