

Lesson Title: Create a Colony Crate!

Materials Needed

- A shoebox or small cardboard box ("The Crate")
- Craft supplies: construction paper, markers, colored pencils, clay, cotton balls, pipe cleaners, fabric scraps, glue, scissors
- Natural items (optional): small rocks, twigs, leaves, sand, seashells
- A large piece of paper or whiteboard for brainstorming
- A notebook and pencil for writing
- Access to a computer or books for brief research (e.g., kids' history websites, library books on colonial America)
- **For the "Mystery Box":** A separate box containing three distinct items representing each colonial region (e.g., a seashell for New England, a small bag of flour/grain for the Middle Colonies, a cotton ball for the Southern Colonies)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Identify the three main colonial regions: New England, Middle, and Southern.
- Explain how geography and climate influenced the economy and way of life in a chosen colony.
- Create a physical representation ("Colony Crate") that synthesizes information about a specific colony's resources, industry, and daily life.
- Articulate their creative choices and connect them to historical facts.

Curriculum Standards Alignment (Example for 4th-5th Grade Social Studies)

- **U.S. History and Geography:** Students describe the cooperation and conflict that existed among the Native Americans and between the Native Americans and the new settlers.
- **U.S. History and Geography:** Students describe the various colonial regions by comparing and contrasting their economies, governments, and religious and social structures.
- **Speaking and Listening:** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning.

Lesson Activities (Approx. 75-90 minutes)

Part 1: The Mystery Box Hook (10 minutes)

1. **Introduce the Mystery:** Present the "Mystery Box" and explain that it contains clues about three different ways of life from long ago.
2. **Analyze the Clues:** Have the student pull out one item at a time (seashell, flour, cotton ball). Ask guiding questions for each item:
 - "What is this?"
 - "Where might you find it? Near an ocean? On a farm?"
 - "What could people do with this? Eat it? Build with it? Sell it?"
3. **Make a Connection:** Explain that these items represent the three major regions of the American colonies, and today's mission is to become an expert on one of them.

Part 2: Exploring the Three Colonial Regions (15 minutes)

1. **Quick Overview:** Briefly introduce the three colonial regions (New England, Middle, and Southern). Use a large piece of paper to create a simple three-column chart.
2. **Interactive Research:** Together, spend about 10 minutes looking up the key features of each region. Focus on fun, memorable facts rather than dates. Fill in the chart with simple notes, drawings, or keywords.
 - **New England:** Rocky soil, cold winters, fishing, shipbuilding, small towns. (*Connect to the seashell*)
 - **Middle Colonies:** Fertile soil, "The Breadbasket," growing wheat and grain, diverse population. (*Connect to the flour*)
 - **Southern Colonies:** Warm climate, large plantations, growing cash crops like tobacco and cotton. (*Connect to the cotton ball*)
3. **Choose a Colony:** Let the student choose ONE colony to focus on for their main project (e.g., Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia). This choice gives them ownership of the activity.

Part 3: Main Activity - Create a Colony Crate! (35-45 minutes)

1. **The Mission:** Explain the project: "Your mission is to create a 'Colony Crate'—a box filled with items that represent your chosen colony. Imagine you are sending this crate back to England to show people what life is like here. It needs to include 5-7 items that tell a story about the colony's geography, economy, and daily life."
2. **Brainstorm:** Help the student brainstorm what could go in their crate. For example, if they chose Virginia (Southern Colony):
 - A rolled-up piece of paper stained with a tea bag to look like a tobacco leaf (Economy).
 - Blue construction paper to represent the James River (Geography).
 - A small house shape made from twigs (Daily Life/Shelter).
 - A drawing of a ship that would transport goods (Trade).
 - A small clay pot (Crafts/Daily Life).
3. **Create!:** Provide the shoebox and craft supplies. Let the student lead the creative process, turning their ideas into tangible items for the crate. This is where they apply their knowledge creatively.
4. **Write a Label:** As a final touch, have the student create a "shipping label" for the outside of the box. The label should name the colony and include a one-sentence summary of its most important feature (e.g., "From the Colony of Virginia, Home of King Tobacco!").

Part 4: Show and Tell & Assessment (10 minutes)

1. **The Presentation:** Have the student present their "Colony Crate." Ask them to take out each item and explain what it is and why they chose to include it. This is the primary assessment of their understanding.
2. **Ask Follow-Up Questions:**
 - "How did the rivers/ocean/soil in your colony help the people who lived there?"
 - "If you were a colonist, which of these items would be most important to you for survival? Why?"
 - "What do you think was the hardest part about living in this colony?"

Differentiation & Extension

- **For Extra Support:** Provide a pre-filled list of ideas for what to include in the crate. Work together to construct each item, focusing the conversation on the "why" behind each one. Use a

template for the shipping label.

- **For an Extra Challenge:** Ask the student to write a one-paragraph letter to go inside the crate, written from the perspective of a colonist. The letter should describe their daily life and explain the importance of the items in the crate. They could also create a small map of their colony on the inside lid of the box.

Assessment Rubric for "Colony Crate" Presentation

Use this as a guide for giving feedback. No formal grading is needed; focus on encouragement and identifying areas of understanding.

- **3 - Excellent:** Student clearly explains each item in the crate, confidently connecting it to the colony's geography, economy, or daily life. Answers follow-up questions with thoughtful detail.
- **2 - Good:** Student explains most items and makes a general connection to the colony. May need prompting to explain the "why" behind their choices.
- **1 - Developing:** Student can identify the items but struggles to explain how they relate to life in the colony. The items may be more generic than specific to the chosen region.