

Import/Export

Cross-Curricular Focus: History/Social Sciences



When the colonists first arrived in America, there were no stores to go and buy things that they needed or wanted. The people often did not have the supplies to be self-sufficient. They had to rely on products shipped to them from other countries, mainly England. When you bring products in from another country, you **import** them into your own country.

Goods were imported by ship to major colonies with a port on a bay. The port had to be a safe place for large ships to dock. People who wanted the products traveled to the port. People could not buy too much, though. They had to **transport** whatever they bought to their homes in wagons or on horseback.

The colonies became more self-sufficient over time. Crops like tobacco and rice proved to be very successful in the South. The soil there was especially rich in nutrients. Large plantations used the labor of many indentured servants and slaves. It was hard work to bring in the plentiful harvests. Soon, goods began to flow in the other direction. The colonies started to **export** goods back to England and other countries to sell.

As rumblings of independence started, colonists were relying less and less on goods they had to import. Local merchants continued to sell items from other countries. However, the prices kept increasing as the English government added taxes to the goods. Merchants began to carry more locally produced goods.

The U.S. became independent. It grew and expanded westward. This created a unique opportunity for entrepreneurs to start businesses. They purchased extra supplies and took them to the frontier for people to buy. They could only carry a small amount of extra supplies over the long distance. These goods were hard to find on the frontier and very desirable. The entrepreneurs could charge high prices because so many people wanted to buy the rare items. This economic principle is called the law of supply and demand.

Name _____

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

1) Why was it necessary for the early colonists to rely on imported goods?

2) What does import mean?

3) What were the crops in the South that were successful?

4) Can you think of any goods that are imported into the U.S. today? Name one.

5) Is "supply and demand" economics fair? Explain.
