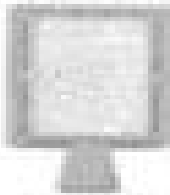


Life as a Child in Colonial America

Life in Colonial America wasn't easy for kids. They lived in harsh conditions. They didn't have running water or electricity, and they had to work very hard in order to survive. Most colonial families had to build their own houses and furniture. Some families lived in small, cramped houses.

Colonial children had few personal possessions, if any at all. They were lucky if they had two sets of clothing! The women and girls had to make all of the clothes. Most of their clothing was made from wool, which is not very comfortable. A girl might have made a doll from cardboard and scraps of material, and a boy was lucky if he even owned marbles.

Boys and girls during Colonial times were expected to do lots of chores. They woke up early every morning, and helped feed the chickens and gather their eggs, milk the cows, and water and feed the horses. During the day they helped to plant and gather crops. The girls helped their mothers spin wool and weave it into cloth for clothes, sew, make candles, and prepare meals. Boys helped their fathers hunt, fish, chop and gather firewood, make barrels and wagon wheels, and build furniture.



Some colonial boys were lucky enough to have one room schoolhouse. Children learned to read, write, and do arithmetic. Colonial families were very religious. Children were expected to read the Bible, write letters, and learn how to keep track of their money. Children learned to write on paper made of birch bark with a quill pen and ink. They learned to read from a *primer*, a wooden book with paper attached to it.

It wasn't easy getting around during Colonial times. Children mostly walked wherever they needed to go. If they were fortunate, they got to ride on a wagon or on a horse. If it was raining, they used a large shed. It took a long time to get somewhere.

The colonists faced lots of danger—wild animals, harsh weather conditions, food shortages, and war with other settlers or American Indians. Sometimes everyone got along, but at other times villages were attacked, or the men and boys had to go off to fight in battles. At other times, the colonists lived in peace.

Colonial children helped build our country alongside their parents, but life wasn't always easy.