

Name: _____

The Apprentice System

When European colonists arrived in North America they were leaving behind all the comforts of home. There was no longer a corner store where they could do the grocery shopping or pick up a newspaper. If their tools or equipment broke, there was no place to purchase replacements. This was a harsh reality in a world where they had to fight for their own survival.

More settlers came to the English colonies than to those of the French or Spanish. When they arrived, they were ready to work hard for themselves and their community members. They had to help each other, or they would surely die. A few skilled workers were among them, but they did not necessarily have someone with training to do some of the jobs that needed to be done. Families up to that point were mostly self-sufficient, with all of the family members helping each other get what they needed. In the colonies, they had to reinvent some of that family-style teamwork and join together for the good of the entire group.

It was not long before people began to take on new work responsibilities. Those who knew

how to make things by hand were called artisans. Their work on things such as nails, horseshoes, barrels, and even homes was critical to the success of their colony. Because their skilled work was so necessary, they began to train younger workers so that there would be others to take over their duties if death, disease, or old age made them unable to continue. Artisans often had several such helpers of different ages. These helpers were called apprentices.

Apprentices would commonly be sent to live with the artisan. The younger apprentices would provide their labor in exchange for food, shelter, clothing, and the knowledge and experience of the skills they were learning. Tools brought with them from England provided the basis for most artisan's work and apprentices' training until sufficient materials arrived from England to create additional tools. Experienced apprentices would become artisans and take apprentices of their own to train. In this way, the colony would be assured of skilled workers long into the future.

The Central Idea

What is the central idea of the text?

List two supporting details for the central idea.

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What is the central idea of the text? *Actual answers may vary.*

The apprentice system that was used in the early American colonies helped colonies grow.

List two supporting details for the central idea.

1) Apprentices provided skilled labor while they learned vital jobs.

2) After apprentices became artisans, they would have apprentices who would also learn the skills, so skilled artisans would be working in the future.
