

Answer Key: Comparing the Three Colonial Regions

Grade: 5 **Subject:** Social Studies (early United States) **For teacher use only** Social Studies

How to use this key

Answers are grouped by section and question number. Many items are open-ended; accept any response that shows correct reasoning even if the wording differs. Notes flag where more than one answer is defensible and list common misconceptions to watch for. Everything students need is in the packet, so answers should draw on the three profiles, the map (Figure 1), and Table 1 only. Estimated grading time: ~4–6 min per packet.

Start Look & Notice grade for effort · ~1 min

1 Notice one thing about where the regions are.

Full credit for any reasonable observation from the map, e.g., "the three regions are stacked north to south," "they are all next to the Atlantic Ocean," "New England is farthest north and Southern is farthest south." Warm-up graded for effort.

2 One way weather or land might change how people work.

Accept any reasonable idea in the student's own words: cold weather makes farming hard, good soil helps farming, being near water lets people fish or ship goods, warm weather helps crops grow. More than one answer is defensible.

Apply Read the Map & Table ~2–3 min

3 Map reading — north and south.

Farthest **north: New England**. Farthest **south: Southern** (the Southern colonies). Both are read directly from Figure 1.

4 Table reading.

a) "breadbasket" = **Middle** region. b) big plantation farms = **Southern** region. c) fishing and shipbuilding = **New England**. All read directly from Table 1.

5 Compare — one likeness, two differences.

Alike (any one): all three were colonies along the Atlantic coast; all three used the land and water around them to make a living; all three had farming of some kind; all three traded goods.

Different (any two): climate/land (cold rocky north vs. mild rich middle vs. warm south); main way of making a living (fishing/ships vs. wheat/grain vs. plantation crops like tobacco and rice); settlement (small close towns vs. busy ports vs. spread-out farms with few towns).

Watch: a difference must contrast the regions, not just restate one region's trait.

6 Cause and effect — geography shaped how people lived.

Accept any one region with a correct geography → living link. **Models:**

- **New England:** cold weather and rocky soil made big farming hard, so people fished, hunted whales, built ships, and traded by the sea.
- **Middle:** mild weather and rich, flat soil let farmers grow lots of wheat and grain, and wide rivers and ports helped them trade it.
- **Southern:** warm weather, a long growing season, and rich soil let people grow large crops like tobacco and rice on big plantations.

Full credit needs a geography cause **and** a matching effect on how people worked. See rubric below.

7 Fact (F) / Opinion (O).

- a) **F** — checkable in the New England profile / Table 1.
- b) **O** — "best region" is a personal preference; cannot be proven.
- c) **F** — checkable in the Southern profile / Table 1.
- d) **O** — "more exciting" is a personal feeling.

Fact = you can check it in the packet; opinion = what someone feels or likes.

8 Evaluate the claim "the land and weather were the same in all three regions."

Correct: B (No). The packet clearly shows different geography: cold rocky land in New England, mild rich soil in the Middle, and warm land with a long growing season in the South. Reject A (nothing says they were the same) and C (the packet discusses land and weather throughout). Explanation must cite one such detail from a profile or Table 1.

Explain CER (Q9) ~1–2 min

9 Compare how two regions made a living, and why.

Model answer (New England vs. Southern). Claim: In New England people mostly fished and built ships, but in the Southern colonies people mostly farmed big plantations of tobacco and rice. Evidence: (1) The New England profile / Table 1 says the north was cold with rocky soil, so people fished, whaled, and built ships. (2) The Southern profile / Table 1 says the south was warm with a long growing season, so people grew tobacco and rice on large plantations. Reasoning: The land and weather were different, so people used whatever their region gave them — the sea in the north, and warm farmland in the south.

Defensible alternates: any two regions may be chosen (New England vs. Middle, or Middle vs. Southern) and earn full marks if the claim names both regions, two accurate pieces of evidence support it, and the reasoning connects the difference to geography.

CER scoring rubric (3 points)

Score	Claim	Evidence	Reasoning
3	Names two regions and clearly states how their ways of making a living differed.	Two accurate, relevant details from the profiles, map, and/or Table 1.	Correctly links the difference to geography (land, weather, or water).
2	Names two regions; difference mostly clear.	One solid detail, or two with a minor error.	Some correct linkage but incomplete or a small misconception.
1	Vague or names only one region.	Evidence weak, off-topic, or not from the packet.	Little or flawed reasoning; no clear link to geography.
0	No/incorrect claim.	No evidence.	No reasoning.

Close ACE ~1 min

Articulate: accept any accurate plain-language definition (e.g., "a region is a group of places that share things like weather or land").

Connect: the cited spot must actually show geography shaping life — e.g., the map note "cold · rocky soil · fishing," the Middle "breadbasket" note, or the Southern "big plantations" note.

Extend: any reasonable local land/weather effect with a link to work or play (e.g., "hot summers here mean people swim," "flat farmland means farming"). More than one answer is defensible; grade the reason, not the choice.

Watch Common misconceptions

- **All regions were the same (Q5, Q8).** Students may assume the colonies were alike. Point to the clear climate/land and livelihood differences in the profiles and Table 1.
- **Mixing up "breadbasket" and plantations.** The Middle region was the wheat/grain "breadbasket"; the Southern region had large plantations of tobacco and rice.
- **Fact vs. opinion (Q7).** A statement using "best" or "more exciting" is an opinion, not a fact — it cannot be checked in the packet.
- **Cause vs. effect (Q6).** The geography (land, weather, water) is the cause; how people made a living is the effect. Students sometimes name the job without naming the geography that led to it.
- **Not to scale.** The map is a simple drawing showing north-to-south order, not exact sizes or shapes — grade the order and reasoning, not map precision.

Sensitive-topic note. The Southern profile states plainly that much of the plantation field work was done by enslaved people who were forced to work and were not free. Keep any discussion factual, age-appropriate, and non-partisan. If a student asks, affirm that slavery was wrong and that this is why it is part of learning our history.

Teacher follow-up based on likely errors

If many students say the regions were "the same" (Q5/Q8), do a 3-minute sort of the three climate/land descriptions. If Q7 shows fact/opinion confusion, re-anchor with the Word Bank and a couple of quick examples. If Q6 or the CER (Q9) reasoning is thin, model aloud the "geography → job" link for one region. The highest-value idea to revisit is that **the land and weather of each region shaped how people there lived and worked.**