

Art
ToGo

The Cleveland
Museum of Art

Early America: Artistry
of a Young Nation



Jean Graves

Contents

- 3 Introduction
- 4 At a Glance
- 6 The Presentation
- 8 Timeline
- 12 List of Objects
- 12 Vocabulary List
- 13 Map
- 14 Lesson Plan
- 14 Suggestions for Further Reading
- 15 “Webbing” American Artistry

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Written by Jean Graves, with timeline by Michael Starinsky. Thanks to Linda Baumgarten and John Davis at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation for assistance in identifying the shoe buckles. Also thanks to Carol Godes and Joan G. Hudson for editing help.

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Cover: *Nathaniel Hurd*, c. 1765. John Singleton Copley. Gift of the John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Trust 1915.534

www.clevelandart.org
We invite teachers and students alike to visit the Cleveland Museum of Art in person. We also encourage teachers and students to visit the museum’s Web site for information about the museum’s permanent collection and educational programs.

This Teacher Packet will prepare you for a visit from the Cleveland Museum of Art's Art to Go team. It will help familiarize you with the topic *Early America: Artistry of a Young Nation*. We hope the presentation will not be an isolated event for the students, but rather an integrated part of their course of study. In keeping with this idea, the *Early America* program is designed to fulfill some of the proposed 2002 Ohio Social Studies Academic Content Standards.

The presentation builds on the curriculum for first graders by examining the role of children and families in colonial America. It pays special attention to how children contributed to the welfare of their families and how they learned the skills they would need as adults. The lesson plan incorporates the grade two theme of “people working together” by discussing how settlers used specific skills to make necessary items. It is also well suited to one of the grade three goals, for we “make history come alive” using artifacts that students can hold in their hands.

Additionally, the presentation can be customized to meet goals for older students. Ohio’s Academic Content Standards for grades five and eight emphasize the relationship between geography and resources. Students will learn about the resources that colonists found and how they gathered and refined those resources to create the objects in our suitcase.

We strongly encourage you to bring your students to the museum to view related objects within the permanent collection. The “American Art” school tour is available free of charge. To request a registration form, call 216–707–2462.

Among the first wave of immigrants to North America were a number of highly optimistic silversmiths, goldsmiths, and jewelers. These artisans believed they would find a land brimming with precious metals just waiting to be transformed into teapots and tankards. Needless to say, they were disappointed. Some turned tail and headed back to England. The few who remained—and survived—set out to make a living in their new home.

The settlers were faced with a terrific lack of resources. Most brought little more than a bed roll and tin cup with them. A man who brought a hammer or saw was fortunate indeed, as even the most basic tools were scarce. The technology was not yet in place to manufacture the items the colonists needed to live. Importing goods was also very difficult. The settlers did not generate enough money to purchase finished products and the British government was reluctant to send raw materials. (The crown received higher tax revenues on finished goods.)

The only solution was to make good use of what was already available. The colonists built their first homes from wattle and daub (straw and mud) and then with wood. They raised sheep for wool, meat, and tallow. Dishes were fashioned from local red clay.

Materials that were difficult to replace were carefully preserved and then recycled, if possible. Printed paper was covered with clear sheets of horn—the predecessor of modern lamination. Worn-out tin cups and tools were melted down and transformed into shiny new spoons. Threadbare coverlets came back to life as cushion covers and dishrags.

Human resources were also carefully marshaled. Every colonist had to be productive. In Massachusetts, a Puritan settler who failed to produce his quota of food could be banished, a sentence tantamount to death. Skilled craftsmen were highly esteemed—witness the status of Paul Revere and his fellow silversmiths. Even slaves profited to a degree by learning skills. For instance, slaves working in the iron mills of the Chesapeake Bay could earn pay for hours worked beyond their regular day.

The family was the essential work unit during the settlement of America. The wife and daughters took care of food preparation, from churning the butter to baking the beans. The husband raised crops or worked a trade and maintained the family's property. The sons looked after the livestock, hunted, and fished. Even small children contributed to the family's welfare, gathering berries and spinning thread.

In spite of the pressing needs of survival, the colonists found ways to express a no-nonsense sense of beauty. They dyed their home-spun yarns yellow, brown, red, and blue and wove them into attractive geometric designs. They painted simple designs in slip on their clay pottery. And they memorialized their dead with haunting "soul effigies" incised into slabs of New England slate.

The colonists valued usefulness above all, but never sacrificed their appreciation of the attractive and unique. Each of the objects in this suitcase illustrates this ideal and celebrates the heritage of those judicious forebears.

Early American Schools

Children's books in colonial America concentrated on religion. A **hornbook**, a 17th-century child's first book, was used to learn letters and begin sounding out words. It was a single page printed with letters, syllables, and prayers. This sheet was pasted to a wooden paddle to help preserve it. The shape of the hornbook invited other uses, both pleasant and not. Pupils used their hornbooks for impromptu badminton games, while teachers sometimes employed them for a corrective swat or two.

Six- to eight-year-olds began learning reading and arithmetic at dame school, taught by a woman in her home. Older children attended common school, where they studied writing, spelling, and arithmetic. One teacher taught all grades in a single room. School was in session from 7:00 AM to 4:00 or 5:00 PM six days a week. Discipline was strict. Students who failed exams or daydreamed had to wear a pointed dunce cap, and disrespect could earn a public whipping. School ended for most children when they were 11 or 12. A few boys with wealthy, ambitious parents went on to Latin school to prepare them for college. America's first college, Harvard, was founded in 1639.

In the northern colonies, common schools were supported by taxes. In the south, parents had to pay tuition. Many southern children, both black and white, never learned to read.

For girls who did not go to school, making a **sampler** was a way to learn reading by embroidering letters, numbers, and prayers or poems. Look closely at our sampler: its author did not quite master all her digits.



Reproduction Hornbook

Do you remember your first book? What was the title? What is your favorite book now?



Sampler

What saying would you embroider on a sampler? Would you put your date of birth on the sampler?

Colonial Houses

It's hard to talk about a "typical" colonial house. Housing quality in the south ranged from the dirt-floored shacks of field slaves to the mansions of plantation owners. In New York, Dutch immigrants constructed stone houses several stories high, while settlers on the frontier made do with log cabins.

One common housing type was the simple wood farmhouse of an established New England family. Its steeply pitched roof shed winter snow. Inside was a single room with a plank floor. Planks were often laid over the rafters to create a sleeping loft for the children.

The great room was dominated by two large pieces of furniture, a bed and a loom. A **coverlet** woven by the wife decorated the four-poster bed. There were also a table and a few stools, with a chair for the head of the household. A hearth large enough for an adult to enter took up most of one wall. Equipped with hooks for hanging iron pots over the fire and a spit for roasting meat, it provided heat, light, and a place to cook and bake.

In the era before gas or electric lights, illuminating the house was a major concern. Colonial women made their own candles, either by dipping or using a **candle mold**. Wax for the candles came from tallow or from bayberries gathered by the children of the house. The iron **betty lamp**, an American invention, reduced the likelihood of dangerous house fires. A groove in the metal under the wick caught dripping oil before it could fall onto a flammable item such as a coverlet.



Coverlet

A coverlet was made to cover the bed, the most important piece of furniture in the colonial house. What is the most important piece of furniture in your house?



Candle Mold

Candles were precious to the colonists, and they used them sparingly. If you knew you only had one hour of light to use tonight, what would you do in that hour?

Betty Lamp

The betty lamp was designed to help prevent house fires. What are some of the ways we prevent fires today?





Classical Art



Ancient Americas



Cool Knights



0
Birth
of
Christ

79
Mt. Vesuvius
erupts,
Pompeii
buried

Highlights in Art and World History

after 1000
Leif Eriksson
reaches
North America

1173
Work begins
on Leaning
Tower of Pisa

1368–1644
Ming Dynasty
in China

c. 1440
Gutenberg
invents printing
press

1492
Columbus sails
the ocean blue

1503–06
Da Vinci
paints
Mona Lisa

1564–1616
Life of William
Shakespeare



Reproduction Hornbook 20th-century replica, after an American or English original, c. 1660–80



Rubbing from the Gravestone of Abigale Muzzy 20th-century rubbing of 1766 gravestone



Spoon Mold early 19th c.



Fragment of a Coverlet early 19th c.



Pie Plate mid 19th c.



Betty Lamp 18th or 19th c.



Native American Art



Diego Rivera

1600 AD

1700 AD

1800 AD

1900 AD

2000 AD

1606–69
Life of Rembrandt

1665
Sir Isaac Newton articulates laws of gravity

1706–90
Life of Ben Franklin

1776
Declaration of Independence signed

1775–83
Revolutionary War

1789
George Washington elected first American president

1827
Niepce makes first photograph

1903
Wright Brothers take first airplane flight

1905
Einstein formulates theory of relativity

1879
Edison invents light bulb

1879
Rodin creates *Thinker*

c. 1907
Cubism conceived

1945
Atomic bombs end World War II

1930s
Television equipment perfected

1928
Penicillin discovered

1982
Compact disc introduced

2003
You are here



Spoon Mold and Reproduction Spoons

Colonial pewter was made from tin and lead. Why don't we make spoons out of leaded pewter any more?

A Colonial Family Dinner

Imagine having supper in the home described above. The children are busy feeding wood to the fire in the hearth, turning the spit to roast the meat or stirring the stew in its iron cauldron. Before supper, they recite what they learned at school.

Mother and Father sit, but children stand to eat and are expected to keep silent throughout the meal.

Food is served in trenchers, big oval dishes shared by two people. You have a spoon but no fork, and the only knives are what the men and boys carry on their belts. Mostly, you use your fingers. A typical meal might consist of hasty pudding (corn meal mush) or a simple meat stew.

The colonists love sweets. Local cherries, apples, blueberries, and other wild berries combined with imported cane sugar make a lovely pie, especially when served in an attractive **pie plate**. Pies and bread are baked in a brick oven, a special compartment in the chimney with an iron door.



Pie Plate

Redware was a fairly inexpensive material in colonial times. What materials do we use for cheap dishes? How about fancy ones?

Jobs in Colonial America

Christian ministers were the leaders of the New England colonists because they were college educated and thought to have a special relationship with God. Their authority was rarely questioned.

The majority of settlers were farmers, who had learned by working alongside their parents. Farmers grew crops and raised animals to provide the raw materials for feeding and clothing their families. When they were able to produce extra, they bartered for items they could not make themselves.

Tradesmen used specific skills to earn a living. They learned their crafts by apprenticeship, assisting and observing an established artisan at work.



Ink Stand

Early American craftsmen often made new items by melting down worn out pewter goods. What materials do we recycle today?

Apprenticeships could last up to seven years. The pewterer who made our **ink stand** probably had an apprentice because it took two people to operate the lathe, the machine used to shape the metal.

Women prided themselves on their domestic skills; girls learned by watching their mothers and grandmothers work. This presentation pays special attention to the crafts of weaving and candlemaking. Women wove fabric and made candles to benefit their families, but many made extra to sell for profit.

What did people do in their spare time?

Sunday, usually the only day off, was spent in church in the northern colonies. After service colonists could pursue quiet activities, chatting with neighbors, or reading religious texts. Children who played loudly on a Sunday could get their parents in trouble. Walking in the churchyard was permitted, however, because the pictures and epitaphs carved on the stones would properly orient one's reflections. The **rubbing from the gravestone of Abigale Muzzy**, cut in 1766, illustrates Puritan attitudes toward the loss of a loved one and the hope of heaven.

On other days, northern children might find a little time to play with balls or dolls and ice skate in the winter. Music, dancing, poetry, and gambling of any sort were frowned upon.

In the south, the rules were not as strict. The wealthy learned to dance and play instruments and hosted card parties, balls, and hunting expeditions. The imported **shoe buckles** were the sort of finery rich men wore to impress the ladies at a dance. Poor whites and slaves also enjoyed music and dancing and made simple toys for their children.



Rubbing from the Gravestone of Abigale Muzzy

The artists who made this rubbing reproduced only part of this gravestone. What information did they leave out? What would you like to know about Abigale Muzzy?



Shoe Buckles

Shoe buckles made an 18th- or 19th-century American's shoes fashionable. Do shoes make a fashion statement today? What is the most fashionable shoe now?

List of Objects

- **Reproduction Hornbook**

American, 20th century
 Replica of an English or American hornbook,
 c. 1660–80
 Paper, wood, and imitation horn
 Gift of Mrs. Ruth F. Ruggles TR10092/19

- **Sampler**

Lucretia Rachel Arnold (American), 1819
 Cross-stitch embroidery on linen
 Gift of Mrs. E. A. Ruggles 1948.45

- **Fragment of a Coverlet**

American, early 19th century
 Wool and linen
 Gift of I. T. Frary 1946.155

- **Candle Mold**

American, early 19th century
 Tin
 Educational Purchase Fund 1935.195

- **Betty Lamp**

American, Pennsylvania German, 18th or
 19th century
 Iron with brass ornament
 Gift of Miss Ruth E. Adomeit 1984.1088

- **Spoon Mold**

American, early 19th century
 Brass
 G40.146

- **Reproduction Spoons**

American, 1966
 Lead (imitating pewter)
 S53/24, S53/24a

- **Pie Plate**

American, mid 19th century
 Redware with slip decoration
 Educational Purchase Fund 1932.79

- **Ink Stand**

American, early 19th century
 Pewter (glass ink container is modern)
 Gift of Mrs. Ruth F. Ruggles 1961.115

- **Rubbing from the Gravestone of Abigale Muzzy, 1766**

Ann Parker and Avon Neal (American, 20th
 century)
 Crayon on paper
 The Harold T. Clark Educational Extension
 Fund 1966.247

- **Pair of Shoe Buckles**

European (English or French), after 1780
 Silver on brass, with hinged steel prongs for
 mounting
 Gift of Juanita Sheflee 1968.82-3

Vocabulary List

A list of terms that might be used during the lesson.

anvil. heavy block of iron or steel with a smooth, flat upper surface on which metals are shaped by hammering

apprentice. person who agrees to work for a master craftsman for a specific period of time in return for instruction in a trade

crucible. vessel used for melting materials at high temperatures

epitaph. inscription on a tombstone in memory of the one buried there

forge. furnace or hearth where metals are heated or wrought

glaze. glass-like coating applied to ceramics before firing

indigo. deep blue dye derived from the indigo plant

lathe. machine for shaping a piece of material, such as wood or metal, by rotating the material rapidly along its axis while pressing against a fixed cutting or abrading tool

pewter. any of numerous silver-gray alloys of tin with various amounts of antimony, copper, and sometimes lead

shuttlecock. small rounded piece of cork or rubber with a conical crown of feathers, used in badminton

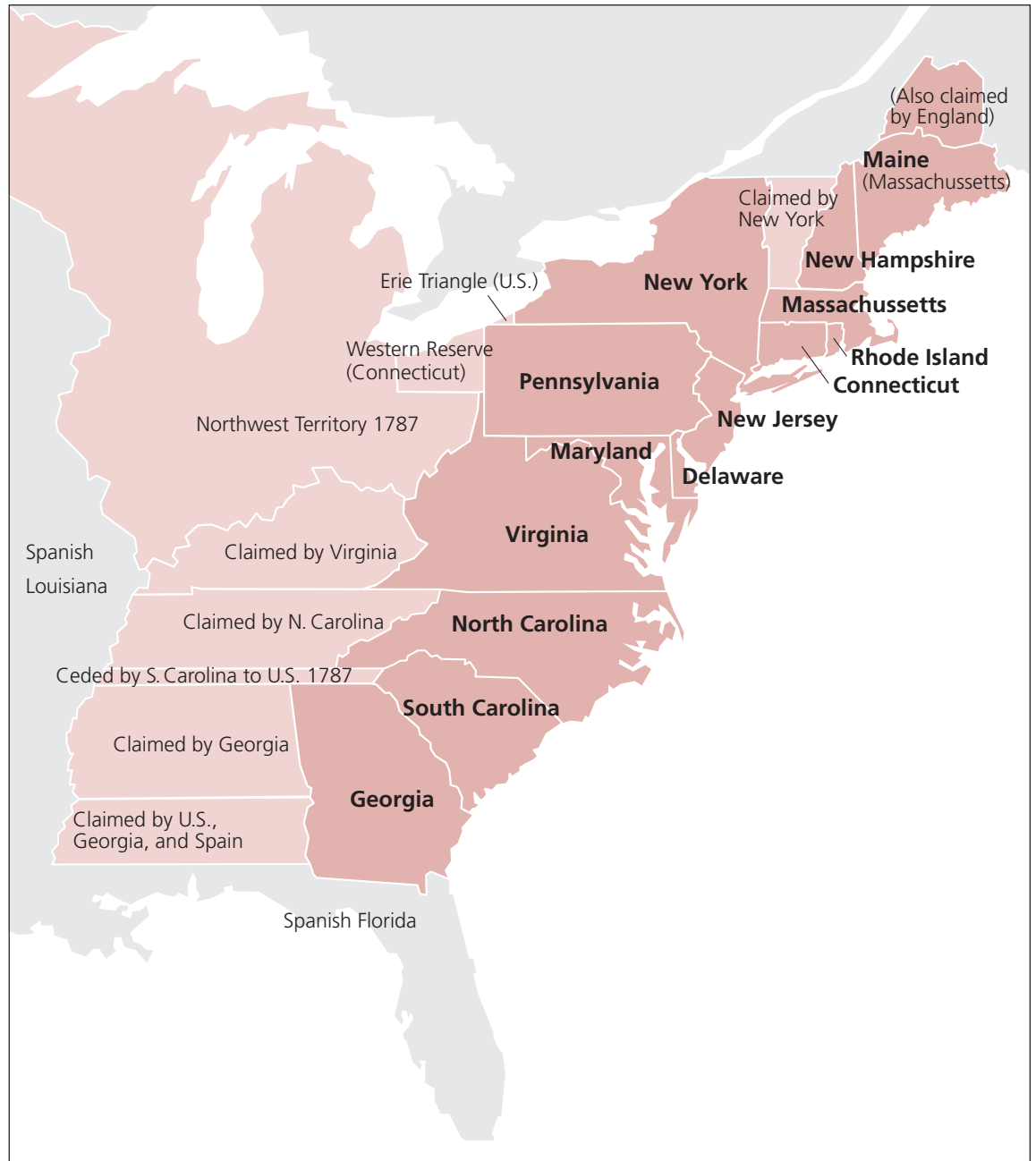
slip. thinned potter's clay used for decorating or coating ceramics

tallow. hard fat obtained from cattle, sheep, or horses, used to make candles, leather dressing, and soap

warp. vertical threads on a loom

weft. horizontal threads interlaced through the warp to create a woven fabric

The United States 1787



Art to Go Suitcase Presentations

Ancient Americas:
Art from Mesoamerica

The Art of Writing:
The Origin of the Alphabet

Classical Art:
Ancient Greece and Rome

Cool Knights: Armor
from the European Middle Ages and Renaissance

Diego Rivera: A Mexican Hero and His Culture

Early America:
Artistry of a Young Nation

Journey to Africa:
Art from Central and West Africa

Journey to Asia

Journey to Japan: A Passport to Japanese Art

Let's Discover Egypt
Masks: Let's Face It

Materials and Techniques of the Artist

Museum Zoo:
Animals in Art

Native American Art:
Clues from the Past

Problem Solving:
What in the World?

Lesson Plan

● Focus

Students will be introduced to the arts and crafts of the early Americans using artifacts from the Art to Go collection. The lesson is appropriate for grades two through eight, but can be adapted for older audiences as well.

● Purpose

To give insight into the daily lives of the American colonists and to make topical connections to classroom studies.

● Motivation

Students will be motivated through a direct, hands-on experience. Students will be further motivated by classroom discussion during the presentation. Follow-up discussion and projects assigned by the classroom teacher will help students retain information.

● Objectives

Students will learn:

- about early American houses, schools, and family life
- how settlers learned and used specific skills to make the items they needed
- about the resources available to the colonists and how they were used

- how the colonists preserved and recycled scarce materials

- how colonists made utilitarian objects beautiful.

● Participation

Students will be asked questions from simple to complex. They will be asked to problem solve using questions designed to help them identify what they see. Students will use critical thinking skills to determine how objects were made, and how these objects assisted the colonists in their daily lives.

● Comprehension Check

The Art to Go presenter will ask the students questions as the lesson is taught to ensure that they understand the material. The classroom teacher will be able to reinforce what the students have learned with curriculum ideas from this packet; teachers may also incorporate ideas from the lesson in an art project.

● Closure

Students will be able to reinforce what they have learned in the Art to Go presentation by visiting the American galleries in the Cleveland Museum of Art. They will be able to make connections between their classroom studies, the Art to Go presentation, and what is on view in the museum.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Atwater, Mary Meigs. *The Shuttle-Craft Book of American Hand-Weaving*. New York: Macmillan, 1951.

Dewhurst, C. Kurt, Betty MacDowell, Marsha MacDowell. *Artists in Aprons: Folk Art by American Women*. New York: Dutton, 1979.

Edmonds, Mary Jaene. *Samplers & Samplermakers: An American Schoolgirl Art 1700–1850*. Exhibition catalogue. New York/Los Angeles: Rizzoli/Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1991.

Fales, Martha Gandy. *Early American Silver*. Rev. ed. New York: Dutton, 1973.

Forbes, Harriette Merrifield. *Gravestones of Early New England*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927. Reprint. Princeton: Pyne Press, 1973.

Johnson, Claudia Durst. *Daily Life in Colonial New England*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002.

Ketchum, William C., Jr. *American Redware*. New York: Henry Holt, 1991.

Langdon, William Chauncy. *Everyday Things in American Life, 1607–1776*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943.

Montgomery, Charles F. *A History of American Pewter*. New York: Praeger, 1973.

"Really Neat Books." www.cedu.niu.edu/blackwell/books.html. DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University.

Reiss, Oscar. *Blacks in Colonial America*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1997.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Especially for Children

Barrett, Tracy. *Growing Up in Colonial America*. Brookfield, Conn.: Millbrook Press, 1995.

Fisher, Leonard Everett. *The Homemakers*. New York: Benchmark Books, Marshall Cavendish, 1998.

Kalman, Bobbie. *Colonial Crafts*. New York: Crabtree, 1992.

Warner, John F. *Colonial American Home Life*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1993.

Resources for Craft Projects

Carlson, Laurie M. *Colonial Kids: An Activity Guide to Life in the New World*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1997.

Guyon, Madeline H. *American Crafts: Easy-to-Make Projects from Traditional Folk Crafts*. Washington/New York: National Gallery of Art/Rizzoli, 1992.

“Webbing” American Artistry

Visual Arts

Weave a piece of cloth, embroider a sampler, make your own walnut-shell ink and quill pen. See the craft books listed in the “Further Reading” section for instructions and more ideas.

Earth Science

The colonists had to work hard to get the materials they needed. Where did they find iron and how did they extract it? Tin was not available so they had to recycle it from worn-out items. What materials do we recycle today?

Social Studies

A great way to get to know a culture is to sample some of its foods. Try making hasty pudding (Laurie Carlson’s book has a recipe.) Would you be willing to eat this every day?

Try adopting a piece of the past. Are there any Revolutionary soldiers buried in your area? Your class can volunteer an afternoon to clean the cemetery and plant flowers. While you’re there, try making your own rubbing. (Be sure to get permission from the caretaker, first.)

Mathematics

A housewife decides that her 6 x 8 foot coverlet is too tattered to put on the bed anymore. She will make seat covers from it. If half of the coverlet is too worn to use, and each seat cover requires 2 square feet of fabric, how many seat covers can she make?

A blacksmith bought a sheet of iron for 5 cents. He made a half-dozen lamps from it and sold them at 10 cents each. What was his profit?

Music

Sing a few verses of “Yankee Doodle” (there are more than 100), then learn the history of the song. Check out www.contemplator.com/america for information on this and many other American tunes.

Language Arts

Study poetry the way American children did in times past. Memorize a poem and recite it to the class or to your family. Senior citizens can be a fine resource for this activity because memorizing poetry was once a part of most school curricula. Some suggestions: “The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere” or “The Village Blacksmith,” both by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. For briefer selections, try some of Benjamin Franklin’s aphorisms.

Early America: Artistry of a Young Nation

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receives operat-
ing support
from the Ohio
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