Social Structure of American Colonies

New Spain (Mexico)

Peninsulares

- Were born in Spain.
- Were favored by the Spanish Crown.
- Held the highest government and clerical positions.
- Came from titled families.

Creoles

- Were born in the Americas of Spanish ancestry.
- Were considered second-class citizens.
- Held the lower-level government positions.
- · Were landlords and merchants.

Mestizos

- · Had both Spanish and Indian ancestry.
- Worked as artisans, skilled laborers, and *mayordomos*.
- Were often poor and uneducated.

Indians

- Worked the land for the Creoles.
- Could keep lands they owned before Spanish rule.
- Were devastated by disease and harsh working conditions.
- · Had legal rights that were often ignored.

African Slaves

- Were imported as labor to replace the Indians.
- Had the right to marry and have families.
- Could gain freedom through manumission.

British America (Virginia)

Gentry

- Formed the upper class.
- Owned large plantations.
- Included the wealthiest merchants and financiers.

Middling

- · Considered the middle class.
 - Worked in trades.
- Worked as merchants and storeowners.
- Held professional positions.

Farmers

- Owned small farms.
- Worked the farms with the help of their families.
 - Grew a cash crop.

Free Blacks

- Denied rights granted to white citizens.
 - Allowed to own property.
 - Held skilled jobs.

Enslaved House Servants

- · Worked skilled jobs.
- Worked seven days a week.
- Could move about more easily than enslaved field hands.

Enslaved Field Hands

- Worked from sunrise to sunset.
- Included men, women, and children.
 - ·Lived in slave quarters.

French Caribbean (Saint-Domingue)

Grand Blancs (White Elites)

- Were born in France.
- Owned most of the plantations and slaves.
- Held the highest social and government positions.
- Were wealthy merchants.

Petite Blancs (Poor Whites)

- Were born in Saint-Domingue.
 - Were poorer than the *grand blancs*.
- Were not major landowners.
- Wanted equality with the *grand blancs*.

Affranchis (Freedman)

- Descended from unions between *grand blancs* and Africans.
- · Considered inferior to the whites.
- Could own slaves and become wealthy.
- Had restricted legal rights.

Noirs (Black Slaves)

- Were imported African slaves.
- Worked as field hands or as house servants.
- Worked under abusive conditions and were oppressed by all the classes.

