Gender Roles in Early America

What are Gender Roles?

- ► What is gender?

- ► What are gender roles?

- ► How do gender roles change from when you are a kid and when you are an adult?

Pre-Colonial Society (before Europeans came to this land)

► People have been living in what is now the USA for a very long time

► Native Americans had societies here long before Columbus and other Europeans came here.

► These societies had their own kinds of gender roles, and their own definitions of what "family" meant.

Virginia Powhatan Tribe

▶ In this *indigenous* tribe, women and men played different roles, **but were treated the same**. Women and children would tend to farming, clothing making, and cooking. Men would hunt, fish and make canoes.

▶ Some duties were everyone's responsibility, for example raising children, and everyone was expected to know how to use a canoe.

Virginia Algonquian Tribe

▶ In this *indigenous* tribe, **men and women were viewed as equal**, but had opposite roles.

  ▶ Women were viewed as givers of life, while men were viewed as takers of life. Women were in charge of farming, and maintain households.

  ▶ Men were in charge of hunting, and were warriors. **Political power, ancestry, and property were passed through the female line.**

Early English Colonial Gender Roles

▶ *Patriarchy-* **A society where men have the power and lead the household.**

▶ The gender roles of the English colonists were much more rigid than native tribes

▶ <u>Men</u> made all the legal decisions while property and lineage were determined by the man's family. Men took care of farming

▶ <u>Women</u> did work inside the home and did not own land

Early English Colonial Gender Roles

▶ To "be a man" in colonial society you were supposed to-

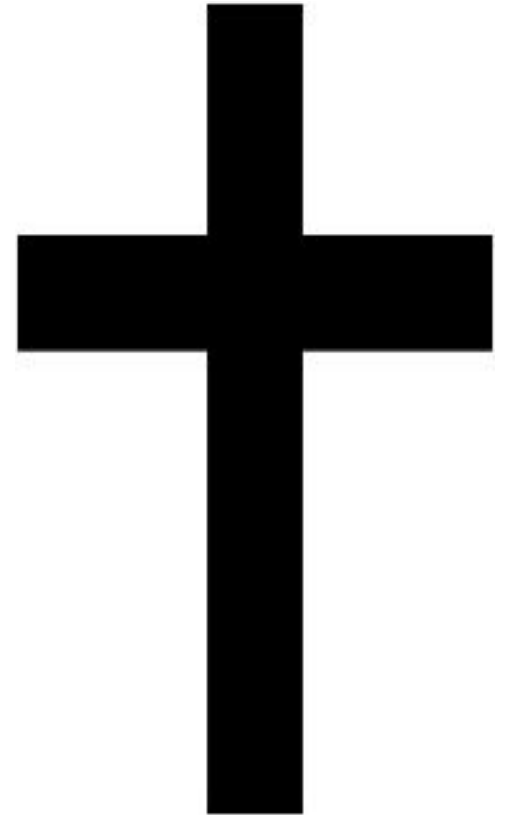 ▶ Be educated

  ▶ Own property

  ▶ Participate in government

▶ To "be a woman" you were supposed to-

  ▶ Maintain household order

  ▶ Support good morals and faith
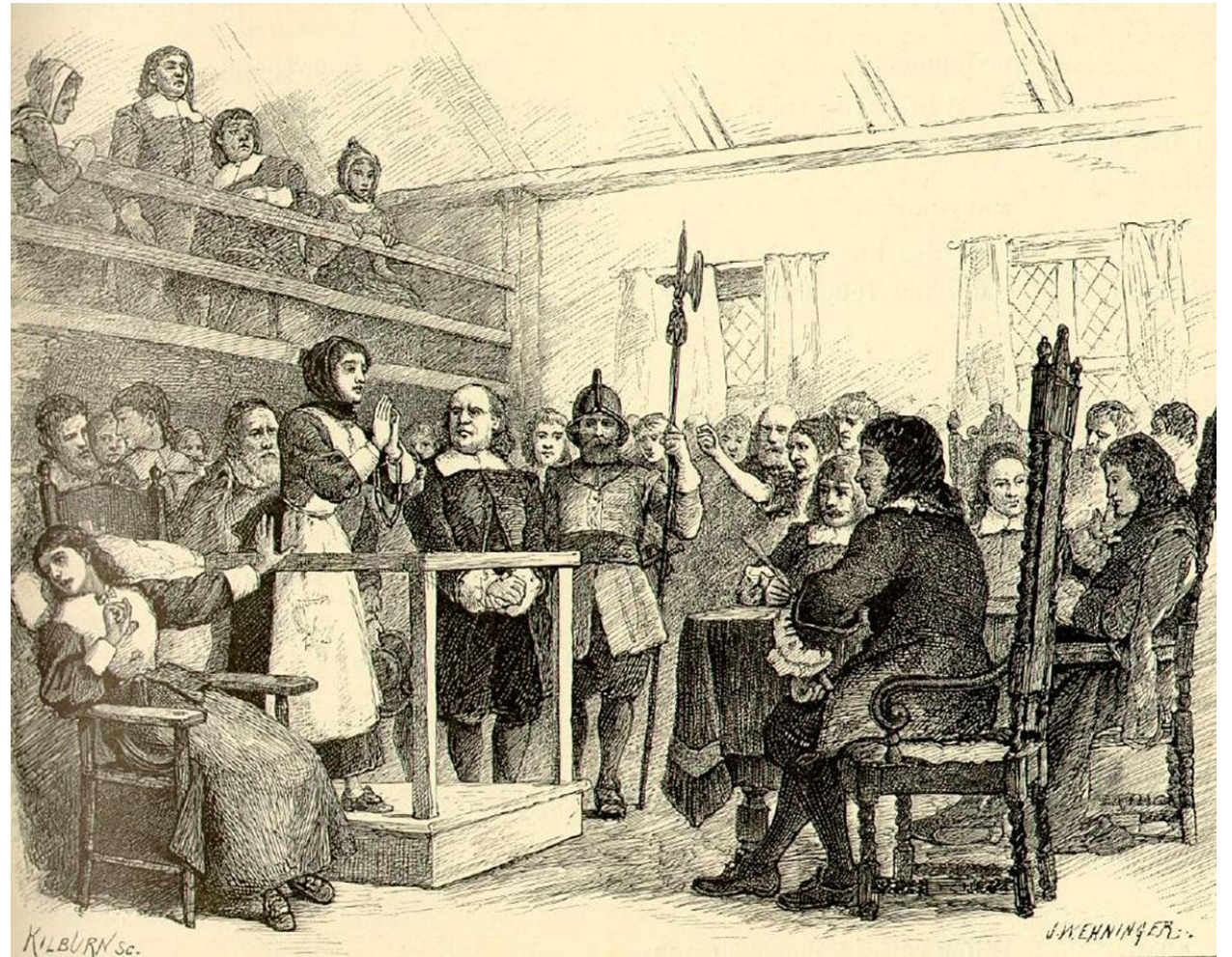
  ▶ Help men

  ▶ Have children

Religion's Role

► Religion played a major role in colonial society, especially for gender roles and expectations.

► In many colonial societies they used the Christian Bible as justification for oppressing women.

► However, some of the Northern colonies, like Pennsylvania, gave women a little more freedom than others. The Quaker religion allowed women to speak at religious gatherings.

When People Broke the Rules

▶ When women did not follow the strict gender roles in English colonies, there was often punishment.

▶ In many cases the **punishment was social rather than legal.** People who broke the rules were often chastised, shamed, or shunned.

▶ However, there were also legal punishments. Women who broke gender roles were sometimes banished, or labeled as "witches".

Anne Hutchinson

► One famous example of a woman who broke gender roles was **Anne Hutchinson**. She could be described as one of the first American feminists!

► She lived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony which practiced Puritan beliefs. **In the Puritan religion, women are not allowed to speak in church, or preach.**

Anne Hutchinson

► Anne preached her own interpretation of the Bible, and said she spoke directly to God.

► The men of the colony did not approve of her bravery so she was exiled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

STORYBOARD TIME

How Is Gender Different Today?

► How were your stories similar? How were they different?

► What are some gender roles you see today?

► What are some gender stereotypes we see today?

► What does a family look like today?

► How are these different than early Colonial America?

► Why do gender roles change?

► How do you think gender roles will change in the future?