

Name: _____

Large vs. Small Republics: Time and Space in Colonial America

Objective: To better understand Americans' debate over whether a large republic was possible in 1787, it is first necessary to understand the nature of their world. Its survival would depend on the connections between its many component parts. Thus, we must mentally transport ourselves back to their time and attempt to grasp to what extent this was possible. They did not enjoy the rapid travel provided by our interstates and airlines or the comforts of Marriott Courtyards along the way. Nor could they learn about election results in real time on iPhones. To understand the factors that shaped their thinking and the choices they made, we must first comprehend the world in which they made them.

Required Materials: Attached information about travel (below).

Directions: Read the background information about traveling in the 18th century, then complete the exercise.

Travel in the 18th Century

Were a visitor from ancient Rome to suddenly appear in colonial America, he or she would immediately recognize the modes of travel, which had little changed since their era. It was painfully slow, often dangerous, and exceedingly uncomfortable and unpleasant. A horse's fractured ankle, a broken wagon wheel, a storm, a flooded river, breezeless days, and a myriad of other factors could delay one's journey for days. Lodging at an inn meant sharing a room (and likely the bed!) with strangers, washing up with a basin of water and an already used towel and praying you would not be robbed. People and news all moved at the same snail-like, uncertain pace. For example, when George Washington died in 1799, settlers in Kentucky did not learn of it until 6 weeks later!

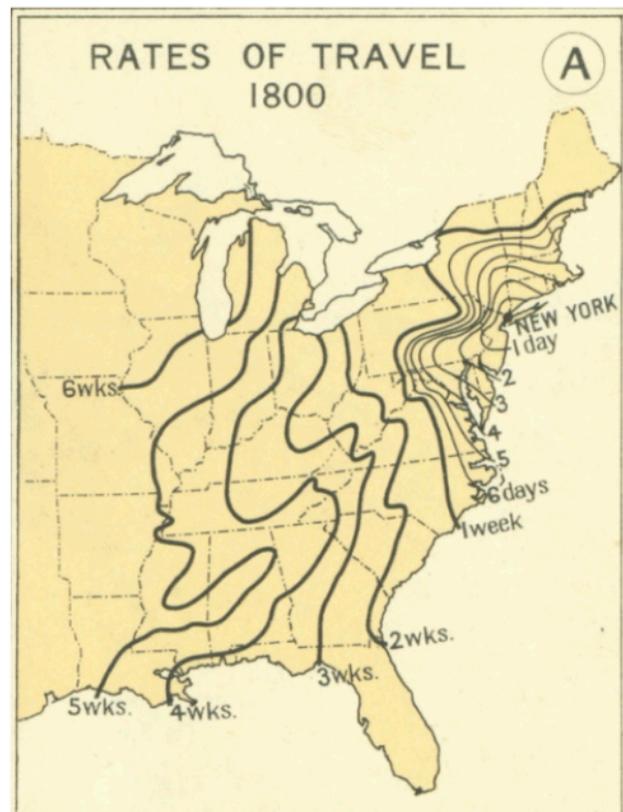
Travel Methods and Times

Horseback: About 4 mph and 30-40 miles per day

Wagon: 10-20 miles per day

Stagecoach: About 5 mph and up to 60-70 miles per day

Sailing ship: Times varied according to the winds. You might cover 100+ miles in a day or sit idle and move zero miles in a day.



3. Would elites and wealthy individuals have unchecked power in a large republic?

