



Mid-Unit 2 Assessment:

Inferring about the Silversmith Trade in Colonial Times

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:**

1. Read “Colonial Trades: The Silversmith” text.
2. Complete the graphic organizer.
3. Answer the inference question.
4. Write a Help Wanted ad for the silversmith.

**Colonial Trades: The Silversmith**

In colonial times, silver, gold, and copper were the metals that were valued most. In Colonial America, there were no banks. Most colonists’ wealth wasn’t in money at all, but in land or livestock. But for colonists who did have gold or silver, it was kept at home. When all of the silver coins looked just like another, what could colonists do to protect their money?

The silversmith was a skilled craftsman who worked with silver, gold, and copper to make special objects for the home. Not everyone was wealthy enough to need a silversmith. But wealthy colonists often brought their money to the silversmith. These colonists wanted to protect their silver and gold from being stolen. They had the silversmith make it into useful things like coffee pots, candlesticks, plates, spoons, and more. Each piece looked unique, or one-of-a-kind, so the items were easier to identify if stolen.

To be a silversmith you had to be skilled at working with metals. The silversmith used a large fireplace called a forge that makes fires extra hot. This special forge helped heat the metals that silversmiths worked with. The metals could be heated then beaten on an anvil with a mallet to make large metal sheets. The metal could also be melted and poured into containers called molds that were used to give a teapot or bowl its shape.

The silversmith was expected to make things that were beautiful as well as functional. The teapot had to pour tea, but it also had to look nice enough to be put out on the table when guests came. The silversmith was often asked to create pieces with designs that were cut out or engraved into the metal. To make these designs, the silversmiths had to use smaller hammers and more delicate tools to do this fine work.

The silversmith was an important colonial trade. Not only did this craftsman make beautiful pieces that could be used in the home, they also helped to protect a family’s wealth.



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Flesch-Kincaid: 7.0

Written by Expeditionary Learning for Instructional Purposes

**Sources**

Colonial Williamsburg Web site, History of Trades section (Silversmith):

[www.history.org/Almanack/life/trades/tradesil.cfm](http://www.history.org/Almanack/life/trades/tradesil.cfm) (last accessed 10/25/12).

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Ann McGovern, *If You Lived in Colonial Times*, illustrated by June Otani (New York: Scholastic, 1992); ISBN: 978-0-590-45160-4.