



By Barbara Cole

Imagine shivering on a cold winter's night. The tip of your nose tingles in the frosty air. Finally, you climb into bed and find the toasty treat you have been waiting for—your very own hot brick.

If you had lived in colonial days, that would not sound as strange as it does today. Winters were hard in this New World, and the colonists had to think of clever ways to fight the cold. At bedtime, they heated soapstones, or bricks, in the fireplace. They wrapped the bricks in cloths and tucked them into their beds. The brick kept them warm at night, at least for as long as its heat lasted.

Before the colonists slipped into bed, they rubbed their icy sheets with a bed warmer. This was a metal pan with a long wooden handle. The pan held hot embers from the fireplace. It warmed the bedding so well that sleepy bodies had to wait until the sheets cooled before climbing in.

Staying warm wasn't just a bedtime problem. On winter rides, colonial travelers covered themselves with animal skins and warm blankets. Tucked under the blankets, near their feet, were small tin boxes called foot stoves. A foot stove held burning coals. Hot smoke puffed from small holes in the stove's lid, soothing freezing feet and legs. When the colonists went to Sunday services, their foot stoves, furs, and blankets went with them. The meeting houses had no heat of their own until the 1800s.

At home, colonial families huddled close to the fireplace, or hearth. The fireplace was wide and high enough to hold a large fire, but its chimney was large, too. That caused a problem: Gusts of cold air blew into the house. The area near the fire was warm, but in the rest of the room it might still be cold enough to see your breath.

Reading or needlework was done by candlelight, or by the light of the fire. During the winter, animal skins sealed the drafty windows of some cabins and blocked out the daylight. The living area inside was gloomy, except in the circle of light at the hearth.

Early Americans did not bathe as often as we do. When they did, their "bathroom" was the kitchen, in that toasty space by the hearth. They partially filled a tub with cold water, then warmed it up with water heated in the fireplace. A blanket draped from chairs for privacy also let the fire's warmth surround the bather.

The household cooks spent hours at the hearth. They stirred the kettle of corn pudding or checked the baking bread while the rest of the family carried on their own fireside activities. So you can see why the fireplace was the center of a colonial home.

The only time the fire was allowed to die down was at bedtime. Ashes would be piled over the fire, reducing it to embers that might glow until morning.

By sunrise, the hot brick had become a cold stone once more. An early riser might get dressed under the covers, then hurry to the hearth to warm up.

Maybe you'd enjoy hearing someone who kept warm in these ways tell you what it was like. You wouldn't need to look for someone who has been living for two hundred years. In many parts of the country the modern ways didn't take over from the old ones until recently. Your own grandparents or other older people might remember the warmth of a hearthside and the joy of having a brick to cuddle up to.

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1. You would probably read this article if you wanted to know how the colonists

- A) cooked their food
- B) traveled in the winter
- C) washed their clothes
- D) kept warm in cold weather

2. After reading this article, would you like to have lived during colonial times? What information in the article makes you think this?

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3. Some of the ways that colonists kept warm during the winter were different from the ways that people keep warm today. Tell about two of these differences.

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4. Do you think "A Brick to Cuddle Up To" is a good title for this article? Using information from the article, tell why or why not.

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8. In writing this article, the author mostly made use of

- A) broad ideas
- B) specific details
- C) important questions
- D) interesting characters

9. Does the author help you understand what colonial life was like? Use examples from the article to explain why or why not.

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Question 2

**Evidence of full comprehension - Student Response**

2 After reading this article, would you like to have lived during colonial times? What information in the article makes you think this?

No, I would not like to have lived in the colonial days. Because nobody I know or me would like to cuddle up to a brick or have to take a bath very seldomly. And having to carry Foot warmer

- 2 After reading this article, would you like to have lived during colonial times? What information in the article makes you think this?

I would not like to live during the colonial times because for a bath you would need cold and then pour in some water that was heated by the fire. At bedtime you would heat soapstones, or bricks from the fireplace and then wrap them in cloth to keep them warm.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses provide specific details from the article to support an opinion as to why they would not have wanted to live during colonial times.

Evidence of partial or surface comprehension - Student Response

- 2 After reading this article, would you like to have lived during colonial times? What information in the article makes you think this?

No, I wouldn't like to live in colonial times because it sounds like its very hard to live in the winter.

- 2 After reading this article, would you like to have lived during colonial times? What information in the article makes you think this?

NO Because they didn't have clothe for the winter and I would of froze to death.

Scorer Comments:

Both responses demonstrate a general understanding of the winter as a hard time for the colonists, but do not support their opinion with specific details from the article.

**Evidence of little or no comprehension - Student Response**

- 2 After reading this article, would you like to have lived during colonial times? What information in the article makes you think this?

I would like to live in colonial days because I would like cuddling up in bed.

- 2 After reading this article, would you like to have lived during colonial times? What information in the article makes you think this?

well to live their would be a very nice thing.

**Scorer Comments:**

Neither of these responses demonstrates an understanding of colonial life during the winter as described in the article. The first response would need to specify cuddling with a brick. "Cuddling up in bed" does not refer specifically to colonial times.

Question 3

**Evidence of full comprehension - Student Response**

- 3 Some of the ways that colonists kept warm during the winter were different from the ways that people keep warm today. Tell about two of these differences.

Back in the "old days" they had  
fireplaces and bed warmers now  
we have heaters and electric  
blankets.

- 3 Some of the ways that colonists kept warm during the winter were different from the ways that people keep warm today. Tell about two of these differences.

One difference is that instead of just  
turning on a heater or an electrical  
bed warmer they had to put bricks  
in their covers and make a fire.

**Scorer Comments:**

Both responses connect text descriptions to prior knowledge by comparing two ways by which colonists kept warm during winter to the ways by which people keep warm today.

**Evidence of partial or surface comprehension - Student Response**

- 3 Some of the ways that colonists kept warm during the winter were different from the ways that people keep warm today. Tell about two of these differences.

The diffrnce is that colonists  
kept there self cuddle with bricks  
and we use blanct's and  
other stuf.

- 3 Some of the ways that colonists kept warm during the winter were different from the ways that people keep warm today. Tell about two of these differences.



One puting a hot brick in  
there bed from the fire place  
I was using animals skins to  
real off drifting windows.

Scorer Comments:

The first response provides only one difference between colonial and contemporary ways of keeping warm. The second response demonstrates understanding of how colonists kept warm, but does not connect the text description to a contemporary way of keeping warm.

**Evidence of little or no comprehension - Student Response**

- 3 Some of the ways that colonists kept warm during the winter were different from the ways that people keep warm today. Tell about two of these differences.

I would keep warm by staying  
in side and make a fire.

- 3 Some of the ways that colonists kept warm during the winter were different from the ways that people keep warm today. Tell about two of these differences.

Peoplc kept warm diffrent back then  
and now we have heaters and heting pads.

Scorer Comments:

These responses provide ways to keep warm today, but neither demonstrates understanding of the ways colonists kept warm as described in the article.

Question 4

**Evidence of full comprehension - Student Response**

- 4 Do you think "A Brick to Cuddle Up To" is a good title for this article? Using information from the article, tell why or why not.

Yes I do think it is a good title.  
It is a good title because the  
article tells about how colonists  
kept warm in the winter & how they  
used heated bricks to keep warmen

- 4 Do you think "A Brick to Cuddle Up To" is a good title for this article? Using information from the article, tell why or why not.

not really because that  
title only tells about the  
brick not the foot stove  
or they had to use fur for  
blankets.

## Scorer Comments:

The first response supports an opinion about the title with a reference to the article's theme and with a specific detail from the article. The second response points out the limitations of the title by providing specific details that the title does not encompass.

**Evidence of partial or surface comprehension - Student Response**

- 4 Do you think "A Brick to Cuddle Up To" is a good title for this article? Using information from the article, tell why or why not.

I think it is a good  
title because that's what  
the paragraph is about.

- 4 Do you think "A Brick to Cuddle Up To" is a good title for this article? Using information from the article, tell why or why not.

Yes because it describes  
the story

Scorer Comments:

Both responses support an opinion about the title with a general reason but do not specify how the title relates to the article.

**Evidence of little or no comprehension - Student Response**

- 4 Do you think "A Brick to Cuddle Up To" is a good title for this article? Using information from the article, tell why or why not.

Yes I think "A Brick to Cuddle Up  
To" is a good title!

- 4 Do you think "A Brick to Cuddle Up To" is a good title for this article? Using information from the article, tell why or why not.

Yes Because they put the title in the  
story and I like it when they  
put the title in the story.

Scorer Comments:

Neither response provides any reason for the title's appropriateness for this article.

Question 5

**Evidence of full comprehension - Student Response**

5 Give two reasons stated in the article why the hearth was the center of the home in colonial times.

The hearth was the center of the home because they needed it for cooking and for warmth.

5 Give two reasons stated in the article why the hearth was the center of the home in colonial times.

The hearth was the center of the home because it kept you warm and you could see by its light.

Scorer Comments:

These responses retrieve relevant information as to why the hearth was important and provide two reasons why it was the center of the home in colonial times.

**Evidence of partial or surface comprehension - Student Response**

5 Give two reasons stated in the article why the hearth was the center of the home in colonial times.

because if you sit on it you will get warm quick.

5 Give two reasons stated in the article why the hearth was the center of the home in colonial times.

Because the "hearth" is the fireplace. That would be the center because it keeps them warm in the day.

Scorer Comments:

These responses retrieve relevant information and provide one reason why the hearth was important.

**Evidence of little or no comprehension - Student Response**

5 Give two reasons stated in the article why the hearth was the center of the home in colonial times.

Because a fireplace was fine, but  
the chimney was too large too.

5 Give two reasons stated in the article why the hearth was the center of the home in colonial times.

Because a fireplace was in colonial  
time, and a blanket too.

Scorer Comments:

These responses show understanding that the hearth was a fireplace, but provide no reason why it was important in the home in colonial times.

Question 7

**Extensive - Student Response**

- 7 Pretend that you are an early American colonist. Describe at least three activities you might do during a cold winter evening. Be specific. Use details from the article to help you write your description.

On a cold winter evening I would probably get out a game and play it with my family. We would have a nice hot snack and drink to keep them warm. We would all sit around the fireplace, maybe tell old stories when we were little. We could tell ghost stories. When they went to bed I would put the warm bricks under their bed. While they were asleep I would knit a warm blanket for church or trips.

- 7 Pretend that you are an early American colonist. Describe at least three activities you might do during a cold winter evening. Be specific. Use details from the article to help you write your description.

we would build a fire place  
 and when it was bedtime we  
 would put the brick with clothes  
 or put in top of us and of  
 covers, or we could sleep close  
 to the fire place, in traveling  
 we would put hot coal so they  
 could keep you warm or when  
 we were going to travel to  
 were the animals skin or  
 were covers so we could  
 be warm or put of clothes  
 that we were going to wear  
 before we went to sleep close  
 to the fire place

Scorer Comments:

The first response begins with activities that are not typical of colonial life as described in the article, but goes on to include three activities related to staying warm. All the ideas in the second response, while less clearly presented, relate to the need to stay warm.

**Essential - Student Response**

- 7 Pretend that you are an early American colonist. Describe at least three activities you might do during a cold winter evening. Be specific. Use details from the article to help you write your description.

I would sit by the fireplace  
 and read, or do needlework  
 or stir a kettle or corn  
 pudding, or check the baking  
 bread.

- 7 Pretend that you are an early American colonist. Describe at least three activities you might do during a cold winter evening. Be specific. Use details from the article to help you write your description.

I would sew a blanket  
 by the candle light and  
 this would be made out of animal  
 skin, I would warm up a stone or  
 brick to keep me warm at  
 night, and I would read.

Scorer Comments:

In the first response, all the activities are text-based, any one of which in connection to being by the fireplace relates to the need to stay warm. In the second response, both sewing a blanket of animal skins and warming up the stone relate to the need to stay warm.

**Partial - Student Response**

- 7 Pretend that you are an early American colonist. Describe at least three activities you might do during a cold winter evening. Be specific. Use details from the article to help you write your description.

I would read a book  
 while sitting by the  
 fire, I would rest a lot.

- 7 Pretend that you are an early American colonist. Describe at least three activities you might do during a cold winter evening. Be specific. Use details from the article to help you write your description.

I would sit and try  
 to learn how to  
 row and how to make  
 toys with help from  
 my mom and dad.  
 If I had a little  
 sister I would help  
 her take a bath, I  
 would help my mom  
 make meals.



Scorer Comments:

The first response contains one activity done by the fire. The second response contains activities referred to in the article, but none are connected with the need to stay warm.

**Unsatisfactory - Student Response**

- 7 Pretend that you are an early American colonist. Describe at least three activities you might do during a cold winter evening. Be specific. Use details from the article to help you write your description.

Three activities that I  
might do in the winter  
go sled riding with  
a winter sled. I  
might have a camp  
fire with friends. I might  
build a snowman.

- 7 Pretend that you are an early American colonist. Describe at least three activities you might do during a cold winter evening. Be specific. Use details from the article to help you write your description.

I would stay in the house when I  
would get cold. I would make tunnels  
in the snow. shovel the driveway.

Scorer Comments:

These responses provide winter activities; however, none of these activities are text-based examples of what colonists might have done on a cold winter evening.

Question 9

**Evidence of full comprehension - Student Response**

- 9 Does the author help you understand what colonial life was like? Use examples from the article to explain why or why not.

Yes, she does. She gives specific details on how they did the things they did to keep warm. She gave the specific details of how a food stove was used, and when it was used.

- 9 Does the author help you understand what colonial life was like? Use examples from the article to explain why or why not.

Yes. He taught me that the winters were very cold and people had to sleep with hot bricks and take a hot pan and rub the sheets on the bed with it.

**Scorer Comments:**

The first response supports a statement about the author's use of specific details with an example from the article. The second response provides specific information from the article to illustrate the author's competence in telling about colonial life.

**Evidence of partial or surface comprehension - Student Response**

- 9 Does the author help you understand what colonial life was like? Use examples from the article to explain why or why not.

Yes the author did help explain what the colonial life. He did that by explaining how the colonists kept warm on cold winter nights.

- 9 Does the author help you understand what colonial life was like? Use examples from the article to explain why or why not.

The author does help me learn about the colonial life. In the winter it was very cold for them.

Scorer Comments:

These responses support an opinion about the author's ability to convey information about colonial life with a text-based generalization.

**Evidence of little or no comprehension - Student Response**

- 9 Does the author help you understand what colonial life was like? Use examples from the article to explain why or why not.

Yes, because now we can look back and find out things about back then.

- 9 Does the author help you understand what colonial life was like? Use examples from the article to explain why or why not.

Yes, he describes how they did it when they did and why.

Scorer Comments:

These responses provide personal opinions with no text-based support.