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## Connecticut

Connecticut is one of the six New England states that are located in the northeast corner of the United States. Connecticut is south of its neighbor Massachusetts and is flanked by Rhode Island to the east and New York to the west. Connecticut's entire southern border is seacoast along Long Island Sound, an inlet of the Atlantic Ocean. Across the sound, further south, is Long Island, New York. With its proximity to New York City, western Connecticut is home to commuters who work in the greater New York City area.

### Early History

Around 4,000 years ago Native Americans that archaeologists call the Algonquian people began settling in the area of present-day Connecticut. Algonquian people represented numerous tribes that were united by dialects of a common language and features in lifestyle. For example, Algonquians wore similar clothing and hunted using the same types of weapons. The Pequot people lived along the seacoast and rivers of eastern Connecticut while the small tribe of Nipmuc Indians occupied the northeast corner. Most of Connecticut was divided into Mohegan territory in the east and Quiripi land in the west. The northwest corner of Connecticut was home to the Mahicans and the southwest corner belonged to the Munsee. The name Connecticut is derived from the Algonquian name Quinnehtukqut which means "beside the long tidal river."

The New England area of Massachusetts and Connecticut were some of the first areas to be affected by exploration and colonization in the early 1600's. A Dutch explorer, Adriaen Block, sailed on the Connecticut River which empties into Long Island Sound in 1614. Meanwhile the Puritans from England settled further north and east from Connecticut along the Atlantic Coast of present-day Massachusetts in 1620. They formed the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630.

The Dutch involvement in Connecticut continued when in 1633 Jacob Van Curler purchased land from the Piquot and established a trading post. This was the first building in what later evolved into the city of Hartford. Shortly thereafter, the English had settlements in Connecticut which they combined into the Connecticut Colony in 1636. Other English settlements along the coast organized themselves into the New Haven colony.

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However, the new colonists were encroaching on the land of the 30,000 Native Americans who lived in Connecticut. The colonists had an extremely adverse effect on the native people; thousands died from smallpox, a disease introduced to North America by the Europeans. Native Americans had no immunity to the new diseases. In 1636 and 1637, Pequot warriors waged attacks against the English colonists. After being defeated, many Pequot were sent as slaves to the British colonies in the Caribbean. In fact, at the end of the 1600s, slavery was legal in Connecticut and African slaves were sold at auction and advertised for sale in newspapers of the day. In 1784, the Connecticut Assembly passed a law that gave slaves their freedom when they became 25 years of age.

### **Towards Statehood**

Reverend Thomas Hooker, a Puritan minister, came to Hartford and preached that the colonists had the right to elect their magistrates. The leaders of the Connecticut Colony established a set of rules in 1639, called the Fundamental Orders, which allowed citizens a voice in their government. In 1661, the governor of the Connecticut Colony, John Winthrop, traveled to England and obtained an official royal charter for the colony. This charter expanded the rights of citizens under British law. In 1665, the New Haven Colony merged with the Connecticut Colony to obtain these rights for its citizens as well.

When England passed the Stamp Act in 1765 which placed a tax burden on the colonists, Connecticut men formed a group called the Sons of Liberty who protested English taxation. When the Revolutionary War began in 1775, 32,000 soldiers from Connecticut joined the colonial army. Besides fighting several battles on Connecticut soil, the people of Connecticut are known for producing provisions for the army, resulting in the nickname, "The Provision State."

The Revolutionary War ended in 1783 and the fledgling new country was ruled by the Articles of Confederation which allowed the states great autonomy. Leaders in many of the former colonies quickly realized the flaws in the Articles and met in 1787 to devise a new government structure. The result of this meeting was the Constitution of the United States which continues to be the foundation of the American government today.

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A major problem facing the leaders at this Constitutional Convention, as it was later called, was how to divide power equitably between large states like New York and small states like Connecticut. Roger Sherman, a delegate to the convention from Connecticut, proposed that the number of members of the House of Representatives would be based upon population, favoring large states but the Senate would contain two members from each state, balancing the power of small states. The Connecticut Compromise, as it was called, was adopted in the Constitution. Connecticut ratified the Constitution in 1788 and became the fifth state.

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Circle True or False after analyzing each of the following statements.

1. True False Connecticut's entire southern border is seacoast along Long Island Sound, an inlet of the Atlantic Ocean.
2. True False The Algonquian people represented the merger of two Native American tribes, the Pequot and the Nipmuc.
3. True False Connecticut is derived from the Algonquian name Quinnehtukqut which means "beside the long tidal river."
4. True False The city of Hartford was first established by English settlers as a trading post.
5. True False Thousands of Native Americans died from smallpox and other European diseases because they had no immunity to them.
6. True False At the end of the 1600s slavery was legal in Connecticut and African slaves were sold at auction and advertised for sale in newspapers of the day.
7. True False John Winthrop, the governor of the Connecticut colony, was responsible for writing the Fundamental Orders which allowed colonists to vote.
8. True False Connecticut earned the nickname "The Provision State" by providing food to runaway slaves.
9. True False The Connecticut Compromise is responsible for determining the number of members in the House of Representatives and the Senate.
10. True False The state of Connecticut originally contained two colonies, the Connecticut Colony and the New Haven Colony.

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### Answers

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True
6. True
7. False
8. False
9. True
10. True