



# *The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*

TEACHER RESOURCES

## **Three-Cornered Hat Pattern**

From about 1720 until about 1780 most men wore three-cornered “cocked hats,” today also known as tricorns. There were many variations on cocked hats, differing in proportion and decoration, and so that men chose hats that suited their own style, face shape, and the occasion for which they were dressing. If the hat was needed for shade, a broad-brimmed “flopped hat” could be worn. Men almost always wore hats when outside, and often when inside as well. The hat was to be removed when “making an honor” (greeting someone with a bow), but then sometimes was put back on, depending on who was in the room. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the new style of tall hat was less frequently worn inside.

Why was the cocked hat folded on the sides? When honoring someone, the gentleman could tuck his hat under his arm after having made his bow. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century the fashionable hats were large and round, so it was more convenient to hold with the sides folded or rolled. Do that enough times and the hat will begin to keep that shape! As the fashion continued men steamed their hats to form them into the folded shape.

Men’s cocked hats, made of beaver or other fur felts, could be trimmed in many ways. A decorative button with a loop of cord or ribbon secured under it was most common. A “cockade,” or gathered ribbon decoration, was occasionally put under the loop, most often to designate something in particular. Black and white cockades were worn by the army as symbols of French alliance. Colored cockades were worn during political campaign season: Tory red and Whig blue. The cocked hat’s edge could be bound with black ribbon or gold or silver metal tape called “lace.” Feathers in hats were very unusual, and thus mocked as a “Macaroni” fashion in Yankee Doodle.

### **Objective**

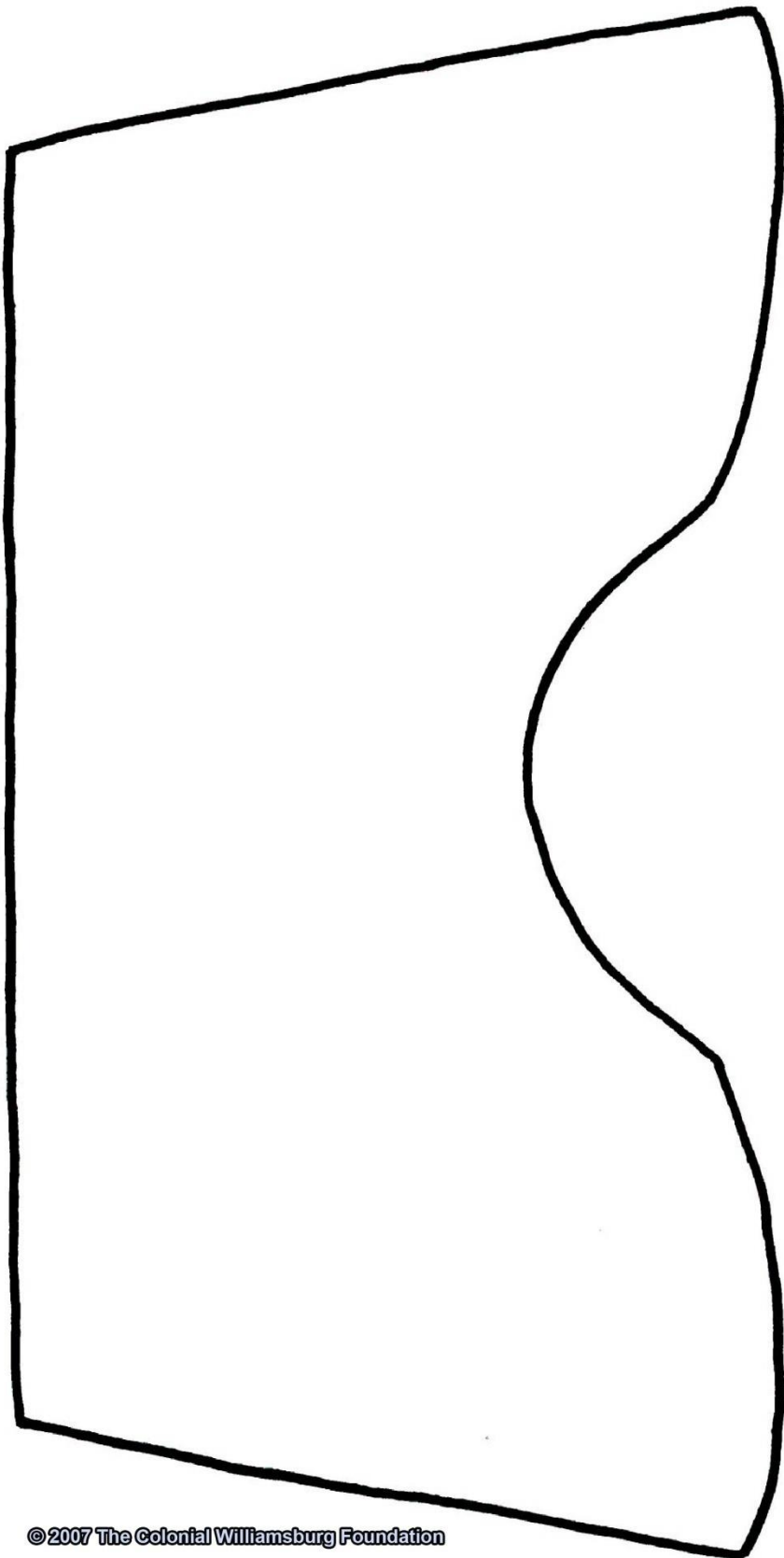
Students construct a three-cornered hat resembling those worn by men and boys in the eighteenth century.

## Materials

- Poster board or cardstock pattern for hat (see next page)
- black construction paper
- Optional additions:
  - white construction paper (4" x 6") for wig
  - black ribbon
  - scraps of colored construction paper or ribbon for cockade
  - brad
  - gold seals

## Strategy

1. Provide students some historical information about three-cornered, or cocked, hats from the introduction. Explain that today, they will be making a version of this hat out of construction paper. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, these hats were made by bending back the sides of a round felt hat.
2. Have students trace patterns onto black construction paper. Each student will need to trace three pieces.
3. Cut out the patterned construction paper.
4. Staple the three cut papers into a triangle-shaped hat.
5. Optional additions:
  - a. Cut white paper into strips to represent hair. Attach it to back of hat with staples or glue. Curl ends on a pencil.
  - b. Add black ribbon around the top edge of the hat.
  - c. Create a cockade by assembling scraps of colored construction paper into a circular flower. Alternately, gently fold strips of colored construction paper or ribbon in half so that a loop is formed, and layer them in a circle. Attach them to the hat using a brad or glue.
  - d. Attach a gold seal either to the center of the cockade or as the cockade itself.



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