**Why Was Georgia Founded, and How Was It Governed?**

Georgia was the last of the original thirteen British colonies, founded in 1732 with a unique dual purpose: **philanthropy** and **defense**. British reformers, led by **James Oglethorpe**, envisioned Georgia as a haven for debtors and the "worthy poor" who could start anew. At the same time, it was designed as a **buffer colony** to protect South Carolina from Spanish Florida.

During the **Trustee Period** (1732–1752), the colony was governed by a group of appointed trustees rather than an elected assembly. These trustees banned slavery and rum, limited land holdings, and tightly controlled settlement patterns. Their goal was to build a moral, egalitarian society composed of small farmers and sober, industrious citizens. However, discontent grew as settlers pushed back against these restrictions, demanding policies more like those in other Southern colonies.

By 1752, Georgia became a **royal colony**, gaining a governor and elected assembly. The transition reflected a shift in priorities from idealism to economic growth, plantation agriculture, and slave labor. Understanding this evolution sheds light on broader themes of colonial governance, policy experimentation, and the clash between utopian ideals and economic realities.

**Key Terms and Definitions**

| **Term** | **Definition** |
| --- | --- |
| Trustee Period | The first 20 years of Georgia’s colonial history, during which it was governed by trustees appointed by the British crown. |
| James Oglethorpe | Founder of Georgia and leading figure behind the colony’s philanthropic and defensive goals. |
| Buffer Colony | A colony established to serve as a protective barrier—in Georgia’s case, against Spanish Florida. |
| Philanthropy | Charitable efforts to help the poor; a major motivation behind Georgia’s founding. |
| Land Cap | A limit on land ownership (initially 500 acres) intended to prevent the rise of a wealthy elite. |
| Royal Colony | A colony governed directly by the British crown, with a royal governor and an elected assembly. |
| Civil Liberties | Individual rights and freedoms that were limited during the Trustee Period, such as free speech or property rights under strict land laws. |
| Slavery Ban | A policy enacted by the trustees prohibiting slavery, intended to ensure economic equality and moral discipline. |

**Orienting Question**

**How did Georgia’s founding ideals shape its early governance—and why did those ideals give way to royal control?**

**Active Learning Exercises**

**Exercise 1: Analytical Summary**

**Prompt:**  
Write a concise analytical summary (150–200 words) explaining the purpose of Georgia’s founding. Discuss how its philanthropic and strategic objectives influenced early settlement policies and governance structures during the Trustee Period.

**Objective:**  
To assess comprehension of Georgia’s founding motivations and their impact on colonial administration.

**Exercise 2: Comparative Governance Analysis**

**Prompt:**  
Compare the governance model of Georgia during the Trustee Period (1732–1752) with that of another British colony that had a representative assembly. In your analysis, address differences in legislative authority, land distribution, and civil liberties.

**Objective:**  
To encourage critical thinking about colonial administrative models and their implications for political development.

**Exercise 3: Policy Evaluation Essay**

**Prompt:**  
Evaluate the effectiveness of the Trustees’ policies—such as the bans on slavery and rum, and the land ownership cap—in achieving their intended goals of social equity and moral discipline. Consider both the short-term outcomes and long-term consequences leading to the transition to royal governance in 1752.

**Objective:**  
To develop evaluative skills and historical reasoning regarding policy outcomes in colonial contexts.

**Review Questions**

1. What were the main goals of Georgia’s founding, and who promoted them?
2. How did Georgia’s Trustee Period differ from other colonies in terms of governance and land ownership?
3. Why did the trustees ban slavery, and what were the consequences of this decision?
4. What factors led to the end of the Trustee Period and the shift to royal rule?
5. In what ways did Georgia’s early history reflect a tension between idealism and economic reality?