Group members should remind themselves of the main characteristics of Mercantilism:
1. A nation’s wealth depends on its stores of bullion (gold and silver)... (achieving more wealth/prosperity means another nation suffers a simultaneous loss of wealth/prosperity);
2. Favorable balance of trade (when goods exported of greater value than those imported);
3. Raw materials from colonies to the mother country;
4. Colonies to become markets for the Mother Country’s goods;
5. Closed market: required to purchase manufactured goods from Mother Country

Randomly choose a card on which various elements of society are written, along with a set of circumstances that slant “your” perspective on mercantilism. Read the scenario aloud. After a review of the characteristics of mercantilism, and using your knowledge of both Europe and the New World, discuss the effects of Mercantilist policy on your given individual (Help each other if the cardholder is struggling!). Try to see that each person has at least one turn (but thoroughly work through each scenario together before moving on. Some might be more difficult than others and take more time. The goal is to think it through together!).

Role Playing Scenario Cards:

1. You are a Spanish sugarcane plantation owner. Would you favor all or some of Spanish Mercantilist policy practiced by the Spanish government? Which and why? Discuss with the group.

2. You are a British furrier (you manufacture and sell fur hats, stoles, hand warmers, etc.). Your profits and market are dwindling rapidly throughout Europe as increasing numbers of French and Russian furriers are entering the arena with pelts pulled from their regions/colonies. Would you favor British mercantilist policy? Explain which, if any and why? Discuss with your group.

3. You are a British sundries shop owner, living above your shop in central Georgia, close to Spanish territory to the south. You have repeatedly sold out of guns, because Britain is sending their ships to northern ports because of the piracy happening in southern waters. The demand for these guns remains high, and people are becoming angry and are threatening to take their business elsewhere. Are you satisfied with British mercantilist practices and what might be an alternative (albeit illegal) for you to ensure your profits remain intact? Discuss with your group.

4. You are a wealthy Spanish cotton textile manufacturer who needs cotton from the British colonies. You are willing to trade significant quantities of tobacco from your plantation in western Cuba for this cotton. Would this be a beneficial trade for the British, based on Mercantilist policy? Why or why not? EXPLAIN and discuss with the group.

5. The Spanish colonies in the western Caribbean have seen a surge in the demand for spices as the socially and culturally heterogeneous peoples of the region have blended over time. Customs and cultures have integrated and now, people want access to spices. With soil not conducive to growing nutmeg trees, trees whose inner bark produces cinnamon, or the dried flower buds which make cloves, they need an alternative. They have the option of buying spices from the British East India Company in India with bullion or forging trade with East African Muslims by trading rum and tobacco, which would be the best alternative for Spaniards to attempt, based on mercantilist theory? What might be a problem with trading rum to this particular group? Discuss as group.

6. You are a cotton grower with a large plantation near the port of Charleston. Because of British mercantilist policies, price for cotton is fixed according to British law. The cotton is sent to England where the British create cotton textiles. They then sell it (for gold) to America, France, and South America for a
huge profit. How does this affect you as a colonial grower? How is this beneficial for England and negative for France and Spain? Discuss as a group.

7. Spain and Portugal were not able to keep pace with the colonizing and subsequent growth and power of the British and French. As a result, the Spanish were forced to impose strict mercantilist rule to keep other nations from “their” colonies. What specifically would Spain have done to its colonies as it applies to mercantilist policy? Be specific regarding each aspect of mercantilism. Discuss with group.

8. You are a slave who works the Cuban tobacco plantations, while your wife and son were sold to a cotton plantation owner in British North America. Like the painting, *The Slave Trade*, you were separated when you arrived in Barbados. Two of your three children died during the Middle Passage. You labor in the fields, doing back-breaking work and suffer horrendous living conditions. As a slave, you have no rights, and are exploited by the Spanish tobacco plantation owner. The product you take from the fields is shipped to Spain. What is your role in Spanish mercantilist policy? Discuss as a group:

9. You are a Spanish Colonial missionary who happens to be the brother of Aruba’s colonial governor. You have seen Mercantilist policies in action on the sugarcane-producing island. You believe these practices have had a negative effect on the people there, so you intend to discuss this with your brother, a man you believe, at heart, is fair and good. What will you tell him regarding what you have seen the effects of Spanish Mercantilist policy (culturally, socially, economically, environmentally) on the people and the land?

10. You are a Spanish silk trader in the Philippines in the late 16th century. Why are you likely to fight attempts by not only other European merchants from “setting up shop”, in the area, but also other Spanish merchants? You do not produce silk, so how are you getting your product and what is its significance regarding trade in the Pacific? (think Ming Dynasty)

11. You are a captain who illegally runs rum (smuggles) from the Caribbean to colonies in the north and to Europe. You hold no allegiance to Spain, England or any other nation. Your profit margin is huge based on the significant demand for your product. Clearly there is a significant risk in your profession, as if caught, you will be imprisoned. You determine the risk is worth it as you have become wealthy from your profession. How has mercantilism affected you?