

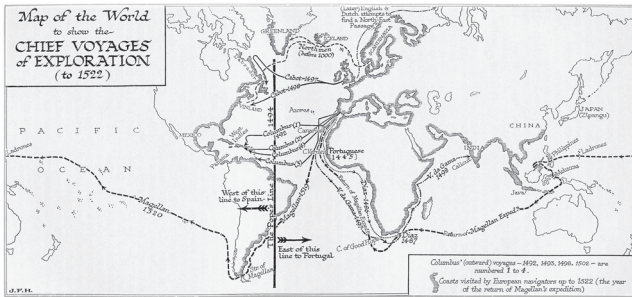


Compass

# Age of Contact

## Reader

Early exploration



Spanish missions



European explorers



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# Age of Contact

## Reader



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# Age of Contact

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# Chapter 1

## European Exploration

**The Age of Exploration** In the 1400s CE, Europeans began exploring and trading around the world more than ever before. There were several reasons for this. One was curiosity generated by returning Crusaders. In the Middle Ages, generations of European knights and soldiers went on Crusades and other campaigns to parts of Asia, the Middle East, and present-day Spain where they saw that Islamic civilization was much more advanced than they had been led to believe. Crusaders returned home and described the goods and cultures they had encountered. Europeans generally became more interested in the wider world.

### The Framing Question

How did European interests and rivalries shape trade and colonization?

Another reason for exploration was a combination of political conflicts and spices. Europeans had developed a taste for the intense flavors of spices brought from Southeast Asia. Traders brought the spices to Europe by traveling across Turkey and Central Asia on routes of the Silk Road. Europeans acquired these spices through the city of Constantinople. However, in 1453 CE, the Turks conquered



The Monument to the Discoveries in Lisbon, Portugal, depicts the people who made Portugal's age of sea exploration possible. Thirty statues of notable figures, led by Prince Henry the Navigator, stand along the prow of a caravel.

Constantinople and shut down Europe's access to the routes along the Silk Road. No more spices! So Europeans looked to the seas for a trade route that did not cross Turkey.

The age of exploration made the world smaller in some ways. Global trade and contact began to occur on an unprecedented scale. But contact with ambitious, wealth-seeking Europeans often harmed people who were not European. Often, Europeans who met Indigenous peoples, or those native to lands outside Europe, would spread disease among them, hurt or kill them, or force them from their land.

Beginning in the 1400s CE, Europeans became especially good at **navigation**, which improved their skill in sailing. Scientists invented a new instrument, the **astrolabe**.

This handheld device enabled sailors to determine their ship's latitude by measuring the height and varying positions of the sun, the moon, and stars in the sky.

The magnetic **compass**, a Chinese invention, uses a magnetized pointer to show direction. The magnetic compass had been in use in other parts of the world for centuries. Now, Europeans also relied on it to determine direction.

Another important advancement was in the design of ships' sails. Previously, ships could only sail with the wind at their back. The new triangular sails could catch the wind in a way that let ships sail into the wind. They also made ships more maneuverable. The improved sails helped people explore farther than ever before.

### Vocabulary

**navigation**, n. the skill or science of determining the route to a destination

**astrolabe**, n. a navigational tool used to determine the position of the sun, a star, or another object in the sky

**compass**, n. a device that uses a magnetic pointer to show direction



These technological advances helped Europeans travel to distant lands. But the reasons for exploration and the explorers' destinations varied depending on the group of people and the time period. For many countries, exploration was connected to European economic policies of the time, which were based on **mercantilism**. Mercantilism was the idea that the nation with the most wealth in gold and silver would be the most powerful. The purpose of empire and trade was simply to get as much gold and silver as possible.

### Portuguese Navigators

The Portuguese were some of the most successful early explorers. Portugal's primary goals for exploration included expanding their control of lands in Africa, securing access to wealth and trade, and spreading Christianity.

Portugal's ventures in exploration were largely due to one person's leadership. Prince Henry of Portugal had a strong desire to explore the oceans. Though he never went on any expeditions



Technology like the compass helped explorers navigate to places previously unknown to Europeans.

#### Vocabulary

**mercantilism**, n. an economic system that aims to increase a country's wealth and power by controlling trade and people

## Vocabulary

**caravel**, n. a small, maneuverable sailing ship used by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century

**hull**, n. the sides and bottom of a boat

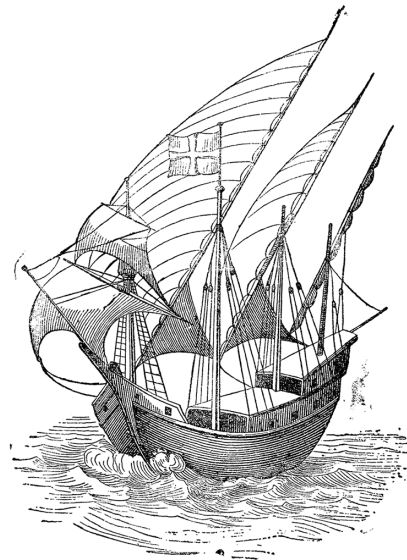
himself, he became known as Henry the Navigator. Henry founded a school to encourage developments in mapmaking, shipbuilding, and instrument making. He supported the design of the **caravel**, a ship that was smaller and faster than any other boats at the time. With its triangular sails and reinforced **hull**, the caravel could travel long distances and withstand rough seas.

Henry also encouraged the sharing of information, enabling would-be explorers to benefit from these new ideas. Most important, he helped convince his father, King John I, to pay for expensive expeditions in the name of Portugal. Like other Europeans, the Portuguese had a strong desire to set up trade routes and gain knowledge about lands unknown to them.

Expanded trade routes would also help them spread Christianity even further.

The Portuguese wanted to find a way to get to Cathay (the European name for China) by sea. They had heard about Cathay from a traveler and writer named Marco Polo. They hoped to find a way to sail there after trade routes on the Silk Road was cut off.

While looking for a sea route to Cathay, Portuguese navigators explored the coasts of Africa and established colonies. They found gold in Africa, and they traded for West African goods



The design of the caravel allowed explorers to travel faster and farther than ever before.

such as ivory, peppers, wax, and copper. They also brought enslaved African people back to Europe. Even after Prince Henry died, the Portuguese continued to explore. Bartolomeu Dias (/bar\*tuh\*luh\*mae\*uh/dee\*us/) came upon the southern tip of Africa, the Cape of Good Hope, and sailed around it. He was the first European to do so. As a result, he found the path to sail east to India and China around Africa.

In 1497 CE, Portugal's rulers sent a group led by Vasco da Gama (/vah\*skoe/duh\*gah\*muh/) to trade with India. Da Gama's crew explored cities in East Africa on the way. Once they arrived in India, the group was not able to make a trade agreement.

In March 1500 CE, Pedro Álvares Cabral was sent to India to try again. His goal was to make contact with trade centers in the East and identify goods that would be interesting or valuable to Portugal. Cabral was supposed to follow the route taken by Vasco da Gama. He followed the coast of Africa until he had passed the Cape Verde Islands, off present-day Senegal.

### Early Portuguese Exploration



In 1488 CE, Bartolomeu Dias sailed around the southern tip of Africa. Vasco da Gama sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, into the Indian Ocean.

Da Gama had told Cabral to stay clear of the Gulf of Guinea. The ocean there was frequently calm, with little or no wind to move a ship. He told Cabral to head southwest and sail out into the Atlantic Ocean instead. Cabral did so, and in April 1500 CE, he sighted land. But Cabral had strayed so far west that he had crossed the Atlantic. The expedition had reached the coast of Brazil!

Cabral sent a ship home to tell the Portuguese king of this land, which he named *Ilha de Vera Cruz* (/vair\*uh/krooz/), or the Island of the True Cross. He made contact with the native people and stayed for ten days. Cabral eventually reached India, where he had better luck trading for spices.

The Portuguese set up a network of trading posts, not only along the east coast of Africa, but also in India, the East Indies, and the Spice Islands. The East Indies is a group of islands that are located between the Asian mainland and Australia. Beira, on the coast of what is now Mozambique, Africa, was an especially valuable trade center. Gold that was mined inland was shipped from Beira to Portugal.

While the Portuguese established forts and colonies on Africa's coast, they could not expand very far inland. Their inland expansion was limited to a handful of small colonies.

## Spanish Navigators

The Portuguese were not the only Europeans exploring the oceans in the 1400s CE. Christopher Columbus was an Italian sailor who believed he could find a new way to get to Cathay. He hoped to secure some of its wealth through trade. Rather than sailing east, Columbus thought he could sail west from Europe. He asked

European leaders for money to test his theory. Columbus eventually got support from King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella I of Spain. They were willing to take the risk because if Columbus succeeded, Spain could gain wealth and power and also spread Christianity.

In September of 1492 CE, Columbus set off westward from the Canary Islands. According to some who sailed with Columbus, many sailors wept. They were fearful of what lay ahead. After a month on the open ocean without any sign of land, the crew threatened **mutiny**. Many of the men feared they had traveled so far west that they would never find their way back to Europe. But on October 12, they landed in the Bahamas—and then they went farther. When they

### Vocabulary

**mutiny**, v. to rebel against leaders, especially on a ship

**validate**, v. to give official approval

arrived at an island called Ayti, Columbus thought he had made it to what was then called the East Indies. He assumed, quite wrongly, that the people he met there were inhabitants of the East Indies. He named this island Hispaniola and referred to its people as Indians.

Columbus returned to Spain laden with plundered treasure, enslaved people, and news of his success. This achievement led to more support from his patrons, and Columbus left for another voyage in September 1493 CE. Columbus's second and third voyages confirmed that there were plentiful economic opportunities for Spain in the Americas. Ferdinand and Isabella immediately claimed ownership of all land to the west of a point near Cape Verde. They asked Pope Alexander VI to **validate** their claim. He did.

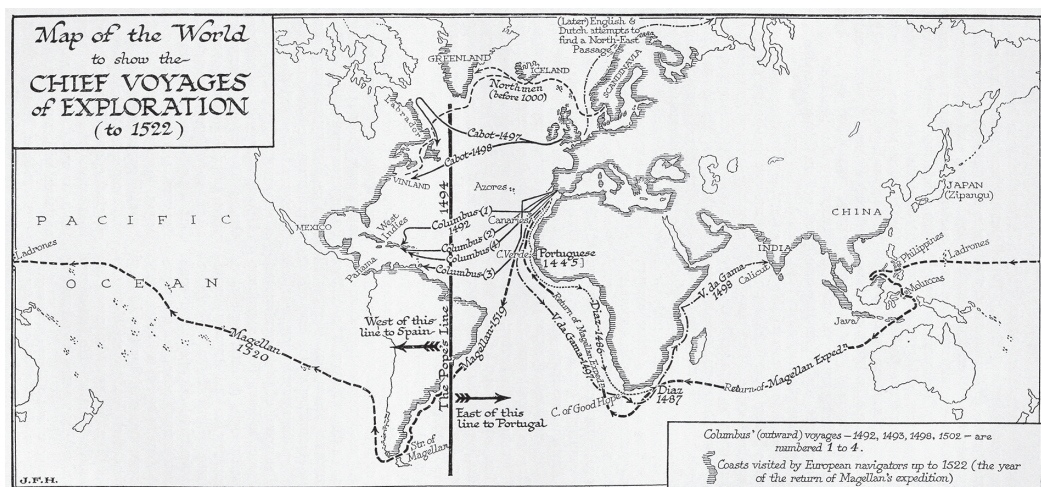
However, the Portuguese complained strongly. They also had claims in the Americas. Soon, a meeting was held in the city

of Tordesillas, in Spain, to divide these territories between the two countries. In reality, neither Spain nor Portugal had any real understanding of the extent of the landmass they were claiming.

The Treaty of Tordesillas declared that everything to the west of the line drawn west of the Cape Verde Islands belonged to Spain, while everything to the east belonged to Portugal. The treaty also meant that all other European powers had to seek new ways to settle in the Americas. English, Dutch, and French explorers were not willing to be excluded from the Americas by a line drawn on a map.

Because of the Treaty of Tordesillas, the crowns of Spain and Portugal considered themselves the true rulers of the Americas. They used this treaty as justification to conquer and exploit the Americas' peoples and lands.

Amerigo Vespucci (/ves\*poo\*chee/), an Italian navigator, made several trips across the Atlantic between 1497 and 1504 CE.



Major voyages of exploration through 1522 CE. The line down the middle of the map represents the one agreed upon by the Treaty of Tordesillas.

Vespucci's missions were funded by various sponsors, including the powerful Medici family of Florence, now part of Italy. His writings of his journeys made him one of the most famous explorers of his time.

Vespucci's findings helped change Europeans' understanding of the world. They also contributed to greater exploration and **colonization** of the Americas.

Vespucci is credited with being the first to recognize that the lands he explored were not part of Asia. He used the term "New World" to describe this place.

A German mapmaker was so impressed with Vespucci's writings that he labeled the new continent *America* on the map he was working on.

### Vocabulary

**colonization**, n. the practice of bringing people from a different country to control and settle an area that already has an Indigenous population

## Balboa Finds the Pacific Ocean

While exploring the Isthmus of Panama, the Spaniard Vasco Núñez de Balboa (/vah\*skoe/noo\*nyath/de/bal\*boe\*uh/) learned of a great sea to the west. In 1513 CE, Balboa organized an expedition to find this sea. The party crossed swamps and mountains and hacked their way through thick jungles. They fought off snakes, crocodiles, and mosquitoes.

On September 25, 1513 CE, they were rewarded for their struggles. They stood atop a mountain and looked out over a body of water Balboa called "the South Sea." Today, we call it the Pacific Ocean. Balboa marched down to the ocean and tasted the salt water, just

to be sure. Then he claimed all the lands washed by this sea in the name of his homeland, Spain.

Balboa is known for being the first European to see the eastern shore of the Pacific Ocean. However, he is also known for the cruel ways he treated Indigenous groups. Other Europeans also used force and violence against Indigenous peoples in their quest to gain the land they desired.

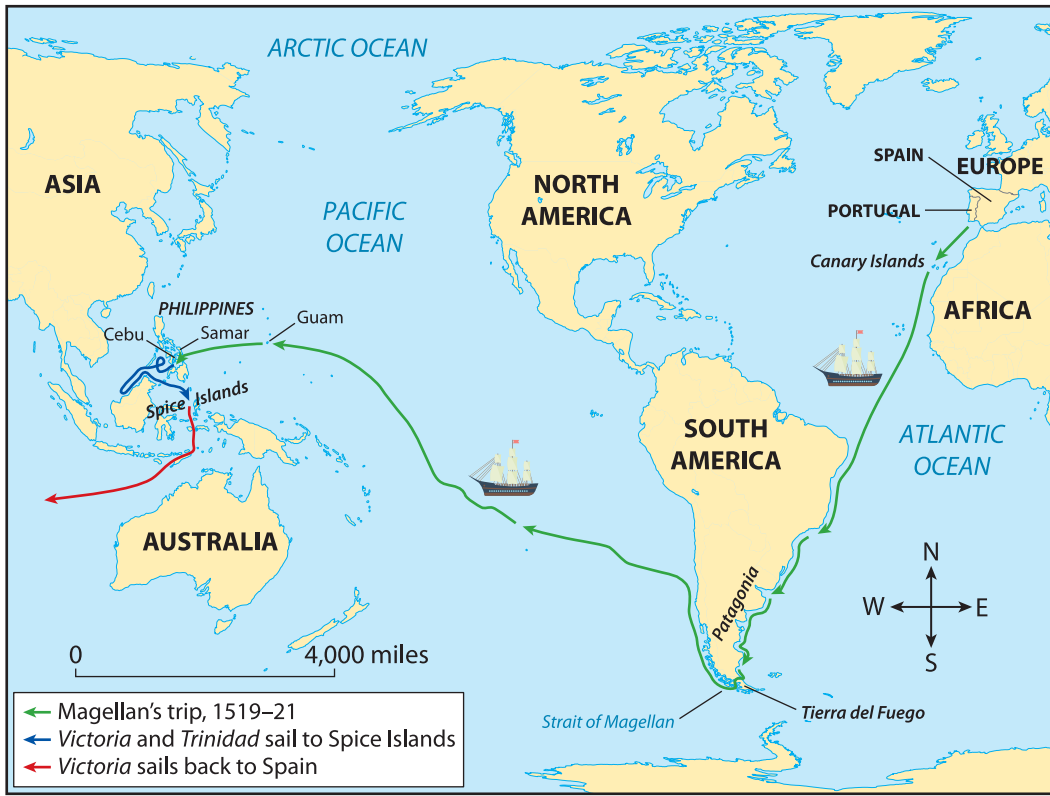
## **Circumnavigating the Globe**

The Portuguese were slower than the Spanish to explore the Americas. This was partly because of the Treaty of Tordesillas. But also, the Portuguese were more interested in exploring the East and trade opportunities than in conquering new territories. They set up bases in India and then the Maluku islands, south of the Philippines. They named these the Spice Islands for the spices found there. The Portuguese continued exploring and adding more colonies to the empire, including Sri Lanka, Macau, and Malaysia.

The Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan wanted to find a water route through the middle of the South American continent. If there was such a route, this would make trade and the accumulation of wealth easier. In 1519 CE, Magellan led an expedition to Brazil to look for this route. He kept sailing south along the coast of Brazil, looking for a route to the west. Eventually he found a narrow strait. Tall cliffs loomed up on both sides, and violent tides threatened to smash the ships against the rocks. The passage was so dangerous that some of Magellan's crew mutinied and refused to continue. But after a month, three ships reached calm waters and open ocean. The sailors had no idea how large the Pacific Ocean was.



## Circumnavigation of the Globe, 1519–22



Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan led the first circumnavigation of the globe—although Magellan himself did not complete the voyage.

On March 16, 1519 CE, they arrived in the Philippines. Magellan died there in a fight with Indigenous people. A few surviving crew members made it to the Spice Islands. In the end, only 18 out of the 270 people who started the expedition returned to Spain. Today, Magellan is remembered as having led the first expedition to **circumnavigate**, or circle, the globe.

### Vocabulary

**circumnavigate**, v.  
to travel completely around something (such as Earth), especially by water

## England and France Compete

Other powerful European countries were not satisfied with Spain and Portugal dividing the world between them. England and

France were rival kingdoms in northern Europe. Each wanted to create its own empire. Instead of traveling south like the Portuguese had, they traveled north to find a route around the Americas through the Arctic Ocean. They wanted to find a “northwest passage” to reach East Asia.

In 1497 CE, King Henry VII of England sponsored an expedition led by a Genoese sailor named Giovanni Caboto (/joh\*vah\*nee/kah\*boh\*toh/). Caboto wanted to search for a northwesterly route to the Spice Islands. Unfortunately, the monarchs of both Portugal and Spain had other plans. The Portuguese had already established their own route to the East around the Cape of Good Hope. When Christopher Columbus returned from his voyage, the Spanish believed that they had found another route. No one wanted to hear Caboto’s proposal for still another route.

Caboto moved with his family to the port city of Bristol, England, and changed his name to John Cabot. He was able to convince Henry and the merchants of Bristol to support his exploration. They hoped he would bring them great wealth. After a failed first attempt in 1496 CE, Cabot set sail again in 1497 CE. After five weeks of travel, the crew spotted what they called “new found land.” It was in fact what is now eastern Canada, but Cabot believed that he had found an island off the coast of Asia. He returned to England to report his findings.

The sailors did not have any spices or silks to show for their journey, but they were able to describe scooping fish out of the water in baskets. The voyage was judged a success, and another trip was planned for the following year. On this trip, Cabot had a fleet of five ships. Following a storm, only one of the five ships returned to

Bristol. Cabot and the other four ships were never seen again. To this day, nobody knows for certain what happened to them.

French royalty also sponsored their own expedition. They hired an Italian explorer named Giovanni da Verrazzano (/jo\*vah\*nee/duh/vair\*uh\*tzah\*no/) to lead it. In 1524 CE, Verrazzano sailed to the Americas and then started his expedition at Cape Fear, which is now part of North Carolina. He sailed north along the east coast of continental North America. Verrazzano was the first European to explore various places along this coast, including what we now know as New York Harbor. After Verrazzano's voyage, the French settled a colony in North America called Gallia Nova, or New France, centered in the area that is now Quebec.

## Exploration Continues

In the mid-1500s CE, European exploration continued to expand. In the 1530s and '40s, a French explorer named Jacques Cartier (/zhak/kar\*tee\*ay/) explored the eastern coast of modern-day Canada. Looking for a northwest passage to Asia, he instead discovered the St. Lawrence River and stopped in what is now Montreal. He also helped establish French colonies in this region, leading to future French settlements in Canada.

England continued to look for a northwest passage to Asia through the Arctic Ocean. Though he never found this passage, Henry Hudson discovered and mapped present-day New York City and the large river now called the Hudson. The Hudson River provided an important route for trade and transportation. This discovery paved the way for European traders and settlers to colonize the region.

Hernando de Soto, a Spanish voyager, explored the southeastern region of what is now the United States in the sixteenth century. He was the first European to find the Mississippi River. This



Henry Hudson sailed the ship the *Half Moon* up the river that was later named in his honor.

discovery opened up new trading and exploration opportunities for the Spanish. De Soto and his army clashed repeatedly with the Indigenous people they encountered. Because these people had no immunity to European diseases, many were infected by illnesses carried by de Soto's men.

De Soto's expeditions established Spanish claims on the land and helped pave the way for future Spanish settlers in the region. Unfortunately for de Soto, he did not discover the riches he had hoped to find and died before the expedition was completed.

Competition among rival European countries played a major role in the age of exploration. The Portuguese, Spanish, English, Dutch and French all sought to acquire wealth and power through exploration and colonization. European powers clashed over territorial claims, dividing the world among them. Exploration continued, leading to the discovery of so-called new lands and the establishment of colonies, trade routes, and settlements.

The age of exploration was a time of great change, innovation, and competition. It transformed the world. However, the harmful effects of colonization on Indigenous peoples cannot be ignored.

## PRIMARY SOURCE: EXCERPT FROM AMERIGO VESPUCCI'S ACCOUNT OF HIS FIRST VOYAGE (1497 CE)

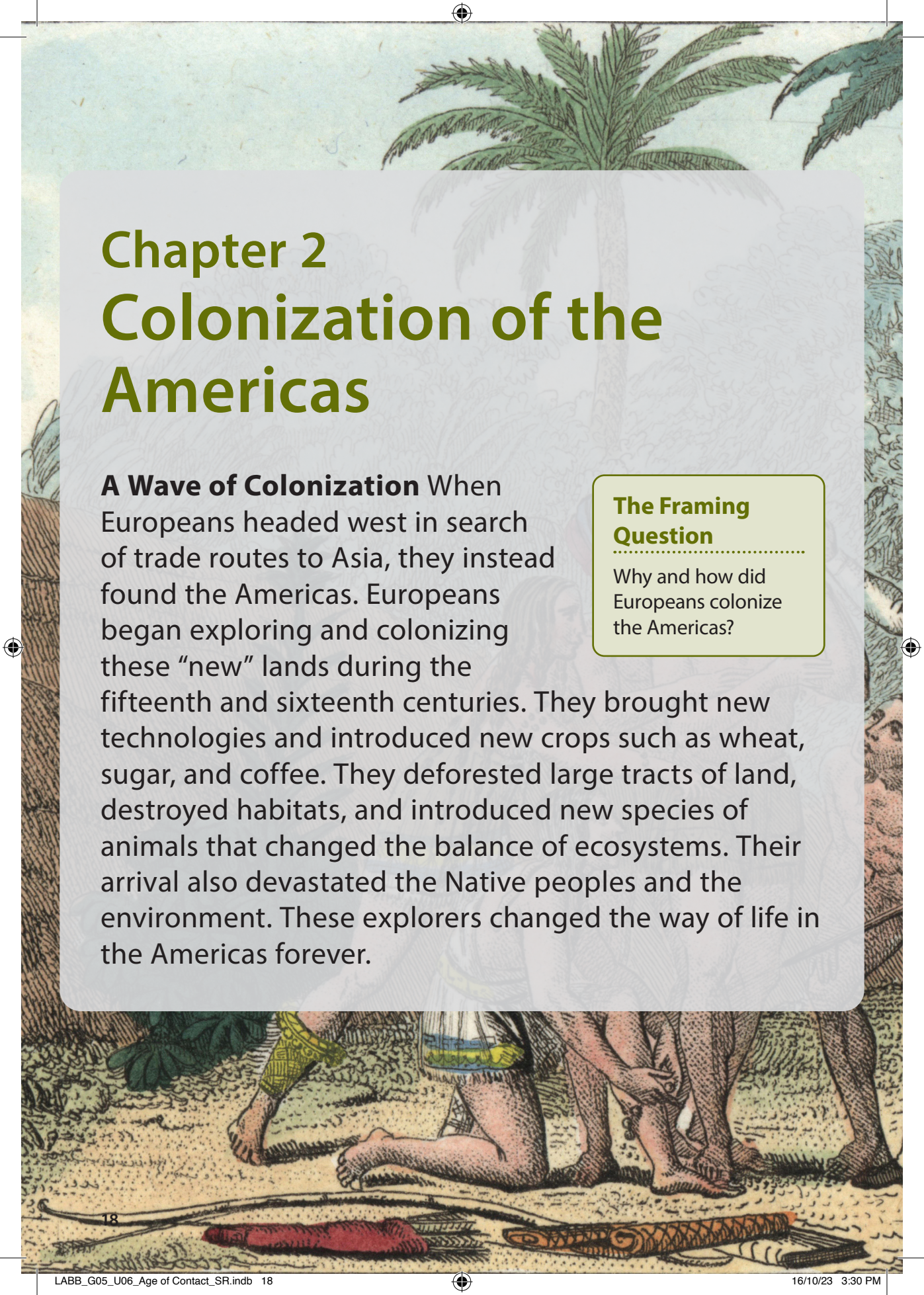
*In this account, explorer Amerigo Vespucci describes one of the first groups of Indigenous people he encountered on his voyage.*

Many are the varieties of tongues; for in every 100 leagues we found a change of language, so that they are not understandable each to the other. The manner of their living is very barbarous, . . . for they eat at all hours, and they eat upon the ground without a table-cloth or any other cover, for they have their meats either in earthen basins which they make themselves or in the halves of pumpkins. . . .

Their dwellings are in common, and their houses [are] made in the style of huts, but strongly made, and constructed with very large trees, and covered over with palm-leaves, secure against storms and winds; and in some places [they are] of so great breadth [width] and length, that in one single house we found there were 600 souls; and we saw a village of only thirteen houses where there were four thousand souls. . . .

In fine, they live and are contented with that which nature gives them. The wealth that we enjoy in this our Europe and elsewhere, such as gold, jewels, pearls, and other riches, they hold as nothing; and although they have them in their own lands, they do not labour [work] to obtain them, nor do they value them.

Adapted from Vespucci, Amerigo. *The First Four Voyages of Amerigo Vespucci*. Translated by Michael Kearney. London: B. Quaritch, 1885, pp. 9, 11.



# Chapter 2

# Colonization of the Americas

**A Wave of Colonization** When Europeans headed west in search of trade routes to Asia, they instead found the Americas. Europeans began exploring and colonizing these “new” lands during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They brought new technologies and introduced new crops such as wheat, sugar, and coffee. They deforested large tracts of land, destroyed habitats, and introduced new species of animals that changed the balance of ecosystems. Their arrival also devastated the Native peoples and the environment. These explorers changed the way of life in the Americas forever.

### The Framing Question

Why and how did Europeans colonize the Americas?



An engraving of Christopher Columbus giving metal bells to the Taino people, whom he would later conquer and enslave

## Europeans Encounter Native Peoples in the Americas

When Columbus arrived in the Bahamas, east of Florida, he took a landing party ashore to meet the inhabitants of what he thought was Asia. Columbus decided to name the island he was on San Salvador (Holy Savior).

The lush green land did not look much like the Asia described by Marco Polo. There were no silks or spices to be seen. Columbus nevertheless was convinced that he had reached the East Indies. His use of the name Indians for the peoples stuck, even after later explorers proved that

Columbus had found not the East Indies but rather islands near two continents located between Europe and Asia previously unknown to Europeans.

The inhabitants of the island were not “Indians” but members of the Taíno (/tye\*noh/) tribe. They

were people who fished in the waters around their island. The Taíno came down to the shore to look at Columbus and his men. Columbus had brought along a translator who spoke Hebrew and Arabic. He felt sure that the “Indians” would understand one of these two Eastern languages. To his frustration, they did not. The Spanish and the Taíno ended up using sign language to communicate.



At first, Columbus did not realize that he was one of the first Europeans to visit the Americas.



In order to locate what he believed would be China, Columbus soon sailed on. He took six Taíno with him. Before long, he landed on what are now the islands of Cuba and Hispaniola. Today, the island of Hispaniola is divided between the countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

News of Columbus's success quickly spread across Europe. However, not everyone was convinced that Columbus had found a westward route to Asia. Eventually, though, the Spanish and others decided that whatever faraway place Columbus had been to, they wanted to go there too.

## **The Later Voyages of Columbus**

Columbus made three more voyages to the Americas. On his second voyage, he mapped most of the islands of the Caribbean Sea and established the permanent colony of Santo Domingo on Hispaniola. He left his brothers Bartholomew and Diego in charge while he searched the Caribbean region for gold. His search was unsuccessful.

The third voyage (1498–1500 CE) went even worse for Columbus. While he explored the north coast of South America, Bartholomew and Diego angered both the Indigenous people and the Spanish settlers of Hispaniola. The Columbus brothers forced the Indigenous people to work in gold mines and favored some Spanish settlers over others. Eventually, complaints reached the Spanish court. Columbus lost his position as governor of the colony, and his brothers were sent back to Spain. Columbus himself was first put in prison in Hispaniola, then tried in a court in Spain, where he was found to be not guilty.

The fourth voyage (1502–4 CE) was the worst of all. Columbus and his men were shipwrecked on the island of Jamaica for a year. By the time Columbus returned to Spain, he was in bad health, and his reputation had been damaged. When Columbus died in 1506 CE, almost nobody noticed.

## **Spain in the Americas**

Almost as soon as Columbus arrived in the Americas, the Spanish started to take over the lands they found. Spanish settlers were often harsh to the Native peoples already living there. The Spanish sometimes enslaved Indigenous people such as the Taíno and killed those who resisted.

Spanish colonists used enslaved and free people in the Americas to work and make themselves and the Spanish government rich. And they unintentionally brought new germs to which Indigenous peoples had never been exposed. Within about thirty years of Columbus's arrival in the Caribbean, the number of Taíno people had declined from two million to only a few thousand. By 1550 CE, they had almost entirely disappeared. Those who survived mixed with other island inhabitants, such as Europeans and enslaved Africans. Despite all of this, even today there are people who continue to identify as Taíno.

## **Cortés Defeats the Aztecs**

The Aztec empire was Mexico's largest and most powerful empire before the arrival of the Spanish. The Aztec had a rich culture and a complex society with laws, writing, and feats of

engineering that produced complex structures such as pyramids. They built huge stone temples and pyramids that still exist today.

In 1519 CE, despite his official expedition there having been canceled, the Spanish explorer Hernán Cortés landed in Mexico. He had disobeyed orders by doing so, stopping in Trinidad, Cuba, for more men and horses. Cortés intended to conquer the Aztec and acquire the land and riches for Spain.

As Cortés and his men moved from the coast into the interior, they were met with resistance. But his men had superior weapons—horses, guns, and cannons. The Aztec had never seen horses before and were afraid of them. And they had no weapons or armor to defend against guns and cannons. These advantages helped Cortés and his men as they confronted the Aztec.

Cortés aligned himself with a group of Indigenous people from Tlaxcala who were enemies of the Aztec. Cortés reached Tenochtitlán on November 8, 1519 CE. He then used his knowledge of Aztec beliefs and customs to trick and capture their leader, Montezuma. Thousands of Aztec warriors fought back against the Spanish invaders, but Cortés and his men, with support from Indigenous allies, attacked and defeated the leaders of the Aztec people.

The Aztec empire finally fell in 1521 CE. The use of cannons and the impact of disease aided the Spanish conquest. This once-great



This engraving depicts the troops of Hernán Cortés invading the Aztec.

empire was replaced by a settlement that the Spanish called New Spain. Cortés took over as ruler of a large territory that spanned the Caribbean and Mexico. The conquest of the Aztec is considered a tragic event by many of the Indigenous peoples of Mexico. It led to the destruction of their culture and the loss of many lives.

## The Inca Fall

Shortly after the fall of the Aztec empire, Spanish soldiers with advanced technology and a desire for wealth turned their sights southward. A term was used to describe these soldiers:

**conquistadors** (/kon\*kees\*tuh\*dorz/).

Conquistadors followed the Spanish leaders' desire to conquer lands to increase their own wealth. They also sought political power.

### Vocabulary

**conquistador**, n.  
the Spanish word for conqueror

The Inca empire was the largest empire in the Americas before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors. The Inca had a complex society with impressive architecture, irrigation technology, and an extensive road system. However, like the Aztec, they were eventually defeated by the weapons and tactics of the Spanish.

In 1531 CE, Francisco Pizarro, a Spanish conquistador, arrived in what is now Peru with soldiers, including several of his brothers. Pizarro was able to capture Inca emperor Atahualpa (/ah\*tuh\*hoo-ahl\*puh/) in a surprise attack. The Spanish accepted the Inca offer to fill a room with silver and gold as a ransom for Atahualpa's release. However, the Spanish did not keep their promise and killed Atahualpa anyway. Pizarro then took over the Inca capital, Cusco, and installed his

own emperor who would follow Pizarro's wishes. The Spanish also destroyed and looted priceless Inca treasures, many of which were melted down and shipped back to Spain. After the fall of the Inca empire, the Spanish established the Viceroyalty of Peru, which included most of South America. The Spanish used the land and peoples for their own benefit.



The Spanish colonized South America after conquistador Francisco Pizarro defeated the Inca.

One reason the Spanish were able to defeat the Inca was that the Inca were distracted by a civil war. Atahualpa and his brother Huascar were fighting for control of the empire. The brothers' conflict weakened Inca society and left them vulnerable to attack from the outside.

## Christianity Spreads

When Spanish explorers arrived in the Americas in the sixteenth century, they brought their religion, the Catholic form of Christianity, with them. The Spanish colonists believed it was their duty to convert the Indigenous peoples of the Americas to Christianity. At first, various Catholic groups arrived to spread their faith to the people they encountered there. Later, in the eighteenth century, groups set up **missions**. These were

### Vocabulary

**mission**, n. a settlement built for the purpose of converting Native Americans to Christianity and expanding territory



The missions helped the Spanish set up their colonies in the Americas.

places where Native people were recruited into the Catholic faith.

At the missions, Spanish priests taught the Native people about Catholicism and also to read and write Spanish. They adapted their practices to Native

cultures by including familiar symbols and cultural references, such as feathers and flowers. The Spanish also commissioned artists to make paintings and sculptures depicting Bible stories.

These images were placed in churches and public spaces, where everyone could see them.

Few Native Americans were interested in adopting Christianity. In 1513 CE, the Spanish government developed a policy called the "Requirement," or *Requerimiento*. Now, the Indigenous people would be forced to accept Spanish rule and allow Catholic preaching. If they resisted, they faced war and enslavement. This policy spread Christianity while forcing Native people to give up their beliefs and customs.



This Spanish-Peruvian colonial painting is an example of a type of art that started in Cusco, Peru, which had been the capital of the Inca empire.

## The Encomienda System

Building an empire in the Americas required settlers. To encourage migration to these new lands, the Spanish set up a system of **encomiendas**

(/en\*koe\*me\*yen\*dus). In this system, a Spanish conqueror was given a large plot of land and a number of enslaved workers. In exchange, these new landowners were responsible for converting the Indigenous people of the region to Catholicism. These same people were forced to work in fields and mines unpaid. The encomienda system clearly benefited Spain and the Spanish settlers.

According to the Spanish, the encomienda system also benefited Indigenous people by allowing them to become more “civilized.” This thinking was based on the idea that Spanish culture was superior to any Indigenous culture. In truth, Indigenous cultures were different, not inferior. The encomienda system stripped people of their freedom and ways of life and plunged them into poverty.

Bartolomé de Las Casas (/bahr\*toe\*loe\*mae/de/lahs/kah\*sahs/) came to the Americas in 1502 CE. He settled in Hispaniola as an *encomendero*, or someone who had an

### Vocabulary

**encomienda**, n. a system in which Spain offered grants of land and enslaved people to reward conquerors



Under the encomienda system, the Indigenous people of South America were enslaved.

encomienda. However, he was horrified by how the Spanish treated the Indigenous people. They were deprived of their land and then forced to work without pay for the people who had taken it from them. Las Casas decided that the encomienda system was wrong. He became a Catholic priest and began to preach against it. He also wrote a book telling people in Spain what was happening in the Americas. In the book, he explained that the encomienda system was based on greed. He convinced the Spanish government to pass the New Laws of the Indies, which banned encomiendas, in 1542 CE. Unfortunately, this did not end the abuses of Indigenous people.

As the Indigenous population declined in numbers, particularly from diseases brought over from Europe, the Spanish began importing enslaved Africans to work in their colonies. This transition to African slavery was gradual, peaking in the 1700s as sugar became a much-desired export of the Caribbean.

## **Colonizing North America**

The Spanish colonized across the Americas, except in present-day Brazil. This included large regions of what is now Mexico and much of South America, as well as regions of the present-day southern and western United States. Meanwhile, the English, French, and Dutch established colonies in North America and elsewhere. Through the 1500s, English and French colonies in North America struggled. Many of these small, early colonies failed. These colonists did not find and conquer large empires of Indigenous peoples like the Spanish did. However, in the 1600s, the English and French had more success. They founded colonies



all over North America and even in the Caribbean. They also attacked Spanish ships and stole their treasures.

One notable Englishman who rose to power and fame for successfully attacking Spanish ships was Sir Francis Drake. He managed to win some of the riches for himself too. The Spanish called him the “master thief of the unknown world.” In fact, the Spanish were so angry about the English attacks on their ships that they sent an armada, or fleet of ships, to attack England. The Spanish Armada sailed into the English Channel in July 1588 CE. Bad weather and the faster, smaller English ships resulted in a victory for England.

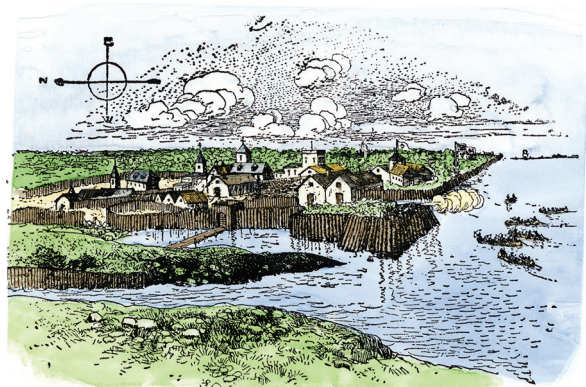
Building colonial settlements was expensive. The English kings and queens did not want to spend the money. Instead, they granted land to wealthy people or businesses called **joint-stock companies** to build the colonies.

In 1585 CE, Sir Walter Raleigh established the first English colony in North America. Raleigh sent a group of men to Roanoke Island, off the coast of present-day North Carolina. Raleigh’s colonists soon grew discouraged, and they returned to England. A second attempt was made in 1587 CE, but that too did not succeed.

In 1607, a joint-stock company called the London Company started a colony

### Vocabulary

**joint-stock company,**  
n. a company that raises money by selling shares, or interest in the company, in the form of stock



JAMESTOWN IN 1622.

Jamestown, Virginia, was the first lasting European settlement in North America.

at Jamestown, Virginia. They named this place after King James and Queen Elizabeth I, known as the Virgin Queen. Jamestown was the first permanent English settlement in North America. The colonists had a hard time at first, as they did not know how to farm the land and struggled to grow enough food. Then the Powhatan Confederacy, a group of Native Americans indigenous to the area, came to the colony's rescue. The Confederacy, named for the chief who governed the unified group, was made up of about thirty Native American groups that shared the same language, called Algonquian. Members of the Powhatan Confederacy taught the colonists how to grow food crops and tobacco, a crop that was native to North America and unknown in Europe. Growing tobacco was a success. Tobacco quickly became a cash crop for the colonists.

A second English colony, Plymouth, was founded in what is now Massachusetts. The Pilgrims were a religious group who left England because they objected to practices of the Church of England. They came to the Americas seeking to practice their religion freely. They arrived in the harbor at Plymouth and spent the winter of 1620–21 on their ship, the *Mayflower*, because it was too cold for them to survive outside with no housing. While on the ship, they signed an agreement, the Mayflower Compact. They pledged to work together and to obey the laws that the group would agree on. This was an important step toward self-government in colonial America.



By signing the Mayflower Compact, the Pilgrims agreed to help and support each other as they built their new lives.

## French and Dutch Colonies

The French and Dutch established colonies in the Americas as well. Quebec was founded by Samuel de Champlain in 1608. Quebec is located in present-day Canada. It became an important trading post for the French.

The French also built settlements along the Mississippi River, including New Orleans. The French had good relations with the Native Americans and often traded with them for furs, which were exported back to France.

The Dutch built a fort and founded New Amsterdam in 1624. New Amsterdam lay at the mouth of the Hudson River on an island the local people called Manhattan. It was an excellent location

for a trading post. The Dutch were interested in acquiring both beaver furs and beaver organs that were useful in making perfumes. However, the Dutch could not hold their colony. In 1664, the English took it over and renamed it New York.



Here you can see a seventeenth-century image of New Amsterdam when it was under Dutch control.

The Dutch also founded a colony in the present-day state of New Jersey, which they called New Netherland. They established good relations with the Native Americans and traded furs with them. This colony was successful and attracted new settlers. It, too, was later taken over by the English.

## European Colonies in the Americas



Multiple European countries established colonies in the Americas, dividing the continents among themselves.

## PRIMARY SOURCE: THE DURÁN CODEX

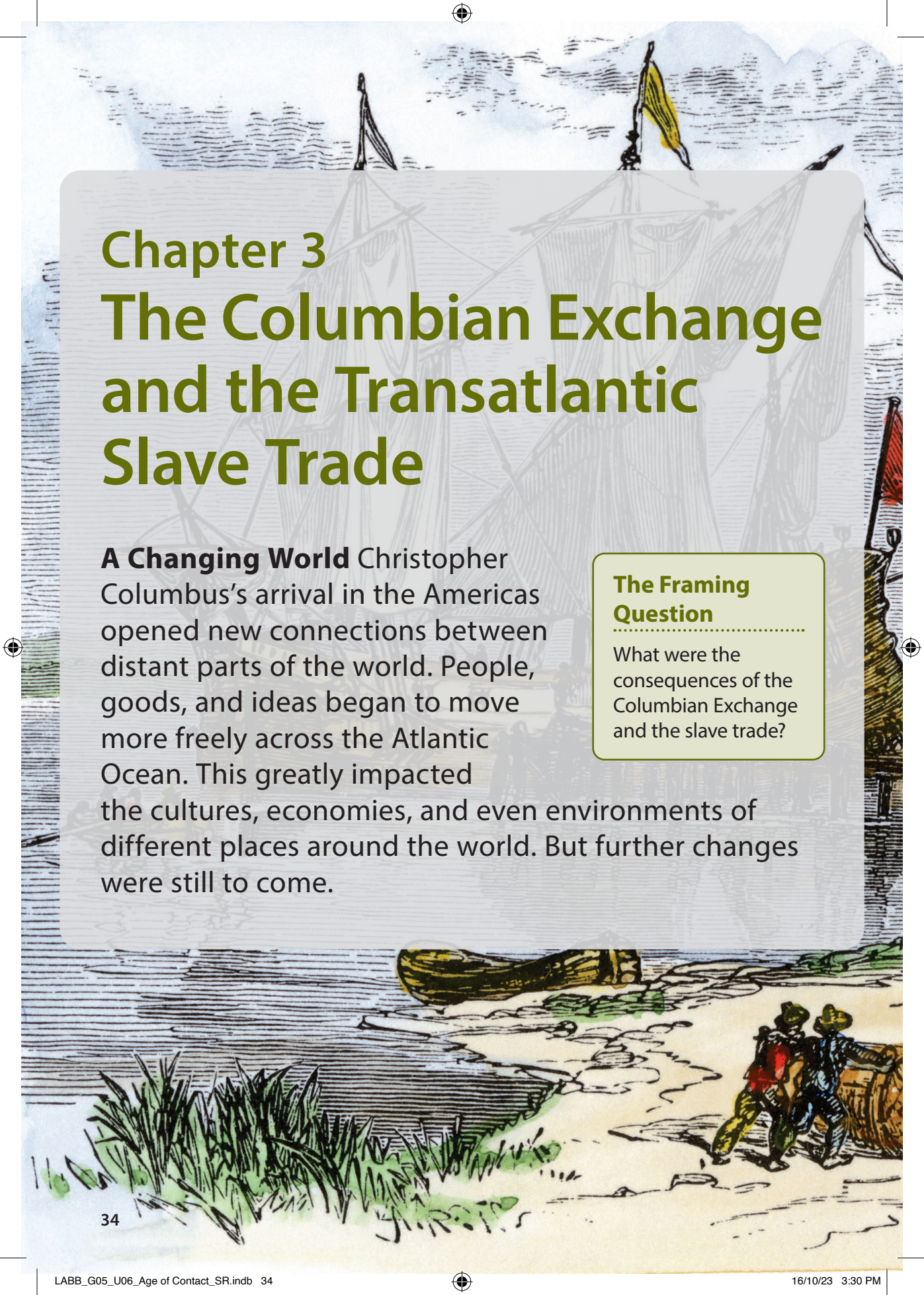
*Diego Durán was a Dominican friar who wrote the Durán Codex. It was one of the earliest Western books on the history and culture of the Aztec. The book covers many different topics, including the Aztec creation story and a chronology of Aztec kings.*



This image from the Durán Codex depicts a comet that appeared over the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlán in 1519 CE.



This image from the Durán Codex depicts Hernán Cortés marching with his Tlaxcalan allies to attack the Aztec empire.



# Chapter 3

## The Columbian Exchange and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

**A Changing World** Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas opened new connections between distant parts of the world. People, goods, and ideas began to move more freely across the Atlantic Ocean. This greatly impacted the cultures, economies, and even environments of different places around the world. But further changes were still to come.

### The Framing Question

What were the consequences of the Columbian Exchange and the slave trade?



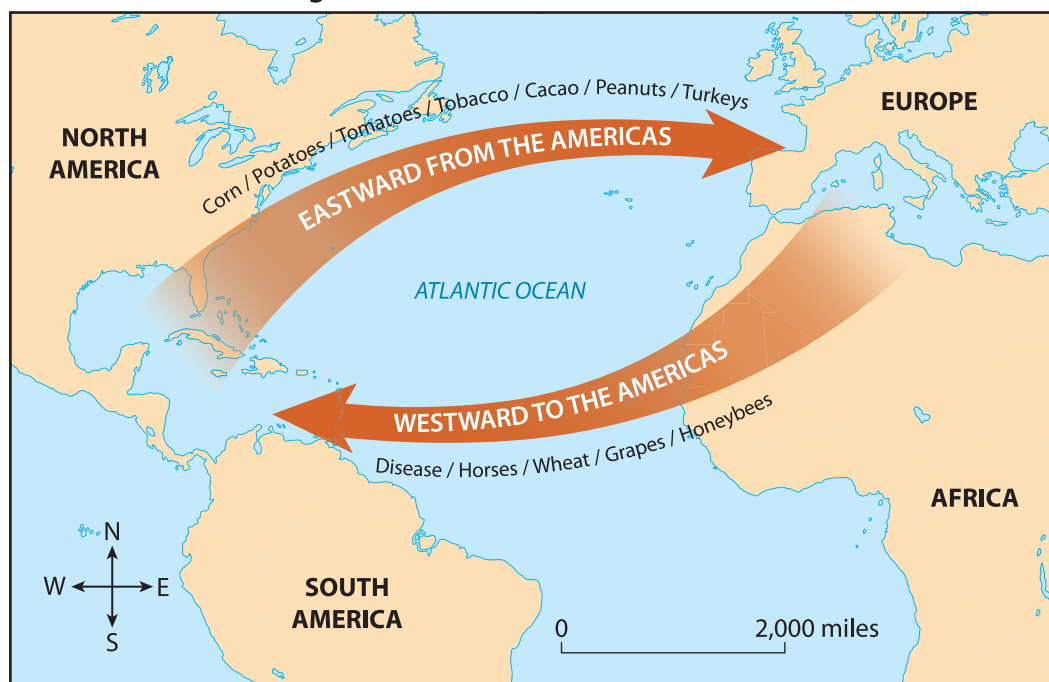
Ships like these were used to trade goods across the Atlantic Ocean in the Columbian Exchange.

## The Columbian Exchange

The Columbian Exchange was a period of exploration and trade that began when European explorers reached the Americas. It is named after Christopher Columbus. The Columbian Exchange involved the transfer of goods, ideas, plants, and animals—as well as devastating diseases—between the Americas and the rest of the world.

The impact of the Columbian Exchange was immense. Plants and animals that were native to America were brought to Europe, Africa, and Asia. This helped introduce new foods, such as potatoes and corn, to these continents. This in turn led to changes in diets and farming practices. Similarly, European animals such as horses and cows were brought to the Americas. These animals

### The Columbian Exchange



The Columbian Exchange brought large changes to the entire world.



drastically changed the two continents' landscapes and how people there lived and worked.

The Columbian Exchange also spread religions and languages to new places. It even created new ways of thinking about art, literature, and science. This led to a mix of ideas and culture.

Nevertheless, many effects of the Columbian Exchange were harmful. The transfer of diseases between continents was particularly devastating for the Indigenous populations of the Americas. These people had never encountered European diseases such as smallpox and measles, so they had no chance to develop resistance. As you have learned, diseases became deadly and devastated Indigenous cultures. Additionally, the forced migration of enslaved Africans to the Americas as part of the exchange was a huge loss that contributed to the impoverishment that still affects some African societies today.

## Slavery in the Americas

One aspect of the Columbian Exchange was the movement of people between the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. Explorers and settlers crossed the oceans by choice, but others were forced to do so. The movement of enslaved people from Africa to the Americas is one of the more horrific events in history.

The islands of the Caribbean were not rich in mineral wealth. The land and climate, however, were well suited for growing sugar and other crops. At first, Spanish **plantation** owners planned to use local

### Vocabulary

**plantation**, n. a large farm where one or more crops are grown by a large number of laborers, then sold for a profit by the plantation owner

Indigenous people to work on the plantations. But disease and war thwarted that plan. Landowners turned to enslaved people

### Vocabulary

**cost-effective**, adj. providing benefits without costing much money

**inhumane**, adj. cruel, lacking mercy

from Africa as a **cost-effective** solution. However, this practice was incredibly **inhumane** and caused much suffering.

The Spanish were not the only Europeans who thought of this solution. Portuguese colonists imported people to use as enslaved labor to grow sugarcane in the coastal regions of Brazil. In the 1600s, British planters also turned to enslaved people from Africa to work on their sugar plantations in the Caribbean. Sugar made the planters rich. But the sugar growers created another business that could make people rich—trading human beings across the Atlantic.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans involved in the Atlantic slave trade. Their explorations of the African coast had opened up new sources for people they could buy as slaves. When Portugal's power collapsed and the Dutch took over the spice trade, they took over much of the Atlantic slave trade as well.



Enslaved Africans were often forced to work on sugar plantations.

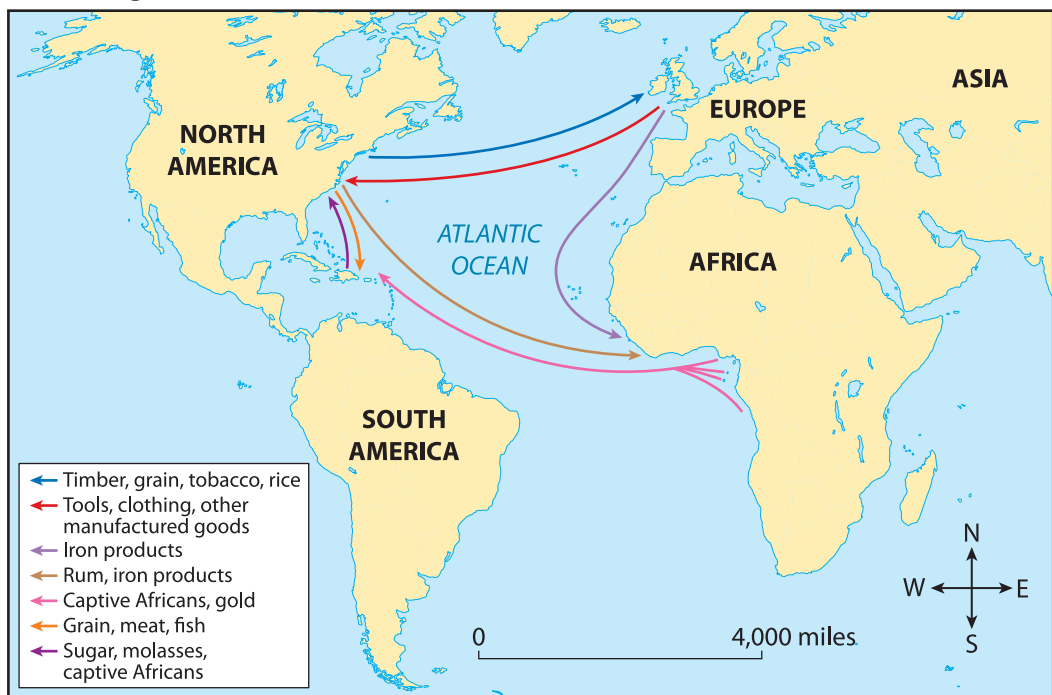
In 1619, Dutch pirates arrived in Virginia with a shipload of Africans they had captured. The pirates traded these people for food. This was the first arrival of Africans in the English North American colonies. Whether these Africans became **indentured servants** or enslaved workers remains unclear.

### Vocabulary

**indentured servant**, n. a person who owes an employer a certain amount of work for a certain amount of time in exchange for some benefit

The Dutch took over a Portuguese trading center called Elmina on the west coast of Africa (in present-day Ghana). At Elmina, captured Africans were imprisoned before being transported to Europe or the Americas. Before long, Elmina was the center of the Dutch slave trade. By 1655, the Dutch were transporting 2,500 enslaved people across the Atlantic each year.

### The Triangular Trade



The triangular trade saw merchant ships bring goods from Europe to Africa, captive Africans to the Americas, and goods from the Americas back to Europe.

The slave trade was one side of a trading triangle. One segment of the triangle carried goods from Europe to Africa. Ships carried items such as iron, guns, gunpowder, knives, cloth, and beads. Another segment transported people from Africa to the Caribbean islands and later to Brazil and the English colonies in North America. And the third segment of the triangle made a return trip to Europe. These ships carried timber, tobacco, grain, sugar, and rice from the plantations of the Americas in the triangular trade.

## Middle Passage

Africans typically passed through several stages in their journey into slavery. First, they were captured, at times by European slavers but usually during wars among African tribes. Next, they were marched to a seaport such as Elmina. There, they were packed into ships for the journey across the Atlantic. Those who survived the journey were sold at the slave market in a seaport in the Americas and transported to plantations.

The trip across the Atlantic Ocean was known as the Middle Passage. It was a terrible, dehumanizing experience. Slave ships usually carried between 150 and 600 Africans. Enslaved people were treated like **cargo** or **chattel**, not people. They were chained, lying down, on platforms. Each person had a space about six feet long and sixteen inches wide. Because they were chained in place, they could not even turn over.

### Vocabulary

**cargo**, n. goods transported by a ship, plane, or truck

**chattel**, n. personal property

As the ships passed through tropical latitudes, temperatures in the hold would rise to more than one hundred degrees. Enslaved people were fed small amounts of rice and water twice a day.

The trip across the ocean took between two and four months, depending on the weather and the destination. Illness and death were common occurrences. With people packed in close quarters, disease spread easily. Historians estimate that about 15 percent



Enslaved African people were transported in cramped conditions, chained up, on ships that crossed the Atlantic.

of enslaved people did not survive the journey. The Atlantic slave trade lasted nearly three hundred years. In that time, European slave traders made approximately fifty-four thousand voyages across the Atlantic. Some historians estimate that between twelve and fifteen million people were forced from their homes in Africa to work across the ocean. The vast majority of these people were directed toward plantations in Brazil and the Caribbean. A smaller but still significant number landed in the English colonies in North America.

## The Growth of Slavery in the Colonies

While plantations with slaves were rare in the northeastern British colonies of North America, many of the ports there were large slave-trading centers. Indeed, New England was the heart of slave-trading in colonial British North America.

In the South, the situation was different. Southern plantations **exported** tobacco to Europe. They needed many workers to run these plantations. To find a supply of workers, plantation owners began paying for indentured servants to come from Europe to work for a set number of years. This did not work out well. The hot weather, humidity, and swampy water bred disease. The work was very hard, and many servants did not live long.

### Vocabulary

**export**, v. to send goods to sell in another country

**cultivation**, n. the act of preparing ground for growing crops

In time, the use of indentured servants declined. Plantations began to move away from the coast, where disease had been a big problem. Healthy servants started living long enough to fulfill their contracts. That meant plantation owners had to pay “freedom dues” when servants completed their contracts.

Before long, buying enslaved workers from Africa became more profitable and efficient. Slavery spread in the 1700s. Millions of acres were planted with tobacco, and planters also introduced new cash crops such as rice, cotton, and indigo. **Cultivation**, planting, and harvesting of these crops relied almost entirely on the labor of enslaved people.

## Plantation Life

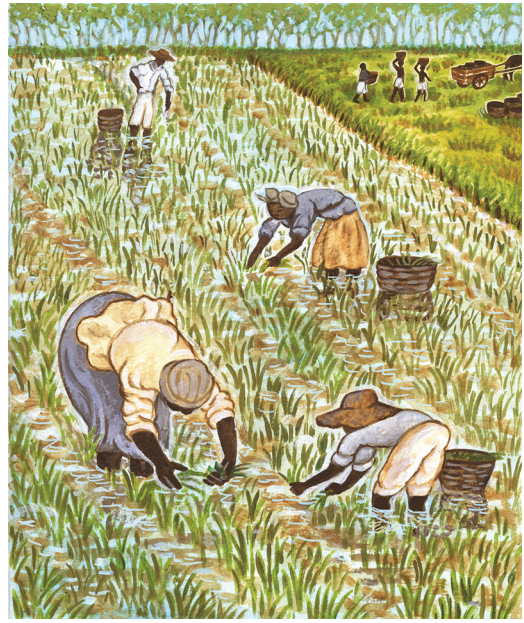
People forcibly brought from Africa were sold as slaves at markets where slaveholders bid against each other. Families were frequently broken up; children were separated from their parents, and husbands from wives. Often the enslaved brought with them various skill sets. In their native lands, they might have been farmers, teachers, engineers,

artisans, or homemakers. Now they would work for no pay or personal reward.

On a plantation, enslaved people had no freedom. They had to do what their enslavers told them to do and could not travel anywhere without permission. They could not testify in court, so a slaveholder could mistreat an enslaved person without consequences.

Many colonies also had laws that made it illegal to teach enslaved people to read or write. The enslaved worked in the cotton, rice, indigo, and tobacco fields. They chopped wood, built fences, cleared roads, and dug wells. During all their work they were watched by a person called an **overseer**. Other enslaved people worked in the enslaver's house, performing tasks such as cooking and cleaning.

However, not all Africans in the colonies were enslaved. Some managed to gain their freedom. A few slaveholders even gave freedom to their enslaved workers. Free Africans in the colonies made their living as farmers and craftspeople. After the American Revolution, slavery was gradually abolished in most of the northern states. But slavery spread in the American South, where it survived until the end of the Civil War in the mid-nineteenth century.



Enslaved people did backbreaking work on rice plantations.

### Vocabulary

**overseer**, n. someone who supervises workers to make sure a job is done properly

## PRIMARY SOURCE: EXCERPT FROM KING NZINGA MBEMBA'S LETTER TO KING JOÃO III OF PORTUGAL

*Nzinga Mbemba (also known as King Afonso I) was a powerful ruler of the Kingdom of Kongo, a vast and prosperous African empire that existed in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.*

We cannot reckon how great the damage is, since the mentioned merchants are taking every day our natives, sons of the land and the sons of our noblemen and vassals and our relatives, because the thieves and men of bad conscience grab them wishing to have the things and wares of this Kingdom which they are ambitious of, they grab them and get them to be sold; and so great, Sir, is the corruption and licentiousness that our country is being completely depopulated, and Your Highness should not agree with this nor accept it as in your service. . . .

Many of our people, keenly desirous as they are of the wares and things of your Kingdoms, which are brought here by your people, and in order to satisfy their voracious appetite, seize many of our people, freed and exempt men, and very often it happens that they kidnap even noblemen and the sons of noblemen, and our relatives, and take them to be sold to the white men who are in our Kingdoms; and for this purpose they have concealed them; and others are brought during the night so that they might not be recognized.



# Glossary

## A

**astrolabe, n.** a navigational tool used to determine the position of the sun, a star, or another object in the sky (4)

## C

**caravel, n.** a small, maneuverable sailing ship used by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century (6)

**cargo, n.** goods transported by a ship, plane, or truck (40)

**chattel, n.** personal property (40)

**circumnavigate, v.** to travel completely around something (such as Earth), especially by water (13)

**colonization, n.** the practice of bringing people from a different country to control and settle an area that already has an Indigenous population (11)

**compass, n.** a device that uses a magnetic pointer to show direction (4)

**conquistador, n.** the Spanish word for conqueror (24)

**cost-effective, adj.** providing benefits without costing much money (38)

**cultivation, n.** the act of preparing ground for growing crops (42)

## E

**encomienda, n.** a system in which Spain offered grants of land and enslaved people to reward conquerors (27)

**export, v.** to send goods to sell in another country (42)

## H

**hull, n.** the sides and bottom of a boat (6)

## I

**indentured servant, n.** a person who owes an employer a certain amount of work for a certain amount of time in exchange for some benefit (39)

**inhumane, adj.** cruel, lacking mercy (38)

## J

**joint-stock company, n.** a company that raises money by selling shares, or interest in the company, in the form of stock (29)

## M

**mercantilism, n.** an economic system that aims to increase a country's wealth and power by controlling trade and people (5)

**mission, n.** a settlement built for the purpose of converting Native Americans to Christianity and expanding territory (25)

**mutiny, v.** to rebel against leaders, especially on a ship (9)

## N

**navigation, n.** the skill or science of determining the route to a destination (4)

## O

**overseer, n.** someone who supervises workers to make sure a job is done properly (43)

## P

**plantation, n.** a large farm where one or more crops are grown by a large number of laborers, then sold for a profit by the plantation owner (37)

## V

**validate, v.** to give official approval (9)





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Slaves working a sugar field, c.1860 (coloured engraving)/American School, (19th century) / American/Private Collection /Peter Newark American Pictures / Bridgeman Images: 38

Virgin of Belén (Virgen de Belén), c.1700-1720 (oil on canvas)/Cuzco School, (17th Century) / Peruvian/Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA, USA/Bridgeman Images: i, iii, 26b





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