UNIT 1 — Period 1: 1491–1607

Topic 1.1

Contextualizing Period 1

Learning Objective: Explain the context for European encounters in the Americas from 1491 to 1607.

Today, the United States is a synthesis, or combination, of people from around the world. The first people arrived in the Americas at least 10,000 years ago. A survey of how these indigenous people lived before the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas in 1492 provides the context for understanding the interaction of the Europeans and Native Americans and the impact this had on both groups. Columbus's first voyage was a turning point in world history because it initiated lasting contact between people on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean. His voyages, followed by European exploration and settlement in the Americas, had profound results on how people on every continent lived.

Another landmark change came in 1607 with the founding of the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown, Virginia. The Jamestown settlement marked the beginning of the framework of a new nation.

Cultural Diversity in the Americas When Columbus reached the Americas, the existing cultures varied greatly, partially because of differences in geography and climate. Each culture developed distinctive traits in response to its environment, from tropical islands where sugar grew to forests rich in animal life to land with fertile soil for growing corn (maize). Native Americans also transformed their environments. For example, people in dry regions created irrigation systems, while those in forested regions used fire to clear land for agriculture.

Motives for Exploration The European explorers in the Americas—first the Spanish and Portuguese, then the French and Dutch, and later the English—competed for land in the Americas. Some were motivated by desires to spread Christianity. Others hoped to become wealthy by finding an all-water route to Asia, establishing fur-trading posts, operating gold and silver mines, or developing plantations. Europeans often relied on violence to subdue or drive away native inhabitants.

Transatlantic Exchange Contact between Europeans and the natives of America touched off a transatlantic trade in animals, plants, and germs known as the Columbian Exchange that altered life for people around the globe.

Crops originally from America such as corn (maize), potatoes, and tomatoes revolutionized the diet of Europeans. However, germs that had developed in Europe caused epidemics in the Americas. Typically, the native population of a region declined by 90 percent within a century after the arrival of Europeans.

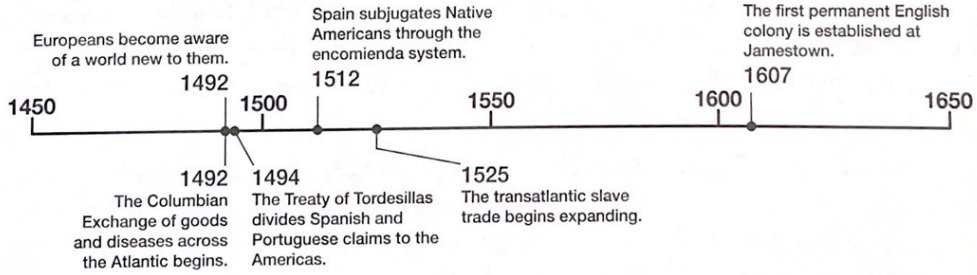
Addition of Enslaved Africans Adding to the diversity of people in the Americas were enslaved Africans. They were brought to the Americas by Europeans who desired low-cost labor to work in mines and on plantations. Africans, like Native Americans, resisted European domination by maintaining elements of their cultures. The three groups influenced the others' ideas and ways of life.

European Colonies Within a century of the arrival of Columbus, Spanish and Portuguese explorers and settlers developed colonies that depended on natives and enslaved Africans for labor in agriculture and mining precious metals. In particular, mines in Mexico and South America produced vast amounts of silver that made Spain the wealthiest European empire in the 16th and 17th centuries.

ANALYZE THE CONTEXT

1. Describe a historical context for understanding the diverse Native American cultures that had developed in the Americas by the 1490s.
2. Explain a historical context for the European exploration in the Americas from the 1490s to early 1600s.
3. Explain a historical context for the interactions between Europeans and Native Americans in the period from 1491 to 1607.

LANDMARK EVENTS: 1450–1650



Topic 1.2

Native American Societies Before European Contact

The American Indian is of the soil, whether it be the region of forests, plains, pueblos, or mesas. He fits into the landscape, for the hand that fashioned the continent also fashioned the man for his surroundings.

Luther Standing Bear, Oglala Lakota Chief, 1933

Learning Objective: Explain how various native populations interacted with the natural environment in North America in the period before European contact.

The original discovery and settlement of North and South America began at least 10,000 and maybe up to 40,000 years ago. Migrants from Asia might have crossed a **land bridge** that once connected Siberia and Alaska (land now submerged under the Bering Sea). Over time, people migrated southward from near the Arctic Circle to the southern tip of South America. As they adapted to the varied environments they encountered, they evolved into hundreds of tribes speaking hundreds of languages. By 1491, the population in the Americas was probably between 50 million and 100 million people.

Cultures of Central and South America

The native population was concentrated in three highly developed civilizations.

- Between the years 300 and 800, the **Mayas** built remarkable cities in the rain forests of the Yucatán Peninsula (present-day Guatemala, Belize, and southern Mexico).
- Several centuries after the decline of the Mayas, the **Aztecs** from central Mexico developed a powerful empire. The Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán, had a population of about 200,000, equivalent in population to the largest cities of Europe.
- While the Aztecs were dominating Mexico and Central America, the **Incas** based in Peru developed a vast empire in western South America.

All three civilizations developed highly organized societies, carried on an extensive trade, and created calendars that were based on accurate scientific observations. All three cultivated crops that provided a stable food supply, particularly **corn (maize)** for the Mayas and Aztecs and potatoes for the Incas.

Cultures of North America

The population in the region north of Mexico (present-day United States and Canada) in the 1490s may have been anywhere from under 1 million to more than 10 million.

General Patterns Native societies in this region included fewer people and had less complex social structures than those in Mexico and South America. One reason for these differences was how slowly the cultivation of corn (maize) spread northward from Mexico. The nutrition provided by corn allowed for larger and more densely settled populations. In turn, this led to more socially diversified societies in which people specialized in their work.

Some of the most populous societies in North America had disappeared by the 15th century for reasons not well understood. By the time of Columbus, most people in the Americas in what is now the United States and Canada lived in semipermanent settlements in groups seldom exceeding 300 people. In most of these groups, the men made tools and hunted for game, while the women gathered plants and nuts or grew crops such as corn (maize), beans, and tobacco.

Language Differences Beyond these broad similarities, the cultures of American Indians were very diverse. For example, while English, Spanish, and almost all other European languages were part of just one language family (Indo-European), American Indian languages constituted more than 20 language families. Among the largest of these were **Algonquian** in the northeast, **Siouan** on the Great Plains, and Athabaskan in the southwest. Together, these 20 families included more than 400 distinct languages.

Southwest Settlements In the dry region that now includes New Mexico and Arizona, groups such as the **Hohokam, Anasazi,** and **Pueblos** evolved multifaceted societies. Many people lived in caves, under cliffs, and in multistoried buildings. The spread of maize cultivation into this region from Mexico prompted economic growth and the development of irrigation systems. The additional wealth allowed for a more complex society to develop, one with greater variations between social and economic classes.

By the time Europeans arrived, extreme drought and other hostile natives had taken their toll on these groups. However, their descendants continue to live in the region, and the arid climate helped preserve some of the older stone and masonry dwellings.

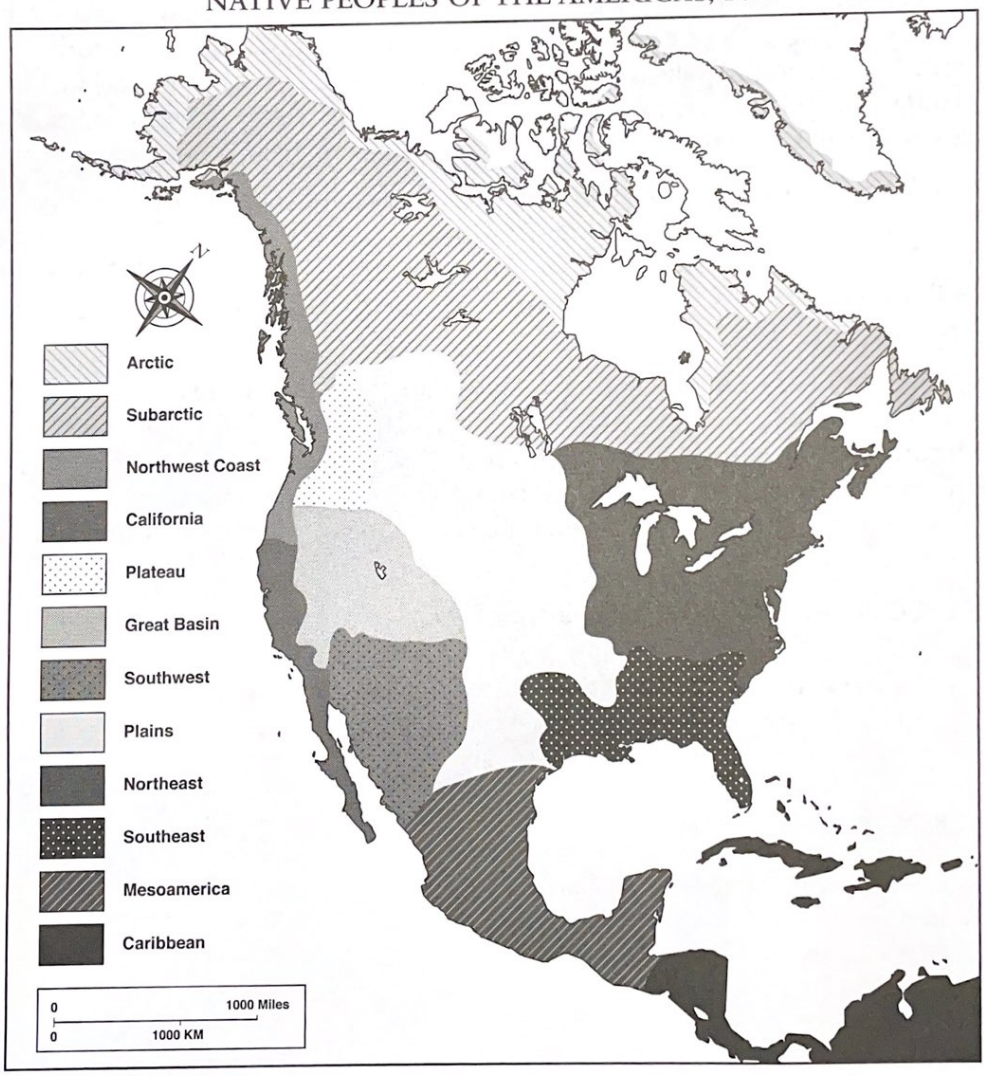
Northwest Settlements Along the Pacific coast from what is today Alaska to northern California, people lived in permanent longhouses or plank houses. They had a rich diet based on hunting, fishing, and gathering nuts, berries, and roots. To help people remember stories, legends, and myths, they carved large totem poles. However, the high mountain ranges in this region isolated tribes from one another, creating barriers to development.

Great Basin and Great Plains People adapted to the dry climate of the Great Basin region and the grasslands of the Great Plains by developing mobile

ways of living. Nomadic tribes survived on hunting, principally the buffalo, which supplied their food as well as decorations, crafting tools, knives, and clothing. People lived in tepees, frames of poles covered in animal skins, which were easily disassembled and transported. Some tribes, though they also hunted buffalo, lived permanently in earthen lodges often along rivers. They raised corn (maize), beans, and squash while actively trading with other tribes.

Not until the 17th century did American Indians acquire horses by trading or stealing them from Spanish settlers. With horses, tribes such as the Lakota Sioux could more easily follow buffalo herds. The plains tribes would at times merge or split apart as conditions changed. Migration also was common. For example, the Apaches gradually migrated southward from Canada to Texas.

NATIVE PEOPLES OF THE AMERICAS, 1491



Mississippi River Valley East of the Mississippi River, the Woodland American Indians prospered with a rich food supply. Supported by hunting, fishing, and agriculture, people established permanent settlements in the Mississippi and Ohio River valleys and elsewhere. The Adena-Hopewell culture, centered in what is now Ohio, is famous for its large earthen mounds, some 300 feet long. One of the largest settlements in the Midwest was Cahokia (near present-day East St. Louis, Illinois), with as many as 30,000 inhabitants.

Northeast Settlements Some descendants of the **Adena-Hopewell** culture spread from the Ohio Valley into New York. Their culture combined hunting and farming. However, their farming techniques exhausted the soil quickly, so people had to move to fresh land frequently. Multiple families related through the mother's lineage lived together in **longhouses** that were up to 200 feet long.

Several tribes living near the Great Lakes and in New York—the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, and later the Tuscaroras—formed a powerful political union called the **Iroquois Confederation**, or Haudenosauanee. From the 16th century through the American Revolution, this powerful union battled rival American Indians as well as Europeans.

Atlantic Seaboard Settlements In the area from New Jersey south to Florida lived the people of the Coastal Plains such as the Cherokee and the Lumbee. Many were descendants of the **Woodland mound builders** and built timber and bark lodgings along rivers. The rivers and the Atlantic Ocean provided a rich source of food

Overall Diversity The tremendous variety of landforms and climate prompted people in North America prior to 1492 to develop widely different cultures. While Europeans often grouped these varied cultures together, each tribe was very conscious of its own distinctive systems and traditions. Not until much later in history did they develop a shared identity as Native Americans.

REFLECT ON THE LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Describe the influence of the natural environment on the society and culture that various Native Americans had developed.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

Migration (MIG, ARC)
land bridge
Hohokam, Anasazi, and Pueblos
Adena-Hopewell
Woodland mound builders

Identity and Politics (NAT, POL)
Mayas
Aztecs
Incas
corn (maize)

American Indians (MIG, POL, ARC)
Algonquian
Siouan
longhouses
Iroquois Confederation
Woodland mound builders

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Questions 1–2 refer to the following excerpt.

> "During the thousands of years preceding European contact, the Native American people developed inventive and creative cultures. They cultivated plants for food, dyes, medicines, and textiles; domesticated animals; established extensive patterns of trade; built cities; produced monumental architecture; developed intricate systems of religious beliefs; and constructed a wide variety of systems of social and political organization. . . . Native Americans not only adapted to diverse and demanding environments, they also reshaped the natural environments to meet their needs. . . . No society had shaped metal into guns, swords, or tools; none had gunpowder, sailing ships, or mounted warriors."
>
> "Overview of First Americans," *Digital History*, 2016

1. According to the excerpt, one contrast between Native Americans and Europeans before contact between the two groups of people was that
   (A) all Native Americans shared a common political system
   (B) most Native Americans had little trade with other groups
   (C) some Native Americans had metal tools they used in farming
   (D) no Native Americans had certain military technologies that were common in Europe

2. What does the source imply was the cause of the "wide variety of systems of social and political organization"?
   (A) Variations in the moral code
   (B) Variations in the natural environment
   (C) Variations in religious beliefs
   (D) Variations in styles of architecture

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTION

1. Answer (a), (b), and (c).
   (a) Briefly describe ONE specific difference between the cultures of the indigenous peoples of North America and those in Central and South America in the period 1491–1607.
   (b) Briefly describe ONE specific similarity between the cultures of the indigenous peoples of North America and those in Central and South America in the period 1491–1607.
   (c) Briefly explain ONE specific contrast between language families among Native Americans and Europeans in the period 1491–1607.

Topic 1.3

European Exploration in the Americas

Thirty-three days after my departure . . . I reached the Indian Sea, where I discovered many islands, thickly peopled, of which I took possession without resistance in the name of our illustrious monarch, by public proclamation and with unfurled banners.

Christopher Columbus, *Select Letters*, 1493

Learning Objective: Explain the causes of exploration and conquest of the New World by various European nations.

Until the late 1400s, the people of the Americas carried on extensive trade with each other but had no connection to the people of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Similarly, Europeans, Africans, and Asians traded among themselves without knowing of the Americas. However, starting in the 1400s, religious and economic motives prompted Europeans to explore more widely than before. As a result, they brought the two parts of the world into contact with each other.

The European Context for Exploration

While Vikings from Scandinavia had visited Greenland and North America around the year 1000, these voyages had no lasting impact. Columbus's voyages of exploration finally brought people into ongoing contact across the Atlantic. Several factors made sailing across the ocean and exploring distant regions possible and desirable in the late 15th century.

Changes in Thought and Technology

In Europe, a rebirth of classical learning prompted an outburst of artistic and scientific activity in the 15th and 16th centuries known as the Renaissance. Several of the technological advances during the Renaissance resulted from Europeans making improvements in the inventions of others. For example, Europeans began to use **gunpowder** (invented by the Chinese) and the **sailing compass** (adopted from Arab merchants who learned about it from the Chinese). Europeans also made major improvements in shipbuilding and mapmaking. In addition, the invention of the **printing press** in the 1450s aided the spread of knowledge across Europe.

Religious Conflict

The later years of the Renaissance were a time of intense religious zeal and conflict. The Roman Catholic Church and its leader, known as the pope, had dominated most of Western Europe for centuries. However, in the 15th and 16th centuries, their power was threatened by both Ottoman Turks, who were Muslims, and rebellious Christians who challenged the pope's authority.

Catholic Victory in Spain In the 8th century, Islamic invaders from North Africa, known as Moors, rapidly conquered most of what is now Spain. Over the next several centuries, Spanish Christians reconquered much of the land and set up several independent kingdoms. Two of the largest of these kingdoms united when **Isabella**, queen of Castile, and **Ferdinand**, king of Aragon, married in 1469. In 1492, under the leadership of Isabella and Ferdinand, the Spanish conquered the last Moorish stronghold in Spain, the city of Granada. In that year, the monarchs also funded **Christopher Columbus** on his historic first voyage. The uniting of Spain under Isabella and Ferdinand, the conquest of Granada, and the launching of Columbus's voyage signaled new leadership, hope, and power for Europeans who followed the Roman Catholic faith.

Protestant Revolt in Northern Europe In the early 1500s, certain Christians in Germany, England, France, Holland, and other northern European countries revolted against the authority of the pope in Rome. Their revolt was known as the **Protestant Reformation**. Conflict between Catholics and Protestants led to a series of religious wars that resulted in many millions of deaths in the 16th and 17th centuries. The conflict also caused the Roman Catholics of Spain and Portugal and the Protestants of England and Holland to want to spread their own versions of Christianity to people in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Thus, a religious motive for exploration and colonization was added to political and economic motives.

Expanding Trade

Economic motives for exploration grew out of a fierce competition among European kingdoms for increased trade with Africa, India, and China. In the past, merchants had traveled from the Italian city-state of Venice and the Byzantine city of Constantinople on a long, slow, expensive overland route all the way to eastern China. This land route to Asia had become blocked in 1453 when the Ottoman Turks seized control of Constantinople.

New Routes So the challenge to finding a new way to the rich Asian trade appeared to be by sailing either south along the West African coast and then east to China, or sailing west across the Atlantic Ocean. The Portuguese realized the route south and east was the shortest path. Voyages of exploration sponsored by Portugal's Prince **Henry the Navigator** eventually succeeded in opening up a long sea route around South Africa's Cape of Good Hope. In 1498, the Portuguese sea captain Vasco da Gama was the first European to reach India via this route. By this time, Columbus had attempted what he mistakenly believed would be a shorter route to Asia.

Slave Trading Since ancient times people in Europe, Africa, and Asia had enslaved people captured in wars. In the 15th century, the Portuguese began trading for enslaved people from West Africa. They used the enslaved workers on newly established sugar plantations on the Madeira and Azores islands off the African coast. Producing sugar with enslaved labor was so profitable that when Europeans later established colonies in the Americas, they used a similar system there.

Developing Nation-States

Europe was also changing politically in the 15th century.

- Small kingdoms were uniting into larger ones. For example, Castile and Aragon united to form the core of the modern country of Spain.
- Enormous multiethnic empires, such as the sprawling Holy Roman Empire in central Europe, were beginning to break up. For example, most of the small states that united to form the modern country of Germany in 1871 were once part of the Holy Roman Empire.

Replacing the small kingdoms and the multiethnic empires were **nation-states**, countries in which the majority of people shared both a common culture and common loyalty toward a central government. The monarchs of the emerging **nation-states**, such as Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain; Prince Henry the Navigator of Portugal; and similar monarchs of France, England, and the Netherlands depended on trade to bring in needed revenues and on the church to justify their right to rule.

Dividing the Americas

The Western European monarchs used their power to search for riches abroad and to spread the influence of their version of Christianity to new overseas dominions. This led to competition for control of land in the Americas.

Spanish and Portuguese Claims Spain and Portugal were the first European kingdoms to claim territories in the Americas. Their claims overlapped, leading to disputes. The Catholic monarchs of the two countries turned to the pope to resolve their differences. In 1493, the pope drew a vertical, north-south line on a world map, called the *line of demarcation*. The pope granted Spain all lands to the west of the line and Portugal all lands to the east.

In 1494, Spain and Portugal moved the pope's line a few degrees to the west and signed an agreement called the **Treaty of Tordesillas**. The line passed through what is now the country of Brazil. This treaty, together with Portuguese explorations, established Portugal's claim to Brazil. Spain claimed the rest of the Americas. However, other European countries soon challenged these claims.

English Claims England's earliest claims to territory in the Americas rested on the voyages of John Cabot, an Italian sea captain who sailed under contract to England's King Henry VII. Cabot explored the coast of Newfoundland in 1497.

EUROPEAN LAND CLAIMS IN NORTH AMERICA IN THE 1600s

England, however, did not immediately follow up Cabot's discoveries with other expeditions of exploration and settlement. Other issues preoccupied England's monarchy in the 1500s, most importantly the religious conflict that followed Henry VIII's break with the Roman Catholic Church.

Later in the 16th century, England took more interest in distant affairs. In the 1570s and 1580s, under Queen Elizabeth I, England challenged Spanish shipping in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Sir Francis Drake, for example, attacked Spanish ships, seized the gold and silver that they carried, and even attacked Spanish settlements on the coast of Peru. Another English adventurer, Sir Walter Raleigh, attempted to establish a colonial settlement at **Roanoke Island** off the North Carolina coast in 1587, but the venture failed.

French Claims The French monarchy first showed interest in exploration in 1524 when it sponsored a voyage by an Italian navigator, Giovanni da Verrazzano. Hoping to find a northwest passage leading through the Americas to Asia, Verrazzano explored part of North America's eastern coast, including the New York harbor. French claims to American territory were also based on the voyages of Jacques Cartier (1534–1542), who explored the St. Lawrence River extensively.

Like the English, the French were slow to develop colonies across the Atlantic. During the 1500s, the French monarchy was preoccupied with European wars as well as with internal religious conflict between Roman Catholics and French Protestants known as Huguenots. Only in the next century did France develop a strong interest in following up its claims to North American land.

REFLECT ON THE LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Explain what supported and motivated European exploration and colonization in the New World.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

Atlantic Trade (WOR)
gunpowder
sailing compass
printing press
Isabella and Ferdinand
Christopher Columbus
Henry the Navigator
Treaty of Tordesillas
Roanoke Island

Identity & Politics (NAT, PLC)
Protestant Reformation
nation-states

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Questions 1–3 refer to the following excerpt.

> "I marvel not a little, right worshipful, that since the first discovery of America (which is now full four score and ten years), after so great conquests and plannings of the Spaniards and Portuguese there, that we of England could never have the grace to set fast footing in such fertile and temperate places as are left as yet unpossessed of them. But . . . I conceive great hope that the time approacheth and now is that we of England may share and part stakes . . . in part of America and other regions as yet undiscovered. . . .
>
> Yea, if we would behold with the eye of pity how all our prisons are pestered and filled with able men to serve their country, which for small robberies are daily hanged up in great numbers, . . . we would hasten . . . the deducting [conveying] of some colonies of our superfluous people into these temperate and fertile parts of America, which being within six weeks' sailing of England, are yet unpossessed by any Christians, and seem to offer themselves unto us, stretching nearer unto Her Majesty's dominions than to other parts of Europe."
>
> Richard Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages Touching the Discovery of America and the Islands Adjacent,* 1582

1. Which of the following would best explain the British failure to follow the Spanish and Portuguese in exploring the New World?
   (A) Lack of British explorers
   (B) Development of British colonies in Asia
   (C) Domestic challenges to the crown within England
   (D) Establishment of the Church of England

2. Which of the following would eventually become a more important motivation for colonists than the ones suggested in the excerpt?
   (A) The desire for religious freedom
   (B) The hope of finding gold and silver
   (C) The loyalty of members of the nobility
   (D) The success of merchants and traders

3. According to the excerpt, which of the following areas is the most likely region that the British would colonize?
   (A) North Atlantic coast
   (B) West Indies
   (C) Southern Florida
   (D) Central America

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTION

Use complete sentences; an outline or bulleted list alone is not acceptable.

1. Answer (a), (b), and (c).
   (a) Briefly explain ONE specific cause that led to European colonization in the Americas during the 15th and 16th centuries.
   (b) Briefly explain ONE additional cause that led to European colonization in the Americas during the 15th and 16th centuries.
   (c) Briefly explain ONE specific effect that resulted from European colonization in the Americas during the 15th and 16th centuries.

Topic 1.4

Columbian Exchange, Spanish Exploration, and Conquest

In 1491, the world was in many of its aspects and characteristics a minimum of two worlds—the New World, of the Americas, and the Old World, consisting of Eurasia and Africa. Columbus brought them together, and almost immediately and continually ever since, we have had an exchange.

Alfred W. Crosby, historian and geographer, 2011

Learning Objective: Explain causes of the Columbian Exchange and its effect on Europe and the Americas during the period after 1492.

Columbus's purpose in sailing westward in the 1490s was to find a sea route to the lucrative trade with Asia, which had been limited by a long and dangerous land route. The eventual impact of what Columbus found was of far greater importance.

Christopher Columbus

As mentioned in the previous topic, 1.3, changing economic, political, and social conditions in Europe combined to support new efforts to expand. Exploration across the seas was specifically supported by the improvements in shipbuilding and in navigation with better compasses and mapmaking. These factors all helped shape the ambitions of many to explore.

Plans to Reach Asia One of these explorers was from the Italian city of Genoa, Christopher Columbus. He spent eight years seeking financial support for his plan to sail west from Europe to the "Indies." Finally, in 1492, he succeeded in winning the backing of Isabella and Ferdinand. The two Spanish monarchs were then at the height of their power, having just defeated the Moors in Granada. They agreed to outfit three ships and to make Columbus governor, admiral, and viceroy of all the lands that he would claim for Spain.

After sailing from the Canary Islands on September 6, Columbus landed on an island in the Bahamas on October 12. His success in reaching lands on the other side of the ocean brought him a burst of glory in Spain. But three subsequent voyages across the Atlantic were disappointing—he found little gold, few spices, and no simple path to China and India.

The Columbian Exchange

Europeans and the original inhabitants of the Americas had developed vastly different cultures over the millennia. The contact between them resulted in the Columbian Exchange, a transfer of plants, animals, and germs from one side of the Atlantic to the other for the first time. These exchanges, biological and cultural, permanently changed the entire world. Never again would people live in isolation from the other hemisphere.

Europeans learned about many new plants and foods, including beans, corn, sweet and white potatoes, tomatoes, and tobacco. These food items transformed the diet of people throughout Eurasia and touched off rapid population growth in regions from Ireland to West Africa to eastern China. Europeans also contracted a new disease, syphilis.

People in the Americas learned about sugar cane, bluegrasses, pigs, and **horses**, as well as new technology, such as the wheel, iron implements, and guns. But while the Columbian Exchange led to population growth in Europe, Africa, and Asia, it had the opposite effect in the Americas. Native Americans had no immunity to the germs and the **diseases** brought by Europeans, such as **smallpox** and **measles**. As a result the native population declined rapidly in the first century after contact. In Mexico, the native population declined from around 22 million in 1492 to around 4 million by the mid-16th century.

The Rise of Capitalism

In Europe, population growth and access to new resources encouraged trade, which led to economic, political, and social changes. The medieval system of feudalism, a system in which monarchs granted land to nobles in exchange for military service, declined. In its place rose **capitalism**, an economic system in which control of capital (money and machinery) became more important than control of land. As trade increased, commerce became increasingly important, and political power shifted from large landowners to wealthy merchants.

One reason trade increased was that Europeans were eager to gain access to the riches of the Americas, Africa, and Asia. A single successful trade expedition could make the individual who financed the voyage very wealthy. However, ocean voyages were expensive and dangerous. One bad storm could destroy all the ships in an expedition. To finance trade voyages more safely, Europeans developed a new type of enterprise, the **joint-stock company**, a business owned by a large number of investors. If a voyage failed, investors lost only what they had invested. By reducing individual risk, joint-stock companies encouraged investment, thereby promoting economic growth.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: *WAS COLUMBUS A GREAT HERO?*

When Columbus died in 1506, he still believed that he had found a western route to Asia. However, many Spaniards realized he had not. Nor had he found gold and spices. They viewed him as a failure. Even the land that he had explored was named for someone else, Amerigo Vespucci.

Columbus then became more honored. Scholars praised his skills as a navigator and his daring. He traveled where nobody else had ever dared to venture. As early as 1828, Washington Irving wrote a popular biography extolling the explorer's virtues. The apex of Columbus's heroic reputation was reached in 1934 when President Franklin Roosevelt declared October 12 a national holiday.

Since the 1990s, however, historians have become more aware of the strength and diversity of indigenous cultures and the devastating impact of contact with Europeans. As a result, several biographies have revised their view of Columbus, taking a more critical look at him.

A Fortunate Navigator Some have argued that Columbus was simply at the right place at the right time. Europeans at the end of the 15th century were eager to find a water route to Asia. If Columbus had not run into the Americas in 1492, some other explorer—perhaps Vespucci or Cabot—would have done so a few years later.

A Conqueror Some revisionists take a harsh view of Columbus, regarding him not as a discoverer but as a conqueror. They portray him as a religious fanatic who sought to convert the American natives to Christianity and kill those who resisted.

Response to the Critics Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. argued that Columbus's chief motivation was neither greed nor ambition—it was the challenge of the unknown. Others pointed out that, while Columbus brought deadly diseases to the Americas, the costs of contact were partially offset by positive results such as the development of democracy.

Historians will continue to debate the nature of Columbus's achievement. As with other historical questions, distinguishing between fact and fiction and separating a writer's personal biases from objective reality are difficult. One conclusion is inescapable: As a result of Columbus's voyages, world history took a sharp turn in a new direction. People are still living with the consequences of this interaction.

Support an Argument *Explain two perspectives on Columbus's role in the European expansion in the Americas.*

REFLECT ON THE LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. How did the Columbian Exchange develop, and what was its impact on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean?

KEY TERMS BY THEME

Exchange & Interaction (WXT, GEO)	smallpox, measles
horses	capitalism
diseases	joint-stock company

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Questions 1–2 refer to the following excerpt.

> "Apart from his navigational skills, what most set Columbus apart from other Europeans of his day were not the things that he believed, but the intensity with which he believed in them and the determination with which he acted upon those beliefs. . . .
>
> Columbus was, in most respects, merely an especially active and dramatic embodiment of the European—and especially the Mediterranean—mind and soul of his time: a religious fanatic obsessed with the conversion, conquest, or liquidation of all non-Christians; a latter-day Crusader in search of personal wealth and fame, who expected the enormous and mysterious world he had found to be filled with monstrous races inhabiting wild forests, and with golden people living in Eden."
>
> David E. Stannard, historian, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World,* 1992

1. According to Stannard, which of the following most accurately describes the context in which Columbus lived?

(A) Europeans believed they should spread Christianity to people in other parts of the world.

(B) Europeans viewed their culture and the cultures of other people as very similar.

(C) Europeans were the wealthiest people in the world and considered themselves "golden."

(D) Europeans assumed that a continent existed that they had no contact with.

2. Evidence that would modify or refute the view of Columbus expressed by Stannard in this excerpt would include

(A) statements by Spaniards in the late 16th century who believed that they should not try to convert people to Christianity

(B) excerpts from letters by Columbus indicating that he hoped his ventures would make him wealthy

(C) descriptions of Native Americans by other European explorers that were negative

(D) examples of long-term benefits for people in Europe and Asia that resulted from the voyages by Columbus

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTION

1. "The New World provided soils that were very suitable for the cultivation of a variety of Old World products, like sugar and coffee. The increased supply lowered the prices of these products significantly, making them affordable to the general population for the first time in history. The production of these products also resulted in large inflows of profits back to Europe, which some have argued fueled the Industrial Revolution and the rise of Europe. . . .

   The exchange also had some extremely negative impacts. Native American populations were decimated by Old World diseases. This depopulation along with the production of valuable Old World crops . . . fueled the demand for labor that gave rise to the transatlantic slave trade. The result was the forced movement of over twelve million slaves from Africa to the Americas and devastating political, social, and economic consequences for the African continent."

   Nathan Nunn and Nancy Qian, *The Columbian Exchange*, 2010

   "Most dramatically, the Columbian Exchange transformed farming and human diets. This change is often so culturally ingrained that we take it for granted…

   Despite the transport of new killer diseases, including the emergence of deadly syphilis in Europe and Asia, which was linked to trade with the Americas, the Columbian Exchange eventually allowed more people to live off the land. These newly available plants and animals led to the single largest improvement in farm productivity since the original agricultural revolution. The results of different peoples' efforts in domesticating and refining crops over thousands of years were now available and being adopted worldwide."

   Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, *Atlantic*, August 24, 2018

   Using the excerpts above, answer (a), (b), and (c).

   (a) Briefly describe ONE important difference between Nunn and Qian's and Lewis and Maslin's historical interpretations of the Columbian Exchange.

   (b) Briefly explain how ONE specific historical event, development, or circumstance from the period 1491–1607 that is not specifically mentioned in the excerpts could be used to support Nunn and Qian's argument.

   (c) Briefly explain how ONE specific historical event, development, or circumstance from the period 1491–1607 that is not specifically mentioned in the excerpts could be used to support Lewis and Maslin's argument.

Topic 1.5

Labor, Slavery, and Caste in the Spanish Colonial System

Know ye that I have given permission . . . to take to the Indies, the islands and the mainland of the ocean sea already discovered or to be discovered, four thousand negro slaves both male and female, provided that they be Christians.

Emperor Charles V of Spain, colonial charter, August 18, 1518

Learning Objective: Explain how the growth of the Spanish Empire in North America shaped the development of social and economic structures over time.

Spanish dominance in the Americas was based on more than a papal ruling and a treaty. The new empire began with ambitious and skilled leaders in Ferdinand and Isabella. With its adventurous explorers and conquerors (called **conquistadores**) and the labor provided by Indians and enslaved Africans, Spain rapidly expanded its wealth and power.

Spanish Exploration and Conquest

Feats such as the journey across the Isthmus of Panama to the Pacific Ocean by Vasco Núñez de Balboa, the circumnavigation of the world by one of Ferdinand Magellan's ships (Magellan died before completing the trip), the conquests of the Aztecs in Mexico by **Hernán Cortés**, and the conquest of the Incas in Peru by **Francisco Pizarro** secured Spain's initial supremacy in the Americas.

The conquistadores sent ships loaded with gold and silver back to Spain from Mexico and Peru. They increased the gold supply in Spain, making it the richest and most powerful kingdom in Europe. Spain's success encouraged other states to turn to the Americas in search of gold and power.

Indian Labor In Mexico and Peru, the Spanish encountered the well-organized and populous Aztec and Inca empires. Even after diseases killed most natives, millions survived. The Spanish incorporated the surviving Indians into their own empire. To control them, the Spanish used the **encomienda** system in which Spain's king granted natives who lived on a tract of land to individual Spaniards. These Indians were forced to farm or work in the mines. The fruits of their labors went to the Spanish, who in turn had to "care" for the Indians.

Enslaved African Labor On their sugar plantations on islands off the African coast, the Portuguese had already shown that using enslaved Africans to grow crops could be profitable. They provided a model for other Europeans. The Spanish, to add to their labor force and to replace Indians who died from diseases and brutality, began trading with African partners who could supply enslaved people. The Spanish imported people under the **asiento** system, which required colonists to pay a tax to the Spanish king on each enslaved person they imported to the Americas.

As other Europeans established American colonies, they also imported enslaved Africans in large numbers. During the colonial era, more Africans than Europeans crossed the Atlantic to the Americas. Before the transatlantic **slave trade** ended in the late 1800s, slave traders sent between 10 million and 15 million enslaved people from Africa. Between 10 percent and 15 percent died on the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, called the **Middle Passage**.

African Resistance Though transported thousands of miles from their homelands and brutally repressed, Africans resisted slavery in multiple ways. They often ran away, sabotaged work, or revolted. Further, they maintained aspects of African culture, particularly in music, religion, and folkways.

Spanish Caste System

The combination of Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans made the Spanish colonies ethnically diverse. In addition, since most Spanish colonists were single men rather than families, many had children with native or African women. The result was that the Spanish colonies included many people with mixed heritage. In response, the Spanish developed a caste system that defined the status of people in the colonies by their heritage:

- At the top were pure-blooded Spaniards.
- In the middle were several levels of people ordered according to their mixture of European, Native American, and African heritage.
- At the bottom were people of pure Indian or Black heritage.

REFLECT ON THE LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. How was the society and economy of North America affected by the expansion of the Spanish Empire?

KEY TERMS BY THEME

Labor Systems (WXT)	Identity and Politics (POL)	Atlantic Trade (WXT)
encomienda	conquistadores	slave trade
asiento	Hernán Cortés	Middle Passage
slavery	Francisco Pizarro	

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Questions 1–3 refer to the following excerpt.

> "The province of Quivira is 950 leagues from Mexico. Where I reached it, it is in the fortieth degree [of latitude]. The country itself is the best I have ever seen for producing all the products of Spain. . . . I have treated the natives of this province, and all the others whom I found wherever I went, as well as was possible, agreeably to what Your Majesty had commanded, and they have received no harm in any way from me or from those who went in my company. I remained twenty-five days in this province of Quivira, so as to see and explore the country and also to find out whether there was anything beyond which could be of service to Your Majesty, because the guides who had brought me had given me an account of other provinces beyond this. And what I am sure of is that there is not any gold nor any other metal in all that country."
>
> Francisco Coronado, Spanish conquistador,
> *Travels in Quivira*, c. 1542

1. Which of the following best summarizes Coronado's goal in exploring Mexico as expressed in this excerpt?
   (A) To inform the natives about Spain and its culture
   (B) To learn from the native inhabitants in the region
   (C) To spread Roman Catholic Christianity in the region
   (D) To find natural resources that might enrich the king

2. The activities described in this excerpt were similar to those of other Spanish and Portuguese explorers in the Americas in the 16th century because they depended primarily on the support of
   (A) merchants and fur traders
   (B) the Catholic Church
   (C) monarchs
   (D) impoverished Europeans

3. Based on the excerpt, one difference between Columbus and Coronado was that Coronado had little interest in
   (A) enriching the king
   (B) finding gold and silver
   (C) converting the natives to Christianity
   (D) searching for new routes to the Far East

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

Use complete sentences; an outline or bulleted list alone is not acceptable.

1. "I want the natives to develop a friendly attitude toward us because I know that they are a people who can be made free and converted to our Holy Faith more by love than by force. I therefore gave red caps to some and glass beads to others. They hung the beads around their necks, along with some other things of slight value that I gave them. . . . I warned my men to take nothing from the people without giving something in exchange."

   Christopher Columbus, *Log*, October 12, 1492

   Using the excerpt above, answer (a), (b), and (c).

   (a) Briefly explain ONE expectation about Native Americans that caused Columbus to issue this statement to his men.

   (b) Briefly explain ONE effect that this statement by Columbus would likely have on a powerful group in Spain, other than the monarchy.

   (c) Briefly explain ONE effect of contact between Europeans and the first inhabitants of America that is not consistent with the above passage.

2. Answer (a), (b), and (c).

   (a) Briefly explain ONE specific example of how the Spanish managed their American colonial empire during the 15th and 16th centuries.

   (b) Briefly explain ONE specific example of how a non-Spanish individual or country influenced Spain's American colonial empire during the 15th and 16th centuries.

   (c) Briefly explain ONE specific example of the diversity that developed in Spain's American colonial empire during the 15th and 16th centuries.

3. Answer (a), (b), and (c).

   (a) Briefly explain ONE specific example of a benefit that the Native Americans gained from the Spanish settlements during the 15th and 16th centuries.

   (b) Briefly explain ONE specific example of a negative effect on Native Americans caused by the Spanish settlements during the 15th and 16th centuries.

   (c) Briefly explain ONE specific factor that influenced the Spanish in their treatment of Native Americans during the 15th and 16th centuries.

Topic 1.6

Cultural Interactions in the Americas

The Spanish have a perfect right to rule these barbarians of the New World and the adjacent islands, who in prudence, skill, virtues, and humanity are as inferior to the Spanish as children to adults, or women to men.

Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, Spanish theologian, 1547

Learning Objective: Explain how and why European and Native American perspectives of others developed and changed in the period.

History is filled with experiences of contact between diverse people, such as the Romans and Africans in the Classical Era, or the Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages. Often these conflicts were violent, but they were in small regions and lasted no more than a couple centuries. The contact between Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans in the Americas also featured violence, but the interaction was on a much larger scale for a much longer time.

Europeans and Native Americans held conflicting worldviews. For example, most Europeans believed in a single god, while most Native Americans honored many deities. European women had little role in public life, while Native American women in some tribes held decision-making positions. Europeans used legal documents to establish the right to plow a field or hunt in a forest. Native Americans relied more on tradition to make land use decisions.

European Treatment of Native Americans

The Europeans who colonized North and South America generally viewed Native Americans as inferior people who could be exploited for economic gain, converted to Christianity, and used as military allies. However, Europeans used various approaches for ruling Native Americans and operating colonies.

Spanish Policy

The Spanish overwhelmingly subjugated Native Americans. However, Spanish scholars also debated the status of Native Americans and the treatment of them.

Bartolomé de Las Casas One European who dissented from the views of most Europeans toward Native Americans was a Spanish priest named

Bartolomé de Las Casas. Though he had owned land and slaves in the West Indies and had fought in wars against the Indians, he eventually became an advocate for better treatment for Indians. He persuaded the king to institute the **New Laws of 1542**. These laws ended Indian slavery, halted forced Indian labor, and began to end the encomienda system that kept the Indians in serfdom. Conservative Spaniards, eager to keep the encomienda system, responded and successfully pushed the king to repeal parts of the New Laws.

Valladolid Debate The debate over the role for Indians in the Spanish colonies came to a head in a formal debate in 1550–1551 in Valladolid, Spain. On one side, Las Casas argued that the Indians were completely human and morally equal to Europeans, so enslaving them was not justified. On the other side, another priest, **Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda**, argued that Indians were less than human. Hence, they benefited from serving the Spaniards in the encomienda system. Neither side clearly persuaded the entire audience. Though Las Casas was unable to gain equal treatment for Native Americans, he established the basic arguments on behalf of justice for Indians.

English Policy

Unlike the Spanish, the English settled in areas with no large native empires that could provide forced labor. Further, when English colonists arrived in the 1600s, European diseases had already dramatically reduced the indigenous population. In addition, many English colonists came in families rather than as single young men, so marriage with natives was less common.

Initially, at least in Massachusetts, the English and the American Indians coexisted, traded, and shared ideas. American Indians taught the settlers how to grow new crops such as corn (maize) and showed them how to hunt in the forests. They traded furs for an array of English manufactured goods, including iron tools and weapons, that they found useful.

But peaceful relations soon gave way to conflict and warfare. Most English showed no respect for American Indian cultures, which they viewed as "savage." American Indians saw their way of life threatened as the English seized land to support their growing population. The English occupied the land and forced the small, scattered tribes they encountered to move away from the coast to inland territories. They expelled the natives rather than subjugating them.

French Policy

The French, looking for furs and converts to Catholicism, viewed American Indians as potential economic and military allies. Compared to the Spaniards and the English, the French maintained good relations with the tribes they encountered. Seeking to control the fur trade, the French built trading posts throughout the St. Lawrence Valley, the Great Lakes region, and along the Mississippi River. At these posts, they exchanged French goods for beaver pelts and other furs collected by American Indians. Because the French had few colonists, farms, or towns, they posed less threat to the native population than

did other Europeans. In addition, French soldiers assisted the Huron people in fighting their traditional enemy, the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee).

Survival Strategies by Native Americans

As European settlements expanded, Native Americans responded to protect their cultures. One strategy was to ally with one European power or another. For example, in Mexico, several tribes allied with the Spanish to help them win their freedom from the Aztecs in the 16th century. Later, in the Ohio River Valley, the Delawares and the Shawnees allied closely with the French against English encroachment on their land.

Other tribes simply migrated west to get away from settlers, though this often led them into conflict with Native Americans already living in a region. The conflicts reflected the strong tribal loyalty that Native Americans felt. Since they did not identify as part of a larger group that included all tribes, European settlers pushing westward rarely faced a unified response from Native Americans. Only later would the shared desire to resist European power lead people to identify as Native Americans as well as members of a particular tribe. Regardless of how they dealt with the European invasion, Native Americans would never be able to return to the life they had known prior to 1492.

The Role of Africans in America

Africans contributed a third cultural tradition in the Americas. Their experience growing rice resulted in rice becoming an important crop in the colonies of South Carolina and Louisiana. They brought musical rhythms and styles of singing that shaped the development of music throughout the Americas. They also introduced European settlers to the banjo. By the 19th century, the banjo would be closely associated with the culture of the southeastern United States.

Europeans justified slavery in many ways. Some cited passages from the Bible to support their belief that slavery had always existed and was approved by God. As slavery became exclusively for Africans, Europeans began to argue that Africans were biologically inferior, so enslaving them was acceptable. This was similar to the argument used by de Sepúlveda regarding Native Americans.

REFLECT ON THE LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Describe the evolution in the views of the Europeans and Native Americans toward each during the period of European colonization.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

Identity and Politics (NAT, POL)	**Values and Attitudes (SOC)**	Valladolid Debate
New Laws of 1542	Bartolomé de Las Casas	Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Questions 1–2 refer to the following excerpt.

> "Concerning the treatment of Native American workers: When they were allowed to go home, they often found it deserted and had no other recourse than to go out into the woods to find food and to die. When they fell ill, which was very frequently because they are a delicate people unaccustomed to such work, the Spaniards did not believe them and pitilessly called them lazy dogs, and kicked and beat them; and when illness was apparent they sent them home as useless, giving them some cassava for the twenty- to eighty-league [about 60 to 240 miles] journey. They would go then, falling into the first stream and dying there in desperation; others would hold on longer, but very few ever made it home. I sometimes came upon dead bodies on my way, and upon others who were gasping and moaning in their death agony."
>
> Bartolomé de Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indian, c.* 1550

1. How did Las Casas's attitudes compare to those of most Europeans?
   (A) He was more sympathetic toward the suffering of Indians.
   (B) He was more critical of Indians for causing their own problems.
   (C) He was more focused on how Indians treated Europeans.
   (D) He was very typical in his attitudes toward Indians.

2. Las Casas was primarily trying to influence
   (A) the monarchs of Spain who shaped colonial policies
   (B) the religious leaders in Europe who were not Roman Catholics
   (C) the conquistadores in the colonies who were moving into new areas
   (D) the Native Americans who were reacting to the Spanish colonists

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTION

Use complete sentences; an outline or bulleted list alone is not acceptable.

1. Answer (a), (b), and (c).
   (a) Briefly explain ONE specific effect of Spain's policy toward Native Americans during the period 1492–1607.
   (b) Briefly explain ONE specific effect of a policy of a European country other than Spain toward Native Americans during the period 1492–1607.
   (c) Briefly explain ONE specific reaction of Native Americans to European policies during the period 1492–1607.

Topic 1.7

Causation in Period 1

Learning Objective: Explain the effects of the development of transatlantic voyages from 1491 to 1607.

The reasoning skill of "causation" is the suggested focus for evaluating the content of this period. As explained in the contextualization introduction to Period 1, there are many factors to consider in the broad topic of European encounters in the Americas in the 15th and 16th centuries. One needs to be able to *describe what caused* the Native Americans to develop diverse societies across the enormous and varied lands of North America. This appreciation of the status of Native Americans during this period will help to *explain the specific developments* when the Europeans came to explore what they saw as a "new world."

A number of factors had come together to explain the causes of the European explorations during this particular period. For example, both desires to spread Christianity and desires for economic gain. However, not all causes are equally significant. One task of a historian is to weigh the evidence to decide how much emphasis to place on each of these various causes. Among the most common differences among historians are debates over whether one cause was more important than another.

Note that causation implies that an event or development had an effect. The results of the contact are viewed by some as the Columbian Exchange, which *explain both the short- and long-term* impact not only on both sides of the Atlantic but on people throughout the world. Given the many factors involved, one can argue as to the *historically significant effects* on the various peoples involved on both sides of the Atlantic.

QUESTIONS ABOUT CAUSATION

1. Explain the factors that resulted in various Native American groups developing their own unique cultures.
2. Explain a significant development in Europe by the 15th and 16th centuries that caused a surge in exploration.
3. Explain the extent to which the Columbian Exchange had beneficial effects on both the Native Americans and Europeans.