Pre-Columbian Era

On a North American continent controlled by American Indians, contact among the peoples of Europe, the Americas, and West Africa created a new world.

- Before the arrival of Europeans, native populations in North America developed a wide variety of social, political, and economic structures based in part on interactions with the environment and each other.
- As settlers migrated and settled across the vast expanse of North America over time, they developed quite different and increasingly complex societies by adapting to and transforming their diverse environments.

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<th>Civilization &amp; social diversification</th>
<th>Aztec</th>
<th>Cahokia</th>
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Portugal, Spain & the Columbian Exchange

European overseas expansion resulted in the Columbian Exchange, a series of interactions and adaptations among societies across the Atlantic.

- The arrival of Europeans in the Western Hemisphere in the 15th and 16th centuries triggered extensive demographic and social changes on both sides of the Atlantic.
- Spanish and Portuguese exploration and conquest of the Americas led to widespread deadly epidemics, the emergence of racially mixed populations, and a caste system defined by an intermixture among Spanish settlers, Africans, and Native Americans.
- Spanish and Portuguese traders reached West Africa and partnered with some African groups to exploit local resources and recruit slave labor for the Americas.

- The introduction of new crops and livestock by the Spanish had far-reaching effects on native settlement patterns, as well as on economic, social, and political development in the Western Hemisphere.
- Spain sought to establish tight control over the process of colonization in the Western Hemisphere and to convert and/or exploit the native population.
- In the economies of the Spanish colonies, Indian labor, used in the encomienda system to support plantation-based agriculture and extract precious metals and other resources, was gradually replaced by African slavery.
• European expansion into the Western Hemisphere caused intense social/religious, political, and economic competition in Europe and the promotion of empire building.
• European exploration and conquest were fueled by a desire for new sources of wealth, increased power and status, and converts to Christianity.
• The Spanish, supported by the bonded labor of the local Indians, expanded their mission settlements into California, providing opportunities for social mobility among enterprising soldiers and settlers that led to new cultural blending.
• New crops from the Americas stimulated European population growth, while new sources of mineral wealth facilitated the European shift from feudalism to capitalism.
• Improvements in technology and more organized methods for conducting international trade helped drive changes to economies in Europe and the Americas.

Leif Erikson  
Crusades  
Ottoman Empire  
Marco Polo  
Henry the Navigator  
Caravel  
Sextant  
African slave trade  
Slave “factories”  
Plantation system  
Chattel slavery  
Reconquista  
Nationalism  
Ferdinand & Isabella  
Christopher Columbus  
“Indies”

Treaty of Tordesillas, 1494  
Columbian (Intercontinental) Exchange  
Smallpox  
Horses  
Conquistadores  
“Gold, God & Glory”  
“Guns, Germs & Steel”  
Hernan Cortes  
Tenochtitlan  
Chinampa  
Moctezuma  
Francisco Pizarro  
Vasco Nunez Balboa  
Ferdinand Magellan  
Juan Ponce de Leon  
Francisco Coronado  
Hernando de Soto  
Encomienda  
Plantations  
Gold & silver mines  
Banking  
Capitalism
Cultural Change & Continuity

Contacts among American Indians, Africans, and Europeans challenged the worldviews of each group.

- European overseas expansion and sustained contacts with Africans and American Indians dramatically altered European views of social, political, and economic relationships among and between white and nonwhite peoples.
- With little experience dealing with people who were different from themselves, Spanish and Portuguese explorers poorly understood the native peoples they encountered in the Americas, leading to debates over how American Indians should be treated and how “civilized” these groups were compared to European standards.
- Spanish colonizing efforts in North America, particularly after the Pueblo Revolt, saw an accommodation with some aspects of American Indian culture; by contrast, conflict with American Indians tended to reinforce English colonists’ worldviews on land and gender roles.
- Many Europeans developed a belief in white superiority to justify their subjugation of Africans and American Indians.
- Native peoples and Africans in the Americas strove to maintain their political and cultural autonomy in the face of European challenges to their independence and core beliefs.
- European attempts to change American Indian beliefs and worldviews on basic social issues such as religion, gender roles and the family, and the relationship of people with the natural environment led to American Indian resistance and conflict.
- Continuing contact with Europeans increased the flow of trade goods and diseases into and out of native communities, stimulating cultural and demographic changes.
The Chesapeake & Southern Colonies

Unlike their European competitors, the English eventually sought to establish colonies based on agriculture, sending relatively large numbers of men and women to acquire land and populate their settlements, while having relatively hostile relationships with American Indians and establishing a system of racialized chattel slavery.

- The Chesapeake colonies and North Carolina relied on the cultivation of tobacco, a labor-intensive product based on white indentured servants and African chattel.
- The colonies along the southernmost Atlantic coast and the British islands in the West Indies took advantage of long growing seasons by using slave labor to develop economies based on staple crops; in some cases, enslaved Africans constituted the majority of the population.
- Migrants from within North America and around the world continued to launch new settlements in the West, creating new distinctive backcountry cultures and fueling social and ethnic tensions.

- The British–American system of slavery developed out of the economic, demographic, and geographic characteristics of the British-controlled regions of the New World.
- The abundance of land, a shortage of indentured servants, the lack of an effective means to enslave native peoples, and the growing European demand for colonial goods led to the emergence of the Atlantic slave trade.
- Reinforced by a strong belief in British racial and cultural superiority, the British system enslaved black people in perpetuity, altered African gender and kinship relationships in the colonies, and was one factor that led the British colonists into violent confrontations with native peoples.
- Africans developed both overt and covert means to resist the dehumanizing aspects of slavery.
- In spite of slavery, Africans’ cultural and linguistic adaptations to the Western Hemisphere resulted in varying degrees of cultural preservation and autonomy.

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The New England Colonies

The New England colonies, founded primarily by Puritans seeking to establish a community of like-minded religious believers, developed a close-knit, homogeneous society and — aided by favorable environmental conditions — a thriving mixed economy of agriculture and commerce.

- Puritan religious beliefs influenced the development of New England traditions including theocracy, education, patriarchy, industry, and democratic participation.
- Religious dogma and dissent caused conflicts in New England, but the primacy of religion in daily life faded as new generations were born in North America and the New England economy grew more prosperous.

- Unlike Spanish, French, and Dutch colonies, which accepted intermarriage and cross-racial sexual unions with native peoples (and, in Spain’s case, with enslaved Africans), English colonies attracted both males and females who rarely intermarried with either native peoples or Africans, leading to the development of a rigid racial hierarchy.

New England colonies: John Calvin, Predestination, Conversion, Visible saints, Puritans, Separatists, Mayflower, Mayflower Compact, Plymouth Colony, William Bradford, Massachusetts Bay Colony, Great Migration (Puritan/English), John Winthrop

“City upon a hill”
“Covenant community”
Town meetings
Direct (Athenian) democracy
Majority rule
Town commons
“Bible Commonwealth”
John Cotton
Protestant work ethic
Subsistence farming
Profit motive (limited profit)
Shipbuilding
“Sacred cod”
Paternalism & Patriarchy

Apprenticeship
Life expectancy in New England
Public education
New England Primer
Harvard College
Blue laws (sumptuary laws)
“God vs. Cod”
Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter
Dissenter/Heretic
Anne Hutchinson
Antinomianism
Roger Williams
Rhode Island
“The Sewer”/“Rogue’s Island”
Religious tolerance
The Middle Colonies

Differences in imperial goals, cultures, and the North American environments that different empires confronted led Europeans to develop diverse patterns of colonization.

- Along with other factors, environmental and geographical variations, including climate and natural resources, contributed to regional differences in what would become the British colonies.
- The demographically, religiously, and ethnically diverse middle colonies supported a flourishing export economy based on cereal crops.

- Several factors promoted Anglicization in the British colonies: the growth of autonomous political communities based on English models, the development of commercial ties and legal structures, the emergence of a trans-Atlantic print culture, Protestant evangelism, religious toleration, and the spread of European Enlightenment ideas.
Life & Liberty in the Colonies

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Colonial regional differences Colonial commonalities

Diversity vs. uniformity

Class structure

Race relations

Land ownership

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Unit Review: Essential Questions

- How did Native North Americans live before European contact?
- How were the lives of Native Americans as well as Europeans and Africans transformed by the arrival of the conquistadors in the Americas?
- Why did Europeans settle in the English colonies? How did their motivations influence their settlement patterns and colony structures?
- Why was slavery introduced into the colonies? And how did the institution of slavery influence European and African life in the colonies?
- To what extent did the colonies offer religious, political, social and economic freedom to their residents?
- How did the cultures of Europe, Africa, and the Americas interact in the colonies?
- How did bloodshed and conflicts reveal tensions in colonial society?
- To what extent did the colonial regions differ? In what ways were they similar?