

Aditya Patel

APUSH

Period 4

2 September 2020

HW 9/2

Focus Questions(pg.1):

4. Mercantilism was an economic policy practiced from 16th to 18th centuries which stated that there was finite wealth in the world. A nation's goal in society should be to increase its own wealth, at the cost of others. It would have to grow exports to other lands and decrease imports so that it would be bringing in money. This concept was closely related to bullionism, which theorized that only gold and silver determined a country's wealth. The Spanish practiced this theory by stealing gold and silver from the Americas in their early explorations.

Mercantilism also provided a commercial incentive to colonization, where nations would get resources from instead of competing countries and would also provide markets for goods. The English Navigation Acts of the 1660s were attempts to restrict trade of its colonies so that only England would benefit from the resources and market. Mercantilism was eventually proved inferior to *laissez-faire*, but was an important factor in the drive to create colonies in Europe.

5. The Columbian Exchange was a major moment in history where the New World and the Old World touched to exchange technology, crops, animals, resources and diseases. The agricultural exchange resulted in Europeans receiving maize, beans, tomatoes, and potatoes,

which became a staple in some European countries. The Native Americans also gained many agricultural benefits, such as sugar, bananas, cattle, and most importantly, the horse. The horse became an essential part of Native American life, after being reintroduced to North America. From the first meeting, Native Americans experienced demographic catastrophe at the hands of European and Old World diseases, losing up to 90% of their population. Native Americans were further suppressed by Spanish conquistadors such as Hernando Cortés, who looted and destroyed the people and cities in search of gold and silver. It is undeniable that the Columbian Exchange improved conditions in both worlds, but the Native Americans were definitely worse off afterwards.

Debating the Past(pg. 9,11):

3. A continuing argument within the historian community is the value or lack of value to “differing historical interpretations of ‘events.’” Over the course of history, people have put their opinions and twists on their history. I think that these interpretations are essential to understand historical events. Looking back from the present, seeing and noticing these interpretations helps us understand every time period better. For example, a historian in China currently wouldn’t dare criticize China’s reaction to the Tiananmen Square protests. Fifty years from now, people will know much more about the conditions of the historian’s time, and would still know about the Tiananmen Square Massacre, from other sources. I do think that each historian should do their best to stay impartial to their view on the past, but it is inevitable that some views are expressed in their documents and books, and these views aren’t detrimental, but valuable.

2. Prior to the 1960s, people across the world believed that the Native Americans had a very low population. In the 1830s, Native Americans claimed that their population was once as high as 16 million in North America. This was regarded as preposterous due to their low population. People more commonly estimated their population between one and eight million. However, a significant shift occurred in 1976 and the following decades, when the historians William McNeill and many other historians provided evidence and accounts of tribes facing extinction and massive depopulation. This is when many historians realised that the Native Americans were most likely devastated by European diseases such as measles and smallpox. Soon after this, the estimates of the North and South American populations increased from the single digits to between 10 and 112 millions across all of the Americas. The massive shift in the numbers directly resulted from the historians such as William McNeill and Alfred Crosby, who completely changed the conversation of the Pre-Columbian population of America.