

# European Colonization in the Americas

*How did Europeans colonize the Americas?*

## Introduction

With the exception of some Viking explorers around the end of the first millennium, Europeans had no knowledge of the people of the Americas, half a world away, or the land where they lived. To the west, they saw only a vast ocean.

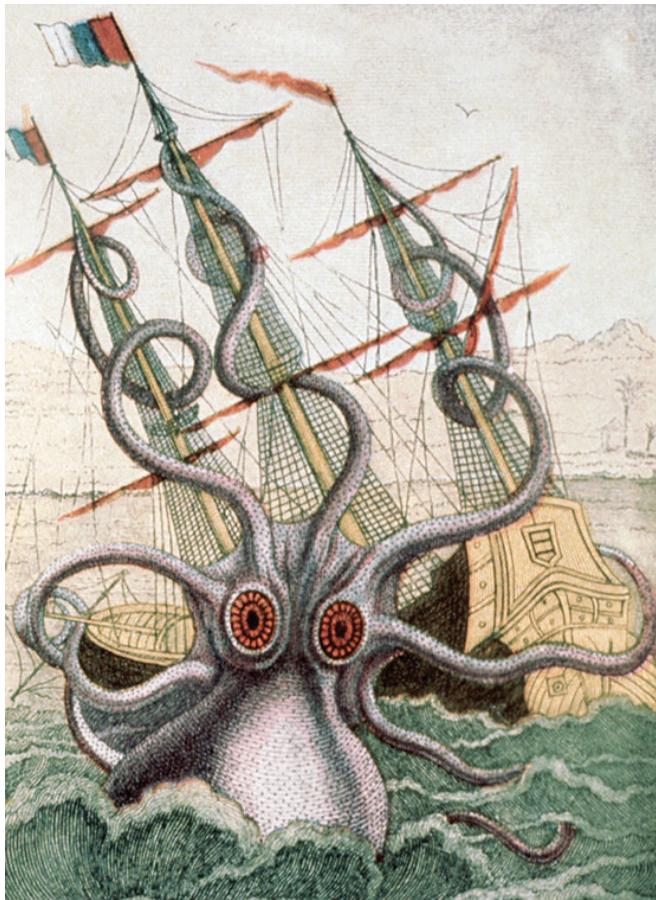
Europeans were interested in the riches of the lands that lay to the east. In the late 1200s, Marco Polo traveled through Asia with his father, a merchant and trader from Venice, Italy, in search of goods to further increase their wealth. Polo spent the following 17 years in China. When he returned to Venice, people were interested in his stories of "the Indies," as India and East Asia were known then.

A writer helped Polo pen his stories into a book, which described rich silks, rare spices, gold, jewels, and luxurious palaces. After his book was published, the few people in Europe who could read at that time were fascinated by his descriptions and wanted to acquire for themselves the riches Polo described. Polo's stories encouraged other Europeans to follow in his path and chart faster courses to Asia.

Some Europeans tried sailing to China by going around the southern tip of Africa, while others traveled west in search of another route. At the time, no one knew how long the westward route would take to reach Asia, or what else they would find on their way. Some feared sea monsters awaited them in the ocean.

In this lesson, you will learn about Christopher Columbus, who sailed west looking for a route to China. As you will see, his unexpected discovery of the American continents led to competition among European nations to explore and profit from these lands. You will also learn how Europeans established settlements on the American continents and, in the process, changed both Europe and the Americas.

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European explorers confronted many dangers and fears as they voyaged to new lands. Some believed that large monsters called krakens would attack their ships.

**Social Studies  
Vocabulary****colony****Columbian Exchange****conquistadors****coureurs de bois****missionaries****slavery****Vocabulary Cards Glossary**

## 1. Spain Starts an Empire

Marco Polo's book continued to be read over the next two centuries, a time of great change in Europe. The rediscovered writings of ancient Greeks and Romans inspired a new interest in learning and art. This period of lively new thinking has become known as the Renaissance, a word that means "rebirth."

During this time, the invention of the printing press made books, including Marco Polo's, more available. As Europeans learned about the world beyond Europe, they became eager to explore these far-off lands in hopes of finding wealth. Although Indigenous people lived in these places, Europeans took their land and resources and claimed the wealth for themselves while warring with Indigenous groups.

**Columbus's Discoveries** One of the people who was inspired by Marco Polo's writings was an Italian seaman named Christopher Columbus. After studying maps of the world, which at that time did not include the Americas, Columbus became convinced that the shortest route to the Indies lay to the west, across the Atlantic Ocean.

Columbus looked for someone who could pay for the ships and men he needed to test his idea. Eventually, he was able to convince King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to sponsor a voyage.

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In August 1492, Columbus sailed west with three small ships. After more than a month at sea, his sailors raised the cry of "Land!" The land turned out to be a small island in what we now call the Caribbean Sea.

Columbus was thrilled. In a later letter, he wrote, "I write this to tell you how in thirty-three days I sailed to the Indies with the fleet that the illustrious King and Queen ... gave me, where I discovered a great many islands, inhabited by numberless people." Mistakenly believing that he had reached the Indies, Columbus called these people Indians.

In reality, the islanders were native people who spoke a language called Taino (TIE-no). The Taino lived in a peaceful fishing community. Columbus believed the Taino were "so unsuspicious and so generous with what they possess, that no one who had not seen it would believe it."

Because the Taino had no written language, their reaction to the Europeans is unknown. While documents from Columbus's ship log say the Taino were friendly and welcoming, it is possible that the Taino were afraid of these new White people, who looked and spoke differently than they did.

Columbus made four trips to the Caribbean, as well as the continent of South America. He laid claim to all land in the name of Spain, though it was not his to take. Columbus died believing the land he took was Asia, though it was a world previously unknown to Europe—North and South America. Europeans called these continents the New World.

**The Columbian Exchange** The voyages of Columbus triggered a great transfer of people, plants, animals, and diseases back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean. This transfer is called the **Columbian Exchange**, which brought valuable new crops such as corn, potatoes, and squash to Europe. These foods greatly improved the diet of the average European. Although people in the Americas were introduced to wheat, rice, and **domesticated** animals, they mostly received disease and enslavement from the Europeans. It was an exchange that greatly favored the Europeans and devastated Indigenous people.

The Europeans who came to the Americas brought germs that led to outbreaks of smallpox and other deadly diseases among the Indigenous population. Historians estimate that in some areas, European diseases wiped out 90 percent of the native population.

**Europeans Bring Slavery to the Americas** When the Spanish and other Europeans arrived in the Americas, they enslaved Indigenous people. However, the death rate among Indigenous people was high due to disease, violence, and

harsh work conditions introduced by the Europeans. To ensure that they could continue exploiting the resources of the Americas, Europeans began enslaving Africans to replace the Indigenous people they had enslaved.

**Slavery** had existed around the world since ancient times. Often, people who were on the losing side in wars were enslaved, or treated as the property of their conquerors. The Trans-Saharan slave trade sent Africans to be enslaved in the Arab world beginning in the 7th century. By the late 1400s, European explorers in West Africa were trading guns and other goods for people captured and enslaved by African traders. Both the Maya and Aztec people practiced slavery, though they enslaved their own people.

Over the next three centuries, millions of Africans would be kidnapped and taken across the Atlantic on crowded, disease-infested ships. The voyage could last from several weeks to several months. Many died aboard the ship, and others jumped overboard, choosing death over enslavement in the Americas.

When the Africans arrived in the Americas, they were sold at auctions to the enslavers. Many perished from disease and overwork. Those who survived faced a lifetime of enslavement and forced labor.

**Cortés Conquers Mexico** After Columbus's voyages, Spain began sending soldiers called **conquistadors** (kahn-KEES-tah-dors), across the Atlantic. Their mission was to conquer a vast empire for Spain, regardless of whether the land they found belonged to others.

In 1519, Hernán Cortés (ehr-NAHN kohr-TEHZ) arrived in Mexico with horses and 500 soldiers. There, he heard about the powerful Aztecs who ruled much of Mexico. When Cortés and his men reached the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán (tay-noch-teet-LAN), they could not believe their eyes. A beautiful city seemed to rise out of a sparkling lake. The Aztec architects had built amazing stone structures and established their own civilization long before the Spanish had arrived to conquer their land and people.

The Aztecs were unsure what to make of the strangers. They had never seen men dressed in metal armor and riding horses. Some mistook Cortés for the great Aztec god Quetzalcoatl (kwet-zul-kuh-WAH-tul) and welcomed him as a hero. They would soon realize their mistake.

The Spanish brought smallpox, and the disease killed large numbers of Aztec warriors. Cortés took advantage of their reduced numbers and destroyed Tenochtitlán. The Spanish then used its stones to build Mexico City and made it the capital of a new Spanish empire, New Spain.

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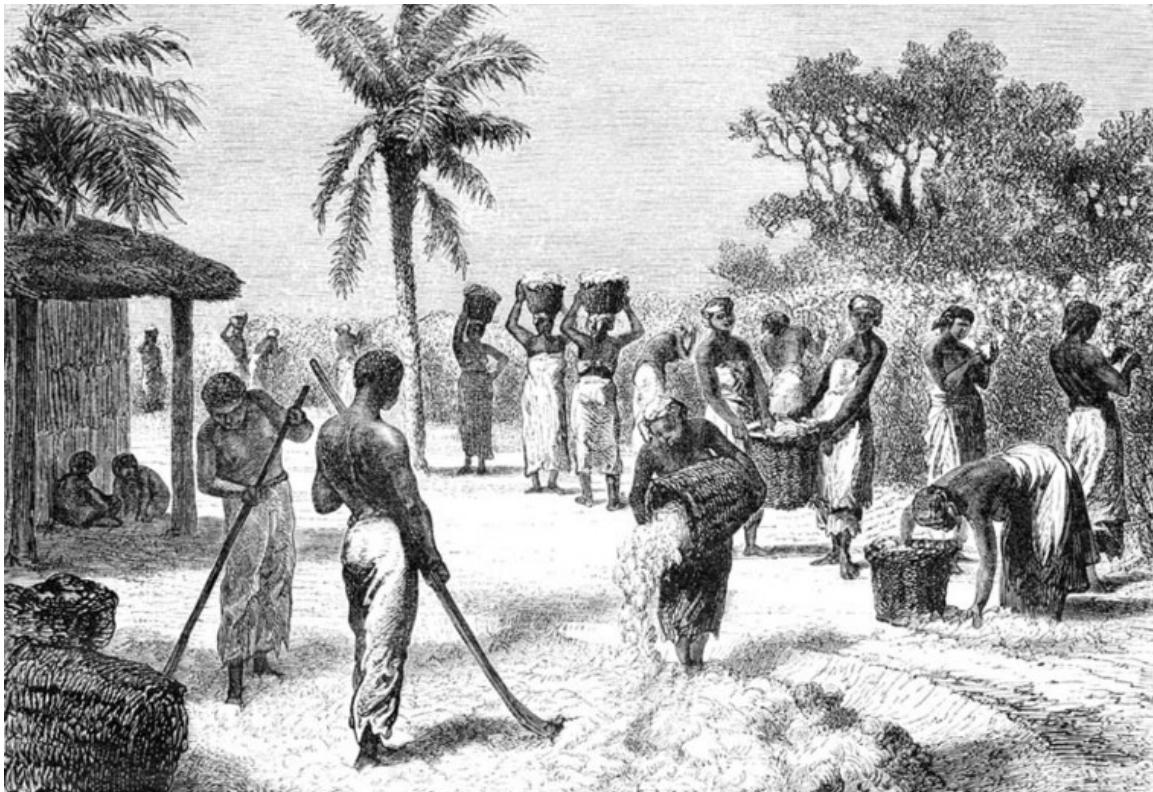
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**Pizarro Conquers Peru** Smallpox also helped another Spanish conquistador, Francisco Pizarro (fran-SIS-co pi-ZAR-oh), conquer an empire in South America. In 1532, Pizarro encountered the powerful Inca Empire in present-day Peru. Smallpox had reached Peru before Pizarro, killing thousands of Inca. The Inca were also embroiled in a civil war, which left the empire badly divided.

With the division created by the Incan civil war, Pizarro entered the Inca Empire's capital city, Cuzco. Pizarro demanded that the Inca ruler, Atahualpa (ah-tuh-WAHL-puh) convert to Christianity and swear loyalty to Spain. When Atahualpa refused, Pizarro took him hostage but promised to release him in exchange for gold. To save their ruler, the Incas filled the equivalent of three rooms with gold and silver treasures. Pizarro murdered Atahualpa anyway and conquered the Inca Empire. From there, the Spanish conquered most of the Indigenous people and their lands throughout South America.



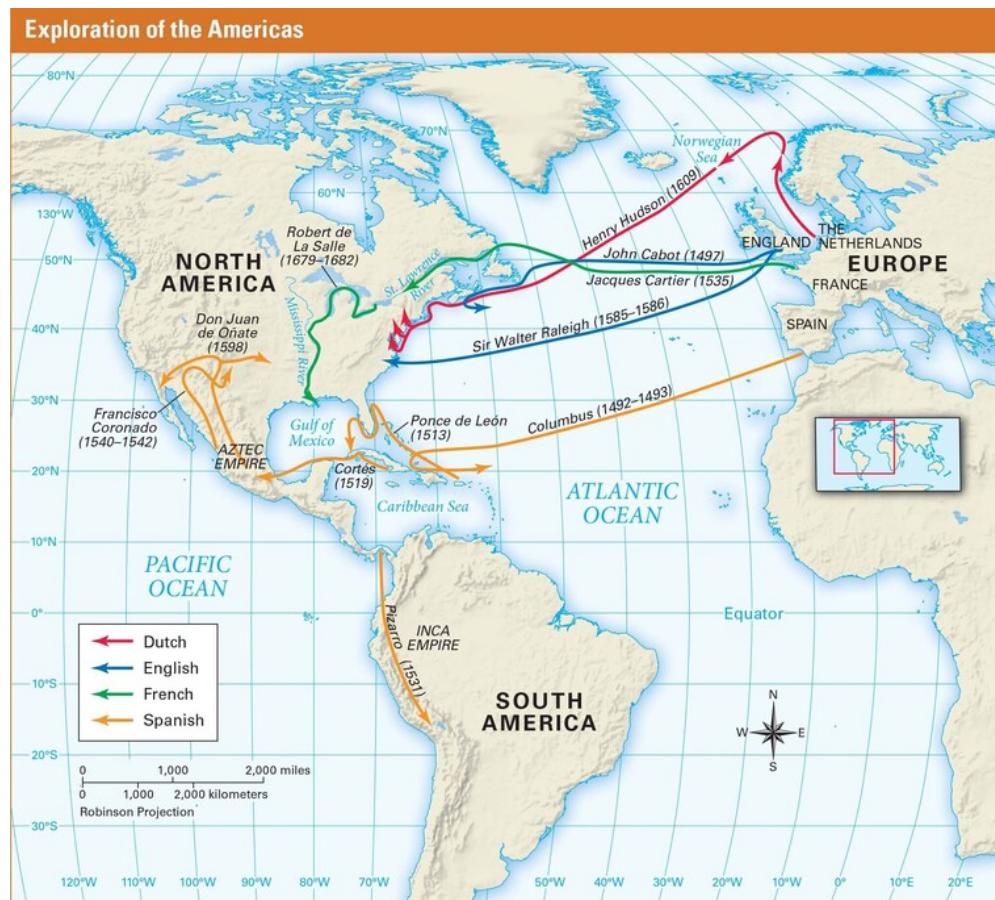
On October 12, 1492, Columbus stepped on an island inhabited by the Taino people, claimed it for Spain, and named it San Salvador. In this image, Columbus and his crew hold up crosses and flags as they arrive on the island. Columbus is also carrying a long sword. Taino people appear on the left and right sides of the image. What do you think their reactions say about how they felt upon seeing the Europeans' arrival?



Initially, the Spanish relied on enslaved Indigenous people to work on their colonial sugar plantations. However, the Spanish brought diseases that killed Indigenous people. Then they enslaved Africans to work on their plantations. The Spanish, and later other Europeans, forced both Indigenous people and Africans to work against their will. They did this to gain wealth for themselves and their countries.



The Aztec emperor Montezuma suspected trouble when he greeted Cortés. Montezuma rallied the Aztecs to defend themselves against the Spanish. However, smallpox and Aztec enemies who sided with Cortés killed much of the Aztec army. Cortés took Tenochtitlán from the Aztecs in the name of Spain and imprisoned Montezuma.



Explorers from several European countries took various routes to the Americas. Voyages were long and difficult and often involved travel on both land and sea.

## 2. The Spanish Borderlands

In Mexico and Peru, conquistadors found gold and silver riches beyond their wildest dreams. Hoping to take more, they pushed north into lands that are now part of the United States to colonize land and people. These Indigenous lands later became called the Spanish borderlands by historians.

**Florida** One of the first Spanish expeditions into North America was led by Juan Ponce de León (wahn PAHN-suh day lee-OHN). He had sailed with Columbus to the Caribbean and made his fortune by unearthing gold on the island of Puerto Rico, which the Spanish had conquered. Despite his wealth, Ponce de León continued thinking about Indigenous rumors of a "fountain of youth" that made old people young again. He set off to find the truth about these tales of everlasting youth.

Ponce de León landed on a sunny peninsula of North America in April 1513.

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Because he had sighted this lush new land around Easter, known as Pascua Florida in Spanish, he called it La Florida, meaning "flowery." Eight years later, he returned to Florida with 200 men to establish a Spanish settlement, or **colony**. Indigenous people, including Muscogees (Creeks), sought to defend themselves against Spanish invaders by shooting them with poisoned arrows. Instead of finding a fountain of youth, Ponce de León died from a poisoned arrow.

**The "Seven Cities of Cíbola"** Another legend sparked Spanish expeditions into North America. An old European tale told of the "Seven Cities of Cíbola" (SEE-buh-luh). These cities were said to be so rich that the streets and houses were decorated with gold and jewels. When the Spanish heard Indigenous people tell similar tales, they became convinced that the Seven Cities of Cíbola were in North America.

It did not matter who lived on the land where such wealth might be housed. Spanish colonizers first looked for the seven cities in Florida and present-day Texas. They found plenty of adventure, but no golden cities. Then a Spanish priest named Marcos de Niza claimed to have seen a shimmering golden city in what is now New Mexico. He raced back to Mexico City with the news.

**The Coronado Expedition** In 1540, a famed conquistador named Francisco Vásquez de Coronado (VAHS-kehz day kohr-uh-NAH-doh) set out from Mexico City with a large expedition and de Niza as his guide. Their goal was to find the legendary golden cities.

After traveling north more than 7,000 miles, the expedition found an Indigenous *pueblo*. A *pueblo* is a village of apartment-like buildings made of stone and adobe rising four or five stories high. Though there were no streets paved in gold, de Niza was impressed by the architecture and ingenuity of the Pueblo people. Coronado, angry because he was only interested in gold, sent the priest back to Mexico City.

The Coronado expedition continued north onto the Great Plains before giving up the search for golden cities. Disappointed, Coronado reported to Spain, "Everything is the reverse of what he said, except the name of the cities and the large stone houses ... The Seven Cities are seven little villages."

**Colonizing the Borderlands** As conquistadors explored new territories, they claimed the areas for Spain. By 1600, the Spanish borderlands extended west from Florida across present-day Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

At first, Spain did little to encourage settlement in these far-flung areas. However, rival European nations began to show an interest in the land—seeking to take from

Spain what Spain had taken from Indigenous Americans. Spain sent small bands of soldiers to these regions to protect its land claims. The soldiers lived in walled forts called *presidios* (preh-SEE-dee-ohs).

In 1565, for example, a Spanish naval officer named Pedro Menéndez de Avilés (muh-NEN-dez day ah-vuh-LACE) was sent to Florida to drive French colonizers from the area. Menéndez successfully forced the French out of their Florida base and built a fort on the peninsula's Atlantic coast. Menéndez named the fort St. Augustine. The land on which St. Augustine was built had belonged to the Timucua, an Indigenous group. Through the years, Spanish soldiers successfully defended the fort at St. Augustine from both French and English attacks. Today, St. Augustine is the oldest permanent settlement founded by Europeans in the United States.



St. Augustine was originally a presidio, or fort, built by the Spanish to protect their claim to Florida. It is the oldest permanent European settlement in the United States.

Catholic **missionaries**, or religious people who try to persuade people to **convert** to their religion, accompanied the soldiers to the borderlands. The missionaries built settlements, called missions, where they preached the Christian faith. Their efforts often involved intimidation and violence to force Indigenous people to adopt the Catholic belief system and the Spanish way of life.

Colonizers also moved into the borderlands, where they established towns and

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farms. Juan de Oñate (own-YAH-tay), who had made a fortune extracting silver from Indigenous land in Mexico, led the colonization of New Mexico. In 1598, Oñate brought 400 colonizers and 7,000 animals from Mexico to New Mexico. The journey took a year and a half to complete.

The Pueblo people of New Mexico welcomed the newcomers with kindness. The Spanish colonizers, however, repaid that kindness by enslaving them. The Catholic priests who accompanied the soldiers forced the Pueblo people to convert to Catholicism by ordering the whipping of Pueblo religious leaders who continued to practice their traditional rituals. Such treatment led the Pueblo to **revolt** and drive the Spanish out. Twelve years would pass before Spanish colonizers returned to New Mexico.

During the 1600s and 1700s, colonization of the Spanish borderlands proceeded slowly. Spanish colonizers spread their language, religion, and culture across the American Southwest through intimidation and violence against Indigenous people in the area.

**Impact on Indigenous People** The arrival of Spanish colonizers had a devastating **impact** on the Indigenous people. The Pueblo people introduced the Spanish to new **techniques** for growing crops in the desert. As they colonized Indigenous land, the Spanish introduced new tools, foods, and sheep.

From Florida to California, missionaries converted Indigenous people to Catholicism, often by force. The converts were forced to live and work in and around the missions, growing crops and maintaining the churches and other buildings. Despite the threat of punishment, Indigenous people who converted to Catholicism often continued to practice their traditional religious rituals as well.

Wherever the Spanish settled, they brought smallpox, measles, and influenza, which often wiped out entire Indigenous villages. Before Coronado's expedition, there had been approximately 100 different and thriving Pueblo groups in New Mexico. By 1700, only 19 remained.



The Seven Cities of Cíbola attracted many Spanish explorers to the Americas, like Francisco Vásquez de Coronado. Although Coronado never found the Seven Cities of Cíbola, his explorations opened a new area for Spanish settlement.



Missions were established by Spanish Catholic colonizers to convert Indigenous people to Christianity and increase Spanish control over the land and its Indigenous people. Often, missionaries used violent coercion or punishment to force Indigenous people to convert.

### 3. New France

As Spanish colonies sent ships loaded with resources—including gold and silver—home to Spain, Europe watched with envy. Every year, Spain seemed to become wealthier and more powerful. Other nations wanted wealth from the Americas, but none was strong enough to challenge Spain's American empire. Instead, they sought their fortunes in areas under Indigenous control and not yet colonized by Spain.

**Claiming New France** In 1534, France sent Jacques Cartier (zhahk cahr-TYAY) to explore the Atlantic coastline of North America. His goal was to find a Northwest Passage, an all-water route through the North American continent to the Pacific Ocean. Such a passage would provide a shortcut for ships sailing west to Asia.

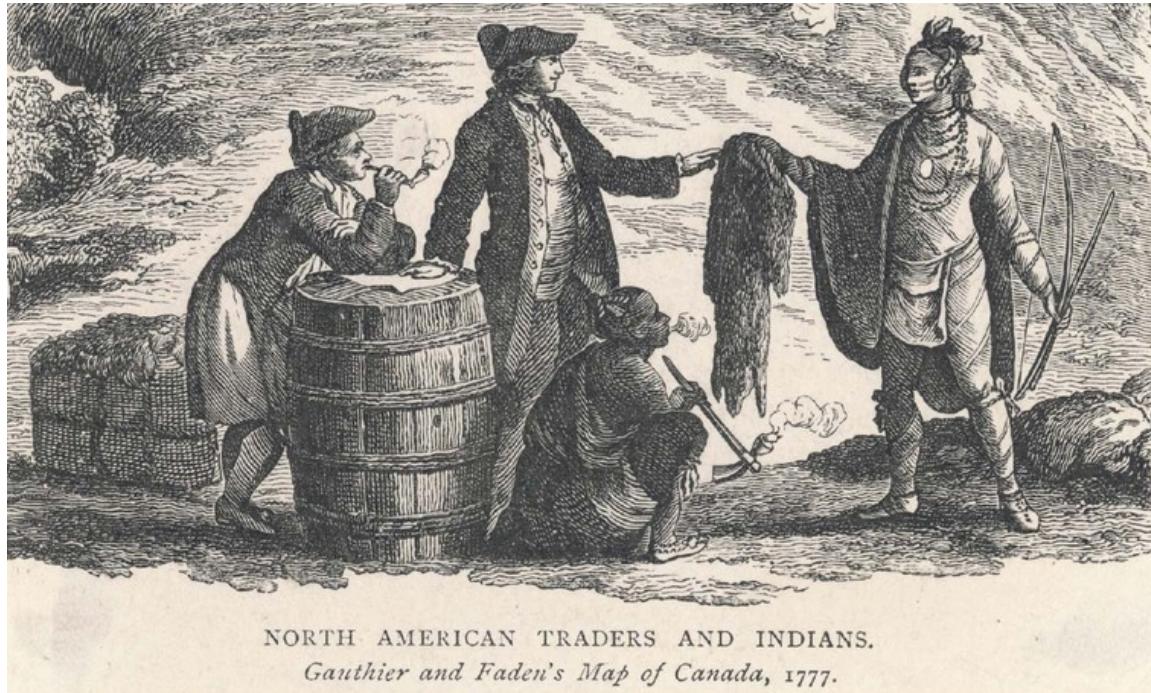
Though Cartier failed to find such a passage, he did claim Indigenous land for France in what is now known as Canada. On this land, which would later be named

New France, Cartier discovered something almost as valuable as Spanish gold—beaver fur. Beaver hats were a fashionable item in Europe, and French hat makers paid high prices for beaver pelts.

**Colonizing New France** The first European settlement in New France was founded by Samuel de Champlain (duh sham-PLANE). In 1608, Champlain sailed up what is now called the Saint Lawrence River and built a trading post he called Quebec (kwuh-BEK). For the next 150 years, Quebec would be a base for French explorers, soldiers, missionaries, traders, and fur trappers.

From Quebec, fur trappers continued west, claiming Indigenous land for France and searching for beaver pelts. They called themselves **coureurs de bois** (kuh-RUR duh BWAH), which means "wood runners" in French. Catholic missionaries followed the trappers to convert Indigenous people like the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potwatomie, together known as the Anishinaabe.

The French were not suited for or prepared to live in the harsh climate. This discouraged French farmers from crossing the Atlantic, as did the colony's policy of granting the best land to French nobles. However, the nobles did not intend to live on this land. Instead, they planned to rent it to farmers. Ultimately, the few colonizers who did come soon left their farms to search for furs.



The French took advantage of the rivalry between the Wyandot (Huron) and the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy to colonize New France. A bloody battle

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ensued, which enabled Champlain to take land and exploit resources.

**Interactions Between Indigenous People and the French** Because the French were more interested in furs than farming and because they were few in number, they did not try to conquer and enslave Indigenous people, as the Spanish had done.

The French needed Indigenous knowledge of the land and skills to survive for months in the wilderness. To learn to survive, they took up residence in Wyandot (Huron) villages. French men married Wyandot women to forge alliances to protect their access to resources. Being in close proximity to the French exposed the Wyandot to European diseases, which swept through their villages and killed many of them.

After establishing the settlement of Quebec, Champlain allied the French with the Wyandot against their enemies, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. He later wrote of fighting alongside the Wyandot against the Haudenosaunee Confederacy,

*When I saw them making a move to fire at us, I rested my musket against my cheek, and aimed directly at one of the three chiefs. With that same shot, two fell to the ground; and one of their men was so wounded that he died some time after ... When our side saw this shot ... they began to raise such loud cries that one could not have heard it thunder.*

The astonished Haudenosaunee fighters, who had never seen or heard gunfire before, fled in terror. From that day on, they would be the bitter enemies of the French.

**Colonizing Louisiana** The search for furs led the French far inland from Quebec. In 1673, two explorers, Father Marquette (mahr-KET) and Louis Joliet (zhol-YAY), explored the great Mississippi River with Indigenous help. They hoped this waterway would be the long-sought Northwest Passage. But they discovered that, instead of flowing west to the Pacific Ocean, the river flowed south toward the Gulf of Mexico. Disappointed, they returned to New France.

Nine years later, Robert Cavelier de La Salle explored the entire length of the Mississippi River. On April 9, 1682, he planted a French flag at the mouth of the river and claimed all Indigenous land west of the Mississippi River but some Indigenous groups fought back. La Salle named the vast area Louisiana for French King Louis XIV.



*Coureurs de bois*, or fur trappers, roamed New France in search of beaver pelts. They learned their skills from Indigenous people and then used those skills to exploit the land's resources.

#### 4. Jamestown: The First English Colony

John Cabot, an Italian living in England, sought his own western route to Asia. In 1497, Cabot, who had moved to England from Venice, sailed west across the Atlantic. He landed on the island now known as Newfoundland, off the coast of Canada. A fellow Venetian living in London wrote of Cabot's brief landing,

*He coasted for three hundred leagues and landed; saw no human beings, but he has brought here to the king certain snares which had been set to catch game, and a needle for making nets; he also found some felled trees, by which he judged there were inhabitants, and returned to his ship in alarm ... The discoverer ... planted on this newly-found land a large cross, with one flag of England and another of St. Mark [the patron saint of Venice] on account of his being a Venetian.*

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Like Columbus, Cabot mistakenly believed he had landed in Asia. Cabot's claim encouraged more English colonizers to come to North America. However, in creating a new life in a new place, English colonizers also took land from and displaced Indigenous groups.

**The Lost Colony of Roanoke** Nearly a century after Cabot, an English noble named Sir Walter Raleigh tried to start a colony on Roanoke Island off the coast of present-day North Carolina. The Indigenous people on the island, the Secotan, initially helped the colonizers find food and supplies, but as disease spread, Indigenous leaders withdrew their support. Supplies ran low for the English, who were more interested in searching for gold. The newcomers eventually returned to England.

In 1587, Raleigh sent a second group to Roanoke. Unfortunately, they arrived too late in the season to plant crops. Their leader, John White, sailed back to England for more supplies. While White was in England, however, fighting broke out between England and Spain. This delayed his return to Roanoke for three years.

When White finally reached the island, the colonists had disappeared. Carved on a doorpost was the word CROATOAN. To this day, both why this word was carved and what happened to the lost colony of Roanoke remain a mystery.

**Colonizing Jamestown** Twenty years went by before a permanent English colony was established in America. In 1607, a group of merchants formed the London Company to start a colony in a region they called Virginia. The company crammed 105 colonizers and 39 sailors into three tiny ships and sent them across the Atlantic. The colonizers were to take land and exploit natural resources to send valuable goods like furs and timber to England.

When they reached Virginia, the colonizers settled on a swampy peninsula they believed could be easily defended. They called their new home Jamestown after King James I. The spot they chose to settle would soon be swarming with disease-carrying mosquitoes. It was also surrounded by a large and powerful Indigenous group called the Pamunkey, part of the larger Powhatan nation.

The Jamestown colonizers were a mix of gentlemen and craftsmen. None of them knew much about farming, nor were they willing to work very hard at it. They were in Virginia to look for gold, not to provide for themselves.

As the colonizers ate the food they had brought with them, they began to trade with the Pamunkey, bartering glass beads and iron hatchets for corn and meat. Over time, the Pamunkey and the English began to quarrel. Moreover, the English expected the Pamunkey to grow and catch food to trade. The Pamunkey decided

they would rather kill the English—or just let them starve—than trade. Hunger and disease soon took their toll.

John Smith, a member of the Jamestown expedition, took control of Jamestown in 1608. "If any would not work," announced Smith, "neither should he eat." They were hungry, so they worked.



The first colonists at Jamestown settled in an area they believed would be easy to defend against Indigenous tribes and the Spanish. However, the land was marshy and infested with malaria-carrying mosquitoes.

While scouting for food, Smith was captured by members of the Pamunkey tribe and brought to a smoky longhouse. Seated at one end, he saw the powerful Chief Powhatan, who ruled more than 30 Algonquin-speaking tribes. Smith's recollection of the event says the tribe greeted Smith with a loud shout and a great feast. But when the meal ended, the mood changed. Smith was about to be clubbed to death when a young girl leapt out of the shadows. "She got [my] head in her arms and laid her owne upon [mine] to save [me] from death," Smith later wrote.

Smith's savior was Pocahontas, Chief Powhatan's favorite daughter, whose given name was Amonute. Historians disagree about the details of how Smith and Pocahontas first met and about whether she saved him from execution.

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Documents written by John Smith indicate that the two met and taught each other the basic concepts of their respective languages, English and Algonquin. "She, next under God," Smith wrote, "was ... the instrument to preserve this colony from death, famine, and utter confusion."

**The Starving Time** Jamestown's troubles, however, were far from over. In the fall of 1609, injured in a gunpowder explosion, Smith returned to England. The following winter was the worst yet—it came to be known as "The Starving Time."

A drought had caused food shortages, so the Pamunkey refused to trade with the colonists. The English ate dogs, horses, rats, and even human corpses to survive. By spring, only 60 of the about 500 people Smith had left in the fall remained alive.

When supply ships came the next spring, the survivors were ordered to abandon their colony. Then three more English ships brought food, 150 new colonists, and other supplies.

**Jamestown Survives** Although Jamestown was saved, the threat of conflict with the Pamunkey remained. To force the release of colonial prisoners and the return of colonizer weapons, the English kidnapped Pocahontas and held her hostage. Despite her previously ensuring their survival, they used her as a political pawn. For a year, Pocahontas remained a prisoner. During that time, she was taught English and the Christian faith.

Among her teachers was a widower named John Rolfe. Rolfe had helped the colony survive by finding a crop that could be raised in Virginia and sold in England —tobacco. The colonists planted tobacco crop everywhere, even in Jamestown's streets.

Rolfe hoped to ease tensions between the English and Pamunkey and protect the colonists' financial interests by proposing marriage to Pocahontas. Both the governor of Jamestown and Chief Powhatan gave their consent, hoping the marriage would end the conflict between their people.



John Cabot, an Italian exploring for England, sailed to Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, off the coast of present-day Canada. He believed he had reached Asia, and although he was aware the land was inhabited, claimed the land for England.



Pocahontas, the daughter of a powerful Pamunkey leader, helped the Jamestown colonizers survive. Later, she was kidnapped and taken prisoner by the English. She was coerced into marrying her teacher, John Rolfe, in hopes of smoothing over the tensions between the Pamunkey people and the Jamestown colonizers. This portrait of Pocahontas in European dress was painted when she visited England and is the only lasting image of her created in her lifetime.

### 5. New Netherland: The Short-Lived Dutch Colony

While John Smith struggled to save the colony of Jamestown, an English sailor named Henry Hudson explored the coastline farther north for the Netherlands. Henry Hudson's voyage was sponsored by Dutch merchants who hoped to find the Northwest Passage.

In 1609, Hudson discovered a deep river full of fish and thought it might take him all the way across the continent. It did not, but he claimed the land along its banks for the Netherlands, although Indigenous people lived on this land. The river was later named the Hudson in his honor, and the territory he took for the Dutch became known as New Netherland.

In 1621, Dutch merchants formed the Dutch West India Company to further colonize North America. The first Dutch colonizers settled along the upper Hudson near present-day Albany, New York. The area was home to Indigenous groups such as the Mahicans (Mohicans) and Abenaki. The colonizers quickly found that there were good profits to be made in the fur trade. They established trading posts along the Hudson, with the largest on Manhattan Island.

**Relations with Indigenous People** In 1626, Dutch West India Company sent Peter Minuit (MIN-yu-what) to New Netherland as the colony's governor. Wanting peaceful relations with the region's Indigenous people, partly because the Dutch had few people there, the Dutch West India Company told Minuit that any native people on Manhattan Island "must not be expelled with violence or threats but be persuaded with kind words ... or should be given something."

Minuit offered the island's Indigenous population, members of the Lenape (Delaware) nation, iron pots, beads, and blankets worth about \$24—the equivalent of about \$1,000 today—in exchange for their land. The Lenape accepted the trade possibly because they did not understand that the gifts by the Dutch were a deal to transfer control of the land to the colonizers.

Dutch traders also made deals with members of the powerful Haudenosaunee Confederacy, an alliance of five Indigenous groups who lived across the northern portion of New Netherland. This created competition between the French and Dutch and, in turn, gave some advantages to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The French had long supplied the Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee's great rivals, with guns in exchange for furs. As such, it made sense for the Haudenosaunee to become partners with the Dutch, who supplied them with the weapons they needed to fight the Wyandot.

This alliance also made sense for the Dutch. The French were their main rivals in the European fur trade and competition for land in North America. For most of the 1600s, the relationship between the Dutch and the Haudenosaunee kept the French from moving into the fur-rich Ohio Valley.

**New Amsterdam** As the fur trade expanded, the Dutch settlement on Manhattan swelled to more than 1,000 people. In 1647, the Dutch West India Company hired Peter Stuyvesant (STY-vuh-sunt) as the colony's new governor. The settlement was called New Amsterdam after the capital city of the Netherlands.



Stuyvesant, the Dutch governor of New Amsterdam, surrendered the settlement to the British without a shot being fired. Outnumbered and outgunned, Stuyvesant bowed to the pleas of his people to avoid bloodshed and destruction.

Stuyvesant lost his right leg in battle, so he used a wooden leg decorated with silver nails as a prosthetic. People called him "Old Silvernails" or "Peg Leg Pete." Although he was a strong leader, Old Silvernails was generally disliked. When Dutchmen who had been elected as city councilors disagreed with him, Stuyvesant called them "ignorant subjects" and threatened to ship them back to the Netherlands in pieces if they gave him trouble.

Despite his reputation, Stuyvesant governed New Amsterdam for 17 years. During this time, he captured a nearby Swedish colony and invited its colonists to live in New Amsterdam. New Amsterdam also allowed the settlement of the first Jewish people in North America. By 1660, the colony had nearly 8,000 people. This included Europeans from many nations and the Africans they enslaved.

**New Netherland Becomes New York** Stuyvesant's biggest problem was that the English wanted to drive the Dutch out of North America. England's king, Charles II, refused to recognize Dutch claims to New Netherland and was unconcerned about Indigenous rights to the land. In 1664, Charles gave his brother, James, the Duke

of York, ownership of all Dutch lands in America—if he could conquer them.

James organized a small invasion fleet to take the colony. When the English arrived, they sent Stuyvesant a letter demanding his surrender. Stuyvesant tore up the note and refused to consider giving up until New Amsterdam's chief gunner reported that the city's supply of gunpowder was damp and useless. Without firing a shot, the English took over New Netherland and renamed the colony New York.



European exploration and colonization of the Americas greatly benefited Europeans. However, their arrival had a devastating effect on Indigenous people.

## EUROPEAN COLONIZATION...



European countries took land from Indigenous tribes throughout North and South America. Which European country first colonized the area where you now live? How can you find out which Indigenous people were living there at the time?

### Lesson Summary

In this lesson, you read about the first European settlements in the Americas.

**Discovery and Competition** Explorers like Christopher Columbus were looking for a westward route to Asia but landed on the American continents. European nations competed to claim these lands and the riches they might contain, regardless of the Indigenous people who lived in these places.

**Spain** Spain took vast territories from Indigenous people, including Mexico and the southwestern portion of the future United States. In their search for gold and other treasures, Spanish conquistadors conquered the Aztecs of Mexico and the Incas of Peru. The Spanish also enslaved Africans to plant and harvest crops in the Americas. Spanish missionaries forced Indigenous people to convert to Christianity.

**France** The French took control of much of present-day Canada, as well as Louisiana, the territory west of the Mississippi River. Most French colonizers were more interested in trapping and trading furs than in farming or establishing large settlements.

**England** The English based their claim to North America on John Cabot's 1497 voyage. They established their first permanent colony at Jamestown in Virginia.

**The Netherlands** The Dutch founded the colony of New Netherland. Although the Dutch traded with the Lenape for the land, it is unlikely the Lenape understood land ownership. The English, however, drove the Dutch out and renamed the colony New York.

**Effects on American Indians** The arrival of Europeans in the Americas devastated Indigenous groups. European efforts to take land and resources, as well as to convert Indigenous peoples to Christianity, led to death and destruction. Indigenous people faced enslavement, violence, and the spread of diseases for which they had no immunity.



European exploration and colonization of the Americas greatly benefited Europeans. However, their arrival had a devastating effect on Indigenous people.

### Investigating Primary Sources

#### Who Was Christopher Columbus?

**Was Christopher Columbus a brave hero? Or a greedy man responsible for the deaths of millions of Indigenous people? Or something in between? You will**

## EUROPEAN COLONIZATION...

**analyze two primary sources that can help you evaluate Columbus's effect on the Americas.**

At daybreak on October 12, 1492, a group of Taino people observed from a distance as ships landed on their beach. Christopher Columbus and his crew came ashore and planted Spain's flags in the sand. What did the Taino think when they saw these foreign-looking strangers? The Taino had no written language, so their reaction is unknown. The perspectives of people like the Taino have often been erased from history because conquerors write from their own perspective of history.

Most of what we know about the consequences of Columbus's voyages is based on a few primary sources from the time. One of these sources is Columbus's ship's log, or diary of his travels, which he wrote on his first voyage from Spain to the Americas. He wrote it in Spanish in 1492, and it was translated into different languages for people in other countries to read.

The log explains Columbus's purpose for making the voyage, which was to find a new route to the East Indies that would give Spain more direct access to trade with Asia. He also hoped to find gold and other riches, claim land for Spain, and spread the Catholic religion.

The following primary source was written by Columbus himself. As you read, ask these questions: How does Columbus depict himself in his writing? How does he depict the Taino? What good does he expect to come from his voyage?

### **The Log of Christopher Columbus**

**Friday, October 12, 1492**

... Presently many inhabitants of the island assembled. What follows is in the actual words of the Admiral in his book of the first navigation and discovery of the Indies. "I," he says, "that we might form great friendship, for I knew that they were a people who could be more easily freed and converted to our holy faith by love than by force, gave to some of them red caps, and glass beads to put round their necks, and many other things of little value, which gave them great pleasure, and made them so much our friends that it was a marvel to see ...

**Saturday, October 13, 1492**

"... I was attentive, and took trouble to ascertain if there was gold. I saw that some of them had a small piece fastened in a hole they have in the nose, and by signs I was able to make out that to the south, or going from the island to the south,

there was a king who had great cups full, and who possessed a great quantity. I tried to get them to go there, but afterwards I saw that they had no inclination. I resolved to wait until tomorrow in the afternoon and then to depart, shaping a course to the S.W., for, according to what many of them told me, there was land to the S., to the S.W., and N.W., and that the natives from the N.W. often came to attack them, and went on to the S.W. in search of gold and precious stones.

"This island is rather large and very flat, with bright green trees, much water, and a very large lake in the centre, without any mountain, and the whole land so green that it is a pleasure to look on it. The people are very docile, and for the longing to possess our things, and not having anything to give in return, they take what they can get, and presently swim away. Still, they give away all they have got, for whatever may be given to them, down to broken bits of crockery and glass. I saw one give 16 skeins of cotton for three ceotis of Portugal, equal to one hlanca of Spain, the skeins being as much as an arroha of cotton thread. I shall keep it, and shall allow no one to take it, preserving it all for your Highnesses, for it may be obtained in abundance."

—Christopher Columbus, 1492

After reading the log, consider the following questions: By writing about this important journey in a diary, what do you suppose Columbus wanted to accomplish? For whom is Columbus writing this diary? What does this document say about Columbus's treatment of and opinions about Indigenous people, particularly the Taino? How do you think this source supports or dispels the notion that Columbus was a hero or a villain?

### Another Viewpoint from Bartolomé de Las Casas

Primary sources that cover the same historical event sometimes reveal conflicting information. The effects of Christopher Columbus's first voyage is the subject of another primary source, a book called *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account*, by Bartolomé de Las Casas, a Spanish priest. However, this source presents a much darker viewpoint.

After hearing reports about Columbus's discovery, Las Casas joined other colonizers who planned to settle in the Indies. He was given land in the Caribbean that had been taken from its Indigenous inhabitants. There, he taught the Indigenous people about Christian principles to convert their faith, but he observed circumstances that were too disturbing to ignore.

Las Casas witnessed how life had changed for the Indigenous people. Disease, overwork, and violence were destroying them. He returned to Spain in 1515 to

## EUROPEAN COLONIZATION...

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demand an end to colonial practices of violent invasion and enslavement. Despite his attempts, Indigenous people continued to face violence and mistreatment from the Spanish colonizers.

In 1542, many years after visiting the Indies, Las Casas wrote *The Devastation of the Indies*. It was important to him to present to Spain's king what he claimed was an accurate description of the effects of Columbus's legacy. Las Casas admired Columbus in many ways and did not blame him for all the harm endured by the Indigenous people. However, he recognized that Columbus played a role in setting these events in motion.

Las Casas accused the colonizers of terrible behavior and explained the reason behind the Spaniards' actions as their "greed and ambition, the greatest ever seen in the world." Las Casas's religious beliefs played a heavy role in his narrative. He even warned the king that, due to the colonizers' actions against the Indigenous, Spain would face punishment from God.

Read these excerpts from Las Casas's introduction to *The Devastation of the Indies*. How does his portrayal of Indigenous people contrast with his portrayal of the Spanish colonizers? How do his descriptions reinforce or challenge stereotypes about Indigenous people? What metaphors does he use to describe the colonizers? How do these metaphors support his argument?

### **The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account**

God made all the peoples of this area, many and varied as they are, as open and as innocent as can be imagined. The simplest people in the world—unassuming, long-suffering, unassertive, and submissive—they are without malice or guile, and are utterly faithful and obedient both to their own native lords and to the Spaniards in whose service they now find themselves. Never quarrelsome or belligerent or boisterous, they harbour no grudges and do not seek to settle old scores; indeed, the notions of revenge, rancour, and hatred are quite foreign to them ...

It was upon these gentle lambs, imbued by the Creator with all the qualities we have mentioned, that from the very first day they clapped eyes on them the Spanish fell like ravening wolves upon the fold, or like tigers and savage lions who have not eaten meat for days. The pattern established at the outset has remained unchanged to this day, and the Spaniards still do nothing save tear the natives to shreds, murder them and inflict upon them untold misery, suffering and distress, tormenting, harrying and persecuting them mercilessly. We shall in due course describe some of the many ingenious methods of torture they have invented and refined for this purpose, but one can get some idea of the effectiveness of their methods from the figures alone. When the Spanish first journeyed there, the

Indigenous population of the island of Hispaniola stood at some three million; today only two hundred survive ...

—Bartolomé de Las Casas, 1542

Las Casas's efforts eventually met with success when the king of Spain issued the New Laws in 1542. The New Laws granted more rights to these Indigenous people and placed restrictions on Spanish colonizers. Still, Indigenous people experienced enslavement, violence, and suffering.

Now you have read two primary sources about the same event—the Spanish arrival in the Americas. What positive and negative effects did it have for the Americas and Indigenous people? For the Europeans? Use both primary sources to examine Columbus's contribution and answer: Who was Christopher Columbus?



Primary sources describe Christopher Columbus as both a heroic explorer and as a murderous conqueror driven by greed. This painting by Currier & Ives is from 1846 and shows the landing of Christopher Columbus with his crew on October 12, 1492.



After witnessing the colonizers' violence against Indigenous tribes, Bartolomé de Las Casas called for better treatment of Indigenous people. Las Casas's book provides another viewpoint on Spanish colonization of the Americas.

### The Columbian Exchange

You just learned about European explorers who navigated the sea to new lands. These explorations led to European discovery of new goods, land, and people. The voyages of Columbus triggered a great transfer of people, plants, animals, and diseases back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean. This transfer is called the Columbian Exchange.

The Columbian Exchange brought valuable new crops such as maize (corn), potatoes, and squash to Europe. These foods improved the diet of the average European. Many Europeans also found new opportunities by crossing the Atlantic to settle in the Americas. They introduced crops such as wheat and rice to these lands. They also brought domesticated animals like horses, cows, pigs, and sheep. Crops such as coffee and sugar grew well in American soil.

This transfer changed other parts of the world, too. For example, maize was introduced to China. Tobacco was even used as a form of money in parts of the world. Foods such as tomatoes, peanuts, and cacao (chocolate) crossed the ocean to places such as Italy and Thailand. Ingredients from the Americas are still staples in these places' diets.

For Indigenous people, however, the exchange began badly. The Europeans who came to America brought germs that lead to outbreaks of smallpox and other deadly diseases among the Indigenous populations. Indigenous populations were not immune to the same diseases as Europeans, and many died. One primary source, *A History of Plimmoth [Plymouth] Plantation from 1620–1647* by Governor William Bradford, describes the situation.

*The condition of this people was so lamentable, and they fell downe so generally of this diseas, as they were (in the end) not able to help on[e] another; no, not to make a fire, nor to fetch a litle water to drinke, nor any to burie the dead. . . .*

Historians estimate that in some areas, diseases from Europe wiped out 90 percent of the native population.



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The spread of deadly disease made the European conquest of the Americas much easier. It weakened Indigenous resistance and opened up the land for European settlement. However, the spread of disease left colonizers without laborers, which in turn harmed colonial economies. To resolve this problem, the colonies began to seek workers elsewhere: Africa.

The Portuguese began bringing Africans whom they had enslaved to the Caribbean in the 1500s. With the death of Indigenous laborers from disease, Europeans began to bring over many more enslaved Africans. Between around 1600 and 1650, more than 400,000 Africans were sent to Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Traders from other European nations soon joined in the trade of enslaved people, or the slave trade, as well.

Europeans built relationships with African rulers willing to trade enslaved people. Together, they set up a system in which Africans gathered enslaved people and Europeans sent them to the Americas. As demand for enslaved Africans grew, these relationships became military alliances. Europeans then encouraged African groups to fight their enemies so they could capture more people to enslave in battle.

After 1650, northern Europeans took over much of the trade of enslaved people from the Portuguese, to serve sugar plantations in Brazil and the West Indies. Later, Britain controlled much of this trade throughout the Americas, including in its North American colonies. In the 1700s alone, some 6 million enslaved Africans were forcibly sent to the Americas. However, around one in six died on the voyage across the Atlantic.

The transport of enslaved Africans to the Americas was just one "side" of what is known as the triangular trade. In American ports, merchants traded enslaved people for sugar, silver, tobacco, and other products from the mines and plantations. Then, the shipping of those goods to Europe formed the second side of the triangle. In Europe, traders picked up manufactured goods such as textiles and weapons, as well as raw metal, rum, and tobacco. The third side of the triangle was the voyage to Africa to trade those goods for enslaved people.

In addition to the movement of goods and people, this trade brought an exchange of ideas. Europeans introduced Christianity to the Americas. In Spanish America, Catholic priests converted millions of indigenous peoples to Christianity. In most cases, the indigenous groups blended Christian teachings with their own traditional beliefs. Additionally, African enslaved people introduced elements of African culture and traditions, transforming the social and cultural landscape of the Americas.

Ultimately, the Columbian Exchange introduced new goods that benefited populations in both the Americas and overseas. However, this exchange also had severe, deadly effects on Africans and Indigenous populations in the Americas. Whatever the exchanges' advantages and disadvantages were, the transfers between populations permanently transformed the world's ecosystems.

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- A *History of Plymouth Plantation 1620 to 1647*, Volume II by Governor William Bradford, 1630–1651, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company for the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1912, p. 194.

Entire Selection:

<http://ia802709.us.archive.org/12/items/historyofplymout2162brad/historyofplym>

Accessed March, 2017

### The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy

The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy was an alliance of five Indigenous groups who lived in the northern and western part of what is now New York State. The five Indigenous nations were the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca. The Tuscarora later joined in 1772. These five nations united as a way to stop conflict among themselves. This led them to create a council of chiefs from each nation, called the Grand Council of Chiefs, in which each group had a vote on decisions. This form of government allowed the confederacy to be extremely effective and organized.

The confederacy was united by the Great Law of Peace. The Great Law of Peace set out laws that all nations agreed to live by and described how the confederacy would be run. It became an oral constitution, which was recorded on wampum belts. Each nation had its own leaders, but they worked together in the Grand Council of Chiefs. They worked to maintain peace instead of fighting, and decisions were made by consensus, meaning that all chiefs had to agree. The Great Law of Peace has clauses that establish a two-house legislature that passed laws, identify who can declare war, and balance the power between the confederacy and the individual nations.

Some believe the Great Law was one of the works that influenced the writing of the U.S. Constitution, which contains similar clauses. Benjamin Franklin referred to it when discussing his Albany Plan of Union to create a unified government for the

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colonies. (The plan did not pass.) In 1988, Congress passed a resolution that recognized the influence of the Iroquois Confederacy on the U.S. Constitution.

### **Foreign Relations and Their Effects**

The establishment of the confederacy also united the nations in protecting their interests against outsiders: other Indigenous groups and, later, European colonizers.

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy came into conflict with the French. The French were allies of the Wyandot (Huron), who were enemies of the confederacy, and had been supplying them with guns in exchange for fur. This led the Haudenosaunee Confederacy to become trading partners with Dutch traders. The Dutch supplied the confederacy with guns and weapons in exchange for pelts and furs. This allowed them to fight back against the Wyandot.

In the period before the American Revolution, the confederacy also came into conflict with colonizers from the 13 colonies. As the colonial population grew, people sought land in the west between the Ohio and Mississippi rivers—land that had already been settled by Indigenous groups. Both Great Britain and France claimed this area. In 1754, the French staked their claim by building Fort Duquesne, where the city of Pittsburgh stands today. Among the nations that claimed this land were members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, including the Seneca and Cayuga.

British leaders ordered a small militia force to drive the French from Ohio Valley. When British forces ambushed French soldiers, it started the French and Indian War. Some Indigenous groups fought with the French and others with the British. Members of the Mohawk nation fought on both sides. As many died in battle, particularly among the Mohawk and Oneida, the people of the confederacy questioned their participation in the war, and the confederacy eventually declared its neutrality.

When the war finally ended, the interests of Indigenous groups were not addressed in the peace treaty between France and Great Britain. France ceded, or gave, its claim of land in Canada to Great Britain. Indigenous groups did not have a say in the treaty.

The divisions in the Confederacy that emerged during the French and Indian War reappeared during the American Revolution. Initially, the Confederacy tried to stay neutral, but soon individual nations began to ally with the Patriots and Loyalists. The Oneida and the Tuscarora supported the American cause, while the remaining groups in the Confederacy supported the British. The Americans responded by

destroying large portions of Haudenosaunee land in 1779.

In 1784, after the war, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy agreed to sign the Second Treaty of Fort Stanwix. The Treaty of Paris, which ended the American Revolution, did not address the status of Indigenous lands. The 1784 treaty was meant to serve as a peace treaty between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the United States. However, the Haudenosaunee had been weakened by the American Revolution, and ending up giving up much of the confederacy's land to the United States. The treaty specified the boundary lines of the land that the Haudenosaunee Confederacy would live in, which established the first reservation. The treaty also recognized each of the six Indigenous nations as sovereign, meaning that they had the authority to govern themselves, and the United States would treat them as independent nations. The Grand Council, however, refused to ratify it. Negotiations over the treaty caused further division. This led to the decline of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

### **Europeans in the Americas**

How were Europeans able to conquer the Americas? Think of the hardships. The land area was huge, and the ocean journey to the Americas was long and dangerous. Millions of people already lived in North and South America—possibly as many as lived in Europe, or even more. Indigenous groups had skilled warriors who were determined to defend their lands. And the Europeans were not unified. In fact, they were often at war among themselves. What were the Europeans' advantages?

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First, to reach the Americas, European ships could travel long distances and sail against the wind. The Europeans also had navigational tools that allowed them to find their way across the ocean. The compass and the astrolabe gave them directional bearings, by day and by night. Later, the chronometer and the sextant helped explorers find their ship's location in the ocean.

Europeans frightened many Indigenous people, even when they weren't trying to. As a Muscogee Nation chief explained to Spanish traders with explorer Hernando de Soto,

*The things that seldom happen bring astonishment. Think, then, what must be the effect on me and mine, of the sight of you and your people, whom we have at no time seen, astride the fierce brutes, your horses, entering with such speed and fury into my country, that we had no tidings of your coming—things so altogether new, as to strike awe and terror to our hearts. . . .*

Picture how frightening the Europeans gunpowder and weapons must have been the first time Indigenous warriors saw them used. However, Indigenous people

quickly got used to them, learned to use them, and began trading for them.

Their greatest advantage however, was something that Europeans didn't even know they had. It was resistance to the diseases they brought with them. Because Indigenous people had not been exposed to these diseases, their bodies had no way to fight these foreign illnesses. Sickness swept across the Americas, which led to thousands dying and caused the collapse of many Indigenous cultures.

In geographer's terms, the mortality rate, or the death rate, was higher than the birth rate. The most extreme examples occurred in the Caribbean islands. No one knows for certain how many Taino people inhabited these islands—estimates range from less than 100,000 to 2 million—but about 50 years after Columbus's arrival, they were nearly extinct. The remainder were assimilated, or absorbed, into the new culture established by the Spaniards and the imported enslaved Africans. But in that brief time, some cultural diffusion did occur. Several words in English, such as hurricane and barbecue, are derived from the Taino language.

Europeans shared advantages such as technology and immunity, but how each nation used them differed. Read on to see how people from different nations in Europe explored the Americas.

### **The Spanish**

In 1492, Spain had finally won a 700-year war against the Moors, so Spanish soldiers were experienced and well-trained. That same year, Columbus sent back word of a new world to conquer. Many conquistadors, or soldiers, sailed off to the Americas in search of gold and glory.

To see how the Spanish used their advantages, you can learn about Francisco Pizarro. He heard stories of a great Inca Empire with much gold in South America. Pizarro hoped to conquer it.

Before he reached the Incas, smallpox did. Thousands died, including the Incan ruler and many of his generals. These deaths plunged the Inca Empire into civil war. As two sons of the emperor fought over who would rule, Pizarro prepared his attack. Finally, with 160 men and 62 horses, he advanced.

Atahualpa, who had won the civil war, was not sure what to do. He was the powerful ruler of 5 million people in the greatest empire on Earth. He decided to invite the Spanish to meet him in a great plaza. Pizarro arrived first and set men with guns around the plaza. Then he waited.

The emperor arrived with some 3,000 unarmed men. Suddenly, at a signal from

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Pizarro, his men opened fire with guns and cannon. Then his soldiers on horseback charged into the crowd. Swinging their steel swords, they killed many people. In the chaos, Pizarro captured the emperor. The Spanish held Atahualpa prisoner. In the end, Pizarro killed him and claimed the Inca Empire for Spain.

The Spanish conquered all of Central America and most of South America. In North America, they took Florida, the Southwest, and much of the present-day western United States. Spain ruled these lands harshly. The Spanish controlled trade, government, and religion. They set up Catholic missions and forced Indigenous people to practice this religion. The Spanish also forced them to build towns and forts, and to grow food and work the mines.

The Spanish and the Portuguese reached an agreement with the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 in which they split the Americas between themselves for exploration and colonization. Spain had some conflict with other colonizing powers, such as a war with England in the 16th century and France in the 17th century. Spain and Portugal would also become embroiled in conflict over time.

Today, signs of Spanish culture remain in the western United States. This cultural diffusion can be heard in the region's music, tasted in the foods, and seen in architecture of the missions. The Spanish also brought horses to the Americas, which changed the culture of many Indigenous groups. Before the Lakota (Sioux) tribes got horses, they hunted both large and small game and did some farming. As other tribes forced the Sioux from the northern Plains to the southern Plains, the Sioux encountered horses. They soon adapted to the use of both horses and guns, which enabled them to hunt bison on the Plains. This put them in conflict with the Absaroka (Crow), the Mandan, and others who lived on the plains.

### **The Portuguese**

Portugal gained a huge colony in South America as the result of a storm. In 1500, the navigator Pedro Álvares Cabral was trying to sail to India when a wind blew his ship all the way to present-day Brazil where he claimed the land for Portugal. There, the Portuguese started a colony. Their rule was similar to how Spain ruled its settlements. While Cabral worked to treat the Indigenous people there more kindly than others, many colonial leaders forced Indigenous people to work for them. The Portuguese settlers had little say in government, and there was no freedom of religion.

The Portuguese eventually aligned themselves with England and, later, Great Britain in regional European conflicts. However, since Portugal's colonial holdings were not located in North America, there was less friction in the Americas with

powers like Britain, France, and the Netherlands.

Portugal is a small country, but its influence on Brazil was great. Today, Portuguese remains the language of Brazil. There are many more people in Brazil who speak Portuguese than in Portugal.

## The British

In the 1600s, Great Britain did not have unemployed soldiers eager to conquer new lands. Instead, many British people wanted a place to build new lives and new communities.

British rule offered settlers more freedoms than did Spanish rule. English colonists had some religious freedom. They had more say in government, and there was more opportunity for business than in Spanish colonies.

The British settlers often brought their families. They built homes and planted gardens. Some British colonists worked as missionaries, bringing the Protestant religion to Indigenous people. On the whole though, the British were less interested than the Spanish in converting Indigenous people to their religious beliefs or in forcing them to work, and more interested in the land.

Life in the Americas was much different than in Great Britain. For settlers, land was abundant and could be used for farms and crops. Tobacco became a successful crop for the colonies of Virginia and Maryland. It was exported and sold overseas. These colonies developed strong market-oriented economies. However, labor for British settlers was scarce. Goods from merchant ships, firearms, and clothing usually came from Great Britain.

Sometimes the British bought land from Indigenous groups. Often, however, land was a prize of war. The British fought many wars and had many conflicts with the Indigenous people who had already lived in lands that the British now claimed. The British went to war with the Dutch and took Dutch claims in the 17th century. British forces frequently fought with the French, with both powers pitting Indigenous groups against one another.

Sometimes the British made treaties with Indigenous nation, who agreed because they saw the British as a source of strength in their conflicts with other tribes. At other times, the British became allies with certain tribes in order to fight the French. In one war, the British were allied with the powerful Iroquois Confederacy. The French were allied with the Huron. When the Huron were defeated, they were driven from their homelands. Then British settlers moved in.

## The French

The French were not so eager to leave their farms and towns in France for the hardships of the New World. Those who came were usually men looking to earn some money and then return home. Those who stayed were often trappers. Trappers did not want land as much as the British did. They wanted furs and hides from local animals.

French settlers often worked with Indigenous people to get beaver pelts and deer hides to send back to France. The way the French treated some of Indigenous groups created a valued relationship. As a Chippewa chief explained in a speech:

*When the Frenchmen arrived ... we lived like brethren in the same lodge  
... They never mocked at our ceremonies, and they never molested  
[bothered] the places of our dead. . . . Just, very just, were they towards  
us!*

The French claimed a vast territory. But with far fewer settlers than the British, and their losses to Britain in the Seven Years' War, they had a hard time defending their claims against the growing British population.

Today, the French influence can be seen from Quebec in Canada, all the way to New Orleans, on the Gulf of Mexico. In these places, people still speak French or dialects that are based on French. And in New Orleans you can also see and taste the influence of France.

## The Dutch



The Dutch came from the Netherlands, sometimes called Holland, in the early 1600s. They were merchants who built an empire of trade. They bought Manhattan Island from the Lenapes for about 24 dollars and founded New Amsterdam in 1625. It became the capital of the Dutch colony of New Netherland. From the beginning, this was a diverse colony that reached up the Hudson River into present-day New York and New Jersey. One visitor to the little village of New Amsterdam heard more than 18 different languages spoken. Another noted that worship was just as varied.

Like the French, the Dutch did not push as many Indigenous groups from their land. They, too, wanted to trade with their native neighbors for furs that could sell in Europe for a lot of money. They traded items such as metal utensils with the Iroquois in exchange for fur.

This colony built on trade did not last long. In 1664, the British gained control of New Netherland and renamed it New York. However, the Dutch ideas of diversity became part of the American tradition. And the Dutch left an interesting landmark. They had a long wall of logs built to protect their colony. In time, the wall was torn down and became a street. Today that street is called Wall Street

and is one of the financial centers of the world.

### **The Swedes**

People from Sweden started a colony called New Sweden in 1638. Like the Dutch colony, it was based on trading local resources such as furs and fish. The small colony was built along the Delaware River in present-day New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware. The Swedish settlers were not in power for long, and New Sweden surrendered to Dutch colonists in 1655. However, the settlers were permitted to keep their lands and practice their customs.

By 1682, New Sweden was part of William Penn's British colony of Pennsylvania. Penn welcomed them. The Swedish colonists introduced the log cabin to American settlers on the frontier.

### **Effects on the Old World**

Between 1492 and 1820, about 2.6 million Europeans and 8.8 million Africans came to the Americas. This represented the largest human migration up to that point in history. The Spanish and British together made up the vast majority of the European numbers. Although most early European colonizers were free Spanish soldiers, missionaries, and settlers, there was a period from about 1640 to 1760 when large numbers of people from the lower classes in Britain and other European nations arrived as indentured servants or contract laborers.

Cities such as London and port cities in Britain and Europe tended to attract these lower classes, who had few opportunities. Most were young, under age 25; some were children. There were paupers and unskilled laborers, and most came on their own. Some indentured servants were prisoners. They tended to come from certain regions in their home countries that were poorer and had fewer opportunities. America often represented the chance for a much better life than they would have had at home. Benjamin Franklin observed that the opportunities and the needs in America caused people in the colonies to marry younger and have more children than people in Europe, thus causing the high birth rate.

In the 18th century, the cost to move across the Atlantic decreased so fewer people needed a labor contract to start a new life in the American colonies. This made the enslavement of Africans more desirable, especially as some indentured servants received land at the end of their contracts. This cost landowners money and created competition.

During this same period, the colonies became more prosperous. They attracted

more middle-class farmers, craftspeople, and other professionals who came with their families. Although they weren't looking to merely escape starvation as emigrants in earlier decades had, they still came mainly for economic opportunity.

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- Excerpt from a speech by a Creek Chief near Achese to Hernando de Soto and his company

Entire Selection:

<http://ia800500.us.archive.org/11/items/spanishexplorers11n/spanishexplorers11r>

Accessed March, 2017

- Speech of Chippewa chief in 1826, recorded in "Some Remarks upon the original and character of the North American Indians ..." delivered before the Historical Society of Michigan by Henry R. Schoolcraft and recorded in *Historical and Scientific Sketches of Michigan: Comprising a Series of Discourses Delivered Before the Historical Society of Michigan, and Other Interesting Papers Relative to the Territory*. Detroit: Stephen Wells and George L. Whitney. 1834, p. 65.

Entire Selection: <http://books.google.com/books?id=khcVAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&vq>

Accessed March, 2017

### Women and the French and Indian War

The French and Indian War lasted from 1754 to 1763 and became part of a broader, global conflict between France and Great Britain known as the Seven Years' War. The French and Indian War would prove consequential for American colonists, Indigenous people living across North America, and for the political future of French colonial holdings across the continent. People from all walks of life played a role in the conflict, including women.

Women colonists assisted British soldiers during the French and Indian War. Up to four women would work in troop companies, taking care of cleaning clothes and acting as nurses in return for food. Sometimes, the number of women working in companies could be much higher. These women were a part of the military and, as such, moved when the troops moved. Others, such as wives of the soldiers or Indigenous traders, played a less central role but still supported soldiers' efforts.

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The women working in the military would receive special passes, such as at Fort Pitt in Pennsylvania. They could freely come and go from the military fort. Women who lived nearby and tried to enter or leave the fort without a pass could face prison.



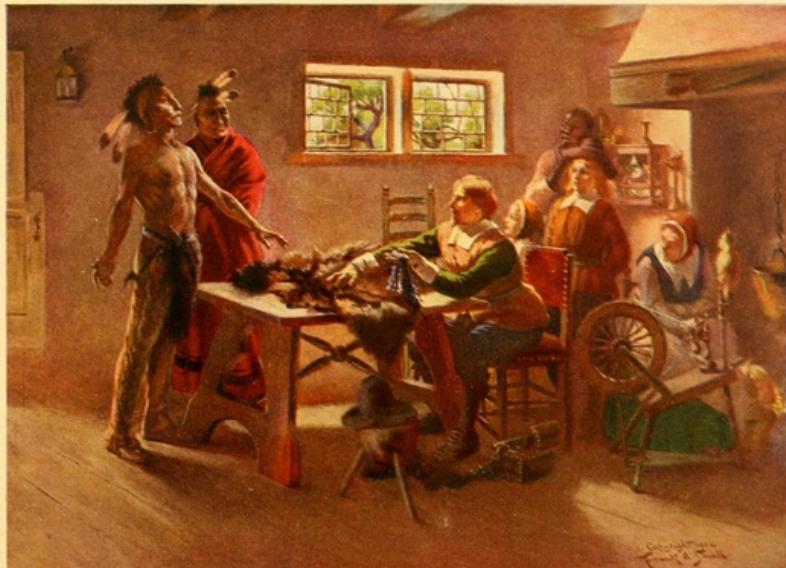
It was not just women colonists who were important to the British war effort against the French in North America. One Indigenous woman named Aliquippa was the leader of the Onondowagah (Seneca) people. George Washington, who served as a military leader during the French and Indian War, made a special visit to see her and brought her gifts out of respect for her position. She remained loyal to the British, refusing to switch allegiances even if she was offered a better deal by the French. Aliquippa was described as elderly and ruled "with great authority." She died toward the end of 1754. Aliquippa navigated the treacherous environment of the mid-18th century, leading her people through the early stages of what would be a difficult war. She also guided them through the difficult great power politics. As an Indigenous person and a woman, her experience in leadership and encounters with colonists has been memorialized in history.

### **European Powers Vie for New France**

The economic, political, cultural, and religious competition between major European powers in North America defined the colonial era. Each nation used its resources in ways to try to outmaneuver others. They also engaged with Indigenous groups, sometimes pitting groups against one another as part of a broader strategic conflict. New France and surrounding regions, in particular, were a key target for the British, French, Spanish, and Dutch at varying points.

The Dutch first established trading posts in North America in 1614 around the region they called New Netherland, but is now known as New York. They kept a relatively small presence in the area and primarily focused on trade with Indigenous groups. Their settlement of New Amsterdam located on Manhattan Island, was a vital economic center and fort at the mouth of the Hudson River. New Amsterdam was generally religiously tolerant and welcomed immigrants from across Europe.

The Dutch dominance of the fur trade found competition in French efforts to do the same in New France. However, it was the British who posed the most immediate threat to Dutch colonial holdings. The British and Dutch warred with each other intermittently. Eventually, in 1674, the Dutch lost control over all of New Netherland, including New Amsterdam, ending their project at dominating the fur trade. Since the British were much less interested in fur and more in farming, that left New France as the center of the fur trade.



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New France describes a vast region stretching from the Gulf of Mexico to the far reaches of northeastern Canada that was claimed by the French during colonial times. Here, the British, Spanish, and French all competed for power. After the Seven Years' War, known as the French and Indian War in North America, a large amount of territory went to Spain in 1763. The British gained control of eastern Canada and the French were pushed out of the continent, retaining only a few islands and some fishing rights.

New Orleans itself absorbed French, Spanish, Indigenous, and African influences. This helped create a multicultural and religiously diverse community there by the 1700s. New Orleans was also extremely important economically because it sat at the mouth of the Mississippi River, determining what could go in and out of a huge expanse of territory.

Formerly French holdings in Canada would also retain their French character to some degree. French people known as Acadians from eastern Canada came under the control of the British. Some remained, but many were deported by the British. Some even went to the southern parts of Louisiana and gradually developed Cajun culture. The modern Canadian province of Quebec uses French as its official language, showing just how the intersection of history, language, and culture has a lasting effect on regions.

### **Spanish Exploration and Settlement in Florida**

The world of Florida's Native Americans changed when Spanish explorers arrived. In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed from Spain. Spain is a country that lies across the Atlantic Ocean from Florida. Columbus landed on an island to the south and west of Florida. Soon the Spanish had taken over the island and many others in the area. The native people who lived there were pushed aside. The Spanish were ruthless in their search for gold and glory for their God and country.



Juan Ponce de León (wahn PAHN-suh day lee-OHN) was one of these Spanish explorers. He found gold in the islands. But he dreamed of greater treasure. Ponce de León was fascinated by a tale he heard from some native islanders. They spoke of a fountain whose waters made old people young again. In search of this "fountain of youth," Ponce de León in 1513 became the first Spaniard to set foot in Florida. Ponce de León gave Florida its name. It comes from the Spanish word for flowers.

A man named Juan Garrido (wahn gah-REE-doh) may have joined Ponce de León on his journey. Born in Africa, Garrido would have been the first person from that land to reach Florida.

Ponce de León, Garrido, and the crew first landed on Florida's northeast coast. Next, they sailed south through the Florida Keys. The explorers then headed north along Florida's west coast. They landed and met members of the Calusa tribe. For unknown reasons, this meeting was a tense one. The Spanish soon left Florida.

Ponce de León returned in 1521. This time, he came with 200 people, hoping to build a settlement in Florida. Again, the Spanish fought with the Calusa. Again, the

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Spanish fled.

The Spanish returned in 1528. In that year, Panfilo de Narváez (pahn-fee-loh de nahr-VY-ez) arrived near Tampa Bay with a force of 400 men. He set out to explore the land. After many battles with Native Americans, Narváez and his group tried to escape Florida on rafts. Narváez and most of his crew died at sea. Only four men lived to tell of their ordeal.



About ten years later, the Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto (her-NAN-doh day SOH-toh) traveled through Florida. De Soto landed near Tampa Bay in 1539. He and his troops marched northward. They fought many terrible battles with Native Americans as they went. In time, de Soto moved into what is now the state of Georgia. He went on to explore much of what is now the southeastern United States.

In 1559, Tristan de Luna (trihs-than de LOO-nuh) helped start a Spanish settlement in Florida. The plan was to settle near what is now the city of Pensacola. A hurricane sank many of de Luna's ships. This disaster helped doom the settlement.

## Spanish Settlement in Florida

The first Spanish explorers found death and disaster in Florida. In other parts of the Americas, however, Spain had great success. Its soldiers conquered great Native American empires. Its ships sailed to Spain with tons of gold and silver.

Spain did not want the French in Florida. In 1565, Spain sent Pedro Menéndez de Avilés (PAY-droh muh-NEN-dez day ah-vuh-LACE) and 2,000 soldiers to destroy Fort Caroline. Then, Menéndez de Avilés started a new Spanish settlement nearby. He called it St. Augustine. He hoped the settlement would keep the French away from Florida. Unlike early Spanish efforts in Florida, St. Augustine was a success. The Spanish worked hard to keep the settlement going. Today, it is the oldest surviving European settlement in the United States.

Next, the Spanish set out to control more of Florida. They made Native Americans work as laborers. The Spanish also converted some Native Americans to the Christian faith. The Spanish set up missions for this purpose.

A mission was like a Spanish village. It had a church, where priests taught Native Americans the Catholic religion. It had farms, where Native Americans grew crops. It had workshops, where they learned skills such as woodworking. A mission raised its own food. It made all the things people needed to live the Spanish way of life.

Spain's rivals in Europe saw this success. They also wanted to find wealth in the Americas. One of these rivals was the country of France. In 1564, 200 French people sailed to the northeast coast of Florida. They started a settlement called Fort Caroline.



The Spanish set up many missions in Florida. Most were in the northern area. Many Timicua and Apalachee people accepted mission life. San Luis Talimali is an example of a mission in Apalachee territory. A mission among the Calusas, however, did not succeed. The Calusa were unwilling to give up their way of life.

Why did some Native Americans go to the missions? Some hoped the Spanish would protect them from Native American enemy tribes. Others may have come to get food and other gifts. Some may have wanted to learn about Christianity.

Not all Native Americans accepted the missions. There were some violent uprisings against them. A bigger problem was disease. Native Americans were not able to fight off many European illnesses. By the thousands, they got sick. Many died. Over time, many Native American groups in Florida died out.

### **Competition for Florida**

Spain had forced the French out of Florida in 1565. But Spain's rivals did not give up. These rivals included not only France, but England, too. France and England kept up their efforts to get a share of Spain's American riches. Often, the

competition between these countries took place in Florida.

In 1567, two years after the defeat of Fort Caroline, a French soldier named Dominique de Gourgues (daw-men-EEK duh GAWRJ) led three ships back to Florida. He wanted revenge against the Spanish. De Gourgues led an attack on Spanish outposts near St. Augustine. He and his troops killed a number of Spanish people. Then they left.

In the late 1500s, England sent Sir Francis Drake across the Atlantic Ocean. Drake raided many Spanish settlements and stole Spanish treasure. Then, in 1586, Drake set his sights on Florida. He attacked St. Augustine. Drake's attack did much damage. But it failed to destroy St. Augustine.

In the early 1600s, England and France started their own colonies in North America. Soon, England held much of the land north of Florida. The English colonies lined the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. France also controlled a huge area. French claims reached down to the Gulf of Mexico.



England—now part of Great Britain—fought many battles and wars with Spain.

## E U R O P E A N   C O L O N I Z A T I O ...

Some battles took place in Florida. For example, the British attacked St. Augustine and other settlements in the early 1700s. They attacked again in 1740. Yet Florida remained under Spanish control.

In 1763, Spain and Great Britain signed a treaty to end a larger war fought in many places. In the treaty, Spain gave Florida to the British. In 1783, the British gave Florida back to the Spanish. This was also the result of a war fought far from Florida.

The French attacked and took over Pensacola in 1719. But they soon gave the city back to the Spanish. The French, however, kept control of the land west of Pensacola. This land came to be known as West Florida. The British gained West Florida in 1763. They gave it back to Spain in 1783.