

CHAPTER  
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Summary

CHAPTERS IN BRIEF *The Atlantic World, 1492–1800*

**CHAPTER OVERVIEW** Starting in 1492, the Spanish built a large empire in the Americas, but the native peoples suffered. In North America, the Dutch, French, and English fought for control. England finally won. The labor of enslaved persons brought from Africa supported the American colonies. The contact between the Old World and the New produced an exchange of new ideas.

## 1 Spain Builds an American Empire

**KEY IDEA** *The voyages of Columbus prompted the Spanish to carve out the first European colonies in the Americas.*

In 1492, Christopher Columbus, an Italian sailor, led a voyage on behalf of Spain. He sailed west from Europe intending to reach Asia but instead landed in the Americas. This was land that Europeans had not known existed before. Columbus thought at first that he had reached Asia, or the Indies. He misnamed the natives he met Indians and claimed the land for Spain. The king and queen agreed to let him lead another voyage. This one was an expedition to form colonies, or controlled lands, that Spain would rule.

In 1500, a Portuguese explorer landed in Brazil and claimed that land for his country. In 1501, another Italian sailor on behalf of Spain, Amerigo Vespucci, explored the eastern coast of South America. He said that these lands were not Asia but a new world. Soon after, a mapmaker showed the lands as a separate continent. He named them America after Vespucci.

Other voyages gave Europeans more knowledge about the world. One explorer reached the west coast of Central America and first saw the Pacific Ocean. Another, Ferdinand Magellan, led a bold expedition from Spain that sailed completely around the world. Magellan himself died about halfway around. However, a few members of his crew survived. They returned to Spain after sailing for almost three years.

Spanish conquistadors, or conquerors, also began to explore the lands of the Americas. There they found great riches. In 1519, Hernando Cortés came to Mexico and defeated the powerful Aztec Empire. The Spanish had the advantage of rifles and cannons. They also had the aid of several native groups who were angry over harsh Aztec

rule. In addition, the Aztec were seriously weakened by new diseases brought to the Americas with the Spanish. Native peoples had no resistance to measles, mumps, and smallpox, which killed them by the hundreds of thousands.

About 15 years later, another Spanish force, led by Francisco Pizarro, conquered the mighty Inca Empire of South America. Once again, the Spanish gained access to huge amounts of gold and silver. By the mid-1500s, Spain had formed an American empire that stretched from modern-day Mexico to Peru. After 1540, the Spanish looked north of Mexico and explored the future United States. However, one large area of the Americas—Brazil—remained outside the control of Spain. Brazil was the possession of Portugal. Colonists there built huge farms called plantations to grow sugar, which was in demand in Europe.

The Spanish had a pattern of living among the people they conquered. Because few Spanish settlers in the Americas were women, Spanish men had children with native women. These children and their descendants formed a large mestizo population, people with mixed Spanish and Native American blood. The Spanish also formed large farms and mines that used natives as slave labor. Many landowners treated the native workers harshly. Some Spanish priests criticized this treatment. In 1542, the Spanish stopped making slaves of native peoples. They soon, however, would bring enslaved Africans to the Americas to meet labor demands.

## 2 European Nations Settle North America

**KEY IDEA** *Several European nations fought for control of North America, and England eventually emerged victorious.*

In the early 1500s, the French began to explore North America. Jacques Cartier came across and named the St. Lawrence River. He then followed it

inward to reach the site of modern Montreal. In 1608, Samuel de Champlain sailed as far as modern Quebec. In the next 100 years, the French explored and claimed the area around the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River all the way to its mouth at the Gulf of Mexico. The area became known as New France. The main activity in this colony was trade in beaver fur.

The English also began to colonize North America. The first permanent settlement came at Jamestown, in modern Virginia, in 1607. The colony struggled at first. Many settlers died from disease, hunger, or war with the native peoples. Soon farmers began to grow tobacco to meet the high demand for it in Europe.

In the 1620s and 1630s, other groups from England began to settle in modern Massachusetts. These settlers were deeply religious people who did not agree with the practices of the Church of England. They wanted to purify the church and were called Puritans. They hoped to build a model community dedicated to God. They succeeded over time in part because many families settled there.

Meanwhile, the Dutch also started a new colony. They settled in the location of modern New York City and called it New Netherland. Like the French, they engaged in the fur trade and set up trading posts along the Hudson River. The colony did not grow very large, but it did attract people from other European countries. New Netherland became known as a home to people of many different cultures. Europeans also took possession of many islands of the Caribbean. There they built tobacco and sugar plantations that used enslaved Africans as workers.

The European powers began to fight for control of North America. First, the English forced the Dutch to give up their colony. New Amsterdam was renamed New York. The English also planted other colonies along the Atlantic coast, from Maine to Georgia. These colonists came in conflict with the French settlers in Canada on many occasions. The final fight started in 1754 and was called the French and Indian War. When it ended in 1763, France was forced to give up all its land in North America to Britain.

The native peoples responded to these events in many different ways. Many worked closely with the French and Dutch, joining in the fur trade and benefiting from it. Those who lived near the English, though, had stormier relations with colonists. More than just trade, the English were interested in

acquiring land for settlers' living and farming. This was land that Native Americans would not be able to use for hunting or growing their own food. This conflict erupted into war several times. Natives, though, could not overcome the settlers' guns and cannons. As in Spanish lands, the native peoples suffered even more from disease. Thousands upon thousands of natives died from European illnesses, making it impossible for them to resist the growth of the colonies.

## 3 The Atlantic Slave Trade

**KEY IDEA** *To meet their growing labor needs, Europeans enslaved millions of Africans in forced labor in the Americas.*

Slavery has a long history in Africa and in the world. For most of that history in Africa, though, no large numbers of people were enslaved. That changed in the 600s, when Muslim traders started to take large numbers of slaves. Between 650 and 1600, Muslims took about 17 million Africans to North Africa and Southwest Asia. Most did have certain rights. The European slave trade that began in the 1500s was larger. Also, the enslaved Africans were treated far more harshly.

In the Americas, when the natives began dying from disease, the Europeans brought in Africans, for three reasons. Africans had resistance to European diseases, so they would not get sick and die. Also, many Africans knew about farming so they would be accustomed to the work involved. Third, Africans were strangers to the Americas and would know no places to hide from slavery. From 1500 to 1870, when the slave trade in the Americas finally ended, about 9.5 million Africans had been imported as slaves.

The Spanish first began the practice of bringing Africans to the Americas. However, the Portuguese—looking for workers for sugar plantations in Brazil—increased the demand for slaves. During the 1600s, Brazil received more than 40 percent of all the Africans sent to the Americas. Other European colonies also brought slaves to work on tobacco, sugar, and coffee plantations. About 400,000 slaves were brought to the English colonies in North America. Their population increased over time, though, to number about 2 million in 1830.

Many African rulers joined in the slave trade. They moved inland to capture people and brought them to the coast to sell to European traders.

This trade was part of a triangular trade that linked Europe, Africa, and the Americas. European ships brought manufactured goods to Africa, trading them for people. They carried Africans across the Atlantic to the Americas, where they were sold into slavery. The traders then bought sugar, coffee, and tobacco, which they carried back to Europe. Another triangle involved ships sailing from the northern English colonies in North America. They carried rum to Africa, people to the West Indies, and sugar and molasses back to the colonies to make more rum.

The part of the voyage that brought people to the Americas was called the middle passage. It was harsh and cruel. People were crammed into ships, beaten, and given little food. Many died, and many others simply jumped overboard trying to escape. About 20 percent of the people on these ships died.

Life on the plantations was harsh as well. People were sold to the highest bidder and then worked from dawn to dusk in the fields of the plantations. They were given little food and lived in small huts. Africans kept alive their traditional music and beliefs to try to maintain their spirits. Sometimes they arose in rebellion. From North America to Brazil, from 1522 to the 1800s, there were small-scale slave revolts.

## 4 The Columbian Exchange and Global Trade

**KEY IDEA** *The colonization of the Americas introduced new and different items into the Eastern and Western hemispheres.*

There was constant movement of people from Europe and Africa to the Americas. This large-scale mixing of people and culture was called the Columbian Exchange. Important foods such as corn and potatoes were taken from the Americas, where they originated, to Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Some foods moved from the Old World to the New. Bananas, black-eyed peas, and yams were taken from Africa to the Americas. Cattle, pigs, and horses had never been seen in the Americas until the Europeans brought them. Of course, deadly illnesses also moved to the Americas. They killed a large portion of the Native American population.

The settling of the Americas and the growth of trade led to a new set of business practices still followed today. One was the rise of an economic system called capitalism. It is based on private owner-

ship of property and the right of a business to earn a profit. Another new business idea was the joint-stock company. With this, many investors pooled their money to start a business and share in the profits. European governments began to follow an idea called mercantilism. In this theory, a country's power depended on its wealth. Getting more gold and silver increased its wealth, as would selling more goods than it bought. Colonies played an important role because they provided goods that could be sold in trade.

With the American colonies, European society saw changes. Merchants grew wealthy and powerful, and towns and cities grew larger. Still, most people lived in the countryside, farmed for a living, and were poor.

## Review

1. **Drawing Conclusions** What single factor was most devastating for the native peoples of the Americas and what effect did it have?
2. **Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects** How did settlement patterns in the Spanish colonies lead to a mixing of Spanish and native cultures?
3. Why did the French and Dutch have better relations with the native peoples than the English?
4. **Comparing and Contrasting** Compare and contrast the Muslim slave trade in Africa with the European slave trade that began in the 1500s.
5. **Summarizing** What was exchanged in the Columbian Exchange?