



Big Era Six
The Great Global Convergence
1400 – 1800 CE



Landscape Teaching Unit 6.2
The Columbian Exchange and Its Consequences
1400 – 1650

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Why this unit?

During the period 1492-1650, America was the site of developments that would later have great importance not only for that continent but also for [Afroeurasia](#) and indeed the whole planet.

The [Columbian Exchange](#) was linked to [demographic](#), economic, and power-distribution changes. At this time and place emerged the seeds of American wealth, European imperialism and economic domination, and what we call [globalization](#). However, these did not flower, let alone bear fruit, until hundreds of years later.

The linking of America with Afroeurasia by way of both the Atlantic and the Pacific treated in Landscape Teaching Unit 6.1, and the resulting crossings to and fro of plants, animals, germs, people, and goods that are the focus of this Unit, had the following effects and long-term implications:

- They initiated the largest demographic catastrophe in the known history of the world. This happened because of the introduction of Afroeurasian diseases to immunity-lacking [Amerindian](#) populations. The consequent high mortality rates of American Indians, to which was added European mistreatment, made possible the rapid European conquests in the New World.
- They promoted the circulation of goods along a web of trade routes linking Africa, Europe, Asia, and America in every direction, eased by the flood of silver emerging from American mines.
- They made possible the exchange of food plants between America and Afroeurasia. This, in turn, made possible growing nutritious or useful crops in previously non-productive parts of ecosystems. This resulted in an increase, by the mid-seventeenth century, in the health and numbers of the population in various areas of the world.
- They began the process of increasing reliance on slave labor in America, which would eventually result in millions of Africans being carried off to the New World, where they and their children would work and die as slaves to the benefit of their captors, sellers, and owners. In the process, some African [states](#) would become richer and more powerful, while others would decline.
- They shifted the commerce of both Europe and West Africa significantly towards the Atlantic, though for Europe the Mediterranean and the Baltic, and for East Africa the Indian Ocean maritime routes remained important. Also, a lively commerce between China and the Americas became established.

- They provided the extraordinary income from silver that financed the maintenance of the Spanish empire in Europe, which declined in sync with the decline in the production and premium value of silver.
- They helped China to a huge expansion of its already wide commercial activity by supplying much of the silver its growing population needed for ordinary domestic buying and selling and that merchants needed for multiplying international transactions. The growth of trade stimulated Chinese production of items in demand abroad. Chinese population growth owing to the establishment there of high-calorie American plants, such as the sweet potato, led to increased domestic demand, which stimulated production for home consumption.
- When the Chinese satisfied their demand for silver, they no longer paid for it twice the price it fetched in Europe. Silver lost about two-thirds of its buying power, causing significant ripple effects in the incomes of the Spanish, Ottoman, and Chinese governments that had mandated their taxes to be paid in silver.

Unit objectives

Upon completing this unit, students will be able to:

1. Analyze the causes and severity of Native American mortality rates from 1500 to 1650.
2. Describe the contributions of Afroeurasia and the Americas to the biological exchanges of plants, animals, humans, and germs initiated by the permanent linking of these two regions.
3. Explain the consequences for global trade of linking America and Afroeurasia with each other.
4. Evaluate the moral significance of a) massive die-off of American Indian populations in the period 1500-1650 and b) the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved Africans.
5. Assess documentary and numerical evidence for reliability, and explain reasons for serious disagreements among historians about the size of Native American populations before and after contact with newcomers from Afroeurasia.

Time and materials

This unit is versatile. The variety and number of student readings, discussion questions, and activities provided are meant to give teachers the choice to use those most suited to their students, interests, and circumstances.

Time taken will vary depending on teachers' selections of the materials provided, on how long is spent on them, and on whether the Student Handouts and some of the activities can be assigned as homework.

Each of the two Lessons, and even parts of each, could be used alone. The basics could be covered with Student Handouts 1.1, 2.1, and 2.3, and a choice from among their associated questions and activities, in two to three forty-five-minute class periods. Using Student Handouts 1.2 and 1.3 and their questions and activities could be tailored to an additional class period, as could Student Handout 2.4 with its questions and activities.

No materials are needed other than pencil and paper.

Author

The author of this unit is Anne Chapman, retired after teaching high school history for over thirty years. She has served as a history education consultant to the College Board, the Educational Testing Service, and the National Center for History in the Schools. In the 1990s she was a member of the National History Standards' World History Task Force. She wrote *Coping with Catastrophe: The Black Death of the 14th Century*; *Women at the Heart of War, 1939-1945*; and *Human Rights in the Making: The French and Haitian Revolutions* for the National Center for History in the Schools. She also edited a volume of *World History: Primary Source Readings* for West Publishing and has written several Teaching Units for the World History for Us All curriculum.

The historical context

The year 1402 has been called by some “the birth year of European imperialism.” That was the year when a French expedition, backed by Spain, invaded one of the seven Canary Islands just off the North African coast. The Europeans conquered it, in spite of resistance by some 300 native people, named the Guanches by the invaders. The intruders then went on to gradually take over other islands in the group and continued to hold on to them in the name of the Spanish Crown.

This was the first attempt to plant a permanent European population on extra-continental territory since the Christian Crusading States were founded on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean in the eleventh-thirteenth centuries. Those colonies foundered owing to their inability to reproduce in sufficient numbers, to attract enough replacement population, and to generate enough supplies from home to maintain the European presence in [Southwest Asia](#). They suffered attrition from having to defend their settlements from the surrounding Muslim population, who were self-confident, militant, and much more numerous. Culturally and biologically, the Crusaders were poorly adapted to their environment. They were unwilling to marry the local Christian women, because they were Nestorian, Greek, or Syrian Christians, not Roman Catholics. They were generally reluctant to adopt local clothing and customs better suited to the climate than their European ones. And they suffered more than the natives from malaria and other local parasitic or infectious diseases.

Several nations in the fifteenth century had their eye on the Canaries, known to Europe for several centuries. The Portuguese seriously tried to seize the islands several times. One of their invading forces numbered 2,500 infantry and 120 horses. Their attempt, as well as numerous others, failed. But the Spanish continued to hammer away at the Canaries, where the total number of Guanches had, at best, been about 100,000. For nearly a century, Guanches defenders repeatedly pushed amphibious invaders, despite their horses and cannons, back into the sea. Nevertheless, one by one, the islands were gradually transformed into European possessions. The obstinacy of the invaders and their ability to keep calling up new forces from their home country resulted in the final surrender of surviving Guanches in 1496. The conquest of the Canaries foreshadowed in some ways subsequent Spanish experience in the Americas.

Long as the process of conquering them took, it would have been much longer still if the Guanches had not succumbed to diseases they caught from the invaders and to which they had no immunity. Those taken in the wars and on raids were enslaved and often sold abroad. After the conquest, Europeans settled the Canaries and proceeded to transform the islands' ecology by introducing new plants and animals from home.

The Madeiras, also off the North African coast, had been uninhabited when, in the 1420s, the first Portuguese settlers made themselves at home there. They started making a living by importing European plants and animals, raising pigs and cattle, as well as wheat and grapes for export. Income from these, however, would not make them rich. For substantial wealth, the Portuguese in Madeira needed to find something highly valued and with a ready market abroad. They settled on producing sugar, hotly in demand in Europe and valued in China and Africa as well. They decided to go in for a monoculture of this addictive substance for export, and to work it with slave labor. A kind of rehearsal for the later plantation systems in the Americas, it was a runaway success. Production went from 6,000 *arrobas* of sugar in 1455 to 140,000 *arrobas* in 1510. (Parallel to this development, Muslim entrepreneurs in Morocco also developed a thriving sugar industry.)

Europeans learned several things from their experiences on Atlantic islands. They learned that they, and their plants and animals, could live well and permanently in places where they never had been known before. They learned that peoples living on lands the invaders wanted to take over could be defeated, but that they could also sicken easily and therefore turn out to be useless as a labor force. They learned that slaves, especially African slaves, made good substitute workers. They also learned that having the right product to exchange could lead to riches.

When Columbus set out to reach the East by sailing west, he had an exchange of sorts in mind. He hoped to take home spices, gold, and perhaps an alliance with China or other Asian powers. What he offered were the benefits of Christianity and assurances of friendship from the Spanish crown for "the Great Khan in India."

However, instead of reaching the East, Columbus stumbled across one of the outliers of America, the island of Guanahani (San Salvador) in the Bahamas. The Columbian Exchange in

commodities was initiated when Columbus gave the local inhabitants red caps, strings of beads, and “other trifles of small value,” receiving in return parrots, American cotton thread, and javelins. The exchange soon tilted towards far greater advantage for the Europeans, who could get gold in return for pieces of pottery or shoelace tips. Soon, exchange between Europeans and Native Americans began to give place to extortion by the former.

In the long run, some suffered exceedingly as a result of the Columbian Exchange, notably Native Americans who succumbed to inadvertently-imported Afroeurasian diseases, often accompanied by deliberate European mistreatment and encroachment on local habitat. For many of them, their labor became a commodity, for the value of which they received little or nothing in exchange. Africans became items of exchange themselves, sold, bought, and brought in as slaves to produce much of what America’s contribution would be to the global exchange of goods: silver, tobacco, hides, indigo, and sugar, among others.

Numerous Afroeurasian animals, especially domestic species, arrived in the Americas within a generation of Columbus’ touching down in the Caribbean. The unrestrained roaming and feeding habits of horses, cattle, sheep, and pigs transformed wide swathes of the American landscape and damaged Native American crops. Some Indian groups transformed their own ways of life by adopting horses, cattle, or sheep. Hides became a major commodity of exchange in the foreign trade of the Americas. Of the very few American domesticated animals, the only one to successfully migrate to the Old World was the turkey. But, while accepted in Europe, turkeys had no large-scale impact there.

The exchange of plants began early and continued for a long time. The Spanish, Portuguese, English and others in the New World experimented with finding, and finally settling on, favorable places for growing their accustomed food crops, most of which were flourishing in America by the end of the sixteenth century, and some, such as sugar, in quantities allowing significant export. But Native Americans did not have much of a taste for the Old World foods.

By the seventeenth century, American food crops were making a major impact on population growth on the other side of the Atlantic. These included cassava and maize in Africa and sweet potatoes and maize in China. Less-heavy hitters but important nevertheless for taste and vitamins, including tomatoes and chili peppers, became accepted more gradually, some earlier in India and Indonesia than in Europe. The trends towards increasing reliance on food crops from opposite sides of the oceans, established by 1650, grew in the eighteenth century and beyond. Over one-third of all crops grown in China today originated in America.

Exchanges flourished across the Pacific as well. The Manila galleons carried silver to the Philippines, most of which ended up in China. In return, silk arrived in America in such quantities that it lowered prices there. In Lima and Mexico City, women wore Chinese silk in preference to cloth imported from Spain. The inhabitants of the Muslim world were tied into the new global network as both consumers of silver arriving by way of Europe from America and as middlemen speeding its transfer across the Indian Ocean to China.

Africa, already firmly linked in various ways to Europe and Asia, became conjoined to America also, mostly through the slave trade, although this did not reach its full spate until well after 1650. Initially, the Portuguese paid for slaves in goods like copper, brass, luxury cloths, and cowrie shells from the Indian Ocean. Sometime in the seventeenth century, payment shifted to European manufactured goods, such as cheap cloth and metal hardware, gradually including guns, which promoted warfare and increased the supply of slaves.

Great wealth, including the profits of the slave trade, poured from the wider Atlantic basin into Europe. Merchants flying Portuguese or Spanish flags at first dominated the Atlantic trade, but then the French, Dutch, and English entered on a large scale. By the seventeenth century, a connection was established between having overseas possessions and having European Great Power status. Simultaneously, the arena of European state rivalries expanded to global dimensions.

Spain's Protestant foes in England and the Netherlands seized gleefully on accounts of Spanish atrocities in the New World. These were used systematically as anti-Spanish propaganda, giving birth to the "Black Legend" that dogged Spain's reputation for centuries. Spanish defense was mostly centered on the benefits conferred on "heathen peoples" by Christianity and civilization and the need to take strong action against what was perceived as evil in the customs and "nature" of Native Americans.

European states, especially France, England, and the Netherlands, were increasingly impatient with Spain's claim that it was entitled to a monopoly over New World trade and lands, a claim based on the Pope's 1493 division of the overseas world between Spain and Portugal. (America, except Brazil, was on Spain's side of the dividing line; Asia and Brazil on Portugal's.) The dispute over legal justification for "owning" America and its maritime trade contributed to the hammering out of ideas about a "law of nations" that should govern international relations. It was first formalized by Grotius in the mid-seventeenth century, who urged in his code the "freedom of the seas."

From the fifteenth century on, the importance of maritime communications and trade increased explosively. By 1650, there was also increasing need for European states to spend money to protect their colonies against one another's attacks, especially since income and power of states were increasingly tied to the success of their maritime commerce. Unsurprisingly, there was a related rise in the importance to European nations of sea power, in terms of both numbers and armament of ships.

It became increasingly clear by the mid-seventeenth century that there were large chunks of America that Spain had become unable to either colonize or defend. The reasons were various. An important one was their loss of strength on the world exchange stage. The silver available from American mines declined as costs increased, and the profits delivered earlier by the hefty premium paid by silver-hungry China for that metal stopped when, finally, China's appetite for silver was glutted, at least for a time. The price of silver fell, and this metal lost much of its buying power worldwide. This put serious strain on governments, including Spain's, which

collected their taxes in silver. The Spanish merchant community lost confidence in the financial policies of the government, reducing their willingness to invest in the Indies trade. Wealth available to fuel exchanges shrank. Dutch and English attacks on Spanish treasure fleets and possessions in the New World intensified, and the northern European navies inflicted resounding defeats on Spanish fleets in the English Channel and off Brazil. Spain lost its earlier command of the sea to the Dutch, French, and English.

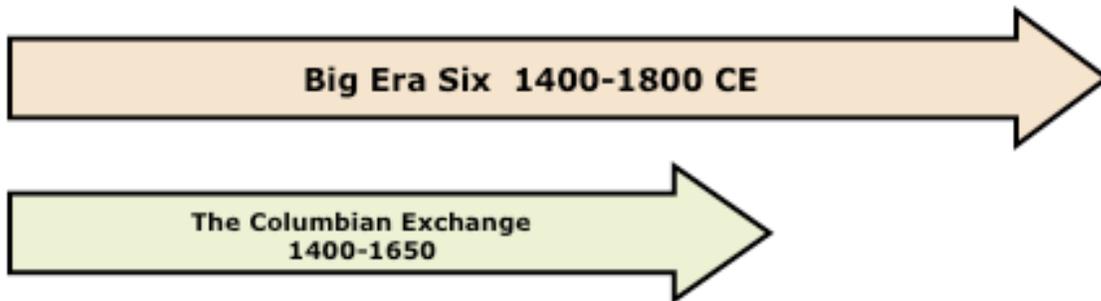
One result of Spain's loss was the increasing acceptance among European nations with overseas interests of the idea that possession was nine-tenths of the law, and "effective occupation" was sufficient title to overseas possessions. This idea was to play a major part in European imperialism in the nineteenth century.

Native Americans did not cross to Europe and Africa in significant numbers, but tens of thousands of them were transported as slaves from one part of America to another. Crossings of Europeans (who came from at least nine different countries) and of Africans (also from a number of different states and ethnic regions) to the New World could each be counted in the hundred thousands rather than in millions during this early period. The flood of migrants, forced or voluntary, came later. There was, however, complex and large-scale mixing of genetic material among inhabitants of the Americas. People of mixed parentage, European and Native American, Native American and African, European and African, multiplied fast. Their number in 1650 was just under that of the imported African slaves'. America as a melting pot had begun to bubble.

By 1650, America had become well integrated into the global economy. Its existence and what it had to offer stimulated trade and production worldwide and gave rise to growing populations across Afroeurasia. It came to serve as a link in, rather than barrier to, communications between Europe, which began shifting from the margins of long-distance trade to a more central position. From Europe, trade now went both east and west.

It was peculiarly fitting that Garcilaso de la Vega, offspring of a Spanish conquistador and an Inca princess, should have made the comment, in 1609, summing up the results of the oceanic voyages discussed and the Columbian Exchange: "There is only one world."

This unit in the Big Era Timeline



Lesson 1

The Great Dying

Introduction

- Students can work on most activities and questions as a whole class, as individuals, or in groups. Results of individual and group work usually need to be shared with the whole class.
- Give students the questions they are going to be asked to answer, and the activities they will be asked to do, *before* they read the documents on which the questions and the activities are based. This will help their concentration, comprehension, and performance.
- Questions and activities typically start with the relatively simple and go on to probes of increasing complexity.
- More questions and activities are provided than need be used in order to allow choices to be made based on teacher and student interests and circumstances. Besides those identified as possible assessments, some of the other questions and activities could so serve as well.
- Encourage students to keep notes of answers to discussion questions and results of activities.
- Keeping notes will help to organize and make sense of extensive and unfamiliar information. Reviewing notes will help towards success on assessments.

Introductory Activities

Ask students to respond to the following questions. If time is limited, each question (or parts of a question) could be assigned to a different group, which would then report its conclusions to the rest of the class.

1. Imagine you are a journalist and your editor wants you to write an article about the new pope's Easter sermon. An important part of the article should be the number of people who turned out to listen to him. The last pope had attracted many thousands. Your editor wants her staff to rely on personal observation, not hearsay or official handouts. What ways can you think of that would give you a reasonably reliable headcount of attendees? How would you justify your number to your editor?

2. Suppose that over the next fifty years or so, fast-acting **epidemics** wiped out half the US population. What do you think would be the results in economic, political, social, religious, and other terms?
3. Faced with unfamiliar foods, people are often unwilling even to try them. What examples can you think of, from your own or others' experience, of foods you refused to try? Which of the foods Europeans first met with in America do you think they had the most trouble accepting? Why? Which Afroeurasian foods do you think Native Americans had most trouble accepting? Why?
4. What products can you think of that today are bought and sold worldwide, and that, wherever they are bought, sold, or used, influence many peoples' lives in some considerable way?

Discussion Questions and Activities

1. List the reasons given by contemporaries for large-scale deaths and a steep decline in Native American populations after the arrival of Europeans. See Student Handout 1.1 (Native American Population Decline: Why and by How Much?). About which reason(s) is there general agreement?
2. Can the evidence in Student Handout 1.1 about reasons for Native American population decline be accepted as reliable? Why or why not? Are the reasons on which there is agreement more likely to be correct than those only one observer mentions? Why or why not?
3. What can you tell about European attitudes towards Native Americans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from contemporaries' comments as shown in Student Handout 1.1? Explain how you arrived at your conclusions.
4. What effects do you think the large number of deaths had on Native American societies before 1650? Consider possible effects on such areas as family life, producing and distributing food, relations between rulers and ruled, fighting ability, religious and other beliefs, outlook on life. How do your answers here compare to your answers to the Introductory Activity, question 2?
5. Compare the description of disease-caused mortality in Student Handout 1.2, Document 4 with that in Student Handout 1.2, Document 5. How would the differences affect the consequences of the heavy mortality?
6. Imagine that you are a government official in the mid-sixteenth century, sent out to travel over Spanish possessions in the New World and report to the king on the conditions of Native Americans there and their relations with the Spanish. You may take into account, and refer to, information from earlier in the century, unless you have reason to believe that the situation changed—in which case you will probably want to explain that. Based on the

information in Lesson 1, what points would you definitely want to cover in your report? Why those? How might your being a government official reporting to the king influence what you say? (This activity may serve as assessment.)

7. Consider the reliability as historical evidence of Student Handout 1.1, Documents 2, 4, 8, 9, and 11. Take into account whatever information you have about the subject matter and the author from any part of Student Handout 1.1. (This activity lends itself well to group work.) For each Document:
 - What reasons might you have for questioning its reliability?
 - What reasons might you have for accepting its reliability?
 - Rank order the five documents above from the most to the least believable, and explain the reasons for your ranking. What questions would you ask that might help you decide on the believability or otherwise of the documents?
8. Using the table information in Student Handout 1.2, Document 1, construct a large-format graph that shows for each date in the sequence 1300 to 1700 both sets of complete population estimates.
 - For the Americas
 - For Africa
 - For Europe
 - For India
 - For China
9. Find a way to distinguish the lines on your graph that give information about the five different regions, and to distinguish the two estimates for the same region from each other. You might use a thin line, a thick line, a line made up of dots, one made up of dashes, and one of small circles. A double line could distinguish one estimate from the other. Having studied your graph, answer the following questions:
 - On what information about the populations in the five regions do the estimates agree?
 - For which regions does the graph show a decline in population size at some point?
 - What explanations could you give for the decline in each case?
 - What information in this table would you consider most reliable? Why?

- What questions would you ask that might raise or lower your confidence in the reliability of the information?
10. Taking into account all information in Student Handout 1.2 (What Numbers to Believe), which information about the Amerindian population would you say that twentieth-century scholars generally agree on?
11. Is there any evidence in Lesson 1 suggesting that the population estimate for central Mexico of 51.6 million just before the arrival of the Europeans should not be accepted? See Student Handout 1.2, Document 6. If so, what? Is there any evidence in favor of its acceptance? If so, what?
12. For which of the causes of population decline cited by Robert McCaa in 1995 (Student Handout 1.2, Document 8) is there confirmation in the contemporary reports included in Student Handout 1.1? Give examples. Which are most thoroughly confirmed? Explain.
13. In determining which of several different population estimates to accept as the most reliable one, which of the following factors would influence your thinking?
- The recentness of the estimate
 - Its position in the range of estimates from highest to lowest
 - How many scholars cited it
 - Whether it was by someone considered an authority (such as, for instance, a professor who has published much in the field)
 - Whether it was by a specialist (such as a demographer rather than a geographer or a historian)
 - How it was supported by evidence. (Remember that the amount and kind of evidence available has not changed significantly since 1924 and is known to be spotty and inconsistent.)

If more than one of the above would influence you, would any carry greater weight than any other? Why or why not? If any would do so, which one?

14. Why does the estimated size of Native American populations at any time between 1490 and 1650 matter? Why do you think there is so much disagreement and controversy about

population figures at the time of, and after, the European conquests in America? What choices do historians have in dealing with this situation? What ought they to do? Why?

15. If you were asked to recommend, based on information in Student Handout 1.2, what estimate of the total number of people living in the Americas in about 1490 to include in an editorial in the *New York Times*, what number would you give? Defend your choice to the editors. To do so, draw on relevant information from Lesson 1.
16. What reasons might have led some Europeans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries not to see “the decline of the ... native population ... as a tragedy?” (The quote is from Student Handout 1.2, Document 9.) Use information from Lesson 1 to help with your answer. Might any of those reasons still be offered today? Why or why not? If any are, then which? If not, what changed between then and now that might make a difference?
17. What questions would you ask that might help you better understand the reasons for European attitudes and behavior towards Native Americans during the period 1500-1650? Native Americans’ attitudes and behavior towards Europeans during the same period?
18. Create a conversation between one of the following two pairs:
 - a) Someone who feels that arguing either in favor of or against calling European behavior towards Native Americans “genocide” is pointless because it makes no difference today what you call it, and b) someone who believes that such an argument is important because whether this behavior is called “genocide” has significant political, social, or cultural consequences today.
 - a) A supporter of David Stannard’s position on genocide (Student Handout 1.3, Document 1), and b) a supporter of James Axtell’s position (Student Handout 1.3, Document 2).

In both cases, take into account the current definition of genocide given in Student Handout 1.3, Document 1, as well as any other relevant information from Lesson 1.

19. What moral standards can be used in assessing blame or guilt for things done long ago and far away, by people different from us? Should they be judged by their own values, or by ours? Why? Should historians try to avoid any moral judgment of actions taken by people in the past? Why or why not?
20. Using European-Native American relations from 1492 to 1650 as a case study, create a conversation among three people:
 - One who believes that historians should judge people in the past by their own values.

- One who believes that historians should judge people in the past by our values.
- One who believes that historians should try to avoid any moral judgment of people in the past.

Should we assume or not that all people in a past society shared *the same values*? What if the values of some people in the society (e.g., the ruling class) conflicted with the values of others (e.g., rural peasants)? What difference does it make whether, and how, historians judge people in the past?

21. Based on Lesson 1, list the most important information about the Native American population between 1500 and 1650 that you think should be included in a world history textbook. Explain how you arrived at the choices you made, including how you decided on what was “most important.” What information about this topic, in addition to what is presented in Lesson 1, would you like to see included, if it could be found? Why? What might lead someone else to make different choices from yours?

Extension Activities

1. Research the most recent estimates available of the number of Iraqi civilians killed between the US invasion of March 2003 and the end of 2009. How were the estimates arrived at? How much agreement is there on the numbers? What hypotheses can you come up with to account for differences or unanimity regarding the estimates? Compare your findings with the information in Lesson 1 about Native American deaths and the controversies surrounding it.
2. Compare the epidemics in the Americas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the [Black Death](#) in Afroeurasia in the fourteenth century. (See Big Era 5.)

Lesson 1

Student Handout 1.1—Native American Population Decline: Why and by How Much?

Background

When they first arrived in the Americas, the Spanish had just won a generations-long, ruthlessly-fought war against Muslim states in Iberia. Afterward, they expelled from Spain both those Muslims remaining and the approximately 200,000 resident Jews. Legal theory held that fighting to expand Christianity justified enslavement of infidels at will, taking over their lands, and disposing of them as the conquerors wished.

During increasing contact with Native Americans in the 1500s, there were heated discussions among Spanish political and religious leaders about whether the inhabitants of “the Indies” were even human and about how they should be treated. Opinion was divided on whether they were capable of becoming converted. To some, they were innocent, trusting lambs, with souls that would be receptive to the Christian message. To others, they were vicious beasts who practiced cannibalism, human sacrifice, and worship of Satan. To all, they were clearly inferior to the Spanish who had conquered them.

From the beginning, the Spanish crown was concerned for the welfare of Native Americans. It ruled that they were to be paid fair wages for work they freely undertook, be secure in their possessions and persons, and be treated well. Anyone who beat Native Americans or called them “dogs” was fined five gold pesos. However, if they refused to become Christians and submit to Spain’s rule, the Requirement (a document read to them, in Spanish, by the early explorers and conquistadors) told them the consequences: they could be attacked, enslaved, or put to death. And it would all be their own fault, no response being taken as refusal.

In 1542, the *New Laws* of Spain stated that it was illegal to enslave Native Americans under any circumstances whatsoever. Yet they were unfree in Spanish America under the *encomienda* system, an institution traditional in Spain and similar to serfdom. It assigned a group of natives in a neighborhood to a Spaniard, to whom they owed tribute and labor services in return for protection and instruction in Christianity. Senior royal and Church officials were appointed “Protectors of the Indians,” to supervise and inspect *encomiendas* so that Indians would enjoy justice and good government. The system, however, was open to widespread abuse, which officials mostly ignored. The *New Laws* were only spottily enforced.

In North America, the English were eager to convert and “civilize” the natives, whom they considered at best inferior, at worst barbaric, and little better than beasts. Nevertheless, they often allied with Native Americans against other Native Americans and against other European colonial powers. English settlers continually encroached on the lands of Native Americans, who resisted. In some places at some times, massacres occurred on both sides.

In Their Own Words**Documents Reporting and Explaining Large-Scale Native American Deaths, 1512-1666****Document 1**

The Spaniard Peter Martyr, official government chronicler of events in the New World, gave an account of Vasco Núñez de Balboa's expedition to the Pacific. He wrote about the behavior of expedition members towards Native Americans in 1516.

The Spaniards cut off the arm of one, the leg or hip of another, and from some their heads at one stroke, like butchers cutting up beef and mutton for market. Six hundred, including the cacique [chief], were thus slain like brute beasts. ... Vasco [Balboa] ordered forty of them to be torn to pieces by dogs.

Source: Qtd. in Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 141.

Document 2

Soon after 1520, Bernardino Vázquez de Tapia, one of the Spaniards with Cortés in Mexico, gave his eyewitness testimony. Note that a "mosque" is a Muslim place of worship. Vázquez de Tapia refers to the Aztec temple as the "Main Mosque," even though the indigenous peoples of Mexico were not Muslims and had no knowledge of Islam at that time.

This witness saw Pedro de Alvarado [Cortés' second in command] go to the Main Mosque [the Temple of Huitzilopochtli in Tenochtitlán, the Aztec capital] with a certain number of Spaniards where they found the Indians getting ready for their dances. ... Alvarado had [four of] them seized and ... tortured to find out if they were to take arms against [the Spaniards]. ... [They] confessed to anything ... under torture. ... Later Alvarado decided to go to the Main Mosque to kill them. ... [He] called all his people to arms and ... went with his men fully armed to the Main Mosque where three or four hundred Indians were dancing, holding each other's hands ... and another two or three thousand sitting down watching them. ... [N]one of them moved; they remained still, and Alvarado began to surround them ... as soon as they were surrounded, he began to hit them and cry "die" and all those with him did the same. ... [T]hey killed four hundred noblemen and chiefs. ... Alvarado must take the blame for it in the opinion of this witness.

Source: Qtd. in John H. Parry and Robert G. Keith, ed., *New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early 17th Century*, Vol. III: *Central America and Mexico* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 290-1.

Document 3

In the late 1520s, Juan de Zumárraga, the first bishop of Mexico, wrote to the Spanish king in concern about the drop in Native Americans' birthrate. In 1542, Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas gave different reasons for the same problem.

They no longer approach their wives, in order not to beget slaves. (Zumárraga)

[Because of enforced labor services], husbands and wives were together [only] every eight or ten months, and when they met they were so exhausted and depressed on both sides that they had ... ceased to procreate. (Las Casas)

Source: Qtd. in Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York: Harper and Row), 134.

Document 4

In 1533, the Spanish official Castañeda wrote to the king about his concern for the Native Americans in his territory.

The Indians of this province [Nicaragua] are becoming extinct, and if something is not done quickly, there will be none left in four years. ... [T]hey are made to work in the mines, which labor by itself would be enough to destroy and extinguish them all, because the nearest of the mines are forty leagues [160 miles] away, and though the Indians who work in this province are well fed by their masters with bread, meat, and fish, as well as the other local food crops ... this is not enough to keep them from dying from the work. ... [T]he land where the mines are is very cold and rainy. ... The Indians who go to the mines work at extracting gold in the cold and rain and in great exhaustion, and since they come from the hot land of these plains, where they are accustomed to plenty of fruit, fish, and other delicacies they have among them, when they are taken ill there with the coldness of the land and the absence of the [foods] they have been raised on, even though their masters ... take good care of them, this is not enough to keep them from dying, since [they also] have a very weak constitution. ... The Indians who ... transport maize to the labor gangs have to set to work as soon they arrive after traveling forty leagues; thus, if they are taken sick, the illness catches them when they are worn out and exhausted, and in order not to die there, such people leave for their homes, where they never arrive, since they die on the way.

Source: Qtd. in John H. Parry and Robert G. Keith, ed., *New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early 17th Century*, Vol. III: *Central America and Mexico* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 118.

Document 5

The sixteenth-century Spanish newcomers in the Americas were used to fencing their fields and leaving their livestock free to range at will. Native American farmers, having no livestock, did not fence their fields. Unsurprisingly, Spanish livestock ranged into and through their unprotected fields, eating and trampling their crops. Antonio de Mendoza, the first viceroy of New Spain, wrote to the Spanish king in the 1530s.

May your Lordship realize that if cattle are allowed, the Indians will be destroyed.

Source: Qtd. in Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 99.

Document 6

Spanish explorer and conquistador Pascual de Andagoya heard about the rich land to the south called “Biru” or “Piru” when he was governor in the area that is now Colombia. Having unsuccessfully tried conquest in Inca territory, he wrote in 1539 as follows.

The Indians [there] are being totally destroyed and lost. ... [The soldiers are] killing all the llamas they want for no greater need than to make tallow candles. ... The Indians are [also] left with nothing to plant, and since they have no cattle and can never obtain any, they cannot fail to die of hunger.

Source: Qtd. in David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992), 88.

Document 7

Toribio de Motolinía, one of first Franciscan missionaries to Mexico, wrote around 1540 in his *History of the Indians of New Spain* about a smallpox epidemic.

[In most provinces of Mexico], more than one half of the population died; in others the proportion was little less. ... They died in heaps, like bedbugs. ... Many others died of starvation, because since they were all taken sick at once, they could not care for each other.

Source: Qtd. in Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 52-3.

Document 8

Father Bartolomé de las Casas was an energetic activist on behalf of the native peoples of the Americas among whom he worked. He realized his aim of inspiring legislation to protect Indians by his frequent reports detailing Spanish atrocities and abuses. He did not, however, succeed in getting these laws consistently enforced. The following are from his 1542 book, *Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*.

a) [In Cuba in 1512, a hundred or more Spaniards, eager to compare the sharpness of their swords], began to rip open the bellies ... [of] men, women, children, and old folk, all of whom were seated, off guard and frightened, watching the mares and the Spaniards. ... not a man of all of them there remains alive. ... [I]n the same way, with cuts and stabs, [they killed all in a house nearby. The massacre then spread to other villages. Well over 20,000 were killed during this rampage].

b) [T]he Spaniards determined on a massacre [in the Mexican town of Cholula, in 1519] or, as they say, a chastisement [punishment] to sow terror and the fame of their valor throughout that country. ... [T]hey first sent to summon all the lords and nobles of the town ... and when they came ... they were promptly captured. ... They had asked for five or six thousand Indians to carry their baggage all of whom immediately came. ... Being all collected and assembled in the courtyard ... some armed Spaniards were stationed at the gates ... [and] all others seized their swords and lances, and butchered all [the Indians], not even one escaping. ... More than one hundred of the lords whom they had bound, the [Spanish] captain commanded to be burned, and impaled alive on stakes stuck in the ground. ...

c) On Hispaniola ... in the mines [where the islanders enticed there from the Bahamas] were forced to work ... life was short for them. Full of despair at finding themselves duped [into mining for the Spaniards] they poisoned themselves with yucca juice; or died of hunger and overwork, delicate as they were.

Sources: Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Very Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, quoted in a) David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992), 71; b) Marvin Lunenfeld, ed., *1492: Discovery, Invasion, Encounter* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1991), 208-9; c) Thomas Christensen and Carol Christensen, eds., *The Discovery of America and Other Myths: A New World Reader* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1992), 183-4.

Document 9

The Franciscan friar Toribio de Motolinía, between whose order and that of the Dominicans (to which Las Casas belonged) there was traditional rivalry and enmity, wrote to the Spanish king in 1555 about the latter's campaign against Spanish behavior in the Indies, as follows.

Las Casas ... thinks that all err and he alone is right, [making statements such as] "All the conquerors have been robbers and ravishers, the most qualified in evil and cruelty that there ever have been, as is manifest to the whole world." All the conquerors, he says, without making a single exception. Your majesty already knows the instructions and orders that those who go to new conquests carry ... and how they work to observe them, and are of as good a life and conscience as Las Casas ... [who seeks] to exaggerate and make worse the evils and sins that have occurred. ...

During the last ten years the natives of this land have diminished greatly in number. The reason for it has not been bad treatment, because for many years now the Indians have been well treated, looked after, and defended; rather the cause has been the great diseases and plagues that New Spain has had. ...

Source: Qtd. in Marvin Luenfeld, ed., *1492: Discovery, Invasion, Encounter* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1991), 212-4.

Document 10

Domingo de Santo Tomás, a Spanish Dominican friar who spent time in Peru in the mid-sixteenth century and learned the Quechua language, wrote about Spanish explorations in search of gold to the Amazon.

Some two or three hundred Spaniards go on these expeditions, [but] they take two or three thousand Indians to serve them and carry their food and fodder. ... Few or no Indians survive, because of lack of food, the immense hardships of the long journeys through wastelands, and from the loads themselves.

Source: Qtd. in David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992), 88.

Document 11

Andrés Chacón, an *encomendero* of Peru, wrote in 1570 in a letter to his brother in Spain as follows:

The Indians give me nothing, that is, I take little from them and have expenses for priests and other things for them and ... since they are on the main highway and have been mistreated and destroyed, few of them remain. Once there were more than 2,000 Indians, and now there are about 200. I consider them as if they were my children; they have helped me earn a living. ... I have given them 220 pesos in income [and] I will leave them free of tributes when I die, so that whoever enjoys the tributes will not mistreat the Indians to get his revenue. Probably you there will say that it would be better to give this to my relatives than to the Indians. But I owe it to these children who have served me for thirty-odd years; it is a debt of life, and if I did not repay it I would go to hell. I am obliged to do what I can for my relatives, but if I don't, I won't go to hell for it. ... I have sheep, goats, and pigs here, and I did have cows, but recently I sold them because they damaged the Indians' crops.

Source: Qtd. in James Lockhart and Enrique Otte, trans. and ed., *Letters and People of the Spanish Indies: Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976), 67-8.

Document 12

A member of Francis Drake's expedition to Florida in 1585 reported.

The wilde people ... died verie fast and said amongst themselves, it was the Inglisshe God that made them die so fast.

Source: Qtd. in Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 40.

Document 13

Thomas Hariot, hired by Raleigh for his astronomical and **cartographic** expertise, traveled to Virginia where he learned the Algonquin language. He wrote in 1588.

[Within a few days of our departure from their towns] the people began to die very fast, and many in a short space; in some towns about twenty, in some forty, and in one six score [120], which in truth was very many in respect to their numbers. ... The disease ... by report of the oldest men in the country never happened before. ... All the space of their sickness, there was no man of ours known to die, or that was especially sick. [Also], some of our company towards the end of the year, showed themselves too fierce, in slaying some of the people, in some towns, upon causes that on our part, might easily enough have been borne.

Sources: Qtd. in Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 66-7. Language modernized by Anne Chapman.

Document 14

José de Acosta, a Spanish Jesuit missionary writing before 1600, claimed that by the 1580s, most of the peoples of the Antilles and the lowlands of New Spain, Peru, and the Caribbean shores had been killed or driven off, due to disease and Spanish brutality.

Of thirty parts of the people that inhabit it, there wants twenty-nine; and it is likely the rest of the Indians will in short time decay.

Source: Qtd. in Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 38.

Document 15

Hernández Arana, descendant of the last ruler of the Guatemalan Maya Cakchiquels, wrote this in his *Annals of the Cakchiquels* in the second half of the sixteenth century.

[During 1519] the plague began, oh my sons! ... It was truly terrible, the number of dead there were in that period. ... [In 1521] the plague began to spread. ... The people could not in any way control the sickness. ... Great was the stench of the dead. ... The dogs and the vultures devoured the bodies. The mortality was terrible. Your grandfathers died, and with them died the son of the king and his brothers and kinsmen. ... [In 1560] the plague which had lashed the people long ago began [again] here. ... [A] fearful death fell on our heads ... Now the people were overcome by intense cold and fever ... then came a cough growing worse and worse ... and small and large sores broke out on them. The disease attacked everyone here. ... Truly it was impossible to count the number of men, women, and children who died this year. My mother, my father, my younger brother, and my sister, all died. ...

Source: *The Annals of the Cakchiquels*, qtd. in Marvin Lunenfeld, ed., *1492: Discovery, Invasion, Encounter* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1991), 312-3.

Document 16

After the Spanish conquest, an anonymous Mayan of Mexico wrote, probably in the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, about his people before the coming of the Spaniards in the *Book of Chilam Balam*.

There was then no sickness; they had no aching bones; they had then no high fever; they had then no smallpox; they had then no burning chest ... they had then no consumption; they had then no headache ... The foreigners made it otherwise when they arrived here.

Source: *The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel*, qtd. in Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 36.

Document 17

In 1622-23, authorities of the Virginia colony had the following to say about the local Native American tribes.

[We recommend that, children being spared, soldiers should pursue the adults], surprising them in their habitations, intercepting them in their hunting, burninge their Townes, demolishing their Temples, destroyinge their canoes ... carrying away their Corne, and depriving them of whatsoever may yield them succor or relief ... rooting them out for being longer a people upon the face of the Earth. [Virginia Company of London, 1622]

[Against] these barberous and perfidious enemys, wee hold nothing injuste, that may tend to their ruine. [Virginia Council of State, 1623]

Source: Qtd. in Alden T. Vaughan, “Expulsion of the Salvages: English Policy and the Virginia Massacre of 1622,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35, 1 (January 1978), 77-8.

Document 18

Increase Mather, a New England colonist, clergyman, and first president of Harvard College, saw Indian disease as divine intervention. He wrote this in 1631. Elsewhere, he observed that entire towns of New England Indians were destroyed by smallpox, with not even a single survivor.

About this time [1631] the Indians began to be quarrelsome touching the Bounds of the Land which they had sold to the English, but God ended the Controversy by sending the Smallpox amongst the Indians ... who were before that time exceedingly numerous.

Source: Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 75.

Document 19

Two English colonial governors in North America during the seventeenth century wrote.

a) For the natives, they are neere all dead of small Poxe, so as the Lord hathe cleared our title to what we possess.

(John Winthrop, first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony)

b) [Thank God for sending] smallpox &c. to lessen their numbers: so that the English, in Comparison with the Spaniard, have but little Indian blood to answer for.

(A governor of South Carolina)

Sources: a) Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), 208; b) Alfred W. Crosby, “The Columbian Voyages and their Historians,” in *Islamic and European Expansion*, ed. Michael Adas (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993), 158.

Document 20

In 1641, Miantonomo, a Narragansett chief from Long Island, tried to talk the Montauks into a coordinated attack upon the English, as follows.

[Y]ou know our fathers had plenty of deer and skins, our plains were full of deer, as also our woods, and of turkies, and our coves full of fish and fowl. But these English having gotten our land, they with scythes cut down the grass, and with axes fell the trees; their cows and horses eat the grass, and their hogs spoil our clam banks, and we shall all be starved. [Therefore, let us] fall on and kill men, women, and children, but no cows, for they will serve to eat till our deer be increased again.

Sources: Qtd. in James Axtell, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992), 119-20; chief's name from Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 60, epigraph.

Lesson 1

Student Handout 1.2—What Numbers to Believe?

Background

Twentieth-century scholars were creative in their use of a wide range of sources to get at population figures for the Americas from 1492 onward. Their results varied widely, and hot disputes about the size of Native American populations continue. Note that there are also large differences in estimates of pre-eighteenth century populations for other regions of the world.

The following have been used most widely to arrive at estimates for America:

1. **Europeans' reports** produced by explorers, conquistadors, missionaries, and others.
Problems: Information is lacking on how the numbers reported were arrived at. Very few are known to have been personal counts. Bias and unintentional inaccuracy may be present. Reports were not systematically made for every populated part of the continent.
2. **Early Church records** of numbers converted, baptized, and paying tribute. *Problems:* No way to tell what proportion of the total population at the time these represented. Possible temptation to inflate numbers of converted and underreported tribute.
3. **Later Church, government, and other censuses** of Native American populations.
Problems: Both their accuracy and the proportion of the total population they included have been questioned. Censuses did not include every populated area, nor were they uniform in what they counted. People counted could have been male heads of household, payers of tribute, those baptized, recorded births, and so on.
4. **Mortality rates** used to calculate backward from much later and more reliable population figures. The assumed average yearly mortality would be deducted to arrive at an earlier population size. *Problems:* Using estimates from contemporary descriptions, same as in 1 above. Using the known mortality rates in modern times of the diseases responsible for high death rates assumes an overwhelming role for disease. Does not allow for several diseases, not all of which can be identified with certainty. Not being able to allow for the differences in death rates owing to age, general health, treatment of the sick, and other factors, all unknown.
5. **Ecological estimates** based on how many people could be fed with a known crop, produced by known methods (e.g., were fields left unplanted every other year, or every third?) in the size area where the crop was known to be grown or could have been grown. *Problems:* Just because a certain number could be fed, that many did not necessarily actually live there. Finding out what size fields were actually planted with what, and how, poses many difficulties. Both crops and methods of production could unpredictably change over time.

Document 1**Which populations did well? Which poorly? When?**

Estimates of Changes in Population in Selected Regions, 1300-1700
(population in millions)

	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700
Americas	32 (28)	39 (30)	42 (41)	13 (15)	12 (10)
Comparison					
Africa	68 (67)	68 (74)	87 (82)	113 (90)	107 (90)
Europe	70 (73)	52 (45)	67 (69)	89 (89)	95 (115)
China	83 (99)	70 (112)	84 (125) [155]	110 (140) [231]	150 (205)
India	100 (50)	74 (46)	95 (54)	145 (68)	175 (100)

NOTE: Figures on the left are 1979 estimates (source 1); figures in parentheses are 1954 estimates (source 2); figures in brackets for China, 1500 and 1600, are from 1999 (source 3).

Sources: 1. Based on J. R. Biraben, "Essai sur l'évolution du nombre des hommes," *Population* 34 (1979), 16, qtd. in *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*, David Christian (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 345. 2. M. K. Bennett, *The World's Food: A Study of the Interrelations of World Populations, National Diets, and Food Potentials* (New York: Harper, 1954), Table 1, reproduced in André Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1998), 168. 3. Dennis O'Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Journal of World History* 13, 2 (2002): 400.

Document 2

Just how many inhabitants of America were there before European arrival touched off a large-scale die-off?

Some Twentieth-Century Estimates of America's Total Native Population in the 1490s
(add 000)

Estimate	Date of Estimate
40-50,000	1924
50-75,000	1928
13,101	1931
8,400	1939
13,170	1945
15,500	1952
100,000	1964
90,043-112,554	1966
33,300	1967
43,000-72,000	1976

Source: Based on Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 23, Table 2.1.

Document 3**Estimated population of the European countries that had early contact with the Americas.**

Country	Approximately 1500 CE
France	15,000,000
Italy	10,000,000
Spain	6.5 to 10,000,000
British Isles	5,000,000
Portugal	1,250,000
Netherlands	less than 1,000,000
Total Europe (except Russia)	60 to 70,000,000

Source: Based on Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 36-7.

Document 4

Historian John H. Elliott in 2006 assumed agreement on a 90 percent population decline, despite wide disagreement on total population figures.

Estimates of the total population of the Americas on the eve of the arrival of the first Europeans have varied wildly, from under 20 million to 80 million or more. ... While the totals will always be a matter of debate, there is no dispute that the arrival of the Europeans brought demographic catastrophe in its train, with losses of around 90 percent in the century or so following the first contact. ... Forms of sickness that in Europe were not necessarily lethal brought devastating mortality rates to populations that had not built up the immunity that would enable them to resist.

In **Mesoamerica** the smallpox which ravaged the Mexica ... in 1520-21 ... was followed ... by waves of epidemics ... 1531-4, measles; 1545, typhus and pulmonary plague; ... 1550, mumps; 1559-63, measles, influenza, mumps, and diphtheria; 1576-80, typhus, smallpox, measles, mumps; 1595, measles. Comparable waves struck the people of the Andes. [Population decline] appears to have been of the order of 90 percent, although there were significant regional and local variations.

Source: John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006), 64-5.

Document 5

For comparison: Examples of European mortality rates from epidemics, 1346-1651.

a) Die-offs [during the Black Death, a disease apparently new in Europe at least since about 500 CE] in Europe varied widely. Some small communities experienced total extinction. Others ... seem to have escaped entirely. ... The plague ... was propagated not solely by fleabites, but also [by] coughing or sneezing of an infected individual. [Such infections] were 100 percent lethal. ... In recent times, mortality rates for [flea-transmitted bubonic plague] varied between 30 and 90 percent. [However, in the fourteenth century not] everyone was exposed. Overall, the best estimate of plague-provoked mortality, 1346-50, in Europe as a whole is that about one-third of the total population died. ... Mortality clearly varied sharply from community to community. ... Moreover ... recurrent plagues followed at irregular intervals [about every 10 years]. A loss of 30 to 40 percent is [confirmed] by local studies in [Italy], France, Spain, England, and Germany.

b) In Uelzen [Germany] the plague of 1597 carried off 33 percent of the population ... Santander in Spain was virtually wiped off the map in 1599, losing 83 percent of its 3000 inhabitants. ... Mantua [Italy] in 1630 lost nearly 70 percent of its population, Naples and Genoa in 1656 nearly half theirs. ... [In a European population in the Americas] over the seventeenth century ... [among] the English emigrants ... in Barbados, it took approximately 150,000 immigrants to produce a population of 20,000 ...

Sources: a) William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1976), 147-8; last two lines from: Massimo Livi Bacci, *A Concise History of World Population*, trans. Carl Ipsen (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 49. b) M. J. Seymour, *The Transformation of the North Atlantic World, 1492-1763: An Introduction* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 156.

Document 6

Historian and historiographer David P. Henige in 1998 cast doubt on population estimates for pre-European contact with Native Americans.

In the 1930s the population of the western hemisphere at the time of the arrival of the Europeans was estimated at 8 million. Some fifty years later it was asserted that ... no fewer than 51.6 million American Indians were living in central Mexico alone, and up to 70 million were living elsewhere. ... [T]his change was not grounded in an increase in the amount of direct evidence available. In fact, during this fifty-year period there was no change in the evidence at all ...

Source: David P. Henige, *Numbers from Nowhere: The American Indian Contact Population Debate* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 23.

Document 7

Demographer Massimo Livi Bacci in 1997 gave reasons for questioning a high population estimate for pre-conquest central Mexico.

It is difficult to accept the [estimate for central Mexico's pre-conquest population, originally published in 1963 and regularly quoted since] of 25 million: given the restricted area in which the population must have been concentrated, its density would have been about 50 persons per square kilometer, considerably higher than that of the most densely populated country area of Europe at the time (Italy, with about 35 persons per square kilometer). Considering the fairly rudimentary technology of the indigenous population, the harshness of the terrain, and the moderate productivity of their agriculture, one is inclined to [accept the more careful estimate] of well below 10 million.

Source: Massimo Livi Bacci, *A Concise History of World Population*, trans. Carl Ipsen (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997), 58.

Document 8

Historian Robert McCaa in 1995 cited agreement that the rate of Mexican population decline fell between 55 and 96 percent, and argued for multiple causes.

There is agreement that a demographic disaster occurred and that epidemic disease was a dominant factor. ... But the role of disease cannot be understood without taking into account massive harsh treatment (forced migration, enslavement, abusive labor demand, and exorbitant tribute payments) and ecological devastation accompanying Spanish colonization. Killing associated with war and conquest was clearly a secondary factor, except in isolated cases. ... [He added that] whatever the estimate of the size of population of central Mexico before the conquest, nine scholars out of ten estimate the population decline ... [1519-95 was] somewhere between 55 and 96 percent.

Source: Robert McCaa, "Smallpox and Demographic Catastrophe in Mexico: What can Spanish and Náhuatl Narratives tell us that Numbers Cannot?" Unpublished manuscript, 1995, qtd. in *A Concise History of World Population*, Massimo Livi Bacci, trans. Carl Ipsen (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997), 58, n. 56.

Document 9**Historical demographer Ryan Johansson warned in 1982 of bias in population estimates.**

The most important thing to remember in evaluating competing [population] estimates is that, with few exceptions, most are overtly or covertly influenced by ... political ... biases. Generally, the first estimates of the total number of inhabitants of the New World at the time of contact were contributed by “pro-Europeans.” ... Europeans were regarded as colonizing a vast land with [few] people, and the subsequent demise or decline of the sparse native population was not seen as a tragedy ... [High] population estimates by “pro-nativists” ... created in and of itself the problem of explaining how so many people could seemingly disappear so fast.

Source: Qtd. in Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 35.

Lesson 1

Student Handout 1.3—Does the Label Matter? The Question of Genocide

Document 1

American studies scholar David E. Stannard argued in 1992 that what happened to Native Americans at the hands of Europeans was genocide.

The term “genocide” was coined by Raphael Lemkin in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, published in 1944. ... Under [his] definition, “genocide was the coordinated and planned annihilation of a national, religious, or racial group. ...” Finally, in 1948, the Genocide Convention of the United Nations was adopted. ... [It gave a definition as follows:] [G]enocide means ... acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such: killing ... [or] causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction; ... imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.” ... In light of the U.N. language ... it is impossible to know what [happened] in the Americas during the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries and not conclude it was genocide.

Source: David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992), 279-81.

Note: This definition of genocide is still the official one, adopted in 2002. A total of 104 nations now support the International Criminal Court’s right to try cases of genocide according to it.

Document 2

American historian James Axtell in 1992 urged caution about using “genocide” to describe what happened to Native Americans at the hands of Europeans.

The latest and most inclusive definition of *genocide* [from *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*, 1988] is simply “a form of one-sided *mass* killing in which a *state* or other authority *intends* to destroy a group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the *perpetrator*.” ... “Genocide” ... is historically inaccurate as a description of the vast majority of encounters between Europeans and Indians. Certainly no colonial government ever tried to exterminate all of the Indians as Indians, as a race, and you can count on one hand the authorized colonial attempts to annihilate even single tribes. ... The vast majority of settlers had no interest in killing Indians—[they] were much too valuable for trade and labor. ... [T]he vast majority of Indians succumbed, not to colonial oppression or conquistador cruelty—as real and pervasive as those *were*—but to new and lethal epidemic diseases imported *inadvertently* by the settlers. ... Genocide, as distinguished from *other* forms of cruelty, oppression, and death, played a very small role in the European conquest of the New World.

Source: James Axtell, *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992), 261-3.

Lesson 2

Animals, Plants, People, and Goods on the Move

Introduction

Teachers may wish to select among the twenty activities offered here to use in their classrooms.

Activities

Plants and Animals

1. What differences would you expect the introduction of new kinds of plants and animals to make in the places where they became newly established? What advantages did they bring to the lives of the peoples to which they were introduced? Referring to Student Handouts 1.1 and 2.1, what evidence is there for any differences they made?
2. What reasons can you give why European domestic animals in America multiplied far faster than they did in their native habitats? Consider food supply, competition, and predation.
3. Plan a menu for two meals, one using only ingredients native to the Americas, the other only native Afroeurasian ones. If you were a European in America during the first decades of the sixteenth century and had to rely entirely on native foods, which of the latter would seem least familiar? Which might appeal to you most? What of your accustomed diet would you miss most? If you were an Amerindian, which of the imported European foods would be most unfamiliar? Which of them might appeal to you most? Why?
4. Compare Student Handout 2.2, Documents 1 and 2. Consider the reasons why transplanting the crops mentioned here was undertaken. Who did it, how, and with what results? Who benefited and how? Are there other ways that you can think of that plants and animals could have been introduced to one side or other of the Atlantic? What?
5. Using as a pattern Student Handout 2.2, Document 1, Document 2, or a combination of them, create a believable story about “How the European Earthworm Came to North America.” For information on how this happened, see Charles C. Mann, “America Found and Lost” *National Geographic*, 211, 5 (May 2007): 34, 37.
6. If you were the adviser to the ruler of a country in Afroeurasia, and you wanted to convince her or him to require that farmers grow certain crops native to the Americas, which crop or crops would you choose and what information about the advantages of this crop would you present?

7. What questions would you ask that might help you better understand the consequences of the presence of Afroeurasian plants and animals in America, and the presence of American plants in Afroeurasia, from about 1550 on?

People

8. Compare the information about Native Americans in Student Handout 2.3, Document 2, with your recommended population figure in answer to question 14 in Lesson 1. How might you use the former to support or to modify your recommendation? Explain.

Lesson 1, question 14 is: Why does the estimated size of Native American populations at any time between 1490 and 1650 matter? Why do you think there is so much disagreement and controversy about population figures at the time of, and after, the European conquests in America? What choices do historians have in dealing with this situation? What ought they to do? Why?

9. Compare the movement of peoples from Europe to the Americas, from the Americas to Afroeurasia, and from Africa to the Americas during the period of about 1500 to 1650. How did these movements differ? In what way(s) were they similar? Consider who initiated the trans-Atlantic crossings, the reasons for the crossing in each of the three cases, the numbers involved, the kinds of people making the crossing, and whether the crossing was one-way only or not. What reasons can you give for the differences and the similarities? (This activity could serve as assessment.)
10. Compare European attitudes towards Native Americans, on the one hand, and Africans brought to the Americas, on the other. In what ways were they different? In what ways were they similar? What reasons for the differences could you suggest?
11. What was there in the recent experiences or cultural traditions of the Spanish and English regarding peoples different from themselves on the eve of the crossings to the Americas that might have influenced their attitudes towards Native Americans or Africans? What is there in the relatively recent experiences of Americans today with peoples different from themselves that might have influenced their attitudes towards people of Iraq from 2003 to the present?
12. Explain what you think the consequences might have been of few women among Europeans relative to men moving to the Americas in the sixteenth century.
13. List as many reasons as you can for the increasing demand for imported African slaves in America before 1650. Why was there increasing demand for workers of any kind? What were the problems in European eyes with available workers other than African slaves? What did they see as the advantages of using African slaves?

14. What changes in African slaves' numbers and experience in America from 1492 to 1650 can you identify?
15. What impact would leaving home and crossing to a new continent have had on the people involved in each of the cases in Question 9? How, if at all, would moving to a new continent have differed from moving elsewhere within their home country?

Products

16. In what ways did Spanish America's imports and exports change from 1493 to 1650? In what ways did they remain the same? How would you explain the changes and continuities?
17. Compare the trade of Spanish America with the trade of Portuguese America to 1650. What were the similarities and differences? Which would you say had the bigger worldwide impact? Support your argument with evidence.
18. What reasons can you give for the important part played by silver in the economies of Spain, on the one hand, and China, on the other?
19. Would you agree with the statement that "during the century or so between the 1540s and the 1640s, silver was bought and sold worldwide, and wherever it was bought, sold, or used, it influenced most peoples' lives in some way?" Why or why not?
20. Evaluate the statement that "between 1550 and 1650, the whole world economy was entangled in a global silver web." What evidence in this lesson could you use to support the statement? What evidence would lead you to question or modify it? This activity could serve as assessment.

Extension Activity

Research modern slavery. Where does it still occur? What forms does it take? How do these forms compare to types of unfreedom imposed by Spaniards on Native Americans, by Africans on each other, and by Europeans on Africans in the Americas? Have definitions of slavery changed? If so, how? What, if anything, do all things referred to as "slavery" have in common? The Internet may be a good source of information on slavery in today's world.

Lesson 2

Student Handout 2.1—Animals and Plants Crossed the Atlantic Both Ways

Background

Some of the movements in the Columbian Exchange of this period were heavily one-directional, for example, the movements of domestic animals, weeds, and disease microorganisms. Others were two-directional, as was the case with cultivated plants. The passage of some plants was deliberately engineered by humans. For instance, ships sailing to America were required by the Spanish crown to carry seeds, cuttings, roots, and breeding stock. Europeans, for example, deliberately introduced olive trees. But many plants and some animals arrived uninvited. Seeds of European weeds such as thistles, dandelions, and many others survived on sailors' clothes and in the earth often used as ships' ballast. Old World rats invaded the New World as stowaways. All these thrived in their new habitat, unlike the American ragweed, goldenrod, and others that never got a foothold in Afroeurasia. Turkeys were widely raised for food in Europe. But while cattle, pigs, horses, goats and, more rarely, sheep in America multiplied explosively on their own in the wild, turkeys never did so in Europe.

Afroeurasian people, animals, and plants transformed the ecology in large areas of the Americas. The hordes of Old World feral livestock contributed to erosion in the Americas. Huge herds of cattle and horses roamed the grasslands. Overgrazing in a number of places led to the replacement of pasture with scrub growth. European weeds and grasses took over large areas. They were more adapted than many native plants to being trampled on or chewed to ground level by grazing. After various experiments with European crops that failed in the Americas because climate or soil conditions were wrong, successful natural niches were often found. Forests also fell as immigrant settlers cut down trees to make room for fields. Crops such as sugarcane, tobacco, and wheat began to be grown on a large scale not only for home consumption but also for export, requiring increasing clearing of land. Growing trans-oceanic trade required more ships, which took large amounts of timber to build. Smelting metal and shoring up mine shafts for silver production, and boiling down the sap from sugarcanes on huge plantations, took wood from forests in enormous quantities. English earthworms established themselves in New England's forests, destroying the understory litter needed for the survival of tree seedlings there.

In the case of people, some crossed the Atlantic of their own free will, either because of what they hoped to gain in work and wealth, or because they were driven away by conditions at home. Others were forced to cross against their will.

The exchange of goods before 1650 overwhelmingly favored American gold and silver, which, in turn, lubricated the trade of many other commodities around the world.

Document 1

Valuable plants that were confined before 1492 to one side of the Atlantic, crossed to the other side, and flourished there.

Cultivated plants of American origin established in Afroeurasia by about 1650 CE	Nourishment value: millions of calories per hectare that the crop may produce	Cultivated plants of Afroeurasian origin established in the Americas by about 1650	Nourishment value: millions of calories per hectare that the crop may produce
Maize (corn) *+ #	7.3	Wheat	4.2
Potatoes * +	7.5	Barley	5.1
Sweet potatoes +	7.1	Rice	7.3
Cassava (manioc) #	9.9	Oats	5.5
Vanilla		Sugarcane	
Peanuts		Olives	
Tobacco		Peaches	
Beans (several types)		Okra	
Squash		Cabbage	
Tomatoes		Spinach	
Chili peppers		Turnips	
Cocoa		Mustard	
Pineapple		Coffee	

* In Europe, maize and potatoes became significant only after 1650.

+ In China, sweet potatoes were grown by the 1560s. They grew on earlier unproductive land, and were unattractive to locusts. Along with maize and potatoes, they became staple food crops in China in the seventeenth century. The introduction of new crops resulted in large-scale Chinese migrations to previously thinly-populated and unproductive areas.

In Africa, cassava (which keeps well in the ground for long periods, is not eaten by locusts and, unlike surface-growing crops, is not trampled by animals or soldiers) inspired “a veritable agricultural **revolution** in the seventeenth century, enabling the population to grow to previously unattainable levels ... Maize had similar consequences a little later.”

Sources: André Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 60; Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), 154 (spinach), 157 (peach); Luis Martin, *Daughters of the Conquistadores: Women of the Viceroyalty of Peru* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), (olives) 42; Paula de Vos, "The Science of Spices: Empiricism and Economic Botany in the Early Spanish Empire," *Journal of World History* 17, 4 (2006): 422 (ginger). For information on plants of American origin, see U. P. Hedrick, ed., *Sturtevant's Edible Plants of the World* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972), 48, 59, 136, 212, 303, 314, 343, 353, 384, 422, 545, 568, 591; * William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1976), 317, n. 58; + André Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 60; # Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 133; ** Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 175.

Document 2

Valuable animals that were confined before 1492 to one side of the Atlantic, crossed to the other side, and flourished there.

Domestic animals of American origin established in Afroeurasia by about 1650	Domestic animals of Afroeurasian origin established in the Americas by about 1650
Turkeys	Cattle
	Pigs
	Sheep
	Horses
	Goats
	Chickens
	Honeybees
	Dogs (bigger and fiercer than American ones)

The only other domestic animals in the Americas were high-altitude-adapted llamas and alpaca, guinea pigs, muscovy ducks, and small dogs. None of these became established in Afroeurasia.

Sources: Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 74-5, 92; Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), 188.

Lesson 2

Student Handout 2.2—Unofficial and Official Introductions of Afroeurasian Plants to the Americas

Document 1

How wheat and olive trees came to Peru: A twentieth-century historian's account.

A few months after the foundation of Lima [in 1535], Inés [Muñoz, sister-in-law to Pizarro and one of the dozen or so women among the founders of that city] received from Spain a barrel filled with rice. ... One day Inés sat to pick and clean some of the rice. ... [While doing so, she] noticed a few grains of wheat mixed in with the rice which she picked out carefully with the intention of planting them to see if wheat would grow in Peru. She planted a few grains of wheat in a flowerpot “with the same care and attention she would give carnations or sweet basil.” Inés took unusual care of her flowerpot, and was delighted when a bundle of large, healthy spikes of wheat grew from the few grains she had planted. ... [T]he first spikes of wheat were threshed by hand and Inés replanted her first tiny crop. ... [W]ith the intense care and interest of Inés Muñoz, the wheat multiplied so much that within three or four years the production of bread began in Lima. ...

[Her second husband in 1560] returning from a trip to Spain and well aware of what would please Inés most ... brought to Lima the first olive trees to arrive in Peru. ... Only two or three survived the long journey. ... [These] were protected like a rare treasure and were planted with the utmost care in [Inés'] vegetable garden. ... Day and night a group of slaves accompanied by Castilian watchdogs kept a vigil ... [but] one of the olive trees was stolen one night from the garden to reappear months later on the frontier of Chile. In Chile, the stolen tree multiplied with ease, and in a few years groves of olive trees overlooked the Pacific Ocean.

Source: Luis Martin, *Daughters of the Conquistadores: Women of the Viceroyalty of Peru* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 39-40, 42.

Document 2**How the government worked to get ginger grown in Mexico: A twenty-first century historian's account.**

The transplantations [of spices from the East Indies to the Americas] took place through a combination of efforts on the part of the state in coordination with colonial leaders and local [businessmen]. ... The earliest evidence of long-distance transplantation of spice in the Spanish empire took place sometime in the 1550s and involved the transport of spice seeds from the East Indies to New Spain [Mexico]. ... It seems they were smuggled out of Portuguese India and came [into] the possession of Antonio de Mendoza, the first Viceroy of New Spain, who was granted a monopoly to plant [and cultivate] them. ... The cultivation of ginger, ... a highly prized spice ... was clearly successful on the island of Hispaniola. ... By the end of the sixteenth century ... ginger constituted the island's main export. ... In the 1580s, it received higher prices in Europe than sugar did ... [and] two million pounds of ginger reached Seville annually. ... In 1606 ... of 9,648 slaves in Hispaniola, 6,742 worked producing ginger while only eight hundred served in the sugar mills. [However, plans for the cultivation in Spanish America of pepper, cloves, and cinnamon never got off the ground.]

Source: Paula de Vos, "The Science of Spices: Empiricism and Economic Botany in the Early Spanish Empire," *Journal of World History* 17, 4 (2006), 415, 417, 422-3.

Lesson 2

Student Handout 2.3—Humans Crossing the Atlantic, Free and Forced

Background

Why did ever-increasing numbers of people cross the Atlantic? Those earliest to cross, overwhelmingly from Spain, were attracted by new horizons. They looked to find heathen whom they could convert for the glory of God; adventure, whereby to gain glory for themselves and their ruler; gold, to get rich quickly. Others came from Europe for a life that promised them more opportunities for improving their economic and social circumstances. Some Europeans left for America to escape poor conditions at home: war or famine, economic hardship, isolation, suspicion, or discrimination because of their religion.

Increasing numbers of men and women were carried from sub-Saharan Africa to America, usually in chains and almost always because they had no choice. In 1603 King al-Mansur of Morocco in North Africa suggested to Queen Elizabeth I of England that they jointly colonize America, with Moroccans undertaking the actual settlement. Nothing came of this idea.

Smaller but not insignificant numbers went from America to Afroeurasia, mostly as unwilling slaves, but some also voluntarily.

Document 1

Numbers of Europeans and Africans that left for the Americas, by national origin and status.

	Before 1580	1580-1640
Spain	139,000	188,000
Portugal	58,000	110,000
Britain	0	87,000
France	0	4,000
Netherlands	0	2,000
<i>Included among those above:</i>		
Indentured servants	0	49,000
Convicts and prisoners	3,000	8,000
African slaves	68,000	607,000

Note: These numbers are scholars' estimates.

Source: Based on David Eltis, ed., *Coerced and Free Migration: Global Perspectives* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002), 62, 67.

Document 2**Results of the crossings: What main groups made up inhabitants of Spanish and Portuguese America?**

	1570		1650	
	Spanish America	Brazil	Spanish America	Brazil
Native American	8,907,150	800,000	8,405,000	700,000
African	230,000	30,000	715,000	100,000
Mestizo	Included with African		348,000	50,000
Mulatto	Included with African		236,000	30,000
European	118,000	20,000	655,000	70,000

Note: The scholar citing the above states that, while these figures can only be tentative, “the weight of existing evidence suggests that [the] totals for all main groups should be revised downward, and those for [Native Americans] substantially.”

Source: Based on Angel Rosenblat, *La población indígena y el mestizaje en América, 1492-1959*, Vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nova, 1954), 59, qtd. in Lyle N. McAlister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World, 1492-1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 344-5.

Document 3**Europeans: Mostly free, crossing east to west—and sometimes back again.**

Europeans did not in the beginning flock eagerly to the Americas. By 1570, there were still only some 140,000 of them in Spanish and Portuguese America. Home governments worked hard to get their people to move and settle there, because permanent European presence in the Americas depended on continuous immigration. There were two reasons for this.

First, death rates among the early settlers were very high. Scarce, unreliable, and unfamiliar food supply; heavy work under often brutal conditions; and sickness took by far the most lives. European casualties in battles with Native Americans were typically low. During the first decade in Hispaniola, probably two-thirds of the Spaniards there died, and nearly half of the English immigrants perished of disease and exposure during their first winter in New England.

Second, women were a much lower proportion of the immigrants from both Iberia and England than men. They were only 5 percent of immigrants in the first two decades after 1492, 16 percent in the two decades up to 1560, and 28 percent in those up to 1580. During the sixteenth century, Portugal sent orphan girls and even “women of bad repute” to provide wives for male settlers in Brazil. Spain’s rulers promoted the marriage of Spaniards to Native Americans (though not Africans). A white population could not keep up, let alone add to, its numbers by natural increase alone. However, the numbers of children born to variously mixed parentage of Amerindian, European, and African unions in Spanish, Portuguese, and French (though not English) territories created large populations with various names, among others, *mestizos*, *mulattoes*, and *metis* (See Student Handout 2.3, Document 2). Many, but not all of these, were slaves.

Both the Spanish and the Portuguese were familiar with slavery in their home countries. At the start of the sixteenth century, both had substantial populations of slaves from North Africa and West Africa. Some were captured in raids, but most were bought. In 1550, there were about 9,000 African slaves in Lisbon, doing a variety of jobs in government offices, hospitals, noble households, craft shops, and on farms. There were also a few white slaves from the Caucasus, as well as Slavs and Turks.

Some Europeans who arrived in the Americas were convicts, their passage forced. Many British and French immigrants arrived as **indentured servants**. That is, they were bound by a legal contract to serve their employer without pay for a number of years, typically four to ten, in return for having their passage paid and their housing and food provided during their indenture. Their experience could be a poor one in the New World, just as in their home countries. They had little protection from being badly fed and worked to excess, or from dying of neglect when they were sick. But in America they could sometimes run away, a disadvantage for their employers.

Spanish law forbade foreigners from settling in Spain’s American territories. But in North America, between 1600 and 1650, Finns, Swedes, German Protestants, Jews, and Danes, as well as the British, French, and Dutch established settlements. Some Europeans went to the New World but did not stay. These included would-be settlers and explorers who found opportunities

in the New World less splendid than they had thought; those who had gone only to get rich, and were glad to leave having done so; officials returning home at the end of their tour of duty; churchmen recalled by their superiors; and merchants who came temporarily to seek trade prospects.

Sources: Based on information from the following: John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006), 49, 51, 99; Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 125-7, 185-6, 246-7; Lyle N. McAlister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World: 1492-1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 115, 276, 283; M. J. Seymour, *The Transformation of the North Atlantic World, 1492-1763* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 198; Thomas Bender, *A Nation among Nations: America's Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 47.

Document 4**Native Americans: Mostly forced crossings, west to east—and rarely back again.****Background**

A number of pre-conquest Native American societies were familiar with slavery, among others the Aztecs, Maya, Caribs, and the Brazilian Tupi. Slaves were often prisoners of war or people enslaved as punishment for crimes. Others were orphans, debtors, or those who sold themselves or their children because of economic hardship. Among the Aztecs, slaves, though liable to be sacrificed, could own property, including slaves of their own. They could also buy their own freedom. In pre-1492 Mexico, it has been estimated that slaves made up about ten percent of the population.

Starting only a few years after Columbus' first voyage, many Native Americans were sold in Spain and Portugal as slaves. Their numbers cannot be known with any certainty. When enslaving Native Americans became illegal, slavers kept no records. In records that exist, many slaves were classified, albeit inconsistently, only by their color, being referred to as white, black, brown, dark, stewed quince color, or tawny. Persons specified as "Indians" were variously described, using all the different color labels. Some of those with only a color label, whichever color it was, were likely to have been Native Americans. Their numbers, however, cannot even be guessed. Those in the list below were identified in ways that makes it certain they were Native Americans. Some high-status Native Americans and part-Native Americans traveled to Europe freely. Pocahontas did so as a visitor. The son of La Malinche (Doña Marina), who served Cortés, died fighting pirates with Cortés in the Mediterranean.

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 1495 | One of Columbus' associates took 400 Native Americans from the Caribbean to Spain for sale as slaves. Half died on arrival, the cause given as "the unaccustomed cold." |
| 1499 | Amerigo Vespucci "took by force" 232 inhabitants of the Bahamas, 200 of whom lived to be sold as slaves in Spain. |
| 1500 | 236 enslaved Native Americans were landed in Spain. |
| 1502 | The Portuguese king licensed a company of merchants to send six ships a year to Brazil "to trade in brazilwood and slaves." From then on, Native Americans were fairly regularly shipped to Portugal. |
| 1503 | A Spanish explorer seized 600 Americans, the majority of whom were sent to Spain. |
| 1509 | From this time on, significant numbers of Native Americans from Brazil journeyed to and settled in France. |
| 1511 | A Portuguese ship carried some 35 American slaves to Portugal from Brazil. |
| 1500-1525 | 41 slaves were registered in the Spanish city of Seville as being from the Americas. |

- 1503-1550 Large numbers of slaves from the Americas were taken to Spain, in spite of a law introduced in 1542 forbidding the enslavement of Native Americans.
- 1530s-1549 A royal decision allowed 216 American slaves a year to be sent to Portugal for sale. It was not only as slaves, however, that Native Americans went to Spain. Many were sent as interpreters, entertainers, and curiosities or to be baptized and educated.
- 1550 A sizeable group of Native Americans from Brazil lived in the French city of Rouen. Some of them put on a spectacle there for King Henry II that year.
- 1560s So many Native Americans traveled to France and Switzerland that Portuguese Jesuits expressed serious concern over Protestant heretics taking Brazilians to Europe for training in heresy.
- 1576 A Native American chief complained to the Spanish that the Portuguese were carrying his people's children off "to Portugal to be sold as slaves."
- Late 1500s The congregation in one of Lisbon's churches had within it a fraternity with membership limited to "Indians."
- From 1590s Dutch warships often captured Spanish and Portuguese ships laden with slaves, some of whom were from the Caribbean, others from North America. A contemporary wrote of Brazilians taken to the Netherlands, taught Dutch as well as reading and writing, and then "went about in the world of the university and business."
- 1603 The English began to carry off kidnapped Native Americans from New England and Virginia to England. Some of them gave a demonstration of canoe handling on the River Thames in London. In the next few years, "taking captured Indians to England had become routine. Would-be colonizers ... hoped to impress the captives ... to learn as much as they could about the way of the land, and to acquire mediators with the local Indians." Others were sold as slaves.
- 1605 From this date on to the end of the century, a number of Inuit people were taken to Denmark and the Netherlands.
- 1607 Some new slaves from the Americas were recorded as introducing the smoking of tobacco to Seville in Spain.
- 1600s Many Native Americans from Brazil went to Angola in Southwest Africa as soldiers, peddlers, businessmen, prostitutes, and exiles. They were also used as military auxiliaries to Portuguese soldiers in Africa. Large numbers of Brazilians went to France as free visitors. Native Americans from New England were recruited to serve as sailors on English ships.
- 1631-1654 Numbers of Brazilian natives of the Tupi and Tapuya groups were sent to the Netherlands for education, as entertainers, and for diplomatic alliances.
- 1636 Native Americans from Brazil were numerous enough in Amsterdam in the Netherlands to have their own church.

- 1637 The Dutch expedition to conquer Portuguese forts on Africa's Gold Coast included many Tapuya soldiers.
- 1641 240 Americans of the Tupi group were part of the Dutch expedition that seized Portuguese forts in Angola. That year, the Tupi complained that their numbers were declining because so many of them were taken off to fight in foreign lands.
- 1642 Some 300 Brazilian natives fought alongside the Dutch military in São Tomé, an island off the West African coast, and helped conquer Axim in West Africa.

Sources: Based on Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 89- 90; Jack D. Forbes, *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 31-2, 34-5, 37-42, 46-7, 49-50, 53, 55, 57.

Document 5**Africans: Forced crossings, east to west—and not back again.**

During the early period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, those who financed and ran it were mostly Portuguese and Spanish, but the English, French, Dutch, and other Europeans also soon took part. At least as important as the buyers were the sellers, African merchants and rulers familiar with slavery and the slave trade as long-established institutions.

The slaves carried to the Americas were taken from many different sub-Saharan societies. Most of them were prisoners of war (fought for reasons having nothing directly to do with the slave trade), or they were caught in raids made expressly to acquire slaves for sale. Some had been enslaved for debt or a criminal offense; some were “pawned” by parents to improve the family’s economic condition; some were kidnapped. Some sold themselves because of dire conditions, such as famine.

In Spanish America, Africans carried there remained slaves. This was not necessarily so in Portuguese Brazil. There, a master quite often stipulated that after his death his favorite mistress of African origin and his children by her (or them), as well as his loyal male slaves, would be set free. Some slaves in Portuguese Brazil could also buy their freedom by saving up modest wages. Masters paid wages, however low, as an incentive for high-quality work to those with skills in demand. In Portuguese territories these former slaves joined the slowly-growing pool of free people of African and part-African origin. The dividing lines in the New World between those of European, Native American, and African descent were strictly drawn, but least so in Portuguese Brazil.

Whether enslavement of Africans was legal, and, if so, how it could be justified, was not asked before 1650, though these same questions were lengthily debated about Native Americans. In the Spanish empire, Native Americans came to be thought of as subjects of the crown, and therefore they had some rights. This did not apply to uprooted Africans.

Scattered and incomplete information suggests that women numbered about one-third of the African slaves imported before 1650. The working life of slaves was short, estimated at seven to ten years. Infant mortality was high. Therefore, natural increase among slaves was not enough even to maintain, let alone to increase, the slave population and to keep up with the increasing demand for labor. Plantation and mine owners found that continuous and increasing importation was necessary.

Until 1650, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was small relative to its later dimensions. Probably it did not even reach the numbers of black slaves sold in the trade across the Sahara Desert during the same period. The total number of African slaves shipped to the Americas between 1492 and 1640 has been estimated at more than 600,000.

- 1501-1520 A trickle of Africans, already slaves in Spain, began to arrive in the Americas. Some were sent by merchants to sell goods on their behalf. Africans accompanied the conquistadors Balboa, Cortés, and others, mostly as personal slaves but some as comrades-in-arms. One of them was the first to plant wheat in Mexico. Another one, probably unknowingly, carried the smallpox infection there.
- 1510 Royal permission was given to export African slaves already in Spain to the Americas, and perhaps 50 African slaves were sent to the Americas yearly. During this time there were several changes of policy about the importation of African slaves to Spanish America. A point in favor of the trade from Spain's point of view was that Africans were stronger and more disease-resistant than Native Americans, and they were accustomed to working with domestic animals. Moreover, the steep drop in Native American populations caused a labor shortage not solved by interior raids for Native American slaves. And, probably most decisively, the crown gained income from the licenses and taxes it imposed on the slave trade, though slave traders widely evaded them. Opponents argued that imported African slaves were dangerous. They often fled and then joined Native American populations, whom they sometimes urged to revolt against their European masters.
- 1520-1530 Eight thousand or more African slaves were imported during this decade, and the numbers grew fast thereafter. Their earliest work was as herdsmen and miners.
- 1530 After this date, slaves to Spanish America were usually imported directly from Africa. They were considered easier to control because they were less likely to run away than those who had already spent some time in Spain before being carried off to the New World.
- 1542 The *New Laws* passed by the Spanish king in response to widespread criticism of Native American enslavement, especially by churchmen such as Las Casas, stated that an Indian could not be enslaved for any reason. While poorly enforced, the *New Laws* were expected to make the import of African workers into Spanish America a necessity.
- From 1550s Expansion of sugar plantations in Spanish and Portuguese America, and the eager demand in Europe for American silver and gold, increased the need for slave labor, while the supply of Native American labor continued to shrink.
- 1570 At this time, Brazil's African population was only about 2,000-3,000. But during 1576-1591, 40,000-50,000 African slaves arrived in Brazil. That Africans in Brazil in 1600 numbered only 15,000 shows the high death rates among this population.
- 1595-1600 Slaves totaling 80,500 were transported from Africa to Spanish America.
- 1600 Up to this date, some 150,000 Africans may have been shipped to Spanish American possessions, and another 50,000 to Brazil.
- 1600-1625 About 200,000 African slaves were brought to America, about half to Brazil

- and over 75,000 to Spanish possessions. African slaves fought on the side of the Spanish and Portuguese against both Native American rebels and new European rivals.
- 1612 Caribs in the West Indian islands attacked Spanish settlements and made off with their African slaves. At this time, an estimated 2,000 slaves were in Carib hands.
- 1616 A new monopoly contract was issued for shipping 3,500 to 5,000 slaves a year to Spanish American colonies and a similar one to supply Brazil.
- 1625 The Dutch began to carry African slaves to North America, averaging about 1,500 a year during the 1630s.
- 1626-1640 About 30,000 African slaves were taken to Spanish America.
- 1640 After 1595, Portuguese merchants shipped between 250,000 and 300,000 Africans to America for the Spanish. Slave traders from elsewhere also supplied Spanish America with slaves during this period.

Sources: Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 91-2, 95, 97, 102-3, 105, 117, 123, 139, 143-4, 164-6, 170, 180; John Thornton, *Africa and the Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 131, 141; John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006), 100; David Eltis, ed., *Coerced and Free Migration: Global Perspectives* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2002), 62; Lyle N. McAlister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World: 1492-1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 172, 338; M. J. Seymour, *The Transformation of the North Atlantic World, 1492-1763* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 171.

Lesson 2

Student Handout 2.4—Silver: The Engine Driving Trade around the World

Background

At first, American trade was restricted to sailing across the Atlantic to and from Seville in Spain and Lisbon in Portugal. A contraband trade to northern Europe, carried often in English, French, Dutch, and other ships, soon developed. So did the Portuguese sailing directly to their African trading posts.

Although Magellan reached Asia across the Pacific Ocean in 1521, it was not until after 1550 that mariners finally figured out how to use the winds that made a return trip from Asia to America possible. In 1565, a Spanish fleet sailing from America claimed the Philippines for Spain. In 1571, Manila was founded there as a Spanish trading center, giving Spain direct access to the Asian markets. A profitable trans-Pacific trade developed.

China's huge demand, and the premium prices it paid, swallowed up much of the world's silver production (mostly American silver but also Japanese) from the 1540s to the early 1600s. American silver crossed the Atlantic directly to Spain and crossed the Pacific to the Philippines. From there, directly or indirectly through intermediary merchants, it flowed into and through northern Europe, the Mediterranean lands, Southwest Asia, India, and Southeast Asia. Silver moved by various routes: overland, by the [silk roads](#); by way of the Baltic Sea (which carried as much traffic in silver as did the galleons sailing to Manila), through the Mediterranean and the Ottoman empire; and by sea around the Cape of Good Hope, into the Indian Ocean.

Document 1**What part did silver play in Spanish America's trade?****Trans-Atlantic trade**

1504	The Spanish crown ruled that all trade with America should be centralized, supervised, registered, and licensed, and should go through the port at Seville.
1493-1520	Imports to Spain: mainly arms, gunpowder, horses and other livestock, flour, oil, wine. Exports: overwhelmingly gold from the West Indies.
1521-1530	Imports: consumer goods. Exports: mostly gold, also dyes and pearls.
1530s to 1550s	Imports: mainly mercury (used in processing silver), fine foods and wines, damascene swords, quality textiles, spices, books, and paper. Exports: from South America almost all silver and some gold, as well as hides, tobacco, and medicinal plants; from New Spain further north, about 65 percent silver and some gold, cochineal (a dye), hides, indigo (a dye), sugar, and medicinal plants.
1540-1550	The volume of trade doubled; about 40,000 tons of shipping went to America from Spain yearly, in an average of 150 ships of 300 tons each.
1550-1610	Both inbound and outbound sailings from Seville to Mexico increased about threefold.
1609	At this time, the value of silver exported to Spain from America made up 84 percent of the total value of exports from there. The rest was made up of dyes, hides, and small amounts of lesser-value items.
1590-1600	Some 7,000,000 ounces of silver a year left America for Spain. For comparison, production of the silver-producing region of central Europe in the 1630s was some 500,000 ounces.
About 1610	Spain's trans-Atlantic trade peaked at some 160,000 tons and then declined. Around 1650, it was about half of what it had been in the peak years. Precious metals, mostly silver, made up some 95 percent of American exports.
1620s	Both the amount and value of silver exports to Spain began to slump. So did Spain's overall trade with America. About this time, Spain found it increasingly difficult to keep up with the growing demand for manufactured goods by colonial America. Its merchant marine, though greatly expanded, could not handle the ever-increasing demand for trans-Atlantic shipping. Therefore, smuggling of silver out, and goods from places other than Spain in, flourished. And foreigners developed large-scale illegal trade directly between Spanish America and northern European states, bypassing Seville.

1500-1650 During this century-and-a-half, 16,000 tons of silver and 181 tons of gold went to Europe from America. In addition, much stayed in the Western Hemisphere, used to build churches and missions; an unknown amount was smuggled out; and a great deal went across the Pacific to Manila from Acapulco (see below). One estimate of the amount smuggled suggests it ranged between 10 and 50 percent of the officially registered amounts.

Trans-Pacific trade

1570s Trans-Pacific Acapulco (Mexico) to Manila (Philippines) trade opened. Exports: overwhelmingly silver. Imports: Chinese silk, porcelains, spices, wax. The Spanish crown limited this trade to what could be carried in two galleons yearly.

1597 According to one estimate, the value of silver sent illegally to Manila from Mexico was greater than the total value of all goods, including silver, carried by Spain's official trans-Atlantic fleet.

1600-1610 Imports continued as before. Almost 95 percent of trans-Pacific exports consisted of silver.

1600s: Throughout the seventeenth century, over fifty tons of silver a year went from Acapulco to Manila.

Sources: Lyle N. McAlister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World: 1492-1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 370-1, 374-5, 381, 463-4; Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 63, 96; Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Journal of World History* 13, 2 (2002): 398; John H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New: 1492 to 1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970), 60; S. M. H. Bozorgnia, *The Role of Precious Metals in European Economic Development* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 166.

Document 2**Who in the world wanted silver between 1550 and 1650, and why?**

The Chinese, Ottoman, and Spanish governments in the sixteenth century changed from collecting taxes based on a percentage of sales to collecting them based on a fixed quantity of silver. Additionally, laws in China from the 1570s on insisted that most Chinese, including peasants, had to pay taxes in silver. Silver was also the main currency, used to pay for everyday needs by all except the very poorest, in the most populous country in the world. According to one estimate, China's population in 1650 was one-third of the world's total.

Several European states during the sixteenth century debased their currency by mixing the silver in coins with copper, because there were not enough coins available to fill the needs of greatly-increased populations, and not enough silver to mint additional coins of silver only. In 1599, Spain introduced copper currency for lack of enough silver.

The kings of Spain and Portugal were owed a share of all shipments of silver in their domains before 1640, ranging between 28 and 40 percent.

Merchants in Europe, India, Mexico, and elsewhere needed silver to pay for China's products, such as silk, porcelain, and gold, which were much in demand. Because China was largely self-sufficient, it had little or no interest in buying goods from Europe. This put a premium value on silver as a commodity that Europeans could offer the Chinese by way of Manila.

Merchants who had the contacts and know-how to get silver to Chinese markets could make big profits. Because of the high demand in China, the price of silver there was double that in Spain. In the 1590s, one ounce of gold traded for fourteen ounces of silver in Europe, nine in India, and seven in China. According to a Spanish merchant with long experience in the Asian trade, exchanging silver for gold in China in 1609 could gain a profit of 75 percent.

Silver was the favored medium of exchange accepted in all major markets, and in most, though certainly not all, places where there was any trade. Cowrie shells, gold, and copper were the most popular alternatives.

Sources: Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century," *Journal of World History* 13, 2 (2002), 393-4, 400, 405, 417; Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2000), 190, 269; Lyle N. McAlister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World: 1492-1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 464; Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 70.

Document 3**What happened to American silver once it arrived in Spain?**

According to the 1594 official Spanish estimate, the average annual amount of silver received from the New World was worth some ten million ducats. At the time this represented about a quarter of the total income of the Spanish crown, up from about 11 percent forty years before. Of the ten million total:

- Three million went to pay for the foreign expenses of the crown, mostly for the troops, provisions, and equipment used in its many and lengthy wars abroad. These included campaigns against Muslims in North Africa; fighting against the Protestant Dutch, who had revolted in order to gain independence from Catholic Spain; defense against French and English privateers, then outright war against both; and resisting the Ottoman empire's expansion into Europe.
- Three million went to accounts of foreign individuals abroad, mostly to pay interest on the imperial debt to German, Genoese, and other bankers. At the end of the sixteenth century, interest payments on the debt ate up some two-thirds of the crown's income.
- Four million ducats' worth of silver was available in Spain. Of this:
 - Some of it stayed there, and was turned into coinage, jewelry, and religious objects, like crosses and chalices. The increase in the money supply in Spain and in much of Europe fed a rise in prices. With the inflation, goods in general cost two-and-a-half to three times as much in 1600 as they had in 1500.
 - Some of it paid for foreign imports, mostly from Asia. Exports of Spanish silver coin to East Asia were so large that these *reales* became the preferred coins there to use in international exchanges.
 - Some of it made its way to China in return for gold, because in China silver was more highly valued (doubly so as in Spain) and high profits on it could be made.
- Owing to American silver making its way there through Spanish payouts and smuggling, there was a fast increase over much of Europe in the available money supply. This encouraged investment there in expensive, long-range, and profit-producing projects such as opening new mines, building mills, ships, and manufacturing plants, improving irrigation and field drainage, and paying wages to larger workforces. These investments resulted in a significant increase in European production of goods and services. It also produced high inflation.

- In contrast to much of the rest of Western Europe, the flood of American silver into Spain did not lead to large-scale investment in projects producing sustained profits.

Sources: John H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New: 1492 to 1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970), 65, 87; Lyle N. McAlister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World: 1492-1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 464; S. M. H. Bozorgnia, *The Role of Precious Metals in European Economic Development* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 168, 172-3, 180; Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), 68.

Document 4**Why did a slump occur in American silver exports in the early seventeenth century, and what were the consequences?**

The main reason for the slump was that silver production in Spanish America became more difficult and less profitable.

- The silver content of American mines gradually declined. Exploring for and opening new mines was expensive.
- The continued decline in Native American populations shrank the available labor force. Replacing Indian workers with imported African slaves was expensive and ate into profits.
- The Spanish colonies in America became less dependent on imports from “home.” As they began to grow in number and to make the products they wanted for themselves, colonists became less willing to pay high prices, mostly demanded in silver, for imports.
- More silver was held back in America. More was needed as administrative and military needs grew with the increasing size and diversity of the population and with increasing competition from other European nations.
- An increasing proportion of American-produced silver went to Manila instead of to Spain, as American demand for Asian luxuries grew.
- In the sixteenth century, as much as one-third to one-half of silver mined in the Americas ended up in China, with additional amounts absorbed by India, Southeast Asia, and Southwest Asia. China’s appetite for silver, however, was finally slaked after a century or so of surging production in America. China also absorbed most of the output of the rich silver mines discovered in Japan in the 1540s, which then began to supply a significant part of the world’s silver. Ten thousand tons of silver went from Japan to China during the late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries.
- Supply finally outran the demand. By 1640, the price of silver had flattened out, becoming much the same all over the world. Silver lost about two-thirds of its buying power from its highest value. Business people could no longer count on big profits by trading in silver.

Sources: John H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New: 1492 to 1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970), 70; Lyle N. McAlister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World: 1492-1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 371; Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, “Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of World History* 13, 2 (2002): 392, 395, 398, 405, 414; Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2000), 190.

Document 5**What was the character of Portuguese America's trade?****Background**

Unlike Spain, which worked hard to keep foreigners out, Portugal welcomed foreign traders doing business in Portuguese and Brazilian ports as long as they paid the import/export duties. But because foreign merchants felt those duties were set too high, there was a lot of secret, illegal trading and smuggling going on.

No precious metals were discovered in Brazil before 1650. It had a more or less uniform climate, so it could not produce a wide range of crops. And its population, both Native American and European, was much smaller than that of Spanish America. It did, however, have a virtual monopoly of the slave trade up to the mid-seventeenth century, as Portugal controlled all African slaving stations until the 1640s. Its conquest of Angola in Southwest Africa in the later sixteenth century provided it with its own ready supply of slaves, which it sold for Spanish silver. Silver, in turn, bought European-manufactured goods and Asian luxuries.

Other than slaves, Brazil's main trade was in sugar produced in Brazil. Before 1500, only a few wealthy Europeans were even acquainted with sugar. But demand for sugar grew, and its production was stimulated by a six-fold rise in its price during the sixteenth century. In 1680, European consumption of sugar hovered around a pound per person per year. In England, it was four pounds. In China, sugar had important ritual and medicinal uses, and European visitors commented on how much more extensively sugar was used among well-to-do Chinese than among Europeans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Brazilian sugar production boomed, with an output that grew from 2,500 tons in 1576 to 20,000 tons in 1637.

Place of Origin	Destination	Principal Items Shipped
Portugal	Brazil	European manufactures (hardware, machinery); foods (wheat, olive oil); wine; re-exports of goods from China, India, Southeast Asia
Portugal	Angola	European manufactures (hardware, textiles)
Angola	Portugal	Ivory, slaves (for re-export to Spanish America)
Angola	Brazil	Enslaved men and women
Brazil	Portugal	Sugar (some for re-export to Northern Europe), tobacco, dyes, hides, cotton
Brazil	Angola	Tobacco, cheap spirits
Portugal	Spanish Caribbean	Enslaved men and women
Spanish Caribbean	Portugal	Silver (some for re-export to various parts of Asia)
Portugal	Northern Europe	Wine, fruit, cork, salt, Brazilian sugar, Spanish American silver
Northern Europe	Portugal	Manufactured goods
Portugal	China, India	Silver
China, India	Portugal	Silk, porcelain, textiles, spices, gold

Sources: Lyle N. McAlister, *Spain and Portugal in the New World: 1492-1700* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 381-6, *passim*; Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2000), 118-9, 191.

Assessment

Write an editorial intended to appear in the October 12, 1642 issue of your local newspaper, with the title “The First 150 Years: Local and Global Consequences of European Settlement in the Americas.”

This unit and the Three Essential Questions

	<p>Research and report to your class major effects on the physical and natural environment of the Americas of the introduction of cattle, sheep, pigs, or horses in the sixteenth century.</p>
	<p>Compare and contrast the demographic, economic, and social consequences of disease mortality in the Americas in the sixteenth century with the global influenza pandemic in 1918-19.</p>
	<p>In what ways did beliefs about, and attitudes towards, Native Americans influence Europeans' behavior towards them between 1492 and 1650? Why do you think the possibility that Native Americans were not descendants of Adam and Eve caused intellectual and religious controversy in sixteenth-century Europe?</p>

This unit and the Seven Key Themes

This unit emphasizes:

Key Theme 1: Patterns of Population

Key Theme 2: Economic Networks and Exchange

Key Theme 6: Science, Technology, and the Environment

This unit and the Standards in Historical Thinking

Historical Thinking Standard 1: Chronological Thinking

The student is able to (E) interpret data presented in timelines and create timelines by designating appropriate equidistant intervals of time and recording events according to the temporal order in which they occurred.

Historical Thinking Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

The student is able to (A) identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative and assess its credibility.

Historical Thinking Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation.

The student is able to (B) compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions by identifying likenesses and differences.

Historical Thinking Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities.

The student is able to (C) interrogate historical data by determining by whom and when it was created; testing the data source for its credibility, authority, and authenticity; and detecting and evaluating bias, distortion, and propaganda by omission, suppression, or invention of facts.

Historical Thinking Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

The student is able to (A) identify issues and problems in the past and analyze the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those involved in the situation.

Resources

Resources for teachers

Axtell, James. *Beyond 1492: Encounters in Colonial North America*. New York: Oxford UP, 1992. In a series of essays, “Moral Reflections on the Columbian Legacy” raises interesting issues about “the legitimacy and utility of judging the past.” “Native Reactions to the Invasion of America” examines this issue under the headings of five basic strategies: to incorporate, beat, join, copy, or avoid the newcomers. Several other essays offer insights as well as information, in formats that tend to transcend chronology. Provocative.

Crosby, Alfred W. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003. The seminal, classic work on the topic. Chapter 2, on the impact of European diseases on Native Americans, and Chapter 3, on the consequences in America of the introduction of European plants and animals, are still the best quick entry to those topics. Unfortunately, much of the discussion in Chapter 5 of the impact of American crops in the Old World refers to post-1650 events. Identifies issues that new information since it was first published has made problematic.

Elliott, John H. *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2006. An excellent comparative analysis of the two states and their colonial empires.

McAlister, Lyle N. *Spain and Portugal in the New World: 1492-1700*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. Much detail but useful for reference. Subheadings in both text and table of contents helpfully identify very specific topics, each discussed concisely and clearly.

Seymour, M. J. *The Transformation of the North Atlantic World, 1402-1763*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004. Stresses change, and its possible explanations. Combines chronological and topical approaches and offers new ways of looking at familiar information. Readable, but needs concentration.

Resources for students

Wiesner-Hanks, Merry E. *An Age of Voyages, 1350-1600*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. This volume in Oxford University Press' "The Medieval and Early Modern World" series includes chapters titled "Sailors, Sugar, and Slaves: How European Voyages Changed Asia and Africa" and "Germs, Silver, and Blood: New World Conquests and Global Connections."

Sources of the documents in the unit

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Correlations to National and State Standards

National Standards for World History

Era 6: The Emergence of the First Global Age, 1450-1770. Standard 1. The student should understand how the transoceanic interlinking of all major regions of the world from 1450 to 1600 led to global transformations. 1C: The student understands the consequences of the worldwide exchange of flora, fauna, and pathogens. Standard 4. The student should understand economic, political, and cultural interrelations among peoples of Africa, Europe, and the Americas, 1500-1750. 4A: The student understands how European powers asserted dominance in the Americas between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. 4B: The student understands the origins and consequences of the trans-Atlantic African slave trade.

California: History-Social Science Content Standard

Grade Seven, 7.11.2: Discuss the exchanges of plants, animals, technology, culture, and ideas among Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the major economic and social effects on each continent.

Illinois Learning Standards: Social Science

16.E.4a. W: Describe how cultural encounters among peoples of the world (e.g., Columbian exchange ...) affected the environment, 1500 – present.

Michigan High School Content Expectations

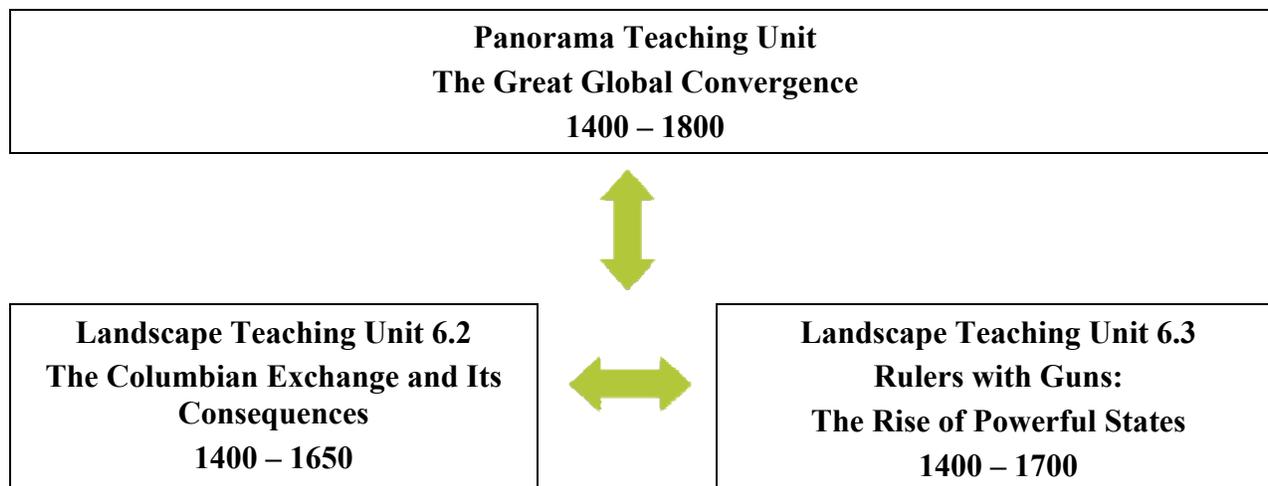
World History and Geography. WHG Era 5 – The Emergence of the First Global Age, 15th to 18th Centuries. 5.2.1: European Exploration/Conquest and Columbian Exchange; 5.2.2: Trans-African and Trans-Atlantic Slave Systems.

New York: Social Studies Resource Guide with Core Curriculum

Unit Four: The First Global Age (1450-1770), E. The encounter between Europeans and the peoples of Africa, the Americas, and Asia. Case Study: The Columbian exchange.

Virginia History and Social Science Standards of Learning

WHII.4. The student will demonstrate knowledge of the impact of the European Age of Discovery and expansion into the Americas, Africa, and Asia by: d) defining the Columbian Exchange; f) describing the impact of precious metal exports from the Americas.

Conceptual links to other teaching units

The permanent linking of the Americas with Afroeurasia coincided with a period in Afroeurasian history when certain states amassed greater military, political, and financial power than any states had done before then. Rulers took advantage of improved communications technology, new techniques of central governing and tax collecting, new unified law codes, and especially new firearms both to seize territories from their neighbors and to more effectively control and regulate the lives of their own subjects. Historians have called the powerful states of the fifteenth-eighteenth centuries “gunpowder empires.” The largest of them included the Chinese empires of the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Mughal empire of India, the Safavid Persian

empire, and the Ottoman, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian empires. Territorially smaller states also consolidated central power and deployed gun-bearing armies to achieve regional power. These included such states as England, France, Portugal, Morocco, and Japan. This process of central state-building got underway before the Great World Convergence took place, but the two developments were closely interrelated. The Spanish used firearms to significant effect in destroying the Aztec and Inca empires, though there is little doubt that if Ottoman Turks, Mughals, or Ming Chinese forces had been the first to set foot in the Americas, they would have destroyed the American empires as readily as the Spanish did. Like the Spanish, they would also have been equipped with guns, horse cavalry, and Old World infectious diseases. Early exploitation of minerals and commercial crops in the Americas augmented Spanish and Portuguese power in the sixteenth century, and in the following 200 years, the Dutch, French, and English states similarly benefited. By the end of the eighteenth century, European ships mounted with cannons dominated the world's oceans, though the balance of global military and economic power, until then weighted toward Asian empires, began to tip in favor of the strongest European states.