Chapter 1: Worlds in Motion, 1450-1550

Overview
When the European, African, and native American worlds came in contact with one another it was as if three pebbles had been tossed into a pond. The players’ actions and reactions set into motion events that changed the world. Each group, European, African, and Indian was characterized by its own complex societies, complete with internal animosities; well developed economies based partly on trade; and beliefs of their own superiority and invincibility. The first century of contact established new power structures (both between and within the groups), new economic strategies, and new patterns of behavior towards one another that continued for centuries to follow.

Key Topics The information in chapter 1 introduces your students to the following key topics:
- European trade patterns on the eve of discovery.
- Portuguese and Spanish objectives in exploration and colonization.
- Native American civilizations and development of native American social and political organizations.
- The biological consequence of conquest.
- The conquest of Mexico.
- Spanish settlements on the mainland US as frontier outposts.

Chapter Outline
Christopher Columbus: World Traveler
The Worlds of Christopher Columbus
  European Nations in the Age of Discovery
  The Political Economy of Europe
  The World of the West African Peoples
  Slavery Before 1500
  The Golden Age of Spain
The World of the Indian Peoples
  The Archaic Indians
  The Indians of the Eastern Woodlands
  The Indians of the Plains
  The Indians of the Deserts
  The Indians of the Pacific Coast
  The Great Civilizations of the Americas
Worlds in Collision
  Christopher Columbus Finds a Patron
  Columbus Finds a New World
  Tainos and Caribs
  The Origins of a New World Political Economy
  The Requerimiento and the Morality of Conquest
Feature: The Conquest on Trial: Las Casas and Sepulveda Debate the Morality of Conquest
The Biological Consequences of Conquest
  Demographic Decline
  The Columbian Exchange
Onto the Mainland
  The First Florida Ventures
  The Conquest of Mexico
  The Establishment of a Spanish Empire
  The Return to Florida
  Coronado and the Pueblo Indians
Conclusion
Annotated chapter outline with review questions

Christopher Columbus: World Traveler: Columbus’s arrival in the Western Hemisphere changed the world for Europeans, Indians, and eventually for Africans. A bold and restless man, Columbus’s “discovery” set off political and economic changes that helped create a truly global economy.

The Worlds of Christopher Columbus: Christopher Columbus lived in a world that was almost unchanged for centuries. Men and women made lives together living much as their ancestors had done: carving out an existence and leaving the same legacy for their children and grandchildren. Yet at the same time the world around them was changing due in large part to trade, commerce, and national rivalries. As you read this section think about the author’s assertion that Columbus came to the New World as a trader but became a conqueror.

- Not until the disparate competing principalities combined to make the modern nations that we know today could Europeans focus on trade and commerce.
- Between 1450 and 1750 new trade patterns changed the face of the world. What had once been regional economies focused on agriculture changed into truly global and complex economies. As a nation’s economy changed so too did its political and social organization.
- When the Spanish and Portuguese arrived in western Africa in the 1400s, they found societies that ranged from simple and poor to complex and wealthy. The Europeans also found existing trade networks which they willingly entered. The African traders welcomed the Europeans. What the Africans did not count on was that the Portuguese and Spanish would soon dominate the trade.
- Although slavery was known in Europe during the 1400s, it was neither widespread nor profitable. The African slave trade in the 1400s was different: slaves were a part of a complex African trade network. Portuguese sugar plantations on the Madera Islands transformed the slave trade. The Europeans became active players in the African slave trade business.
- Once Spain was politically united lucrative economic endeavors could be developed.

The World of the Indian Peoples: By the time Columbus arrived in the western hemisphere, the native population north of the Rio Grande may have been as high as twelve million people, speaking as many as 375 distinct languages. The Spanish encountered people who lived in societies that ranged from poor and simple to complex and diverse.

- Early native Americans were hunters and gatherers who hunted now-extinct forms of mammoth, mastodon, and bison. When Columbus arrived, the descendants of these early native people were as distinct from one another as were Europeans.
- The eastern woodlands farmers lived along the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers in the southeastern United States between 700 B.C. and 1500 A.D. They lived in very wealthy and complex societies. They were also well traveled traders. Politically they organized themselves into confederacies which enabled them the luxury of the upper hand in early encounters with the Spanish explorers.
- The Plains Indians were farmers who supplemented their diet by hunting bison. Not until many decades later -- after the introduction of the rifle and horse -- did the Plains Indians acquire more power and prestige. Living in the desert presented unusual challenges to these early Americans. Before farming became known, about 1000 A.D., the people were hunters and gatherers. Once farming soon became the norm, a stable food source enabled the population the grow and prosper and cities sprang up across the southwestern deserts. Trade networks linked the southwest with other regions of North America.
- Because of such natural abundance, the Indians along the Pacific Coast never had to rely exclusively on farming. Such abundance also allowed for a proliferation of regionally distinctive cultures. South of the Rio Grande, native populations also flourished in large part to sophisticated agricultural practices. The Toltecs prevailed until the 1100s and were replaced in power by the Aztecs who dominated Mexico until the early 1500s. When the Spanish arrived in Peru, the Inca had reached the highest point of their development.

Describe the development of Indian civilizations in North America from Archaic times until 1500. What were the major similarities among European, Native American, and African civilizations? The major differences?
Worlds in Collision: Because of the European explorers and their desires to find quicker, cheaper, and easier routes to Asia, regions of the world that had once been isolated became known to one another. Eventually they became integral parts of a global economy. One reason for the ease with which these regions came together was that each was already part of a regional trade network. Even though trade was the motivation for exploration, the result was the world, including Europe, was transformed.

- Christopher Columbus made four voyages to the New World between 1492 and 1504. Like all learned people of the time, Columbus knew the world was round; he, like they, had miscalculated the circumference of the globe and lacked any concrete knowledge of the actual location and proximity of the continents to one another. Columbus combined his knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm to engage the Spanish king and queen in financing a trade expedition to Asia. The Spanish monarchs and Columbus were united in their desire for increased wealth and power and they were united in their zeal to use their newly acquired riches and power to spread Christianity.

- Columbus’s explorations created two patterns that subsequent Spanish explorers followed: (1) the promise of wealth was real and available for those willing to search for it and (2) encounters with native peoples established patterns of behavior and attitudes that all followed. Columbus and his men encountered two groups of people: the Tainos and the Caribs. The Tainos were farmers and the Caribs traders and warriors. Depending upon their characterization, the Indians were dealt with in one of two ways: diplomatically or militarily. Columbus inadvertently helped create a new political economy unique to the New World: the encomienda. The new system was born of the conflicting ideals: prohibitions of the enslavement of friendly natives and making a profit from the New World’s resources.

- Despite the encomienda, some Spanish settlers and investors worried more about riches than morality. The result of such conflicts was the Requiemiento or the requirement, a document drafted by legal scholars and theologians. It offered the Indians the choice of becoming vassals of the crown, to be accepted in love and brotherhood, or upon refusal, it promised armed subjugation.

The Biological Consequences of Conquest: Many of the consequences of contact between the Indians of the New World and the Europeans of the Old World were unintentional. The ecological worlds were distinct and seemingly fragile: the introduction of new diseases in the New World had immediate and devastating consequences; the introduction of new kinds of plants and animals from one world to the other had more subtle and long term consequences.

- The encomienda changed the nature of native American agriculture and disrupted Indian communities. With the introduction of diseases for which the natives had no immunities, the populations of the New World plummeted. The survivors were demoralized and they questioned their old gods and ways of living.
- Less violent than diseases and more long lasting in its effects were the other plants and animals that found a new home on either side of the Atlantic Ocean. European and native American diets and culinary habits changed as new food items were adopted and adapted.

What did the Spanish expect to find in the New World? How did their experience alter their expectations? Why was slavery introduced into Spanish colonies? How did New World slavery differ from Old World slavery?

Onto the Mainland: When the Spanish finally pushed their exploration on to the mainland of North America, the riches they had dreamed of became a reality. Some native Americans urged the Spanish to move on to other more wealthy groups and when the Spanish moved on the Aztecs of Mexico and the Inca of Peru, their original dreams had not come close to the riches they found.

- The exploration of Florida established patterns that would be played out time and again as the Spanish explored the continent. Their arrival disrupted local political economies by spreading disease and undermining political structures. By 1521 the wealth that Columbus had promised was made real when Cortes defeated the Aztec empire in its capital city of Tenochtitlan. The Aztec capital was a fabulous city boasting of 200,000 inhabitants -- making it three times larger than the largest Spanish city, Seville. Tenochtitlan was also the religious capital of the Aztecs and its monumental architecture impressed even the most hardened Spaniard. The Aztecs also ruled over much of Mexico but all of that changed when Cortes and 500 Spaniards and thousands of Indian allies marched on the city in 1519. The city was destroyed, the ruling family displaced, and the Aztecs vassals of the Spanish monarch.
• The Spanish built their New World capital on the ruins of the Aztec capital. Finally, a new economy, one based on the extraction of gold and silver, was a viable reality for the Spanish, and with the Indians to work the mines, the labor problem was solved.

• Explorers of the American southwest, such as Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, traveled north from Mexico into present day Arizona and New Mexico before heading east. Coronado’s expedition failed to find mineral wealth.

Feature: The Conquest on Trial: Las Casas and Sépulveda Debate the Morality of Conquest: Sépulveda sought to defend the military subjugation of the Indians on the basis of their lack of humanity; Las Casas argued that the Indians were “prudent and rational” and should be converted by the Spanish, not conquered. Even though Sépulveda’s arguments were upheld by many Spaniards in the New World and in Spain, Las Casas’s arguments seemed to prevail. Even though his influence was clear in subsequent legal decisions about Indians, by 1550 (when Las Casas and Sépulveda debated) the real conquest had already been accomplished as most Indians had either been pacified or eliminated. Las Casas unwittingly helped solidify monarchical control of Spain’s New World empire by undercutting the authority of the encomenderos. In this way, both a feudal society and local representative government in Spain’s colonies was prevented.

Conclusion: The face of the world changed as a result of Columbus’s discovery. Not only was the New World changed but so, too, was the Old World. Columbus’s voyages marked the end of one era and the beginning of another -- they created new political powers and new political economies. Because Spain was the first to make money from explorations and colonies in the New World she became the role model for other European nations who wanted the same power and wealth. If they were going to become wealthy they would either have to displace Spain in the New World or make do with what Spain had not claimed. Whether a nation found wealth laying on the ground or they had to find alternative means of creating wealth, one pattern was unchanging: the labor would be performed by noneuropean workers. When native Americans proved unreliable, the Spanish were ready and willing to bring Africans to the New World to do the work. When the morality of slavery was questioned, the economics of the situation seemed to prevail.

Making links to other ideas Using the maps and websites, in addition to your prepared lectures and other assignments, can give you more resources to enable your students to see that history is much more than memorizing names and dates. You will find that the websites are even more comprehensive and adaptable than described and because they have been collected here in one volume you have a world of information no further away than the click of your mouse. If you are new to the web’s opportunities, you will be pleasantly surprised at the breadth and depth of the information available in these sites.

Map 01: What does this map tell you about Europeans’ knowledge of Europe, Africa, and Asia? Why was an oceanic route to Asia an advantage to everyone but the Italians?

Map 02: Comparing this map of Africa with Map 01, with what parts of Africa were Europeans familiar at this time? How might this have affected the African people in the known and unknown regions? Despite the many political and cultural divisions known to exist in Africa at this time, why did the Europeans lump the Africans into one category?

Map 03: What does this map tell you about the nature of American Indian cultures at this time? Why would the Europeans have presumed that “all Indians spoke the same language” when they clearly did not?

Map 04: What does this map tell you? What goods were going to which continent?

Map 05: Identify the country for which each explorer was employed. Why would this information be important?

Map 06: Compare this map to Map 01. How has European knowledge of the world changed? Has African and native American knowledge of the world changed? If so, how; if not, why not?

Use the chronology at the end of the chapter to answer the following questions.

1. Las Casas and Sépulveda debated the morality of slavery before the Council of the Indies in 1550. Eight years earlier, Las Casas helped write the New Laws of 1542. “By that time,” the authors wrote, “Spain’s New World was essentially complete; therefore there were relatively few Indians left to conquer or pacify.” (page 47) What events had transpired in the New World that support their conclusion?
2. Using a map of the world, trace the incremental progress that the explorers made in exploring the world. Start with the Portuguese arrival at the west coast of Africa and end with Coronado's explorations of the American southwest in 1540-1542.

**Web connections and resources** Consider using these websites to supplement your students’ reading and analytical skills. The sites were chosen because of their relevance to the material in the chapter -- not just to mirror it but to provide additional materials and perspectives. Questions from the student study guide have been included so that you can use or amend them to your own needs. Your students may find it insightful for you to guide them through the site as you help them develop research strategies.

"Worlds in Motion" www.prenhall.com/boydston/horse

One of the most enduring images of the American Indian is of a mounted warrior masterfully commanding his steed in battle. However, the horse is a recent import to America. In 1539, thousands of horses were brought to North America from Europe by Spanish conquistadors DeSoto and Coronado. DeSoto spent 4 years exploring the southeastern area of today’s United States, while Coronado spent years in the southwest. How did the addition of the horse to the ecosystem change the ways that American Indians lived?

“Spanish Exploration and Conquest of Native America” http://www.floridahistory.com/

Containing text and analysis of conquest records, maps, and illustrations, this site explores the movements and experiences of the Spanish Conquistadors. It also offers an in-depth look at the impact Spanish exploration had on the Native American population.

1. The routes of Cabeza de Vaca, Hernando de Soto, and Francisco Vasquez de Coronado are mapped and their journeys described. Admittedly the desire for wealth motivated these conquistadores to explore, but while they were looking for gold what else did they find?


Read the words of Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Europeans and Native Americans describing the devastating impact of disease.

1. Using this web site, http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/medicine/history/histories/plagues.html and the information in chapter one, consider the following question. Without natural immunities to the Europeans’ diseases, native Americans were overcome. A Mayan writer reported that “the mortality was terrible. Your grandfathers died and with them died the son of the king and his brothers and kinsmen. So it was that we became orphans…” Perhaps the writer was speaking metaphorically. If significant numbers of the population died, how might the survivors be considered cultural orphans?

“Historia natural y moral de las Indias, Jose de Acosta, 1590” http://www.sc.edu/library/pubserv/reserve/scardaville/hist420/doc8.htm

Written by a Jesuit priest, this primary source document gives the account of the introduction of Spanish flora to the Americas and the rise of commercial agriculture.

1. In this report by Jose de Acosta, written in 1590, de Acosta writes that “the Indies have been better repaid in the matter of plants than any other kind of merchandise…”. Describe the kinds of plants that the Spanish have brought with them to their colonies in the New World. de Acosta makes a suggestion for the reason these plants flourish here instead of New World plants flourishing in Spain. What is that reason? Have these introduced plants changed the nature of the native American economy in any way? If so, how?

“Colonial North America” http://www.ucalgary.ca/HIST/tutor/colony/Fintro.html

This site lends insight into the social, political, religious, and economic worlds of Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans before their earliest interactions with one another. Maps, illustrations, and narratives enrich this site.

1. Using the worksheet entitled “Native North Americans” fill in the categories using material from the chapter as well as any additional information contained in the web site. When you get to the site, click on
the Introduction and read through the material on “Peopling of America,” “Founding Peoples,” Sedentary Populations without Large States” and “Founding Peoples,” “Sedentary Populations with Large States,” as well as “Population and Biological Isolation 1492.”

2. Using the worksheet entitled “The Origins and Evolution of Slavery” fill in the categories using the material from chapter one as well as the information contained in the web site: http://www.ucalgary.ca/HIST/tutor/colony/Fintro.html. Directions: When you get to the site click on African Ways and look at the entries under “African Origins of the Slave Trade” and “Atlantic Slave Trade.” Under European Ways, look at the entry entitled “European Slavery.”

**Analytical reading**

Your students may need more experience analyzing a short reading passage so that he or she can determine its component parts. They may need help identifying primary and supporting information as well as the author’s analysis. The analytical reading passages and the questions from the student study guide have been duplicated in the instructor’s manual for your use. Your students may need direction and encouragement in using them.

There is no question that Cortes came with conquest in mind. He landed on the Yucatan coast with five hundred men in February of 1519. After defeating the Tabasco Indians, they gave him all their gold, and twenty slave women, one of whom, Malinche, became Cortes's translator and mistress. As Cortes marched toward Tenochtitlan, he picked up so many Indian allies that they soon greatly outnumbered Cortes's own troops. When they reached the Aztec capital, the Aztec ruler, Moctezuma, welcomed them in, probably because it was the Aztec custom to offer hospitality to visiting emissaries. Unfortunately for his people, Moctezuma did not understand Spanish customs, and the foreigners soon placed him under a form of house arrest. When the Aztec repulsed a Spanish attack, Cortes laid Tenochtitlan under siege. After three months, in August, 1521, the victorious Spanish entered the city, but the proud Aztecs refused either to fight or to submit to the Spanish who had starved them into submission. Frustrated, angry, unable to understand these now-gaunt people, Cortes and his troops killed twelve thousand and let their Indian allies slaughter forty thousand more. And then Cortes turned his cannons on the huddled masses of starving Aztec. By the time they surrendered, the city was in ruins. Cortes had promised his King a great prize in Tenochtitlan and its glittering civilization. Instead he had destroyed it.

1. Identify the passages that you think are factual -- this would be information that you could find substantiated in some reliable source.
2. Identify those passages that are the author’s conclusions -- ideas or conclusions drawn from the facts presented.
3. Based on this passage and the passages that precede and follow this, why were the Tabasco Indians so willing to follow Cortes after he defeated them?
4. If “there is no question that Cortes came with conquest in mind” why did he end up destroying Tenochtitlan?
5. Identify the Spanish and Aztec cultural values that made this conflict so much more deadly.

**Writing**

The questions or writing prompts from the student study guide have been duplicated here for your use. These writing topics make good lecture topics especially if you help your students see the development of the idea in lecture format before they refine the idea in their writing assignments.

1. Describe the development of Indian civilizations in North America from Archaic times until 1500. What were the major similarities among European, Native American, and African civilizations? The major differences?
2. When men such as Columbus left Europe they did so hoping to bring wealth and glory to themselves and their monarchs and wealth, glory, and converts to their god. What were the forces that led Europeans to explore the New World?
3. In the process of exploration and colonization, the Europeans helped create a truly global economy -- one that transformed the worlds of all the peoples of the globe. What did the Spanish expect to find in the New World? How did their experience alter their expectations? How was it that the Spanish helped create a truly global economy?

4. With the encomienda, the Spanish created a new political economy based on forced labor. What problems did the encomienda solve? How is the encomienda an adaptive strategy for these problems? If the encomienda was a solution, why then was slavery introduced into Spanish colonies? How did New World slavery differ from Old World slavery?

**Lecture Strategies**

Ultimately the lecture is where you impart, or profess, your knowledge for the benefit of your students. These strategies were designed around the textbook and if your classroom strategy is to use the organization of the text to organize your course content, these lecture ideas may prove helpful. However, if you lecture around themes please see the section entitled “Thematic Lecture Topics.” You may find that you are more comfortable with and your students are more responsive to a combination of the two. Consider, too, the projects suggested in the student study guide. If your students complete these before your lecture, their comprehension will surely be enhanced.

In general, chapter one brings together the three main groups that interact as the new world becomes known to the old.

**Native North America:** this topic presents you with several lecture ideas. One is the age and complexity of native North American cultures from about 12,000 years ago to the eve of Columbus’s arrival. This topic not only enables you to discuss the historical and cultural development of the Indians before Columbus but it also gives you the opportunity to confront several popular American myths about Indians: that they all lived in one culture, believing the same thing, speaking the same language, and so on; that that culture was rude, lacking sophistication or the ability of the people to solve many of life’s challenges. Having established native North American history before Columbus, your students will then be able to evaluate more competently the interaction of Indians and Europeans.

**Africa and Africans before the Europeans:** this topic also presents several lecture ideas. A similar strategy as outlined above would allow you to discuss the age and complexity of African cultures. Central to this discussion is the development of trade between African societies on the African continent. Slavery -- especially Africans enslaving other Africans -- sets a good foundation for lectures to come. Since slavery was also common within Maya and Aztec cultures, this is an opportunity to examine slavery across cultures.

**Europe and Europeans in the century preceding Columbus:** One way of looking at European development on the eve of Columbus’s voyages is to look at Leif Ericsson. Ericsson’s “discovery” in 1001 of the same new world did not set off waves of exploration or population dislocations and relocations. Why didn’t Ericsson’s discovery have the same effect as Columbus’s? Answering this question allows for an examination of the things that had to happen in Europe for the notion of a “new world” to have importance.

“Discovery” is a good topic for exploring several related topics: European rules of discovery, the intellectual world of Europeans in the fifteenth century, their ethnocentrism.

Exploration and the evolution of the modern economy: Explore the connection between government policies of exploration (motives, expectations, results) and the ways in which those policies changed the lives of the explorers, the Indians they came in contact with, and Europeans and Indians not directly involved in exploration. The discovery sets off numerous changes that in turn create more changes. Look at the birth of a global economy bringing into it many diverse peoples and their cultures.

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