Chapter 2: Colonial Outposts, 1550-1660

Overview

Following Spain’s financial success in Mexico, the French, Dutch, and English begin to look to establish similar colonies in North America in the hopes that they, too, would make money. Each nation approached colonization in a different way: the French worked with and lived alongside their Indian fur trappers; the Dutch tried their hand at the fur trade and agriculture, but found their best bet was the sale of African slaves; the English tried to keep themselves isolated from their Indian neighbors only to find that that did not guarantee success. Because of the wealth Spain found in Mexico, the Spanish government moved to fortify its claims to the American southeast by building several forts, among them the one at St. Augustine, Florida. France, Holland, and England also moved to establish claims to land in North America in hopes of finding the wealth they knew must be there. Based at Champlain’s post at Quebec in 1608, the French established a trading network along the St. Lawrence River and soon found their wealth in animal furs. Because they relied on Indian trappers and traders the French were forced to adapt many of their ways to those of their trading partners. Consequently, the French were drawn into complex Indian alliances and wars. Following France’s lead, the Dutch at New Netherland, hoped to create the same sort of trading relation with the Indians in present-day New York. Unlike the Spanish and French, however, the Dutch government had no real interest in financing a trading settlement and the task fell entirely to a private trading company. The Dutch colony was shaped by the forces of commerce. The Dutch soon found that the fur trade was not as lucrative as hoped and focused instead on agriculture -- relying on African slaves to do the work. The English were motivated primarily by a search for wealth and power and religious fervor. Despite her desires the British did not begin building colonies, instead they raided the Spanish galleons carrying gold to Spain. England’s colonization efforts came very late compared to their European neighbors and based on their failures at Roanoke, English colonization was not a sure bet. However, England’s failures brought with them several lessons that once employed in future colonization schemes enabled England to have the longest lived North American colonies.

Key Topics  The information in chapter 2 introduces your students to the following key topics:

- European objectives in exploring the North American coast.
- Colonial settlements as outposts in a global economy.
- The creation of a “middle ground” between French traders and Huron Indians in Canada.
- The connection between trade, religious toleration, and slavery in New Netherland.
- Why England failed to establish a permanent colony at Roanoke.

Chapter Outline

Don Luis de Velasco Finds His Way Home
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  The Huge Geographical Barrier
  Spanish Outposts
New France: An Outpost in the Global Economy
  The Indian Background to French Settlement
  Champlain Encounters the Hurons
Feature: Where they lived, where they worked: Huronia
  Creating a Middle Ground in New France
  An Outpost in a Global Political Economy
New Netherland: The Empire of a Trading Nation
  Colonization by a Private Company
  Slavery and Freedom the Dutch Political Economy
  The Dutch-Indian Trading Partnership
  The Beaver Wars
England Attempts an Empire
  Raiding and other Empires
Annotated chapter outline with review questions

**Don Luis de Velasco Finds His Way Home:** Don Luis de Velasco, born Paquiqueño, a Powhatan Indian from coastal Virginia, was picked up by the Spanish in 1561 somewhere south of his homeland. For the next ten years Don Luis lived first in Mexico, where he was baptized and educated by Dominican friars; he then moved to Spain before returning to America. In 1570, Don Luis returned home; much had changed including Don Luis.

**Pursuing Wealth and Glory Along the North American Shore:** Because Spain’s colonies in the New World brought her wealth and power, the other European nations soon followed west with their own dreams of gold and glory. The immediate result was the establishment of colonies designed to bring wealth to the mother country. Although each nation approached colonization differently the primary objective of the exploring nations was wealth. While searching for gold, they also searched for a water route across the barrier continent that they were certain had to exist. These two priorities, wealth and a Northwest Passage, preoccupied the Europeans. They saw colonization as costly; a venture with uncertain profits. Only when alternative wealth, such as animal furs or fishing, was identified did the colonization effort begin in earnest.

- The continent of North America was initially seen as an obstacle filled with obstacles. The Europeans lacked any kind of sophisticated geographical knowledge about the continent and they had mixed relations with the native peoples.
- Initial attempts at establishing a profit-making colony were unsuccessful but the French soon realized that success, which may have really meant survival, rested upon establishing friendly relations with the Indians.
- Spain’s wealth made it the role model where the New World was concerned and its wealth soon became a target of English and French schemes to get rich. Because it was cheaper than colonization, preying upon Spanish gold-laden ships became an English national policy in part because the gold was easier to take off the ships and also because the Spanish ships were relatively easy marks.
- Because the French and English were moderately successful, the Spanish retaliated by building a string of forts along the Florida/South Carolina coastline, although all of the forts except the one at St. Augustine were eventually abandoned.

What were the key European objectives for exploring North America in this period? To what extent did England, Spain, France, and Holland achieve their objectives?

**New France: An Outpost in the Global Economy:** With the Spanish massacre at the French Fort Caroline, Spain succeeded in scaring the French from the southeast. The French instead focused their attentions on Canada and the region along the St. Lawrence River. In doing so, the French found a new way to make a profit in North America: they struck up a trade in beaver pelts. The French would not become the fur trappers as such; they relied on the Indians to do that and instead the French became traders in a very complex and geographically expansive network. The French drew the Indians into their global economy and the Indians drew the French into their intertribal relations. Both groups were profoundly changed for the experiences.

- Warfare was almost constant between the Algonquin peoples and the Iroquois. Blood feuds, or wars of retaliation, called “mourning wars” had been the norm between the Algonquins and Iroquois for generations and had resulted in, among other things, the creation of the Five Nations or Great League of Peace for the Iroquois.
- By 1600 the French were ready to focus more attention on their North American possessions. Trade in beaver pelts had become increasingly lucrative and the French crown realized that commerce with the Indians could increase his power and wealth. In 1608, Samuel de Champlain established a post at Quebec. There the French established a trading network along the St. Lawrence and learned how to live among the Indians. Soon French peasant farmers and Roman Catholic missionaries moved to the colony.
- As more French traders arrived, Champlain had to push further west to obtain more furs. The result of the French and Indian trade and cooperation was the creation of a mutually dependent relationship in which the Indians and the French had to adapt to each other’s ways if either was to be successful.
What was the “mourning war?” What function did it serve in Iroquois culture? How was it adapted to new circumstances in the seventeenth century?

**New Netherland: The Empire of a Trading Nation:** With Spain suffering a political decline, the British and Dutch stepped into the void. The Dutch government was dominated by a group of private middle class merchants whose wealth and influence helped create a distinctive political economy characterized by toleration and moderation. The Dutch claim originated with Henry Hudson who sailed up the Hudson River in New York, then called New Netherland. The Dutch relied on the fur trade for wealth and on the Indians to procure those pelts. The Dutch government relied on private companies to set up the trade networks and they lasted as long as they were profitable.

- New Netherland was never as important to the Dutch investors as their colonies in the Caribbean and in South America and profits from timber and fur never paid out the dividends like the slave trade did. Only after more liberal inducements were put into place did the number of colonists grow.
- Culturally, the Dutch were much more tolerant of different cultures (including Indians and Africans) as long as the investors were making a profit. The Dutch private companies created an environment in which business could prosper and there were no cumbersome social, religious, or political beliefs to get in the way of profit.
- The Dutch disrupted the balance among regional Indian tribes. The Indians competed with one another for access to the Europeans’ trade goods as well as the military powers they represented. The Dutch soon found themselves in the middle of a fight between the Mahican tribe on the one hand and the Mohawks on the other.
- Between 1648 and the 1660s, as the economic position of the Dutch faltered, the balance of power among a number of northeastern tribes collapsed. The Iroquois found themselves fighting almost everybody and the Europeans gained the upper hand. The beaver wars marked a turning point: the Indians were never able to replace the populations they lost to warfare and the pace of European colonization was increasing.
- Once the Dutch lost their profit-making centers, they had no real reason to hold onto a colony in North America.

Compare the early encounters with native Americans of the English, French, and Dutch. What was the “middle ground,” and how was it created?

**England Attempts an Empire:** England stepped into the void created by Spain’s descent into near powerlessness. The English colonies were created to make money for the mother country in strict accordance with the mercantilist theory. But unlike the Dutch, England was also motivated by a strong zeal to export Protestant Christianity to the New World. England’s nationalism was tinged with religious fervor.

- England came late to the colonization game.
- England’s first attempts to make money from the New World were hit and miss at best. Queen Elizabeth supported privateering -- stealing gold or slaves from Spanish ships. Within the theory of mercantilism, any Spanish loss was to England’s credit. The lasting legacy of these endeavors was the creation of the joint stock company to finance the privateering operations.
- Before England turned her attention to North America she dealt with her first priority: Ireland. These efforts (1565-1576) trained the English for their efforts in North America. The pattern of Irish colonization was followed at England’s first colonies in North America.
- Roanoke Island was settled by two distinct groups of English at two different times for two distinct purposes. The first colonists, organized by Walter Raleigh in 1584, was designed to create a resupply base in North America for privateering ships picking off Spanish gold-laden ships. Peopled by soldiers and the underclass in England, these first Roanoke colonists were ill-equipped to succeed. They were neither farmers nor diplomats and alienated the local Indians who they relied on for food.
- In 1585, the English colonists were gone for home. Two years later another group of English arrived. This time a mixed population of 110 men, women, and children arrived. Doomed from the start, these English arrived to find relations with the local Indians still poisoned. Their lack of farming skills meant they would have to rely on resupply ships from England for food. When the resupply ship did return in 1590, there were no English left on Roanoke Island. The English had abandoned the location and took up permanent residence inland with the Croatoan Indians; some may have ventured north toward Chesapeake Bay. For a variety of convenient reasons no one looked too hard for the “lost” colonists.
Why was the colony at Roanoke established and why was it abandoned?

Feature: Where they lived, where they worked: Huronia: By the mid 1500s, the Huron, which numbered about 20,000, occupied a huge region bounded by Georgian Bay and Lakes Huron, Erie, Ontario, and Simcoe. They lived in palisaded villages of about 2000 people. Residence was matrilocal and descent was matrilineal. Men occupied their time hunting, trading, and warfare while women raised crops and children. Land and other kinds of property were communally controlled and primary allegiance was to the group rather to any one individual.

- The adaptation that resulted from French and Indian cooperation is unlike the relationships that developed between other Europeans and the Indians. The frontier where the French and Indians lived and traded has been called the “middle ground.” French traders and priests accommodated to the Indians’ life style and became an active part of their interaction with other Indians; the Indians figured prominently in European affairs.
- For the French this meant that the on-going war between the Huron and Iroquois was their fight, too. The French managed to keep the region relatively peaceful but once the Dutch and English established colonies and made alliances with the Iroquois, old enmities were soon rekindled -- this time they were international in scope.
- By the end of the 1600s, the French colony began to prosper and grow. As it grew, the Huron population declined in large part because of epidemics. The Huron became increasingly dependent on the French and the French on the Huron who were the middlemen in acquiring the beaver pelts the French relied on. Over-trapping caused the Indians to range further and further west looking for pelts, bringing many more Indians into France’s economy.
- The French and Huron were active participants in the economic theory mercantilism. Based on the belief that the amount of money in the world was finite and that a nation’s objective was to acquire as much wealth as possible (therefore acquiring more power), colonies were seen as a lucrative way to increase one’s wealth by checking another’s.

Conclusion: By the mid 1600s, it was obvious that colonies in North America could make money for their mother country and with wealth a nation could become powerful. That the Europeans had unified their own nations through the use of military force meant that they would transfer that successful model to the formation of their colonies. Each nation’s colonies developed along distinctive lines, however, their similarities to one another were clear: colonies were seen as a road to national wealth and glory and each colony drew them all into an ever more complex global economy.

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 commodities are being transported from England to North America? What about from North America to England? What about between Spain and the New World and the New World and Spain? Is this how the “Columbian exchange” operated?
Map 02: What time period does this map cover? Trace the exploration routes in chronological order. Does one route or discovery lead to another?
Map 03: What time periods are covered in this map? Why are all of the settlements and forts located on rivers or the coastline? Do any of the European national claims over-lap another nation’s claims? Which ones?
Map 04: What time periods are covered in this map? Why are all of the settlements and forts located on rivers, lakes, or the coastline? Do any of the European national claims over-lap another nation’s claims? Which ones?
Map 05: Explain why the Europeans have such limited geographical knowledge of this region. Why would the Indian and European trade routes parallel bodies of water?
Map 06: What does this map depict? Which groups are involved in the trade relations depicted? What do they have to trade? What do they get in return?

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.

“Colonial Outposts” www.prenhall.com/boydston/landclaims
Spain and Portugal started the large-scale exploration and exploitation of North and South America, but eventually they were followed to the Americas by France, England, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Russia, all claiming large pieces of the land. Americans of the time-indigenous peoples-had their own concepts of land ownership that rarely included Europeans. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, all these independent land claims overlapped on maps, and people fought to enforce their own view of how the continents were divvied up. Who was where, and when, and what happened in the long run?

“Canadian Museum of Civilization” http://www.civilization.ca/cmc/cmeng/ca12beng.html
Read about trade between Native Americans and the French that fostered cultural exchange. At this site, also view actual artifacts of the fur trade, both Indian and European wares. The site also contains a link to the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, which features more artifacts of the fur trade.
1. After examining the French manufactured trade items that the Indians received in exchange for their animal pelts, answer these questions: Why would the Indians view these items as valuable?
2. Were they at least as valuable to the Indians as the furs?
3. How would French manufacturing change because of the need for these kinds of trade items?

“Coin and Currency Collection” http://www.coins.nd.edu/colcoin/colcoinintros/Netherlands.html
Part of an online exhibit at the Collections of Notre Dame Libraries’, this site details merchant activities in New Netherlands and showcases coins traded there.
1. Coins are said to reflect the nation’s sense of itself. How do these coins reflect Holland’s view of itself?

“Thomas Harriot’s A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia”
This primary account describes the first English colony, including the natural environment, provisions for the colonists, and their experiences with Native Americans.
1. Why did Thomas Harriot see the need to write such a lengthy descriptive report of his experiences on Roanoke Island?

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.

New France began as a tiny outpost in a global economy. By the end of the seventeenth century, it had increased in both size and importance. The French population in North America grew slowly (356 in 1640, 2000 in 1650, 19,000 in 1714) and the primary focus of New France remained the fur trade. In the 1630s, missionaries began to arrive in significant numbers, making the conversion of Indians to Catholicism the second most important endeavor in the colony. At the same time, the Huron population decreased dramatically. A series of epidemics -- smallpox in 1634, smallpox or measles the next year, influenza the year after that, and then smallpox again in 1639 -- cut the population in half, carrying off many of Huronia's leaders. Some of the survivors,
especially those who engaged in trade, converted to Christianity, while others blamed the priests for the diseases. The result was internal conflict and political instability that left the Huron vulnerable to their Indian enemies and increasingly dependent on their French allies. At the same time, the French depended upon their allies, the Hurons (and the Hurons’ allies, the Algonquins) to keep bringing them furs. The Hurons, in fact, operated as middlemen, not trapping beaver themselves, but acquiring beaver pelts from other tribes further to the west.

At some point in the middle of the seventeenth century, the supply of beaver in the regions closest to European settlements began to diminish. Before the arrival of the French, the Indians had trapped only enough for their own use. The huge European demand for beaver, however, led Indians to overtrapping, killing more beaver than could be replaced by natural reproduction. As a result, Europeans (or to be more precise, the Indians who acted as middlemen) extended their trade routes farther and farther to the north and west, where the supply of beaver was more plentiful. This expansion involved increasing numbers of Indians in the global economy.

The European demand for warm beaver coats and stylish beaver hats was almost insatiable. In order to trade for the pelts from which they were made, the French increased domestic manufacturing of cloth, metal implements, guns, and other goods that were attractive to the Indians. This pattern, in which the mother country produced goods to be sold or traded in foreign colonies for raw materials, was not unique to France.

1. What caused the “internal conflict and political instability that left the Huron vulnerable to their Indian enemies and increasingly dependent of their French allies?” Why would these result in such changes?
2. Using the passage, the chapter, and your imagination, describe the process by which beaver pelts came to the French and the reverse: trade goods found themselves in the hands of fur trapping Indians.
3. What caused New France to increase in size and importance?

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. Compare the exploration objectives of Spain and France or England and Holland. Did they meet those objectives? If so, why; if not, why not?
2. How did their exploration objectives relate to their colonization efforts?
3. The Huron and Iroquois practiced what is known as the “mourning wars.” What were these wars? What function did they serve in either Iroquois or Huron culture? What circumstances in the seventeenth century caused it to change? How did it change? Did the change result in the mourning wars serving some other reason than its original reason?
4. The French, Dutch, and English interacted very differently with the native peoples they came in contact with. Compare their early encounters with native Americans in the area of trade. What caused the Europeans to react so differently to the Indians?
5. What was the “middle ground,” and how was it created? Why would this be considered a positive adaptation of both the French and the Indians?
6. England’s first attempt at colonization was a failure. So, too, was its second attempt. Both of these attempts took place on Roanoke Island. Describe the motives for establishing these two colonies. Why were these first attempts such failures? What lessons did the English take from these failed ventures?

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.
Chapter two introduces your students to the establishment of the French, Dutch, and first English colonies in North America. On the one hand this chapter discusses commonalities among the colonizing nations: mercantilism and the competition between them for wealth and power; on the other hand the chapter points out differences between them: the raw materials exploited, attitudinal differences, etc. That the Europeans are motivated by the same goal but pursue it in different ways will probably be confusing for your students, who probably lump all Europeans and "colonies" in the same basket.

The same will probably be true with the Indians. Not only do we tend to lump them all together we also tend to see them as powerless in their relationships with the Europeans. Nor do we see them as having any role in the rivalries between the European nations. This chapter is interesting for its complexity. It is also a very good opportunity to introduce the geographic spheres of influence the Europeans came to control so that you can prepare your students for the wars for empire to come.