Chapter 1
Worlds Apart

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to United States history by exploring the cultural backgrounds of the three major racial and ethnic groups that came together in the seventeenth century to create the New World. Topics discussed in this chapter include descriptions of Native American, West African, and European societies on the eve of contact; the motivations for European exploration and settlement in the New World; early Spanish, French, and British settlements; and the impact of contact among Native Americans, Africans, and Europeans during the sixteenth century.

I. Native American Societies Before 1492
   A. Paleo-Indians and the Archaic period
   B. The development of agriculture
   C. Nonfarming Societies
   D. Mesoamerican Civilizations
      1. The Mayans
      2. The Aztecs
   E. North American Cultures
      1. Ancestral Puebloans
      2. Plains Indians
      3. Mound-building cultures
   F. The Caribbean Islanders

II. West African Societies
    A. Geographical and political differences
       1. Artisans and merchants
       2. Farming and gender roles
    B. Family structure and religion
    C. European Merchants in West Africa and the Slave Trade

III. Western Europe on the Eve of Exploration
     A. The Consolidation of Political and Military Authority
     B. Religious Conflict and the Protestant Reformation

IV. Contact
    A. The Lure of Discovery
       1. Advances in navigation and shipbuilding
       2. The Atlantic islands and the slave trade
    B. Christopher Columbus and the Westward Route to Asia
    C. The Spanish Conquest and Colonization
       1. The end of the Aztec Empire
       2. The fall of the Inca Empire
       3. Spanish incursions to the north
       4. The seeds of economic decline
    D. The Columbian Exchange
    E. Cultural Perceptions and Misperceptions
V. Competition for a Continent

A. Early French efforts in North America
B. English attempts in the New World
   1. The Colonization of Ireland
   2. Expeditions to the New World
   3. The Roanoke Colony

VI. Conclusion

Learning Objectives

After a careful examination of Chapter 1, students should be able to do the following:

1. Define the term *Paleo-Indians*.

2. Explain the impact of the development of agriculture on Native American society.

3. Define the term *culture area* and apply it to the development of Native American culture in the New World.

4. Explain the significance of Mesoamerica in the development of North American Native American culture.

5. List the Native American societies that emerged north of Mexico and describe their distinctive cultural characteristics.

6. Describe the Native American societies of the Caribbean Islands.

7. Describe the cultural characteristics of Native American society, focusing on religion, family and kinship traits, and gender roles.

8. Describe the cultural characteristics of West African society, focusing on the political systems, economy, family and kinship traits, religion, and the tradition of slavery.

9. Describe the cultural characteristics of western European society on the eve of discovery, focusing on the economy, family and kinship ties, political systems, and religion.

10. Distinguish between Catholic and Protestant Christianity and identify and chronologically place the Protestant Reformation.

11. Understand the basic principles of Calvinist theology, including the doctrine of predestination.

12. List the factors contributing to the development of western European interest in exploration and discovery.

13. Identify Christopher Columbus and discuss his contributions to the discovery and exploration of the New World.

14. Explain the factors that contributed to Hernando Cortes’s conquest of the Aztecs in Mexico.
15. Define the term *Columbian exchange* and discuss its impact on European and Native American culture.

16. Identify the major French explorers of the sixteenth century and describe their contributions to creating a French empire in the New World.

17. Identify the major English explorers of the sixteenth century and describe their contributions to creating a British empire in the New World.

18. Explain how the British experience in Ireland impacted British colonization in the New World.

19. Discuss the mystery of Roanoke Island and the possible explanations offered by historians as to the fate of the settlement.

**Topics for Classroom Lecture**

1. Discuss pre-Columbian Native American culture, stressing the diversity and complexity of American Indian societies in the New World. Point out differences in population dispersal and density, the varying degrees of civilization reflected in Native American societies, and the variety of religion, architecture, art, and political and economic organization in these cultures. Discuss the meaning of the term civilization and what modern-day Americans mean when they describe a society or culture as civilized. Have students question the traditional historical assertion that American history began with the arrival of Europeans and suggest that European settlement simply initiated another phase of American history.

2. Present a discussion of the factors contributing to the development of European interest in exploration and settlement in the New World. Because the United States originated as British colonies, focus specifically on the British motivation. A complete treatment of the issue would examine both political and individual reasons for movement into the New World. Include in the political discussion such issues as the national pursuit of a mercantile economic policy, the political power associated with the acquisition of empire, the expansion of military power, and the missionary motive. On the personal level, consider how religion, economic hardship, and the lure of adventure impacted many persons’ decisions to go to the New World.

**Topics for Class Discussion and Essays**

1. Compare and contrast Native American and European society on the eve of contact. How did beliefs regarding land ownership, family and kin, religion, and law and justice impact relations between these groups? How did each group regard the other and why?

2. Compare and contrast European perception and treatment of Native Americans and Africans during the sixteenth century. What negative impressions did Europeans hold about each society? Did they see anything positive or worthy in either culture? Discuss the distinction between race and culture. To what extent did race and culture define the European perception and treatment of each group? Which of these factors, race or culture, contributed most to the European perception of Native Americans? Which contributed most to the European perception of Africans?

3. Organize a group classroom activity in which students develop an understanding of Native American, African, and western European culture. Organize students in the classroom into groups so that
one third of the class is working on Native American culture, one third on African culture, and one third on European culture. For example, in a class of 30, set up six groups of five, with two groups working on each culture. Have them examine religion, family, politics, and the economy in their assigned society. After the groups have finished this assignment, reorganize the class into groups of three. Each group will include one member who has studied each of the three racial and ethnic groups. Have each student teach the other two about his or her culture. You can test the material by giving a take-home essay in which the students are asked to compare and contrast the Native American, African, and western European cultures.

4. Ask students to imagine they are citizens of lower-middle class origin living in Britain in the seventeenth century. Have them develop a scenario in which they explain their recent decision to go to the New World. What factors and conditions in each person’s life have become serious enough to motivate him or her to leave life in Britain and embark on a long journey to an unknown land? Ask students if they can imagine circumstances in their lives that would lead them to such a decision.

Topics for Term Papers or Class Projects

1. Research the primary historical resources left by western Europeans in which they recorded the events of their initial contact with Native Americans in the New World. These resources could include written records, such as journals or diaries from explorers and early colonists, or European art, particularly paintings and sketches based on a Native American theme. Discuss how these primary resources teach us about the European response and reaction to Native American culture.

2. Research the debate over slavery in Spain. Why did the institution present special problems within the Spanish culture? How did the debate impact the characteristics of the institution of slavery in Latin America?

3. Examine the Spanish and British approaches to colonial administration. How did Spanish colonial rule reflect the political system of the mother country? How did British administration of its colonies reflect its political philosophies? Can we connect these distinctions to the futures of these respective colonies (particularly the American quest for independence)?

4. Write a paper exploring the British colonial experience in Ireland. How did this experience prepare the British for creating a colonial empire in the New World? How will British treatment of the Irish be reflected in the plantation society of the American South? Can the British experience in Ireland be tied to the emergence of slavery in the British colonies?

Resources for Lectures and Research Projects

Audio-Visual Resources

This eight-part video series explores the Native American populations of North and Central America from pre-Columbian times until the turn of the twentieth century.

American Indian Artists, KAET-TV, 1975.
This three-part video allows students to investigate Native American culture through the art of six artists from the Pueblo, Navajo, and Hopi cultures.

In Search of History: The First Americans, A&E Video, 50 minutes.
This video examines the origins of the first human population in North America.

Roanoak, South Carolina Educational Television, 1986, 180 minutes.
This series chronicles the mysterious history behind The Lost Colony.

The first episode of the nine-part Ken Burns series on the West, this film chronicles the early Native American populations of North America and the impact of Spanish conquistadores on these native cultures.