



Summary of Period 1: 1491–1585

What You Should Know Before Reading This Chapter _____

- Large numbers of natives occupied almost all parts of North America when European colonists arrived.
- European colonists came to America for a large variety of reasons.
- Natives fluctuated between cooperating with the Europeans, or fighting them.

What you Will Learn By Reading This Chapter _____

- Native populations in the territory that would become the United States developed over time into distinct societies and groups, many of which were quite complex.
- Predominant in the northeast was the Iroquois confederation of five tribes who formerly were enemies, but united together for purposes of trade.
- In the southwest were hunters and gatherers who ranged over large areas of the arid, desert land in order to sustain life. Farther south were the great nations of the Aztecs and Incas.
- The European nations which sought to gain power over North America each created different relationships with the natives they found there.
- The French sought to establish a trading empire up the Mississippi River, and allied with many native Indian groups to assist them in doing so.
- The Spanish sought to establish Catholicism among the natives, while at the same time exploiting their labor in silver mining.
- In contrast, the late-coming English consisted of transplanted family groups who came to the continent to stay.
- The English colonists viewed the natives as an annoyance, while natives were naturally alarmed at how the English newcomers were taking land. This led to conflict between the two groups.

Many students may feel that the beginning of the United States is more connected to the colonization by the English and the political upheaval that led to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. However, a good understanding of the different nations, kingdoms, and tribes of the Native Americans is essential in gaining a fuller view of US History. This historical period shows how multiple complex civilizations developed across the globe, came into contact, and formed relationships on the North American continent.

Native American Nations

One of the mistakes found in previous interpretations of United States history is to combine all Native American people under one label, such as “Indian”. A better way to approach this time period is by referring to groups of Native Americans who lived in tribes, confederations, kingdoms and empires.

We tend to stereotype Native Americans as hunters and gatherers who lived peacefully in simple communities. This assumption likely originated with Christopher Columbus, who met a group of Native American, known as the Arawaks, living in such a manner on the Caribbean island we call San Salvador today. This provided them with isolation from competing tribes, resources to support their population, and a climate that was favorable to their community throughout the year.

However, if we go to the Northeast, we find a different type of society. A group of Native American tribes allied into a confederation called the Iroquois. This confederation included Mohawk, Oneida, Tuscarora, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca nations. The Confederation had been formed because the groups had warred with each other over resources. The creation of this alliance was done in the context of competition over resources and a complex agreement amongst political nations.

In the Southwest, Native American tribes were nomadic groups and kingdoms. There, groups like the Pueblo moved from place to place due to the lack of resources in the desert. However, they did establish an enormous kingdom, hewn entirely out of rock. This massive city was carved by hand out of the rock faces and included thousands of dwelling places for families. These communities thrived for thousands of years, until resources became scarce.

Then, to the South in Mesoamerica, we have the legendary empires of the Aztecs. The Aztecs filled in the power vacuum left by the original kingdoms of the Toltecs and Olmecs. Keep in mind that the Aztecs formed their capital city of Tenochtitlan in the middle of today’s Mexican desert. There they formed a central capital city that at one point housed 140,000 people. Contrast that to the European cities that had about 50–100,000 people in their cities during the same period. And remember that the Aztecs had to create their own form of irrigation



Key Concept 1.1

As native populations migrated and settled across the vast expanse of North America over time, they developed distinct and increasingly complex societies by adapting to and transforming their diverse environments.

systems called Chimpanas. These were storage facilities for rain water that would be kept above ground to keep their civilization supported.

The Aztecs were a strong and centralized empire. There was a clear hierarchy, with an emperor who was advised by religious leaders. And the local areas of the city were governed by familial groups called calpulli. The Aztecs conquered hundreds of tribes in the area. Then, they forced these groups into a tributary relationship. The local tribe could keep its own culture, political system, and religious beliefs if they paid a tax to the Aztecs each year in produce.

Aztecs are also known for their practice of human sacrifice. Some estimates suggest that Aztecs sacrificed 200,000 people over their time. They did this out of the religious belief that they were returning human blood back to the gods to satisfy them and to continue the cycle of seasons.

A similar type of system can be found further South in Mesoamerica in the Incas. The Incan Empire arose out of the different religious and tribal movements in the Peruvian mountains. The Incans formed an empire with its capital at Twantinsuyu. The empire was based upon farming, tributary systems, and the use of resources in a difficult mountainous terrain. The Incans also created an incentive for their emperors to expand the empire. New emperors could not inherit the land of their ancestors. They had to go out and conquer new land for their namesake. This grew the Incan empire in the very difficult terrain of the Andean mountains.

Native American or Native American(s)

It is important to understand, the notion of a single Indian, Native American or American Indian group makes little sense. It is like reducing all of Europe into one people. We know that Europe at this time was broken into mercantile nations competing against each other. The same was true of the Native Americans. They included farming groups, hunters and gatherers, nomads, confederations and kingdoms/empires. The European nations are often considered to have been larger, in scale, but this is misleading. Their urban centers, for instance, were much smaller than those of the American Natives.

Both the Old and New Worlds saw the birth of new nations that competed with each other over resources, trade, and alliances in order to increase the extraction of resources and labor for the development of the empire.

Frontier Meetings/Wars

This leads to the next issue: the encounter between the Native groups and the Europeans. The Europeans eventually emerged as the dominant force, but at the time, it was not clear who would end up being the victors of this cultural clash. This was due to a variety of factors, such as superior technology, the spread of disease, religious beliefs, and shifting alliances.

Hernan Cortez, a Spanish conquistador, conquered the Aztec empire. Records of his first interactions with the empire suggest the Aztec Emperor, Montezuma, welcomed Cortez, believing he was the Priest Quetzlcoatl who had come back to save the Aztecs from the spread of diseases at the time. This allowed Cortez to infiltrate the Aztecs and conquer them from within. Cortez also allied himself with local tribes that had been forced to give tribute to the Aztecs. So, shifting alliances, combined with disease and religious beliefs, led to the Aztecs' fall.

In North America, the relationship was far more complex. The English formed family-based settlements on the East coast for long term settlement and extraction of resources, such as timber, tobacco, cotton, and rice. Differing English groups settled on the coast. In Massachusetts, New York, and Connecticut, a variety of religious groups came to the area to set up economic colonies, as well as faith-based communities that sought to avoid English oppression. In the Chesapeake, or what became Virginia, noblemen settled to find riches and land. They found tobacco, and began to sell it back to England. Thus, their colonies became established for economic gains, with a strong hierarchy of land owners who employed cheap indentured servant labor.

This led to conflict with the Native American tribes and confederations. In the Northeast, the Pequot Indians came into conflict with the Puritans over land rights. Eventually, the Puritans allied with the Pequot Indian rivals, the Mohegans and Narragansets, to wipe out the Pequots. Puritan leaders argued the Pequots had to be destroyed because they threatened the religious mission of the community.

In the Chesapeake, the colonists came into conflict with the Wampanoags on the issue of land. The king of the Wampanoags, Massasoit, had formed an uneasy relationship with the pilgrims. However, his son Metacom was upset by the increasing encroachment on the land of the natives. So he organized an alliance with the Narragansett Indians and attacked the English colonies along the coast in the Chesapeake. He eventually lost the war, though he did create in European settlers a fear that the Natives could eventually wipe out the colonies.

In response, the Governor of the Virginia colony, William Berkeley, formed a treaty with the local tribes to limit the colonies' land possessions. This angered the indentured servants who saw their land rewards being threatened by the agreement. A landowner, named Nathaniel Bacon, saw an opportunity to raise a revolution of the indentured servants against the landed elites. Bacon died during the revolution from dysentery. But the fear of a possible future uprising that could succeed led to the search for a "less troublesome" form of labor for tobacco production. This opened the door for African slavery, while also creating an incentive to seek out land possessions for the production of tobacco.

In the Ohio River Valley, Native tribes used a variety of political and economic tools to keep the European powers in check. The Native groups had already formed an alliance of trade before the Europeans arrived called the Iroquois



Key Concept 1.2

Contact among Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans resulted in the Columbian Exchange and significant social, cultural, and political changes on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

confederation. This group of Natives included the Cayuga, Oneida, Mohawk, Onondaga, and Seneca. They had at one time warred with each other. But, for economic trade reasons, they joined together to create a peaceful relationship. When the Europeans arrived, the Iroquois tried to use their group of countries to negotiate trade and land disputes. Eventually, the Iroquois would create an alliance with the British while the Ottawas, Mississaugas, Wyandots, and Potawatomis, and Delawares joined with the French. These groups hoped to both check the Europeans and their Native enemies. However, once the French lost the French-Indian War and were kicked off the North American continent, British and American expansion into the Western territories began to uproot the Natives and stop their ability to check back the advance of European powers.

Trade Networks

The primary activity that took place between the different kingdoms and nations was trade. However, this took on different formats depending on the contexts and the motives of each of the European and Native groups.

The original trading relationship created after the European “discovery” of the Western hemisphere is called the Columbian exchange. The Europeans received important agricultural products from the Native tribes, including maize, potatoes, tobacco, coffee, and tomatoes. The Western Hemisphere saw European introduction of horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, goats and chickens. The most important, and most destructive, exchange was disease. Europeans brought diseases from the Eastern Hemisphere including influenza, measles, mumps, malaria, and smallpox. Most of these diseases were not especially destructive in Europe and Africa because people had contact with each other for centuries and had developed immunities. But the people of the Americas had not had contact with Europeans, Africans, or Asian groups. So these diseases caused mass deaths.

The Spanish conquered the region stretching from modern day California into Mesoamerica and South America. Spain was the leader of the Catholic world in Europe, and it saw itself as under siege by the Protestant movement in Northern Europe and the Islamic world in Northern Africa. Spain began to view the Western Hemisphere as a place to provide new converts to Catholicism and new resources for fighting their enemies at home. They established New Spain to solve these problems.

New Spain took the Aztec and Incan survivors and placed them in regions for resource extraction. The primary resource in Mexico was silver. Aztec descendants were placed on haciendas, or large plantations, where they either farmed produce or mined for silver. The resources were then sent back to Spain. This system was called the encomienda system, and it was disastrous to the Natives. The labor was essentially slavery, and disease often swept through the community of Natives due to their lack of immunological defenses, weaknesses

from working, and close proximity to one another. Eventually, this was criticized from a very unlikely A Catholic monk and slaveholder named Bartolomeo de Las Casas, who had originally supported the encomienda system as a way to convert Aztecs to Catholicism. However, when he observed the treatment of the Natives, he called for an end to the encomienda system.

Still, the Spanish treated the Natives like children who needed to be converted. In California, a system of missions was created. Here, Natives were often separated from their families and converted. The system of discipline at the missions tended to be harsh. The eventual result was the Pope rebellion in the Southwest that kicked the Spanish out of the region. The Spanish were able to return and create a local hierarchy to keep order. But the region was always tense in the relationships between the Spanish and local native population.

In the Louisiana territory, the French established New France as a way to create trade along the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes. The French explorer Jacques Cartier discovered what he would call the St. Lawrence River. Then, Samuel Champlain discovered its connection to the Great Lakes and Ohio region. Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet then discovered that the Mississippi flowed out into the Gulf of Mexico. These discoveries created a massive trade route from the Atlantic, down the Mississippi and out into the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean. France saw a huge potential for trading massive amounts of resources and gain the upper hand in its mercantile competition with Britain.

So, New France became a trading colony, and France controlled a huge tract of land. But most of it was settled very sparsely by military outposts and traders. The main trade was fur with the Native American tribes. France tended to treat the Native American tribes with tolerance. The reason was to keep peaceful relations for trading purposes. The advantage of this was a constant flow of resources out to France. The disadvantage was a lack of permanent or secure long term settlements.

And this is where New England gained an upper hand. The original colonies in New England seemed to be in a vulnerable position. They were on the Eastern Coast of the North American continent. They ranged over a very small portion of land. And, they were surrounded by their French enemies in the Great Lakes region and the Spanish in Florida and the Caribbean.

However, the method of settlement for New England actually gave the colonists the upper hand. The Pilgrims at Jamestown and the Puritans in Massachusetts came to the North American continent to establish religious colonies in order to reform England from afar. This meant that their colonies were based upon family settlements. And, whether they were established directly through the King or through joint stock investments, the colonists had a vested interest in seeing that their colony succeed spiritually, financially, and for security. This ensured that the English colonies had long-term stability and success. In fact, the notion of

“grandparents” were first established in the Puritan colonies because the people there started to live longer due to the higher standards of living.

New England did grow and become stronger due to their stable foundations. However, their relationships with the local Native tribes was very tense. This was largely due to the religious beliefs that the tribes needed to be converted or moved out of the way. This led to a series of wars. The most significant and destructive were the Pequot wars and King Philip’s War. The Pequot Wars ended with the mass destruction of the Pequot Indians at Mystic River. At the time, the Puritans justified this as necessary in order to stop the threats against God’s colony. However, the long term effect was a questioning of the Puritan identity. Some internal dissenters, like Roger Williams, had to leave the colony because he criticized the Puritan leadership for its ill treatment of the Natives. King Philip’s War ended with the English defeating the Natives. But the war created mass hysteria as Metacom and the Wampanoag tribe was able to devastate many settlements. The English colonists always had a very tense relationship with the local Native tribes.

Slavery

This leads up to one of the most important and most controversial aspects of early colonial history: the beginnings of African slavery. Two questions arise over this issue. First, why did African slavery begin in the colonies? And second, was slavery about race or economics when it got started?

Slavery has been a part of almost all major civilizations since the beginning of human history. For most of human history, slaves were either people captured in war or people who sold themselves to pay off debts. It is also true that Africans held slaves in the major kingdoms on the Northwestern coastline. And the largest number of slaves were transported through the Trans-Saharan trade route from Western Africa into the Middle Eastern Muslims empires.

However, European slavery did take a different turn from historical roots of slavery by making African slaves property. Slaves in most societies could eventually become a part of the kingdom, tribe, or nation. Slaves or their descendants would eventually join the group gaining all of the same rights and privileges as everyone else. But not in European slavery. In European slavery, African slaves were changed into property for ideological and for property reasons.

Europe developed a mercantilist economy. The mercantilist economy relied upon merchants and military to go out and conquer lands for colonies. The colonies were used to extract resources and send them back to the mother country for mass production. Then the mass produced items were sold to other countries with the hope of using that money to invest in the military for further conquering of colonies. Every nation competed to grow its military. The eventual goal was either to beat other countries or at the least check a growing country.

African slavery ended up being a key piece of this equation. The primary resources in the Western Hemisphere were sugar, cotton, and tobacco. These were rich products for mass production and sale, and they were labor intensive. Having a cheap form of labor like slavery reduced costs for extracting these resources. And since Africans were resistant to most European diseases, there was an even greater incentive to use their labor versus that of the Native American.

However, there was a huge ideological consequence to this. In order to maintain continued use of African slave labor, Europeans had to change Africans into objects so that they and their descendants could remain available for exploitation. This made it even easier to dehumanize African laborers into inferior objects that could be treated in such an inhumane way.

Africans were transported from Western Africa to the Caribbean by Spanish, French, and English ships. This voyage is called the Middle Passage. For many Africanists, it is viewed as a Diaspora or even a Holocaust because so many Africans lost their lives due to poor treatment, disease, or even being thrown overboard during the journey. The Europeans would then return their wealth from selling slaves to Europe. Then they would sail back to Western Africa. This three-legged trip is called the Triangle Trade.

It is true that African Kingdoms participated in this trade. African Kings saw this as an opportunity to get guns from Europeans. They used these guns to conquer local tribes in Western and Central Africa. For most African Kings, slavery was simply a part of human nature and human civilizations. In fact, when the British outlawed international slavery, African kings asked why they would do this.



Summary of Period 2: 1585–1750

What You Should Know Before Reading This Chapter _____

- Pilgrims settled in New England in the early 1600s, seeking religious freedom.
- British colonies were established from New Hampshire and Massachusetts on the north to Georgia on the south.
- Tobacco was the main southern crop in the colonial era.

What you Will Learn By Reading This Chapter _____

- Jamestown was the first permanent English colony in the New World, in 1607. The goal of this group was to gain gold and silver, and to quickly return profits to England. The goal was never met, and the colony only survived because of the discovery of tobacco, which quickly became popular in Europe.
- Puritan groups seeking religious freedom were the primary British colonists in the north. The pilgrims settled in Plymouth, while other distinct puritan groups went to Massachusetts Bay. Some dissenters who were cast out from the puritans settled in Rhode Island.
- Settlers seeking profits from the land settled in the southern colonies, particularly Virginia and North Carolina.
- Settling in the middle colonies were religious dissenter groups such as Catholics and Quakers who settled Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey.
- British control over the colonies was lax for over 100 years, which encouraged home rule and a strong sense of independence among the American colonists.
- Labor in the north was supplied primarily by indentured servants, and in the south by a growing number of transplanted African slaves. Rice and tobacco were the main southern crops.

Colonization: Different Goals Led to Different Outcomes _____

In the colonial era, the driving force behind the conquest of the Americas by European nations was the concept of mercantilism. Under the mercantilist mode of thinking, trade generated wealth (preferably in the form of gold and silver), and a favorable balance of trade would generate more wealth. Colonies were but one link in the chain that European nations would use to achieve such wealth.

However, mercantilism can be achieved in many different ways. Each of the four main European colonizers of the Americas approached their colonizing effort with different goals in mind, and therefore with different results. The Spanish goal was mainly to extract wealth from the land and from the natives. Initially, this goal was accomplished with ruthless disregard for the natives, and in time it was discovered that domination of the Indians was most easily accomplished if they were converted to Catholicism, and thus assimilated with their captors.

The French and Dutch focused more on trade with the natives as a source of wealth, such as trapping for furs, particularly since they were less successful at attracting settlers from the mother country willing to come to the Americas. Favorable trade relationships were often accomplished by forming alliances with the natives, and sometimes even by way of intermarriage between the colonizers and the natives.

And what of the English? While initially slow to become involved in the business of founding colonies to pursue mercantilist goals, two significant events set the stage for marked change in the 1600s. First was Henry VIII's break in the 1530s with the Roman Catholic Church, which led to the Protestant Reformation. The growth in divergent and sometimes unpopular religious ideas under the new banner of Protestantism in England would ultimately lead to the creation of a number of colonies in the new world based on a quest for religious freedom. The second event was the 1588 British defeat of the Spanish Armada. With Spain no longer capable of controlling the seas, British efforts to acquire wealth in North America in the 1600s could now more easily take place.

Accordingly, two divergent themes for British migration to the Americas in the 1600s evolved: religious freedom, and the mercantilist goal of improved trade between the colonies and the mother country based on producing and shipping products that each could specialize in which the other wanted. As will be seen, each of the colonies which eventually became the original 13 states got its start with one of these two goals primary in mind.

The First English Colonies _____

One of the first attempts at colonization occurred in 1585 under the direction of Sir Walter Raleigh. However, this first colony, the Roanoke Colony on the coast of what would become North Carolina, mysteriously disappeared during



Key Concept 2.1

Europeans developed a variety of colonization and migration patterns, influenced by different imperial goals, cultures, and the varied North American environments where they settled, and they competed with each other and American Indians for resources.