

American History Notes Unit 1 – Different Worlds Meet

Chapter 1 Section 1

- First Americans arrived thousands of years ago
- 1500 AD: millions of people covered North and South America
- Europeans arrived in the late 1400s

Question for Europeans: Where did these people come from?

- Mythical city of Atlantis?

- Modern archeologists study this question today using artifacts; carbon dating helps determine the age of an artifact
- Studies show that they may have crossed Beringia, a land bridge that connected present-day Russia to Alaska
- Most recent Ice Age: began 100,000 YA; ended 10,000 YA; end of Ice Age brought rising temperatures and rising sea levels
- Beringia now lies under the Bering Strait
- Earliest Americans were nomads; hunters and gatherers who migrated from place to place
- Hunted large animals; woolly mammoth, mastodon, saber-tooth tiger
- One animal provided meat, clothing, tools, weapons, and shelter; every part was used for something
- Rising temperatures of the ending Ice Age led to extinction; forced to find a new source for food

- 9,000 YA: people in Mexico learned to grow maize; provided a steady and reliable source of food – they no longer had to live a nomadic lifestyle
- Experimentation with seeds and planting; led to more food and greater population
- Early villages date from about 5,000 YA
- Permanent settlements led to an overall improvement in life; government, art, religion, language, writing, and culture

Chapter 1 Section 2

- Major American civilizations prior to the arrival of Europeans:
 - Olmec, Maya, Aztec, Inca

- Olmec: flourished between 1500BC-300BC along the Gulf Coast of what is now Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras – strongly influenced later American civilizations

- Maya: firmly established by 300 AD in present-day Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize; farmers and architects
 - Built large monuments and pyramids made of stone; still stand today – temples at highest point dedicated to the gods
 - Tikal: largest Mayan city in present-day Guatemala
 - Religion was central to Mayan society; priests made important decisions – theocracy government
 - Mayans became accurate astronomers; predicted eclipses and developed a 365-day calendar – this led to developments in mathematics
 - Hieroglyphics: Mayan form of writing
 - No wheels/horses – everything was transported by humans
 - Traded farmed goods for cotton, pottery, meat, etc.
 - 800AD: mysterious decline of the Mayan; gone by 900AD

- Aztec: wandered into present-day Mexico in 1325 AD; settled on an island in Lake Texcoco, present-day Mexico City

- Tenochtitlan: capital, and one of the greatest cities in the Americas; served as a center of trade which attracted thousands of merchants, bringing money into the city
- Grew into a military empire, conquering rival communities; conquered people were forced into slavery
- Religion was the focal point in society; Aztecs believed that human sacrifices were necessary to keep the gods pleased and to ensure abundant harvests; thousands were sacrificed
- 1519: 550 Spanish soldiers entered Tenochtitlan, led by Hernan Cortes
- Inca: largest of the American civilizations; capital city of Cuzco wanted founded in the Andes Mountains around 1200 AD
 - 1438: Emperor Pachacuti (PAH chah KOO tee) began a conquest of neighboring communities; empire stretched over 3,000 miles from present-day Colombia to northern Argentina
 - All men ages 25-50 could be drafted into the military
 - At least 10,000 miles of stone-paved roads ran through the mountains
 - Quechua (KEH chuh wuh): Incan language
 - How did the Inca farm in the rough Andes? They cut terraces into the mountains
 - Machu Picchu: major religious Incan city
- Francisco Pizarro: conquered the Incas

Chapter 2 Section 1

- Western world: Europe emerges out of the Middle Ages; trade and technology are advancing = time for exploration
- First European explorer: Marco Polo; wrote *The Travels* which inspired Europeans like Christopher Columbus 200 years later
- Need for a different route to the East: India/China had riches and highly coveted spices; the Middle East was dangerous and long
- 1300s: powerful new spirit emerged in Italy known as the Renaissance; a rival or rebirth of classical knowledge and interest in Greece and Rome
- Development of banking made Italian merchants wealthy
- The Renaissance dramatically changed the way Europeans thought about themselves and the world, paving the way for an age of exploration and discovery
- Powerful monarchies: Spain, Portugal, France, and England; sought ways to increase trade and make their countries wealthy and strong
- Technology paved the way for European voyages; the printing press, astrolabe, magnetic compass, and the caravel
- Advances in cartography
- 300-1600: powerful African kingdoms emerge south of the Sahara; rich in gold, copper, and iron
- Trade with Islamic societies in North Africa brought wealth and Islamic ideas and customs to these kingdoms; Arab traders from cotton, silk, and porcelain from East Asia
- Portuguese explorers sailed along the African coastline, setting up trading posts where they traded gold for slaves
- Ghana: powerful kingdom that prospered from the taxes imposed on trade; caravans loaded with gold, ivory, and slaves traded with Muslim traders = many West Africans became Muslim
- Mali: revived trade routes to North Africa after Ghana declined
- Mansa Musa: ruled Mali from 1312-1332; greatest king of Mali – he made a pilgrimage to the Muslim holy city of Mecca, he built a great mosque in the capital city, Timbuktu which became an important center of Islamic art and learning
- Quran: holy book of Islam

Chapter 2 Section 2

- Only known continents at this time: Europe, Asia, Africa; some believed the Atlantic and Pacific connected, suggesting the world was round; it was known as the Ocean Sea – the Americas were completely unknown
- Portugal took the lead in exploration, sailing south along Africa, hoping to find a southern ocean route to the Indies; Portugal did not have a Mediterranean port and could not benefit from Mediterranean trade routes
- Prince Henry the Navigator: set up a center for exploration in Portugal in 1420 bringing astronomers, geographers, and mathematicians to share their knowledge with sailors and explorers
- Western African coast known as the “Gold Coast”; Portugal began trading and selling slaves here
- Bartholomeu Dias: set out to explore the southern tip of Africa in 1488; discovered the southwestern most tip of Africa and it was named the Cape of Good Hope by King John II of Portugal
- Vasco da Gama: first Portuguese explorer to reach India by an all water route in 1497; he rounded the Cape of Good Hope and continued onto India, reaching the Port of Calicut in 1498
- Pedro Alvares Cabral: followed da Gama’s route, swinging so far west that he landed in Brazil, claiming part of the America’s for Portugal

- Christopher Columbus: Italian who sailed for Spain; believed he could sail west to get to the east – he believed Asia was 2,400 miles from Europe, about a 2-month trip

- Vikings from Scandinavia had reached North America in the 800s and 900s; Leif Erikson landed in Newfoundland in 1000 AD and established a settlement, but it did not last; these tales were unknown to the rest of Europe

- 1492: all Muslims were driven out of Spain; King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella could focus on other goals; they would sponsor Columbus’ voyage

- Columbus sailed with three ships on August 3, 1492; *Nina*, *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria* – landed in the Bahamas on October 12, 1492
- Caribbean is still known as the “West Indies”; Columbus died believing he had landed in India – he made three additional voyages; later explorations established that Columbus had “discovered” a new world

- Exploration race between Spain and Portugal, led to the line of demarcation to be drawn in 1493; this separated the world between Spanish exploration (west of the line) and Portuguese exploration (east of the line)
- Portugal argued the line favored Spain; Treaty of Tordesillas moved it farther west, giving Portugal- established Brazil to Portugal – a trend still true in today’s world

- Vasco Nunez de Balboa: governor of a Spanish town in Panama; led a group to the Pacific over the mountains – first Spaniard to see the Pacific from the Americas

- Ferdinand Magellan: sailed for Spain; first to circumnavigate the world; discovered the Strait of Magellan at the tip of South America. Magellan himself was killed in the Philippines, but his crew made it back to Spain

Chapter 2 Section 3

- Conquistadors: Spanish explorers; had the right to explore and establish settlements in the Americas – the crown received 1/5 of the profits
- Hernan Cortes: landed in Mexico in 1519 with 500 soldiers, some horses, and a few canons; learned about the Aztec empire and Tenochtitlan
 - Aztecs had conquered many neighboring villages; they were forced to give crops, clothing, gold, and precious stones to the Aztecs as tribute

- Cortes formed alliances with these cities since they were not fond of the Aztecs
- Destroyed Tenochtitlan in 1521
- Montezuma: last Aztec emperor who reigned during Cortes' arrival
 - Captured and killed by the Spaniards
- Francisco Pizarro: landed in South America around 1532 with 180 Spanish soldiers
 - Captured the Incan emperor, Atahualpa; falsely accused him of crimes and executed him

Why was Spain so successful?

- Unique weaponry: guns and cannons
- Unique animals: horses and dogs
- Natives accepted the Spaniards as gods
- Many Natives hated the ruling empire and allied with the Spanish
- Disease: specifically smallpox

Spain in the Americas

- Mexico & Peru were rich in silver and gold; this led to additional exploration to the north – as they encountered Natives, they captured villages, the chief and raided for food and supplies
- Juan Ponce de Leon: first Spanish landing on the mainland of North America, present-day Florida in 1513; hoping to find the legendary fountain of youth and gold – this expedition led to the establishment of St. Augustine, Florida in 1565
- Oldest, continuous, European settlement in North America: St. Augustine, Florida – est. 1565
- Hernando de Soto: led an expedition to explore Florida and lands to the west; explored as far west as Oklahoma – crossed the Mississippi
- Francisco Vasquez de Coronado – traveled through northern Mexico, Arizona, and New Mexico
- Three types of Spanish settlements: pueblos, missions, and presidio
- Social Structure: peninsulares, creoles, mestizos, slaves
- *Encomienda* system
- Bartolome de Las Casas: condemned cruel treatment of Natives – Spain passes the New Laws which forbade making slaves of Native Americans; this did not end poor treatment
- Main exports: sugarcane and tobacco – led to the plantation system and slavery of Natives
- Las Casas suggested replacing Native slaves with imported Africans

Mid-1500s: thousands of slaves were being imported

Chapter 2 Section 4

- Martin Luther: ignited the Protestant Reformation in 1517 by nailing the 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church in Germany – he exposed arguments against the Catholic Church; people began breaking away and starting their own religions
- John Calvin: inspired by Luther, started his own religion
- King Henry VIII: broke away because the pope refused to grant him a divorce; began the Protestant Church of England/Anglican Church – led to religious and societal turmoil in England
- Europe = divided between Protestants and Catholics; as Europeans immigrated they brought their religious views with them and worked to spread their views in the Americas

- The promise of great wealth and religion drove Europeans to cross the Atlantic
- Mercantilism: money=wealth; driving force for rulers – provided opportunities for individual merchants to make money and increased rivalry between nations
- Columbian Exchange: exchange of goods between Europe and the Americas
- Northwest Passage: England, France, and the Netherlands were not in on the Treaty of Tordesillas; they searched for a northern passage to the East
- John Cabot: landed in Newfoundland for England in 1497; basis for English claims in North America
- Giovanni da Verrazzano: Frenchman who explored the coast from Nova Scotia to the Carolinas in 1524
- Jacques Cartier: sailed up the St. Lawrence River in 1535 for France; named a peak at his farthest exploration point, “Mont-Royal” in present-day Montreal
- Henry Hudson: discovered the currently named Hudson River, Hudson Strait, and Hudson Bay in 1609 for the Netherlands
- The Dutch settled in the areas Hudson discovered
- France’s goal: trading posts and fur trade
- Samuel de Champlain: established Quebec for France – became major trading post
- French fur trappers were called coureurs de bois (ku RUHR duh BWAH)