

- ▼ An American Indian and a European exchange goods.



## WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

### Two Cultures Meet

In one of the great accidents of history, explorer Christopher Columbus sailed west from Spain and landed on an island he thought was in Asia. In fact, Columbus encountered lands and people that Europeans did not know existed. In an October 12, 1492, journal entry, Columbus describes his first encounter with the people who lived on the island.

“As I saw that [the island residents] were very friendly to us, . . . I presented them with some red caps, and strings of beads to wear upon the neck, and many other trifles of small value. . . . Afterwards they came . . . bringing parrots, balls of cotton thread, javelins, and many other things which they exchanged for articles we gave them, such as glass beads, and hawk’s bells; which trade was carried on with the utmost good will.”

—Christopher Columbus, October 1492

# Many Cultures Meet

## Objectives

- Discuss the migration of the first people to the Americas.
- Explain why Europeans wanted to develop a sea route to India in the 1400s.
- Describe the importance of trade in West Africa.
- Identify the effects of Christopher Columbus’s voyage to the Americas.

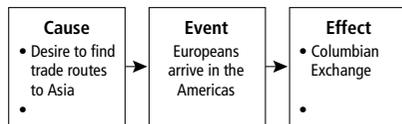
## Terms and People

clan	conquistador
Middle Passage	Columbian Exchange
Christopher Columbus	

## NoteTaking

### Reading Skill: Identify Causes and Effects

Identify the causes and effects of European arrival in the Americas.



**Why It Matters** Europe’s Age of Exploration began in the 1400s as a quest for an all-water route to Asia. In 1492, Europeans crossed the Atlantic Ocean and began to explore North and South America. The arrival of European settlers and enslaved Africans brought traumatic changes to the Native Americans, who had developed many complex cultures in the Americas. **Section Focus Question:** What were the causes and effects of European arrival in the Americas?

## The American Indians

North and South America are remarkable for the diversity of their landscapes and their climates. Tens of thousands of years ago, humans began arriving in these vast lands.

**Ancient Peoples Migrate to the Americas** Most scientists believe that the first inhabitants of the Americas migrated from the northeastern coast of Asia between 40,000 and 15,000 years ago. Some scientists believe that Asians came over a land bridge that appeared across the Bering Strait during the last ice age. Others suggest that the first Americans arrived in boats that traveled along the Pacific coastline.

Over the generations, the American Indians expanded southward, occupying North and South America. As they filled these two continents, they adapted to dramatically different climates and landscapes, developing great cultural diversity. By 1492, the American Indians spoke at least 375 distinct languages.

**Cultures Share Many Traits** Despite their diverse cultures, many Indian cultures shared a number of characteristics. Most cultures were based on extended family groups called **clans**. All members of a clan had a common ancestor and identified with the spirit of a powerful animal. Several clans combined to make up a mobile band of Indians or a stationary village.

Many American Indian cultures shared similar religious beliefs. They believed that powerful spiritual forces were part of nature. Some Indians became shamans, who conducted rituals to seek benefits from spirit beings.

**Agriculture Leads to the Growth of Civilizations** About 3,500 years ago in central Mexico, the Indians learned how to grow such crops as maize (corn), squash, and beans. The methods of cultivation spread northward into the American Southwest and Midwest. The expanded food supply allowed the population to grow, which led in turn to the growth of towns and cities sometimes guided by powerful chiefs.

Many Indians did not adopt an agricultural way of life and thrived on a mix of hunting, gathering, and fishing. Crops did not thrive in the arid Great Basin between the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains. In the Pacific Northwest, Indians did not need to farm because fishes and game were so plentiful.

 **Checkpoint** How did geography influence the American Indians' way of life?

**Vocabulary Builder**  
diverse—(duh VERS) *adj.* different; varied

**Geography Interactive**

For: Interactive map  
Web Code: ncp-0102

## Native American Culture Regions of North America in About 1450

**Map Skills** By 1450, a great variety of Native American groups lived in North America. Within each culture area shown on the map, groups shared similar ways of life.

- 1. Locate:** (a) Gulf of Mexico, (b) Arctic Ocean, (c) Hudson Bay
- 2. Regions** In which region do the Cheyennes live?

- 3. Make Comparisons** Based on the characteristics of their regions, describe at least one way in which Inuit culture may have differed from Navajo culture.



## The Europeans

While Native American cultures thrived in the Americas, life in Europe was changing rapidly. Changes in Europe that had begun in the fourteenth century would lead to contact between the cultures of Europe and the Americas.

**The Renaissance Changes Europe** The period from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries when great advances in science, economics, political thought, and art occurred in Europe is called the Renaissance. Scientific advances and an increase in economic wealth led some to sponsor early voyages of exploration. European kingdoms on the Atlantic coastline sent explorers into the sea. The monarchs and aristocrats who ruled these nations competed for access to the profitable trade in silks, gems, gold, ivory, and spices from Asia and Africa. This trade was dominated by Muslims who lived in North Africa, the Balkans, and Southwest Asia and by Italian merchants with access to the Mediterranean Sea.

**The Age of Exploration Leads to Voyages of Discovery** During the fifteenth century, the Portuguese took the lead in an era known as the Age of Exploration. By developing better ships and more advanced methods of navigation, the Portuguese regularly ventured into the Atlantic Ocean far from the sight of land. Sailing farther south and then east, Portuguese mariner Bartolomeu Dias traveled around the southern tip of Africa into the Indian Ocean from 1487 to 1488. Then in 1498, Vasco da Gama reached India, opening a profitable trade.

✓ **Checkpoint** Why did Europeans seek a sea route to Asia?

## The West Africans

Sailing south into the Atlantic Ocean, Portuguese mariners reached West African kingdoms below the Sahara. Highly civilized and densely populated, African kingdoms like Songhai and Benin had a sophisticated agricultural system, made iron tools, and employed draft animals and writing systems. Their products and produce moved north by caravans of camels or along the coast and the major rivers in large canoes. To trade, the Portuguese needed the cooperation of the powerful West African kings.

The Portuguese mariners were not only interested in gold and salt, they were also interested in buying enslaved Africans. The Portuguese did not invent the slave trade, but they greatly expanded it—especially after 1500, when new colonial plantations created a demand in the Americas. During the next three centuries, slave traders from Portugal, Spain, Britain, and other European nations forced at least 11 million Africans across the Atlantic. Known as the **Middle Passage**, this brutal transatlantic commerce weakened the economy of West Africa as it enriched European merchants and empires.

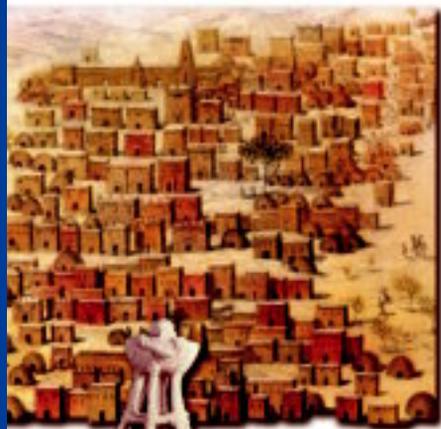
✓ **Checkpoint** What effects did the Portuguese mariners have in West Africa?

## First Encounters in America

In 1492, Spain sponsored a voyage headed by Italian mariner **Christopher Columbus**. Columbus hoped to reach the Indies of East Asia by sailing westward across the Atlantic. However, he underestimated the size of the world and had no idea that the Americas were there to block his ships.

### West African Kingdoms

Songhai and Benin were powerful African kingdoms. Pictured here are the city of Timbuktu, which reached its height under the Songhai empire, and a Benin ivory saltcellar with carvings of Portuguese traders. *How did trade affect West Africa?*



Columbus explored several Caribbean islands. Convinced that the islands were the Indies, he called the natives “Indians.” (See the Witness History at the beginning of this section.) Columbus and those who followed worked to convert the Indians to Christianity. Europeans also took Indians’ lands and enslaved Indians.

**The Conquistadores** The Spanish rapidly conquered a vast empire around the Caribbean and in Central and South America. Known as **conquistadores**, Spanish invaders were brave, resourceful, ruthless, and destructive. Between 1519 and 1521, Hernando Cortés overpowered the Aztecs in Mexico.

Other Spanish conquistadores explored and conquered other parts of North America. Juan Ponce de Leon traveled through parts of Florida in 1513. Later, from 1539 to 1542, Hernando de Soto explored other portions of Florida and parts of the Southeast, reaching the Mississippi River. Francisco Coronado searched for legendary cities of gold in the Southwest. He explored present-day Arizona and New Mexico but found no gold.

**The Columbian Exchange** The conquistadores had the advantage of horses and steel weapons. But they had an unintentional weapon, too. Native Americans had no immunity to such deadly European diseases as smallpox, measles, and cholera. Indians died by the thousands.

These plagues made it easier for the Europeans to conquer and colonize North and South America. But they also thinned the number of possible Indian slaves. To make up the loss, the colonizers forced millions of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic to the Americas.

In addition to bringing new people into the Americas, the colonizers introduced new animals, including pigs, horses, mules, sheep, and cattle. The Europeans diversified their own agriculture by adopting crops pioneered by the Indians. Maize and potatoes helped to boost the population of Europe. The traffic of goods and ideas between Europe and the Americas is called the **Columbian Exchange**.



**Checkpoint** How did European explorations affect life in the Americas, Africa, and Europe?

**Comprehension**

- 1. Terms and People** For each item below, write a sentence explaining its significance.
  - clan
  - Middle Passage
  - Christopher Columbus
  - conquistador
  - Columbian Exchange

- 2. NoteTaking Reading Skill: Identify Causes and Effects** Use your cause-and-effect chart to answer the Section Focus Question: What were the causes and effects of European arrival in the Americas?

**Writing About History**

- 3. Quick Write: Identify Effects** Write a paragraph describing the effects of the European arrival in America from a Native American point of view. Your paragraph should state a main idea and include supporting details.

**Critical Thinking**

- 4. Draw Inferences** How would the culture of Native American peoples who lived in a mountainous region differ from those who lived on a fertile plain? Which groups would be more likely to live in villages, and which would be more likely to hunt and gather?

- 5. Summarize** What did the Europeans hope to gain by finding a sea route to Asia?
- 6. Analyze Information** How did European contact with Africans affect the Africans?
- 7. Recognize Bias** When Europeans and American Indians first encountered one another, they each must have been startled to see the other. What opinion do you think Columbus had of the Indians? What do you think American Indians thought of the Europeans?