**APUSH Summer Assignment Reading**

**Directions**: Read the following pages in their entirety! You will need this information to answer the review questions (included separately: please see Mr. Mullen’s webpage at <http://www.bonitahigh.net>). This assignment covers the first 3 chapters our APUSH textbook and comprises roughly 10% of the material that is covered by the AP US Exam in May.

This document has been formatted to be easily printed, if desired.

**NOTE # 1:** YOU **DO NOT** NEED TO PRINT OUT THIS DOCUMENT IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO!!! THAT IS YOUR PERSONAL DECISION BASED ON HOW YOU PREFER TO READ THIS DOCUMENT.

**NOTE # 2**: These excerpts do not go in the exact order of your textbook and they cover the information in a slightly different way. That is OK. For this assignment you only need to read the following pages – YOU DO NOT NEED YOUR TEXTBOOK!

Excerpts for this assignment were taken with permission from:

The American Yawp (<http://www.americanyawp.com>) and <http://www.ushistory.org>

**CHAPTER 1**

1.  Introduction

Europeans called the Americas “The New World.” But for the millions of Native Americans they encountered, it was anything but. Human beings have lived here for over ten millennia. American history begins with them, the first Americans. But where did they come from? Native Americans passed stories down through the millennia that tell of their creation and reveal the contours of indigenous belief. The Salinan people of present-day California, for example, tell of a bald eagle that formed the first man out of clay and the first woman out of a feather.[1](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/01-the-new-world/#footnote_0_53) Archaeologists and anthropologists, meanwhile, studying artifacts, bones, and genetic signatures, have pieced together a narrative for the origins of humans’ presence in the Western Hemisphere: the Americas were once a “new world” for Native Americans as well.

2. The First Americans

The last global ice age trapped much of the world’s water in enormous continental glaciers. Twenty thousand years ago, ice sheets, some a mile thick, extended across North America as far south as modern-day Illinois and Ohio. With so much of the world’s water captured in these massive ice sheets, global sea levels plummeted and the receding waters exposed a land bridge between Asia and North America across the Bering Strait. The first Americans most likely migrated from Asia sometime between twelve and twenty-thousand years ago, if not before. Nomadic hunter-gatherers, they traveled in small bands following megafauna–enormous mammals that included mastodons and giant horses and bison–into the frozen Beringian tundra at the edge of North America. Then, sometime between twelve- and fourteen-thousand years ago, the glaciers’ long retreat freed them to enter the heart of North America. Behind them the land bridge closed and severed the two hemispheres, but in North America, as the ice retreated, humans filled the continents and by 11,000 years ago migrating peoples had reached the tip of South America. Hunters across the hemisphere preyed on plentiful game and natural foods and the population boomed.

Whether because of overhunting, climate change, or a combination of the two, the megafauna population collapsed and mastodons, horses, and other large mammals disappeared. But native populations adapted: they fished, hunted small mammals, and gathered nuts and berries. Native peoples spread across North America. Woodland groups populated the Atlantic coast and later practiced agriculture to supplement rich hunting and fishing. On the plains, nomads followed bison herds. In the Northwest, natives exploited great salmon-filled rivers. And as paleo-Indians populated mountains, prairies, deserts, and forests, cultures and ways of life as arose as varied as the geography. Paleo-Indian groups spoke hundreds of languages and adopted distinct cultural practices. Woodland cultures burned underbrush to create vast park-like hunting grounds. Men typically hunted and women typically gathered and prepared wild foods. Rich and diverse diets fueled massive population growth across the continent.

Between two and eighteen million people lived north of present-day Mexico before the arrival of Europeans. They were not isolated among themselves but connected by complex relationships and long trading routes. By 3,500 years ago, for instance, copper from present-day Canada and flint from modern-day Indiana could be found in Poverty Point, Louisiana.

Agriculture arose sometime between nine- and five-thousand years ago, almost simultaneously in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. Mesoamericans in modern-day Mexico and Central America first domesticated maize and and developed perhaps the hemisphere’s first settled population around 1,200 BCE. The Olmecs grew maize (corn), built monumental stone structures, and established long-distance trade routes that extended across the region and eventually the hemisphere. Corn was high in caloric content, could be easily dried and stored, and, in Mesoamerica’s warm and fertile Gulf Coast, could sometimes be harvested twice in a year. Corn and other Mesoamerican crops spread across the peoples of North America in the centuries before contact with European invaders. Agriculture flourished especially in the fertile river valleys between the Mississippi River and Atlantic Ocean. There, three crops in particular–corn, beans, and squash, the so-called “three sisters”–provided nutritional needs necessary to sustain cities and civilizations.

[](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/wp-content/uploads/Prehistoric-Settlement-in-Warren-County.jpg)

*Prehistoric Settlement in Warren County, Mississippi,*[*Vicksburg Riverfront Murals*](http://www.riverfrontmurals.com/indian.htm)*.*

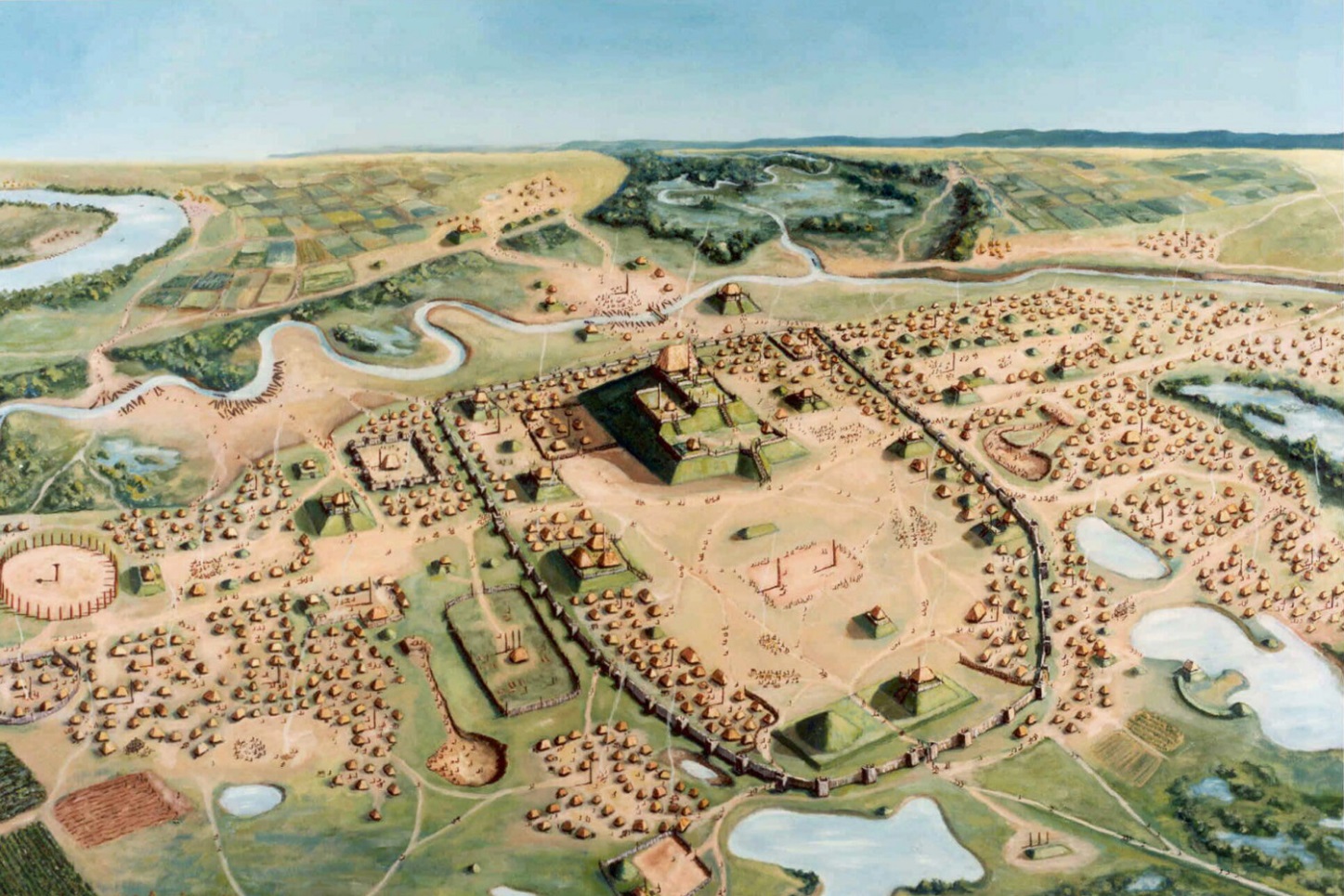
Native American agriculture varied. Some groups used shifting cultivation where farmers cut the forest, burned the undergrowth and then planted seeds in the nutrient rich ashes of what remained. When crop yields began to decline, farmers would simply move to another field and allow the land to recover and the forest to regrow before they would again cut the forest, burn the undergrowth, and restart the cycle. This technique was particularly useful in areas with difficult soil. But in the lush regions of the central and eastern United States, Native American farmers engaged in permanent, intensive agriculture, using hand tools rather than European-style plows. The lush soil and use of hand-tools enabled effective and sustainable farming. These techniques produced high yields without overburdening the soil.[2](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/01-the-new-world/#footnote_1_53)

Agriculture allowed for dramatic social change. Farmers could produce more food than hunters, enabling some members of the community to pursue other skills. Religious leaders, skilled soldiers, and artists could devote their energy to activities other than food production. Most Native Americans did not have written languages, but Algonkian and Ojibwe peoples used birch bark scrolls to record medical treatments, recipes, songs, stories, and more. Skilled weavers also produced clothing that supplemented furs. Eastern woodland peoples wove plant fibers, while others on the plains wove buffalo hair, and in the Pacific Northwest goat hair, into soft textiles. Metalworkers produced practical tools like fishhooks or weapons, and artists made decorative jewelry. Copper was the most common metal used in North America, while gold and silver could be found further south.

Several expansive civilizations in the Midwest and Southwest demonstrated the potential for large-scale Indian civilizations. The so-called Mississippians exploited the rich floodplains of the Mississippi River and built a network of settlements across the Midwest and the American South. Mississippian society was stratified. Elites maintained power through kinship, gift-giving, and by controlled access to the spiritual world. The Mississippian’s signature mounds–enormous earthworks that could span acres and climb several stories tall–physically set priests and elites above the general population of craftsmen, agricultural workers, and slaves.

The Mississippians developed the largest and most advanced native civilization north of modern-day Mexico. Roughly one-thousand years ago, the largest Mississippian settlement, Cahokia, located just east of modern-day St. Louis, peaked at a population of between 10,000-30,000. It rivaled contemporary European cities in size. (No American city, in fact, would match Cahokia’s peak population levels until after the American Revolution). Cahokia experienced what one archeologist has called a “big bang” around the year 1050 that included “a virtually instantaneous and pervasive shift in all things political, social, and ideological.”[4](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/01-the-new-world/#footnote_3_53) The population grew almost 500 percent in only one generation, and new groups of peoples were absorbed into the city and its supporting communities.

Located near the confluence of the Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri Rivers, Cahokia became a key trading center with networks stretching from the Great Lakes to the American Southeast. The city itself spanned 2,000 acres. Religious ceremonies were performed atop vast “mounds,” enormous man-made earthen hills that still dot the Midwest and the American South. The largest mound at Cahokia, Monks Mound, rose ten-stories and was larger at its base than the great pyramids of Egypt. By 1300, the once powerful city had undergone a series of strains that led to collapse. Scholars previously pointed to ecological collapse or slow depopulation through emigration, but new research instead indicates that mounting warfare, or internal political tensions led to the collapse of the once mighty city.[5](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/01-the-new-world/#footnote_4_53)

[](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Cahokia_1.jpg)

*Cahokia, by Bill Iseminger.*[*Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site*](http://www.cahokiamounds.org/)*.*

In the American Southwest sometime between the years 900 and 1300 ancient Puebloan peoples built a large civilization sustained by advanced irrigation and a vast trading network linking goods from as far as Central Mexico and the Mississippi River. As many as 15,000 people lived in the Chaco Canyon complex in present-day New Mexico. One single building, Pueblo Bonito, stretched over two acres and rose five stories. Its 600 rooms were decorated with copper bells, turquoise decorations, and bright macaws.[6](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/01-the-new-world/#footnote_5_53) (Not until the late-nineteenth century would another American building surpass it in sheer size.) It and other ancient adobe cliff dwellings persist as ruins. Decline–likely brought on by sustained droughts, overpopulation, and soil exhaustion–shattered the large Pueblo cities although Puebloan peoples persisted in New Mexico and would later resist the highpoint of Spain’s North American expansion.

North America’s indigenous peoples shared some broad traits. Spiritual practices, beliefs on property, and kinship networks differed markedly from Europeans. Most Native Americans did not neatly distinguish between the natural and the supernatural. Spiritual power permeated their world and was both tangible and accessible. It could be appealed to and harnessed. Moreover, most native peoples’ notions of property rights differed markedly from Europeans. Native Americans generally felt a personal ownership of tools, weapons, or other items that were actively used. The same rule applied to land and crops. While groups and individuals exploited particular pieces of land, for instance, and through violence or negotiation would exclude others, the right to the use of land did not imply the right to permanent possession. Meanwhile, kinship bound most native North American people together. Most North American native peoples lived in small communities tied by kinship networks. Native cultures understood ancestry as matrilineal: family and clan identity proceeded along the female line, through mothers and daughters, rather than fathers and sons. Fathers, for instance, would often join mothers’ extended families and sometimes even a mother’s brothers would take a more direct role in child-raising than biological fathers. Mothers could therefore often wield enormous influence at local levels and native mens’ identities and influence were often forged in such matrilineal contexts. Native American culture meanwhile generally afforded greater sexual and marital freedom. Women often chose their husbands, and divorce often was a relatively simple and straightforward process.

Despite commonalities, native cultures varied greatly. From massive empires to scattered nomads, from agriculturalists to hunter-gatherers, the New World was marked by diversity and contrast. By the time Europeans were poised to cross the Atlantic, Native Americans spoke hundreds of languages and had adapted their lives to the hemisphere’s many climates. Some lived in cities, others in small bands. Some migrated seasonally, others settled permanently. Native peoples had long histories and well-formed unique cultures that developed and evolved over millennia. But the arrival of Europeans changed everything.

3.  European Expansion

[](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/wp-content/uploads/Landing-of-Columbus.jpg)

*“The Landing of Columbus,” by John Vanderlyn, 1836.*[*Architect of the Capitol*](http://www.aoc.gov/capitol-hill/historic-rotunda-paintings/landing-columbus)*.*

Scandinavian seafarers reached the New World centuries before Columbus. At their peak they sailed as far east as Constantinople and raided settlements as far south as North Africa. They established limited colonies in Iceland and Greenland and, around the year 1000, Leif Erikson reached New Foundland in present-day Canada. But the Norse colony failed. Culturally and geographically isolated, some combination of limited resources, inhospitable weather, food shortages, and native resistance drove the Norse back into the sea.

Then, hundreds of years before Columbus, the Crusades linked Europe with the wealth, power, and knowledge of Asia. Europeans rediscovered or adopted Greek, Roman, and Muslim knowledge. The hemispheric dissemination of goods and knowledge not only sparked the Renaissance but fueled long-term European expansion. Asian goods flooded European markets, creating a demand for new commodities. This trade created vast new wealth, and Europeans battled one another for trade supremacy.

European nation-states consolidated under the authority of powerful kings. A series of military conflicts between England and France–the Hundred Years War–accelerated nationalism and cultivated the financial and military administration necessary to maintain nation-states.

Seafaring Italian traders commanded the Mediterranean and controlled trade with Asia. Spain and Portugal, at the edges of Europe, relied upon middlemen and paid higher prices for Asian goods. They sought a more direct route. And so they looked to the Atlantic. Portugal invested heavily in exploration. Blending economic and religious motivations, the Portuguese established forts along the Atlantic coast of Africa during the fifteenth century, inaugurating centuries of European colonization there. Portuguese trading posts generated new profits that funded further trade and further colonization. Trading posts spread across the vast coastline of Africa and by the end of the fifteenth century Vasco de Gama leapfrogged his way around the coasts of Africa to reach India and lucrative Asian markets.[](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/wp-content/uploads/Cantino_planisphere_1502.jpg)

*By the fifteenth century, the Portuguese had established forts and colonies on islands and along the rim of the Atlantic Ocean; other major Europeans countries soon followed in step. An anonymous cartographer created this map known as the Cantino Map, the earliest known map of European exploration in the New World, to depict these holdings and argue for the greatness of his native Portugal. “Cantino planisphere” (1502), Biblioteca Estense, Modena, Italy.*[*Wikimedia*](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cantino_planisphere_%281502%29.jpg)*.*

Spain, too, stood on the cutting edge of maritime technology. Spanish sailors had become masters of the caravels. And as Portugal consolidated control over its African trading networks along the circuitous eastbound sea route to Asia, Spain yearned for its own path to empire. Christopher Columbus, a skilled Italian-born sailor who studied under Portuguese navigators, came calling.

Educated Asians and Europeans of the fifteenth century knew the world was round. They also knew that while it was therefore technically possible to reach Asia by sailing west from Europe–thereby avoiding Italian or Portuguese middlemen–the Earth’s vast size would doom even the greatest caravels to starvation and thirst long before they ever reached their destination. But Columbus underestimated the size of the globe by a full two-thirds and therefore believed it was possible. After unsuccessfully shopping his proposed expedition in several European courts, he convinced Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain to provide him three small ships, which set sail in 1492. Columbus was both confoundingly wrong about the size of the Earth and spectacularly lucky that two large continents lurked in his path. On October 12, 1492, after two months at sea, the *Nina*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria* and their ninety men landed in the modern-day Bahamas.

The indigenous Arawaks populated the Caribbean islands. They fished and grew corn, yams, and cassava. Columbus described them as innocents. “They are very gentle and without knowledge of what is evil; nor the sins of murder or theft,” he reported to the Spanish crown. But Columbus had come for wealth and he could find little. The Arawaks, however, wore small gold ornaments. Columbus left thirty-nine Spaniards at a military fort to find and secure the source of the gold while he returned to Spain to great acclaim and to outfit a return voyage. Spain’s New World motives were clear from the beginning. If outfitted for a return voyage, Columbus promised the Spanish crown gold and slaves. Columbus reported, “with fifty men they can all be subjugated and made to do what is required of them.” It was God’s will, he said.[7](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/01-the-new-world/#footnote_6_53)

Columbus was outfitted with seventeen ships and over 1,000 men to return to the West Indies (Columbus made four total voyages to the New World). Still believing he had landed in the East Indies, he promised to reward Isabella and Ferdinand’s investment. But when material wealth proved slow in coming the Spanish embarked upon a vicious campaign to extract every possible ounce of wealth from the Caribbean. The Spanish decimated the Arawaks. Bartolome de Las Casas traveled to the New World ten years after Columbus. He would later write that “I saw with these Eyes of mine the Spaniards for no other reason, but only to gratify their bloody mindedness, cut off the Hands, Noses, and Ears, both of Indians and Indianesses.”[8](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/01-the-new-world/#footnote_7_53) When the enslaved Indians exhausted the islands’ meager gold reserves, the Spaniards forced them to labor on their huge new estates, the *encomiendas*. Las Casas described European barbarities in cruel detail. By presuming the natives had no humanity, the Spaniards utterly abandoned theirs. Casual violence and dehumanizing exploitation ravaged the Arawaks. The Indian population collapsed. Within a few generations a whole island had been depopulated and a whole people exterminated. Historians’ estimates range from fewer than 1 million to as many as 8 million (Las Casas estimated the pre-contact population of the island at 3 million). In a few short years, they were gone. “Who in future generations will believe this?” Las Casas wondered. “I myself writing it as a knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it.”

Despite the diversity of native populations and the existence of several strong empires, Native Americans were wholly unprepared for the arrival of Europeans. Biology magnified European cruelties many times over. Cut off from the Old World and its domesticated animals and its immunological history, Native Americans lived free from the terrible diseases that ravaged populations in Asia, Europe and Africa. But their blessing now became a curse. Native Americans lacked the immunities that Europeans and Africans had developed over centuries of deadly epidemics and so when Europeans arrived, carrying smallpox, typhus, influenza, diphtheria, measles, and hepatitis, plagues decimated native communities. Death rates tended to be highest near European communities who traveled with children, as children tended to carry the deadliest diseases.[9](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/01-the-new-world/#footnote_8_53) Many died in war and slavery, but millions died in epidemics. All told, in fact, some scholars estimate that as much as 90 percent of the population of the Americas perished within the first century and a half of European contact.[10](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/01-the-new-world/#footnote_9_53)

Though ravaged by disease and warfare, Native Americans forged middle grounds, resisted with violence, accommodated and adapted to the challenges of colonialism, and continued to shape the patterns of life throughout the New World for hundreds of years. But the Europeans kept coming.

4. Spanish Exploration and Conquest

As news of the Spanish conquest spread, wealth-hungry Spaniards poured into the New World seeking land and gold and titles. A New World empire spread from Spain’s Caribbean foothold. Motives were plain: said one soldier, “we came here to serve God and the king, and also to get rich.”[11](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/01-the-new-world/#footnote_10_53) Mercenaries joined the conquest and raced to capture the human and material wealth of the New World.

The Spanish managed labor relations through a legal system known as the *encomienda*, an exploitive feudal arrangement in which Spain tied Indian laborers to vast estates. In the *encomienda*, the Spanish crown granted a person not only land but a specified number of natives as well. *Encomenderos* brutalized their laborers with punishing labor. After Bartolome de Las Casas published his incendiary account of Spanish abuses (*The Destruction of the Indies*), Spanish authorities abolished the *encomienda* in 1542 and replaced it with the *repartimiento*. Intended as a milder system, the repartimiento nevertheless replicated many of the abuses of the older system and the rapacious exploitation of the native population continued as Spain spread its empire over the Americas.

[](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/1280px-Chichen_Itza_31.jpg)

*El Castillo (pyramid of Kukulcán) in Chichén Itzá, photograph by Daniel Schwen, via*[*Wikimedia Commons*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chichen_Itza_3.jpg)

As Spain’s New World empire expanded, Spanish conquerors met the massive empires of Central and South America, civilizations that dwarfed anything found in North America. In central America the Maya built massive temples, sustained large populations, and constructed a complex and long-lasting civilization with a written language, advanced mathematics, and stunningly accurate calendars. But Maya civilization, although it had not disappeared, nevertheless collapsed before European arrival, likely due to droughts and unsustainable agricultural practices. But the eclipse of the Maya only heralded the later rise of the most powerful native civilization ever seen in the Western Hemisphere: the Aztecs.

Militaristic migrants from northern Mexico, the Aztecs moved south into the Valley of Mexico, conquered their way to dominance, and built the largest empire in the New World. When the Spaniards arrived in Mexico they found a sprawling civilization centered around Tenochtitlan, an awe-inspiring city built on a series of natural and man-made islands in the middle of Lake Texcoco, located today within modern-day Mexico City. Tenochtitlan, founded in 1325, rivaled the world’s largest cities in size and grandeur. Much of the city was built on large artificial islands called *chinampas* which the Aztecs constructed by dredging mud and rich sediment from the bottom of the lake and depositing it over time to form new landscapes. A massive pyramid temple, the Templo Mayor, was located at the city center (its ruins can still be found in the center of Mexico City). When the Spaniards arrived they could scarcely believe what they saw: 70,000 buildings, housing perhaps 200,000-250,000 people, all built on a lake and connected by causeways and canals. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, one of Cortez’s soldiers, later recalled, “When we saw so many cities and villages built in the water and other great towns on dry land, we were amazed and said that it was like the enchantments … Some of our soldiers even asked whether the things that we saw were not a dream? … I do not know how to describe it, seeing things as we did that had never been heard of or seen before, not even dreamed about.”[12](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/01-the-new-world/#footnote_11_53)

From their island city the Aztecs dominated an enormous swath of central and southern Mesoamerica. They ruled their empire through a decentralized network of subject peoples that paid regular tribute–including everything from the most basic items, such as corn, beans, and other foodstuffs, to luxury goods such as jade, cacao, and gold–and provided troops for the empire. But unrest festered beneath the Aztec’s imperial power and European conquerors lusted after its vast wealth.

[](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/wp-content/uploads/%D0%A2%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%87%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%BD.jpg)

*This sixteenth-century map of Tenochtitlan shows the aesthetic beauty and advanced infrastructure of this great Aztec city. Map, c. 1524,*[*Wikimedia*](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%D0%A2%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%87%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%BD.jpg)*.*

Hernan Cortes, an ambitious, thirty-four year old Spaniard who had won riches in the conquest of Cuba, organized an invasion of Mexico in 1519. Sailing with 600 men, horses, and cannon, he landed on the coast of Mexico. Relying on a native translator, whom he called Doña Marina, and whom Mexican folklore denounces as *La Malinche*, Cortes gathered information and allies in preparation for conquest. Through intrigue, brutality, and the exploitation of endemic political divisions, he enlisted the aid of thousands of native allies, defeated Spanish rivals, and marched on Tenochtitlan.

Aztec dominance rested upon fragile foundations and many of the region’s semi-independent city-states yearned to break from Aztec rule while nearby kingdoms, including Tarascans to the north, and the remains of Maya city-states on the Yucatán peninsula, chafed at Aztec power.

Through persuasion, and maybe because some Aztecs thought Cortes was the god Quetzalcoatl, the Spaniards entered Tenochtitlán peacefully. Cortes then captured the emperor Montezuma and used him to gain control of the Aztecs’ gold and silver reserves and its network of mines. Eventually, the Aztecs revolted. Montezuma was branded a traitor and uprising ignited the city. Montezuma was killed along with a third of Cortes’s men in *la noche triste,*the “night of sorrows.” The Spanish fought through thousands of indigenous insurgents and across canals to flee the city, where they regrouped, enlisted more native allies, captured Spanish reinforcements, and, in 1521, besieged the island city. The Spaniard’s eighty-five day siege cut off food and fresh water. Smallpox ravaged the city. One Spanish observer said it “spread over the people as great destruction. Some it covered on all parts—their faces, their heads, their breasts, and so on. There was great havoc. Very many died of it … They could not move; they could not stir.”[13](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/01-the-new-world/#footnote_12_53) Cortes, the Spaniards, and their native allies then sacked the city. 15,000 died. The temples were unmade. After two years of conflict, a million-person strong empire was toppled by disease, dissension, and a thousand European conquerors.

[](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/wp-content/uploads/Leutze-Storming-Cropped.jpg)

*Detail of Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze, “Storming of the Teocalli by Cortez and His Troops,” 1848.*[*Wikimedia*](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Leutze,_Emanuel_%E2%80%94_Storming_of_the_Teocalli_by_Cortez_and_His_Troops_%E2%80%94_1848.jpg)*.*

After the conquests of Mexico and Peru, Spain settled into their new empire. A vast administrative hierarchy governed the new holdings: royal appointees oversaw an enormous territory of landed estates and Indian laborers and administrators regulated the extraction of gold and silver and oversaw their transport across the Atlantic in Spanish galleons. Meanwhile Spanish migrants poured into the New World. 225,000 migrated during the sixteenth century alone, and 750,000 came during the entire three centuries of Spanish colonial rule. Spaniards, often single, young, and male, emigrated for the various promises of land, wealth, and social advancement. Laborers, craftsmen, soldiers, clerks, and priests all crossed the Atlantic in large numbers. Indians, however, always outnumbered the Spanish and the Spaniards, by both necessity and design, incorporated native Americans–unequally–into colonial life.

Like the French later in North America, the Spanish tolerated and sometimes even supported interracial marriage. There were simply too few Spanish women in the New World to support the natural growth of a purely Spanish population. The Catholic Church endorsed interracial marriage as a moral bulwark against bastardy and rape. As early as 1533, King Carlos I declared that any child with Spanish blood “to the half” was entitled to certain Spanish rights. By 1600, mestizos made up a large portion of the colonial population. By the early 1700s, more than one-third of all marriages bridged the Spanish-Indian divide. Largely separated by wealth and influence from the *peninsulares* and *criollos*, however, mestizos typically occupied a middling social position in Spanish New World society. They were not quite *Indios*, or Indians, but their lack of *limpieza de sangre*, or “pure blood,” removed them from the privileges of full-blooded Spaniards. Spanish fathers of sufficient wealth and influence might shield their mestizo children from racial prejudice, and a number of wealthy mestizos married *Españoles*to “whiten” their family lines, but more often *mestizos*were confined to a middle-station in the Spanish New World.

Slaves and Indians occupied the lowest rungs of the social ladder. After Bartolome de las Casas and other reformers shamed the Spanish for their harsh Indian policies in the 1530s, the Spanish outlawed Indian slavery. In the 1550s, the *encomienda*system of land-based forced-labor gave way to the *repartimiento*, an exploitative but slightly softer form of forced wage-labor. Slaves labored especially on Spain’s Caribbean plantation islands.

From Mexico, Spain expanded northward. Lured by the promises of gold and another Tenochtitlán, Spanish expeditions scoured North America for another wealthy Indian empire. Huge expeditions, resembling vast moving communities, composed of hundreds of soldiers, settlers, priests, and slaves, with enormous numbers of livestock, moved across the continent. Juan Ponce de Leon, the conqueror of Puerto Rico, landed in Florida in 1513 in search of wealth and slaves. Cabeza de Vaca joined the Narvaez expedition to Florida a decade later, was shipwrecked, and embarked upon a remarkable multi-year odyssey across the Gulf of Mexico and Texas into Mexico. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés founded St. Augustine, Florida, in 1565, and it remains the oldest, continuously occupied European settlement in the present-day United States.

But without the rich gold and silver mines of Mexico, the plantation-friendly climate of the Caribbean, or the exploitive potential of large Indian empires, North America offered little incentive for Spanish officials. Still, Spanish expeditions combed North America. Francisco Vazquez de Coronado pillaged his way across the Southwest. Hernando De Soto tortured and raped and enslaved his way across the Southeast. Soon Spain had footholds–however tenuous–across much of the continent.

5.  Conclusion

The “discovery” of America unleashed horrors. Europeans embarked upon a debauching path of death and destructive exploitation that unleashed murder and greed and slavery. But disease was deadlier than any weapon in the European arsenal. It unleashed death on a scale never before seen in human history. Estimates of the population of pre-Columbian America range wildly. Some argue for as much as 100 million, some as low as 2 million. In 1983, Henry Dobyns put the number at 18 million. Whatever the precise estimates, nearly all scholars tell of the utter devastation wrought by European disease. Dobyns estimated that in the first 130 years following European contact, 95 percent of Native Americans perished.[14](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/01-the-new-world/#footnote_13_53)(At its worst, Europe’s Black Death peaked at death rates of 25% to 33%. Nothing else in history rivals the American demographic disaster.) A 10,000 year history of disease crashed upon the New World in an instant. Smallpox, typhus, the bubonic plague, influenza, mumps, measles: pandemics ravaged populations up and down the continents. Wave after wave of disease crashed relentlessly. Disease flung whole communities into chaos. Others it destroyed completely.

Disease was only the most terrible in a cross-hemispheric exchange of violence, culture, trade, and peoples–the so-called “Columbian Exchange”–that followed in Columbus’s wake. Global diets, for instance, were transformed. The America’s calorie-rich crops revolutionized Old World agriculture and spawned a worldwide population boom. Many modern associations between food and geography are but products of the Columbian Exchange: potatoes in Ireland, tomatoes in Italy, chocolate in Switzerland, peppers in Thailand, and citrus in Florida are all manifestations of the new global exchange. Europeans, for their part, introduced their domesticated animals to the New World. Pigs ran rampant through the Americas, transforming the landscape as they spread throughout both continents. Horses spread as well, transforming the Native American cultures who adapted to the newly introduced animal. Partly from trade, partly from the remnants of failed European expeditions, and partly from theft, Indians acquired horses and transformed native American life in the vast North American plains.

The European’s arrival bridged two worlds and ten-thousand years of history separated from each other since the closing of the Bering Strait. Both sides of the world had been transformed. And neither would ever again be the same.

CHAPTER 2

I. Introduction

The Columbian Exchange transformed both sides of the Atlantic, but with dramatically disparate outcomes. New diseases wiped out entire civilizations in the Americas, while newly imported nutrient-rich foodstuffs enabled a European population boom. Spain benefited most immediately as the wealth of the Aztec and Incan Empires strengthened the Spanish monarchy. Spain used its new riches to gain an advantage over other European nations, but this advantage was soon contested.

Portugal, France, the Netherlands, and England all raced to the New World, eager to match the gains of the Spanish. Native peoples greeted the new visitors with responses ranging from welcome cooperation to aggressive violence, but the ravages of disease and the possibility of new trading relationships enabled Europeans to create settlements all along the western rim of the Atlantic world. New empires would emerge from these tenuous beginnings, and by the end of the seventeenth century, Spain would lose its privileged position to its rivals. An age of colonization had begun and, with it, a great collision of cultures commenced.

II. Spanish America

[](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/wp-content/uploads/desoto_discovery.jpg)

*William H. Powell, “Discovery of the Mississippi by De Soto,” 1853, via*[*Architect of the Capitol*](http://www.aoc.gov/capitol-hill/historic-rotunda-paintings/discovery-mississippi-by-de-soto)*.*

Spain extended its reach in the Americas after reaping the benefits of its colonies in Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America. Expeditions slowly began combing the continent and bringing Europeans into the modern-day United States in the hopes of establishing religious and economic dominance in a new territory.

Juan Ponce de Leon arrived in the area named “La Florida” in 1513. He found between 150,000 and 300,000 Native Americans. But then two-and-a-half centuries of contact with European and African peoples–whether through war, slave raids, or, most dramtically, foreign disease–decimated Florida’s indigenous population. European explorers, meanwhile, had hoped to find great wealth in Florida, but reality never aligned with their imaginations.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, Spanish colonizers fought frequently with Florida’s native peoples as well as with other Europeans. In the 1560s Spain expelled French Protestants, called Huguenots, from the area near modern-day Jacksonville in northeast Florida. In 1586 English privateer Sir Francis Drake burned the wooden settlement of St. Augustine. At the dawn of the seventeenth century, Spain’s reach in Florida extended from the mouth of the St. Johns River south to the environs of St. Augustine—an area of roughly 1,000 square miles. The Spaniards attempted to duplicate methods for establishing control used previously in Mexico, the Caribbean, and the Andes. The Crown granted missionaries the right to live among Timucua and Guale villagers in the late 1500s and early 1600s and encouraged settlement through the*encomienda* system (grants of Indian labor).

In the 1630s, the mission system extended into the Apalachee district in the Florida panhandle. The Apalachee, one of the most powerful tribes in Florida at the time of contact, claimed the territory from the modern Florida-Georgia border to the Gulf of Mexico. Apalachee farmers grew an abundance of corn and other crops. Indian traders carried surplus products east along the *Camino Real*, the royal road that connected the western anchor of the mission system with St. Augustine. Spanish settlers drove cattle eastward across the St. Johns River and established ranches as far west as Apalachee. Still, Spain held Florida tenuously.

Further west, Juan de Oñate led 400 settlers, soldiers, and missionaries from Mexico into New Mexico in 1598. The Spanish Southwest had brutal beginnings. When Oñate sacked the Pueblo city of Acoma, the “sky city,” the Spaniards slaughtered nearly half of its roughly 1,500 inhabitants, including women and children. Oñate ordered one foot cut off of every surviving male over 15 and he enslaved the remaining women and children.[1](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/02-colliding-cultures/#footnote_0_58)

Santa Fe, the first permanent European settlement in the Southwest, was established in 1610. Few Spaniards relocated to the southwest due to the distance from Mexico City and the dry and hostile environment. Thus, the Spanish never achieved a commanding presence in the region. By 1680, only about 3,000 colonists called Spanish New Mexico home. There, they traded with and exploited the local Puebloan peoples. The region’s Puebloan population had plummeted from as many as 60,000 in 1600 to about 17,000 in 1680.

Spain shifted strategies after the military expeditions wove their way through the southern and western half of North America. Missions became the engine of colonization in North America. Missionaries, most of whom were members of the Franciscan religious order, provided Spain with an advance guard in North America. Catholicism had always justified Spanish conquest, and colonization always carried religious imperatives. By the early seventeenth century, Spanish friars established dozens of missions along the Rio Grande, in New Mexico, and in California.

III. Spain’s Rivals Emerge

While Spain plundered the New World, unrest plagued Europe. The Reformation threw England and France, the two European powers capable of contesting Spain, into turmoil. Long and expensive conflicts drained time, resources, and lives. Millions died from religious violence in France alone. As the violence diminished in Europe, however, religious and political rivalries continued in the New World.

The Spanish exploitation of New Spain’s riches inspired European monarchs to invest in exploration and conquest. Reports of Spanish atrocities spread throughout Europe and provided a humanitarian justification for European colonization. An English writer explained that the Indians “were simple and plain men, and lived without great labour,” but in their lust for gold the Spaniards “forced the people (that were not used to labour) to stand all the daie in the hot sun gathering gold in the sand of the rivers. By this means a great nombre of them (not used to such pains) died, and a great number of them (seeing themselves brought from so quiet a life to such misery and slavery) of desperation killed themselves. And many would not marry, because they would not have their children slaves to the Spaniards.”[2](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/02-colliding-cultures/#footnote_1_58)  English writers argued that Spanish barbarities were foiling a tremendous opportunity for the expansion of Christianity across the globe and that a benevolent conquest of the New World by non-Spanish monarchies offered the surest salvation of the New World’s pagan masses. With these religious justifications, and with obvious economic motives, Spain’s rivals arrived in the New World.

*The French*

The French crown subsidized exploration in the early sixteenth century. Early French explorers sought a fabled Northwest Passage, a mythical waterway passing through the North American continent to Asia. Despite the wealth of the New World, Asia’s riches still beckoned to Europeans. Canada’s Saint Lawrence River at first glance appeared to be such a passage, stretching deep into the continent and into the Great Lakes. French colonial possessions centered on these bodies of water (and, later, down the Mississippi River to the port of New Orleans).

French colonization developed through investment from private trading companies. Traders established Port-Royal in Acadia (Nova Scotia) in 1603 and launched trading expeditions that stretched down the Atlantic coast as far as Cape Cod. The needs of the fur trade set the future pattern of French colonization. Founded in 1608 under the leadership of Samuel de Champlain, Quebec provided the foothold for what would become New France. French fur traders placed a higher value on cooperating with the Indians than on establishing a successful French colonial footprint. Asserting dominance in the region could have been to their own detriment, as it might have compromised their access to skilled trappers, and therefore wealth. Few Frenchmen traveled to the New World to settle permanently. In fact, few traveled at all. Many persecuted French Protestants (Huguenots) sought to emigrate after France criminalized Protestantism in 1685, but all non-Catholics were forbidden in New France.

The French preference for trade over permanent settlement fostered more cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships with Native Americans than was typical among the Spanish and English. Perhaps eager to debunk the anti-Catholic elements of the Black Legend, the French worked to cultivate cooperation with Indians. Jesuit missionaries, for instance, adopted different conversion strategies than the Spanish Franciscans. Spanish missionaries brought Indians into enclosed missions, whereas Jesuits more often lived with or alongside Indian groups. Many French fur traders married Indian women. The offspring of Indian women and French men were so common in New France that the French developed a word for these children, *Métis(sage).*The Huron people developed a particularly close relationship with the French and many converted to Christianity and engaged in the fur trade. But close relationships with the French would come at a high cost. The Huron, for instance, were decimated by the ravages of European disease, and entanglements in French and Dutch conflicts proved disastrous. Despite this, some native peoples maintained distant alliances with the French.

Pressure from the powerful Iroquois in the east pushed many Algonquian-speaking peoples toward French territory in the mid-seventeenth century and together they crafted what historians have called a “middle ground,” where Europeans and natives crafted a kind of cross-cultural space that allowed for native and European interaction, negotiation, and accommodation. French traders adopted–sometimes clumsily–the gift-giving and mediation strategies expected of native leaders and natives engaged the impersonal European market and submitted–often haphazardly–to European laws. The Great Lakes “middle ground” experienced tumultuous success throughout the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries until English colonial officials and American settlers swarmed the region. The pressures of European expansion strained even the closest bonds.[3](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/02-colliding-cultures/#footnote_2_58)

Despite the arrival of these new Europeans, Spain continued to dominate the New World. The wealth flowing from the exploitation of the Aztec and Incan Empires greatly eclipsed the profits of other European nations. But this dominance would not last long. By the end of the sixteenth century, the powerful Spanish Armada would be destroyed, and the English would begin to rule the waves.

IV. English Colonization

[](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/wp-content/uploads/77788633_2000x8831.jpg)

*Nicholas Hilliard, The Battle of Gravelines, 1588, via*[*National Geographic España*](http://www.nationalgeographic.com.es/articulo/historia/grandes_reportajes/7643/armada_invencible.html)

Spain had a one-hundred year head start on New World colonization and a jealous England eyed the enormous wealth that Spain gleaned from the new World. The Protestant Reformation had shaken England but Elizabeth I assumed the English crown in 1558 and oversaw the expansion of trade and exploration–and the literary achievements of Shakespeare and Marlowe–during England’s so-called “golden age.” English mercantilism, a state-assisted manufacturing and trading system, created and maintained markets, ensured a steady supply of consumers and laborers, stimulated economic expansion, and increased English wealth.

However, wrenching social and economic changes unsettled the English population. The island’s population increased from fewer than three million in 1500 to over five million by the middle of the seventeenth century. The skyrocketing cost of land coincided with plummeting farming income. Rents and prices rose but wages stagnated. Moreover, movements to enclose public land–sparked by the transition of English landholders from agriculture to livestock-raising–evicted tenants from the land and created hordes of landless, jobless peasants that haunted the cities and countryside. One-quarter to one-half of the population lived in extreme poverty.

New World colonization won support in England amid a time of rising English fortunes among the wealthy, a tense Spanish rivalry, and mounting internal social unrest. But English colonization supporters always touted more than economic gains and mere national self-interest. They claimed to be doing God’s work.

Many cited spiritual concerns and argued that colonization would glorify God, England, and Protestantism by Christianizing the New World’s pagan peoples. Advocates such as Richard Hakluyt the Younger and John Dee, for instance, drew upon *The History of the Kings of Britain*, written by the twelfth century monk Geoffrey of Monmouth, and its mythical account of King Arthur’s conquest and Christianization of pagan lands to justify American conquest. Moreover, promoters promised that the conversion of New World Indians would satisfy God and glorify England’s “Virgin Queen,” Elizabeth I, who was verging on a near-divine image among the English. The English—and other European Protestant colonizers—imagined themselves superior to the Spanish, who still bore the Black Legend of inhuman cruelty. English colonization, supporters argued, would prove that superiority.

In his 1584 “Discourse on Western Planting,” Richard Hakluyt amassed the supposed religious, moral, and exceptional economic benefits of colonization. He repeated the “Black Legend” of Spanish New World terrorism and attacked the sins of Catholic Spain. He promised that English colonization could strike a blow against Spanish heresy and bring Protestant religion to the New World. English interference, Hakluyt suggested, may provide the only salvation from Catholic rule in the New World. The New World, too, he said, offered obvious economic advantages. Trade and resource extraction would enrich the English treasury. England, for instance, could find plentiful materials to outfit a world-class navy. Moreover, he said, the New World could provide an escape for England’s vast armies of landless “vagabonds.” Expanded trade, he argued, would not only bring profit, but also provide work for England’s jobless poor. A Christian enterprise, a blow against Spain, an economic stimulus, and a social safety valve all beckoned the English toward a commitment to colonization.[5](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/02-colliding-cultures/#footnote_4_58)

This noble rhetoric veiled the coarse economic motives that brought England to the New World. New economic structures and a new merchant class paved the way for colonization. England’s merchants lacked estates but they had new plans to build wealth. By collaborating with new government-sponsored trading monopolies and employing financial innovations such as joint-stock companies, England’s merchants sought to improve on the Dutch economic system. Spain was extracting enormous material wealth from the New World; why shouldn’t England? Joint-stock companies, the ancestors of the modern corporations, became the initial instruments of colonization. With government monopolies, shared profits, and managed risks, these money-making ventures could attract and manage the vast capital needed for colonization. In 1606 James I approved the formation of the Virginia Company (named after Elizabeth, the “Virgin Queen”).

Rather than formal colonization, however, the most successful early English ventures in the New World were a form of state-sponsored piracy known as privateering. Queen Elizabeth sponsored sailors, or “Sea Dogges,” such as John Hawkins and Francis Drake, to plunder Spanish ships and towns in the Americas. Privateers earned a substantial profit both for themselves and for the English crown. England practiced piracy on a scale, one historian wrote, “that transforms crime into politics.”[6](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/02-colliding-cultures/#footnote_5_58) Francis Drake harried Spanish ships throughout the Western Hemisphere and raided Spanish caravans as far away as the coast of Peru on the Pacific Ocean. In 1580 Elizabeth rewarded her skilled pirate with knighthood. But Elizabeth walked a fine line. Protestant-Catholic tensions already running high, English privateering provoked Spain. Tensions worsened after the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, a Catholic. In 1588, King Philip II of Spain unleashed the fabled Armada. With 130 Ships, 8,000 sailors, and 18,000 soldiers, Spain launched the largest invasion in history to destroy the British navy and depose Elizabeth.

An island nation, England depended upon a robust navy for trade and territorial expansion. England had fewer ships than Spain but they were smaller and swifter. They successfully harassed the Armada, forcing it to retreat to the Netherlands for reinforcements. But then a fluke storm, celebrated in England as the “divine wind,” annihilated the remainder of the fleet. The destruction of the Armada changed the course of world history. It not only saved England and secured English Protestantism, but it also opened the seas to English expansion and paved the way for England’s colonial future. By 1600, England stood ready to embark upon its dominance over North America.

English colonization would look very different from Spanish or French colonization, as was indicated by early experiences with the Irish. England had long been trying to conquer Catholic Ireland. The English used a model of forcible segregation with the Irish that would mirror their future relationships with Native Americans. Rather than integrating with the Irish and trying to convert them to Protestantism, England more often simply seized land through violence and pushed out the former inhabitants, leaving them to move elsewhere or to die.

English colonization, however, began haltingly. Sir Humphrey Gilbert labored throughout the late-sixteenth century to establish a colony in New Foundland but failed. In 1587, with a predominantly male cohort of 150 English colonizers, John White reestablished an abandoned settlement on North Carolina’s Roanoke Island. Supply shortages prompted White to return to England for additional support but the Spanish Armada and the mobilization of British naval efforts stranded him in Britain for several years. When he finally returned to Roanoke, he found the colony abandoned. What befell the failed colony? White found the word “Croatan,” the name of a nearby island and Indian people, carved into a tree or a post in the abandoned colony. Historians presume the colonists, short of food, may have fled for the nearby island and its settled native population. Others offer violence as an explanation. Regardless, the English colonists were never heard from again. When Queen Elizabeth died in 1603, no Englishmen had yet established a permanent North American colony.

After King James made peace with Spain in 1604, privateering no longer held out the promise of cheap wealth. Colonization assumed a new urgency. The Virginia Company, established in 1606, drew inspiration from Cortes and the Spanish conquests. It hoped to find gold and silver as well as other valuable trading commodities in the New World: glass, iron, furs, pitch, tar, and anything else the country could supply. The Company planned to identify a navigable river with a deep harbor, away from the eyes of the Spanish. There they would find an Indian trading network and extract a fortune from the New World.

V. Jamestown

[](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/wp-content/uploads/Virginia_fishing_1590.jpg)

*“Incolarum Virginiae piscandi ratio (The Method of Fishing of the Inhabitants of Virginia),” c1590, via the*[*Encyclopedia Virginia*](http://encyclopediavirginia.org/media_player?mets_filename=evm00002725mets.xml)*.*

In April 1607 Englishmen aboard three ships—the *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed,* and *Discovery*—sailed forty miles up the James River (named for the English king) in present-day Virginia (Named for Elizabeth I, the “Virgin Queen”) and settled upon just such a place. The uninhabited peninsula they selected was upriver and out of sight of Spanish patrols. It offered easy defense against ground assaults and was uninhabited but still located close enough to many Indian villages and their potentially lucrative trade networks. But the location was a disaster. Indians ignored the peninsula because of its terrible soil and its brackish tidal water that led to debilitating disease. Despite these setbacks, the English built Jamestown, the first permanent English colony in the present-day United States.

The English had not entered a wilderness but had arrived amid a people they called the Powhatan Confederacy. Powhatan, or Wahunsenacawh, as he called himself, led nearly 10,000 Algonquian-speaking Indians in the Chesapeake. They burned vast acreage to clear brush and create sprawling artificial park-like grasslands so that they could easily hunt deer, elk, and bison. The Powhatan raised corn, beans, squash, and possibly sunflowers, rotating acreage throughout the Chesapeake. Without plows, manure, or draft animals, the Powhatan achieved a remarkable number of calories cheaply and efficiently.

Jamestown was a profit-seeking venture backed by investors. The colonists were mostly gentlemen and proved entirely unprepared for the challenges ahead. They hoped for easy riches but found none. The peninsula’s location was poisonous and supplies from England were sporadic or spoiled. As John Smith later complained, they “Would rather starve than work.”[7](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/02-colliding-cultures/#footnote_6_58) And so they did. Disease and starvation ravaged the colonists. Fewer than half of the original colonists survived the first nine months.

John Smith, a yeoman’s son and capable leader, took command of the crippled colony and promised, “He that will not work shall not eat.” He navigated Indian diplomacy, claiming that he was captured and sentenced to death but Powhatan’s daughter, Pocahontas, intervened to save his life. She would later marry another colonist, John Rolfe, and die in England.

Powhatan kept the English alive that first winter. The Powhatan had welcomed the English and their manufactured goods. The Powhatan placed a high value on metal axe-heads, kettles, tools, and guns and eagerly traded furs and other abundant goods for them. With 10,000 confederated natives and with food in abundance, the Indians had little to fear and much to gain from the isolated outpost of sick and dying Englishmen.

Despite reinforcements, the English continued to die. Four hundred settlers arrived in 1609 and the overwhelmed colony entered a desperate “starving time” in the winter of 1609-1610. Supplies were lost at sea. Relations with the Indians deteriorated and the colonists fought a kind of slow-burning guerrilla war with the Powhatan. Disaster loomed for the colony. The settlers ate everything they could, roaming the woods for nuts and berries. They boiled leather. They dug up graves to eat the corpses of their former neighbors. One man was executed for killing and eating his wife. Some years later, George Percy recalled the colonists’ desperation during these years, when he served as the colony’s president: “Having fed upon our horses and other beasts as long as they lasted, we were glad to make shift with vermin as dogs, cats, rats and mice … as to eat boots shoes or any other leather … And now famine beginning to look ghastly and pale in every face, that nothing was spared to maintain life and to doe those things which seam incredible, as to dig up dead corpses out of graves and to eat them.”[8](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/02-colliding-cultures/#footnote_7_58) Archaeological excavations in 2012 exhumed the bones of a fourteen-year-old girl that exhibited the telltale signs of cannibalism. All but 60 settlers would die by the summer of 1610.

Little improved over the next several years. By 1616, 80 percent of all English immigrants that arrived in Jamestown had perished. England’s first American colony was a catastrophe. The colony was reorganized and in 1614 the marriage of Pocahontas to John Rolfe eased relations with the Powhatan, though the colony still limped along as a starving, commercially disastrous tragedy. The colonists were unable to find any profitable commodities and they still depended upon the Indians and sporadic shipments from England for food. But then tobacco saved Jamestown.

By the time King James I described tobacco as a “noxious weed, … loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, and dangerous to the lungs,” it had already taken Europe by storm. In 1616 John Rolfe crossed tobacco strains from Trinidad and Guiana and planted Virginia’s first tobacco crop. In 1617 the colony sent its first cargo of tobacco back to England. The “noxious weed,” a native of the New World, fetched a high price in Europe and the tobacco boom began in Virginia and then later spread to Maryland. Within fifteen years American colonists were exporting over 500,000 pounds of tobacco per year. Within forty, they were exporting fifteen million.

Tobacco changed everything. It saved Virginia from ruin, incentivized further colonization, and laid the groundwork for what would become the United States. With a new market open, Virginia drew not only merchants and traders, but also settlers. Colonists came in droves. They were mostly young, mostly male, and mostly indentured servants, who signed contracts, called indentures that bonded them to employers for a period of years in return for passage across the ocean. But even the rough terms of servitude were no match for the promise of land and potential profits that beckoned ambitious and dispossessed English farmers alike. But still there were not enough of them. Tobacco was a labor-intensive crop and ambitious planters, with seemingly limitless land before them, lacked only laborers to exponentially escalate their wealth and status. The colony’s great labor vacuum inspired the creation of the “headright policy” in 1618: any person who migrated to Virginia would automatically receive 50 acres of land and any immigrant whose passage they paid would entitle them to 50 acres more.

In 1619 the Virginia Company established the House of Burgesses, a limited representative body composed of white landowners that first met in Jamestown. That same year, a Dutch slave ship sold 20 Africans to the Virginia colonists. Southern slavery was born.

Soon the tobacco-growing colonists expanded beyond the bounds of Jamestown’s deadly peninsula. When it became clear that the English were not merely intent on maintaining a small trading post, but sought a permanent ever-expanding colony, conflict with the Powhatan Confederacy became almost inevitable. Powhatan died in 1622 and was succeeded by his brother, Opechancanough, who promised to drive the land-hungry colonists back into the sea. He launched a surprise attack and in a single day (March 22, 1622) killed 347 colonists, or one-fourth of all the colonists in Virginia. The colonists retaliated and revisited the massacres upon Indian settlements many times over. The massacre freed the colonists to drive the Indians off their land. The governor of Virginia declared it colonial policy to achieve the “expulsion of the savages to gain the free range of the country.”[9](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/02-colliding-cultures/#footnote_8_58) War and disease destroyed the remnants of the Chesapeake Indians and tilted the balance of power decisively toward the English colonizers, whose foothold in the New World would cease to be as tenuous and challenged.

English colonists brought to the New World particular visions of racial, cultural, and religious supremacy. Despite starving in the shadow of the Powhatan Confederacy, English colonists nevertheless judged themselves physically, spiritually, and technologically superior to native peoples in North America. Christianity, metallurgy, intensive agriculture, trans-Atlantic navigation, and even wheat all magnified the English sense of superiority. This sense of superiority, when coupled with outbreaks of violence, left the English feeling entitled to indigenous lands and resources.

Spanish conquerors established the framework for the Atlantic slave trade over a century before the first chained Africans arrived at Jamestown. Even Bartolomé de las Casas, celebrated for his pleas to save Native Americans from colonial butchery, for a time recommended that indigenous labor be replaced by importing Africans. Early English settlers from the Caribbean and Atlantic coast of North America mostly imitated European ideas of African inferiority. “Race” followed the expansion of slavery across the Atlantic world. Skin-color and race suddenly seemed fixed. Englishmen equated Africans with categorical blackness and blackness with Sin, “the handmaid and symbol of baseness.”[10](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/02-colliding-cultures/#footnote_9_58) An English essayist in 1695 wrote that “A negro will always be a negro, carry him to Greenland, feed him chalk, feed and manage him never so many ways.”[11](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/02-colliding-cultures/#footnote_10_58) More and more Europeans embraced the notions that Europeans and Africans were of distinct races. Others now preached that the Old Testament God cursed Ham, the son of Noah, and doomed blacks to perpetual enslavement.

And yet in the early years of American slavery, ideas about race were not yet fixed and the practice of slavery was not yet codified. The first generations of Africans in English North America faced miserable conditions but, in contrast to later American history, their initial servitude was not necessarily permanent, heritable, or even particularly disgraceful. Africans were definitively set apart as fundamentally different from their white counterparts, and faced longer terms of service and harsher punishments, but, like the indentured white servants whisked away from English slums, these first Africans in North America could also work for only a set number of years before becoming free landowners themselves. The Angolan Anthony Johnson, for instance, was sold into servitude but fulfilled his indenture and became a prosperous tobacco planter himself.

In 1622, at the dawn of the tobacco boom, Jamestown had still seemed a failure. But the rise of tobacco and the destruction of the Powhatan turned the tide. Colonists escaped the deadly peninsula and immigrants poured into the colony to grow tobacco and turn a profit for the Crown.

VI. New England

The English colonies in New England established from 1620 onward were founded with loftier goals than those in Virginia. Although migrants to New England expected economic profit, religious motives directed the rhetoric and much of the reality of these colonies. Not every English person who moved to New England during the seventeenth century was a Puritan, but Puritans dominated the politics, religion, and culture of New England. Even after 1700, the region’s Puritan inheritance shaped many aspects of its history.

The term Puritan began as an insult, and its recipients usually referred to each other as “the godly” if they used a specific term at all. Puritans believed that the Church of England did not distance itself far enough from Catholicism after Henry VIII broke with Rome in the 1530s. They largely agreed with European Calvinists—followers of theologian Jean Calvin—on matters of religious doctrine. Calvinists (and Puritans) believed that mankind was redeemed by God’s Grace alone, and that the fate of an individual’s immortal soul was predestined. The happy minority God had already chosen to save were known among English Puritans as the Elect. Calvinists also argued that the decoration or churches, reliance on ornate ceremony, and (they argued) corrupt priesthood obscured God’s message. They believed that reading the Bible promised the best way to understand God.

Puritans were stereotyped by their enemies as dour killjoys, and the exaggeration has endured. It is certainly true that the Puritans’ disdain for excess and opposition to many holidays popular in Europe (including Christmas, which, as Puritans never tired of reminding everyone, the Bible never told anyone to celebrate) lent themselves to caricature. But Puritans understood themselves as advocating a reasonable middle path in a corrupt world. It would never occur to a Puritan, for example, to abstain from alcohol or sex.

During the first century after the English Reformation (c.1530-1630) Puritans sought to “purify” the Church of England of all practices that smacked of Catholicism, advocating a simpler worship service, the abolition of ornate churches, and other reforms. They had some success in pushing the Church of England in a more Calvinist direction, but with the coronation of King Charles I (r. 1625-1649), the Puritans gained an implacable foe that cast English Puritans as excessive and dangerous. Facing growing persecution, the Puritans began the Great Migration, during which about 20,000 people traveled to New England between 1630 and 1640. The Puritans (unlike the small band of separatist “Pilgrims” who founded Plymouth Colony in 1620) remained committed to reforming the Church of England, but temporarily decamped to North America to accomplish this task. Leaders like John Winthrop insisted they were not separating from, or abandoning, England, but were rather forming a godly community in America, that would be a “City on a Hill” and an example for reformers back home.[12](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/02-colliding-cultures/#footnote_11_58) The Puritans did not seek to create a haven of religious toleration, a notion that they—along with nearly all European Christians—regarded as ridiculous at best, and dangerous at worst.

While the Puritans did not succeed in building a godly utopia in New England, a combination of Puritan traits with several external factors created colonies wildly different from any other region settled by English people. Unlike those heading to Virginia, colonists in New England (Plymouth [1620], Massachusetts Bay [1630], Connecticut [1636], and Rhode Island [1636]) generally arrived in family groups. The majority of New England immigrants were small landholders in England, a class contemporary English called the “middling sort.” When they arrived in New England they tended to replicate their home environments, founding towns comprised of independent landholders. The New England climate and soil made large-scale plantation agriculture impractical, so the system of large landholders using masses of slaves or indentured servants to grow labor-intensive crops never took hold.

There is no evidence that the New England Puritans would have opposed such a system were it possible; other Puritans made their fortunes on the Caribbean sugar islands, and New England merchants profited as suppliers of provisions and slaves to those colonies. By accident of geography as much as by design, then, New England society was much less stratified than any of Britain’s other seventeenth-century colonies.

Although New England colonies could boast wealthy landholding elites, the disparity of wealth in the region remained narrow compared to the Chesapeake, Carolina, or the Caribbean. Instead, seventeenth-century New England was characterized by a broadly-shared modest prosperity based on a mixed economy dependent on small farms, shops, fishing, lumber, shipbuilding, and trade with the Atlantic World.

A combination of environmental factors and the Puritan social ethos produced a region of remarkable health and stability during the seventeenth century. New England immigrants avoided most of the deadly outbreaks of tropical disease that turned Chesapeake colonies into graveyards. Disease, in fact, only aided English settlement and relations to Native Americans. In contrast to other English colonists who had to contend with powerful Native American neighbors, the Puritans confronted the stunned survivors of a biological catastrophe. A lethal pandemic of smallpox during the 1610s swept away as much as 90 percent of the region’s Native American population. Many survivors welcomed the English as potential allies against rival tribes who had escaped the catastrophe. The relatively healthy environment coupled with political stability and the predominance of family groups among early immigrants allowed the New England population to grow to 91,000 people by 1700 from only 21,000 immigrants. In contrast, 120,000 English went to the Chesapeake, and only 85,000 white colonists remained in 1700.[13](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/02-colliding-cultures/#footnote_12_58)

The New England Puritans set out to build their utopia by creating communities of the godly. Groups of men, often from the same region of England, applied to the colony’s General Court for land grants. They generally divided part of the land for immediate use while keeping much of the rest as “commons” or undivided land for future generations. The town’s inhabitants collectively decided the size of each settler’s home lot based on their current wealth and status. Besides oversight of property, the town restricted membership, and new arrivals needed to apply for admission. Those who gained admittance could participate in town governments that, while not democratic by modern standards, nevertheless had broad popular involvement. All male property holders could vote in town meetings and choose the selectmen, assessors, constables, and other officials from among themselves to conduct the daily affairs of government. Upon their founding, towns wrote covenants, reflecting the Puritan belief in God’s covenant with His people. Towns sought to arbitrate disputes and contain strife, as did the church. Wayward or divergent individuals were persuaded and corrected before coercion.

Popular conceptions of Puritans as hardened authoritarians are exaggerated, but if persuasion and arbitration failed, people who did not conform to community norms were punished or removed. Massachusetts banished Anne Hutchinson, Roger Williams, and other religious dissenters like the Quakers.

Although by many measures colonization in New England succeeded, its Puritan leaders failed in their own mission to create a utopian community that would inspire their fellows back in England. They tended to focus their disappointment on the younger generation. “But alas!” Increase Mather lamented, “That so many of the younger Generation have so early corrupted their [the founders’] doings!”[14](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/02-colliding-cultures/#footnote_13_58) The Jeremiad, a sermon lamenting the fallen state of New England due to its straying from its early virtuous path, became a staple of late seventeenth-century Puritan literature.

New England life seemed to burst with possibilities.

The life expectancy of its citizens became longer than that of Old England, and much longer than the Southern English colonies. Children were born at nearly twice the rate in Maryland and Virginia. It is often said that New England invented grandparents, for it was here that people in great numbers first grew old enough to see their children bear children.

**LITERACY RATES** were high as well. Massachusetts law required a tax-supported school for every community that could boast 50 or more families. Puritans wanted their children to be able to read the Bible, of course.

**MASSACHUSETTS BAY COLONY** was a man's world. Women did not participate in town meetings and were excluded from decision making in the church. Puritan ministers furthered **MALE SUPREMACY** in their writings and sermons. They preached that the soul had two parts, the immortal masculine half, and the mortal feminine half.

Puritan law was extremely strict; men and women were severely punished for a variety of crimes. Even a child could be put to death for cursing his parents.

It was believed that women who were pregnant with a male child had a rosy complexion and that women carrying a female child were pale. Names of women found in census reports of Massachusetts Bay include Patience, Silence, Fear, Prudence, Comfort, Hopestill, and Be Fruitful. This list reflects Puritan views on women quite clearly.

Church attendance was mandatory. Those that missed church regularly were subject to a fine. The sermon became a means of addressing town problems or concerns. The church was sometimes patrolled by a man who held a long pole. On one end was a collection of feathers to tickle the chins of old men who fell asleep. On the other was a hard wooden knob to alert children who giggled or slept. Church was serious business indeed.

The Puritans believed they were doing God's work. Hence, there was little room for compromise. Harsh punishment was inflicted on those who were seen as straying from God's work. There were cases when individuals of differing faiths were hanged in **BOSTON COMMON**.

Made famous by author Nathaniel Hawthorne in his book of the same name, the Scarlet Letter was a real form of punishment in Puritan society.

Adulterers might have been forced to wear a scarlet "A" if they were lucky. At least two known adulterers were executed in Massachusetts Bay Colony. Public whippings were commonplace. The **STOCKADE** forced the humiliated guilty person to sit in the public square, while onlookers spat or laughed at them.

Puritans felt no remorse about administering punishment. They believed in Old Testament methods. Surely God's correction would be far worse to the individual than any earthly penalty.

Contrary to myth, the Puritans did have fun. There were celebrations and festivals. People sang and told stories. Children were allowed to play games with their parents' permission. Wine and beer drinking were common place. Puritans did not all dress in black as many believe. The fundamental rule was to follow God's law. Those that did lived in peace in the **BIBLE COMMONWEALTH**.

There was not too much room for religious disagreement in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Puritans defended their **DOGMA** with uncommon fury. Their devotion to principle was God's work; to ignore God's work was unfathomable. When free-thinkers speak their minds in such a society, conflict inevitably results.

Such was the case in Massachusetts Bay when Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams spoke their minds.

**ANNE HUTCHINSON** was a deeply religious woman. In her understanding of Biblical law, the ministers of Massachusetts had lost their way. She thought the enforcement of proper behavior from church members conflicted with the doctrine of predestination. She asked simply: "If God has predetermined for me salvation or damnation, how could any behavior of mine change my fate?"

This sort of thinking was seen as extremely dangerous. If the public ignored church authority, surely there would be anarchy. The power of the ministers would decrease. Soon over eighty community members were gathering in her parlor to hear her comments on the weekly sermon. Her leadership position as a woman made her seem all the more dangerous to the Puritan order.

The clergy felt that Anne Hutchinson was a threat to the entire Puritan experiment. They decided to arrest her for **HERESY**. In her trial she argued intelligently with John Winthrop, but the court found her guilty and banished her from Massachusetts Bay in 1637.

**ROGER WILLIAMS** was a similar threat.  
  
The ideas of religious freedom and fair dealings with the Native Americans resulted in Roger Williams' exile from the Massachusetts colony. This 1936 postage stamp commemorates his founding of Rhode Island.

Two ideas got him into big trouble in Massachusetts Bay. First, he preached separation of church and state. He believed in complete **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**, so no single church should be supported by tax dollars. Massachusetts Puritans believed they had the one true faith; therefore such talk was intolerable. Second, Williams claimed taking land from the Native Americans without proper payment was unfair.

Massachusetts wasted no time in banishing the minister.

In 1636, he purchased land from the **NARRAGANSETT** Indians and founded the colony of**RHODE ISLAND**. Here there would be complete religious freedom. Dissenters from the English New World came here seeking refuge. Anne Hutchinson herself moved to Rhode Island before her fatal relocation to New York.

America has long been a land where people have reserved the right to say, "I disagree." Many early settlers left England in the first place because they disagreed with English practice. Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson were two brave souls who reminded everyone at their own great peril of that most sacred right.

**The Salem Witch Trials**

Surely the Devil had come to **SALEM** in 1692. Young girls screaming and barking like a dog? Strange dances in the woods? This was behavior hardly becoming of virtuous teenage maidens. The town doctor was called onto the scene. After a thorough examination, he concluded quite simply — the girls were bewitched. Now the task was clear. Whomever was responsible for this outrage must be brought to justice.

The ordeal originated in the home of Salem's **REVEREND SAMUEL PARRIS**. Parris had a slave from the Caribbean named **TITUBA**. Several of the town's teenage girls began to gather in the kitchen with Tituba early in 1692. As winter turned to spring the townspeople were aghast at the behaviors exhibited by Tituba's young followers. They were believed to have danced a black magic dance in the nearby woods. Several of the girls would fall to the floor and scream hysterically. Soon this behavior began to spread across Salem. Ministers from nearby communities came to Salem to lend their sage advice. The talk turned to identifying the parties responsible for this mess.

Puritans believed that to become bewitched a **WITCH** must draw an individual under a spell. The girls could not have possibly brought this condition onto themselves. Soon they were questioned and forced to name their tormentors. Three townspeople, including Tituba, were named as witches. The famous Salem witchcraft trials began as the girls began to name more and more community members.

Evidence admitted in such trials was of five types. First, the accused might be asked to pass a test, like reciting the Lord's Prayer. This seems simple enough. But the young girls who attended the trial were known to scream and writhe on the floor in the middle of the test. It is easy to understand why some could not pass.

Second, physical evidence was considered. Any birthmarks, warts, moles, or other blemishes were seen as possible portals through which **SATAN** could enter a body.

Witness testimony was a third consideration. Anyone who could attribute their misfortune to the **SORCERY** of an accused person might help get a conviction.

Fourth was spectral evidence. Puritans believed that Satan could not take the form of any unwilling person. Therefore, if anyone saw a ghost or spirit in the form of the accused, the person in question must be a witch.

Last was the **CONFESSION**. Confession seems foolhardy to a defendant who is certain of his or her innocence. In many cases, it was the only way out. A confessor would tearfully throw himself or herself on the mercy of the town and court and promise repentance. None of the confessors were executed. Part of repentance might of course include helping to convict others.

As 1692 passed into 1693, the hysteria began to lose steam. The governor of the colony, upon hearing that his own wife was accused of witchcraft ordered an end to the trials. However, 20 people and 2 dogs were executed for the crime of witchcraft in Salem. One person was pressed to death under a pile of stones for refusing to testify.

No one knows the truth behind what happened in Salem. Once witchcraft is ruled out, other important factors come to light. Salem had suffered greatly in recent years from Indian attacks. As the town became more populated, land became harder and harder to acquire. A **SMALLPOX** epidemic had broken out at the beginning of the decade. Massachusetts was experiencing some of the worst winters in memory. The motives of the young girls themselves can be questioned. In a society where women had no power, particularly young women, is it not understandable how a few adolescent girls, drunk with unforeseen attention, allowed their imaginations to run wild? Historians make educated guesses, but the real answers lie with the ages.

VII. Conclusion

The fledgling settlements in Virginia and Massachusetts paled in importance when compared to the sugar colonies of the Caribbean. Valued more as marginal investments and social safety valves where the poor could be released, these colonies nonetheless created a foothold for Britain on a vast North American continent. And although the seventeenth century would be fraught for Britain–religious, social, and political upheavals would behead one king and force another to flee his throne–settlers in Massachusetts and Virginia were nonetheless tied together by the emerging Atlantic economy. While commodities such as tobacco and sugar fueled new markets in Europe, the economy grew increasingly dependent upon slave labor. Enslaved Africans transported across the Atlantic would further complicate the collision of cultures in the Americas. The creation and maintenance of a slave system would spark new understandings of human difference and new modes of social control. The economic exchanges of the new Atlantic economy would not only generate great wealth and exploitation, they would also lead to new cultural systems and new identities for the inhabitants of at least four continents.

CHAPTER 3

# I. Introduction

Whether they came as servants, slaves, free farmers, religious refugees, or powerful planters, the men and women of the American colonies created new worlds. Native Americans saw fledgling settlements turned into unstoppable beachheads of vast new populations that increasingly monopolized resources and remade the land into something else entirely. Meanwhile, as colonial societies developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, fluid labor arrangements and racial categories solidified into the race-based, chattel slavery that increasingly defined the economy of the British Empire. The North American mainland originally occupied a small and marginal place in that broad empire, as even the output of its most prosperous colonies paled before the tremendous wealth of Caribbean sugar islands. And yet the colonial backwaters on the North American mainland, ignored by many imperial officials, were nevertheless deeply tied into these larger Atlantic networks. A new and increasingly complex Atlantic World connected the continents of Europe, Africa, and the Americas.

1. The Middle Colonies

Americans have often prided themselves on their rich diversity. Nowhere was that diversity more evident in pre-Revolutionary America than in the **MIDDLE COLONIES** of Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware. European ethnic groups as manifold as English, Swedes, Dutch, Germans, Scots-Irish and French lived in closer proximity than in any location on continental Europe. The middle colonies contained Native American tribes of Algonkian and Iroquois language groups as well as a sizable percentage of African slaves during the early years. Unlike solidly Puritan New England, the middle colonies presented an assortment of religions. The presence of Quakers, **MENNONITES**, **LUTHERANS**, **DUTCH CALVINISTS**, and **PRESBYTERIANS** made the dominance of one faith next to impossible.

Advantaged by their central location, the middle colonies served as important distribution centers in the English mercantile system. New York and Philadelphia grew at a fantastic rate. These cities gave rise to brilliant thinkers such as Benjamin Franklin, who earned respect on both sides of the Atlantic. In many ways, the middle colonies served as the crossroads of ideas during the colonial period.

In contrast to the South where the cash crop plantation system dominated, and New England whose rocky soil made large-scale agriculture difficult, The middle colonies were **FERTILE**. Land was generally acquired more easily than in New England or in the plantation South. Wheat and corn from local farms would feed the American colonies through their colonial infancy and revolutionary adolescence.

The middle colonies represented exactly that — a middle ground between its neighbors to the North and South. Elements of both New England towns and sprawling country estates could be found. Religious dissidents from all regions could settle in the relatively tolerant middle zone. Aspects of New England **SHIPBUILDING** and **LUMBERING** and the large farms of the South could be found. Aptly named, they provided a perfect nucleus for English America.

# Quakers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey

**WILLIAM PENN** was a dreamer. He also had the king over a barrel. Charles II owed his father a huge debt. To repay the Penns, William was awarded an enormous tract of land in the New World. Immediately he saw possibilities. People of his faith, the Quakers, had suffered serious persecution in England. With some good advertising, he might be able to establish a religious refuge. He might even be able to turn a profit. Slowly, the wheels began to spin. In, 1681, his dream became a reality.

**QUAKERS**, or the Society of Friends, had suffered greatly in England. As religious dissenters of the Church of England, they were targets much like the Separatists and the Puritans. But Friends were also devout pacifists. They would not fight in any of England's wars, nor would they pay their taxes if they believed the proceeds would assist a military venture. They believed in total equality. Therefore, Quakers would not bow down to nobles. Even the king would not receive the courtesy of a tipped hat. They refused to take oaths, so their allegiance to the Crown was always in question. Of all the Quaker families that came to the New World, over three quarters of the male heads of household had spent time in an English jail.

The Quakers of Penn's colony, like their counterparts across the Delaware River in New Jersey, established an extremely liberal government for the seventeenth century. Religious freedom was granted and there was no tax-supported church. Penn insisted on developing good relations with the Native Americans. Women saw greater freedom in Quaker society than elsewhere, as they were allowed to participate fully in Quaker meetings.

**PENNSYLVANIA**, or "Penn's Woods," benefited from the vision of its founder. Well advertised throughout Europe, skilled artisans and farmers flocked to the new colony. With Philadelphia as its capital, Pennsylvania soon became the **KEYSTONE**of the English colonies. New Jersey was owned by Quakers even before Penn's experiment, and the remnants of **NEW SWEDEN**, now called Delaware, also fell under the Friends' sphere of influence. William Penn's dream had come true.

William Penn had a distaste for cities. His colony, Pennsylvania, would need a capital that would not bring the horrors of European urban life to the shores of his New World experiment. Penn determined to design and to administer the city himself to prevent such an occurrence. He looked with disdain on London's crowded conditions and sought to prevent this by designing a city plan with streets wider than any major thoroughfare in London. Five major squares dotted the cityscape, and Penn hoped that each dweller would have a family garden. He distributed land in large plots to encourage a low population density. This, he thought, would be the perfect combination of city and country. In 1681, he made it happen.

Penn's selection of a site was most careful. **PHILADELPHIA** is situated at the confluence of the **SCHUYLKILL** and **DELAWARE RIVERS**. He hoped that the Delaware would supply the needed outlet to the Atlantic and that the Schuylkill would be the needed artery into the interior of Pennsylvania. This choice turned out to be controversial. The proprietors of Maryland claimed that Penn's new city lay within the boundaries of Maryland. Penn returned to England to defend his town many times. Eventually the issue would be decided on the eve of the Revolution by the drawing of the famed **MASON-DIXON LINE**.

With Penn promoting religious toleration, people of many different faiths came to Philadelphia. The Quakers may have been tolerant of religious differences, but were fairly uncompromising with moral digressions. It was illegal to tell lies in conversation and even to perform stage plays. Cards and dice were forbidden. Upholding the city's moral code was taken very seriously. This code did not extend to chattel slavery. In the early days, slavery was commonplace in the streets of Philadelphia. William Penn himself was a slaveholder. Although the first antislavery society in the colonies would eventually be founded by Quakers, the early days were not free of the curse of human bondage.

Early Philadelphia had its ups and downs. William Penn spent only about four years of his life in Pennsylvania. In his absence, Philadelphians quibbled about many issues. At one point, Penn appointed a former soldier, **JOHN BLACKWELL**, to bring discipline to town government. Still, before long Philadelphia prospered as a trading center. Within twenty years, it was the third largest city, behind Boston and New York. A century later it would emerge as the new nation's largest city, first capital, and cradle of the Liberty Bell, Declaration of Independence, and Constitution.

1. The Southern Colonies

Virginia was the first successful southern colony. While Puritan zeal was fueling New England's mercantile development, and Penn's Quaker experiment was turning the middle colonies into America's bread basket, the South was turning to cash crops. Geography and motive rendered the development of these colonies distinct from those that lay to the North.

Immediately to Virginia's north was **MARYLAND**. Begun as a Catholic experiment, the colony's economy would soon come to mirror that of Virginia, as tobacco became the most important crop. To the south lay the Carolinas, created after the English Civil War had been concluded. In the Deep South was **GEORGIA**, the last of the original thirteen colonies. Challenges from Spain and France led the king to desire a buffer zone between the cash crops of the Carolinas and foreign enemies. Georgia, a colony of debtors, would fulfill that need.

English American Southerners would not enjoy the generally good health of their New England counterparts. Outbreaks of malaria and **YELLOW FEVER** kept life expectancies lower. Since the northern colonies attracted religious dissenters, they tended to migrate in families. Such family connections were less prevalent in the South.

The economy of growing **CASH CROPS** would require a labor force that would be unknown north of Maryland. Slaves and indentured servants, although present in the North, were much more important to the South. They were the backbone of the Southern economy.

Settlers in the Southern colonies came to America to seek economic prosperity they could not find in Old England. The English countryside provided a grand existence of stately manors and high living. But rural England was full, and by law those great estates could only be passed on to the eldest son. America provided more space to realize a lifestyle the new arrivals could never dream to achieve in their native land.

Maryland — The Catholic Experiment

New England was not the only destination sought by those fleeing religious persecution. In 1632, **CECELIUS CALVERT**, known as **LORD BALTIMORE**, was granted possession of all land lying between the**POTOMAC RIVER** and the **CHESAPEAKE BAY**. Lord Baltimore saw this as an opportunity to grant religious freedom to the Catholics who remained in Anglican England. Although outright violence was more a part of the 1500s than the 1600s, Catholics were still a persecuted minority in the seventeenth century. For example, Catholics were not even permitted to be legally married by a Catholic priest. Baltimore thought that his New World possession could serve as a refuge. At the same time, he hoped to turn a financial profit from the venture.

Maryland, named after England's Catholic queen **HENRIETTA MARIA**, was first settled in 1634. Unlike the religious experiments to the North, economic opportunity was the draw for many Maryland colonists. Consequently, most immigrants did not cross the Atlantic in family units but as individuals. The first inhabitants were a mixture of country gentlemen (mostly Catholic) and workers and artisans (mostly Protestant). This mixture would surely doom the Catholic experiment. Invariably, there are more poor than aristocrats in any given society, and the Catholics soon found themselves in the minority.

The geography of Maryland, like that of her Southern neighbor Virginia, was conducive to growing tobacco. The desire to make profits from tobacco soon led to the need for low-cost labor. As a result, the number of indentured servants greatly expanded and the social structure of Maryland reflected this change. But the influx in immigration was not reflected in larger population growth because, faced with frequent battles with malaria and typhoid, life expectancy in Maryland was about 10 years less than in New England.

Fearful that the Protestant masses might restrict Catholic liberties, the **HOUSE OF DELEGATES** passed the **MARYLAND ACT OF TOLERATION** in 1649. This act granted religious freedom to all Christians. Like Roger Williams in Rhode Island and William Penn in Pennsylvania, Maryland thus experimented with laws protecting religious liberty. Unfortunately, Protestants swept the Catholics out of the legislature within a decade, and religious strife ensued. Still, the Act of Toleration is an important part of the colonial legacy of religious freedom that will culminate in the First Amendment in the American Bill of Rights.

Indentured Servants

The growth of tobacco, rice, and indigo and the plantation economy created a tremendous need for labor in Southern English America. Without the aid of modern machinery, human sweat and blood was necessary for the planting, cultivation, and harvesting of these cash crops. While slaves existed in the English colonies throughout the 1600s, indentured servitude was the method of choice employed by many planters before the 1680s. This system provided incentives for both the master and servant to increase the working population of the Chesapeake colonies.

Virginia and Maryland operated under what was known as the "**HEADRIGHT SYSTEM**." The leaders of each colony knew that labor was essential for economic survival, so they provided incentives for planters to import workers. For each laborer brought across the Atlantic, the master was rewarded with 50 acres of land. This system was used by wealthy plantation aristocrats to increase their land holdings dramatically. In addition, of course, they received the services of the workers for the duration of the indenture.

This system seemed to benefit the servant as well. Each **INDENTURED SERVANT** would have their fare across the Atlantic paid in full by their master. A contract was written that stipulated the length of service — typically five years. The servant would be supplied room and board while working in the master's fields. Upon completion of the contract, the servant would receive "freedom dues," a pre-arranged termination bonus. This might include land, money, a gun, clothes or food. On the surface it seemed like a terrific way for the luckless English poor to make their way to prosperity in a new land. Beneath the surface, this was not often the case.

Only about 40 percent of indentured servants lived to complete the terms of their contracts. Female servants were often the subject of harassment from their masters. A woman who became pregnant while a servant often had years tacked on to the end of her service time. Early in the century, some servants were able to gain their own land as free men. But by 1660, much of the best land was claimed by the large land owners. The former servants were pushed westward, where the mountainous land was less arable and the threat from Indians constant. A class of angry, impoverished pioneer farmers began to emerge as the 1600s grew old. After **BACON'S REBELLION** in 1676, planters began to prefer permanent African slavery to the headright system that had previously enabled them to prosper.

**Bacon’s Rebellion**

Bacon’s Rebellion began, appropriately enough, with an argument over a pig. In the summer of 1675, a group of Doeg Indians visited Thomas Mathew on his plantation in northern Virginia to collect a debt that he owed them. When Mathew refused to pay, they took some of his pigs to settle the debt. This “theft” sparked a series of raids and counter-raids. The Susquehannock Indians were caught in the crossfire when the militia mistook them for Doegs, leaving fourteen dead. A similar pattern of escalating violence then repeated: the Susquehannocks retaliated by killing colonists in Virginia and Maryland, and the English marshaled their forces and laid siege to the Susquehannocks. The conflict became uglier after the militia executed a delegation of Susquehannock ambassadors under a flag of truce. A few parties of warriors intent on revenge launched raids along the frontier and killed dozens of English colonists.

The sudden and unpredictable violence of the Susquehannock War triggered a political crisis in Virginia. Panicked colonists fled en masse from the vulnerable frontiers, flooding into coastal communities and begging the government for help. But the cautious governor, Sir William Berkeley, did not send an army after the Susquehannocks. He worried that a full-scale war would inevitably drag other Indians into the conflict, turning allies into deadly enemies. Berkeley therefore insisted on a defensive strategy centered around a string of new fortifications to protect the frontier and strict instructions not to antagonize friendly Indians. It was a sound military policy but a public relations disaster. Terrified colonists condemned Berkeley. Building contracts for the forts went to Berkeley’s wealthy friends, who conveniently decided that their own plantations were the most strategically vital. Colonists denounced the government as a corrupt band of oligarchs more interested in lining their pockets than protecting the people.

By the spring of 1676, a small group of frontier colonists took matters into their own hands. Naming the charismatic young Nathaniel Bacon as their leader, these self-styled “volunteers” proclaimed that they took up arms in defense of their homes and families. They took pains to assure Berkeley that they intended no disloyalty, but Berkeley feared a coup and branded the volunteers as traitors. Berkeley finally mobilized an army—not to pursue Susquehannocks, but to crush the colonists’ rebellion. His drastic response catapulted a small band of anti-Indian vigilantes into full-fledged rebels whose survival necessitated bringing down the colonial government.

Bacon and the rebels stalked the Susquehannock as well as friendly Indians like the Pamunkeys and the Occaneechis. The rebels became convinced that there was a massive Indian conspiracy to destroy the English and portrayed themselves to frightened Virginians as heroes. Berkeley’s stubborn persistence in defending friendly Indians and destroying the Indian-fighting rebels led Bacon to accuse the governor of conspiring with a “powerful cabal” of elite planters and with “the protected and darling Indians” to slaughter his English enemies.[10](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/03-british-north-america/#footnote_9_60)

In the early summer of 1676, Bacon’s neighbors elected him their burgess and sent him to Jamestown to confront Berkeley. Though the House of Burgesses enacted pro-rebel reforms like prohibiting the sale of arms to Indians and restoring suffrage rights to landless freemen, Bacon’s supporters remained unsatisfied. Berkeley soon had Bacon arrested and forced the rebel leader into the humiliating position of publicly begging forgiveness for his treason. Bacon swallowed this indignity, but turned the tables by gathering an army of followers and surrounding the State House, demanding that Berkeley name him the General of Virginia and bless his universal war against Indians. Instead, the 70-year old governor stepped onto the field in front of the crowd of angry men, unafraid, and called Bacon a traitor to his face. Then he tore open his shirt and dared Bacon to shoot him in the heart, if he was so intent on overthrowing his government. “Here!” he shouted before the crowd, “Shoot me, before God, it is a fair mark. Shoot!” When Bacon hesitated, Berkeley drew his sword and challenged the young man to a duel, knowing that Bacon could neither back down from a challenge without looking like a coward nor kill him without making himself into a villain. Instead, Bacon resorted to bluster and blasphemy. Threatening to slaughter the entire Assembly if necessary, he cursed, “God damn my blood, I came for a commission, and a commission I will have before I go.”[11](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/03-british-north-america/#footnote_10_60) Berkeley stood defiant, but the cowed burgesses finally prevailed upon him to grant Bacon’s request. Virginia had its general, and Bacon had his war.

After this dramatic showdown in Jamestown, Bacon’s Rebellion quickly spiraled out of control. Berkeley slowly rebuilt his loyalist army, forcing Bacon to divert his attention to the coasts and away from the Indians. But most rebels were more interested in defending their homes and families than in fighting other Englishmen, and deserted Bacon in droves at every rumor of Indian activity. In many places, the “rebellion” was less an organized military campaign than a collection of local grievances and personal rivalries. Both rebels and loyalists smelled the opportunities for plunder, seizing their rivals’ estates and confiscating their property.

For a small but vocal minority of rebels, however, the rebellion became an ideological revolution: Sarah Drummond, wife of rebel leader William Drummond, advocated independence from England and the formation of a Virginian Republic, declaring “I fear the power of England no more than a broken straw.” Others struggled for a different kind of independence: white servants and black slaves fought side by side in both armies after promises of freedom for military service. Everyone accused everyone else of treason, rebels and loyalists switched sides depending on which side was winning, and the whole Chesapeake disintegrated into a confused melee of secret plots and grandiose crusades, sordid vendettas and desperate gambits, with Indians and English alike struggling for supremacy and survival. One Virginian summed up the rebellion as “our time of anarchy.”[12](http://www.americanyawp.com/text/03-british-north-america/#footnote_11_60)

The rebels steadily lost ground and ultimately suffered a crushing defeat. Bacon died of typhus in the autumn of 1676, and his successors surrendered to Berkeley in January 1677. Berkeley summarily tried and executed the rebel leadership in a succession of kangaroo courts-martial. Before long, however, the royal fleet arrived, bearing over 1,000 red-coated troops and a royal commission of investigation charged with restoring order to the colony. The commissioners replaced the governor and dispatched Berkeley to London, where he died in disgrace.

But the conclusion of Bacon’s Rebellion was uncertain, and the maintenance of order remained precarious for years afterward. The garrison of royal troops discouraged both incursion by hostile Indians and insurrection by discontented colonists, allowing the king to continue profiting from tobacco revenues. The end of armed resistance did not mean a resolution to the underlying tensions destabilizing colonial society. Indians inside Virginia remained an embattled minority and Indians outside Virginia remained a terrifying threat. Elite planters continued to grow rich by exploiting their indentured servants and marginalizing small farmers. The vast majority of Virginians continued to resent their exploitation with a simmering fury. Virginia legislators did recognize the extent of popular hostility towards colonial rule, however, and improved the social and political conditions of poor whites in the years after the rebellion. During the same period, the increasing availability of enslaved workers through the Atlantic slave trade contributed to planters’ large-scale adoption of slave labor in the Chesapeake.

Creating the Carolinas

While wayward English migrants worked to build the new American colonies, mother England experienced the greatest turmoil in her history in the middle of the 1600s. The Stuart King, Charles I, was beheaded as the result of a civil war in 1649. A dictatorship led by **OLIVER CROMWELL** ruled England until 1660. This represented the only break in the hereditary line dating from 1066 until the present day. Cromwell was a brutal leader, so the return of the English monarchy was well received by the public.

This disruption caused a temporary distraction from colonizing the New World. When Charles II assumed the throne, it was business as usual. The colonies that were created under his rule were known as **RESTORATION COLONIES**. It was in this environment that the Carolinas were created.

The southern part of Carolina served first as support for the British West Indies. Soon the slave economy of the sugar islands reached the shores of Carolina. The cultivation of rice in the plantation system quickly became profitable, and planters in the hundreds and slaves in the tens of thousands soon inhabited Carolina. At the heart of the colony was the merchant port of Charles Town, later to be known as **CHARLESTON**. African slaves became a majority of the population before the middle of the eighteenth century. South Carolina even experimented with Indian slavery, enslaving those captured in the aftermath of battle.

Such was not the case for the northern reaches of the Carolina colony. The earliest inhabitants of this region were displaced former indentured servants from the Chesapeake. Most established small tobacco farms. Slavery existed here, but in far smaller numbers than in the neighboring regions. The inhabitants felt as though the aristocrats from Virginia and the Charles Town area looked down their noses on them. Northern Carolina, like Rhode Island in the North, drew the region's discontented masses.

As the two locales evolved separately and as their differing geographies and inhabitants steered contrasting courses, calls for a formal split emerged. In 1712, **NORTH CAROLINA** and **SOUTH CAROLINA** became distinct colonies. Each prospered in its own right after this peaceful divorce took effect.

Life in the Plantation South

**PLANTATION** life created a society with clear class divisions. A lucky few were at the top, with land holdings as far as the eyes could see. Most Southerners did not experience this degree of wealth. The contrast between rich and poor was greater in the South than in the other English colonies, because of the labor system necessary for its survival. Most Southerners were **YEOMAN** farmers, indentured servants, or slaves. The plantation system also created changes for women and family structures as well.

The **TIDEWATER ARISTOCRATS** were the fortunate few who lived in stately plantation manors with hundreds of servants and slaves at their beck and call. Most plantation owners took an active part in the operations of the business. Surely they found time for leisurely activities like hunting, but on a daily basis they worked as well. The distance from one plantation to the next proved to be isolating, with consequences even for the richest class. Unlike New England, who required public schooling by law, the difficulties of travel and the distances between prospective students impeded the growth of such schools in the South. Private tutors were hired by the wealthiest families. The boys studied in the fall and winter to allow time for work in the fields during the planting times. The girls studied in the summer to allow time for weaving during the colder months. Few cities developed in the South. Consequently, there was little room for a merchant middle class. **URBAN PROFESSIONALS** such as lawyers were rare in the South. Artisans often worked right on the plantation as slaves or servants.

The roles of women were dramatically changed by the plantation society. First of all, since most indentured servants were male, there were far fewer women in the colonial South. In the Chesapeake during the 1600s, men entered the colony at a rate of seven to one. From one perspective, this increased women's power. They were highly sought after by the overwhelming number of eager men. The high death rate in the region resulted in a typical marriage being dissolved by death within seven years. Consequently there was a good deal of remarriage, and a complex web of half-brothers and half-sisters evolved. Women needed to administer the property in the absence of the male. Consequently many developed managerial skills. However, being a minority had its downside. Like in New England, women were completely excluded from the political process. Female slaves and indentured servants were often the victims of aggressive male masters.

# The Growth of Slavery

Africans were the immigrants to the British New World that had no choice in their destinations or destinies. The first African Americans that arrived in Jamestown in 1619 on a Dutch trading ship were not slaves, nor were they free. They served time as indentured servants until their obligations were complete. Although these lucky individuals lived out the remainder of their lives as free men, the passing decades would make this a rarity. Despite the complete lack of a slave tradition in mother England, slavery gradually replaced indentured servitude as the chief means for plantation labor in the Old South.

Virginia would become the first British colony to legally establish slavery in 1661. Maryland and the Carolinas were soon to follow. The only Southern colony to resist the onset of slavery was Georgia, created as an Enlightened experiment. Seventeen years after its formation, Georgia too succumbed to the pressures of its own citizens and repealed the ban on African slavery. Laws soon passed in these areas that condemned all children of African slaves to lifetimes in chains.

No northern or middle colony was without its slaves. From Puritan Massachusetts to Quaker Pennsylvania, Africans lived in **BONDAGE**. Economics and geography did not promote the need for slave importation like the plantation South. Consequently, the slave population remained small compared to their southern neighbors. While laws throughout the region recognized the existence of slavery, it was far less systematized. Slaves were more frequently granted their freedom, and opposition to the institution was more common, especially in Pennsylvania.

As British colonists became convinced that Africans best served their demand for labor, importation increased. By the turn of the eighteenth century **AFRICAN SLAVES** numbered in the tens of thousands in the British colonies. Before the first shots are fired at Lexington and Concord, they totaled in the hundreds of thousands. The cries for liberty by the colonial leaders that were to follow turned out to be merely white cries.

# Slave Life on the Farm and in the Town

What was it like to live in bondage? The experiences of slaves in captivity varied greatly. Indeed, Puritan merchants and Southern planters have as much in common as their slaves. The type of life slaves could expect to live depended first and foremost on whether they lived on farms or in towns.

The first image that comes to mind when considering **CHATTEL SLAVERY** is plantation life. Of course the **CULTIVATION** of the planter's crop was the priority. Beyond these duties, slaves might also be expected to clear land, build a fence, or perform other odd jobs as the circumstances might dictate. Larger plantations usually brought harsher working conditions. **OVERSEERS** might be assigned to monitor the work. As they had little connection to the slave, they tended to treat the slaves more brutally. Sometimes a slave, called a **DRIVER**, would be enticed into holding this position. Accordingly, drivers were hated in the slave community. Living quarters were small and spartan, and food usually consisted of a few morsels of meat and bread.

Large plantations might also have **HOUSEHOLD SLAVES**. These domestic servants would prepare the master's meals, tend the house, prepare for guests, and sometimes look after the master's children. Household slaves often were treated better than plantation slaves. They usually ate better and were in some cases considered part of the extended family.

Slaves that lived on smaller farms often enjoyed closer relations with their masters than plantation slaves. It stands to reason that a farmer working side by side with four slaves might develop closer bonds than a planter who owns four hundred. This sometimes, but not always, led to kinder treatment.

Some urban merchants and artisans employed slave labor in their shops. This enabled slaves to acquire marketable skills. In fact, white craftsmen often displayed strong resentment, believing the price of their labor would suffer. Generally, slaves that lived in towns had greater freedom than those that lived on the farm. They met more people and became more worldly. Daring individuals sometimes took the opportunity to escape.

… and that is where we will end the summer assignment and the “set-up” to the story of US History.