

# European Exploration and Settlement

*How did Europeans explore and establish settlements in the Americas?*

## Introduction

Europeans had no knowledge of the people of the Americas, half a world away, or the land where they lived. When Europeans looked west, they saw only a vast ocean.

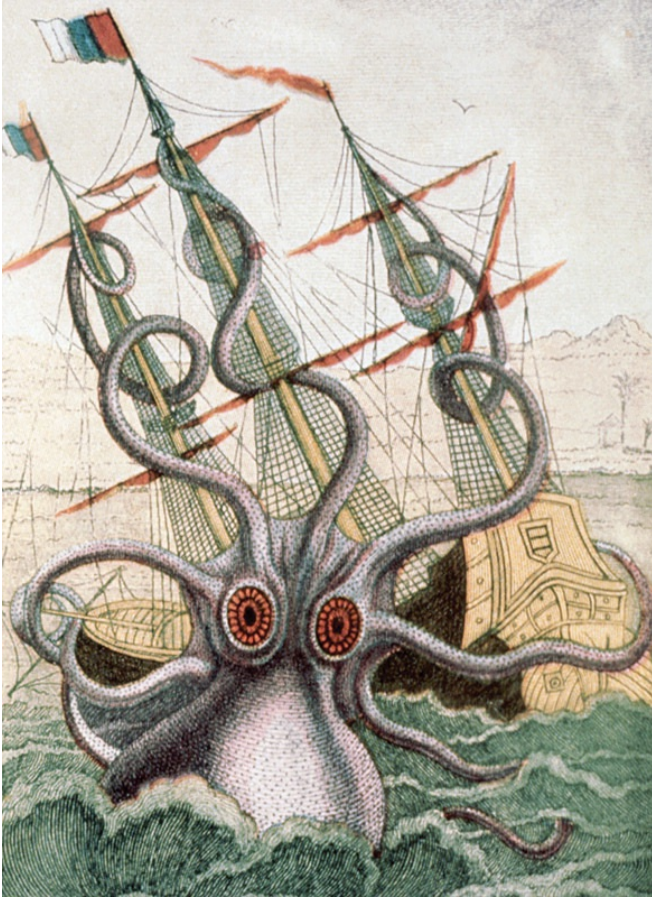
Europeans were far more interested in the lands that lay to the east. In the late 1200s, a young man named Marco Polo traveled through Asia with his father, a merchant and trader from Venice, Italy. Marco Polo spent 17 years in China. When he returned to Venice, people flocked to hear his stories of “the Indies,” as India and East Asia were then known. He was called “the man with a million stories.”

Eventually, a writer helped Marco Polo put his adventures into a book that described the wonders he had seen in China. It told of rich silks and rare spices, gold and jewels, and luxurious palaces.

When Marco Polo's book was published, very few people in Europe could read. However, those who did read it were fascinated by its description of riches to the east. Merchants and traders were eager to find the fastest way to get there. The land route Polo had traveled was long and dangerous. His tales inspired explorers to find an alternative route by sea.

Some explorers would seek a route to China by going around the southern tip of Africa. But a few brave souls looked to the west for another route. Such a trip took courage, for no one knew how far west sailors would have to sail to reach Asia or what monsters and terrors might await them far from Europe's shore.

In this lesson, you will learn how Christopher Columbus faced these dangers and sailed west to find a route to China. As you will see, his unexpected discovery of the American continents led to competition among European nations to explore and profit from these lands. You will also learn how Europeans established settlements in the American continents and, in the process, changed both Europe and the Americas.



**Social Studies  
Vocabulary**

colony

Columbian Exchange

conquistadors

coureurs de bois

missionaries

slavery

**1 Spain Starts an Empire**

Level: A

## 21 Spain Starts an Empire

Marco Polo's book continued to be read over the next two centuries, a time of great change in Europe. The rediscovered writings of ancient Greeks and Romans inspired a new interest in learning and art. This period of lively new thinking has become known as the Renaissance, a word that means "rebirth."

During this time, the invention of the printing press made books, including Marco Polo's, more available. As Europeans learned about the world beyond Europe, they became eager to explore these far-off lands.

**Columbus's Discoveries** One of the people who was inspired by Marco Polo's writings was an Italian seaman named Christopher Columbus. After studying maps of the world, which at that time did not include the Americas, Columbus became convinced that the shortest route to the Indies lay to the west, across the Atlantic Ocean.

Columbus looked for someone who could pay for the ships and men he needed to test his idea. Eventually, he was able to convince King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to sponsor a voyage.

In August 1492, Columbus sailed west with three small ships. After more than a month at sea, his sailors raised the cry of "Land!" The land turned out to be a small island in what we now call the Caribbean Sea.

Columbus was thrilled. In a later letter, he wrote, "I write this to tell you how in thirty-three days I sailed to the Indies with the fleet that the illustrious King and Queen . . . gave me, where I discovered a great many islands, inhabited by numberless people." Mistakenly believing that he had reached the Indies, Columbus called these people Indians.

In reality, the islanders were native people who spoke a language called Taino (TIE-no). The Taino lived in a peaceful fishing community. Never had they seen people like the ones who had suddenly appeared on their shores. Yet they were friendly and welcoming. Columbus wrote, "They are so unsuspecting and so generous with what they possess, that no one who had not seen it would believe it."

Columbus promptly claimed the island for Spain and named it San Salvador, which means "Holy Savior." From there, he sailed on to other islands. Convinced that China lay nearby, Columbus sailed back to Spain for more ships and men.

He made four trips to the Caribbean, finding more islands, as well as the continent of South America. Each time he discovered a new place,

## EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...

---

he claimed it for Spain. Columbus died still believing he had found Asia. Later explorers quickly realized that he had actually stumbled on a world previously unknown to Europe—the continents of North and South America.

**The Columbian Exchange** The voyages of Columbus triggered a great transfer of people, plants, animals, and diseases back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean. This transfer, which still continues today, is called the **Columbian Exchange**. The Columbian Exchange brought valuable new crops such as corn, potatoes, and squash to Europe. These foods greatly improved the diet of the average European. Many Europeans also found new opportunities by crossing the Atlantic to settle in the Americas. They introduced crops such as wheat and rice to these lands, as well as **domesticated** animals like horses, cows, pigs, and sheep.

For American Indians, however, the exchange began badly. The Europeans who came to America brought germs that lead to outbreaks of smallpox and other deadly diseases amongst the American Indian population. Historians estimate that in some areas, European diseases wiped out 90 percent of the native population.

**Slavery Comes to America** This high death rate contributed to the introduction of African slaves to the Americas. Many laborers were needed because some of the Spanish settlers in the Caribbean had started gold mines. Others raised sugar, a crop of great value in Europe. At first, the settlers forced American Indians to work for them. But as native people began dying in great numbers from European diseases, the settlers looked for a new workforce. Before long, enslaved Africans were replacing American Indians as laborers.

**Slavery** had existed around the world since ancient times. Often, people who were on the losing side in wars were enslaved, or treated as the property of their conquerors. By the late 1400s, European explorers in West Africa were trading guns and other goods for slaves captured by African traders.

In the 1500s, European slave traders began shipping slaves to the Caribbean for sale. Over the next three centuries, millions of Africans would be carried across the Atlantic on a terrible voyage in crowded, disease-infested ships that could last anywhere from weeks to months. Many died before it was over.

When the Africans arrived in the Americas, they were sold to their new masters at auctions. Many perished from disease and overwork. Those

who survived faced a lifetime of forced labor as slaves.

**Cortés Conquers Mexico** After Columbus's voyages, Spain began sending soldiers called **conquistadors** (kahn-KEES-tah-dors), across the Atlantic. Their mission was to conquer a vast empire for Spain. The conquistadors hoped to get rich along the way.

In 1519, Hernán Cortés (ehr-NAHN kohr-TEHZ) arrived in Mexico with horses and 500 soldiers. There he heard about the powerful Aztecs who ruled much of Mexico. When Cortés and his men reached the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán (taynoch-teet-LAN), they could not believe their eyes. A beautiful city seemed to rise out of a sparkling lake. One Spaniard wrote, "Some of our soldiers even asked whether the things that we saw were not a dream."

The Aztecs were unsure what to make of the strangers. They had never seen men dressed in metal armor and riding horses. Some mistook Cortés for the great Aztec god Quetzalcoatl (kwetzul- kuh-WAH-tul) and welcomed him as a hero. They would soon realize their mistake.

With the help of American Indians who hated their Aztec rulers, and with the spread of smallpox—which killed large numbers of Aztec warriors— Cortés conquered Tenochtitlán. The Spaniards pulled the city down and used its stones to build Mexico City, the capital of a new Spanish empire called New Spain.

**Pizarro Conquers Peru** Smallpox also helped another Spanish conquistador, Francisco Pizarro (fran-SIS-co pi-ZAR-oh), conquer an empire in South America. In 1532, Pizarro encountered the powerful Inca Empire in present-day Peru. Smallpox had reached Peru many months before Pizarro, killing thousands of Incas and leaving their empire badly divided.

With this division, Pizarro entered the Inca Empire's capital city of Cuzco. Pizarro demanded that the Inca ruler, Atahualpa (ah-tuh- WAHL-puh) convert to Christianity and swear his loyalty to the king of Spain. When Atahualpa refused, Pizarro took him hostage but promised to release him in exchange for gold. To save their ruler, the Incas filled three rooms with gold and silver treasures. Pizarro killed Atahualpa anyway and took over the leaderless Inca Empire. From there, Spanish conquistadors conquered most of South America.

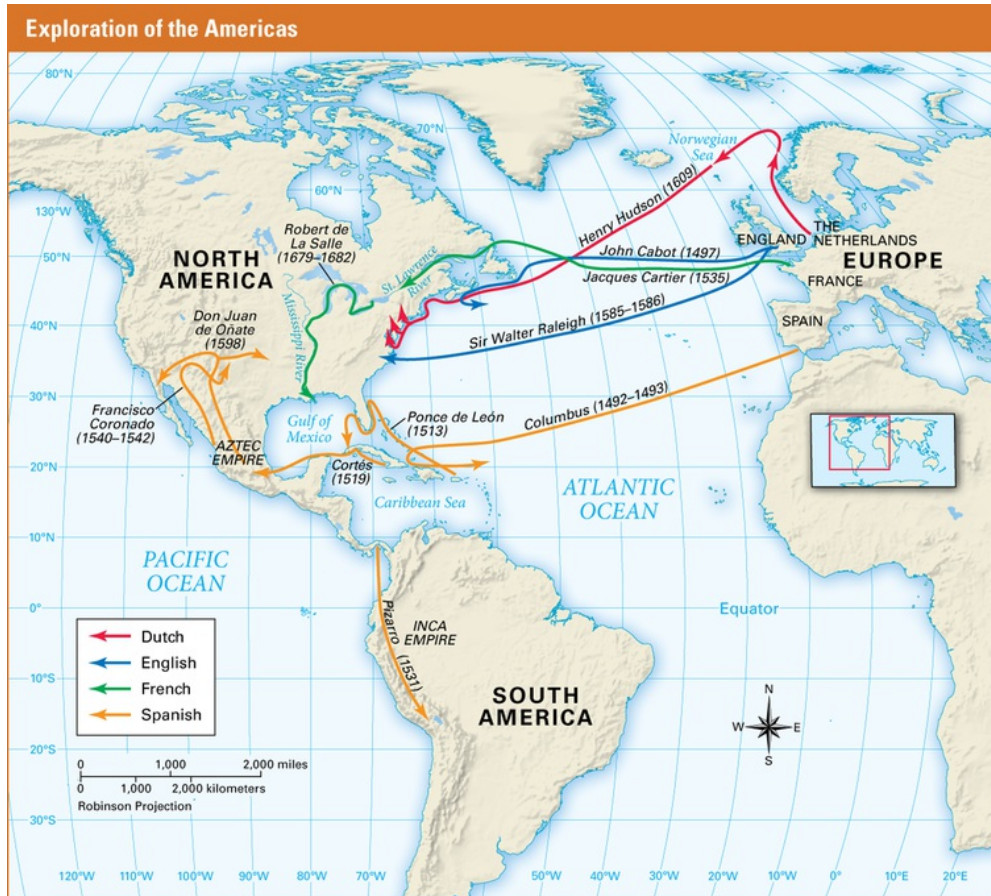
# EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...

---





# EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...



## 2. The Spanish Borderlands

In both Mexico and Peru, conquistadors found gold and silver riches beyond their wildest dreams. Hoping for more, they pushed north into lands that are now part of the United States. Because these lands were located on the far edges of Spain's North American empire, they were known as the Spanish borderlands.

**Florida** One of the first Spanish expeditions into North America was led by a man named Juan Ponce de León (wahn PAHN-suh day lee-OHN). He had sailed with Columbus to the Caribbean and made his fortune by discovering gold on the island of Puerto Rico. Despite his wealth, Ponce de León couldn't stop thinking about American Indian rumors of a "fountain of youth" that made old people young again. Restless for more adventure, he set off to find the truth about these tales of everlasting youth.

Ponce de León landed on a sunny peninsula of North America in April 1513. Because he had sighted this lush new land on Easter Sunday, he called it La Florida, meaning "flowery." (The name is short for "flowery



Easter.”) Eight years later, he returned to Florida with 200 men to establish a Spanish settlement, or **colony**. American Indians in the area used poisoned arrows to drive off the invaders. Instead of finding a fountain of youth, Ponce de León died from a poisoned arrow in his stomach.

**The “Seven Cities of Cibola”** Another legend sparked new Spanish expeditions into North America. An old European tale told of the “Seven Cities of Cibola” (SEE-buh-luh). These cities were said to be so fabulously rich that the streets and houses were decorated with gold and jewels. When the Spanish heard the American Indians tell similar tales, they became convinced that the Seven Cities of Cibola were somewhere in North America.

Spanish explorers first looked for the seven cities in Florida and presentday Texas. They found plenty of adventure, but no golden cities. Then a Spanish priest named Marcos de Niza claimed to have seen a shimmering golden city in what is now New Mexico. He raced back to Mexico City with the news.

**The Coronado Expedition** In 1540, a famed conquistador named Francisco Vásquez de Coronado (VAHS-kehz day kohr-uhNAH-doh) set out from Mexico City with a large expedition and de Niza as his guide. Their goal was to find the legendary golden cities.

After traveling north more than 7,000 miles, the expedition found an American Indian *pueblo*. A pueblo is a village of apartment-like buildings made of stone and adobe rising four and five stories high. To de Niza, this might have looked like a golden city. But to Coronado, it was a “little, crowded village . . . crumpled all up together.” The enraged expedition leader sent the priest back to Mexico City.

The Coronado expedition continued north onto the Great Plains before giving up the search for golden cities. Disappointed, Coronado reported to Spain, “Everything is the reverse of what he said, except the name of the cities and the large stone houses . . . The Seven Cities are seven little villages.”

**As conquistadors explored new territories, they claimed the areas for Spain.** By 1600, the Spanish borderlands extended west from Florida across present-day Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California

At first, Spain did little to encourage settlement in these far-flung areas. But when rival European nations also began to show an interest in the

## EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...

---

land, small bands of soldiers were sent to these regions to protect the claims. The soldiers lived in walled forts called *presidios* (preh-SEE-dee-ohs).

In 1565, for example, a Spanish naval officer named Pedro Menéndez de Avilés (muh-NEN-dez day ah-vuh-LACE) was sent to Florida to protect the area from French explorers. Menéndez successfully drove the French out of their Florida base and built a fort on the peninsula's Atlantic coast. Menéndez named the fort St. Augustine. Over the years, Spanish soldiers based at St. Augustine successfully defended the fort—and Spanish claims to Florida—from both French and English rivals. Today, St. Augustine is the oldest permanent settlement founded by Europeans in the United States.



Catholic **missionaries**, or religious people who try to persuade people to **convert** to their religion, accompanied the soldiers to the borderlands. The missionaries built settlements, called missions, where they taught local Indians new skills and preached the Christian faith. Each mission grew its own food and produced most of what the inhabitants of the missions needed to survive far from towns and trading centers.

Hardy bands of settlers also moved into the borderlands, where they established towns and farms. Juan de Oñate (ownYAH-tay), who had made a fortune mining silver in Mexico, led the settlement of New Mexico. In 1598, Oñate brought 400 settlers and 7,000 animals from

Mexico to New Mexico. The long overland journey took a year and a half to complete.

At first, the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico welcomed the newcomers. Unfortunately, the Spanish repaid the Indians' kindness with cruelty. The Pueblo people were made to work for the settlers as slaves. Catholic priests ordered the whipping of Pueblo religious leaders who continued to practice their traditional rituals. Such treatment led the Pueblo people to rise up in **revolt** and drive the Spanish out. Twelve years would pass before Spanish settlers returned to New Mexico.

During the 1600s and 1700s, settlement of the Spanish borderlands proceeded slowly. But in time, the language, religion, and culture of Spain spread across much of what is now the American Southwest.

**Impact on American Indians** The arrival of Spanish settlers had a great **impact** on the native peoples of the borderlands. The Pueblo people learned how to use new tools, grow new foods, and raise sheep for wool from the Spanish. In turn, the Pueblo people introduced new **techniques** for growing crops in the desert soil to the Spanish.

From Florida to California, some American Indians converted to the Catholic faith. The converts often lived and worked in and around the missions, growing crops and helping to maintain the churches and other buildings. However, even converts often continued to practice their traditional religious rituals as well.

Unfortunately, wherever the Spanish settled, they brought with them diseases to which native peoples had no resistance. Smallpox, measles, and influenza often wiped out entire villages. Before Coronado's expedition, there had been more than 100 thriving American Indian pueblos in New Mexico. By 1700, only 19 remained.

## EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...

---



### 3. New France

Level: A

2019 Teachers' Curriculum Institute

As Spanish colonies sent ships loaded with gold and silver home to Spain, all of Europe watched with envy. Spain seemed to become richer and stronger every year. Other nations wanted their share of riches from the Americas. But none was strong enough to challenge Spain's American empire. They would have to seek their fortunes in areas not yet claimed by Spain.

**Claiming New France** In 1534, France sent Jacques Cartier (zhahk cahr-TYAY) to explore the Atlantic coastline of North America. His goal was to find a Northwest Passage. This passage was an all-water route through the continent to the Pacific Ocean. Such a route would provide a shortcut for ships sailing west to Asia.

Cartier failed to find such a passage. But he did claim land for France in what is now Canada. The claimed land would later be called New France. Cartier did discover something almost as valuable as Spanish gold. He found beaver fur. Beaver hats were a trendy item in Europe. French hat makers were willing to pay high prices for beaver pelts.

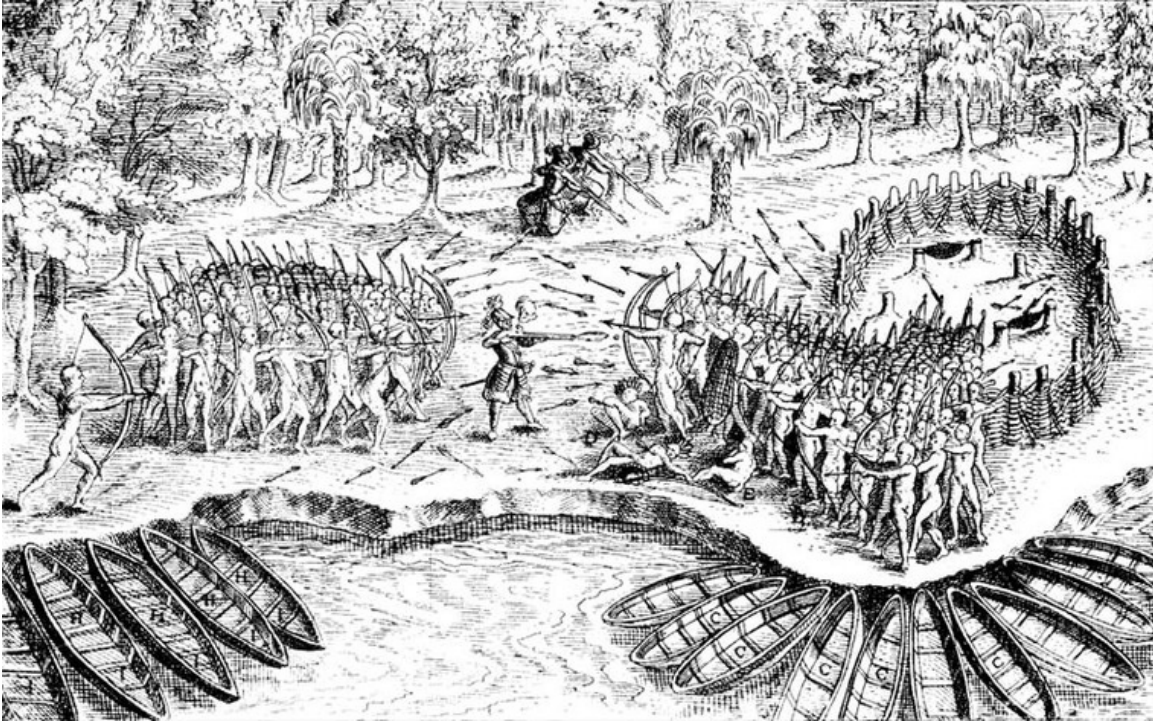
**Settling New France** The first settlement in New France was founded by Samuel de Champlain (duh sham-PLANE). In 1608, Champlain sailed up the St. Lawrence River. He built a trading post he called Quebec (kwuh-BEK). Quebec would be a base for French explorers, soldiers, missionaries, traders, and fur trappers for the next 150 years.

From Quebec, fur trappers pushed west in search of beaver pelts from Quebec. They called themselves **coureurs de bois** (kuh-RUR duh BWAH). This means "wood rangers" in French. Catholic missionaries followed the trappers in hopes of converting more people.

Like the Spanish borderlands, New France failed to attract large numbers of settlers. The harsh climate of New France discouraged French farmers from crossing the Atlantic. Also, the colony granted the best land along the St. Lawrence River to French nobles. The nobles planned to rent it out to farmers. The few settlers who did come soon got tired of renting. So they left their farms to search for furs.

## EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...

---



**American Indian Business Partners** The French were more interested in furs than farming. They did not try to conquer the Indians and put them to work as the Spanish had done. Instead, the French made American Indians their business partners.

After founding Quebec, Champlain made friends with the nearby Indians, especially the Huron. French fur trappers lived in Huron villages. They learned the Huron language and married Huron women. They learned how to survive for months in the wilderness from the Huron. But the friendship exposed the Huron to diseases. These diseases swept through their villages and killed many of them.

Champlain even helped the Huron attack their enemy, the Iroquois. He later wrote,

*I marched some 20 paces in advance of the rest, until I was within about 30 paces of the enemy . . . When I saw them making a move to fire at us, I rested my musket against my cheek, and aimed directly at one of the three chiefs. With that same shot, two fell to the ground; and one of their men was so wounded that he died some time after . . . When our side saw this shot . . . they began to raise such loud cries that one could not have heard it thunder.*

The surprised Iroquois had never seen or heard gunfire before. So they

fled in terror. The Iroquois would be the bitter enemies of the French from that day on.

**Claiming Louisiana** The search for furs led the French far inland from Quebec. In 1673, two explorers, Father Marquette (mahr-KET) and Louis Joliet (zhal-YAY), explored the great Mississippi River. They hoped this waterway would be the Northwest Passage. But they discovered that the river flowed south toward the Gulf of Mexico instead of flowing west to the Pacific Ocean. The explorers returned to New France disappointed.

Robert Cavelier de La Salle explored the entire length of the Mississippi River nine years later. On April 9, 1682, he planted a French flag at the mouth of the river and claimed everything west of the Mississippi River. La Salle named this vast area Louisiana for the French monarch, King Louis XIV.



#### 4. Jamestown: The First English Colony

Columbus's voyages inspired John Cabot, an Italian living in England, to

## EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...

---

seek his own western route to Asia. In 1497, Cabot, who had moved to England from Venice, sailed west across the Atlantic. He landed in Newfoundland, an island off the coast of Canada. A fellow Venetian living in London wrote of Cabot's brief landing,

*He coasted for three hundred leagues and landed; saw no human beings, but he has brought here to the king certain snares which had been set to catch game, and a needle for making nets; he also found some felled trees, by which he judged there were inhabitants, and returned to his ship in alarm . . . The discoverer . . . planted on this newly-found land a large cross, with one flag of England and another of St. Mark [the patron saint of Venice] on account of his being a Venetian.*

Like Columbus, Cabot mistakenly believed he had landed in Asia. The flag that Cabot planted in 1497 to claim the land he found opened the way for more English settlers who wished to create a new life in North America.

**The Lost Colony of Roanoke** Nearly a century after Cabot, an English noble named Sir Walter Raleigh tried to start a colony on Roanoke Island off the coast of present-day North Carolina. American Indians on the island welcomed the settlers and gave them traps for catching fish. The newcomers, however, were more interested in looking for gold than fishing. When their supplies ran low, they returned to England.

In 1587, Raleigh sent a second group of colonists to Roanoke. Unfortunately, they arrived too late in the season to plant crops. Their leader, John White, sailed back to England for more supplies. While White was in England, however, fighting broke out between England and Spain. As a result, his return to Roanoke was delayed for three years.

When White finally reached the island, the colonists had disappeared. Carved on a doorpost was the word CROATOAN. To this day, both the reason this word was carved and what happened to the lost colony of Roanoke remain a mystery.

**Settling Jamestown** Twenty years went by before a permanent English colony was established in America. In 1607, a group of merchants formed the London Company to start a moneymaking colony in Virginia. The company crammed 105 settlers and 39 sailors into three tiny ships and sent them across the Atlantic. The settlers were to



ship back valuable goods such as furs and timber.

When they reached Virginia, the colonists settled on a swampy peninsula they believed could be easily defended against American Indians or Spanish ships. They called their new home Jamestown after King James I. What the settlers didn't know was that the spot they chose to settle would soon be swarming with disease-carrying mosquitoes. It was also surrounded by a large and powerful American Indian tribe called the Powhatan.

To make matters worse, the Jamestown settlers were a mix of gentlemen and craftsmen. None of them knew much about farming, nor were they willing to work very hard at it. They thought they were in Virginia to look for gold, not to provide for themselves.

As the food the settlers had brought with them disappeared, the settlers began to trade with the Powhatan, bartering glass beads and iron hatchets for corn and meat. But barter wasn't easy. Many Powhatan people decided they would sooner kill the English—or just let them starve—than trade. Hunger and disease soon took their toll. Every few days, another body was carried off to the graveyard.

John Smith was one of the members of the Jamestown expedition. A natural leader, Smith took control of Jamestown in 1608. “If any would not work,” announced Smith, “neither should he eat.” They were hungry, so they worked.

## EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...

---



Smith wrote an account of how he met a Powhatan girl whose help saved the colony from starvation. While scouting for food, Smith was captured by the American Indians and brought to a smoky longhouse. Seated at one end, he saw the powerful chief of the Powhatan tribe. The tribe greeted Smith with a loud shout and a great feast. But when the meal ended, the mood changed. Smith was about to be clubbed to death when a young girl leapt out of the shadows. “She got [my] head in her armes and laid her owne upon [mine] to save [me] from death,” Smith later wrote.

Smith's savior was Pocahontas, Chief Powhatan's favorite daughter. Historians disagree about the details of how Smith and Pocahontas first met. They do agree, however, that Pocahontas helped Smith save Jamestown by bringing food and keeping peace with her people. “She, next under God,” Smith wrote, “was . . . the instrument to preserve this colony from death, famine, and utter confusion.”

**The Starving Time** Jamestown's troubles, however, were far from over. In the fall of 1609, after being injured in a gunpowder explosion, Smith returned to England. The following winter was the worst one yet—so bad that it came to be known as the “Starving Time.”

Without the encouragement of Smith and Pocahontas, the Powhatan refused to trade with the settlers. The English ate dogs, rats, and even

human corpses to survive. By spring, only 60 of the 500 people Smith had left in the fall remained alive.

When supply ships came the next spring, the survivors were ordered to abandon their colony. Then three more English ships brought food, 150 new colonists, and 100 soldiers. Jamestown was saved again.

**Jamestown Survives** Even with more settlers, the people of Jamestown lived in constant danger of attacks by the American Indians. To end that threat, the English kidnapped Pocahontas and held her hostage. For a year, Pocahontas remained a prisoner—but a willing and curious one. During that time she learned English, adopted the Christian faith, and made new friends.

Among those new friends was a widower named John Rolfe. Rolfe had already helped the colony survive by finding a crop that could be raised in Virginia and sold for good prices in England—tobacco. The happy settlers went tobacco mad, planting the crop everywhere, even in Jamestown's streets.

Rolfe helped again by making a marriage proposal to Pocahontas. Both the governor of Jamestown and Chief Powhatan gave their consent to this unusual match. Maybe they hoped the marriage would help end the conflict between their peoples.

The union of Pocahontas and John Rolfe did bring peace to Jamestown. In 1616, Rolfe wrote, “Our people yearly plant and reap quietly, and travel in the woods . . . as freely and securely from danger . . . as in England.”

# EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...

---





## 5. New Netherland: The Short-Lived Dutch Settlement

While John Smith was struggling to save the colony of Jamestown, an English sailor named Henry Hudson was exploring the coastline farther north for the Netherlands. Henry Hudson's voyage was sponsored by Dutch merchants who hoped to find the Northwest Passage. (The people of the Netherlands are called the Dutch.)

In 1609, Hudson discovered a deep river full of fish and thought it might just take him all the way across the continent. It didn't, of course, but he claimed the land along its banks for the Netherlands. The river was later named the Hudson in his honor, and the territory he claimed became known as New Netherland.

In 1621, Dutch merchants formed the Dutch West India Company to start a colony in America. The first Dutch colonists settled along the upper Hudson, where they built Fort Orange, near present-day Albany, New York. The new colonists quickly found that there were good profits to be made in the fur trade. They established trading posts along the Hudson River. The largest was on Manhattan Island at the river's mouth.

## EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...

---

**Relations with American Indians** In 1626, the Dutch West India Company sent Peter Minuit (MIN-yu-what) to New Netherland as the colony's governor. Wanting peaceful relations with the Indians, the company told Minuit that any native peoples on Manhattan Island “must not be expelled with violence or threats but be persuaded with kind words . . . or should be given something.”

Following orders, Minuit offered the island's Indians iron pots, beads, and blankets worth about \$24 (which is equivalent to about \$500 today) in exchange for their land. The American Indians accepted the trade because they didn't understand the colonists' views of ownership and didn't believe that anyone could own land.

Dutch traders also made deals with members of the powerful Iroquois Confederacy, an alliance of five Indian groups who lived across the northern portion of New Netherland. The competitive tensions between the French and Dutch had some advantages for the Iroquois Confederacy. The French had long supplied the Huron, the Iroquois's great rivals, with guns in exchange for furs. It made sense for the Iroquois to become partners with the Dutch, who supplied them with the weapons they needed to stand up to the Huron.

This partnership also made sense for the Dutch. The French were their main rivals in the European fur trade. For most of the 1600s, trade relations between the Dutch and the Iroquois kept the French from moving into the fur-rich Ohio Valley.

**New Amsterdam** As the fur trade expanded, the Dutch settlement on Manhattan swelled to over 1,000 people. In 1647, the Dutch West India Company hired Peter Stuyvesant (STY-vuh-sunt) as the colony's new governor. When he arrived at Manhattan, Stuyvesant declared that the settlement would be called New Amsterdam, after the capital city of the Netherlands.



Stuyvesant had lost his right leg in battle, and he stomped around on a wooden leg decorated with silver nails. People called him “Old Silvernails” or “Peg Leg Pete.” Although he was a strong leader, Old Silvernails was generally disliked. When Dutchmen who had been elected as city councilors disagreed with him, he called them “ignorant subjects” and threatened to ship them back to the Netherlands in pieces if they gave him trouble.

Despite his reputation as a grouch, Stuyvesant governed New Amsterdam for 17 years. During this time, he captured a nearby Swedish colony and invited its settlers to live in New Amsterdam. By 1660, the colony had nearly 8,000 people, including Europeans from many nations as well as enslaved Africans. New Amsterdam also provided refuge for Jews who were seeking a place to practice their religion freely.

**New Netherland Becomes New York** Stuyvesant's biggest problem was that the English wanted to drive the Dutch out of North America. England's king, Charles II, refused to recognize Dutch claims to New Netherland. In 1664, Charles gave his brother, James, the Duke of York, ownership of all Dutch lands in America—if he could conquer them.

## EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...

---

James promptly organized a small invasion fleet to take the colony. When the English arrived, they sent Stuyvesant a letter demanding his surrender. Stuyvesant tore up the note and refused to consider giving up until New Amsterdam's chief gunner reported that the city's supply of gunpowder was damp and useless. Without firing a shot, the English took over New Netherland and renamed the colony New York.







## Lesson Summary

**In this lesson, you read about the first European settlements in the Americas.**

**Discovery and Competition** Explorers like Christopher Columbus were looking for a westward route to Asia when they stumbled onto the American continents. European nations competed to claim these new lands and the riches they might contain.

**Spain** Spain claimed vast territories, including Mexico and the southwestern portion of the future United States. In their search for gold and other treasures, Spanish conquistadors conquered the Aztecs of Mexico and the Incas of Peru. The Spanish also brought enslaved Africans to the Americas to plant and harvest crops. In the American Southwest, Spanish missionaries worked to convert American Indians to Christianity.

**France** The French staked a claim to much of present-day Canada, as well as Louisiana, the territory west of the Mississippi River. Most

## EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...

---

French settlers were more interested in trapping and trading furs than in farming or establishing large settlements.

**England** The English based their claim to North America on John Cabot's 1497 voyage. After several attempts, the English established their first permanent colony at Jamestown in Virginia.

**The Netherlands** The Dutch established a foothold in North America by founding the colony of New Netherland. The English, however, drove the Dutch out and renamed the colony New York.

**Effects on American Indians** For American Indians, the arrival of Europeans brought many changes, including new technology and new ideas. But they also brought deadly diseases that killed great numbers of the first Americans.



Investigating Primary Sources

Was Christopher Columbus a Hero?

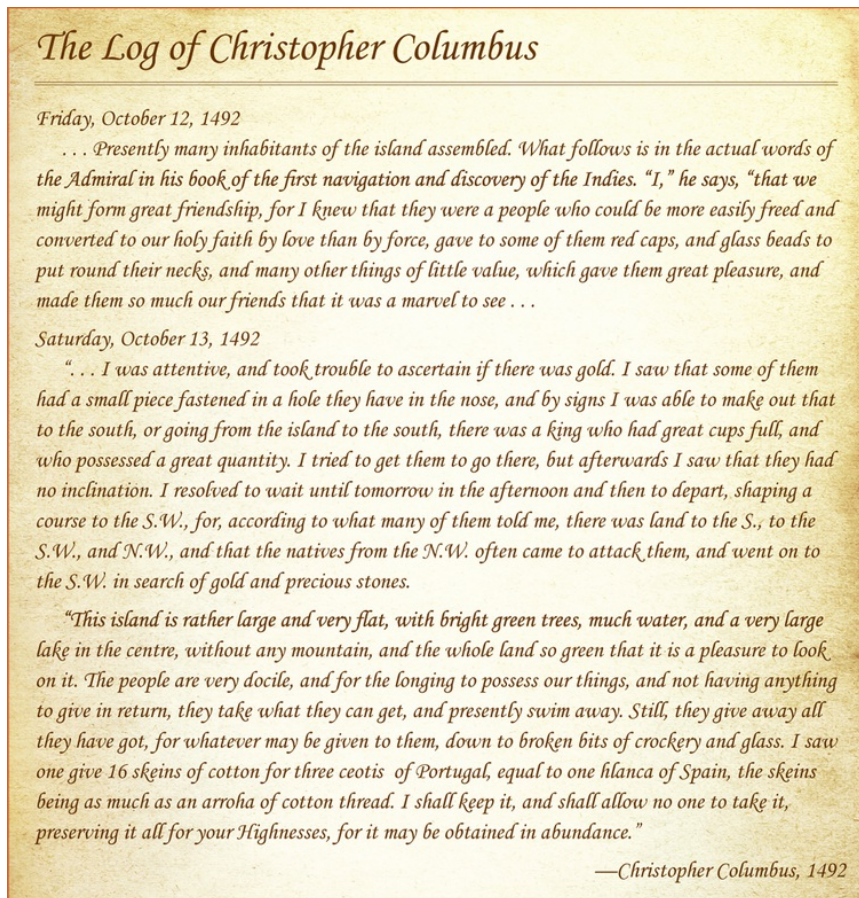
**Was Christopher Columbus a brave hero for introducing the Americas to Europe? Or was he a greedy conqueror responsible for the deaths of millions of American Indians? Or was he something in between? You will analyze two primary sources that can help you evaluate Columbus's effect on the Americas.**

At daybreak on October 12, 1492, on a small Caribbean island, a group of Taino people observed from a distance as ships landed on their beach. Christopher Columbus and his crew came ashore and planted Spain's flags in the sand. What did the Taino think when they saw these foreign-looking strangers? We will never know. The Taino had no

written language, so their reaction has been lost to history.

Most of what we know about the consequences of Columbus's voyages is based on a few primary sources from the time. One of these sources is Columbus's ship's log, or diary of his travels, which he wrote on his first voyage from Spain to the Americas. He wrote it in Spanish in 1492, and it was translated into different languages for people in other countries to read.

The log explains Columbus's purpose for making the voyage, which was to find a new route to the East Indies that would give Spain access to the spice trade with Asia. Along the way, he also hoped to discover gold and other riches, claim land for Spain, and spread the Catholic religion.



The following primary source was written by Columbus himself. As you read, ask these questions: How does Columbus depict himself in his writing? How does he depict the Taino? What good does he expect to come from his voyage?

After reading the log, consider the following questions: By writing about

## EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...

---

this important journey in a diary, what do you suppose Columbus wanted to accomplish? For whom is Columbus writing this diary? What does this document say about Columbus's treatment of and opinions about American Indians? How do you think this source supports the claim that Columbus was a historic hero? What kind of primary source might give evidence that contradicts this image of Columbus as a hero?

### **Another Viewpoint from Bartolomé de Las Casas**

If you do a lot of research, you will find that primary sources that cover the same historical event sometimes reveal conflicting information. The effects of Christopher Columbus's first voyage is the subject of another primary source, a book called *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account*, by Bartolomé de Las Casas. However, this source presents a much darker viewpoint.

After hearing reports about Columbus's discovery, Las Casas joined other colonists who planned to settle in the Indies. He received land in the Caribbean where American Indian inhabitants lived. In this land, he began teaching the American Indians about Christian principles to convert their faith, but he observed circumstances there that were too disturbing to ignore.

Las Casas witnessed how life had changed for the American Indians, for disease, overwork, and violence were destroying them. He eventually returned to Spain in 1515 and urged the government to demand better treatment of the natives. Despite his attempts, American Indians continued to face violence and mistreatment from the Spanish colonists.

Many years after visiting the Indies, Las Casas wrote *The Devastation of the Indies* in 1542. It was important to him to present to Spain's king what he claimed was the accurate description of the effects of Columbus's legacy. Las Casas admired Columbus in many ways and did not blame him for all the harm endured by the Indians. However, he recognized that Columbus had assisted in setting these events in motion.

Las Casas accused the colonists of terrible behavior and explained the reason behind the Spaniards' actions as their "greed and ambition, the greatest ever seen in the world." Las Casas' religious beliefs played a heavy role in his narrative. He even warned the king that, in part due to the colonists' actions against the American Indians, Spain would face punishment from God.

Read these excerpts from Las Casas' introduction to *The Devastation of the Indies*. How does his portrayal of the American Indians in the first paragraph contrast with his portrayal of the Spanish colonists? What metaphors does he use to describe the colonists? And how do these metaphors support his argument?

### *The Devastation of the Indies: A Brief Account*

*God made all the peoples of this area, many and varied as they are, as open and as innocent as can be imagined. The simplest people in the world—unassuming, long-suffering, unassertive, and submissive—they are without malice or guile, and are utterly faithful and obedient both to their own native lords and to the Spaniards in whose service they now find themselves. Never quarrelsome or belligerent or boisterous, they harbour no grudges and do not seek to settle old scores; indeed, the notions of revenge, rancour, and hatred are quite foreign to them . . .*

*It was upon these gentle lambs, imbued by the Creator with all the qualities we have mentioned, that from the very first day they clapped eyes on them the Spanish fell like ravening wolves upon the fold, or like tigers and savage lions who have not eaten meat for days. The pattern established at the outset has remained unchanged to this day, and the Spaniards still do nothing save tear the natives to shreds, murder them and inflict upon them untold misery, suffering and distress, tormenting, harrying and persecuting them mercilessly. We shall in due course describe some of the many ingenious methods of torture they have invented and refined for this purpose, but one can get some idea of the effectiveness of their methods from the figures alone. When the Spanish first journeyed there, the indigenous population of the island of Hispaniola stood at some three million; today only two hundred survive . . .*

—Bartolomé de Las Casas, 1542

Las Casas's efforts eventually met with success when the king of Spain issued the New Laws in 1542. During the time, some Spanish people received pieces of land that included the American Indians who inhabited it. The New Laws granted more rights to these American Indians and gave restrictions to land owners. However, the indigenous people continued to experience repression and suffering.

**Now you have read two primary sources about the same event—the Spanish arrival in the Americas. What positive and negative effects did it have for the Americas? You can use both primary sources to examine Columbus's contribution and answer this question: Was Columbus a hero? As you use each source to support your claim, keep in mind: Who wrote the account, and why?**

# EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...



## Spanish Exploration and Settlement in Florida

The world of Florida's Native Americans changed when Spanish explorers arrived. In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed from Spain. Spain is a country that lies across the Atlantic Ocean from Florida. Columbus landed on an island to the south and west of Florida. Soon the Spanish had taken over the island and many others in the area. The native people who lived there were pushed aside. The Spanish were ruthless in their search for gold and glory for their God and country.



Juan Ponce de León (wahn PAHN-suh day lee-OHN) was one of these Spanish explorers. He found gold in the islands. But he dreamed of greater treasure. Ponce de León was fascinated by a tale he heard from some native islanders. They spoke of a fountain whose waters made old people young again. In search of this "fountain of youth," Ponce de León in 1513 became the first Spaniard to set foot in Florida. Ponce de León gave Florida its name. It comes from the Spanish word for flowers.

A man named Juan Garrido (wahn gah-REE-doh) may have joined Ponce de León on his journey. Born in Africa, Garrido would have been the

## EUROPEAN EXPLORATION...

---

first person from that land to reach Florida.

Ponce de León, Garrido, and the crew first landed on Florida's northeast coast. Next, they sailed south through the Florida Keys. The explorers then headed north along Florida's west coast. They landed and met members of the Calusa tribe. For unknown reasons, this meeting was a tense one. The Spanish soon left Florida.

Ponce de León returned in 1521. This time, he came with 200 people, hoping to build a settlement in Florida. Again, the Spanish fought with the Calusa. Again, the Spanish fled.

The Spanish returned in 1528. In that year, Panfilo de Narváez (pahn-fee-loh de nahr-VY-ez) arrived near Tampa Bay with a force of 400 men. He set out to explore the land. After many battles with Native Americans, Narváez and his group tried to escape Florida on rafts. Narváez and most of his crew died at sea. Only four men lived to tell of their ordeal.



About ten years later, the Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto (her-NAN-



doh day SOH-toh) traveled through Florida. De Soto landed near Tampa Bay in 1539. He and his troops marched northward. They fought many terrible battles with Native Americans as they went. In time, de Soto moved into what is now the state of Georgia. He went on to explore much of what is now the southeastern United States.

In 1559, Tristan de Luna (trihs-than de LOO-nuh) helped start a Spanish settlement in Florida. The plan was to settle near what is now the city of Pensacola. A hurricane sank many of de Luna's ships. This disaster helped doom the settlement.

## **Spanish Settlement in Florida**

The first Spanish explorers found death and disaster in Florida. In other parts of the Americas, however, Spain had great success. Its soldiers conquered great Native American empires. Its ships sailed to Spain with tons of gold and silver.

Spain did not want the French in Florida. In 1565, Spain sent Pedro Menéndez de Avilés (PAY-droh muh-NEN-dez day ah-vuh-LACE) and 2,000 soldiers to destroy Fort Caroline. Then, Menéndez de Avilés started a new Spanish settlement nearby. He called it St. Augustine. He hoped the settlement would keep the French away from Florida. Unlike early Spanish efforts in Florida, St. Augustine was a success. The Spanish worked hard to keep the settlement going. Today, it is the oldest surviving European settlement in the United States.

Next, the Spanish set out to control more of Florida. They made Native Americans work as laborers. The Spanish also converted some Native Americans to the Christian faith. The Spanish set up missions for this purpose.

A mission was like a Spanish village. It had a church, where priests taught Native Americans the Catholic religion. It had farms, where Native Americans grew crops. It had workshops, where they learned skills such as woodworking. A mission raised its own food. It made all the things people needed to live the Spanish way of life.

Spain's rivals in Europe saw this success. They also wanted to find wealth in the Americas. One of these rivals was the country of France. In 1564, 200 French people sailed to the northeast coast of Florida. They started a settlement called Fort Caroline.



The Spanish set up many missions in Florida. Most were in the northern area. Many Timicua and Apalachee people accepted mission life. San Luis Talimali is an example of a mission in Apalachee territory. A mission among the Calusas, however, did not succeed. The Calusa were unwilling to give up their way of life.

Why did some Native Americans go to the missions? Some hoped the Spanish would protect them from Native American enemy tribes. Others may have come to get food and other gifts. Some may have wanted to learn about Christianity.

Not all Native Americans accepted the missions. There were some violent uprisings against them. A bigger problem was disease. Native Americans were not able to fight off many European illnesses. By the thousands, they got sick. Many died. Over time, many Native American groups in Florida died out.

### **Competition for Florida**

Spain had forced the French out of Florida in 1565. But Spain's rivals did

not give up. These rivals included not only France, but England, too. France and England kept up their efforts to get a share of Spain's American riches. Often, the competition between these countries took place in Florida.

In 1567, two years after the defeat of Fort Caroline, a French soldier named Dominique de Gourgues (daw-men-EEK duh GAWRJ) led three ships back to Florida. He wanted revenge against the Spanish. De Gourgues led an attack on Spanish outposts near St. Augustine. He and his troops killed a number of Spanish people. Then they left.

In the late 1500s, England sent Sir Francis Drake across the Atlantic Ocean. Drake raided many Spanish settlements and stole Spanish treasure. Then, in 1586, Drake set his sights on Florida. He attacked St. Augustine. Drake's attack did much damage. But it failed to destroy St. Augustine.

In the early 1600s, England and France started their own colonies in North America. Soon, England held much of the land north of Florida. The English colonies lined the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. France also controlled a huge area. French claims reached down to the Gulf of Mexico.



England—now part of Great Britain—fought many battles and wars with Spain. Some battles took place in Florida. For example, the British attacked St. Augustine and other settlements in the early 1700s. They attacked again in 1740. Yet Florida remained under Spanish control.

In 1763, Spain and Great Britain signed a treaty to end a larger war fought in many places. In the treaty, Spain gave Florida to the British. In 1783, the British gave Florida back to the Spanish. This was also the result of a war fought far from Florida.

The French attacked and took over Pensacola in 1719. But they soon gave the city back to the Spanish. The French, however, kept control of the land west of Pensacola. This land came to be known as West Florida. The British gained West Florida in 1763. They gave it back to Spain in 1783.

### **The Iroquois Confederacy**

The Iroquois Confederacy was an alliance of five Indian tribes who lived in the northern part of New Netherland. The five American Indian

nations were the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca. The Tuscarora later joined in 1772. The five tribes united as a way to protect their tribes and land from the invasion of white settlers. This led them to create a council of village chiefs where each tribe had a vote on decisions. This form of pseudo-government allowed the Confederacy to be extremely effective and organized.

The Iroquois Confederacy came into conflict with the French. The French were allies with the Hurons, who were enemies of the Confederacy, and had been supplying them with guns in exchange for fur. This led the Iroquois Confederacy to become trading partners with Dutch traders. The Dutch supplied the Confederacy with guns and weapons in exchange for pelts and furs. This allowed them to fight back against the Hurons.

However, during the American Revolution, divisions began to appear in the Confederacy. The Oneida and the Tuscarora supported the American cause, while the remained of the tribes in the Confederacy supported the British. The Americans responded by destroying large portions of Iroquois land in 1779. This led the Iroquois Confederacy to agree to the Second Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1784. This treaty was an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the United States to not disturb the others in reserved land. It also defined the boundaries of the first American Indian reservation in the United States in which the tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy would reside. The treaty also claimed portions of American Indian land, as well as recognized each of the six Indian nations as sovereign.