

The Atlantic World, 1492–1600
Concepcion Saenz-Cambra (2012)

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The Atlantic World, 1492–1600

Introduction

The year 1492 marked the beginning of a new era—lasting almost 500 years—in which Europe shaped the modern world. It was at this time that the extraordinary seafaring activity of the European nations led to high advancement in almost every department of nautical science. The voyages of Bartolomeu Dias, Christopher Columbus, and Vasco da Gama astonished the world and tempted many European nations out of their medieval isolation. It was then, with the simultaneous discoveries in the East and the West, that exploration and colonization became patriotic duties. European nations competed to take the lead in maritime enterprise and entered the field as adversaries for geographical honors. The lure of the unknown, the thirst for knowledge, and the vision of empire gave birth to the greatest period of European exploration. It was at this time that Columbus's epoch-making landfall in America opened the Atlantic Ocean to navigation. In a sense, it *created* what is now called the "Atlantic World," which directly connected Europe, Africa, and the Americas; indirectly, it even connected the New World and the Old World, including Asia. This critical encounter reshaped the map of the world and transformed the lives of people in both hemispheres.

The purpose of this reading is to explore overarching political, economic, and social themes, such as: the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries' conceptualization of the "New World"; the history of the early European exploration and colonization of America, with particular emphasis on the lands that form the present-day United States; and the effect of New World societies on the native peoples of these newfound lands. The social, political, and economic integration of the Atlantic World in this period, 1492–1600, created the bases for the New World's fledgling settlements to evolve in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into profitable European colonies with complex societies and economies.

The First Atlantic Encounters

A popular poem tells us that in the year "fourteen-hundred and ninety-two Columbus sailed the ocean blue ... October 12 their dream came true, You never saw a happier crew! 'Indians! Indians!' Columbus cried; His heart was filled with joyful pride." It was in that single instant—Columbus's landfall on October 12, 1492—when two very different kinds of civilization came face to face in a manner that can never again be experienced. The European exploration and colonization of the Americas affected millions of people on several continents in both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, and altered the map of the world. The opening of the Atlantic revolutionized the world and signaled the beginning of the modern era.

In order to fully understand the historical context of Christopher Columbus's "Enterprise of the Indies" and its impact on the world, a brief discussion of the controversial term "discovery" is needed. In the last decade, historians have

conventionally adopted the term “encounter” to refer to the European arrival to the New World. As an alternative to “discovery,” “encounter” offers a more transcultural view, implying a greater reciprocity in the cultures’ exposure to each other. In this chapter, we will use both “discovery” and “encounter,” since Europeans did “discover” what was a “New World” for them, full of unknown “otherness.” At the same time, we will use the term “encounter” when considering non-European perspectives.

Discovery, Reconnaissance, and Expansion

The late fifteenth century was a time of great political, military, and economic activity. The improvements that took place in maritime technology, particularly the more accurate measurement of time and the discovery of the polarity of the magnet, greatly advanced the art of navigation. Mariners were no longer restricted to coastal navigation—they could now travel further afield by employing long-distance sea navigation in the search for new trade routes to substitute the very profitable, but Arab controlled, inland silk and spice roads. For European commercial interests, the trade in spices was of particular importance. Historians compare spices at this time to oil in the twentieth- and twenty-first century world economy. Spices such as salt, cinnamon, peppercorn, cloves, nutmeg, and ginger were used as seasoning, food preservatives, medicine, perfumes, and even money. At this time, Arab traders also controlled the routes to India that passed through the Mediterranean, and consequently the prices of these sought-after herbs. Thus, if European nations wanted to compete for a corner of the spice market they needed to find new trade routes.

The first European country to undertake this challenge was Portugal. Fifteenth-century Portugal became a maritime power, particularly thanks to Prince Henry the Navigator, who sponsored explorations of coastal Africa in hopes of finding a trade route to the East Indies. Throughout the century, Portugal conquered several cities in northern Africa, including Ceuta, discovered the islands of Madeira and the Azores in the Atlantic, and established several trading posts on the west coast of Africa. When, in 1488, Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias (ca. 1451–1500) sailed around the southern tip of Africa to reach Asia, Portugal’s ambition to become the dominant mercantile power in Europe was finally at hand.

Portugal’s only neighbor, Spain, an outpost of the European continent, would command the great theatre of future discovery. The unification of the crowns of Castile and Aragon, and the 1492 completion of the reconquest of Spain after eight centuries of Muslim control of the Iberian Peninsula, coincided with royal efforts to wrest maritime power back from overweening Portugal. The answer came by the hands of a sailor named Christopher Columbus, who believed that it was possible to reach the East by sailing west, an idea that challenged the contemporary belief (among the uneducated) in the flat earth. In fact, Columbus had affirmed that “between the edge of Spain and the beginning of India, the sea is short and can be crossed in a matter of days.” Being an avid reader, Columbus owned a copy of Greek cartographer and mathematician Marinus of Tyre’s (ca. 70–130 AD) book *Ymago mundi*, in which he had annotated: “The eastern extremity of the habitable earth and the western extremity of the habitable earth are near to each other. The part that separates them is a small sea.”

But it was the book *The Travels of Marco Polo* that gave him the idea that the lands of the East stretched far around the back of the globe, and thus that the East could be reached by sailing west from Iberia. Columbus was turned down by various European monarchs, but in 1492, the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain finally decided to fund his expedition to find a western trade route to the “Indies” that would cross the Atlantic Ocean. On October 12, 1492, after seventy grueling days at sea, Christopher Columbus sighted land, marking the seminal moment in the “opening” of the Atlantic Ocean, and one of the most momentous events in the history of the world.

Few navigators have impressed themselves as deeply upon history as Christopher Columbus. His “unknown territories” were, in a very real sense, Columbus’s discovery. His characteristic virtues and defects are writ large across history; however, fate deprived him of having the new territories he had found named after him. In fact, three terms have been used since the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries to refer to the Western Hemisphere: the “Indies,” the “New World,” and “America.”

When Columbus landed on the island called Guanahani in 1492, which he promptly renamed “San Salvador,” he mistakenly declared he had reached the “East Indies” and referred to the native inhabitants as “Indians.” Though he was wrong, throughout his lifetime Columbus believed that he had discovered the “Indies,” or the territory between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. The term “Indies” is still today associated with the Americas—for example, the Caribbean is commonly referred to as the “West Indies.”

The term “New World” was coined by Italian historian Pietro Martire d’Anghiera (1457–1526)—known by the English name Peter Martyr of Angleria—when he used it (*Novus Orbis*, in Latin) to refer to the new lands found by Christopher Columbus, as opposed to the “Old World,” consisting of Europe, Asia, and Africa. He continued using this term for years, including in his main work, *De Orbe Novo Decades* (“Decades of the New World”), published in 1511, in which he described the Spanish explorations of the Indies. In 1520, Pietro was appointed as chronicler for the Council of the Indies, thus becoming the first historian of America. As a chronicler, he performed invaluable work of notable accuracy. Pietro’s works quickly became the main references for early terminology when referring to the newly discovered territories. For example, in 1524, Italian explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano, who had been commissioned by the king of France to find a passage to the Pacific Ocean, used the term “New World” when recording his voyage across the Atlantic.

A bit earlier, in 1507, the term “America” was coined by German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller (ca. 1470–1520) when he published the first world map—titled *Universalis Cosmographia* (Universal Cosmography)—depicting the new lands as two continents. On this map, Waldseemüller designated the southern landmass “America” in honor of Florentine navigator Amerigo Vespucci, whose claim to fame is to have demonstrated that the newly found continent was not Asia, but a previously unknown fourth continent. The map was published with a book titled *Cosmographiae Introductio* (Introduction to Cosmography) in which Waldseemüller justified his choice:

Now truly these parts [Europe, Africa, Asia] have been more widely explored, and another, fourth, part has been discovered by Americus Vesputius (as will appear in what follows), and I do not see why anyone should rightly forbid naming it Amerige—land of Americus, as it were, after its discoverer Americus, a man of acute genius—or America, since both Europe and Asia have received their names from women. Its position and the manners and customs of its people may clearly be learned from the twice-two voyages of Americus that follow.

The *Universalis Cosmographia* became the most circulated map of the mid-sixteenth century, with forty editions, and even though Waldseemüller replaced the term “America” on his later maps with “the Land Unknown,” largely in response to complaints from the Spanish Crown, the term “America” prevailed. It soon became official when Flemish cartographer Gerardus Mercator (1512–1594) called the Western Hemisphere “America,” and encouraged his fellow cartographer Abraham Ortelius (1527–1598) to use the term in his atlas *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (1570) to denominate his map of North America—*Americae sive Novi Orbis*. In fact, this collection of maps by Ortelius is considered not only the most influential cartographic work of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but the first modern atlas in history. Soon it had been translated into seven languages, forty-two editions had been published, and the term “America” was here to stay.

Early Spanish and Portuguese Exploration of North America

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal became the leading pioneers in modern exploration of the world. For centuries, these two Atlantic nations had relied on galleys for their sea voyages; however, galleys had been designed for the Mediterranean Sea, not the rough waters of the Atlantic Ocean, which had remained largely unexplored. In the fifteenth century, Portuguese sailors developed a new ship design by merging a more stable Nordic type of vessel (the cog) with sails used in the Islamic world (triangular lateen sails), which gave them the ability to sail to windward. These new ships, known as *caravels*, allowed the Portuguese to explore and exploit the oceans more effectively. Caravels helped Portugal emerge as a leader in the race to find a sea route to the rich spice trade of the Indies, and to explore the west coast of Africa. After 1488, when Bartolomeu Dias found that it was possible to sail around the southern tip of Africa to reach Asia, every European nation began building caravels. Even Columbus, who had travelled to Africa with Portuguese merchants in their caravels, decided to use two caravels (and one carrack) for his voyage of discovery.

The trade with Asia was a prize worth competing for, and these two powers' rivalry for control of the Atlantic and the New World lasted for decades. In 1493, after Columbus's return from his first voyage, Spain and Portugal launched competing claims for the lands of the Atlantic. Acting as arbiter, Pope Alexander VI issued a bull that divided these newly discovered territories between Spain and Portugal. This decree established a north-south line of demarcation, 100 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands, by which all undiscovered non-Christian lands to the west of the line belonged to Spain, and those to the east to Portugal. In the spring of 1494, this arrangement was

renegotiated by representatives of both kingdoms, which resulted in the Treaty of Tordesillas. This time, the divisional line was set at 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands, giving Brazil to Portugal and the rest to Spain. Later on, by the Treaty of Zaragoza (1529), the demarcation line was extended through both poles and encompassed the entire world. Subsequently, Spain claimed most of North America, while parts of the eastern Atlantic coast fell under the Portuguese sphere of influence by virtue of the Treaties of Tordesillas and Zaragoza. However, the demarcation line quickly became obsolete, mostly because the other competing powers in Europe, particularly England and France, ignored it.

Spain and Portugal had divided the world into two spheres of influence and held a monopoly on exploration, settlement, and trade in the Caribbean and Latin America. However, their presence in North America, even though early, was not as decisive. Spanish and Portuguese fishermen and whalers had been active in exploring and exploiting the cod fisheries of the North Atlantic since the end of the fifteenth century. They may have even explored the mainland of North America before English navigator John Cabot in 1497, but they did not settle; they visited these territories as part of their yearly campaigns. They left no written records, nor did they have rights of discovery, but they contributed greatly to the exploration of the New World, as many of them turned explorers themselves or trained and guided some of the greatest explorers in history.

The first state-sponsored explorer of the northeast coast of North America was Portuguese navigator João Fernandes Lavrador. In 1498, King Manuel I of Portugal granted him a patent to explore and chart the northern regions of the New World. This was not Fernandes's first voyage to the New World; he had become involved with expeditions into the Atlantic in the second half of the 1490s, when he joined several English merchants from the port of Bristol in pursuit of fishing grounds and trading routes. This time, under royal sponsorship, Fernandes was set to search for and discover islands in the Portuguese half of the New World. Thus, Fernandes, accompanied by fellow Portuguese explorer Pêro de Barcelos, first sighted Greenland in 1498, and named it "Terra do Lavrador." It was only after English explorer Martin Frobisher tried to name this land "West England" that "Greenland" (from the Old Norse) started to be used to refer to this land. The name "Lavrador," now spelled "Labrador," was later assigned to the land on the other side of Davis Strait. Nevertheless, as promised by the Portuguese monarch, Fernandes was granted title for the lands he had encountered, and is therefore considered the first European landowner in North America.

On his way back to Portugal, Fernandes learned that the Portuguese monarch had granted letters of patent to navigator Gaspar Corte-Real to search for a northwest passage to Asia. Fernandes and his crew decided to go first to the English port of Bristol, where he had numerous acquaintances from previous voyages, in the belief that he could convince King Henry VII to sponsor another exploration voyage to North America. Fernandes received this patent in 1501, set sail just a few months later, and subsequently died on the voyage. Because of King Henry VII's ever increasing interest in the New World and a possible northwest passage to Asia, Spain and Portugal became increasingly concerned by English intrusions into what they considered their territories, and planned to assert their claims on the North Atlantic coast of America.

As we have seen, King Manuel I of Portugal had commissioned Gaspar and Miguel Corte-Real to undertake a voyage of exploration to Greenland. Upon arrival, the brothers decided to return to Portugal, probably due to the harsh conditions. Convinced that what they had reached on this first voyage was Asia, they set out on a second voyage in 1501. This time, they reached Labrador and Newfoundland. Gaspar then sent his brother and two ships back to Portugal before continuing southward. That was the last that was heard of Gaspar Corte-Real. His brother Miguel attempted to find him in 1502, but he too never returned. Meanwhile, in Spain, King Ferdinand II hurried to place Juan de Dornelos in command of an expedition to the northern coast of North America. A year later, the Spanish monarch ordered Alonso de Ojeda to make the same journey. Both attempts were aborted and the expeditions never set sail, as the attention and strength of Spain was drawn away from the New World for the Italian War of 1499 to 1504, a conflict of dynastic disputes between the Duchy of Milan and the Kingdom of Naples. Still, it was clear that Spain and Portugal were jealous of any third nation interfering in America, and the chance of another European power finding western passage to Asia was a risk they were not willing to take.

Portugal's hunger for Eastern riches would lead first to a route to India by Vasco da Gama in 1498, and in 1500 to the discovery of Brazil by Pedro Álvares Cabral. For the following decades, Portugal concentrated on trading with Asia and exploring and colonizing the eastern coast of South America. Surprisingly, while Portugal did not officially send any further voyages of exploration to the northern coast of North America, contemporaries believed this territory to be within the Portuguese sphere of influence. On several early maps, such as the *Cantino planisphere* of 1502, this territory was labeled "Terra del Rey de Portuguall," while other maps, such as the *Kunstmann III* chart (ca. 1506), showed this territory as "Terra de Cortte Riall," in reference to the Corte-Real brothers.

It was not until 1511 that the coast of North America would draw renewed interest. For over a decade, Portuguese sailors had been able to reach Asia by sailing eastward from Europe, holding dominion over rich commerce in the Indian Ocean and South Atlantic, while England had been increasingly present on the North American continent in a quest to find a northwest passage to Asia. But in 1510–11, Spain would finally find some breathing space. Tudor England was being afflicted by the "great plague," while Portugal was too busy securing its eastward route to Asia by capturing Goa in southwest India in 1510, and the vibrant trading port of Malacca, in today's Malaysia, in 1511. Spain still dreamed of establishing trade relations in Asia by finding a western passage, thus bypassing the Portuguese monopoly on the spice trade. Seizing the moment, in 1511, Queen Joanna of Aragon sent Juan de Agramonte on an expedition to explore Newfoundland and claim it as part of the sphere of Spanish influence. Agramonte's instructions were to make a settlement there in "Tierra Nueva" (New Land), but to avoid entering Portuguese territory. These orders were illustrative of the dispute between Spain and Portugal over control of these lands, and their disregard for England's claims to this territory. Historians agree that Agramonte's expedition was intended to make a Spanish settlement somewhere along the coast of the Gulf of Maine. Some have speculated that the expedition never took place; however, taking into consideration the historical records, which chronicle significant preparations for the

voyage, it is most likely that Agramonte's fleet did set sail for North America, but perished somewhere along the voyage and never returned to Spain.

Shortly thereafter, in 1513, explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Panama and waded into the Pacific to claim it for the Spanish king. However, it was Hernán Cortés's conquest of Mexico that attracted all Spanish efforts at this time. It was with the appointment of Charles I of Spain as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire that Spain's expansionist policy in the Americas was reshaped. Led by reports from the explorer Ponce de Leon—who had visited Florida—suggesting that there could be a passage from the Gulf of Mexico to “the Spice Islands,” Emperor Charles finally became interested in financing new expeditions to North America. In early 1519, mariner Alonso Álvarez de Pineda set sail, first northward along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, and then eastward. By the summer of 1519, de Pineda had visited western Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, becoming the first European to explore these areas. Traditionally, historians believed that he had been the first European to visit the mouth of the Mississippi River; however, recent research indicates that he actually reached Mobile Bay and the Alabama River. Nevertheless, a harsh winter put an end to his journey, forcing him to return to Mexico. Pineda would visit North America once again that same year, at the request of Hernán Cortés himself. Retracing his previous voyage, this time he reached the Rio Grande, which he named “Las Palmas” (The Palms). Foul weather and sickness forced de Pineda to set sail for Jamaica. This expedition put a momentary end to Spanish incursions into the territories north of the Gulf of Mexico. It was clear now that Florida was a peninsula, not an island, which dismissed the possibility of a sea passage to the East through the Gulf. However, the Spanish monarch still believed that there was a sea-lane from North America to Asia.

A few years later, Esteban Gómez, a Portuguese captain who had sailed with Magellan on this first circumnavigation voyage, was chosen to command another expedition along the North American coast. Gómez departed from the port of Corunna in Northern Spain in September 1524 with one caravel, *La Anunciada*, and twenty-nine men. They first sighted land in February 1525 at Cape Breton, in today's Nova Scotia, but soon Gómez gave orders to sail south. They sailed along the Maine coast and entered present-day New York Harbor, which he named the “San Antonio River.” They eventually reached Florida in August 1525, and thence returned to Spain. As a result of his expedition, the majority of the eastern coast of North America was claimed under the Spanish sphere of influence. Particularly illustrative is Diogo Ribeiro's world map of 1527, in which Portuguese discoveries in the North Atlantic are prominently displayed by place names—“Tierra de Labrador” and “Tierra de los Bacallaos” for Labrador and Newfoundland respectively—and Spanish claims over the rest of the eastern coast of North America are represented by naming these shores “Tierra de Estevan Gomez.” Moreover, influenced by Gómez's voyage, the map showed, for the first time in history, the North American coast as continuous land.

Finally, Spain was ready to assert its influence over the entire continent of North America. In 1526, Spanish explorer Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón (ca. 1475–1526) established the short-lived San Miguel de Guadalupe colony in what is now South Carolina—the first European attempt at a settlement in the present-day continental United States. Even though this colony only lasted three months, having been abandoned in 1527 due to foul weather, Ayllón's account of the region inspired a

number of subsequent attempts by the Spanish government to colonize the southeastern United States. In 1527, King Charles I commissioned a royal expedition that was to land in Florida, explore North America's Atlantic coast, and claim as much territory as possible for Spain. Letters of patent were granted to Pánfilo de Narváez, a soldier with twenty years of experience in the New World, who had participated in the Spanish conquest in Jamaica. Narváez and his 600-man crew, which included famous explorer Cabeza de Vaca, arrived at Tampa Bay in Florida on April 15, 1528. Lured by the natives' stories of gold, they decided to sail northward to Apalachee Bay in northern Florida, and later westward to the mouth of the Mississippi River. Foul weather and sickness decreased their numbers exponentially from six hundred to only forty by the time they reached Galveston Island. The list of deceased included De Narváez. The number of survivors dwindled rapidly during the following months, to the point when only four men survived: Cabeza de Vaca, Andrés Dorantes de Carranza, Alonso del Castillo Maldonado, and an enslaved Moroccan Berber named Estevanico. These four men were starving, wounded, sick, and lost, but in their search for their way back to Mexico, they travelled far inland, visiting Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Finally, they arrived at Mexico City in 1537. A few weeks later, they sailed from Veracruz back to Spain, putting an end to an expedition that would be remembered mostly for the marauding behavior of its members.

Upon his return to Spain, Cabeza de Vaca wrote a detailed account of his experiences in the New World, which was published in 1542. This account, titled *La Relación (The Report)*, made numerous allusions to fabulous treasures, including gold, copper, and other metals, as well as emeralds, even though he probably meant turquoises. Cabeza de Vaca's stories of riches gave rise to dreams of glory and wealth. Sailors and noblemen from all over Spain flocked to get their share by enrolling in two new expeditions: one to the southeastern coast of the modern-day United States, then inland, under the command of explorer Hernando de Soto, and another to the southwestern coast under the command of conquistador Francisco Vázquez de Coronado. These stories sparked a rush, and for the first time, men were being turned away from expeditions.

One such treasure-hunting expedition was that of Hernando De Soto, which carried six hundred men and landed in Tampa Bay in May of 1539. For over three years, De Soto and his men explored the territories of the present states of Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Texas. It was the lure of gold and other riches—rather than geographical exploration—that had attracted these men to the expedition, so no settlements were built. They rushed across the mainland and reached the Mississippi River on May 8, 1541. After twelve months wandering around the Mississippi, De Soto died in 1542 on the banks of the river, in either Arkansas or Louisiana. The surviving men, starving, wounded, and sick, escaped downstream to the gulf, and finally reached Mexico.

Meanwhile, in March of 1539, influenced by Cabeza de Vaca's tales of wealth and riches, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, then governor of the province of Nueva Galicia in northwestern Mexico, decided to send a small expedition north to southeastern Arizona. On their return to Mexico, the members of this expedition reported having learned from the Zuni Indians of a city called Cíbola, which stood on a

hill made of solid gold. The lure of gold helped Coronado assemble a much larger expedition, for which he recruited 335 soldiers, over 1000 natives, and several African slaves. On February 23, 1540, Coronado left for the “golden city” of Cíbola. After dividing his expedition into small groups, he continued toward Zuni territory in southern Arizona. Meanwhile, he decided to send a scouting expedition under the command of Pedro de Tovar to Hopi territory. It came back just a few weeks later with no news of gold or any other riches. Coronado sent a second scouting expedition, this time under García López de Cárdenas, to Hopi territory. According to Pedro de Sotomayor, the chronicler of the expedition, after twenty days of wandering, they sighted the banks of the river “Tizon” (the Colorado), from the top of a great gorge. They had become the first Europeans to lay eyes on the Grand Canyon. As it turned out, both Zuni and Hopi were materially poor. Spurred on by rumors of gold, Coronado and his men spent the following years travelling through parts of New Mexico, the Texas Panhandle, and Kansas. On their wanderings, they encountered numerous native groups, including the Querechos, Teyas, and Quivira, all of whom were simple people with no material wealth. Finally, in 1542, Coronado decided to abandon the expedition and return to Nueva Galicia.

Spain was determined to bring southern North America into her sphere of influence. In 1542, João Rodrigues Cabrilho, a Portuguese explorer on the Spanish payroll, set out from Navidad on the west coast of Mexico, with orders to sail north. In September, Cabrilho reached San Diego Bay, becoming the first European to explore the coast of the present state of California. He continued north along the California coast, but died in January 1543 near Santa Barbara from an infection resulting from a broken arm. His chief-navigator, Bartolomé Ferrelo, continued north, reaching the coast of Oregon in March. At this point, with the cold winter upon them, Ferrelo decided to return to the port of Navidad. On the eastern coast, two decades would elapse before Spain was able to establish a colony in Saint Augustine, Florida, the first permanent European settlement in North America. Founded in 1565 by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, it has remained continuously inhabited for centuries.

In the second half of the sixteenth century, Spain turned its attention to colonizing the coasts of Florida, where they would maintain their supremacy for two centuries. From 1580 to 1640, Spain would inherit the right to reign over Portugal, after the Portuguese succession crisis. As a result, Spain's power was greater than ever before. King Philip II ruled “the Empire on which the sun never set.” In fact, he commenced settlements in the Philippines, which were named after him, and established the first transpacific trade route between America and Asia. But the Spanish monarch had no interest in either exploring or colonizing North America, as can be seen by the scant attention attracted by Antonio de Espejo’s expedition into New Mexico and Arizona in 1582–1583. In fact, rather than sponsoring more expeditions, Philip, a devoted Catholic, used most of the wealth from his vast empire to finance the papacy in its fight against the Protestant Reformation. By the end of the century, as the explorations were coming to an end and money was becoming scarcer, other countries began to openly challenge the Treaty of Tordesilas and the Spanish monopoly, which began to lapse and lose its former power.

Early French Exploration of North America

During the late fifteenth century and the entire sixteenth century, France failed to build any settlements in America; however, it did actively participate in the exploration of the newly discovered continent. At this time, France was occupied with momentous challenges at home: first with the Italian Wars—also referred to as the Habsburg-Valois Wars (1494–1559)—between France and the powerful Holy Roman Empire; and later with the French Wars of Religion (1562–98), a grim civil war between the Catholic League and the Huguenots caused by the rise of Protestantism in Europe. While New Spain and New Portugal flourished in this period, “New France” was yet to rise.

Very early on, however, France marked out its own sphere of influence in North America. By the end of the fifteenth century, Bretons, Normans, and Basques were fishing regularly on the cod banks of Newfoundland, and by the first decade of the sixteenth century, they had created a well-established commercial enterprise around the island of Cape Breton, which owes its name to these fishermen. Even though all these commercial enterprises were private concerns, they made an enormous impact on the knowledge and exploration of the New World. In 1509, Thomas Aubert, a navigator from Dieppe, visited Newfoundland on a ship called *La Pensée*, on a private fishing expedition, and brought seven natives back to France. These American Indians’ appearance was the wonder of the day, but failed to attract royal interest. King Francis I only became inclined to sponsor an official French voyage of exploration in 1552, when Antonio Pigafetta visited the royal court. Pigafetta, a survivor of Magellan’s circumnavigation voyage, gifted Queen Louise of Savoy a copy of his journal, which the regent queen presented to her son. These writings aroused the king’s enthusiasm, and he immediately asked Guillaume Gouffier, admiral of France, to find a captain for the first official French exploratory voyage to North America. Gouffier recommended an Italian navigator, Giovanni Verrazzano, for this position. Verrazzano had over twenty years experience, and had visited the coast of Newfoundland on several occasions on private fishing and trading expeditions. Since he had practical experience in westward navigation, Verrazzano was appointed to command the expedition. Less than six months had transpired since Pigafetta had gifted his journal to the regent queen.

Francis I gave orders that four ships should be fitted out for a voyage of discovery. Verrazzano’s orders were to explore and declare French sovereignty over as much land as possible, and to find a sea route to the Pacific, which French merchants could use to trade with “Cathay” (China). The four ships set sail by the middle of 1523, but with strong storms, rough seas and other complications, only one—*La Dauphine*, piloted by Antoine de Conflans—succeeded. On March 7, 1524, *La Dauphine* sighted land, which Verrazzano calculated was north of latitude thirty-four, probably South Carolina. Afraid that they were nearing Spanish territory, Verrazzano gave orders to sail northward. Wading along North Carolina’s Outer Banks in the spring of 1524, he saw Pamlico Sound on the western side of the Outer Banks and postulated that it was the Pacific Ocean. In a letter to Francis I, Verrazzano claimed to have

found an isthmus a mile in width and about 200 long, in which, from the ship, was seen the oriental sea between the west and north. Which is the one, without doubt, which goes about the extremity of India, China and Cathay. We navigated along the said isthmus with the continual hope of finding some strait or true

promontory at which the land would end toward the north in order to be able to penetrate to those blessed shores of Cathay. To which isthmus was given by the discovered [the name] Verrazano; as all the land found was named Francesco for our Francis.

This letter was the origin of the erroneous “Verrazzano’s Sea,” which is depicted in numerous contemporary maps. The first cartographer to include this error was Sebastian Münster, whose 1540 map of North America included a northwest passage shown as a river connecting the Hudson River to the Sea of China and the Indies. Nearly a century later, cartographer John Farrer’s “A map of Virginia discovered to ye Hills” (1652) still located the Pacific Ocean just over the Blue Ridge Mountains, confirming the persistence of this yearning to find a western route to Asia. Therefore, it is easily understandable that Verrazzano, coasting Pamlico Sound and seeing the waters dashing beyond the barrier islands, thought he had found the passage to the East. Thence, he continued north, passing Virginia and Delaware; however, fog probably blocked from his view the entrances to the Chesapeake Bay and the Delaware River. Verrazzano decided to name this region between Virginia and Delaware “Arcadia” because of its utopian beauty. He also named New York Bay “Santa Margarita” in honor of the king’s sister Marguerite de Navarre, and Block Island “Louise” for Francis I’s mother, the regent queen, Louise of Savoy. He continued north, and soon thereafter reached Newfoundland. Then, low on victuals, he decided to return to France, reaching the port of Dieppe on July 8, 1524.

Verrazzano was the first European to explore the North American coastline between the Carolinas and Newfoundland, which spans over 2,000 miles. His discoveries were soon depicted on maps. In 1527, Visconte Maggiolo published his map showing Verrazzano’s 1524 voyage, in which the name “Francesca” appears across North America, thus claiming French dominance over these territories. This map contained a series of errors that prevailed for several decades, including a depiction of “Tera Florida” (Florida) at the top, and “Lavoradore” (Labrador) at the bottom. Nevertheless, despite the errors, it was clear that the New World was indeed a continent, much larger than previously believed, standing between Europe and Asia.

The Treaty of Cambrai, in 1529, ended one phase of the wars between Francis I of France and the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, and it temporarily allowed Francis I to resume his Atlantic ambitions. Guillaume Gouffier, admiral of France, who had previously facilitated Verrazzano’s voyage, had died in 1525, and had been succeeded in this position by Philippe Chabot, Seigneur De Brion (ca. 1492–1543), who became instrumental in rekindling French exploration of the New World. After obtaining royal approval, Admiral Chabot appointed Jacques Cartier, an experienced navigator and explorer, as commander of the second official French voyage of exploration to North America. Like Verrazzano, Cartier had visited Newfoundland on several occasions as part of private fishing and trading expeditions. As described by nineteenth-century naval historian Charles de La Roncière, Cartier’s orders were clear—to claim Canada for France and to find a northwest passage through America:

On October 31st, 1533 Jacques Cartier was received by Admiral de Chabot and during this interview was given orders to prepare ships for the exploratory voyage

and conquest of New France and also to find a northern passage to Cathay. He was thus to resurrect the old dream and mission which had been entrusted to Verrazzano a few years earlier, but which had failed when the latter was killed and eaten by savage Indians on the coasts of North America.

Cartier set sail from the French port of Saint Malo in April 20, 1534, with a fleet of two ships outfitted by the king, and sighted Newfoundland on May 10. For the next two months, he explored the St. Lawrence Gulf in hopes of finding an entrance to the Pacific. On July 24, on the shores of Chaleur Bay, Cartier planted a cross carrying the royal shield and bearing the words "Long Live the King of France," thus declaring French sovereignty over Canada. Finally, at Gaspé Bay, Cartier took two Iroquoian Indians captive and decided to return to France. During their return voyage, the Iroquoians told Cartier of a great river, which the captain hoped would be the channel to the Pacific he had been looking for. The fleet arrived at St. Malo on September 5. Cartier's passion, and the possibility of finding a route to the riches of the East, aroused the king's interest, and he visited St. Malo in person to commission Cartier to undertake a second voyage. A small fleet of three ships and 112 men, including the two Iroquoian captives, set sail on May 19, 1535. Once again, their destination was the coast of Newfoundland. Reaching the St. Lawrence Gulf on August 10, Cartier decided to sail up the St. Lawrence River, which he hoped would prove to be a northwest passage to the Pacific. Of course, this was not the case, and after several months of navigating the Ottawa, Saguenay, and St. Charles Rivers, Cartier decided to return to France, but he still believed that northern North America was either connected to Asia, or provided a passage there.

In 1541, Francis I decided to commission the first French settlement in North America. Surprisingly, he did not appoint Jacques Cartier, who had already led the first two official French voyages of exploration, but instead opted for Jean-François de La Rocque de Roberval (ca. 1500–1560), a French nobleman and a close friend of the king. The mission was to settle on the northern coasts of North America and spread the "Holy Catholic faith." Thus Roberval became the first Lieutenant General of New France, while Cartier was appointed chief navigator. On May 23, Cartier, five ships, and five hundred colonists set sail from the port of St. Malo, while Roberval would later sail with the first round of supplies. After three months at sea, Cartier arrived at the St. Lawrence River, where they built a fortification, which they named Charlesbourg-Royal, present-day Cap-Rouge, in Quebec.

While the colonists were busy building the new settlement, Cartier decided to explore the lands around the river and collect rocks, which he believed to be "gold and diamonds." However, when Cartier returned to the settlement for the winter he did not find a thriving colony. In fact, the Iroquoians were no longer friendly; according to some accounts thirty-five colonists were killed by the natives that winter. In the end, Cartier set sail for France in the summer of 1542, eager to leave the deteriorating colony and to show the stones he had found to the king.

Earlier, in April of that year, Roberval had set out with three ships and two hundred colonists. Cartier's and Roberval's ships met off the coast of Newfoundland, and even though Roberval ordered Cartier to return to Charlesbourg-Royal with him, Cartier left for France. Upon his return to France in October, the stones proved to be

nothing more than quartz and iron pyrites. Meanwhile, Roberval arrived at the St. Lawrence River on June 8 and immediately took command of Charlesbourg-Royal. After two years of severe winters, and continuous attacks by the Iroquoians, the discouraged colonists begged Roberval to let them go back to France. In 1543, a relief expedition was sent from France. This was the end of the first French colony in the New World, and they did not try to establish another for generations. Thus, with the failure of Roberval's little colony also ended the official expeditions sent by Francis I to North America. Even though, during the sixteenth century, French explorers such as Cartier had claimed lands in the Americas for France, thus laying the foundation for a French sphere of influence in the New World, France was too weakened by internal troubles to undertake further voyages of exploration, or to plan permanent settlements. Nevertheless, the way for the expansion of the future French colonial empire had been paved.

The English in North America

The leading pioneers in the Age of Discovery had been the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal. Although they strove to create lasting empires in America, they made little impact on the establishment of early settlements on the North American continent. The French might have proved serious rivals to the English in the New World had they been able to rise from the position of traders and explorers, and had France's internal politics been sufficiently harmonious; but, in the long run, the English, not the French, prevailed in the North American race. Until the sixteenth century, England lagged behind the rest of the world in maritime activity, and consequently in the knowledge of geography. But the forward momentum that began under Henry VII, and continued under Henry VIII, then Queen Elizabeth I, led to England becoming the pioneer power in exploration and colonization, the chief seafaring nation.

Even though internal struggles and numerous clashes with Spain handicapped England at the beginning of the sixteenth century, its zeal for adventure and enterprise would make England a serious contender in the race for colonial aggrandizement. If at first England looked toward North America as a possible route to the East, and later as a land where a mighty empire could be built, fables of golden cities and unparalleled adventures, which spread widely during this period, would lead her to perpetrate the same errors as the other competing nations. The desire to gain rapid wealth and glory prevented the English from drawing a distinct line between explorer, soldier, colonist, privateer and trader, which proved fatal to early attempts at colonization. Even though the English would be unsuccessful in their endeavors to establish a New Albion beyond the sea in the sixteenth century, it was in this period that the modern history of England and the history of colonial North America effectively began.

Early Voyages of Exploration

The period that coincides with the reign of Henry VII forms one of the greatest epochs of British history. Finally, England was ready to take up its position as "Mistress of the Seas." However, the time was not yet ripe for colonial advancement, since internal upheavals would keep England pinned back in the Atlantic race. Hitherto,

Henry VII's policy was both to maintain peace at home and abroad, and to create economic prosperity. Henry was not a military man, even though he was the last king of England to win his throne on the battlefield. He was a firm believer in forging strategic alliances across Europe. He tried to ensure long-term political stability by arranging a strategic marriage with the newly unified Spain—that of his son, Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales, to Catherine of Aragon, the Spanish monarchs' fifth child—under the Treaty of Medina del Campo, in 1489. He also formed an alliance with Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I (1493–1519), which assured England's future political security, and persuaded Pope Innocent VIII to issue a Bull of Excommunication against all pretenders to his throne. Even though he was successful in maintaining relatively good relations and avoiding serious political friction with other European powers, at least during most of his reign, England's expanding trade was intricately linked to a dangerous increase in economic rivalry. At this time, as a result of the opening up of the world in the fifteenth century, the most coveted parts of the earth had fallen to Spain and Portugal. The western coast of Africa was in the possession of the Portuguese, who claimed and maintained a rigid monopoly over the entire area. Spain exercised a prescriptive right to political jurisdiction and an exclusive trade monopoly over Central America, both on the mainland and the islands of the Caribbean Sea. Although both monopolies had some legal basis, one deriving from the Treaty of Tordesillas, and the other from the principles of discovery and exploration, law did not command general respect in a world ruled by force and raw economic power. It was only a matter of time until the lure of American wealth would entice enterprising traders to the Spanish and Portuguese preserves on the other side of the Atlantic. Thereafter, Spain and Portugal's sphere of influence would frequently be invaded by English traders, whose rapacity often stretched the bounds of legality.

It easily could have been England that came to possess parts of the New World before Spain. Columbus had offered his plan to reach the East by travelling west to Henry VII before presenting it to the Catholic King and Queen; however, King Henry, a practical man, thought it was nothing but madness. On the other hand, an Italian mariner by the name of Giovanni Caboto, known in English as John Cabot, offered Spain the chance to be the first European nation to discover the continent of North America; but it was England who would take this honor. Columbus's voyage inspired numerous other navigators to take on the Atlantic adventure. Cabot, an experienced sailor from Venice, believed that the northern part of the New World was much closer than the lands found by Columbus; thus, if a fleet left from a northern latitude the voyage would be much shorter. Looking for a sponsor for this plan, he arrived at the port of Bristol in 1495. At this time Bristol, the second most important port in England, was buzzing with activity, and was the only English port from which sailors had set out to explore the Atlantic, even though these efforts had been in search of the legendary island of Hy-Brasil, which was featured in many Irish myths. This time the New World was not a fable, and the English king was set on not being a passive spectator of the world's far-flung maritime activity. On March 5, 1496, King Henry VII gave Cabot letters patent and

free authority, faculty and power to sail to all parts, regions and coasts of the eastern, western and northern sea, under our banners, flags and ensigns, with

five ships or vessels of whatsoever burden and quality they may be, and with so many and with such mariners and men as they may wish to take with them in the said ships, at their own proper costs and charges, to find, discover and investigate whatsoever islands, countries, regions or provinces of heathens and infidels, in whatsoever part of the world placed, which before this time were unknown to all Christians.

Thus, two small ships were fitted out at Bristol and set sail that summer. However, foul weather prevented them from crossing the Atlantic, forcing them to return to Bristol just a few weeks later. Cabot would successfully cross the Atlantic, reaching North America in the spring of 1497, landing in Newfoundland and coasting south looking for a passage to the East, to no avail. On August 6, the expedition returned to Bristol.

The expedition failed, but the fabled wealth of the East, and the epoch-making achievements of the Spanish in Central and South America, were still tempting England to attempt a third voyage. Internal upheavals, including the Second Cornish Uprising of 1497, kept Henry VII occupied, but once his throne was secure, the king commissioned Cabot to undertake one more expedition on the Atlantic. In February 1498, the English monarch issued him another letter of patent. Cabot departed with five ships from the port of Bristol in May, but due to foul weather, his fleet was lost at sea. The Atlantic voyages under the reign of Henry VII subsided after Cabot's death. England had not yet made a settlement in the New World, but subsequent expeditions undertaken by Bristol merchants to North America created a fishing station for cod off the Canadian coast. For the next decade, up to 1508, Bristol merchants concentrated on private trade enterprises, which included an expedition led by William Weston in 1499 that was the first English-led expedition to North America. By right of the Bristol voyages, England claimed the eastern coast of the United States and Canada; still, sixty years would elapse before any effective English colonies could be planted.

The early sixteenth century was a tumultuous time in British history. Henry VIII, who ascended to the throne upon the death of his father in 1509, was too occupied welding England into political unity and transforming her into a strong modern state to attempt to open up North America to England. Nonetheless, Henry VIII is known as “a monarch of the sea.” He was the king who laid the foundation for England's future role as the center of a maritime empire; but before England's maritime supremacy could become a reality, she had to form naval and merchant services. Surprisingly, the very same pressing matter that rendered him too preoccupied to enter the competition for planting colonies in America—his separation from the Catholic Church—would give him the financial support necessary to expand the Royal Navy from five to fifty-three ships during his reign. After his excommunication by Pope Clement VII in 1538, he seized all of the Roman Catholic Church's lands and assets in the country, and as head of the newly formed Church of England, he was able to finance the English fleet with the proceeds. Not only did he understand the political, military, and economic advantages of building a large fleet, but he had a great passion for everything to do with the sea. Henry VIII was a shipbuilding entrepreneur, and a patron of research in the fields of navigation and naval warfare. He was one of the first to grasp the full significance of the invention of tacking by his friend, shipwright John Fletcher of Rye. By building a ship in 1539 that could sail windward, John Fletcher had marked the dawn of modern

navigation. Despite these tremendous strides in nautical science, the habitable part of the eastern coast of the United States was unknown to English navigators, and remained so for another generation.

With the accession of Elizabeth I (1533–1603) a new era had opened—finally England was poised to take the lead in the Atlantic maritime enterprise. In the early stages, it was the search for new markets that drove these efforts, but by the end of Elizabeth’s reign, the need to relocate some of its surplus population added stimulus to England’s efforts.

At this time, textiles were the main source of national wealth—with cloth and woolens accounting for nearly 80 percent—but English merchants had access to a very restricted market, being confined chiefly to the ports of the Low Countries. With no markets of value outside Europe, the lure of finding new trading routes was irresistible.

In 1555, Richard Eden (ca. 1520–1576) published his *Decades of the New World*, the first compendium in English of information concerning Spanish exploits in America. The book proved a success and captured the imagination of Englishmen everywhere. However, in the 1550s, England was more interested in finding a passage through the northeast than the northwest. English traders founded in 1551 the “Mystery and Company of Merchant Adventurers for the Discovery of Regions, Dominions, Islands, and Places unknown” to forge a northern passage by Norway’s North Cape to Cathay and India, which culminated with Sir Hugh Willoughby and Steven Burrough’s 1556 voyage. Even though they discovered the Kara Strait, this route proved too dangerous to be taken by English merchants on a regular basis.

In 1561, Sir William Cecil, the queen’s chief advisor, scandalized the Spanish ambassador to England, Alvarez de Quadra, by claiming that the pope had no right to partition the earth and bestow kingdoms on whoever he pleased. It was clear that England did not recognize the existing monopolies, a significant indication that it was ready to enter the fight for control of the Atlantic and find a passage through America to the desirable Eastern markets.

In 1567, explorer Humphrey Gilbert (ca. 1539–1583), a half-brother of famous explorer Sir Walter Raleigh, presented the queen with a solution, a way to the East through the West. In fact, he believed that

there lieth a great sea between it [i.e., America], Cathaia, and Greenland, by the which any man of our country that will give the attempt, may with small danger pass to Cathai, the Moluccae, India, and all the other places in the east, in much shorter time than the Spanish or Portugal doth, or may do, from the nearest part of any of their countries within Europe.

Gilbert had been working for nearly a decade collecting information on a possible northwest passage through America to Asia. Even though Elizabeth did not take immediate action, in 1576 Gilbert published his thesis in the celebrated *A discourse of a discoverie for a new passage to Cataia*, which was received with fervor, and became the signal for a fresh interest in the Americas. Thus, at this time, English efforts to reach Asia shifted westward in the quest to find a northwest passage through America. Even though several generations of English seamen searched for this route across the continent, making several discoveries of passages that were later proven false or

nonviable, their efforts added significant new information to the exploration of the northeast coast of North America. Among these explorers was navigator Martin Frobisher (ca. 1535–1594), who made three voyages to America in search of the Northwest Passage between 1576 and 1578. On his voyages, Frobisher explored the lands north of Labrador, and discovered the inlet that would become known as Frobisher Bay. There, he found several black stones, which he believed contained gold, and even though it was later discovered that it was just iron pyrite, his find increased interest in mining, rather than exploration and colonization, in the merchant community.

The Fledgling Settlements

For England, the key turning point in the development of fledgling settlements would occur at the end of the 1570s, when the swelled necessity for new markets led to the arrival of more adventurous explorers and merchants, who would willingly accept the risks of developing and sponsoring these North American settlements. In northern Europe, the Baltic and, more importantly, the passage by the North Cape were controlled by Denmark; in the eastern Baltic region, English traders had to pay tribute to the Hanseatic League, which controlled markets in Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Poland; and in the south, the Mediterranean was being plagued by pirates from Barbary and Spain, who overran the Straits of Messina and Gibraltar. Moreover, England had a surplus population, which was a continual source of social unrest. Thus, the idea of setting up an outpost in America became the lodestar of English interest. Three men put the weight of promoting and supporting the settlement of North America on their shoulders: writer Richard Hakluyt (ca. 1552–1616), Captain Sir Walter Raleigh (ca. 1554–1618), and explorer Humphrey Gilbert (ca. 1539–1583). They believed that an American colony in the northern part of the continent, beyond the Spanish and Portuguese sphere of influence, could not only supply England with raw materials, but could also quickly absorb the surplus population, which, along with the vast native population, would consume all the cloth England could produce. So the idea was born of creating an English colony in America.

The first to attempt to build up a greater England on American soil was that of explorer Humphrey Gilbert, who in 1578 obtained a patent from the queen to establish the first English colony in the New World. In late 1582, Gilbert, who had set sail with three ships – the *Delight*, the *Squirrel*, and the *Golden Hind* – landed near St. John's harbor, a popular area for fishermen due to its proximity to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. Upon arrival, on August 5, 1583, Gilbert proclaimed English sovereignty over the island of Newfoundland and levied a tax on the fishermen working in the area. However, instead of creating a stable settlement, Gilbert decided to continue south along the American coast in hopes of surveying it for minerals and other sources of wealth. Within a few weeks, due to a mistake by Gilbert, the *Delight* ran aground and sank off the shoals of Sable Island. Under the advice of superior mariners, he decided to turn homeward. On September 1583, his ship was struck by a storm, and disappeared north of the Azores, off the coast of Portugal. So ended the first attempt of “planting” Englishmen on a suitable part of the American seaboard, where they could develop and exploit the resources of this vast continent.

Still, England's interest in colonizing North America was not shaken by Gilbert's death. The responsibility fell on the shoulders of Gilbert's half brother, Sir Walter Raleigh (ca. 1554–1618). Raleigh, impatient by nature, decided to dispatch a small expedition to the coast north of Florida, commanded by Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlow, just a month after having obtained a patent to establish an English colony in America from Queen Elizabeth in March 1584. Captains Amada and Barlow sighted the coast of North Carolina on July 4, landing on Roanoke Island a few days later. Amadas and Barlow proclaimed English sovereignty over the island on July 13. After a quick voyage of reconnaissance north to the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, they returned to England with glowing reports of the natural resources and friendliness of the natives. Thus, Raleigh decided that Roanoke Island would be the site for the first English colony in the New World. In December 1584, he presented a bill to Parliament to confirm his patent for the settlement. The bill passed the House of Commons but failed to pass the House of Lords. Nevertheless, Raleigh decided to move forward with the project, and in an attempt to obtain the queen's blessing after the setback suffered at the House of Lords, he named the territory "Virginia" in honor of Elizabeth I, the "Virgin Queen," who in exchange confirmed his patent as lord and governor of the new territory.

In the spring of 1585, Raleigh dispatched seven ships carrying just over six hundred men from Plymouth under the command of Sir Richard Grenville (1542–1591). The fleet landed at Wococon (Ocracoke and Portsmouth Islands) on June 26. Of the six hundred men, over a hundred decided to settle on Roanoke Island. They constructed houses and fortifications, and elected Ralph Lane (ca. 1530–1603) as governor. As planned, Captain Grenville returned to England in late August for supplies. The following spring, Raleigh sent out a ship from England with supplies, which was followed a month later by three more ships commanded by Grenville. However, these supplies were too late in coming; the colonists, threatened with starvation and at cross-purposes with the Indians, who had grown suspicious of their true intent, had decided to abandon the settlement and return to England with Sir Francis Drake (1540–1596), who docked at Roanoke on his way home from his campaign in the West Indies. This was the end of England's first stable settlement in the New World.

Raleigh was not daunted by this setback, and would attempt a second settlement on Roanoke Island in 1587. This time, Raleigh appointed John White (ca. 1540 – ca. 1593), a cartographer who had participated in Grenville's 1585 expedition, as governor of the "City of Raleigh in Virginia." Thus, on May 8, 1587, three ships departed from Plymouth with over a hundred men and women. Two months later, the colonists reached Roanoke Island and the ruins of Grenville's settlement; immediately, they commenced the rebuilding process, and established relations with the natives. However, disaster once again dogged the path of these early settlers. Firstly, White, who had returned to England for supplies on August 27, 1587, was not able to return to America until 1590 because of the maritime danger from Spain. The queen had commanded that all necessary ships remain in England to defend against the Spanish Armada. Finally, on March 20, 1590, after the Spanish menace dissipated, White was able to set sail for the Virginia colony. However, upon his arrival no trace of the settlers could be found. Before leaving in 1587, White had instructed the colonists that if they were to leave the settlement for any reason, they were to carve the name of their

destination on a tree. Thus, White found carved on a post at the entrance of the settlement the word "Croatoan," and there were no boats left at the shores. "Croatoan" was the Indian name for Hatteras Island off the North Carolina coast, where a friendly native tribe lived. White was convinced that some of the settlers had relocated to Croatoan, but bad weather kept him from searching for them, and on August 19, 1590, he returned to England. No rescue mission was ever sent to look for these colonists, and White never returned to the New World. Scholars have been unable to determine exactly what happened there, and the abandoned Virginia colony on Roanoke Island is commonly referred to as "the Lost Colony."

Raleigh's unsuccessful attempts to establish a settlement south of the Chesapeake spelled the end of England's interest in America for the time being. The failure of these first fledgling settlements can be attributed, primarily, to incompetence and lack of foresight. To remove a group of men and women from the political and social surroundings of an old civilization such as England, and plant them down in the wilderness without ample preparations to maintain them during the hard struggle against natural difficulties and possible indigenous attacks, was to court disaster from the very start.

It was now apparent that neither Frobisher's, nor Gilbert's, nor Raleigh's outposts in America could offer any profitable outlet for trade. Elizabethans had not been able to adapt themselves to the careful planning and hard work of pioneering in a virgin country, nor did they understand that the development of natural resources is a surer way to wealth than acting as trading middlemen.

English seamen turned their attention once again toward India and the Far East. In fact, Drake's visit to the Moluccas in 1579, and the journey of Jesuit priest Thomas Stevens (ca. 1549–1619) to Goa in the same year, contributed their share to rendering the Elizabethan interest in America forgotten until the early seventeenth century, with the foundation of "James Fort" (Jamestown) in the Virginia Colony, the first permanent English settlement in America.

The Beginning of Piracy's Golden Age

Elizabeth I's reign gave rise to the greatest period of English exploits on the sea. While merchants, aided by navigators and explorers, busied themselves with the search for distant markets, defying the validity of the Spanish and Portuguese monopoly over the Americas, and statesmen were captivated by the idea of establishing a new England beyond the Atlantic, other audacious Englishmen, who believed that the reign of law was simply the right of the strongest to enforce his will, would become empire builders who conceived that the surest way to strengthen England was to weaken Spain. By 1568, it must have been apparent that Anglo-Spanish relations were fast approaching a crisis, particularly in matters regarding the New World, where the interests of the two nations were colliding, leading to the beginning of English piracy's "golden age."

Piracy on the high seas was nothing new. In the sixteenth century, the main sea-borne traffic of northern Europe passed along the English Channel, and a large part of it was conducted between Spain and Antwerp. Since the early 1560s, this traffic had been subject to attacks by freebooters—some French, but the vast majority English. Even though it was in the interest of all countries to cooperate in the suppression of

piracy, Elizabeth did very little to eliminate it. Of the various methods by which Englishmen sought to take their share of the treasure of the New World, privateering and piracy were the most practical. Under governmental letters of marque, captains were authorized to attack and capture enemy vessels during wartime. Injuries suffered at sea at the hands of the enemy were deemed to justify reprisals—the taking of Spanish goods included. While Spain considered these attacks piratical, and thus unlawful, and looked to England for a solution, addressing numerous complaints to Elizabeth urging drastic action, very little was done. Even if Elizabeth had wanted to, the difficulty of putting in place effective measures against piracy would have been great, and restitution would have been exceedingly hard to obtain. Although the Elizabethan government cannot be held fully responsible for the attacks on Spanish shipping in the Atlantic, the fact that the pirates were English undoubtedly raised a presumption in the minds of the Spanish that Elizabeth was involved in it. Privateering, therefore, may be added to the causes of the increasingly difficult relations between England and Spain, not only in the Old World, but on the new Atlantic stage as well.

Spanish loot had become a major distraction for many English navigators. Among them, the most prominent was Captain Francis Drake, the stoutest supporter of war against Spain. In fact, Drake's hatred for Spain was so great and public that his contemporary explorer, Sir Walter Raleigh, claimed: "A single purpose animates all his exploits ... and the chart of his movements is like a cord laced and knotted round the throat of the Spanish monarchy." Even though for most of his life England and Spain were nominally at peace, his feud with Spain began early in his life, when he was part of a small English fleet that, in September of 1568, suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Spanish in the battle of San Juan de Ulúa.

As a seaman, Drake excelled in leadership skills and tactical planning. His ability as a navigator and strategist shone at its brightest when he identified the Isthmus of Panama as the weakest point in the Spanish empire. This narrow strip of land was the point through which all commerce between Spain and her South American colonies passed. The waters of Panama became Drake's playground, the plundering of Spanish settlements and shipping his main occupation. However, from 1577 to 1580, he became involved in a larger venture—a voyage of circumnavigation. Traditionally, it was assumed that Drake's intentions were to plunder Spanish settlements and ships; however, historians now believe his mission was to occupy the Californian coast in the queen's name, under the title of New Albion, and scout for a location to establish an English settlement in North America.

Drake's voyage of circumnavigation marked the culmination of distant seafaring in Elizabeth's reign. His fleet landed here and there along the American coast, particularly on South American coasts, but in the present-day United States, he claimed "Nova Albion" – Drake's Bay in Northern California – for the English Crown. Some historians believe that he even left some of his men behind as an embryo "colony." In any case, Drake made no successful demand to permanent holdings. In spite of being knighted by Queen Elizabeth upon his return to England on April 4, 1581, his discovery and claim on New Albion became a state secret. Despite her pleasure at irritating the Spanish, Elizabeth was at this point trying to maintain an uneasy peace with them. Still, the immediate effect of Drake's voyage was to breathe new life into England's interest in

finding a northwest passage, an attempt undertaken by John Davis in 1585, 1586, and 1587. Ultimately, Drake's achievement—which was first publicized by Richard Hakluyt in his work *The Principall Nauigations* (1589), and later in the famous 1603 map by Flemish cartographer Jodocus Hondius, which assigned to “Nova Albion” the interior of North America and the entire west coast—became the legal basis for England's later colonial settlements in North America.

Other privateers had a more inadvertent involvement in the exploration of North America. Richard Hakluyt's book, *The Principall Nauigations*, recounts “The Relation of David Ingram,” a crewman in privateer John Hawkins's fleet, who undertook a journey overland from the Gulf of Mexico to Nova Scotia. After the English defeat at the battle of San Juan de Ulúa (1568) at the hands of the Spanish, three survivors – David Ingram, Richard Twide, and Richard Browne – made their way overland to the northward, from Mexico, skirting the coast of Lake Erie or Lake Ontario, to present-day New Brunswick, from where they sailed back to Europe on a French fishing smack. Even though their exact itinerary is still unknown, Ingram told Hakluyt of their adventures among the North American natives, and several fantastical stories about their wealth and treasure. The publication of these tales of gold and fortune captured the imagination of his fellow Englishmen, who, lured by these fables, were ready to undertake the exploration and colonization of the North American continent.

Another way in which privateers helped increase contemporary knowledge of the present-day United States was by capturing enemies and transporting them back to England to be interrogated. For example, a Spaniard by the name of Pedro Morales was captured by Sir Francis Drake in the 1586 raid of the port of St. Augustine, in Florida, and later transported to England. His story was picked up once again by writer Richard Hakluyt. From Pedro Morales, he learned that Spanish explorers were searching for the “Apalachi” (Appalachian) Mountains, which they believed to be full of gold, crystal, and diamonds. These tales of wealth and adventure had a lasting effect by luring contemporaries and future generations to take up the exploration and colonization of North America.

Privateering did the cause of English colonization an inestimable service. Privateers finally proved the inability of Spain to keep other nations out of the New World, but it remained for traders and merchants to take advantage of the knowledge gained. After Elizabeth's death in 1603, maps began to mark the area of North America above New Spain and New Mexico as English territory. Curiously, in the seventeenth century, “Nova Albion” and “Nova Francia” would exchange spheres of influence. England demanded the Atlantic coast, which had been first claimed by French explorers, while France asserted its presence in the interior of North America by exploring the lands from the Alleghenies to the Rockies, and along the Great Lakes.

The Columbian Exchange

The collision of cultures that occurred with the European advent in the New World had vast global consequences. European exploration and colonization of the Americas revolutionized how the Old and New Worlds perceived and conducted themselves, and it established the first truly global exchange network. The Age of

Exploration led to the widespread exchange of animals, plants, culture, human populations, and diseases, not only between Europe and the Americas, but between the Western and Eastern Hemispheres as well. A wide variety of new crops such as potatoes, corn, tomatoes, and chocolate were introduced to the Old World, and livestock, such as cattle, chickens, pigs, and sheep were introduced to the New World. The establishment of new communication and trade routes ignited growing consumer markets, creating the first truly global businesses. The Columbian Exchange not only brought gains but also losses. Europeans brought deadly viruses and bacteria to the New World, such as smallpox, measles, typhus, and cholera, to which the native peoples of the Americas had no immunity, while syphilis was carried to the Old World by the returning sailors.

“The Columbian Exchange” is a term coined by Professor Alfred W. Crosby in his 1972 book *The Columbian Exchange*. It refers to this new era, opened by Christopher Columbus’s 1492 voyage of discovery, that led to the exchange of diseases, ideas, food crops, and population, and gave rise to events that affected millions of people on several continents, fundamentally revolutionized beliefs for many of them, and essentially altered the map of the entire world. The Columbian Exchange was one of the most significant events—concerning ecology, agriculture, and culture—in human history, affecting almost every society on Earth. The creation of new commercial and political networks brought a biological, economic, and social revolution in world history: they introduced new peoples, ideas, labor systems, and cultures to Europeans, while also wreaking havoc on indigenous cultures of the New World. Death, disease, and destruction transformed Native American groups. Many of them adopted a more nomadic existence as a way to escape European intruders and diseases; others forsook their ancestral gods and embraced Christianity. Yet others established new tribes out of the surviving remnants, and many decided to oppose European oppression.

Humanity, Identity, and the Loss of Indigenous Naivety

Perhaps the most complex interaction between the two hemispheres was the cultural exchange. Even though Europeans and American Indians saw some similarities in each other, their concepts of each other as human beings differed greatly. This encounter led not only to rational enquiry about the nature of humanity and civilization, but also to a great deal of abuse, resentment, hatred, and violence.

In 1593, when Christopher Columbus returned to Spain after his journey across the Atlantic, he was heralded as the discoverer of a “New World.” However, the Western Hemisphere was only “new” to Europeans; indigenous civilizations had been thriving in the Americas for more than 15,000 years. Scholars believe that at the time of discovery over fifty million natives populated the Americas, of which between eight and ten million lived in North America. There were thousands of sophisticated and diverse tribes, each one with its own linguistic and cultural characteristics. But despite the enormous number of very distinctive groups, Columbus applied the term “Indian” to describe the indigenous populations of the New World. This confusion originated from the fact that he thought he had arrived in the East Indies while seeking Asia. This created an imaginary concept of cultural unity among the native peoples of the Americas, which was particularly convenient for the conquistadors, as it allowed them to

treat all these groups as one. Obviously, the natives did not share this view. Every tribe believed itself different from the others, as evidenced by their own names; for example, the Delaware Indians called themselves “Lenape,” which means “real people.” The term “Indian” is still common when referring to the indigenous peoples of the Americas. Today, scholars prefer to use terms such as “Native Americans” and “Amerindians.”

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the discovery of the New World challenged the traditional European view of the world and civilization, leading to speculation about the very essence of human nature. Since antiquity, European cultures had used the term “savage” to pejoratively describe those with a different language, culture, or religion, particularly those not living within a Christian civilization. But in the early modern period, as a result of the opening of the Atlantic, the term “savage” came to denote those who not only had a different language, culture, or religion, but did not meet the basic prerequisites of civilized society, who appeared to live by the laws of nature, or without any laws, and were therefore considered dangerous, evil, and inhuman. Thus, the Atlantic encounter led to numerous debates about the origins and nature of the American natives.

Two prevalent positions emerged. The first was based on a biblical monogenetic view of mankind, in which Native Americans were survivors of the biblical flood, and had been lost to “civilization” for centuries. Thus, Indians were human, and they could be integrated into “civilization” and Christendom. This “fully human” view of the American natives was illustrated by the Spanish government’s Laws of Burgos (1512–1513), which forbade the maltreatment of natives in the New World, and endorsed their conversion to Catholicism. However, the other prevalent attitude defined the natives as only semi-human beings, or even “beasts,” lacking all the fundamental prerequisites of civilized people. Physically, they were human, but because they did not share equivalent forms of social, economic, political, or religious characteristics with the Old World, in the eyes of the Europeans, they were “savages,” not “fully human,” and had to be subjected to a superior political and religious authority. In either case, it was clear that the Indians could improve only under the guidance of the politically and religiously “superior” Europeans. Thus, explorers and colonists often rationalized their expansion of empire with the assumption that they were saving a barbaric, pagan world by spreading Christian civilization. Even though from the very beginning the European governments tried to codify the behavior of explorers and settlers in America, particularly with regard to their interaction and treatment of the indigenous populations, they found it difficult to enforce any laws in a distant land, which led to abuse and violence.

The tension between Native American groups and European explorers did not become instantly apparent. Indeed, for well over a century after Columbus’s arrival, Europeans and North American natives engaged in a largely unrecorded trade, which was more suggestive of possibilities of cooperation than of conflict between them. It is important to underscore how little we know of these early contacts and their effects. The various Indian peoples undoubtedly started interacting with European visitors at different times and in different ways. The first to arrive on the coasts of North America were French, English, and Basque fishermen. Few fishing boats left any records of their activities, as all these commercial enterprises were private concerns. They made

only slight contributions to European knowledge of the cultures they encountered. However, there can be no doubt as to the latter's friendliness toward the new arrivals. Indigenous hunters and European sailors encountering one another on the coasts of North America discovered very early that they had valuable things to trade: metal goods, weaponry, clothing, and ornamental objects on the part of the Europeans; furs and skins on the part of the Indians. For the Europeans, such trade began as a casual adjunct to the cod fisheries, but in the second half of the sixteenth century, with the decline in European fur production, North American furs became a principal object of trade in their own right. This trade had severe consequences for the Indians and their ecosystems; overhunting led to depletion of various species, and resulted in violence breaking out over diminishing food supplies and resources.

The first European explorer to write a detailed description of his interactions with the North American natives was Jacques Cartier, who, between 1534 and 1542, explored the St. Lawrence River. Cartier's *First Relation*, based on his ship's log, illustrates the natives' kindness:

St. Martin's Creek ... There we saw a great number of the wild men; they went on shore, making a great noise, beckoning us to land, showing us certain skins upon pieces of wood, but because we had only one boat we would not go to them, but went to the other side. They, seeing us flee, followed, dancing, and making many signs of joy and mirth, as it were desiring our friendship, saying in their tongue, 'Napeu tondamen assurtah,' with many others that we understood not . . . The next day they came to traffic with us. We likewise made signs to them that we wished them no evil, and two of our men carried to them knives, with other ironware, and a red hat for their captain. They seemed very glad to have our ironwares and other things, and came to our two men, still dancing, with many other ceremonies. They gave us whatsoever they had, not keeping anything, that they were constrained to go back again naked, and made signs that the next day they would bring more skins.

Cartier had met up with fifty canoes filled with Micmac Indians. A few days later, the French fleet encountered a fishing party of two hundred Iroquoians led by their chief, Donnacona. The Iroquoians were not native to these parts of the St. Lawrence River, but came for the hunting of seals in local waters. Cartier's *Relation* is full of details regarding this tribe and its chief, whose sons, Domagaia and Taignagny, hoping to establish friendly commercial relations between France and their tribe, accompanied Cartier back to France, where they became the wonder of the day due to their colorful animal-skin clothes. The following year, 1535, Cartier returned to the northern coast of North America with the two natives safe. On this voyage, Cartier met again with the Iroquoians, who were still inclined to friendly intercourse. At the village of Hochelaga, "all the women and the maidens gathered themselves together, part of which had their arms full of young children, and as many as could came to rub our faces, our arms, and what part of the body they could touch, showing us the best countenance that was possible, desiring us, with signs, that it would please us to touch their children . . ."

Donnacona decided to accept an invitation by Cartier to travel to France so he could personally tie closer trading relations. In the spring of 1536, they set sail for the

old continent, but due to foul weather and illness, all Indian visitors died, apart from a little girl whose fate is unknown. Cartier would return to North America one more time, in 1541, but this time found the situation ominous. When he returned without any of the people he had taken to France, the Iroquoians grew suspicious and no longer had interest in trading. In the winter of 1541, the natives killed about thirty-five Frenchmen. Cartier returned to France in 1542, marking the end not only of Cartier's voyages to the St. Lawrence River region, but also of the friendly relations between Iroquoians and European visitors.

Cartier's experience was exemplary of the early encounters. Explorers were greeted by friendly natives, who saw the new arrivals as strange, but godlike. However, their initially favorable disposition toward the visitors would turn into resentment due to abuse. Violence would break out as the natives attempted to remove the unwanted European presence. Then, the well-armed Europeans with their muskets and armor would turn on the natives, put down their attacks and crush all resistance.

Another clear example of this pattern was explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano's voyage along the eastern coast of North America in 1524. When Verrazzano and his crew arrived near Narragansett Bay, on the north side of Rhode Island Sound, they encountered the Wampanoag Indians, who welcomed them wholeheartedly. According to Verrazzano's account, it was clear that this was the first time the Wampanoags had met any Europeans. However, when they continued their journey by sailing north, the Indians they found along the Maine coast were already familiar with European sailors. They actively sought to trade, particularly furs for metal goods such as knives, but they were also extremely wary of the Europeans, and even communicated some hostility. They directed Verrazzano's men to meet at the rockiest part of the shore, where they could not land, and "they sent us what they wanted to give on a rope, continually shouting to us not to approach the land." Obviously, these northern Indians, who lived closer to the fishing banks, had learned of European trade goods and methods before their southern counterparts.

The first contacts in southeastern North America occurred in April of 1513, when Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León landed in Florida. De León was followed by other Spanish explorers, such as Pánfilo de Narváez in 1528, and Hernando de Soto in 1539. In the Southeast, the Spanish explorers encountered Creeks, Choctaws, Cherokees, and Seminoles, who, like their northern counterparts, quickly shifted their initial cordiality toward Europeans for hostility. During his exploration of Florida in 1513, Juan Ponce de León's ships were approached by a delegation of Native Americans interested in trading, but when the Spaniards took eight Indians captive, relations turned hostile. Pánfilo de Narváez's expedition through interior Florida in 1528 encountered nothing but hostility once it reached the territory of the powerful Apalachee Indians. A second Spanish expedition, led by Hernando de Soto in 1539, also encountered the Apalachee. Because of the natives' prior experience with the Narváez expedition, and reports of fighting between the de Soto expedition and neighboring tribes, when the Spanish expedition entered Apalachee territory they were met by warriors.

In the Southwest, the first European contact with the Pueblo peoples, in this case the Zuni, was made in 1539 by a small Spanish scouting party led by Marcos de Niza. As had happened in the Southeast, the explorers' greed soon turned the Indians' initial amiability sour, and violence erupted. As a result, several members of the excursion, as

well as an unknown number of Indians, died. Thus, when later visited by other Spanish expeditions, such as that of Francisco Vásquez de Coronado (1540–1542), the Zunis were reluctant toward any offer of friendship and trading. News of the Spanish explorers' ruthless ways must have travelled fast through the Southwest. When Coronado travelled north, his party encountered a large number of Native American groups – among them the Hopis, Cocomarcos and Tiguex – who denied them entrance to their villages. The explorers' forceful ways led to the brutal Tiguex War of 1540, which resulted in the death of hundreds of Native Americans in the area of the Rio Grande.

The exploration of new lands was followed by the establishment of early colonies. Initially, like their explorer counterparts, the colonists would experience great hospitality. In their first report, Captains Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe explained to Sir Walter Raleigh:

[we] were entertained with all love and kindness, and with as much bounty (after the manner of the natives) as they could possibly devise. We found the people most gentle, loving, and faithful, void of all guile and treason, and such as live after the manner of the golden age . . . There came to us Granganimeo, the king's brother, with forty or fifty of his people. When we came to the shore to him with our weapons he never moved from his place, nor even mistrusted any harm to be offered from us, but sitting still he beckoned us to come and sit by him, which we performed, and being seated he made all signs of joy and welcome, striking on his head and breast, and afterwards on ours, to show we were all one, smiling and making show the best he could, of all love and familiarity.

However, as with the English's Spanish counterparts, hospitality soon shifted to animosity. Merely a year after a settlement was established on Roanoke Island in 1589, the colony was abandoned, mostly due to attacks from the natives, who had started to carry out offensive raids and ambushes. A statement by English writer Richard Hakluyt (ca. 1552–1616), an enthusiastic supporter of the early colonists, and a faithful compiler of their histories, offers some clues regarding the causes of the Indian animosity:

Those on land perceiving this hasted to those three sail which were appointed to be left there, and for fear they should be left behind they left all things confusedly, as if they had been chased from thence by a mighty army. And no doubt so they were, for the hand of God came upon them for the cruelties and outrages committed by some of them upon the native inhabitants of that country.

The encounter between European explorers and colonists and Native Americans was fascinating and, from the Indian standpoint, tragic. If early European explorers and colonists often focused on the naivety and friendliness of the Indians they encountered, it was their actions that changed Indian behavior. Some Indians proved quite adaptable to the new context that European arrival established, learning new languages and skills. Overall, however, the Atlantic encounter had disastrous effects on the indigenous population.

Disease

By far the most dramatic and devastating impact of the Columbian Exchange was the introduction of new diseases into the Americas. Even though conflicts with European explorers and colonists was an important contributing factor to the decline of Native American populations within the first century of the encounter, scholars now believe the overwhelming cause of the exponential plunge in population to be epidemic disease. When the first hominid migrants crossed the Bering Land Bridge from northeast Asia into Alaska and Canada around 40,000 years ago, they brought few diseases with them. This journey in extreme cold lasted decades, during which the disease-causing agents that might have traveled with them were reduced to a minimum. Thenceforth, for thousands of years, Native Americans had lived in biological isolation, unlike Europeans, who had developed high degrees of immunity to numerous ravaging diseases.

The indigenous populations of America had no herds of cattle, horses, and pigs to keep pathogens active, and they lived in small, mostly isolated communities, which did not provide the circumstances necessary to spread diseases. On the other hand, Europeans had been exposed from birth to innumerable active pathogens. They had also travelled to Asia and Africa, where they had suffered diseases such as the Asian flu and malaria. Thus, European navigators, explorers, and colonists inadvertently introduced devastating diseases – including smallpox, measles, mumps, whooping cough, influenza, chicken pox, bubonic plague, malaria, and typhus – to the Americas, which produced catastrophic mortality throughout the continent. African slaves suffered a variety of maladies too – such as dysentery and whooping cough – that soon spread among the indigenous populations, and pushed particularly the infant and early childhood death rate to twice that experienced by adults. It is probable that these diseases traveled even faster than the newcomers, so they could have killed significant numbers of natives before they had even had direct contact with Europeans or Africans. In any case, historians estimate that repeated outbreaks of these devastating diseases resulted in a decline of between fifty and eighty percent of the population of North America during the first decade of European contact.

On the other hand, a few diseases, not as deadly, were transmitted from the New World to the Old, venereal syphilis being the most well known. There are two primary theories about the origins and spread of syphilis. The first, referred to as the “Columbian hypothesis,” proposes that the disease was carried to Europe by the sailors returning from Christopher Columbus’s first voyage to the New World. Columbus’s crewmen acquired it from the Indians of Hispaniola through sexual contact, and upon returning to Spain, they spread it through Europe by travelling as soldiers and mercenaries to the many wars in the Old World. The disease then reached as far as India by the end of the fifteenth century, and China and Australia by the first half of the sixteenth century. Subsequently, syphilis created havoc in the world, since a treatment for this fatal disease would not be discovered until the twentieth century. The second theory, referred to as the “pre-Columbian hypothesis,” proposes that this disease existed in the Eastern Hemisphere before the discovery of America, but it was undetected, due to the large number of diseases with similar symptoms. Recent phylogenetic research, which studies evolutionary relatedness among groups of

organisms, supports the Columbian hypothesis that venereal syphilis was a New World disease. Still, not all that was exchanged proved disastrous. Europeans brought to the Americas their medicinal knowledge and numerous remedies; the New World provided the Old with quinine, the first effective treatment for malaria.

Ecological Impact

In the Columbian Exchange, even the global natural environment was transformed. Native Americans and Europeans had not only adapted to the physical environment of their respective lands, but had also shaped it to meet their needs. The exchange expanded the global supply of agricultural goods, creating the first truly global businesses, and supporting increases in population in both hemispheres for centuries. Altogether, the suite of domesticated animals and new crops from Eurasia that travelled to the New World, and crops and lands offered by the Americas to the Old World, brought about an ecological revolution.

There were two ways in which the Columbian Exchange increased the global supply of agricultural goods. Firstly, new calorically rich crops such as maize and potatoes were introduced to the Old World and quickly became staple foods. Other new crops such as tomatoes, peppers, and cacao not only added calories to diets, but also revolutionized eating habits around the world. These new fruits and vegetables had a deep impact on the evolution of national cuisines: tomatoes altered the cuisine of Italy and other Mediterranean countries, paprika that of Hungary, and chili peppers that of India and Asia. Secondly, the newly discovered continent offered large quantities of land, well suited for the cultivation of crops such as sugar, coffee, oranges, and bananas, for which the Americas soon became the main global supplier. The increase in supply lowered prices, and resulted in improved welfare and large inflows of profits for European nations, which some historians have argued would later fuel the Industrial Revolution.

The introduction of livestock to the Americas also transformed the ecology. Of all the animals introduced by Europeans, the horse, which had been extinct in the Americas for over 10,000 years, held particular importance, producing a cultural revolution. Native Americans first encountered horses ridden by explorers, but soon learned to ride themselves. On the North American Great Plains, the horse radically reshaped the lives of its tribes, transforming transportation, hunting, and warfare. Several native groups, including the Cheyenne, abandoned their farming heritage to become hunting nomads. Ironically, this animal, which initially was very valued by Europeans as an instrument of submission, since it terrified the Indians, would become their greatest weapon in opposing the European expansion in the Americas.

Other domesticated animals, such as cattle, swine, chickens, sheep, and goats, were brought to the Americas by Columbus on his second voyage, in 1493. North America provided vast expanses of relatively unpopulated grazing land well suited for maintaining large herds, which would lead to the establishment of ranching economies. The numbers of these herds are not well documented; however, we do know they spread around the continent very quickly, both domestically and in the wild. For example, in 1539 De Soto transported thirteen pigs to Florida, and just three years later

there were well over 700 in the region. Native Americans used the livestock for meat, clothing, transportation, hauling, and hunting. On the other hand, turkeys, llamas, alpacas, and guinea pigs were carried back to Europe. But not all participating creatures of this Columbian Exchange were transported on purpose. The black rat arrived in North America in the mid-sixteenth century on the ships of European explorers. It not only carried a number of pathogens, but also parasites, which transmitted numerous diseases to humans.

European discovery and exploration also had some devastating impacts on the environment. On one hand, since the very beginning of the sixteenth century, Europeans and North American natives engaged in a largely unrecorded trade. Hunters and sailors encountering one another on the coasts of North America traded metal goods for furs and skins. Even though such trade began casually, by the second half of the sixteenth century, with the decline in European fur production, North American furs became a principal object of trade in their own right. Unfortunately, the number of animals killed for their fur in this period is unrecorded; however, the shift from domestic consumption to becoming a supplier for an international market created an onset of complicated shifts in North America's ecological circumstances. Moreover, European explorers also depleted wildlife in some areas in order to supply their ships with provisions. For example, explorer Jacques Cartier and his crew slaughtered over 1000 birds, most of them great auks, which are now extinct, during one stop at Îles aux Oiseaux (Islands of the Birds, now the Rochers-aux-Oiseaux federal bird sanctuary). Also, since diseases brought to the Americas in the Columbian Exchange caused a sharp decline in population, ecosystems fell into chaos as forests regrew in previously farmed land, and previously hunted animals increased in number.

The Atlantic Slave Trade

With the arrival of Europeans in the New World, the door was opened for colonization and exploitation, with devastating political, social and economic consequences not just for the Americas, but also for the African continent, as the Columbian Exchange led indirectly to an increase in slavery. The cultivation of financially lucrative crops in the Americas, along with the decimation of indigenous populations from disease, resulted in a demand for labor that was met with the abduction and enslavement of over ten million Africans from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Thus, the Atlantic slave trade became the largest involuntary migration in human history.

The simultaneous growth of European empires and the emergence of the Atlantic slave trade in the 1500s was not a coincidence. European empires that sought to explore and colonize territories in the Americas also attempted to forge lucrative commercial networks in other parts of the Atlantic world, which led to a "Triangular Trade" system. European sailors shipped goods from Eurasia to Africa, where they exchanged them for enslaved Africans, who were transported to the Americas through a sea-lane called the Middle Passage. Once in the Americas, African slaves were traded for New World produce, mostly raw materials. Thus, the trade in African slaves became a critical component of the development of the Atlantic economy for the next 350 years;

and Africans, therefore, became an integral part of the history of America. Slaves brought their culture, traditions, and skills with them, effectively altering the economic, social, and cultural history of the New World. Today, most people of African descent in the Americas can account for their families' passage from Africa to the Americas through the Atlantic slave trade.

The Logic of Enslavement

Even though slavery in Europe had steadily diminished in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it was revived on a gigantic scale on the African continent abruptly after the discovery of America. By the early 1500s, Europeans had turned to the quick and highly profitable cultivation of colonial cash crops, such as sugar, cotton, coffee, and tobacco, which required constant attention and exhausting labor. Indian slavery had started as early as the first years of the European advent, even in North America. For example, in 1501, explorers Gaspar and Miguel Corte-Real, on a voyage to Greenland, captured about sixty Native American men in Labrador, who would later be sold as slaves back in Portugal. However, very soon, with the indigenous population decimated by disease, Europeans responded to their pressing labor shortage by importing enslaved Africans, who would be put to work in mines and on plantations of the New World in astonishing numbers.

Papal bulls of 1452, 1455, and 1493 had authenticated both the slave trade and the colonization of non-Christian lands. In fact, the “Dum Diversas” (1452) and “Inter Caetera” (1493) papal decrees authorized Portugal to open West Africa to the slave trade, which eventually evolved into the Atlantic slave trade. Thanks to these official Vatican documents, prior to the discovery of the New World many slave traders had exonerated themselves as being instruments of divine law, but during the sixteenth century they began embracing more profit-driven motives that allowed the slave trade to prosper. Still, the advent of race-based slavery traces back to 1501, when the first authorization from a European nation for transporting black slaves to the Americas was issued, in this case by the Spanish crown. This was ultimately to be revoked two years later, and finally reinstated in 1510.

It was Father Bartolomé de Las Casas, “Protector of the Indians,” who, for the first time, controversially suggested the use of Africans rather than Indians as slaves in the New World, in his “Memorial de Remedios para Las Indias” of 1516. In this work, intended for the Spanish king, Las Casas recommended offering settlers in the Americas rights to import African slaves to stimulate the New World’s economy. Surprisingly, he believed that the best way to relieve the suffering of the Indians was to enslave Africans. As a result, in 1518, Charles V of Spain granted a license giving permission to import 4,000 enslaved Africans into the “Indies.” Nine years later, in 1527, after learning of the cruel methods the Portuguese used to obtain slaves, Las Casas retracted his advocacy for African slavery in his book *History of the Indies*: “I soon repented and judged myself guilty of ignorance. I came to realize that black slavery was as unjust as Indian slavery . . . and I was not sure that my ignorance and good faith would secure me in the eyes of God.” But Las Casas’ revelation came too late—the use of African slaves had already become a fundamental support of the colonial economy.

It is unknown whether Las Casas was aware of a very similar suggestion that had been made to the Spanish king by Hieronymite Fathers. The Hieronymite order had been sent to the Caribbean at the turn of the sixteenth century to investigate accusations of atrocities against the indigenous populations at the hands of colonists, which led to the Spanish monarchy entrusting the Hieronymites with the religious care of the West Indies. In a letter dated January 1518, a Hieronymite Father wrote how they had come to the conclusion that African slaves should be introduced in the Americas, and recommended that licenses be issued to colonists allowing them to import slaves. This recommendation was supported by Alonso de Zuazo, a colonial judge, who had been sent to assist the Hieronymite Fathers in resolving the problems between the colonists and the indigenous populations. In his letter, which accompanied that of the Hieronymite Father, to the Spanish King Charles I and William de Croÿ, Charles's chamberlain, he not only recommended the use of African slaves instead of Amerindians, but he even specified that African men and women should be transported to the New World, especially between the ages of fifteen and twenty, and that they should be allowed marry, and thus produce further slaves, which he anticipated would bring in much gold. By the mid-sixteenth century, when forced indigenous labor had been institutionalized, others were still writing to the same effect. Even the infamous Spanish Bishop Diego de Landa, known for his cruelty towards the Mayan civilization, which led to the destruction of their history, literature, and traditions, was a defender of using African slaves instead of Indians. All this resulted in Pope Paul III's decree in 1548 confirming the right of the clergy and laity to breed slaves.

Even Scholasticism, the prevalent philosophical school that dominated teaching and thought in Europe in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, supported enslaving Africans rather than Indians. According to Scholastic philosophers, blacks were inferior to both whites and Indians, because they had been born in sin. They justified slavery by stating that sinners could be enslaved to be brought back into Christianity, and thus, later they could enjoy a higher level of material existence. Gomes Eanes de Zurara, one of the chroniclers of Portugal, became the main advocate of the idea that slavery was an efficient method of bringing the light of Christian faith to Africans. The scarcity of labor in the New World combined with religious motives and economic considerations to overcome all objections to slavery by the mid-sixteenth century. By the end of the century, all European nations with interest in America, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, had openly engaged in transporting slaves from the coast of Africa to the New World.

African Slaves in North America

Even though the first reported African slaves arrived in the New World in 1502, after the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella granted permission to the colonists of the Caribbean to import African slaves, institutionalized slavery did not reach North America until 1619, when Dutch sailors brought twenty African slaves to the port of Jamestown, Virginia to be sold. However, Africans slaves had been present on the North American continent as early as the time of discovery. They had accompanied many European explorers and conquistadores; they intermarried with Native Americans, and settled throughout the present territory of the United States.

Historians calculate that in the sixteenth century Europeans brought nearly a quarter of a million Africans to the Americas. Well over ninety percent of African slaves were imported into the Caribbean and South America. In fact, the first reference to African slaves travelling to the present-day continental United States dates from 1526. According to contemporary accounts, African slaves participated in the Spanish explorer Lucas Vásquez de Ayllón's short-lived San Miguel de Gualdape colony, in present-day South Carolina. The ill-fated colony only withstood about three months due to hunger, disease, and internal leadership problems. After Vásquez de Ayllón's death in October of 1526, most of the survivors abandoned the colony and fled to the island of Hispaniola. The African slaves escaped and took refuge among local groups, after which their path was lost, but it is probable that they settled with the indigenous tribes. But the 1526 colony would not be the last instance in the sixteenth century of African slave labor within the present territory of the United States. According to contemporary chronicles, in 1565, the colony of Saint Augustine in Florida, the first permanent European settlement in North America, included an unknown number of African slaves.

Other slaves made a name for themselves by exploring the present-day continental United States. An enslaved servant by the name of Estevanico (ca. 1500–1539) was the first Africa-born person to travel across the Southwest. Having been transported to Spain by Portuguese merchants, he was sold to Andrés Dorantes de Carranza, a Spanish nobleman. He accompanied Dorantes to Hispaniola and Cuba with Pánfilo de Narváez's ill-fated expedition of 1527 to colonize Florida and the Gulf Coast. After they were shipwrecked on Galveston Island on the Texas coast, they spent six years traveling across Texas, Arizona, and the Sonoran Desert, until reaching safety in New Spain. Estevanico would visit North America once more in his life. In 1539, he participated in an expedition to find the fabled golden city of Cíbola, which took him to Zuni territory, in New Mexico, where he was apparently killed by locals suspicious of his intentions.

Contemporary accounts tell us of other African slaves, not as well known as Estevanico, travelling to North America as part of exploratory missions. In 1540, Francisco Vásquez de Coronado set out north from Mexico with a large expeditionary group that included several African slaves, in search once again of the mythical golden city of Cíbola. Not much is known about these nameless slaves apart from the fact that they accompanied Coronado through much of the Southwest, maybe as far as central Kansas. They were the first Africans to set eyes on the Grand Canyon.

Still, in the sixteenth century, African slavery was not widespread in the present-day United States, since Europeans only built modest fledgling settlements, in contrast to the large colonies in Central and South America, for which they needed a large labor force. In fact, at this point in time, Europeans were able to satisfy their need for slaves while in North America by carrying out slave raids among the natives. For example, the Chamuscado and Rodriguez expedition, which visited New Mexico in 1581–1582, executed several slave raids against the Conchos and Cabris tribes. Even though native slavery was prohibited during the first half of the sixteenth century, some enslavement continued under the guise of just war. Due to these raids, and the lack of permanent settlements in the northern part of the continent, the transatlantic slave trade did not have widespread impact in North America until the seventeenth century, and did not reach its height until the eighteenth century.

Global Consequences of the Atlantic Slave Trade

The presence of African slaves in the Americas had profound consequences, not only for the Americas, but for the rest of the world as well. The use of African slaves was fundamental to growing colonial cash crops, which were exported to Europe. European goods, in turn, were used to purchase African slaves, who were then brought from Africa to the Americas on the Middle Passage. Thus, the first and most obvious consequence was an increase in the contact between Europeans and Africans, and an influx of wealth into both continents in the sixteenth century.

Africa's integration into the mercantile structure of the world meant that many African ports and their communities used their position as middlemen to their advantage. In western Africa, Benin grew increasingly rich, and would soon become known as the "Slave Coast." For many decades, historians claimed that Europeans, or mercenaries hired by them, physically captured and enslaved Africans and transported them to the Americas. However, even though Europeans did engage in slave raiding, most Africans were enslaved by Africans. The slave trade was a lucrative business that not only involved African rulers and their entourages, but much larger machinery. Internal wars in Africa, and not European raids, were the main source of enslavement. Even though not all wars within Africa were primarily motivated to obtain more slaves, slavery did lead to an increase in conflicts on the continent. On the other hand, there was a reduction in criminal activity, since it was a regular practice for African kings to sell criminals into slavery so they could not commit more crimes in their kingdoms.

Prominent Africanist scholar Walter Rodney has described how the Atlantic slave trade contributed to Africa's depopulation, to the development of more predatory political systems, and to a greater gap between rich and poor within Africa. Even though other historians, like John Fage, have rejected Rodney's claims that the Atlantic slave trade led to serious depopulation in Africa, and that the slave trade led to political and economic growth on the continent, it is clear that the transportation of African slaves to the Americas had many consequences.

Enslaved Africans came primarily from a region stretching from the Senegal River in northern Africa to present-day Angola in the south. It is unarguable that New World slavery led to depopulation in West and Central Africa; however, the severity of it is still today a point of controversy. It has been calculated that the Atlantic slave trade reduced the adult male population in some regions by approximately twenty percent. As we have seen, a majority of slaves transported to the New World were men; in fact, about two to three men for every woman in Central and South America (at this early stage, we do not have any records of African women being transported to North America). This imbalance altered the ratio of adult men to adult women, and of working adults to dependents in Africa. Subsequently, social dynamics were altered in West and Central Africa: polygamy became more acceptable and prevalent, and traditional male forms of work, such as hunting, fishing, livestock rearing, and clearing of fields became less practiced, which led directly to a less protein-rich diet and a reduction in agricultural productivity.

Slavery and wars transformed African culture, society, and even religious practices. Some scholars have argued that this era of constant violence led some

African groups to forsake their ancestral gods and embrace Christianity and Islam; other scholars believe that it deepened traditional beliefs in the metaphysical and witchcraft. Still nowadays, in many cultures of Western and Central Africa, witches are thought to kidnap solitary individuals to enslave or consume them.

Only a handful of research papers focus on the effects of the early Atlantic slave trade on the Old World, but obviously its effects on Europe were less adverse than those on Africa. As with triangular trade, slavery profits strengthened the merchant class, which resulted in stronger pro-business institutions and increased economic growth. In the nineteenth century, German economic historian Karl Marx claimed that “the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production.” According to Marx, the profits obtained from the slave trade allowed Europe to accumulate the wealth that gave rise to the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century. Many other scholars, including Seymour Drescher and Robert Antsey, have supported similar views regarding how the slave trade encouraged capital accumulation before the Industrial Revolution. It is clear that the slave trade brought fabulous wealth to many European nations, enabling them to cultivate sophisticated artistic and cultural traditions employing expensive and luxurious materials.

The Atlantic slave trade also had indirect effects in western and southern Asia. For centuries, Muslim Arab traders had conducted a slave trade between East Africa and Asia, but unlike the European traders, they had mostly carried out their raids under commission, and thus did fewer raids and captured fewer Africans at a time. However, the number of raids and size of the captured groups increased incrementally in the sixteenth century. Some scholars argue that this was due to Muslim rulers' need to conscript larger armies, in many cases of African slaves, to defend their territories from Europeans. Their most notable foes were the Portuguese, whose newly acquired wealth—from exploiting the Americas and their active participation in the slave trade—had allowed them to increase their fleet and carry out more transoceanic voyages.

Conclusions

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, powerful European nations launched the first stage of global imperialism. Once the Spanish and Portuguese had gained control of the southern sea routes, French and English efforts to reach Asia shifted northward in the quest to find a northwest passage. But by the seventeenth century, after several generations of seamen had searched for it, the hope of a route across the northern part of North America had faded. Still, exploration and early colonization efforts in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries added significant new information about the world. However, despite growing geographical knowledge, many erroneous representations on maps of this period would influence navigators', explorers', and colonists' understanding of their surroundings, particularly in North America, for centuries. A clear example is Flemish cartographer Cornelius Wytfliet's *Descriptionis Ptolemaicae Augmentum* (1597), the first ever atlas devoted solely to the New World. Commissioned by Philip II of Spain, this atlas collected the history of the first European encounters with the Americas, but its maps reveal the limitations of geographical knowledge in the period. The world map still depicted the “Straits of Anian” – a mythical Chinese province

mentioned in the 1559 edition of Marco Polo's book – connecting to the fabled Northwest Passage from the Atlantic Ocean. This and other geographical inaccuracies would persist for decades. It was not until the seventeenth century that the North American continent would be extensively explored and charted.

European efforts to settle in North America would finally bear fruit in the seventeenth century, in the hands of England and France, who had successfully challenged Spain's claim to a monopoly over the continent. As the end of the sixteenth century neared, changes in European politics, mostly major substitutions in rulers, finally gave France and England the breathing space necessary to plan settlements in the New World. King Philip II of Spain died in 1598, and was replaced by his less combative son, Philip III. Thus, hostilities between Spain and England came to an end not long after Queen Elizabeth's death in 1603 and the accession of James I to the English throne. In France, Henry III died in 1589 and was succeeded by Henry of Navarre, who, in the interest of internal peace, granted extensive toleration to Protestants. Thus, the rivalry between France and England began to play out on a new stage—North America. While the period between 1492 and 1600 marked the "Opening of the Atlantic Ocean," the seventeenth century would see the "Opening of North America."

Guiding Questions

- What is the historical significance of 1492?
- Why do historians prefer using the term “encounter” rather than “discovery” when referring to the European arrival to the Americas?
- What inventions in the 15th century, particularly in nautical science, made it possible for men to venture out into the Atlantic Ocean?
- Why did Spain and Portugal take the lead in the search for a route to the East?
- Why did France and England focus their exploring and colonizing efforts on North America?
- Why is the reign of Elizabeth I of England considered one of the greatest epochs of British maritime history?
- Why did the first English settlements in North America fail?
- How did Sir Francis Drake’s hatred for the Spanish help England’s efforts to explore and colonize North America?
- What were the unintended consequences of Christopher Columbus’s discovery of America?
- How did the European arrival change North American indigenous peoples’ behavior?
- Why did Old World diseases spread so virulently across the Americas?
- How did the Columbian Exchange shape the Atlantic slave trade?
- Why did Bartolome de Las Casas, at an early stage, support the use of African slaves in the Americas?
- How did African slaves participate in the exploration of North America in the period from 1492 to 1600?
- What were the long-term global effects of the Atlantic slave trade?

Glossary

- **Alonso Álvarez de Pineda:** (1494–1520) Spanish navigator and explorer who, in 1519, became the first European to visit present-day western Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.
- **Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca:** (ca. 1488 – ca. 1558) Spanish explorer. One of the four survivors of the disastrous Pánfilo de Narváez' expedition to Florida in 1527 who, upon his return to Spain, wrote an account of his experiences in the New World, *La Relación* (1542), full of allusions to fabulous treasures and gold, which lured many contemporaries to participate in the race to explore the Americas.
- **Amerigo Vespucci:** (1454–1512) Italian navigator and explorer who proved that the New World that Christopher Columbus found was not Asia but a new continent. The name “America” is derived from the feminized Latin version of his given name.
- **Amerindian:** Alternate term for American Indian and Native American. It refers to any of the indigenous peoples of the American continent.
- **Atlantic Slave Trade:** Also known as the transatlantic slave trade. Lasting from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, it was the largest long-distance coerced movement of people in history—from Africa across the Atlantic to the Americas.
- **Bartolomeu Dias:** (ca. 1450–1500) Portuguese navigator and explorer who captained the first successful European expedition around the Cape of Good Hope, in 1488, opening the sea route to Asia via the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.
- **Bartolome de Las Casas:** (ca. 1484–1566) Spanish Dominican friar, historian, and first “Protector of the Indians.” In his most famous book *Historia de las Indias*, he exposed the great oppression suffered by the Native Americans at the hands of Europeans, and called for the abolition of Indian slavery.
- **Caravel:** Small three-masted sailing ship. Developed in the fourteenth century, initially with square sails for the Mediterranean Sea, it was later adapted for the Atlantic Ocean when equipped with lateen sails. Caravels were the most used vessels during the Age of Discovery.
- **Catholic Monarchs:** The collective title referring to Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, whose marriage in 1469 led to the unification of Spain. They sponsored Christopher Columbus's voyage of discovery.
- **Christopher Columbus:** (1451–1506) Italian navigator, explorer, and colonizer who, under the sponsorship of the Spanish Crown, discovered the New World.

His four voyages (1492–93, 1493–96, 1498–1500, and 1502–04) opened the way for European exploration, exploitation, and colonization of the Americas.

- **Cibola, Seven Golden Cities of:** Legendary cities of gold and other riches sought in the sixteenth century by explorers in North America.
- **Columbian Exchange:** Term coined by Professor Alfred W. Crosby in his 1972 book *The Columbian Exchange*; refers to the new era opened by Christopher Columbus's 1492 voyage of discovery that led to the exchange of diseases, ideas, food crops, and population between the Western and Eastern Hemispheres.
- **Donnacona:** (died ca. 1539) Iroquoian chief of the St. Lawrence Iroquoian village of Stadacona, near present-day Quebec City, who befriended French explorer Jacques Cartier and travelled with him to France in hopes of establishing commercial relations between the Iroquoians and France. He became fatally ill and died in France.
- **Estevan Gómez:** (ca. 1483–1538) Portuguese navigator and explorer who, in 1524–25, under Spanish sponsorship, became the first European to sail along the North American Atlantic coast, from Nova Scotia—entering New York Harbor and the Hudson River—to Florida.
- **Estevanico:** (ca. 1500–1539) African slave and member of the Spanish Narváez expedition to northern New Spain (southwestern U.S.). He was the first Africa-born person to travel to the present-day continental United States.
- **Hernando de Soto:** (ca. 1497–1542), Spanish explorer who, between 1539 and 1542, explored the territories of the present states of Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Texas. He was the first European to visit the Mississippi River.
- **Humphrey Gilbert:** (ca. 1539–1583) English navigator and explorer who annexed Newfoundland to England. Also, in 1582, unsuccessfully attempted to establish the first English colony in the New World.
- **Ferdinand Magellan:** (ca. 1480–1521) Portuguese navigator and explorer who captained the first expedition to circumnavigate the earth (1519–1521). Also the first to sail from the Atlantic Ocean into the Pacific Ocean after discovering the Strait of Magellan, at the southern tip of South America.
- **Francis Drake, Sir:** (1540–1596) English navigator and privateer who captained the second circumnavigation of the earth (1577–1580), claiming a portion of California for England under the name of “Nova Albion” (New England). The stoutest supporter of war against Spain, his devastating attacks and raids on Spanish territories and ships made him a hero in England, and a pirate in Spain.

- **Gaspar and Miguel Corte-Real:** (ca. 1450 – ca. 1501, and ca. 1448–1502) Portuguese navigators and explorers who, on their 1499 and 1501 voyages, explored the coast of Greenland. Both were lost at sea.
- **Giovanni da Verrazzano:** (1485–1528) Italian navigator who, in 1524, under French sponsorship, became the first European to explore the Atlantic coast of North America between the Carolinas and Newfoundland.
- **Jacques Cartier:** (1491–1557) French navigator whose explorations of the Atlantic coast of North America in 1534, 1535, and 1541–42 paved the way for later French claims to North America.
- **Jean-François de La Rocque de Roberval:** (ca. 1500–1560) French nobleman and explorer who, in 1541, received a commission from Francis I to create a settlement in North America. His New France colony in present-day Quebec was abandoned by its settlers in less than two years due to harsh weather.
- **João Fernandes Lavrador:** (1486–1505) Portuguese navigator who, in 1498, became the first European to explore the Atlantic coast of Northern America, including the Labrador Peninsula, which bears his name.
- **João Rodrigues Cabrilho:** (ca. 1499–1543) Portuguese explorer who, under Spanish sponsorship, became the first European to explore the coast of the present state of California.
- **John Cabot:** (ca. 1450 – ca. 1599) Italian navigator who, in 1497, under English sponsorship, captained the first voyage of discovery and exploration to North America, which paved the way for the later British claim to Canada.
- **John White:** (ca. 1540 – ca. 1593) English artist, explorer, and colonist who visited North America twice, once as a member of the 1577 expedition captained by Martin Frobisher to Greenland and Baffin Island, and again in 1587 as a member of Sir Walter Raleigh's expedition to establish a colony in North America. He became the governor of the Roanoke Island Colony, and vanished when the settlement was abandoned in 1593.
- **Lucas Vázquez de Ayllón:** (ca. 1475–1526) Spanish explorer who, in 1526, established the San Miguel de Gualdape colony, the first European attempt at a settlement in the present-day continental United States. Its exact location is controversial, but it is probable that it was near present-day Sapelo Island, Georgia. The settlement was abandoned in 1527.
- **Martin Frobisher:** (ca. 1535–1594) English navigator and explorer who made three voyages (1576, 1577, and 1578) to the Atlantic coast of North America, particularly the areas around Resolution Island in northeastern Canada. In 1576, he became the first European to visit Frobisher Bay, which bears his name.

- **Middle Passage:** The route taken by slave ships, on which millions of people from Africa were taken to the Americas during the Atlantic slave trade.
- **New World:** Term coined in the sixteenth century by Italian historian Pietro Martire d'Anghiera (1457–1526) to refer to the new lands found by Christopher Columbus—the Americas.
- **Nova Albion (or New Albion):** The territories claimed by Sir Francis Drake for England in 1579. It is generally accepted among the academic community that Nova Albion was located on the coast of Northern California; however, other possibilities include Whale Cove and Nehalem Bay in Oregon, and Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada.
- **Old World:** The parts of the world—Europe, Africa, and Asia—known by Europeans before Christopher Columbus's discovery of the Americas.
- **Pánfilo de Narváez:** (1478–1528) Spanish explorer who led an expedition to Florida in 1527. Of the six hundred men who accompanied the Spanish commander, only four survived.
- **Pedro Menéndez de Avilés:** (1519–1574) Spanish explorer who, in 1565, founded the Saint Augustine colony, in present-day Florida, the oldest continuously settled city in the continental United States.
- **Richard Eden:** (ca. 1520–1576) English writer who, in 1555, published his *Decades of the New World*, the first compendium in English of information concerning Spanish exploits in America.
- **Richard Hakluyt:** (ca. 1552–1616) English writer and geographer, noted for his efforts to promote English overseas expansion, particularly the colonization of North America. His work, *The Principal Navigations, Voiages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589–1600) is still the best source for studying early English voyages of exploration to North America.
- **Roanoke Island Colony:** Also known as “The Lost Colony.” Founded in 1584 in present-day North Carolina, it was an early English settlement sponsored by Sir Walter Raleigh. Because of tensions with local Native Americans, the settlement was abandoned, and its hundred-plus colonists' fate is still unknown.
- **Saint Augustine, Florida:** Founded by Spanish explorer Pedro Menéndez de Avilés in 1565, it is the oldest continuously settled city in the continental United States.

- **Treaty of Tordesillas:** Agreement signed on June 7, 1494, between Spain and Portugal, which divided the newly discovered lands outside Europe between both kingdoms along a meridian 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde islands.
- **Vasco da Gama:** (ca. 1460–1524) Portuguese navigator and explorer who captained the first successful European expedition from Europe to India around the Cape of Good Hope, in 1497.
- **Vasco Núñez de Balboa:** (1475–1519) Spanish explorer who, in 1513, led the first successful European expedition to reach the Pacific Ocean from the New World by crossing the Isthmus of Panama.
- **Walter Raleigh, Sir:** (ca. 1554–1618) English statesman, navigator, and explorer. Being a great supporter of early English colonization of North America, he attempted twice to establish a settlement on Roanoke Island, off the coast of North Carolina. Although they failed, these ill-fated colonies paved the way for later English settlements in North America.

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