

PERIOD 1: 1491–1607

Chapter 1 A New World of Many Cultures, 1491–1607

Today, the United States is a synthesis, or combination, of people from around the world. The first people arrived in the Americas at least 10,000 years ago. Chapter 1 begins with a survey of how these people lived in 1491, the year before the arrival of European Christopher Columbus in the Americas. His arrival initiated lasting contact between people on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean. The chapter and the period end in 1607, with the founding of the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown, Virginia. The Jamestown settlement marks the beginning of the framework of a new nation.

Period Perspectives Contact between Europeans and the natives of America touched off a trans-Atlantic trade in animals, plants, and germs known as the Columbian Exchange. This trade altered the way people around the globe lived and thought. Within a hundred years, Spanish and Portuguese explorers and settlers developed colonies using natives and enslaved Africans for labor in agriculture and mining precious metals. Natives and Africans resisted oppression by maintaining elements of their cultures. The Spanish and the Portuguese were quickly followed to the Americas by the French and the Dutch, and later by the English.

Alternate View Until the mid-20th century, most historians viewed Columbus and European explorers and settlers as great adventurers who founded colonies that developed into modern democracies. However, in recent years, historians have highlighted the vibrant and diverse native cultures that existed in the Americas before the arrival of Columbus, and how European diseases and violence destroyed so much of these cultures. The native population declined by 90 percent after the arrival of Europeans. To demonstrate this greater emphasis on native culture, historians often begin this period in 1491 rather than 1492.

Key Concepts

1.1: Before the arrival of Europeans, native populations in North America developed a wide variety of social, political, and economic structures based in part on interactions with the environment and each other.

1.2: European overseas expansion resulted in the Columbian Exchange, a series of interactions and adaptations among societies across the Atlantic.

1.3: Contacts among American Indians, Africans, and Europeans challenged the worldviews of each group.

Source: *AP United States History Curriculum Framework 2014–2015*.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: WAS COLUMBUS A GREAT HERO?

Over the centuries, Columbus has received both praise for his role as a “discoverer” and blame for his actions as a “conqueror.” In the United States, he has traditionally been viewed as a hero. As early as 1828, Washington Irving wrote a popular biography extolling the explorer’s virtues. The apex of Columbus’s heroic reputation was reached in 1934 when President Franklin Roosevelt declared October 12 a national holiday.

Since the 1990s, however, revisionist histories and biographies have been highly critical of Columbus. His detractors argue that Columbus was simply at the right place at the right time. Europe at the end of the 15th century was ready to expand. If Columbus had not crossed the Atlantic in 1492, some other explorer—perhaps Vespucci or Cabot—would have done so a few years later. According to this interpretation, Columbus was little more than a good navigator and a self-promoter who exploited an opportunity.

Some revisionists take a harsh view of Columbus and regard him not as the first discoverer of America but rather as its first conqueror. They portray him as a religious fanatic in the European Christian tradition who sought to convert the American natives to Christianity and liquidated those who resisted.

The revisionist argument has not gone unanswered. For example, historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. has argued that the chief motivation for Columbus’s deeds was neither greed for gold nor ambition for conquest. What drove him, in Schlesinger’s view, was the challenge of the unknown. Columbus’s apologists admit that millions of Native Americans died as a result of European exploration in the Americas, but they point out that an unknown number had suffered horrible deaths in Aztec sacrifices. Moreover, the mistreatment of Native Americans was perhaps partially offset by such positive results as the gradual development of democratic institutions in the colonies and later the United States.

Historians will continue to debate the nature of Columbus’s achievement. As with other historical questions, distinguishing between fact and fiction and separating a writer’s personal biases from objective reality is difficult. One conclusion is inescapable: As a result of Columbus’s voyages, world history took a sharp turn in a new direction. His explorations established a permanent point of contact between Europeans and the first Americans, and soon between both groups and Africans. People are still living with the consequences of this interaction.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Questions 1–2 refer to the excerpt below.

“To oppose those hordes of northern tribes, singly and alone, would prove certain destruction. We can make no progress in that way. We unite ourselves into one common band of brothers. We must have but one voice. Many voices makes confusion. We must have one fire, one pipe and one war club. This will give us strength. If our warriors are united they can defeat the enemy and drive them from our land; If we do this, we are safe”

“And you of the different nations of the south, and you of the west, may place yourselves under our protection, and we will protect you. We earnestly desire the alliance and friendship of you all”

—Chief Elias Johnson, *Legends, Traditions, and Laws of the Iroquois, or Six Nations, and History of the Tuscarora Indians*, 1881

1. According to Johnson, which of the following was the primary reason for the tribes to unite?
 - (A) To increase trade
 - (B) To provide for self-defense
 - (C) To gain additional land
 - (D) To make the Tuscarora leaders
2. Which of the following factors best explains why Native American efforts to unite were rare?
 - (A) Most tribes were isolated from each other
 - (B) Europeans discouraged tribes from uniting
 - (C) People had different foods and cultures
 - (D) Tribes had traditions of independence

American Indians

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Algonquian

Sioux

Iroquois Confederation

Longhouses

Search for Resources

ENV)

John Cabot

Jacques Cartier

Samuel de Champlain

Henry Hudson

Values and Attitudes

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Questions 3–5 refer to the excerpt below.

“Concerning the treatment of Native American workers:
When they were allowed to go home, they often found it deserted and had no other recourse than to go out into the woods to find food and to die. When they fell ill, which was very frequently because they are a delicate people unaccustomed to such work, the Spaniards did not believe them and pitilessly called them lazy dogs, and kicked and beat them; and when illness was apparent they sent them home as useless, giving them some cassava for the twenty- to eighty-league journey. They would go then, falling into the first stream and dying there in desperation; others would hold on longer, but very few ever made it home. I sometimes came upon dead bodies on my way, and upon others who were gasping and moaning in their death agony, repeating ‘Hungry, hungry.’”

—Bartolomé de Las Casas, priest and social reformer,
In Defense of the Indian, c. 1550

3. Which of the following best explains the underlying cause of the Spanish actions described by Las Casas?
 - (A) Racism
 - (B) Religion
 - (C) Desire for wealth
 - (D) Fear of native power
4. The primary audience that Las Casas hoped to influence by his writing was
 - (A) the monarchs of Spain
 - (B) the Roman Catholic Church
 - (C) the conquistadores
 - (D) the Native Americans
5. Which of the following factors that affected Native Americans is directly implied but not stated in this excerpt?
 - (A) Many Spaniards were sympathetic to the Native Americans
 - (B) The Catholic Church was trying to help the Native Americans
 - (C) European diseases were killing millions of Native Americans
 - (D) The Spanish faced strong resistance from Native Americans

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Questions 6–7 refer to the excerpt below.

“Apart from his navigational skills, what most set Columbus apart from other Europeans of his day were not the things that he believed, but the intensity with which he believed in them and the determination with which he acted upon those beliefs. . . .

“Columbus was, in most respects, merely an especially active and dramatic embodiment of the European—and especially the Mediterranean—mind and soul of his time: a religious fanatic obsessed with the conversion, conquest, or liquidation of all non-Christians; a latter-day Crusader in search of personal wealth and fame, who expected the enormous and mysterious world he had found to be filled with monstrous races inhabiting wild forests, and with golden people living in Eden.”

—David E. Stannard, historian, *American Holocaust: Columbus and the Conquest of the New World*, 1992

6. Which of the following European nations would be the least likely to share the characteristics Stannard uses in describing Columbus?
- (A) England
 - (B) France
 - (C) Portugal
 - (D) Spain
7. Which of the following is a reason historians are most likely to criticize the view of Columbus expressed in this excerpt?
- (A) It ignores the period in which Columbus lived
 - (B) It displays a bias against Christians
 - (C) It skips over the progress brought by Columbus
 - (D) It uses highly charged language

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Questions 8–9 refer to the excerpt below.

“The province of Quivira is 950 leagues from Mexico. Where I reached it, it is in the fortieth degree [of latitude]. . . . I have treated the natives of this province, and all the others whom I found wherever I went, as well as was possible, agreeably to what Your Majesty had commanded, and they have received no harm in any way from me or from those who went in my company. I remained twenty-five days in this province of Quivira, so as to see and explore the country and also to find out whether there was anything beyond which could be of service to Your Majesty, because the guides who had brought me had given me an account of other provinces beyond this. And what I am sure of is that there is not any gold nor any other metal in all that country.”

—Francisco Coronado, Spanish conquistador, *Travels in Quivira*, c. 1542

8. Based on Coronado’s observations, which of the following best describes Spanish efforts in Mexico in the mid-16th century?
- (A) Exploring lands new to them
 - (B) Establishing colonies
 - (C) Warring with Native Americans
 - (D) Spreading the Christian faith
9. The activities of Coronado and other Spanish and Portuguese explorers in the Americas in the 16th century primarily depended on the support of
- (A) merchants and fur traders
 - (B) the Catholic Church
 - (C) the monarchs
 - (D) enslaved Europeans

SHORT-ANSWER

Briefly answer

Question 1. A

- a) Briefly describe how the motives of the explorers were different from those of the missionaries.
 - religious
 - trade
 - technological
- b) Briefly describe either the economic or the social conditions of the region in the 16th century.

Question 2 is

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- a) Briefly describe the economic conditions of the region in the 16th century.
- b) Briefly describe the social conditions of the region in the 16th century.
- c) Briefly describe the political conditions of the region in the 16th century.

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

Briefly answer the questions in complete sentences. A thesis is not required.

Question 1. Answer a and b.

- a) Briefly explain, with reference to TWO of the factors listed below, how there came together in Europe in the early 16th century both the motivation and the means to explore and colonize land across the seas.
 - religion
 - trade
 - technology
- b) Briefly explain how ONE of the three factors listed above became either more or less important in colonization by the end of the 16th century.

Question 2 is based on the following excerpt.

“I marvel not a little, right worshipful, that since the first discovery of America (which is now full four score and ten years), after so great conquests and plantings of the Spaniards and Portuguese there, that we of England could never have the grace to set fast footing in such fertile and temperate places as are left as yet unpossessed of them. But . . . I conceive great hope that the time approacheth and now is that we of England may share and part stakes . . . in part of America and other regions as yet undiscovered. . . .

“Yea, if we would behold with the eye of pity how all our prisons are pestered and filled with able men to serve their country, which for small robberies are daily hanged up in great numbers, . . . we would hasten . . . the deducting [conveying] of some colonies of our superfluous people into these temperate and fertile parts of America, which being within six weeks’ sailing of England, are yet unpossessed by any Christians, and seem to offer themselves unto us, stretching nearer unto Her Majesty’s dominions than to other part of Europe.”

—Richard Hakluyt, English writer, *Divers Voyages Touching the Discovery of America and the Islands Adjacent*, 1582

2. Using the excerpt, answer a, b, and c.

- a) Briefly explain ONE reason not in this passage for why England was so far behind Spain and Portugal in colonization.
- b) Briefly explain ONE source where the author believes England can find an excellent source to supply potential colonists for the Americas.
- c) Briefly explain ONE development of the late 16th century that challenges or supports the point of view expressed by the writer.

Mexico. Where I reached it, it is stated the natives of this province, it, as well as was possible, agreed they have received no harm in any company. I remained twenty-day and explore the country and find which could be of service to me had given me an account sure of is that there is not any

istador, *Travels in Quivira*, c. 1542

of the following best describes the century?

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Question 3 is based on the following excerpt.

“I want the natives to develop a friendly attitude toward us because I know that they are a people who can be made free and converted to our Holy Faith more by love than by force. I therefore gave red caps to some and glass beads to others. They hung the beads around their necks, along with some other things of slight value that I gave them. . . . I warned my men to take nothing from the people without giving something in exchange.”

—Christopher Columbus, *Log*, October 12, 1492

3. Using the excerpt, answer a, b, and c.
- Briefly explain the point of view expressed by Columbus in the excerpt.
 - Briefly explain what powerful group in Spain, other than the monarchy, Columbus would be appealing to in the above passage.
 - Provide an example of contact between Europeans and the first inhabitants of America that is not consistent with the above passage.

Question 4. Answer a, b, and c.

- Briefly explain ONE common trait in the policies of two of these European nations toward Native Americans:
 - England
 - France
 - Spain
- Briefly explain ONE difference between the policies of two European nations toward Native Americans.
- Briefly explain ONE reaction of Native Americans to European policies.

THINK AS A HISTORIAN: QUESTIONS ABOUT CAUSATION

Tests often ask students to explain why one event or trait happened after or resulted from another. Which THREE prompts below would best be answered with an essay that emphasizes causation?

- Explain why American Indians were so diverse in 1491.
- How did Spanish colonies differ from English colonies?
- How did religious beliefs influence American colonization?
- Did Columbus reflect the values of the late 15th century Europe?
- Analyze the impact of colonization on Spain.

PERIOD 1 Review: Answering an Essay Question

Writing an Essay: Stating Your Thesis

The AP U.S. History exam includes questions that should be answered with long essays. While no Long-Essay question on the AP US History exam will come exclusively from Period 1, below is an essay question that both helps review the period and initiate the practice of essential essay writing skills. Two aspects of these essays are particularly important to the readers who will be grading them:

1. How clearly does the writer present a thesis (the idea or argument around which the essay is organized) in the essay's introductory paragraph?
2. How well does the writer support his or her thesis with relevant evidence from a historical period?

Sample Question

Writing an essay without a thesis statement would be like attempting to build a house without first laying the foundation. In the same way, practicing the skill of writing the thesis statement is absolutely essential not only to doing well on an AP exam but also to writing a clear and convincing paper on any topic in any subject. Consider three attempts to answer the following essay question:

With the dawn of the 16th century, there came together in Europe both the motivation and the means to explore and colonize territory across the seas. Discuss this statement with reference to two of the following:

- religion
- trade
- technology

Sample Answers

In your view, which of the following THREE introductory paragraphs contains the strongest thesis statement?

- A. By the beginning of the 16th century, Columbus had already explored parts of Central and South America. Immediately following his four voyages, other explorers for Spain were strongly motivated to seek gold and glory in the Americas. Explorers and conquistadores such as Cortés in Mexico, Balboa in Panama, and Pizarro in Peru were quick to establish Spanish claims to large parts of the Americas. An important reason for their being able to do this was the improved design of Spanish ships and such inventions as the compass and the astrolabe.

- B.** In the 16th century, Spain's success in conquering and colonizing American lands was based upon fundamental changes that had already occurred in the culture, economy, and technology of Europe in the preceding century. In religious terms, Spain in the late 1490s had unified itself as a Roman Catholic state by defeating the Moors (or Muslims). In economic terms, the desire for increased trade with Asia provided powerful motivation for voyages of exploration. In technological terms, improvements in navigation in the 1400s made it possible for European ship captains to make the long transatlantic crossing to the Americas and back to return home safely.
- C.** Columbus's first voyage of discovery in 1492 was followed by other voyages by Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian navigators. Of course, Spanish explorers such as Cortés, Pizarro, Coronado, de Soto, and others were the most successful in establishing claims to American land. Motivated by "God, gold, and glory," Cortés conquered the Aztecs of Mexico while Pizarro conquered the Incas of Peru. Cabral's voyage for Portugal helped to establish that nation-state's claim to Brazil. Henry Cabot's 1497 voyage for England was motivated by the desire to find a northwest passage to Asia. Cabot's voyage, however, did not really have important consequences until more than a 100 years later when England under Queen Elizabeth tried unsuccessfully to found colonies in North America.

Evaluating the Answers

Of course, an essay consists of more than just the first paragraph. But if the graders had only these introductions to evaluate, then they would probably rank B as the most effective, C as the least effective, and A in the middle.

Why is paragraph B the strongest of the three? It is the only paragraph that addresses all aspects of the question. It mentions trade as a motivating force, technology as a means, and religious change as another factor in explaining Spain's success in the early 16th century. Thus, a foundation is laid for more detailed paragraphs that follow: one on religious change, a second on economic change, and a third on technological change.

Paragraphs A and C, on the other hand, fall short of the mark because they are not focused on a main idea. Notice that both consist of specific facts that are only loosely related to the question. Paragraph A ranks higher than C because it addresses both motivation and means, whereas C deals with motivation only. Also, C's information about Cabot in the last sentence, while accurate, strays from the subject of the question. Avoid the temptation to overload your first paragraph with information. Concentrate instead on stating a general thesis, making sure that it ties directly to key phrases in question.

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