

▲ In this painting, Native Americans and newly arriving Europeans greet one another.

WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

The First Meeting

The arrival of Europeans in the Americas dramatically affected the native peoples who had lived there for centuries. The consequences included the rapid spread of devastating diseases among the Indian population. These not only claimed lives but also demoralized the survivors. One eyewitness described an epidemic of smallpox in Mexico:

“[The victims] could no longer walk about, but lay in their dwellings and sleeping places. . . . The pustules [fluid-filled sores] that covered people cause great desolation; very many people died of them, and many just starved to death; starvation reigned, and no one took care of the others any longer.”

— Bernardino de Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain*, c. 1575–1580

First Encounters

Objectives

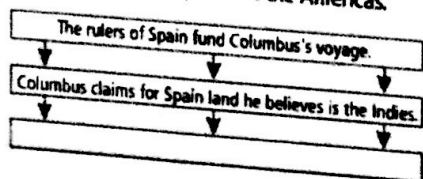
- Identify the goals of Christopher Columbus.
- Explain the consequences of his journey to the Americas.
- Analyze the effects of European contact with the people of the Americas.

Terms and People

Bartolomeu Dias	Ferdinand Magellan
Vasco da Gama	conquistador
Christopher Columbus	Hernán Cortés
John Cabot	Moctezuma
Pedro Alvarez Cabral	Columbian Exchange
Amerigo Vespucci	

NoteTaking

Reading Skill: Understand Effects As you read, complete the chart below with the effects of the arrival of the Europeans in the Americas.



20 Many Cultures Meet



Why It Matters With financial backing from Spain's monarchs, Isabella and Ferdinand, Christopher Columbus found the Americas. He then returned to conquer the land, exploit its wealth, and convert its people to Christianity. That process changed the Americas, Europe, and Africa. **Section Focus Question:** How did European exploration affect the Americas?



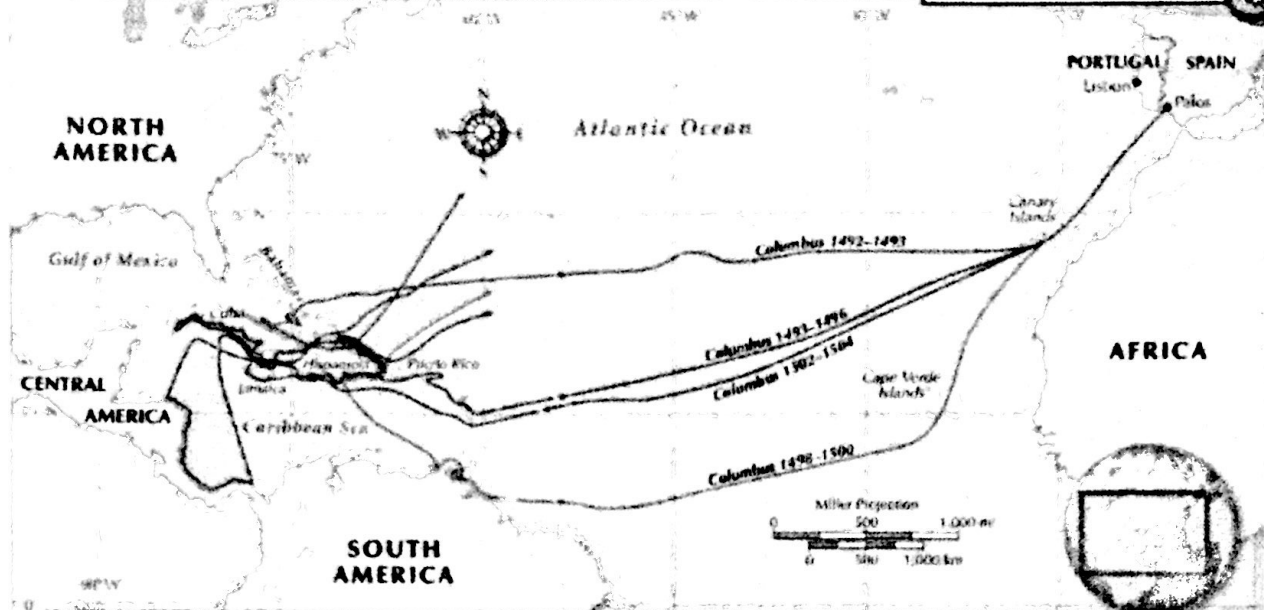
Spain Looks to the West

Throughout the 1400s, the Portuguese continued to sail farther and farther from home. They sought a route around Africa's southern tip into the Indian Ocean. Then, their ships could continue east in search of India, the East Indies, and eventually China. In 1487, the Portuguese mariner **Bartolomeu Dias** learned how to use the counterclockwise winds of the South Atlantic to get around southern Africa. In 1498, **Vasco da Gama** exploited that discovery to reach India, opening an immensely profitable trade. The Portuguese dominated the trade routes south and east around Africa.

By default, in the late 1400s the Spanish looked westward into the open Atlantic. They took inspiration from the profitable discovery and exploitation earlier in the century of islands in the Atlantic—the Azores, Madeiras, and Canaries. Perhaps, they thought, similar islands could be found farther to the west. Furthermore, by leaping from one set of islands to another, perhaps mariners could one day reach the coveted coast of China.

Columbus's Voyages, 1492-1504

Geography Interactive
For: Interactive map
Web Code: ncp-0108



Map Skills After his first voyage to the Americas in 1492, Columbus crossed the Atlantic three more times.

1. Locate: (a) Spain, (b) Hispaniola, (c) Caribbean Sea, (d) Canary Islands, (e) Portugal

2. Analyze Information Around which island did Columbus navigate in 1498?

3. Identify Point of View Based on the map of Columbus's

voyages and what you have read, do you think the Portuguese explorers were better navigators than Columbus? Explain.

Contrary to popular belief, fifteenth-century Europeans did not think that the world was flat. They did, however, worry that China lay too far away and that ships could not complete a voyage west over what they believed was a vast, open ocean.

✓ Checkpoint Why was Spain eager to find a new route across the Atlantic?

The Voyages of Christopher Columbus

To pursue the western dream, Spain relied on an Italian mariner from the city of Genoa named **Christopher Columbus**. He sought a route to China as a means of reviving the Christian struggle against Islam. By converting the Chinese to Christianity, he hoped to recruit their people and use their wealth to assist Europeans in a new crusade.

Columbus dared the westward trip because he underestimated the size of Earth. He believed the planet was 18,000 miles around—almost 7,000 miles smaller than it actually is.

Columbus Investigates Viking Stories An experienced Atlantic mariner, as a young man, Columbus had investigated stories about mysterious lands to the west. He may have sailed to Iceland. If so, he probably heard about the western discoveries by the Vikings from Scandinavia. During the ninth and tenth centuries, Viking mariners had probed the North Atlantic to discover and colonize Iceland and then Greenland. From Greenland, some mariners reached the northeastern coast of North America. About the year 1000, they founded a little

HISTORY MAKERS

Christopher Columbus (1451–1506)

Born in the seaport city of Genoa, Columbus began his seafaring life at 14. Eventually, he went to Portugal for navigator's training.

At first, Columbus approached Alphonso V, the King of Portugal, with his plan to sail to the Indies. But Alphonso, in an unprincipled move, gave the command to another seaman who was instructed to follow Columbus's planned route. The expedition failed, and the crew returned to Portugal. Disgusted by Alphonso's deceit, Columbus set out for Spain, hopeful of achieving success for his petition.



settlement on the northern tip of Newfoundland. But they soon abandoned it because of the isolation and because of resistance by American Indians.

Columbus Sets Sail In 1492, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain provided 3 ships, 90 men, and most of the funding for Columbus's voyage west in search of China. After 33 days at sea, he reached what we now call the Bahamas. Turning south, Columbus found another set of islands. He supposed that these belonged to the East Indies, which lay near the mainland of Asia. Based on his mistaken notion, he referred to the people living on the islands as Indians, a name that has endured to this day.

The presence of native people did not stop Columbus from claiming the land for Spain. As the representative of a Christian nation, Columbus believed that he had the right and duty to dominate the people he found. In his journal, he recorded:

Primary Source

"They should be good servants and intelligent, for I observed that they quickly took in what was said to them, and I believe that they would easily be made Christians, as it appeared to me that they had no religion. I, our Lord being pleased, will take hence, at the time of my departure six natives. . . ."

—Journal of Christopher Columbus, October 1492

Reaction to Columbus's Voyage Columbus continued to explore the islands of the Caribbean. He established a settlement on the island he called Hispaniola. Then, in early 1493, leaving a number of his crew behind, he returned to Spain.

Later that year, Columbus returned to the Caribbean to colonize Hispaniola. The new colony was supposed to produce profits by shipping gold, sugar, and Indian slaves to Spain. The Spanish planned to dominate the natives and forge an empire based in Europe.

Upon his return to Hispaniola, Columbus discovered that the natives had killed the colonists he had left behind. Columbus turned to force. Employing the military advantages of horses, gunpowder, and steel, Columbus killed and captured hundreds of Indians on Hispaniola and the adjacent islands.

Unfortunately for Columbus, his bullying angered the European colonists, who persuaded the king and queen to recall him in 1500. Columbus returned to Spain and died in 1506. The Spanish colonization of the Americas, however, continued.

Columbus had not reached Asia, but he had found a source of riches that enabled European Christendom to grow more powerful and wealthy than the Muslim world. During the next three centuries, the mineral and plantation wealth of the Americas—produced by the labor of African slaves—helped finance the expansion of European commerce. In turn, that commerce promoted the development of new technologies and the growth of military power.

Spain and Portugal Divide the Americas With the assistance of the pope, the Spanish and the Portuguese negotiated the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas. They agreed to split the world of new discoveries by drawing a north-south boundary line through the mid-Atlantic west of the Azores. The Portuguese secured a monopoly to exploit the coast of Africa and the Indian Ocean. In return, the Spanish claimed Columbus's western lands. Further exploration later determined that South America bulged eastward beyond the treaty line, placing Brazil in the Portuguese sphere.

Vocabulary Builder

adjacent—(uh JAY suhnt) *adj.*
near or close

In dividing the world, no one bothered to consult the Native Americans. The Iberians and the pope considered them pagan savages without any rights. The other European kings refused to honor the treaty, for they claimed an equal right to explore and exploit the new lands. But no European leaders thought that the Native Americans could, or should, be left alone in their former isolation and native beliefs.

✓ **Checkpoint** What was Columbus's purpose in sailing west across the Atlantic?

🕒 The Spanish Expand Their American Empire

Until his last breath, Columbus insisted that his discoveries lay close to the coast of China. Other explorers, however, demonstrated that he had reached the margins of two previously unknown continents. In 1497, **John Cabot**, a Genoese mariner employed by the English, sailed to Newfoundland. In tropical waters far to the south, a Portuguese fleet commanded by **Pedro Alvarez Cabral** discovered the coast of Brazil in 1500. A year later, **Amerigo Vespucci**, another Genoese mariner, explored enough of South America's coast to deem it a new continent. European mapmakers began to call the new continents by a variant of Vespucci's first name—America. Between 1519 and 1522, a voyage begun by **Ferdinand Magellan** succeeded in encircling the entire globe, filling in even more of the increasingly detailed picture of Earth.

Cortés Conquers the Aztecs At the start of the 1500s, the Spanish learned of a spectacular Indian empire in central Mexico. Those soldiers who explored central Mexico and defeated the Indian civilizations there were called **conquistadors**. In 1519, the brilliant and ruthless **Hernán Cortés** led a group of about 600 volunteers from Cuba to the coast of Mexico. Born in 1485, Cortés had university training as a lawyer. An ambitious man, he left Spain in 1504 to try his luck in Cuba, where he became rich by acquiring plantations and gold mines. But he hungered for more.

Marching inland, Cortés reached the great central valley, home of the Aztec Empire. The approach of Cortés's army alarmed the Aztec ruler, **Moctezuma**. Hoping to intimidate them with his own power, Moctezuma invited the Spanish into his great city.

The largest and richest city in the Americas, Tenochtitlán occupied a cluster of islands in a large lake. The population of about 200,000 dwarfed Spain's largest city, Seville, which had about 70,000 inhabitants. The Aztec city's central plaza of tall stone pyramid-temples dazzled with a combination of red, blue, and ochre stucco. Bernal Diaz, a soldier, recalled, "These great towns and pyramids and buildings arising from the water, all made of stone seemed like an enchanted vision. . . . Indeed, some of our soldiers asked whether it was not all a dream."

The city's gold and silver inflamed the Spanish desire to conquer and plunder. By seizing and killing Moctezuma, the Spanish provoked violent street fighting that initially drove them from the city. Returning with reinforcements, including many revenge-seeking local Indians who had themselves been brutalized by the Aztecs, Cortés captured Tenochtitlán. The cost, however, was high. Four months of fighting had reduced the city to a bloody rubble.

The Conquistadors

Eager for wealth and fame, the men known as conquistadors established a Spanish empire in the Americas. *What factors allowed a small force of conquistadors to overwhelm larger numbers of Indians?*

