

CHAPTER 2

The Rise of the Atlantic World, 1400–1625

CHAPTER OUTLINE

African and European Backgrounds

West Africa: Tradition and Change

European Culture and Society

Religious Upheavals

The Reformation in England, 1533–1625

Europe and the Atlantic World, 1400–1600

Portugal and the Atlantic, 1400–1500

The “New Slavery” and Racism

To America and Beyond, 1492–1522

Spain’s Conquistadors, 1492–1536

The Columbian Exchange

Footholds in North America, 1512–1625

Spain’s Northern Frontier

France: Colonizing Canada

England and the Atlantic World, 1558–1603

Failure and Success in Virginia, 1603–1625

New England Begins, 1614–1625

A “New Netherland” on the Hudson, 1609–1625

CHAPTER THEMES

During the fifteenth century a series of West African empires—Ghana, Mali, and Songhai— established themselves in the broad belt of grassland separating the Sahara Desert from the forests to the south (known as the Sudan) and gained wealth and fame through trade and conquest. Mali’s best-known city of Timbuktu became an important center of Islamic learning. Several small states arose on coastal West Africa, while still further south four major kingdoms emerged by the fifteenth century. In Africa as in North America, the cohesiveness of kinship groups knitted society together, and in neither area was land treated as a commodity to be bought and sold. Religion permeated African life and, as among Native Americans, spiritual presences were believed to pervade all nature. The arrival of the great monotheistic religions, Islam and Christianity, required a radical break with African tradition.

By the end of the fifteenth century, Europe was approaching the height of the Renaissance, a time of artistic achievement but also of political and economic tensions. Several western European kings, traditionally dependent on contentious nobility for financial support, sought to balance that dependence by turning to bankers and merchants. Peasants, who comprised about 75 percent of the population, paid taxes, rents, and other dues to landlords and to the Church. Manufacturing took place in household workshops, and artisans and merchants formed guilds to control employment, prices, and the sale of goods. Traditional society depended on a strong nuclear family and reciprocal relationships, with prohibitions against usury and “unjust” competition. A new economic outlook, however, was developing that justified both the unimpeded acquisition of wealth and unregulated economic competition. Between the late fifteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Europe’s population almost

doubled. This increase had a tremendous impact on England, with more workers competing for fewer jobs. Enclosures only aggravated the nation's unemployment problems, forcing great numbers of people to wander the countryside or pour into the towns.

Europe was largely Christian, dominated by the power of the Roman Catholic Church. Charges of materialism and corruption led to the Protestant Reformation in which theologians challenged Catholicism in a variety of ways. The Protestant Reformation quickly spawned differing groups of Protestants, and the Catholic Counter-Reformation brought about the modern Roman Catholic Church. Because Protestantism emphasized the ability to read God's word, it encouraged basic education as well as religious indoctrination. Protestantism was firmly established in England by Elizabeth I.

Seeking commercial opportunities, Portugal had by 1488 opened trade in gold and slaves along the African coast and reached the Cape of Good Hope. In the sixteenth century, the African slave trade developed into a flourishing intercontinental business supplying labor to Spanish and Portuguese sugar plantations on Atlantic and Mediterranean islands. The slaves were treated far more harshly than in either the older African slavery or medieval European slavery, and the unprecedented scale of the slave trade resulted in a demographic catastrophe for West Africa and its peoples. Race became the explicit basis of the "new slavery."

Columbus, sailing on behalf of Spain, made landfall in the Americas in 1492. Other Spanish conquistadores followed in his wake and helped to establish *encomiendas* to extract labor and tribute from the Indians. Conquest brought forced labor and mass death, especially from diseases such as smallpox, to Native Americans. When they died in droves, Portuguese slavers imported shiploads of Africans. In a process known as the Columbian Exchange, European animals, including horses, and European and African agricultural products came to the New World. In return, American plants, such as corn, beans, potatoes, and tomatoes, transformed the European diet. New populations of mixed ancestry developed and became an important dimension of the Atlantic world.

Spanish power prevented other nations from establishing colonies in North America during the sixteenth century. Spain moved into what is now the southwestern United States and built an empire by violently subduing the Aztec, Inca and other Indian states. Colonists and traders from other European nations gradually became more active. The fur trade encouraged the French to move into the St. Lawrence River valley and the Dutch into the Hudson River valley. Sweden established a small fur-trading colony in the lower Delaware River valley. But New Sweden was overcome by the Dutch and New Netherland by the English.

The English, while seeking the Northwest Passage to Asia, were also raiding Spanish fleets and ports from Spain to the West Indies. Colonizing attempts were expensive. Only joint-stock companies could gather enough capital. Even a large-scale, well-financed colonizing effort could fail, given the settlers' unpreparedness for the American environment. In 1607 the Virginia Company of London planted a colony on the James River in Virginia. After a year of teetering on the edge of disaster, the colony appointed John Smith to be its leader. He brought order through military discipline and maintained satisfactory relations with the Powhatan Confederacy. When Smith was replaced, the colony nearly foundered again. Worsening relations with the Indians led to war and left the Virginia Company bankrupt. In 1625 Virginia became a royal colony.

Late in 1620 the English founded a settlement at Plymouth, Massachusetts. The Pilgrim community, led by English Separatists, was able to survive only through the assistance of friendly Indians, but this relationship soon deteriorated. However, although the Pilgrims were only one small group, their determination and their ultimate mastery over the Indians were precursors of things to come. Within just years of the arrival of the Pilgrim community at Plymouth, the Dutch had laid claim to Manhattan island and founded the settlement of New Amsterdam—what would become America's most iconic city, New York.

LECTURE SUGGESTIONS

It is quite possible that some members of the class have a conception of the world in which Western nations have traditionally been the centers of culture and technology. Chapter 2 provides an opportunity for instructors to shed light on two other areas that have been significant in world history. A lecture on the West African empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai and on such coastal areas as Benin would do much to correct a commonly held impression of the African past that rests heavily on Edgar Rice Burroughs and Tarzan. Similarly, in America, the empires of the Aztecs and the Incas deserve closer attention. Native North Americans, too, although they organized less complex political structures, should be better understood. The instructor may wish to develop a lecture on one or more of these areas. For Africa, see John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800* (second edition, 1998), and Kevin Shillington, *History of Africa* (third edition, 2012). For what became Spanish America, see Frances F. Berdan, *The Aztecs of Central Mexico: An Imperial Society* (second edition, 2004); Jacques Soustelle, *Daily Life of the Aztecs on the Eve of the Spanish Conquest* (1955; translation, 1970; reprinted 2011); Burr Cartwright Brundage, *Empire of the Inca* (reprint, 1985); and Michael D. Coe, *The Maya* (seventh edition, 2005). For North America, see James A. Brown, “America Before Columbus,” in *Indians in American History*, edited by Frederick E. Hoxie (second edition, 1998), and Wilcomb E. Washburn, *The Indian in America* (1975). For the Americas in general, see Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., editor, *America in 1492: The World of the Indian Peoples Before the Arrival of Columbus* (1992).

A biographical lecture is an excellent way to consider the problem of historical certainty and to discuss with students why history is remembered the way it is. Christopher Columbus would be a good topic. The classic biography is Samuel Eliot Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus* (reprint, 1997). See also Gianni Granzotto, *Christopher Columbus* (1988), and Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Columbus* (1991). In recent years, revisionists have been reexamining Columbus. For hostile views, see Hans Koning, *Columbus: His Enterprise* (1976), or Kirkpatrick Sale, *Christopher Columbus and the Conquest of Paradise* (second edition, 2006).

A second candidate for a biographical lecture is John Smith. See Philip L. Barbour’s superb biography, *The Three Worlds of Captain John Smith* (1964), and Everett Emerson, *Captain John Smith* (revised edition, 1993). The story of Pocahontas could be intertwined here, in a discussion of the ways that Europeans understood events very differently from Native Americans and retold them as part of an heroic narrative.

In 1519 Hernán Cortés mounted an invasion of Mexico with a handful of men and horses. Within a short time he had succeeded in prevailing over the many thousands of the Aztec Empire. The story of this expedition is dramatic and compelling. Contemporary accounts include Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *A True History of the Conquest of New Spain* (1570; many translations). The great nineteenth-century scholar William H. Prescott provided an absorbing history of the conquest. A dramatic reading of Prescott’s account of the *noche triste* of June 30, 1520, would itself create a lecture-room tour de force. See William H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Mexico* (three volumes, 1842). For a brief current account, see J. H. Elliott, “The Spanish Conquest,” in *Colonial Spanish America*, edited by Leslie Bethel (1987). A fuller account is found in Hugh Thomas, *Conquest: Montezuma, Cortes, and the Fall of Old Mexico* (reprint, 1995).

The conquerors were greedy, cruel, and devout Christians. The combination may prove a difficult one for contemporary students to understand. A lecture on the Black Legend and on European attitudes toward Native Americans will be helpful. The Black Legend has its origin in Bartolomé de Las Casas, *Brief Relation of the Destruction of the Indies* (1552; many translations). See also Benjamin Keen, “The Black Legend Revisited: Assumptions and Realities,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 49 (1969): 703–721. European ideas about Native Americans are discussed in Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (new edition, 1999); Benjamin Keen, *The Aztec Image in Western*

Thought (reprint, 1991); and Howard Peckham and Charles Gibson, editors, *Attitudes of Colonial Powers Toward the American Indian* (1969).

A lecture about New Netherland can be particularly revealing of America's multiethnic roots, and of the origins of basic American values that had their origins in the Dutch colony: free trade, individual rights, and religious liberty. For nearly two centuries, Washington Irving's classic satire *A History of New-York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*, by *Diedrich Knickerbocker* (1809) dominated and distorted American understanding of the Dutch in New York. But Russell Shorto's readable *The Island at the Center of the World* (2004), based on a treasure-trove of New Netherland documents, only recently translated, puts the picture to right. In addition, an excellent short overview of New Netherlands is Oliver A. Rink, *Holland on the Hudson: An Economic and Social History of Dutch New York* (1986). A remarkable treasure trove of primary documents from Dutch New York has been translated by the New Netherland Project in Albany, New York: (<http://www.nnp.org/index.shtml>).

A lecture that explores some of the environmental and ecological aspects and consequences of European overseas colonization will attract the interest of many students. The standard overview of this subject is Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (1986).

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONAL SUGGESTIONS

There are still a great many students who believe that Columbus defied a common fifteenth-century idea that the earth is flat. At the very beginning of the course, before any reading has been done, ask students for written opinions on how fifteenth-century Europeans perceived the shape of the earth. Make sure that the question is posed neutrally, perhaps as part of the paperwork that often accompanies the opening of a course. Something like this: Fifteenth-century Europeans generally thought the earth to be pear-shaped; true or false? Fifteenth-century Europeans generally thought the earth to be flat; true or false? Fifteenth-century Europeans generally thought the earth to be spheroid; true or false? If there is any divergence of opinion, the question for the class then becomes, how can the answer be found? The use of original sources so early in the semester would probably present some difficulty, but the idea that studying history involves not only what but why and how may be established. Common observation plays a role. Would a sixteenth-century mariner who had seen ships go hull-down on the horizon think the sea *flat*?

The rigors of sixteenth-century sea travel may encourage new respect for Renaissance seafarers. How and what did they eat? How did they sleep? How did they deal with bodily hygiene? Invite two students to seek the answer to those questions and make a brief statement to the class. Samuel Eliot Morison's biography of Columbus, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea* (reprint, 1997), contains a wealth of material. For more on technology and ordnance, consult Garrett Mattingly, *The Armada* (reprint, 2005).

Students today have the benefit of knowing what happened to Montezuma in Mexico and Atahualpa in Peru. In conjunction with a lecture on the conquistadores, ask students to assume the role of counselor to the emperor and write a one-page letter of advice making recommendations for dealing with the Spanish invaders. Several sources have already been noted. See also Miguel León-Portilla, editor, *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico* (1959; translation, 1962); James Lockhart and Stuart B. Schwartz, *Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish American and Brazil* (1983); William H. Prescott, *History of the Conquest of Peru* (two volumes, 1847); and John Hemming, *The Conquest of the Incas* (reprint, 2003).

In the sixteenth century, Spanish convoys carried treasure from the New World to Iberia. The treasure ships were preyed upon by such men as Francis Drake and John Hawkins—and they won knighthoods. Divide the class in half and ask each member on one side to prepare a statement in defense of the

Chapter 2: The Rise of the Atlantic World, 1400–1625

English practice. Ask the others each to prepare a statement in opposition. Raise the issue for class discussion. See Clarence H. Haring, *The Spanish Empire in America* (revised edition, 1963), and George M. Thomson, *Sir Francis Drake* (1988).

The story of the Atlantic slave trade permeates these centuries. An important book that is able to present that story from the perspective of the Africans themselves is Anne C. Bailey, *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame* (2005). For specific details on 35,000 slave trade voyages, see *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces>).

Every November the nation celebrates Thanksgiving. What was the first Thanksgiving really like? Create a team of three to answer these questions: What happened at that Thanksgiving? What were the motives, attitudes, and actions of the Pilgrims? Of the Indians? Ask for a report to the class. The answers to the three questions will be made with a diminishing degree of certainty, and discussion of the problem of certainty will take the class to a central issue in the writing and study of history. See William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, edited by Charles F. Adams (1912), Samuel Eliot Morison (1952), and Francis Murphy (1981). See also George D. Landon, Jr., *Pilgrim Colony: A History of New Plymouth, 1620–1691* (1975).

PRINT AND NONPRINT RESOURCES

There are several sources for visual materials on pre-Columbian America. Films for the Humanities and Sciences (<http://ffh.films.com/>) offers a six-part series titled *Spain in the New World*. Each episode is thirteen minutes: *The Discovery of America* is based on Columbus's journals; *The Civilizations of Mexico* emphasizes the Aztecs and the Mayas; *The Incas* describes the empire of the Andes; *The Conquest of Mexico and Peru* tries to explain what happened when the Spanish invaded; *End of a Culture* shows the effects of conquest, disease, and forced labor; *A New World Is Born* reveals that assimilation was not complete. From PBS Video (<http://video.pbs.org/>), *The Indians Were There First* deals with North America and emphasizes Iroquois social and political organization. PBS also has a sixty-minute program titled *The Incas*. Background on Africa is available from Films for the Humanities and Sciences: *The Ashanti Kingdom (Ghana)* and *The Glories of Ancient Benin* (both fifteen minutes) and the *Bambara Kingdom of Segou (Mali)* (nineteen minutes). An alternate take on the "discovery" of America argues that explorers from China arrived long before Columbus. See, for example, a documentary available on YouTube (www.youtube.com): *1421: The Year China Discovered America?*

The American History Slide Collection (www.historypictures.com) [Instructional Resources Corp., 1977; 2,100 color and black and white images] offers in Section A, *Explorers and Early America*, a number of artists' renderings, some of them quite interesting, of explorers, Indians, and events of importance. The viewpoint of the artist often dominates the subject and thus presents an opportunity for explanation of pictorial interpretation. Two McGraw-Hill films of note are available. *1492* deals with the first encounter between the Navigator and the Indies. *Cortez and the Legend* deals with the conqueror of the Aztecs. The PBS video *Consequences of Contact* (thirty minutes) deals with the significance of trade and other contacts among Native Americans, Africans, and Europeans by taking a tour through present-day Mexico and New Mexico. PBS also offers *When the White Man Came* (thirteen minutes), which deals with some of the major tribes in North America.

PBS Video has an extensive examination of Columbus and the consequences of his voyages. *Columbus and the Age of Discovery* consists of seven hour-long episodes starting with the world of the fifteenth century and ending with present-day ideas about the Navigator. See also *The Magnificent Voyage of Christopher Columbus* from PBS Video (120 minutes, 1 DVD) and The History Channel's *Columbus the Lost Voyage*, also available from PBS Video (94 minutes, 1 DVD).

PBS offers a powerful dramatic presentation, *Roanoke*, in three one-hour segments. The production maintains interest and tension throughout and treats both the Native Americans and the settlers with a more than usual degree of sensitivity. Also available is *English Colonization*, a thirty-minute program from PBS, which deals with early Chesapeake settlement. Films for the Humanities and Sciences offers *Pocahontas: Her True Story*, a forty-eight-minute examination originally produced by the BBC. Consideration of the 1995 Walt Disney animated film *Pocahontas* should not be undertaken seriously in a history class.

The first episode of the WGBH production *Africans in America*, called "The Terrible Transformation," covers the period from 1450 to 1750 (www.wgbh.org). There is also a resource bank and teacher's guide to the four part series.

Document Set 2–1

The Lost Colony: The 1590 Relief Expedition and the Fate of the Roanoke Colony

1. John White's Relief Expedition, 1590
2. The Roanoke Voyages, 1584–1590

The mystery of the "lost colony" offers students an exciting beginning to the study of English settlement in America. They can observe the drama through the eyes of John White, governor of the colony, when he returned to Roanoke in 1590 to find no one there. Students will of course want to know what happened to the Roanoke colonists. Discussion might focus on White's assumption (was he just rationalizing, or did he have hard evidence?) that the colonists had moved to a nearby island.

The Roanoke story and the excerpt from White's account of the 1590 relief expedition may be used by instructors to explore with students the whole question of European expansion into the New World, as well as to trace the history of the initial English attempts to colonize in the 1580s. The White document does not deal *directly* with motives for colonization. Class discussion of this topic, however, based on the implications of the document and the textbook narrative, should provide an opportunity for instructors to underscore the importance of the second half of the sixteenth century for American history. Among the subjects that might be considered are Portuguese and Spanish activities in the New World, growth of trade, the search for the Northwest Passage, economic and religious conflict with Spain, Queen Elizabeth's "sea dogs," English internal problems, and the English promoters of colonization.

Student groups might be assigned to research and report on Richard Eden's translation of Peter Martyr's *De Orbe Novo, Decades of the New World* (1555); Sir Humphrey Gilbert's *Discourse of a Discovery for a New Passage to Catia* (1576); or perhaps the younger Richard Hakluyt's *Divers Voyages Touching the Discovery of America and the Islands Adjacent* (1582) and *A Discourse on the Western Planting* (1584). These works could be compared with White's account in a discussion of sixteenth-century interest in plantations. On the lost colony itself, students would profit from an assignment to research John White's other writings. For example, his narrative of the initial 1587 voyage and the abortive relief expedition of 1588 provide valuable source material. The purpose of these independent investigations would be to develop student understanding of the expansionist outlook of Elizabethan England. By examining the promotional activities of the "gentlemen adventurers," students will be drawn into discussion of the European origins of American civilization.

Recommended Readings for Document Set 2–1

Kenneth R. Andrews. *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480–1630* (1985).

Chapter 2: The Rise of the Atlantic World, 1400–1625

William Patterson Cumming. *Mapping the North Carolina Coast: Sixteenth Century Cartography and the Roanoke Voyages* (1988).

David B. Durant. *Raleigh's Lost Colony: The Story of the First English Settlements in America* (1981).

Stephen J. Greenblatt. *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (1991).

Karen O. Kupperman. *Roanoke: A Colony Abandoned* (1984).

D. W. Meinig. *Atlantic America, 1492–1800* (1986).

Edmund S. Morgan. *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (1975).

J. H. Perry. *The Age of Reconnaissance* (1963).

David Beers Quinn. *England and the Discovery of America, 1481–1620* (1974).

David Beers Quinn. *Set Fair for Roanoke: Voyages and Colonies, 1584–1606* (1985).

John W. Shirely. *Sir Walter Raleigh and the New World* (1984).

Document Set 2–2

Trying Times at Jamestown: The Early Months of the First Permanent English Colony

1. George Percy's Observations on Jamestown's Early Months, 1607
2. John Smith's Impressions of the Jamestown Experience, 1607
3. Virginia Population Characteristics, 1625
4. The London Company Instructs the Governor in Virginia, 1622
5. The Trappen'd Maiden: Or the Distressed Damsel, ca. Seventeenth Century

Students are often interested in the Jamestown story. Instructors may take advantage of this interest to engage them in critical thinking rather than mere sentimentalizing. After reviewing the documents and considering the analytical problems, students should be prepared to explore the topic further through class discussion. Instructors may assist by introducing historical problem solving, explanation, and textual analysis. By relying on textbook background, students should be able to explain why the colony had such a difficult, precarious start and how, under such circumstances, it succeeded in surviving. Instructors might elevate the quality of discussion by insisting that the classroom analysis go beyond the obvious. For example, that the colonists faced internal dissension, a lack of food, illness, death, and external threats does not in itself constitute adequate inquiry. Why were these factors present? As the documents are carefully scrutinized, these second-order questions may be dealt with and students can advance to a more sophisticated level of historical explanation. Instructors will find excellent resource material for this exercise in Edmund Morgan's *American Slavery, American Freedom* (1975).

Several corollary activities might also be pursued. Instructors could trace the fascinating career of John Smith through lecture and discuss the controversy surrounding his alleged tendency toward self-aggrandizement, which should raise the question of the reliability of his writings as source materials. Some students may be interested in exploring in detail the "starving time" and subsequent years of colonial development, perhaps to the mid-1620s. Others could read Smith's 1624 *General History* and his 1608 *True Relation* and make a comparative analysis of the two accounts. Why does the story of Pocahontas appear in one and not the other? Similarly, students could compare the early years of Jamestown with those of Plymouth, noting similarities and differences. Their point of focus might be an explanation of the Puritans' early success compared to the problem-plagued existence of the Jamestown colonists.

Finally, the statistical material on the Virginia population might be examined for clues to the harsh reality of the colonial experience. Students might be asked to mine the statistics for impressions of mortality, life expectancy, sex ratios, and birth rate. The data, if analyzed with care, can provide valuable insights on not only the quality of life but also the factors and practices that sustained the Virginia colony in its early years. When combined with the company's letter to the governor in Virginia, the data also shed light on the evolution of the colony. The documents may be used to explore the division of labor by gender and women's contribution to Virginia's development in the colonial period.

As students review the evidence, encourage them to concentrate on the questions of survival and the underlying measures that ensured it. They might also be concerned with the reliability of witnesses and the critical analysis of personal memoirs as source material.

Recommended Readings for Document Set 2–2

Philip L. Barbour. *The Three Worlds of Captain John Smith* (1964).

Carl Bridenbaugh. *Jamestown, 1544–1699* (1982).

Wesley Frank Craven. *The Southern Colonies in the Seventeenth Century* (1949).

James Horn. *Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth Century Chesapeake* (1994).

Susan Lebsock. *"A Share of Honour": Virginia Women, 1600–1945* (1984).

A. J. Leo Lemay. *The American Dream of Captain John Smith* (1991).

Edmund S. Morgan. *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (1975).

Richard L. Morton. *Colonial Virginia* (2 vols., 1960).

David Beers Quinn. *Raleigh and the British Empire* (1949).

Bradford Smith. *Captain John Smith* (1953).

Thad Tate and Davie Ammerman, eds. *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century* (1979).

Alden Vaughan. *American Genesis: Captain John Smith and the Founding of Virginia* (1975).

Document Set 2–3

Varieties of Interaction: The Consequence of Cross-Cultural Contact in the New World

1. Bartolomé de Las Casas Indicts the *Conquistadores*, 1542
2. The Aztec View of the Conquest, ca. Sixteenth Century
3. A Jesuit Description of the Missionary Alternative to Violence, 1570
4. Samuel de Champlain Establishes a Trade Relationship with the Indians, 1604
5. Sir Walter Raleigh Describes the English Approach to the Caribbean Indians, 1595
6. The Plymouth Settlers Strike an Agreement with the Indians, 1620
7. William Wood's Impressions of New England Indians, 1639
8. Images of the New World

Chapter 2: The Rise of the Atlantic World, 1400–1625

The documents in this unit hold great potential for the sharpening of student analytical skills. While the textbook will acquaint readers with the Spanish conquest, students should be asked to broaden their examination of white-Indian relations. It is important that instructors provide a lecture introduction to the interpretive problems associated with the record of the conquistadores, as well as the origins of the propaganda attack on Spain by Protestant Europe. With contextual background, students will be prepared for informed discussion.

The textbook's richly detailed description of the Old World religious context for international competition in America will enable instructors to explore with students the contradictory impulses present in the Spanish record. One approach to discussion might be to ask students to compare the accounts of Spain's efforts in Florida and Mexico. The words of Rogel, Las Casas, and Sahagún should provide some opportunity for analysis of both Spanish behavior and the motives of the chroniclers of Spain's New World experience. This discussion should not overlook the importance of propaganda and international diplomatic competition as influences on image making in Europe.

The effort to identify and evaluate images of Indians and the European contacts with native populations also offers an excellent opportunity to deepen students' understanding of historical evidence through the use of nonprint materials. The sixteenth-century illustrations invite students to question the meaning of visual images and uncover the hidden (and sometimes inflammatory) messages communicated by artists. Moreover, an analysis of the contrast between native art and the work of European interpreters of America should provide students with insight into the clash of cultures and the gap between expectations and experience at the point of contact.

The inclusion of non-Spanish materials is designed to encourage students to think of the post-Columbian encounter as an interaction that transcended the exchange of brutalities that marked some of the earliest contacts in Mexico, Peru, and the Caribbean. The documents will challenge students to recognize that not all white-Indian encounters were hostile and that many forms of engagement were evident in a variety of situations. Students might probe the evidence for explanations of these diverse exchanges, including the reasons why some settings produced hostile encounters and others did not. The end result can be greater student sophistication in generalizing about the interaction of Europeans and Indians on the earliest frontier.

For those students who seek further insight on the Black Legend itself, a legalistic framework could be used to scrutinize the charges made by Las Casas. Student teams might be called on to research the arguments made by both Las Casas and his detractors, such as Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. This project would require further examination of both positions, especially that of Sepúlveda, but would enable students to engage in a courtroom-style debate that would force them to confront the arguments of Spaniards in the colonies, as well as those of such humanitarians as Las Casas, whose entreaties could not be completely ignored by the Spanish crown.

Finally, instructors might bring closure to this unit with a capstone discussion of the long-term implications of the issues raised by the documents. Reflecting on both the primary sources and the textbook material, students might discuss the demographic impact of the European conquest on the Indian population. The documents should raise the question of comparative results in areas dominated by the English, French, and Spanish, respectively. This discussion should not fail to address the question of unexplored solutions to the problems created by the clash of cultures in sixteenth-century America, as well as the factors that worked to prevent the implementation of those alternatives.

Recommended Readings for Document Set 2–3

Denis Delâge. *Bitter Feast: Amerindians and Europeans in Northeastern North America, 1600–64* (1993).

Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (1978).

Alfred W. Crosby. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (1972).

Louis Hanke. *The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America* (1965).

Hugh Honour. *The European Vision of America* (1975).

James Lang. *Conquest and Commerce: Spain and England in the Americas* (1975).

James Lockhart and Stuart B. Schwartz. *Early Latin America: A History of Spanish America and Brazil* (1983).

Christopher Miller and George Hammell. "A New Perspective on Indian-White Contact: Cultural Symbols and Colonial Trade." *Journal of American History* 73 (1986): 311–328.

Daniel T. Reff. *Disease, Depopulation and Culture Change in Northwestern New Spain, 1518–1764* (1991).

Kirkpatrick Sale. *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy* (1990).

Neal Salisbury. *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500–1643* (1982).

Audiovisual Resources for Document Set 2–3

Clash of Cultures (videotape—49 min.). Zenger Media, 10200 Jefferson Boulevard, P.O. Box 802, Culver City, Calif. 90232-0802.

The Columbian Exchange (videotape—58 min.). Films for the Humanities and Sciences, P.O. Box 2053, Princeton, N.J. 08543-2053.

1492 Revisited (videotape—28 min.). University of California Extension, Center for Media and Independent Learning, 2176 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, Calif. 94704.

Home Away from Home (videotape—52 min.). Episode 2, *America* Series. Time-Life Films, 110 Eisenhower Drive, Paramus, N.J. 07652.

The Sword and the Cross (videotape—58 min.). Films for the Humanities and Sciences, P.O. Box 2053, Princeton, N.J. 08543-2053.