Chapter 1

The Atlantic World, to 1600
Chapter 1, Section 1

Settlement of the Americas

- The earliest Americans came from the continent of Asia.
- A “land bridge” between Asia and North America allowed migration, the movement of people for the purpose of settling in a new place.
- That land bridge, now covered with water, is known as the Bering Strait.
- Some experts believe that people migrated to the Americas before the land bridge was exposed, entering from more than one point.
- These ancient Americans and their descendants are known as Native Americans, or Indians. Over time, Native American societies settled in different areas and developed a variety of languages and customs.
• The North American environment varies greatly from region to region. The first inhabitants had to adapt their way of life to fit their environment.

• Many early Americans were nomads, people who move their homes regularly in search of food.

• In the Americas, farming practices that began in Mexico, spread to the Southwest region of North America, where corn, squash, beans, and peppers were grown.
Shared Customs and Beliefs

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Despite their different lifestyles, early Native Americans shared a culture that included a common social structure and religion.

• **Social Structure** — Family relationships, called **kinship**, determined the social structure. Kinship groups provided medical and child care, settlement of disputes, and education. Kinship groups were organized by **clans**. A clan is made up of groups of families who are all descended from a common ancestor.

• **Religion** — Early Native Americans believed that the most powerful forces in the world were spiritual. Their religious ceremonies recognized the power of those forces.

• **Preserving Culture** — Early Native Americans relied on oral history to keep their beliefs and customs alive. Through oral history, traditions are passed from generation to generation by word of mouth.
• All Native American groups carried out barter, both within their group and outside it. Trading food and goods was seen as a show of hospitality, friendship, and respect.

• Native American trading routes crisscrossed North America.

• Native Americans used natural trade routes, like the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes, but they also built a network of trading paths.

• These routes often led to centers where Native Americans held trade gatherings during the summer.
Native Americans did not trade, buy, or sell land. They believed that land was part of nature and could not be owned.

The Europeans who arrived in North America in the 1400s did not understand these Indian attitudes about land.

Fundamental differences in beliefs about land would have lasting consequences for both the Native Americans and the European settlers.
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<td><strong>1418</strong></td>
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<td>Marriage of Isabella and Ferdinand unites kingdoms in Spain</td>
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<td><strong>1492</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1500s</strong></td>
<td>Northern Renaissance begins</td>
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Instruments developed by Renaissance scientists made long-range sea travel possible.

- Compass: used to determine direction
- Astrolabe and quadrant: used to determine approximate location

Prince Henry of Portugal, later called Prince Henry the Navigator, established a mariners’ school in Portugal. His seamen developed the caravel, a ship that could sail against the wind as well as with it. Portuguese mariner Vasco da Gama sailed from Portugal to India, opening the first sea route from Europe to Asia.

Spain became determined to surpass Portugal in the race to explore new sea routes and to bring Christianity to new lands.
Europeans had been trading with North Africans since ancient times. The North Africans traded gold which came from their West African trading partners.

Europeans decided to bypass the North Africans and go straight to the West Africans for gold.

In the 1400s, Spain and Portugal competed for that gold as they explored Africa’s Atlantic Coast.

Early relations between the two cultures were mostly peaceful.
Europeans placed a high value on land because it was so scarce (in short supply). Because land was plentiful in Africa, Africans valued labor more than land. The power of African leaders was judged by how many people they ruled, rather than how much land they controlled.

Slaves provided the labor needed to work the land, and also became valuable as items of trade. Slaves in Africa tended to be people who had been captured in war, orphans, criminals, and other rejects of society.
Christopher Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy, in 1451. His father was a merchant. His mother was the daughter of a wool weaver.

After spending some time as a mapmaker and a trader, he traveled to Portugal for navigator training.

He honed his navigational skills on journeys to Iceland, Ireland, and West Africa.

Columbus was ambitious and stubborn. He was highly religious and believed that God had given him a heroic mission: to seek a westward sea route to the “Indies,” meaning China, India, and other Asian lands.
A Daring Expedition

In 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain granted Columbus the title of noble and agreed to sponsor his journey. Spanish nobles and clergy wanted his mission to succeed for several reasons:

- The people of any new non-Christian lands would be ripe for conversion to Catholicism.
- Wealthy merchants and royalty wanted a direct trade route that bypassed the existing Muslim-controlled routes.
- An easier western route to Asia would give Spanish traders an advantage over Portuguese traders.

In 1492, Columbus set off with three ships, the *Niña*, *Pinta*, and *Santa María*. He had underestimated the distance of his journey. Two months after setting sail, he and his crew landed in the Bahamas, instead of Asia.
The Native Americans welcomed Columbus and gave him gifts: parrots, cotton thread, and spears tipped with fish teeth.

Columbus traveled to other islands and collected more gifts—often by force—including Native Americans, to present to the rulers of Spain.

Columbus returned to Spain and was awarded the governorship of the present-day island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean.

Columbus made four more trips to the Americas. When Spanish settlers complained about his governing of Hispaniola, Columbus lost his position.

He died in 1506, never accepting that he had discovered a new continent.
Columbus’s Impact

The Colombian Exchange

• Columbus’s journeys launched a new era of transatlantic trade.
• The Colombian Exchange allowed Europeans and Native Americans to exchange goods, weapons, and culture. Unfortunately, Native Americans became exposed to Europe’s most deadly diseases; they had no resistance to these germs, and many perished.

Treaty of Tordesillas

• European Catholics believed that the Pope had the authority to divide up any newly conquered non-Christian lands. In 1494, Portugal and Spain signed the Treaty of Tordesillas, under which the two countries divided all lands on Earth not already claimed by other Christians.
• Portugal and Spain established plantations or large farming operations that produced crops for sale. Such crops are called cash crops. The plantations supplied the American foods, such as sugar and pineapple, that Europeans demanded.

• At first, Native Americans were kidnapped and forced to work the plantations. But their lack of resistance to many European diseases made them an unreliable work force. As a result, Europeans began bringing enslaved Africans to the Americas.

• Europeans regarded slaves as property, and as such, many slaves were mistreated.

• Estimates of the total number of West Africans abducted and taken to North and South America range from about 9 million to more than 11 million.