



Origins of the American Nation

Chapter 1

US History Honors

Focus Questions:

What were the major patterns of Native American life in North America before Europeans arrived?

How did Indian and European ideas of freedom differ on the eve of contact?

What impelled European explorers to look west across the Atlantic?

What happened when the peoples of the Americas came in contact with Europeans?

What were the chief features of the French and Dutch empires in North America?

Pre-Columbian America



- What shaped the geological history of North America? The Great Ice Age!
- How did people arrive in the Americas?
 - This is a highly controversial discussion
 - Could people have arrived on a land bridge across the Bering Sea?
 - Could people have arrived by boats like the settling of the Pacific islands?
 - Did these peoples follow migrating animals (food sources)?
 - All these theories are possible!



Colossal Olmec Head from La Venta, Mexico ~9' 4" tall

- **What do historians believe?**
 - The peopling of the Americas, prior to European contact, occurred over a period.
- **The earliest civilizations were the Olmec.**
 - 1500 to 1200 BCE
 - Found in Mesoamerica
- **Other Civilizations**
 - Aztec and Maya
 - Built temple structures

Peoples and cultures of central and Latin America

- First peoples to reach Central and Latin America were hunters/gatherers.
- Agriculture became the basis for this civilization as the last ice age ended.
- Centralized government systems will develop in these civilizations.
- These civilizations were very large and will trade with each other.
- True cities develop becoming the centers for government, population, & religion.



Peoples and Cultures of North America



- Great Basin (Nevada and Utah) is not suitable for farming.
- The eastern and plains areas provided more opportunity for crops.
- Largest population center north of Mexico was near present-day St. Louis.

First civilization of North America

- **Mound Builders: lower Mississippi River Valley** whose life centered on a series of semicircular mounds.
 - Extensive trading networks across the continent.
- **Hopi and Zuni = northeastern Arizona**
 - Engaged in long-distance trade
 - Called Pueblo Indians by Spanish
- **Pacific Coast – densely populated**
- **Great Plains – hunted buffalo herds**
- **Eastern North America = Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Iroquois**



Native American Religion, Land and Property

- Although diverse, North American Indian societies shared common characteristics:
 - Religions and religious practices were often directly related to farming and hunting
 - Plants, animals, and non-living things such as water and wind were invested with spiritual power.
 - Shamans, medicine men, and other religious leaders seemed to have supernatural powers.
 - Most religions held a single creator – similar to European religions.
 - Land was never “owned”!
 - Indigenous peoples did not devote themselves to accumulating wealth.



A historical world map, likely a 17th-century edition of Willem Blaeuw's map, showing the world from a perspective centered on the Atlantic Ocean. The map is hand-colored with blue for the oceans and various shades of brown and green for the continents. The text "Early Modern Europe" is overlaid in large, white, bold letters in the center of the map. The map includes labels for major regions like "EUROPA", "ASIA", and "AFRICA", as well as specific seas and oceans such as "MARE ARABICUM", "INDICUM MARE", and "OCEANVS OCCIDENTALIS". The map is framed by a circular border with latitude and longitude markings.

Early Modern Europe



Renaissance and Reformation

- **Renaissance – “rebirth”**
 - Fascination with Greece and Rome
 - Ancient “thinkers” inspired ideas
 - Helped start the scientific revolution
- **Religious Transformations**
 - Martin Luther – 95 Theses
 - Puritanism
 - Issues within the Church of England

Contact

- **Columbus in the New World**
 - October 1492 = Columbus arrived in the Bahamas (probably at Watling Island aka San Salvador)!
 - Columbus would continue to explore Hispaniola and Cuba.





After Columbus

- From 1493 on, European colonization of the New World began.
- Gutenberg's press spread information of the New World :
 - John Cabot (England, 1497) – Newfoundland
 - Pedro Cabral (Portugal, 1500) – Brazil
 - Nicolas de Ovando (Spain, 1502) – permanent settlement in America
 - Amerigo Vespucci (Italian, 1499-1502) – South America
 - Vasco Nuñez de Balboa (1513) – Panama
 - Ferdinand Magellan (1519-1522) – circumnavigation

The Demographic Disaster



North America	3,800,000
Mexico	17,200,000
Central America	5,625,000
Hispaniola	1,000,000
The Caribbean	3,000,000
The Andes	15,700,000
South America	8,620,000
Total	54,945,000