

Chapter Summary

Exploring The Americas

Lesson 1 *The Growth of Trade*

- During the 1400s, the European countries of Spain and Portugal competed to find a sea route to the Indies, islands southeast of Asia. Spices found there were used to preserve food, as medicine, and for flavoring. They were very valuable.
- Instruments had been invented that helped sailors to navigate, including the compass, the astrolabe and the quadrant. New kinds of ships—the caravel and the carrack—were faster and more seaworthy.
- In 1492, Christopher Columbus and his crew set out from Spain in three ships. On October 12, he landed in what he thought was the Indies, but was actually an island in the Caribbean. His success led to more exploration by Europeans.
- European exploration of the Americas brought together two parts of the world that had never before been in contact. Unfamiliar plants and animals were shared. This sharing is known as the Columbian Exchange. New diseases also spread through the Columbian Exchange.

Lesson 2 *Spain in America*

- Spanish explorers, called conquistadors, conquered the Aztec Empire in Mexico and the Inca Empire in Peru. They shipped huge quantities of gold back to Spain.
- One reason the Spanish were able to conquer the Aztec and the Inca was that the Europeans had horses, guns, and cannons. Another reason was that the Aztec and Inca had no immunity to European diseases. Greatly weakened by epidemics, they were less able to defend themselves.
- Spain established many settlements in Florida, including St. Augustine and Tampa. France attempted to establish Fort Caroline on the St. Johns River, but the Spanish drove them out.
- Spain explored the American Southwest searching for gold but found none.
- Types of Spanish settlements in the Americas included presidios, pueblos, and missions. A class system developed in the Spanish empire. People who had been born in Spain were at the top of this social structure.

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Lesson 3 *Competing for Colonies*

- While Europeans were exploring the Americas in the 1500s, there was religious turmoil in Europe. The divisions in Europe were felt in the Americas. Catholics and Protestants both wanted to spread their faith to Native Americans in their American colonies.
- The search for gold and the search for a northwest passage to Asia led to much exploration. The St. Lawrence River, Hudson Bay, and the Mississippi River were all explored in this way.
- The French established estates along the St. Lawrence River. They were more respectful of Native Americans than other Europeans who explored the Americas.
- In 1621, the Dutch set up a colony in North America, which became known as New Netherland. The center of new colony was New Amsterdam, located on the tip of Manhattan Island.