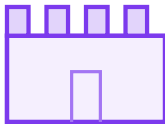


Renaissance and Exploration

AP European History ■ Unit 1

AP European History



What we will cover

- 1 Contextualizing Renaissance and Discovery
- 2 Italian Renaissance
- 3 Northern Renaissance
- 4 Printing
- 5 New Monarchies
- 6 Technological Advances and the Age of Exploration



Contextualizing Renaissance and Discovery

Unit 1 covers roughly 1450 to 1648, and four changes run through it at once. The CED states them as the unit's key concepts, and almost every question draws on at least two:

- The **rediscovery of classical works** from ancient Greece and Rome, and observation of the natural world, **changed how many Europeans saw their world**.
- Europeans **explored and settled overseas territories**, encountering and interacting with **Indigenous populations** .
- European society and everyday life were increasingly shaped by **commercial and agricultural capitalism** , though older traditions persisted alongside it.
- The **struggle for sovereignty** within and among states produced **varying degrees of political centralisation** .

Contextualizing Renaissance and Discovery, continued

That last phrase – *varying degrees* – is a standing instruction for the whole course.

European History rewards answers that say how far a change went in one place compared with another.



Italian Renaissance

That revival had three effects the CED names separately:

- Spread by the **printing press**, the humanist recovery of Greek and Roman texts **challenged the institutional power** of universities and the Catholic Church.
- Admiration for Greek and Roman **political institutions** supported a revival of **civic humanism** in the Italian city-states, producing new works of political thought.
- Rulers and popes concerned with **enhancing their prestige** commissioned paintings and architecture on classical models.

Italian Renaissance, continued

The third point is the one students underuse.

Renaissance art is examinable as **political** evidence: patronage was a claim to legitimacy, not only a taste in pictures.

The two humanisms, and the Commercial Revolution

Italian humanists

humanists, including **Petrarch**, promoted a **revival of classical literature**, values and style

Christian humanism

the northern form – **Erasmus** applied the same textual scholarship to scripture, seeking reform from within

banking and finance

innovations promoted urban financial centres and a **money economy**

the Columbian Exchange

new plants, animals and **diseases** moving both ways – the CED treats it as a defining consequence

the technology

advances in **navigation, cartography and military technology** made the voyages possible

Northern humanism is not Italian humanism moved north: it applies the *same method* to a *different text*, and that shift is what produces the Reformation.



Northern Renaissance

As Renaissance ideas moved north, they changed. The Northern Renaissance retained a more religious focus, producing a **human-centred naturalism** that considered individuals and everyday life as proper subjects for art.

Holding that link makes Unit 2 far easier: the Reformation did not arrive from nowhere.



A wooden hand press

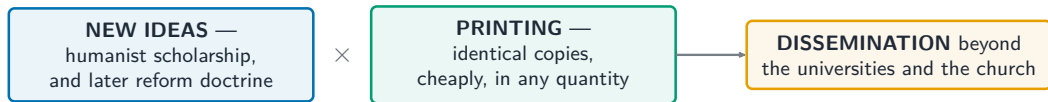
The CED gives printing a topic of its own for a reason: **the invention of printing promoted the dissemination of new ideas** .

It did not create humanism, religious dissent, or political argument – but it changed their speed, reach, and cost, which is what allowed ideas to escape the control of the institutions that had previously governed which texts circulated.



a wooden hand press

Printing as an amplifier



A **multiplication**, not a chain: the press supplied no ideas of its own, and the ideas had existed without reaching anyone. Neither factor alone produces the effect

A compositor's type case



A compositor's type case - the reusable pieces that made identical copies cheap



New Monarchies

The **new monarchies** laid the foundation for the centralised modern state by:

- establishing **monopolies on tax collection** ;
- **employing military force** under royal control;
- and taking increasing control of **law and administration**.

New Monarchies, continued

Two counterweights are also examinable.

Commercial and professional groups gained power across Europe and played a greater role in political affairs. And continued political fragmentation in Renaissance Italy provided the background for new concepts of the **secular state** – the theory came from the place where centralisation had failed, not succeeded.

Some monarchs, including Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, also initiated religious reform from the top down to strengthen royal control – a point that belongs to both this unit and the next.

The new monarchies' four instruments

- establishing **monopolies on tax collection** ;
- **employing military force** under royal control;
- and taking increasing control of **law and administration**.

What made the period possible

Humanism

Italian Renaissance humanists studied classical texts for models of eloquence and civic virtue, using **philological** methods – which is how Valla exposed the Donation of Constantine as a forgery.

Money

Innovations in banking and finance – double-entry bookkeeping, bills of exchange, branch banking – funded both the art and the voyages.

The voyages

Advances in navigation, cartography, and military technology made the Atlantic crossable and the gun-armed ship decisive.

The new monarchies

Rulers taxed, recruited and administered directly, reducing the nobility's independent power.

Money, method and technology arrive together – which is why the argument about what caused the Renaissance rarely settles on one of them.

The new monarchies' four instruments, in detail

THE INSTRUMENT	TAKEN FROM WHOM	WHY IT MATTERS
a monopoly on TAX COLLECTION	local lords and towns that collected their own money	is what the other three run on
MILITARY FORCE under the crown	nobles with private armed followings	a rival can no longer resist by force
royal LAW AND ADMINISTRATION	seigneurial and church courts	the king's judgment reaches the subject directly
alliance with COMMERCIAL GROUPS	they are gained, not taken	a counterweight to the landed nobility, and a source of loans

What makes a monarchy 'new': four instruments, each taken from someone specific



Technological Advances and the Age of Exploration

Keep enabling conditions and motives in separate categories. A question asking "why" wants motives; a question asking "how it became possible" wants the technology.

- European states sought **direct access to gold, spices, and luxury goods** to enhance personal wealth and state power.
- The rise of **mercantilism** gave the state a new role in promoting commercial development and acquiring colonies.
- **Christianity was a stimulus** for exploration, as governments and religious authorities sought to spread the faith – and for some it also served as a justification.



Rivals on the World Stage

Europeans established overseas empires and trade networks **through coercion and negotiation** – both, not one. Where local states were strong, Europeans negotiated for trading rights; where they were not, coercion followed.

Commercial rivalry became a standing cause of European war, which is a continuity that runs all the way to Unit 7.



Colonial Expansion and Columbian Exchange

The **Portuguese** established a commercial network along the African coast and in South and East Asia in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; other states followed.

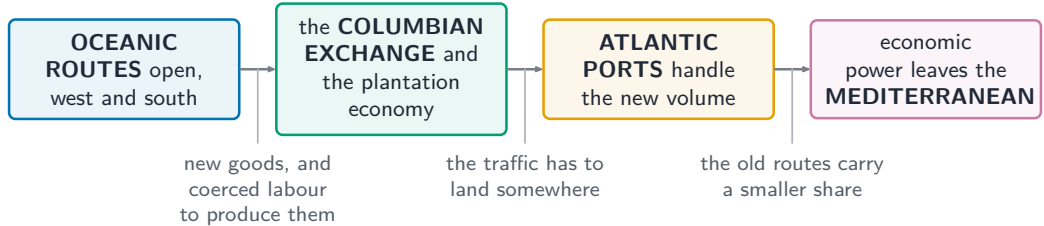
- It **created economic opportunities for Europeans**.
- It **facilitated European subjugation and the destruction of Indigenous societies**, chiefly through disease.

Colonial Expansion and Columbian Exchange, continued

Economically, the exchange of goods **shifted the centre of economic power in Europe from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic states** .

That shift explains why the leading powers of Unit 3 are not the leading powers of Unit 1.

Why the centre of economic power moved



The Italian cities did not shrink – the **share** moved. A shift is a relative claim, and needs the loser named as well as the winner



The Slave Trade

Europeans **expanded the trade of enslaved Africans** in response to the establishment of a **plantation economy** in the Americas and to demographic collapse among Indigenous populations.

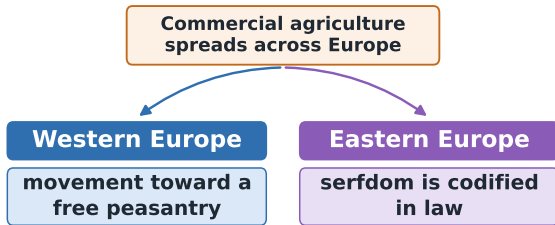
The causal chain is explicit in the CED and should be reproduced as a chain: plantation agriculture demanded labour on a scale the Americas' devastated population could not supply, and that demand was met by an expanded Atlantic trade in enslaved people.



The same century pushed east and west apart

- Western Europe moved toward a **free peasantry** and commercial agriculture.
- In the east, **serfdom was codified** as nobles continued to dominate the rural economy.

The same century pushed east and west apart, in detail



labour is bought; peasants leave the manor for towns and wages
 nobles keep dominating the rural economy and bind labour to the land

One economic pressure, two opposite social outcomes - which is exactly why it is asked about.

In the east, **serfdom was codified** as nobles continued to dominate the rural economy.

The Commercial Revolution

Most Europeans still **derived their livelihood from agriculture** and organised life around the seasons, the village, or the manor. Within that, a sharp divergence opened:

- Western Europe moved toward a **free peasantry** and commercial agriculture.
- In the east, **serfdom was codified** as nobles continued to dominate the rural economy.

The Commercial Revolution, continued

The same commercial pressure produced opposite outcomes, and that is exactly why it is examinable. Two related consequences: landlords attempting to increase revenues by **restricting traditional peasant rights** provoked **revolt** ; and **migrants to the cities** strained resources and challenged the ability of merchant elites and craft guilds to govern.

Finally, from the late sixteenth century Europeans responded to economic and environmental pressure – including the **Little Ice Age** – by **delaying marriage and childbearing**, a demographic adaptation worth knowing because it is unusual evidence.



Causation in the Renaissance and Age of Discovery

The unit's reasoning skill is **causation**.

Worked example – the mechanism, not the fact

“Explain one way in which the development of printing affected European intellectual life, 1450–1648.”

- **Full marks:** *“Printing allowed humanist editions of Greek and Roman texts to be reproduced cheaply and identically, so scholars across Europe could read and compare the same critical editions – which weakened the control universities and the Church had exercised over which texts circulated.”*
- “Printing spread ideas” is the fact. The marks are for *how*.

Identical copies are the point: comparison and correction become possible only when two scholars can be sure they hold the same text.

Exam tips

- "Varying degrees" is the CED's own phrase for centralisation. Compare *how far*, not merely *whether*.
- Renaissance art is **political evidence**. Patronage was a claim to prestige and legitimacy.
- Treat printing as an **amplifier**, not a first cause. That framing answers most printing questions.
- Separate **technological enablers** from **motives** for exploration. Questions ask for one or the other.
- The Columbian Exchange has **two sides** – European opportunity and Indigenous destruction. Give both.
- The **east-west divergence** in serfdom is high-value and frequently missed. One cause, two opposite outcomes.



Period 1 – key takeaways

1

Centralisation

compare *how far*, not merely whether

2

Art

patronage is political evidence of legitimacy

3

Printing

an amplifier, not a first cause

4

Serfdom

one cause, two opposite east–west outcomes

Check yourself

- 1 What phrase does the CED use for centralisation?
- 2 What is Renaissance patronage evidence of?
- 3 Is printing a first cause?
- 4 What is the east–west serfdom point?

Answers: varying degrees ▪ prestige/legitimacy ▪ no – an amplifier ▪ one cause, two opposite outcomes