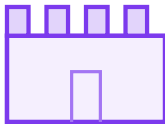


Renaissance and Exploration

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** 古典著作 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** 原住民.
- European society and everyday life were increasingly shaped by **commercial and agricultural capitalism** 商业与农业资本主义, though older traditions persisted alongside it.
- The **struggle for sovereignty** 主权 within and among states produced **varying degrees of political centralisation** 政治集权.

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** 印刷机, 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** 公民人文主义 in the Italian city-states, producing new works of political thought.
- Rulers and popes concerned with **enhancing their prestige** 提升声望 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.

Northern Renaissance

As Renaissance ideas moved north, they changed. The Northern Renaissance retained a more religious focus, producing a **human-centred naturalism** 以人为中心的自然主义 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.

Printing

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

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.

New Monarchies

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

- establishing **monopolies on tax collection** 征税垄断权;
- **employing military force** 军事力量 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** 世俗国家 – 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.

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** 重商主义 gave the state a new role in promoting commercial development and acquiring colonies.
- **Christianity was a stimulus** 宗教动因 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** 强制与谈判 – 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** 从地中海转向大西洋.

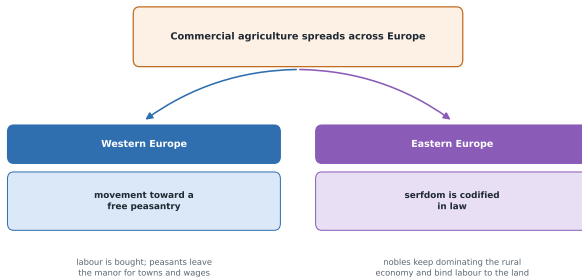
That shift explains why the leading powers of Unit 3 are not the leading powers of Unit 1.

The Slave Trade

Europeans **expanded the trade of enslaved Africans** 奴隶贸易 in response to the establishment of a **plantation economy** 种植园经济 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 Commercial Revolution



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

the distinction this unit turns on

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** 自由农民 and commercial agriculture.
- In the east, **serfdom was codified** 农奴制被法典化 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** 反抗; 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** 小冰期 – 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**.

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.