

Period 1: 1491-1607

AP US History ■ Period 1

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What we will cover

- 1 Native American Societies Before Contact
- 2 Why Europeans Crossed the Atlantic
- 3 The Columbian Exchange
- 4 Labour, Slavery, and Caste in Spanish America
- 5 Worldviews in Conflict
- 6 Thinking Like a Historian in Period 1

Native American Societies Before Contact

Period 1 runs from 1491 to 1607 – from the eve of European contact to the founding of Jamestown. It exists to explain what the Americas were like *before* Europeans arrived, and what happened when three worlds met.

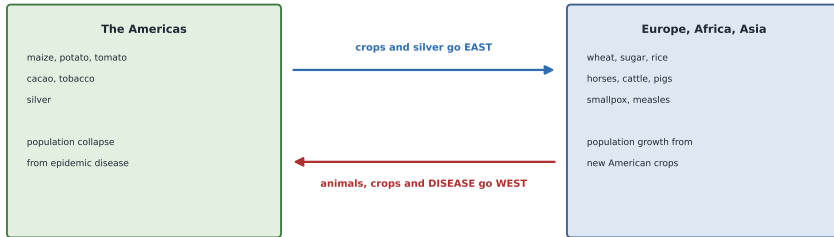
- In the **Southwest**, the spread of **maize** 玉米 cultivation northward from present-day Mexico supported permanent settlement, **advanced irrigation** 先进灌溉, and greater social complexity.
- In the **Great Basin** and the western **Great Plains**, dry conditions produced largely **mobile lifestyles** 流动性生活方式.
- In the **Northeast**, the **Mississippi River Valley**, and along the **Atlantic seaboard**, societies developed **mixed agricultural and hunter-gatherer economies** 农业与狩猎采集混合经济, which favoured permanent villages.
- In the **Northwest** and present-day **California**, abundant ocean resources allowed settled communities without farming.

Why Europeans Crossed the Atlantic

European exploration was driven by a search for **new sources of wealth** 新的财富来源, expanded trade routes, and the spread of **Christianity** 基督教. Spain and Portugal moved first, and Spain's American empire followed.

Two changes made the voyages possible: improvements in **maritime technology** 航海技术, and more organised methods of financing trade, especially the **joint-stock company** 股份公司, which spread the risk of a voyage across many investors.

The Columbian Exchange



disease → demographic collapse → labour shortage → encomienda → Atlantic slave trade

the causal chain Period 1 exists to explain

the distinction this unit turns on

The Columbian Exchange

The **Columbian Exchange** 哥伦布大交换 is the transfer of plants, animals, people, and diseases between the Americas and the rest of the world. It is the single most important development of Period 1, because almost everything else follows from it.

American **silver** 白银 reshaped global trade.

Labour, Slavery, and Caste in Spanish America

Spain built an economy that needed labour it did not have.

When that labour collapsed with the population, Europeans turned elsewhere: traders **partnered with some West African groups** who already practised slavery to forcibly extract enslaved people, beginning the **Atlantic slave trade** 大西洋奴隶贸易.

Worldviews in Conflict

Europeans and Native Americans held **divergent worldviews** 不同的世界观 on religion, gender roles, family, land use, and power. Two ideas about land were especially incompatible: European **private property** 私有财产 against Native American systems of shared use.

As European demands on land and labour grew, Native peoples **resisted** 抵抗 – through accommodation, alliance, trade, and armed conflict.

Thinking Like a Historian in Period 1

Every AP question about Period 1 is really a question about **causation** 因果关系 or **context** 时代背景.

- **Contextualization** 情境化 means placing a development in the broader circumstances that produced it. Period 1 supplies the context for almost every later question about colonisation.
- **Causation** asks what produced a change and what followed from it. The Columbian Exchange is the clearest chain in the whole course: disease caused demographic collapse, which caused a labour shortage, which drove the Atlantic slave trade.

Exam tips

- Period 1 is short but supplies **context** for later questions. Learn it as the origin of the Atlantic system, not as a list of dates.
- The strongest causal chain to memorise: **disease** → **demographic collapse** → **labour shortage** → **encomienda** → **Atlantic slave trade**.
- Name specific regions when describing Native societies. "Native Americans farmed" is too general; the Southwest, Great Basin, Northeast, and Northwest each had a distinct adaptation.
- Keep the **Columbian Exchange** two-directional. Answers that only describe what Europe gained miss half the concept.
- **Encomienda** is a labour system, not a land grant, and the Spanish **caste system** is a social hierarchy defined by ancestry.
- For any prompt, identify the **task verb** first: describe, explain, compare, or evaluate the extent. Each earns points differently.