

Period 1: 1491-1607

AP US History ■ Period 1

AP US History



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

1

Native American Societies Before Contact

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.

One mechanism, four different inputs

Environment shapes society: maize irrigation in the Southwest, mobility in the Great Basin, mixed economies in the Northeast, ocean resources in the Northwest.

One mechanism, four different inputs, in detail

REGION	ENVIRONMENT	WHAT IT PRODUCED
Southwest	maize spreads north from Mexico	permanent settlement, advanced irrigation
Great Basin & western Plains	dry conditions	largely mobile lifestyles
Northeast, Mississippi Valley, Atlantic seaboard	mixed farming and hunting-gathering	permanent villages
Northwest & California	abundant ocean resources	settled communities WITHOUT farming

The CED's four regional groupings: one mechanism - environment shapes society
- with different inputs

Monks Mound at Cahokia



Monks Mound at Cahokia
- the scale a Mississippian settlement reached without draught animals or the wheel

Cliff Palace, Mesa Verde



Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde
- permanent settlement
where maize agriculture
could support it

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Why Europeans Crossed the Atlantic

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.

3

The Columbian Exchange

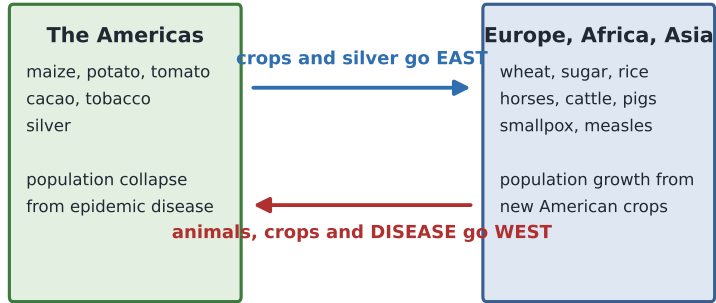
Both directions, and very different consequences on each side

Moving **east** to Europe: American crops – **maize** 玉米 and the **potato** 马铃薯 – raised nutrition and helped drive **European population growth** 欧洲人口增长, while American **silver** 白银 reshaped global trade.

Moving **west** to the Americas: European animals, European crops, and – decisively – **epidemic disease** 流行病, reaching populations with no prior exposure.

Keep the exchange **two-directional**. Europe gained calories and bullion; the Americas suffered a **demographic collapse** 人口锐减 that accompanied and enabled the conquest. An answer that describes only what Europe gained misses half the concept.

Both directions, and very different consequences on, in detail



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

the causal chain Period 1 exists to explain

Crops and precious metals move east; animals, crops and disease move west – with very different consequences on each side.

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 changed environments, populations and colonial economies across the Atlantic.

American **silver** 白银 reshaped global trade.

Explain a causal link without making it inevitable

Disease, violence and forced labour reduced Native populations in Spanish America. Colonists continued to demand labour for agriculture and mining.

How could population loss contribute to a change in labour supply? Why is “therefore African slavery had to happen” an inadequate explanation?

Explain the link, then qualify it: colonial profits, coercive decisions and existing trafficking networks also mattered. A labour shortage did not remove human choices.

Population loss, labour demand and coercive choices



One causal connection: explain the mechanisms and the other factors, rather than treating arrows as proof.

4

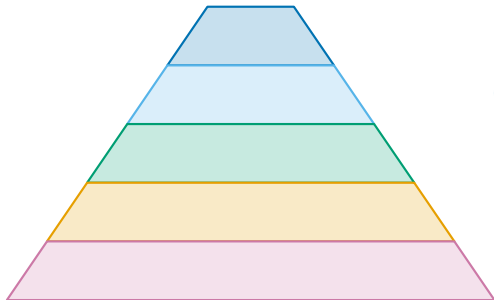
Labour, Slavery, and Caste in Spanish America

Labour, Slavery, and Caste in Spanish America

Spanish colonists sought labour for profitable agriculture and mining.

European traders **partnered with some West African groups** to forcibly obtain enslaved Africans for colonial agriculture and mining through the **Atlantic slave trade** 大西洋奴隶贸易. Colonial demand and coercive choices mattered alongside population loss.

A hierarchy fixed by ancestry, and by law



PENINSULARES — born in Spain

CRIOLLOS — Spanish parents, born in the Americas

MESTIZOS & MULATTOES — mixed ancestry

NATIVE AMERICANS — the *encomienda* labour force

ENSLAVED AFRICANS — no rights at all

Your place was fixed by **ancestry**, not by wealth or achievement – and it was written into **law**, which is what makes it a caste system rather than a class system

5

Worldviews in Conflict

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.

What contact did to Europe itself

the argument at home

extended contact with Native Americans and Africans fostered a **debate over the nature of these peoples** – and over how they should be treated

mutual misunderstanding 相互误解

each side read the other's practices through its own categories, over land, religion and authority

epidemic disease 流行病

the largest demographic consequence: Native populations fell by up to 90% in some regions

the encomienda system 委托监护制

Spanish forced labour, and the argument it provoked in Spain itself

mining 采矿 and the potato 马铃薯

American silver financed European states; American crops drove **European population growth**

The Columbian Exchange runs **both ways**. An answer that describes only what Europe did to the Americas has told half the story the CED asks for.

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Thinking Like a Historian in Period 1

Which reasoning is missing?

Consider three student statements about Spanish colonial labour:

- A Colonists sought wealth from agriculture and mining.
- B Disease killed many Native people; colonial labour demands continued.
- C Disease alone created African slavery in the Americas.

Which describes a motive or setting? Which begins a causal explanation? Which overclaims? Improve the explanation using demand, decisions and trade networks.

Build the explanation, then qualify it

Context 时代背景 gives relevant wider circumstances. **Contextualization** 情境化 explains how they relate to a development. **Causation** 因果关系 explains how and why it happened.

A identifies the search for wealth. **B** links population loss to pressure on labour supply, while agriculture and mining still required workers.

C goes too far. European traders and colonists forcibly obtained and exploited enslaved Africans through existing networks. Profits and coercive choices also mattered. Disease was not a complete explanation or a justification.

Compare societies with specific evidence

Compare livelihoods in the Southwest and Great Basin before European contact.

Give one difference, explain an environmental connection, and avoid saying that all Native American societies were the same.

Before answering: select the regions, identify the relevant evidence, and decide whether the task needs description, comparison or a causal explanation. Historical questions can also ask about sources and arguments.

From evidence to a comparison

Southwest: maize agriculture and irrigation supported permanent settlement.

Great Basin: arid conditions encouraged mobile hunting and gathering.

Connection: different conditions helped shape different livelihoods. Name both sides of the comparison and explain the difference.

These are regional patterns, not a claim that every community within a region was identical. “Native Americans farmed” loses the distinction the question asks for.

Improve context for an exam-linked prompt

2023 Set 1, LEQ2 (paraphrased): evaluate change from transatlantic trade in British North American colonial society, **1607–1776**. We practise its context requirement here, not a full essay.

A student opens: *“Europeans travelled across the ocean. Many things happened before 1607.”*

Why is this too general? Write a short opening that connects earlier Spanish colonization, the search for wealth and later English colonial investment.

Relevant background needs an explained connection

Teacher-written model: Before English settlement at Jamestown, Spanish colonization brought American resources into European commerce. Profits encouraged other European powers to pursue American settlements and trade. This competition helps explain the setting for British Atlantic commerce.

Why it helps: it develops a wider setting and connects it to the prompt; a passing name or earlier date alone is insufficient.

Based on the official 2023 contextualization rubric; this model is not an official sample or a guaranteed point. Earlier context does not replace a defensible claim and relevant evidence about **1607–1776** in the full essay.

Exam tips

- Period 1 is short but supplies **context** for later questions. Explain how early encounters shaped later Atlantic connections; do more than list dates.
- Explain population loss and continuing colonial labour demand alongside economic motives, coercive decisions and trade networks. Do not claim a single cause.
- 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.

Exam tips, continued

- 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.

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Recap

Period 1 – key takeaways

1

Native societies

name the region: maize, mobility, mixed, ocean

2

Causal chain

population loss, demand and coercive choices

3

Columbian Exchange

two directions – Europe *and* the Americas

4

Labour

encomienda is labour, not land; caste is ancestry

Check yourself

- 1 Why is “Native Americans farmed” too weak?
- 2 Explain one connection between population loss and colonial labour demand.
- 3 What did the Americas send east besides crops?
- 4 Is encomienda a land grant?

Answers: name the region ■ fewer surviving workers while colonial demand continues; choices and other factors matter ■ silver ■ no – a labour system