

Transoceanic Interconnections

AP World History: Modern

Why Europeans Sailed

Unit 4 covers **1450 to 1750** - the period in which the Eastern and Western Hemispheres are permanently joined, and the consequences of that joining.

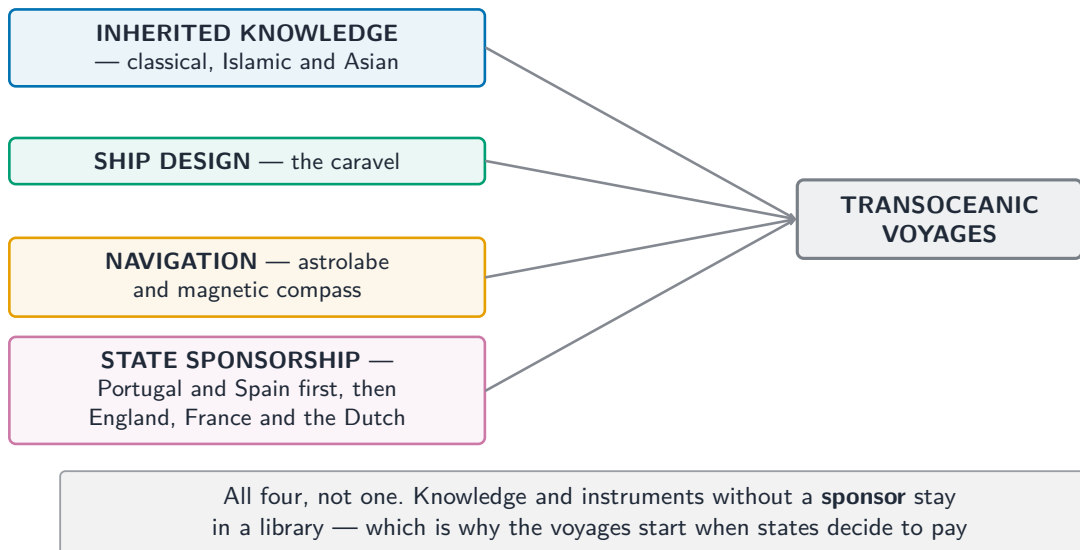
The voyages rested on borrowed knowledge. Learning and technology from the **Classical, Islamic, and Asian** worlds was gathered and applied in Europe: new tools, innovations in **ship design** , and better understanding of **navigation**

- the **caravel** , the **astrolabe**, the **magnetic compass**, and knowledge of wind patterns.

State-supported maritime exploration then followed:

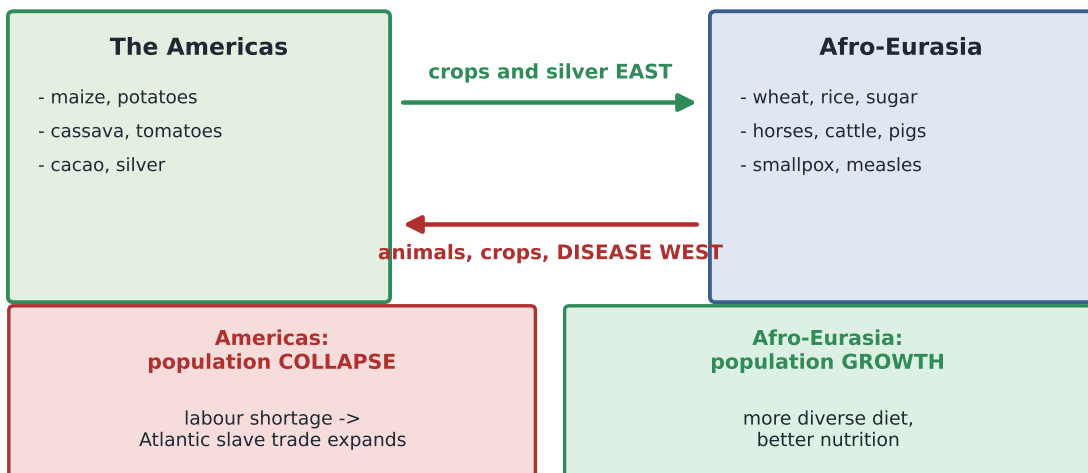
- **Portuguese** development of maritime technology and navigational skill led to the sea route around Africa to the Indian Ocean.
- **Spanish** sponsorship of Columbus and subsequent voyages opened the Atlantic to the Americas.
- **English, French, and Dutch** crossings of the northern Atlantic followed.

Motives combined the search for wealth, competition between states, and religious mission.





The Columbian Exchange



one exchange, opposite demographic outcomes - that asymmetry is the answer

The exchange ran both ways, but the consequences were not symmetrical

New connections between the hemispheres produced the **Columbian Exchange**, and the CED spells out four consequences.

- European colonisation led to the **unintentional transfer of disease** to the Americas, causing catastrophic population loss.
- **American foods** - maize, potatoes, cassava - became staple crops in parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa.

- **Afro-Eurasian** fruit trees, grains, sugar, and **domesticated animals** were brought to the Americas, reshaping its landscapes and economies.
- Populations in Afro-Eurasia **benefited nutritionally** from a more diverse diet, contributing to population growth.

The asymmetry is the examinable point: the same exchange raised population in Afro-Eurasia and destroyed it in the Americas.

Maritime Empires Established

Europeans established **trading posts** in Africa and Asia, which proved profitable, and pursued colonisation in the Americas driven by political, religious, and economic **rivalries**.

Where existing states were strong, Europeans traded rather than conquered: despite disruption caused by Portuguese arrival, **existing trade networks in the Indian Ocean continued**, and Asian states largely dictated the terms.

In the Americas the pattern was different. Colonial economies depended on **agriculture** and on **coerced labour**:

- **Enslavement in Africa continued in its traditional forms**, including incorporation into households.
- The growth of the **plantation economy** increased demand for enslaved labour, and the **Atlantic slave trade** expanded enormously to supply it.
- Systems such as the **encomienda** and **mita** compelled Indigenous labour.

SYSTEM	WHO, AND WHERE	WHAT IT SUPPLIED
ENCOMIENDA	Indigenous people, Spanish America	a labour grant attached to a colonist
MITA	Indigenous communities, the Andes	rotating compulsory labour, above all for the mines
PLANTATION SLAVERY	enslaved Africans, the Atlantic world	the workforce for sugar, tobacco and later cotton
SLAVERY WITHIN AFRICA	continues in its traditional forms	incorporation into households — a different institution, and the CED says so

“Coerced labour” is a category, not an answer. Name the **system**, its people and its purpose, and the comparison writes itself



Maritime Empires Maintained

Mercantilist policies were used by European rulers to expand and control their economies: colonies existed to supply raw materials and buy finished goods, and trade was directed through the mother country.

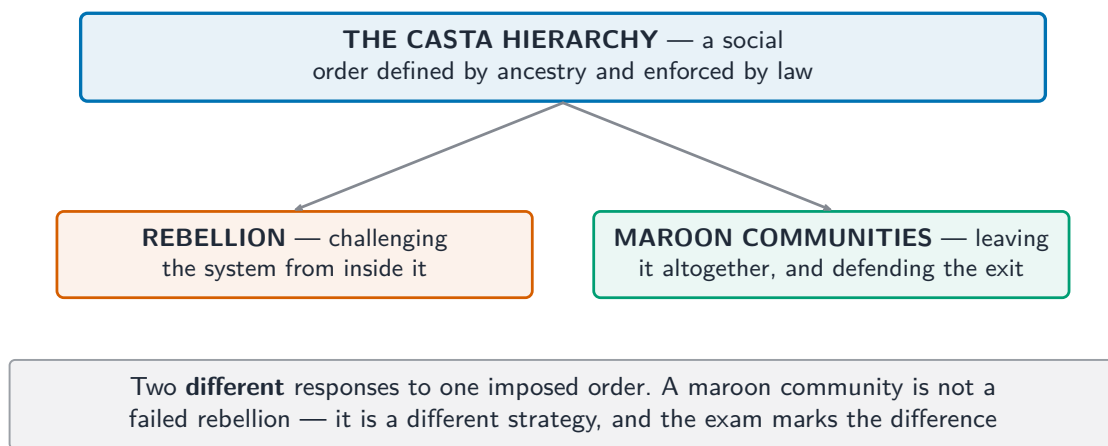
The **Atlantic trading system** moved goods, wealth, and people between Europe, Africa, and the Americas - the pattern usually taught as triangular trade, though real routes were more complex.

Economic disputes led to rivalries and conflict between states, and commercial competition became a standing cause of European war.

Colonial societies developed new **social hierarchies**, defined by ancestry and by place of birth - the Spanish **casta** system being the most formally codified.

Internal and External Challenges

Rulers everywhere faced resistance. Enslaved people resisted through **rebellion** and **maroon communities**; Indigenous peoples resisted colonial demands; peasants and religious groups challenged state power across Eurasia.



Continuity and Change from 1450 to 1750

The unit's reasoning skill is **continuity and change**. The strongest answers hold both: connection between hemispheres was genuinely new, while the dominance of agriculture, coerced labour, and land empires continued.

Worked example (a real AP exam question). AP World short-answer questions in this unit ask, for example, to “*Explain one effect of the Columbian Exchange on the Americas*” and “*...on Afro-Eurasia.*” A full-mark pair states the effect and the mechanism for each: “*In the Americas, transferred diseases such as smallpox caused a demographic collapse, which created the labour shortage that European colonisers met by expanding the Atlantic slave trade. In Afro-Eurasia, American crops such as the potato and maize improved nutrition and contributed to population growth.*” Notice the shape: **effect** questions want the consequence traced, and the two halves must not be the same answer twice.

Exam tips

- Explain the voyages with **borrowed technology plus state support**, not with individual explorers.
- Keep the Columbian Exchange **two-directional** and **asymmetrical**: population fell in the Americas and rose in Afro-Eurasia.
- Where Asian states were strong, Europeans **traded**; where disease had shattered societies, they **conquered**. That contrast answers many questions.
- **Mercantilism** is the policy, the **Atlantic system** is the flow, and **coerced labour** is what made the plantation economy work.
- Always include **resistance** - rebellion, maroon communities, Indigenous refusal - since it is examinable and often omitted.
- On effect questions, trace the consequence. A named change with no mechanism is only half the mark.

Vocabulary card meanings

ship design: Changes in hulls and rigging that made longer ocean voyages safer. navigation: Finding position and course at sea. caravel: A small, manoeuvrable Portuguese ship used in early Atlantic exploration. State-supported maritime exploration: Ocean voyages paid for and directed by governments, such as Portugal's. unintentional transfer of disease: The spread of illnesses, especially to the Americas, that colonisers did not plan. American foods: Crops from the Americas, such as maize and potatoes, that spread worldwide. domesticated animals: Horses, cattle, pigs, and others that Europeans brought to the Americas. benefited nutritionally: Gained a more adequate diet from new crops. trading posts: Small fortified stations where Europeans traded, often without ruling the interior. rivalries: Competition among states and companies for trade and territory. coerced labour: Work extracted by force, including slavery and forced drafts. plantation economy: Export agriculture on large estates worked by coerced labour. mita: A labour draft, adapted by the Spanish from Inca practice, especially in the mines. Mercantilist: Aimed at increasing a state's wealth by controlling trade and accumulating bullion. Atlantic trading system: The linked exchange of goods, enslaved people, and silver around the Atlantic. social hierarchies: Ranked orders of people, reshaped by race, wealth, and colonial rule. rebellion: An organised rising against a ruler or a colonial power. maroon communities: Settlements of people who had escaped slavery.