

Transoceanic Interconnections

AP World History ■ Unit 4

AP World History



What we will cover

- 1 Why Europeans Sailed
- 2 The Columbian Exchange
- 3 Maritime Empires Established
- 4 Maritime Empires Maintained
- 5 Internal and External Challenges
- 6 Continuity and Change from 1450 to 1750



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.

- 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.

Why Europeans Sailed, continued

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.

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



a caravel replica

Four conditions, all necessary

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- **Spanish** sponsorship of Columbus and subsequent voyages opened the Atlantic to the Americas.
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Why the voyages happened when they did

State-supported maritime exploration

State-supported maritime exploration is the key phrase: crowns funded the voyages, so risk was borne publicly and profit shared.

Mercantilist policy

Mercantilist thinking treated wealth as a fixed stock of bullion, so colonies existed to supply the mother country and buy from it.

The technology

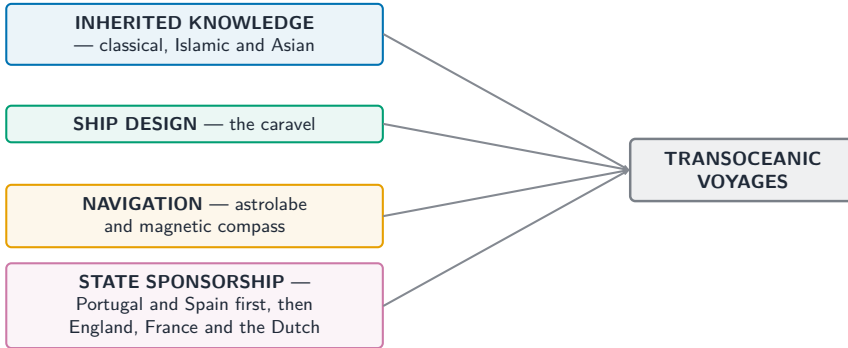
The caravel, the lateen sail, the astrolabe and better charts made an Atlantic crossing survivable.

The motive

Ottoman control of the eastern routes made a sea route to Asia worth the risk.

Motive, means and money. An explanation missing any one of the three does not explain the timing.

Four conditions, all necessary, in detail



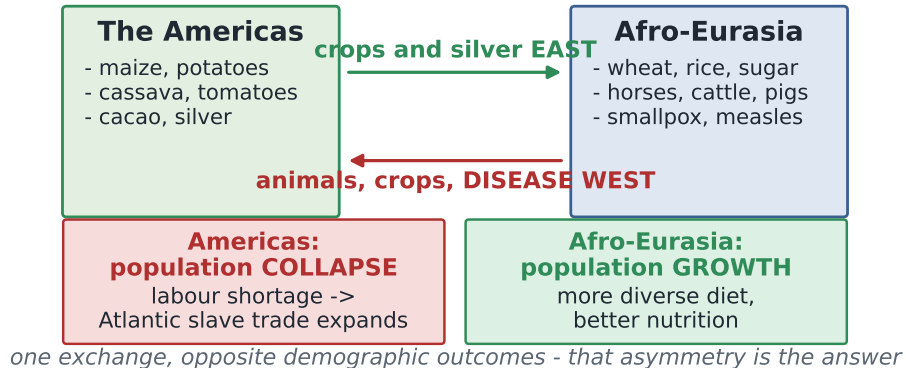
Four necessary conditions, not one motive - knowledge and instruments still need a sponsor



Both directions, and the demographic consequence

- 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.

Both directions, and the demographic consequence, in detail



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

The Columbian Exchange

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.



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** .

- **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.

Maritime Empires Established, continued

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.



Cerro Rico at Potosi

Four coerced-labour systems, told apart

- **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.

Four coerced-labour systems, told apart, in detail

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

The growth of the **plantation economy** increased demand for enslaved labour, and the **Atlantic slave trade** expanded enormously to supply it.



Maritime Empires Maintained

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.

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

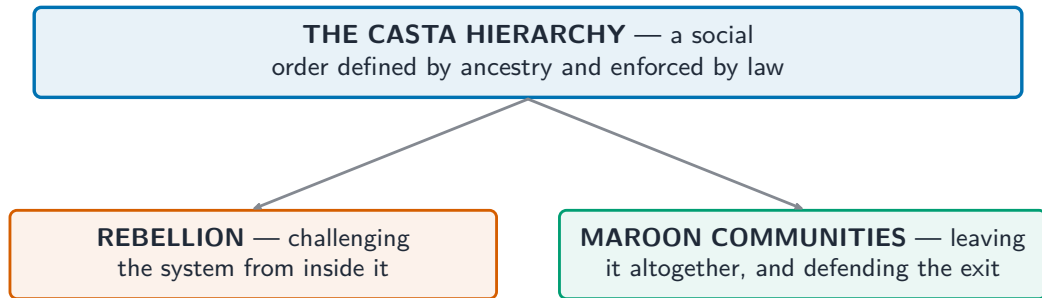


Internal and External Challenges

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.

The casta hierarchy, and the pushback



Two **different** responses to one imposed order. A maroon community is not a failed rebellion – it is a different strategy, and the exam marks the difference



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 – an effect, traced both ways

“Explain one effect of the Columbian Exchange on the Americas” – and “...on Afro-Eurasia.”

- **Full marks:** *“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.”*
- **Effect** questions want the consequence *traced*.

The two halves must not be the same answer twice – each region needs its own mechanism.

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.



Unit 4 – key takeaways

1

Voyages

borrowed technology plus state support

2

Exchange

two-directional and asymmetrical

3

Power

trade where Asia was strong;
conquer where disease hit

4

Labour

mercantilism / Atlantic system /
coerced labour

Check yourself

- 1 What two things explain the voyages?
- 2 How was the Columbian Exchange asymmetrical?
- 3 When did Europeans trade rather than conquer?
- 4 Why always include resistance?

Answers: borrowed tech + state support ▪ Americas fell, Afro-Eurasia rose ▪ where Asian states were strong ▪ it is examinable