

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.

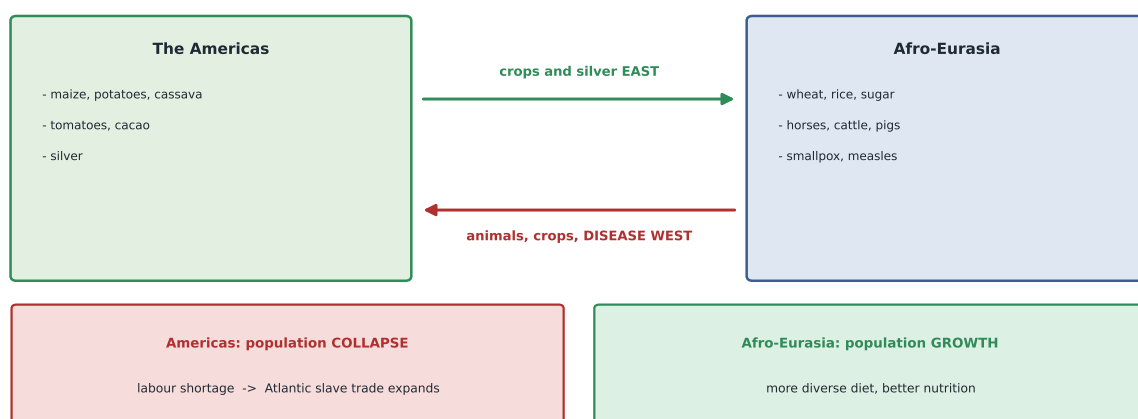
The voyages rested on borrowed knowledge. Learning and technology from the **Classical, Islamic, and Asian** worlds was gathered and applied in Europe: new tools, innovations in **ship design** 船舶设计, and better understanding of **navigation** 航海 - the **caravel** 卡拉维尔帆船, the **astrolabe**, the **magnetic compass**, and knowledge of wind patterns.

State-supported maritime exploration 国家支持的海上探索 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** 哥伦布大交换, and the CED spells out four consequences.

- European colonisation led to the **unintentional transfer of disease** 疾病的非蓄意传播 to the Americas, causing catastrophic population loss.

- **American foods** 美洲作物 - maize, potatoes, cassava - became staple crops in parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa.
- **Afro-Eurasian** fruit trees, grains, sugar, and **domesticated animals** 驯化动物 were brought to the Americas, reshaping its landscapes and economies.
- Populations in Afro-Eurasia **benefited nutritionally** 营养状况改善 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** 商站 in Africa and Asia, which proved profitable, and pursued colonisation in the Americas driven by political, religious, and economic **rivalries** 对抗.

Where existing states were strong, Europeans traded rather than conquered: despite disruption caused by Portuguese arrival, **existing trade networks in the Indian Ocean continued** 印度洋既有贸易网络得以延续, and Asian states largely dictated the terms.

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

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

Maritime Empires Maintained

Mercantilist 重商主义 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** 大西洋贸易体系 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** 社会等级, 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** 起义 and **maroon communities** 逃奴社群; 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.