

Grade 7 World History

Oak Meadow Coursebook

Oak Meadow, Inc.
Post Office Box 1346
Brattleboro, Vermont 05302-1346
oakmeadow.com

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Lesson



African Empires (1500 BCE–700 CE)

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- Complete the reading selections.
- Study the geography of Africa.
- Show the geographical features of one African nation.
- Choose a creative activity related to ancient Africa.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- Locate major geographical features of Africa on a map or globe.
- Identify natural features of one African nation.
- Demonstrate knowledge of one aspect of African history in creative form.

Reading

Read the following sections, which are found at the end of this lesson (see Reading Selections):

- Ancient Kingdoms of Africa
- Africa and Europe Establish Trade

As you read, keep a globe, atlas, or world map next to you and look up each area that you are reading about. This is an important part of every lesson! By looking at the geographical location of each region, you will gain a better understanding of how the environment and neighboring regions influenced each culture.

Before you begin reading, scan the assignments for this lesson and look at the length of the reading selections. This will give you an idea of how much work there is to do and help you plan your time accordingly. You may want to use a planner or the assignment checklist (found at the beginning of each lesson) to divide the work into manageable tasks so you can make steady progress.



Reflect and Discuss

When you think of Africa, what comes to mind? Think about it and then ask this question of one or two other people. Often, we have perceptions of a place that may or may not be accurate. When studying history, it's important to notice any preconceptions we have (ideas we have about something before we really know about it), and try to put them aside as we learn.

Assignments

When doing assignments for this course, you will often need to do additional research. As a starting point, you can find excellent online resources at [oakmeadow.com/curriculum-links](https://www.oakmeadow.com/curriculum-links). Bookmark the page so you can easily return to it to find more resources for each lesson.

1. Using a globe, atlas, or world map, locate the continent of Africa and study its geographical features. Look for major rivers, lakes, mountain ranges, deserts, and other natural features. Note the bodies of water on different sides of the continent. Write a sentence about one thing that surprised you or one new thing that you learned.
2. Select one African nation and learn about its geographical features. Draw or find photos of at least two natural features, such as bays, mountains, rainforests, deserts, rivers, peninsulas, etc. Write captions for each illustration or photo explaining what the picture shows. If you use photographs, include citation information.
3. Choose one of the following creative activities:
 - a) Learn about recent excavations in Morocco, Ethiopia, or elsewhere in Africa and write a brief description of some of the evidence found related to the earliest human civilizations. Draw or include a photograph of one artifact or fossil.
 - b) Some ancient empires used pictographs to make written records. Write something in pictographs! Make sure to include a translation of your message.
 - c) Design an obelisk in honor of a civilization or a ruler (real or imaginary). You can draw a picture of your obelisk or make a model using clay or other materials. Write a brief description of the meaning of the decorations or inscriptions on your obelisk.
 - d) Learn about one of the ancient African kingdoms you read about: Kush, Punt, Phoenicians, Aksum, Mali, or Songhai. Write about or illustrate some aspect of this culture, such as the system of government, art, customs, religious beliefs, architecture, or monuments.
 - e) Read a firsthand account of sailors navigating around the Cape of Good Hope in the early days of exploration. Alternately, you might want to imagine yourself as an early sailor and write a journal of your trip around the Cape of Good Hope.

Learning Checklist

Use this learning checklist to keep track of how your skills are progressing. Include notes about what you need to work on. Please remember that these skills continue to develop over time, so you aren't expected to be able to do all of them yet. The main goal is to be aware of which skills you need to focus on.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Locate continents, peninsulas, and other landforms on a map or globe				
Identify relevant research sources				
Provide accurate and relevant information based on research				
Demonstrate knowledge of one aspect of life in ancient Africa				

For Enrolled Students

When you have completed this lesson, continue to lesson 2. You will submit your work for lessons 1 and 2 at the end of the next lesson.

If you have any questions about your work, the lesson assignments, or how to share your work, let your teacher know.

Reading Selections

Ancient Kingdoms of Africa

The African continent lies between the Atlantic and Indian Ocean. The equator runs through the center of the continent. Africa is the second-largest continent in size (after Asia), but by population, only Australia and Antarctica are smaller. Africa is a land rich in resources and these resources frequently brought Africa to the notice of other countries in both ancient and modern times.

Too often, our awareness of Africa stems from its relatively modern history, from the slave trade beginning in the 16th century and colonization by European countries trying to control its many resources, to more recent events including civil wars, drought, famine, and health crises. However, Africa has a long and storied history, which began with the evolution of humankind.

The oldest hominid fossils are found in Africa. In modern times, paleontologists have excavated in north and east Africa (in Morocco and Ethiopia), and there is general consensus among them that the earliest fossils that could be identified as human are to be found in those locations.

Great civilizations arose in Africa in ancient times, beginning with the kingdom of **Kush** (also spelled Cush), a Nubian kingdom established by 2000 BCE. Kush was situated along the lower

Nile River as far south as modern-day Sudan. It traded ivory, iron, and gold with Egypt, its northern neighbor and was influenced by its culture. The people of Kush worshipped some Egyptian gods, and in its capital, Meroe, many pyramids were constructed.

Another mysterious ancient kingdom in Africa was the kingdom of **Punt**. Very little is known about Punt, which the Egyptians called the “land of the gods.” Punt and Egypt traded ebony, myrrh, and exotic animals. It is thought that this kingdom was found on the Red Sea coast to the south of Egypt.

Other African civilizations arose in more modern times that became rich, powerful, and influential in world history. At the far eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea during the first millennium, there was the state of **Tyre** (which was located in modern-day Lebanon, where the city of Tyre is still in existence.) There is plenty of evidence that the people of Tyre, the **Phoenicians**, were famous for trading, especially a purple dye, which was reserved for royalty. Tyre became such a powerful trade power in the Mediterranean that the Phoenicians established colonies to the west. In North Africa (modern-day Tunisia), they started a town they called **Carthage**, which meant “the new city” in their language. From Carthage, the Phoenicians traded the new rich resources they found in Africa such as textiles, gold, silver, and copper.

As the population of Carthage grew, the Phoenicians founded other colonies farther to the west on the **Iberian Peninsula** (where Spain and Portugal are now) and dominated trade in the Mediterranean from the founding of Carthage in 814 BCE until its fall after three wars with the newly powerful city of **Rome**. These wars are known as the **Punic Wars** (because the Romans called the Carthaginians “*Punici*”), and they lasted from 264 BCE until 146 BCE when Scipio Africanus destroyed the city of Carthage and its fleet.

However, Carthage was not the only great civilization in North Africa. Many people are familiar with the advanced civilization in Egypt in ancient times. There was also the kingdom of **Aksum** (or Axum), situated west of Egypt and east of Carthage. This country was another important trading center, dealing in gold and ivory. Artifacts indicate they traded not only with Egypt and other neighbors, but also with civilizations in the Far East. Aksum had a written language that, unlike Egyptian hieroglyphs, was not pictographs but had an actual alphabet. The Ge'ez language was used to facilitate trade. They also had a unique architectural style that included the **obelisk**,



The immense African continent has varied climate zones and topography that includes coastal areas, mountains, deserts, and rainforest. (Image credit: NASA/JPL/NIMA)

a structure found in Egypt as well. Aksum adopted **Christianity** very early in the religion's history and even had an alliance with the Eastern Roman Empire **Byzantium**. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is a cultural artifact of this civilization and is one of the oldest known forms of Christianity.

The ancient Kingdom of **Mali** was located in northwestern Africa, where the modern country of Mali is located today. In the eighth century, a new religion called **Islam** began and spread from its source on the Arabic Peninsula into neighboring areas such as the Hindu Kush (Afghanistan), Northwestern India, and Northern Africa.

In a process called **jihad**, followers of Islam spread the religion by conquering a country and then offering those who were conquered the chance to become Muslim. Those who did not choose to convert to Islam would pay a higher rate of taxes than citizens who did convert. In time, the Islamic empire spread into Asia and Africa, and to the Iberian Peninsula, forming an Islamic kingdom called **al-Andalus**.



Ancient ruins of the city of Carthage.
(Image credit: Faresbenrayana)

How to Read Ancient Dates

When looking at dates in ancient times, you'll often see BCE (Before Common Era) and CE (Common Era). If there is no label, you can assume the date is CE. But which date came first, 500 BCE or 150 BCE? Which date is closer to modern day? The answer is clear if you think of time as a number line.



Dates that occurred before the current era are viewed looking backward in time, so the numbers get larger the further back in time an event happened. Dates in the current era are viewed looking forward in time, so the numbers get larger as they approach the present. This means an event in 500 BCE occurred 350 years *before* 150 BCE.

Of course, events that happened in ancient times are hard to pinpoint, especially those that happened before written records were common. That's why you'll often see a range of dates rather than a specific year. If you want to find out approximately how long ago a date BCE was from today, simply add 2,000 years to it. For instance, Carthage was founded around 814 BCE or over 2,800 years ago. That's ancient!



The Obelisk at Axum
by Henry Salt, 1809

By the end of the first millennium, the northern part of Africa was heavily Islamic, including the ancient kingdom of Egypt. It was these North African Muslims that spread Islam to the Musa (Emperor) of Mali, known as Mansa Musa. Mali had grown rich on trade and in the capital there were mosques and a university with a library with 700,000 scrolls. When Mansa Musa made a *pilgrimage* to Mecca, a journey that all Muslims are required to make, he brought huge amounts of gold, which gave him and his African kingdom great notoriety.

By the 15th century, the kingdom of *Songhai* arose, encompassing the old kingdom of Mali and several other West African Kingdoms. Songhai was very large, and thrived in trade with countries in the Mediterranean, Europe, and India. Songhai was famous for its well-organized bureaucracy. It was ruled by a Muslim *caliph* who forged alliances with caliphs in other predominantly Muslim countries. Songhai continued to be a very powerful country until it experienced a civil war in the late 16th century and was invaded by neighboring Morocco.

Despite ups and downs, periods of prosperity and turmoil, each of these early civilizations made lasting contributions to African and European culture.

Africa and Europe Establish Trade

Like every story in history, Africa's story is intricately tied to other places and people. Africa went largely unnoticed by inhabitants of the continent of Europe throughout the medieval period (500–1500 CE). Religious warfare called the *Crusades* united European countries in the quest to combat the religion of Islam and spread Christianity, and at the same time, introduced Europeans to the textiles, goods, and technology of the Eastern world. The interest in trade grew further with Marco Polo's book about his travels in Cathay (China), which became a bestseller.

By the 15th century, the countries of Europe began looking for easier ways to trade goods with Asia. Travel over land using caravans was tedious and costly. Spain and Portugal, situated on the Iberian Peninsula, wanted to establish trade routes, but each country had different theories of the best way to get to Asia. Spain, after pushing the Muslims out of Southern Spain in January of 1492, gave money and ships to a sailor named *Cristobal Colon* who thought the best way to reach Cathay was to sail west across the "Ocean Sea."

The Portuguese had the idea to reach the East by the *circumnavigation* of Africa (sailing around the southern edge of the continent). The first voyages of exploration were sent out by Prince Henry the Navigator who had the vision of ocean exploration south along the coast of Africa. He started a school of navigation, which was founded in 1418. First, a Portuguese sailor named *Gil Eannes* sailed south to Cape Bojador, the large bulge in the northwest part of Africa. The first cargo ever brought back to Europe from Africa was a cargo of sealskins. While sailing along this coast, the

What Century Is It?

Centuries are counted from the year 1 of the Current Era. The first century was from year 1 to year 99, the second century was from year 100 to 199, and so on. This means that the century doesn't match the numbers of the date. For instance, something that happened in 1250 was in the 13th century and something that happened in 1760 was in the 18th century. Don't let this confuse you! Just remember that the first hundred years were the first century, even though we weren't yet to year 100!

CENTURY	YEARS	CENTURY	YEARS
1st century	1–99	12th century	1100–1199
2nd century	100–199	13th century	1200–1299
3rd century	200–299	14th century	1300–1399
4th century	300–399	15th century	1400–1499
5th century	400–499	16th century	1500–1599
6th century	500–599	17th century	1600–1699
7th century	600–699	18th century	1700–1799
8th century	700–799	19th century	1800–1899
9th century	800–899	20th century	1900–1999
10th century	900–999	21st century	2000–2099
11th century	1000–1099		

ongoing trade in *slaves* among African nations was discovered. Prince Henry decided to become active in the slave trade, and Portugal began importing enslaved Africans in 1441.

When Prince Henry died in 1460, exploration continued under the new King of Portugal, John II who came to the throne in 1481. He sent out *Bartolomeo Diaz*, who, in 1488, was the first European to travel to the tip of the African continent. He named this point the Cape of Storms because a large storm drove him off course and enabled him to find the cape, but King John renamed it the *Cape of Good Hope*, as now they knew they had the ability to reach India by the circumnavigation of Africa. The Portuguese achieved success when *Vasco da Gamma* rounded the Cape and reached India in 1497.

Through this process of exploration, Portugal built a mighty trade empire in Africa and India, which traded in slaves, gold, ivory, precious gems, spices, exotic fruits and wines, and textiles. These riches made Portugal competitive with Spain, who had chosen the route to the West under the admiralship of *Cristoforo Columbo* (or, as the Spanish called him, Cristobal Colon).

Colon, or as we know him today, Christopher Columbus, believed he sailed to someplace in Asia. He probably never realized he had traveled to a new hemisphere and two new continents—North



Band of Captives Driven into Slavery,
artist unknown (Image credit:
Wellcome Collection)

and South America—but he did claim the new lands he encountered for Spain. Spanish explorers and soldiers, called ***conquistadors*** (Spanish for *conquerors*) built a huge Spanish empire in North and South America. They began to bring in vast quantities of gold and precious metals from the highly developed Aztec and Inca empires.

Spain’s explorations and conquests in the “New World” brought them much wealth and natural resources, but did not make other European countries such as France and England very happy, and soon they too were sending out expeditions seeking a “Northwest Passage” to Asia.

European colonies developed in North and South America. These new European colonies worked hard to develop goods and crops to trade with and enrich their mother countries, and these products were largely developed through agriculture, which involved buying captives forced into slavery from the Portuguese and other countries that participated in the lucrative slave trade with West Africa. Slavery spread rapidly in the Western Hemisphere throughout the 16th and 17th

centuries. It became an enduring problem that would end in a series of wars brought by enslaved people demanding their freedom or, in the United States, by descendants of European colonists rising up against slavery in the abolition movement.

Lesson



The Early Dynasties of Asia (400 BCE–1854 CE)

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- Complete the reading selections.
- Study the geography of China and Japan.
- Draw a map of the major routes of the Silk Road.
- Choose a creative project related to ancient China or Japan.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- Locate China and Japan on a map and identify significant geographical features.
- Draw a historically accurate map.
- Present a creative project based on an ancient cultural tradition.

Reading

Read the following sections, which are found at the end of this lesson (all Reading Selections are found at the end of each lesson):

- Chinese Dynasties
- The Shogunates of Feudal Japan

As you read, look up each area on a globe, atlas, or world map. Take a few minutes to notice where the region is in relation to other nearby or influential countries.

Assignments

1. Using a globe, atlas, or world map, locate the continent of Asia. Focus on the areas of China and Japan. Study the geographical features. Try to get a sense of the terrain, coastal regions, and nearby neighbors as you consider how the empires of China and Japan would have traveled, traded, and defended themselves from invaders. Write a sentence about one thing that surprised you or one new thing that you learned.



Reflect and Discuss

Think about the concept of isolationism. Do you think a nation should be allowed to isolate itself from the influence, trade, and cultural exchange with other nations? What would be the benefits of this policy? What would be the drawbacks? Consider your opinion and then discuss your ideas with someone else. Listen to their point of view.

On a related note, how do you feel about the way in which Commodore Perry and the United States forced Japan to end its isolationist policy? Imagine you were present when ideas were being discussed about how to approach Japan. What would you say to Perry or others in charge? Would you present an alternate plan? With a partner, role play this scenario. Make sure to give the reasoning behind your ideas. Be convincing—try to persuade others to agree with your plan!

2. Research the major routes of the Silk Road, and draw a simple map. Note the locations of countries who were trading partners (you don't have to draw borders around the countries; just show the general area of each). Make sure to include both overland and sea routes. Show on your map or write a few sentences about the geographical features that would have influenced the route or difficulty of travel.
3. Develop a creative project based on the contributions of traditional Chinese or Japanese culture, such as pottery, haiku, calligraphy, or theater.

Learning Checklist

Use this learning checklist to keep track of how your skills are progressing. Include notes about what you need to work on. These skills will continue to develop over time. The main goal is to be aware of which skills you need to focus on.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Locate specific locations and significant landforms on a map				
Draw a historically accurate map				
Label a map with locations and geographical features				

For Enrolled Students

When you have completed this lesson, share your work for lessons 1 and 2 with your Oak Meadow teacher. Refer to your teacher's welcome letter for information on submitting work. Feel free to contact your teacher any time you have a question—your teacher is eager to help!

Up for a Challenge?

Calligraphy is a decorative, stylized form of writing found in many Chinese paintings. Bamboo also features prominently in many traditional Chinese paintings and can be quite simple to draw. Draw or paint a picture of bamboo and write a favorite or original verse in calligraphy on your painting. You can find simple calligraphy instructions online or in the library. (Hint: Practice your calligraphy skills first before writing on your drawing.) If you are particularly interested in becoming skilled at calligraphy, you might consider purchasing special pens. Calligraphy is a fun technique to use in making cards, report covers, posters, and other projects.

This is an optional project.



Twelve Plants and Calligraphy, Xu Wei, 16th century, Ming Dynasty
(Image credit: Honolulu Academy of Arts)

Reading Selections

Chinese Dynasties

In ancient China, small communities farmed along the Yellow River Valley. As with many societies, strong leaders arose who took control of the governance of the people. Leaders often passed control to their sons, establishing a hereditary system of leadership or **dynasty**. Those in power would sometimes live lavish lifestyles, supported by taxes and service of the rest of the population. By 221 BCE, China was ruled by an **emperor** and a small class of scholar-officials known as **mandarins**. They lived in splendor, while the common people toiled in poverty. The emperor was considered to have a direct connection to the gods, who granted him (or her) the right to rule the land. This belief was called the **Mandate of Heaven**.

For over 400 years, from 206 BCE to 220 CE, the **Han Dynasty** ruled China, despite brutal power struggles within the royal court. During this time, a network of trade routes called the **Silk Road** was developed that linked China with far-flung regions. Those in the West were eager to acquire



An ornamental gateway dating from the Han Dynasty is seen in this 1875 photograph. (Image credit: Library of Congress)

goods from the East—and pay handsomely for them: silk, tea, dyes, porcelain pottery, spices, and other treasures. Goods traded from the West to the East included horses and saddles, grapes, animal furs, honey, woolen blankets and rugs, silver, and gold. The trading along the Silk Road routes thrived throughout the **Song Dynasty** (which lasted from 960 to 1279 CE). In 1453, the **Ottoman Empire** boycotted Western trade and closed the routes.

Two great Chinese dynasties of emperors existed between 1368 and 1750 CE. The first was the **Ming Dynasty**, started by a common man named **Chu Yuan-chang** (also spelled Zhu Yuanzhang). Having been first a beggar and then a Buddhist monk, he became a brilliant military leader, and eventually

proclaimed himself emperor, calling himself Ming T'ai-tsu. During his reign, he brought all of China under his rule.

The Ming dynasty brought peace and stability to China. The Ming rulers reorganized the tax system and codes of law, and reformed the local government. This didn't mean that life was necessarily easy or the laws were always kind. For instance, if a scholar displeased the emperor, he could be publicly whipped.

To encourage farmers to move to northern China, which had been devastated by wars before the start of the Ming dynasty, the government offered them free land, tools, seeds, and farm animals in exchange for reclaiming and cultivating the land. Growing rice became a major industry in many parts of China. Travelers brought new crops from other lands, such as sweet potatoes, maize, and peanuts, all of which did well in poor soil. This meant that land previously not favorable for traditional agriculture could now be cultivated.

As agricultural productivity increased, more people became involved in activities that didn't relate to farming. The arts flourished. **Cloisonné**, an artistic technique of decoration, was developed during the Ming dynasty. Silk, tea, porcelain, and cotton cloth were produced in larger amounts. Cities grew larger, and the need for education and entertainment increased. A huge library was compiled that included all the Chinese histories and works of literature possible, recorded by over 2,000 scholars under the orders of the emperor. Novels became very popular during this time.



The Forbidden City, Beijing, China
(Image credit: Adamantios)

Emperors lived in an incredible palace called the **Forbidden City**. The Forbidden City, an entire walled city within the city of Peking (now called Beijing), was off limits to everyone except the emperor and his court. Within those walls were theaters, gardens, athletic fields, libraries, temples, and audience halls—in fact, a mini-city. It was sectioned off into two areas: one for the emperor, his family, and all their servants, and one for important occasions of state. Most citizens of Peking never saw within the walls of the Forbidden City, but there was a courtyard just outside the gate capable of holding 90,000 people.

Chinese artisans produced goods that were greatly valued by European traders. Silk and porcelain were very desirable, and could fetch high prices in Europe. Tea was becoming very popular in Britain, and the British thought Chinese tea was the best in the world. The Chinese didn't want European goods, but they were happy to have gold and silver in exchange for their products.

The Ming emperors lived in luxury and splendor. Toward the end of this dynasty, they were more interested in pleasure than in the business of running an empire. One emperor met with his top officials only five times in the thirty years of his reign! All of this made China weak, and when invaders from Manchuria attacked, the Ming dynasty could not fight them.

Thus began a new dynasty. In 1644, the establishment of the **Qing dynasty** of the Manchus (also known as **Ch'ing dynasty**) represented only the second time in history that all of China had been controlled by foreigners. This dynasty lasted 300 years, and grew to encompass the largest empire that had ever existed in China, taking in Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang, Tibet, and the island of Taiwan. One great Manchu emperor was **Qianlong**.

One of the reasons the Manchus were so successful is that they tried to adopt many Chinese traditions and integrate themselves into the local customs and traditions. The Manchus kept all the highest political positions for themselves, and allowed the Chinese to occupy only lower jobs, with Manchus as supervisors. There were many more Chinese than Manchus, and this technique helped the Manchus retain the real power for themselves. Marriage was banned between the two groups, which also served to strengthen the power of the Manchus as the rulers.

The first Manchu emperor established an easy way to tell the difference between Manchus and Chinese at first glance, at least among the common people. The Chinese men were ordered to shave their heads and grow a **queue**, or braid, at the back of the head. This was a symbol of the



This incense burner, dating from the Ming Dynasty circa 1500, shows the art of cloisonné. (Image credit: Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

low status of the Chinese. The rule was, “Keep your hair and lose your head or lose your hair and keep your head.” The punishment for disobedience was serious!



The Qianlong Emperor in Ceremonial Armour on Horseback, Giuseppe Castiglione, 1758 (Image credit: The Palace Museum)

The population increased a great deal during the Qing Manchu dynasty, from 150 million in 1600 to 350 million in 1800. This meant that growing food was paramount. Every inch of land had to be productive. This led to labor-intensive farming, in which all the work is done by people rather than by animals and machinery. Farming families grew rice, cotton, and other crops, often raising silkworms as well.

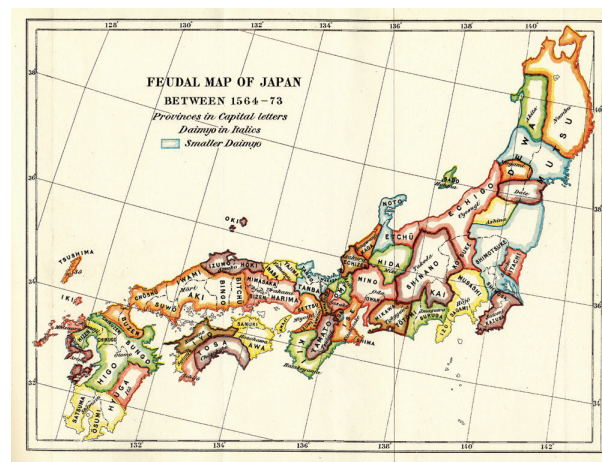
The Qing dynasty became weakened during the 1700s, due to corruption and numerous rebellions. Wars are very expensive and the emperors found it harder and harder to pay for them.

To preserve their culture, the Chinese tried to limit the ability of non-Chinese to travel or trade in China. The British were determined to expand their own access to China, however, and went to war with China in 1839. When they won the war in 1842, they forced the Chinese to sign a treaty that made the strategically placed port city of **Hong Kong**, in the South China Sea, a British possession. This treaty also gave Britain permission to trade in other ports of China.

The Shogunates of Feudal Japan

Japan is a group of mountainous islands off the coast of China. In ancient times, the Japanese were hunter-gatherers and fished in the abundant seas that surrounded their lands. Travel between Japan and the nearby Korean peninsula introduced the technique of cultivating rice, which made it easier to have a stable food source. **Buddhism** was introduced from China, as well as a system of writing. Many Japanese arts, crafts, laws, and government were loosely based on Chinese methods.

Japanese culture and lifestyle was very much affected by the geography of the country. The beautiful countryside inspired reverence for nature in Japanese artists and poets through the centuries. As different ruling families came into power, Japanese culture became more distinct from Chinese culture, resulting in beautiful gardens, architecture, literature, and art, all in a unique Japanese style.



This 1903 map of Japan shows the dozens of territories ruled by different daimyo during the mid-1500s. (Image credit: James Murdoch and Isoh Yamagata)

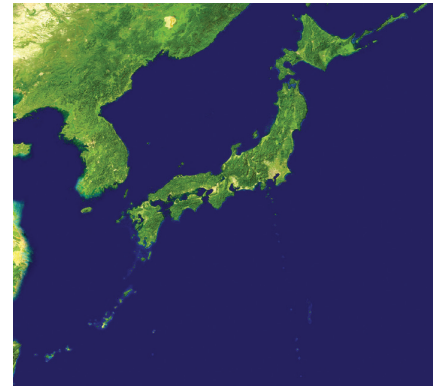
Powerful ruling families fought for control of Japan and the victor's clan would sometimes rule for centuries. Among them, the **Fujiwara** family, **Taira** family, and **Minamoto** family ruled in succession from the eighth century to the early 1300s, with each family leaving a lasting influence on Japanese government and culture.

Unlike the emperors of China, the emperors of Japan received great honor but had very little power. In title, the emperor was the supreme leader, but often the powerful families had the most authority and control. Military leaders called **shoguns** would rule as they liked, establishing their own government or **shogunate**. For instance, the **Tokugawa Shogunate** ruled Japan for 250 years. The title of shogun would pass from father to son until a challenger would try to take control; if successful, the shogun would establish a new ruling family and shogunate.

During this era, **feudalism** existed in Japan, a system of rule where most citizens were peasants who were rigidly controlled by the wealthy ruling class. Shoguns retained their power with the help of landowner-warriors called **samurai**. Samurai followed a strict code of conduct known as **Bushido** (“The Way of the Warrior”), which included virtues such as courage, honesty, compassion, and self-control. The most powerful samurai were **daimyo**, who ruled the region under their command. Samurai pledged loyalty to their daimyo and gave military support as well. Peasants who farmed the lands of the daimyo received protection from the lords. While it is likely that many of the ruling class were kind to the peasants, the inherent inequality of the system kept those who worked the land in poverty with little hope for improving their quality of life.



This photograph, circa 1860, shows a samurai in full armor. (Image credit: Britannica)



Japan is a group of islands in the Pacific Ocean, with the Korean peninsula as its nearest neighbor. (Image credit: NASA)

Although some Portuguese explorers and traders visited Japan in the 1500s, the country was relatively isolated because of its geographical barriers. Both the strong sea currents and the mountains made it difficult for outsiders to invade Japan. Like the Chinese, the Japanese saw foreigners as **barbarians**—uncivilized and inferior. With a society ruled by warriors, the Japanese did not see outsiders as a threat. However, they did see that European weapons could bring them power, so they bought cannons and muskets from Portuguese merchants. Before long, Japanese craftsmen learned how to make guns, and the daimyo provided them to their troops.

The merchants were soon followed by Jesuit missionaries who adopted Japanese customs to increase the

possibility of converting people to Christianity. The missionaries were amazed at the Japanese habit of daily bathing, as Europeans of that time rarely washed. They tried to change their manners so as not to offend the Japanese. One priest wrote, “They are much amazed at our eating with the hands and wiping them on napkins, which then remain covered with food stains, and this causes them disgust.”

The most notable Jesuit missionary was **Francis Xavier**, who later became a Catholic saint. During his two years in Japan in the mid-1500s, he made hundreds of converts to Christianity, which spread quickly when some of the daimyos became supportive. Christian symbols became fashionable, and even non-Christian Japanese wore rosaries and crucifixes, as they believed these items would bring good luck and success. Catholic missionaries traveled freely throughout Japan for about 90 years.

By 1600, over 300,000 Japanese had converted to Christianity. The Tokugawa shoguns began to grow suspicious of the Christians because their influence became so powerful. They were afraid Japanese Christians might revolt against the shogunate. Japanese officials began to **persecute** Christians, and killed many of them, common people and priests alike. When the Christians refused to cooperate, the government did its best to wipe them out completely.

The Japanese government enacted a law called the **Act of Seclusion**, instituting a ban on all Europeans except the Dutch. The Dutch were allowed to remain because they never tried to spread their religious beliefs. However, their travel was limited to two ships a year, and they could only engage in trade in the port of Nagasaki. Dutch travelers were required to stay on a small island in Nagasaki Bay, and were not allowed to cross the bridge to the mainland.

In addition to barring Europeans, the Act of Seclusion decreed that any Japanese residing abroad would be put to death if they returned to Japan. This was to keep outside influences at a minimum since many people who traveled to other countries would return home with new ideas and new ways of doing things. At the same time, the government made it illegal to build any ships large enough for ocean voyages, making it impossible for citizens to leave. With these strict rules, Japan was determined to cut off all influence from the Western world.

For 200 years the policy of seclusion meant that very little news went in or out of Japan, other than what the Dutch traders brought. This **isolationist policy** also meant Japan fell behind other nations in science, technology, and military power. On the other hand, it gave Japan a long period of peace and stability.

Much growth and change occurred in Japan during those two centuries. A new style of theater, called **kabuki**, developed. It mixed some of the older traditions with very stylized acting, dancing, music, and elaborate costumes. A new form of poetry, **haiku**, became popular during that time, especially among city people. Haiku usually expresses some kind of thought to surprise the reader, using a striking image, often from nature, that suggests a deeper meaning. Zen Buddhism also developed during Japan’s period of isolation.

The Japanese period of isolation came to an end in 1853 when United States President Millard Fillmore sent Commodore **Matthew Perry** to negotiate a trade agreement with Japan. Perry carried a letter from the President to the Japanese Emperor, not realizing that the country was actually ruled by the Tokugawa Shogunate. When Perry arrived with four U.S. Navy ships, this show of power was meant to pressure Japan into negotiations. Gifts were presented to the emperor: a telescope, telegraph, and a model of a steam locomotive. When Perry returned the following year with a larger fleet of ships, the Japanese agreed to sign a treaty. Within a few years, Japan had agreements with Great Britain, Russia, France, and the Netherlands as well. Japan was now open to the world.



This five-story Buddhist temple or *pagoda* was built circa 1372 in the Yamagata Prefecture. (Image credit: Geomr)

Lesson



Unit Project and Learning Reflection

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- Complete a unit project of your own design. Complete a learning reflection.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- Design a project that combines personal interests with the unit theme.
- Demonstrate project-management skills.
- Reflect on the learning process and content.

Unit Project

History is often framed by wars and conflicts. For the next two weeks, you'll look away from the conflicts and struggles of humanity and turn your attention to the accomplishments of people around the world. Based on the historical periods you've studied in this unit, you'll explore some element of human achievement in art, science, math, music, technology, engineering, architecture, medicine, literature, or any other creative endeavor or innovation.

What do *you* like? Find something you are interested in and explore an aspect related to it. Do you like maps? Fashion? Animals? Food? Whatever it is, look back in time to see how that interest could be used as a framework for a project. Your project doesn't have to be anything elaborate; you just have to create something that shows what you've discovered.

You have two weeks to complete this project.

Here are a few examples of project ideas, just to help with your own brainstorming:

- If you are interested in food from different cultures, you might find out what kinds of crops were grown in one particular region during that time period, and then create a menu of what might have been a typical meal or a feast. You might even try to make the meal! You can photograph what you've cooked, or create a handwritten menu. You might draw an illustration of the feast, or make up a new recipe based on the available ingredients.

- If you like art, you might draw, paint, or sculpt a reproduction of artwork from that culture and time period. You might learn about one particular artist and create a slide show of that artist's work, using captions to highlight historical details. You could compare the art style of the time to earlier or later styles, or you could show how art was a reflection of the social and political events of that era.
- If you like movies, you could watch a movie based on the historical time period and write a movie review. You could use film clips or trailers from different movies related to one time period and compare how historical details were represented (costume, geographical features, food, family or social structure, etc.). Or you might create your own short film or video compilation that highlights one aspect of the time period.
- If you like building things, you might create a diorama (either physical or computer generated) that shows a particular region or historical event. You could recreate a style of architecture or make a model of a typical house. Or you might create a replica of an artifact, such as a type of tool, jewelry, container, vehicle, or other item in daily use at the time.

Use your imagination! Try to come up with a project that you will enjoy doing. Talk to friends and family members before you start your project. Discussing and brainstorming ideas with others will help you refine your project before you begin. Plan the different stages or steps of your project so that it can be completed within two weeks. (If you have a longer project in mind, discuss your idea with your teacher.) Make a checklist of tasks, write down how long you expect each to take, and check off tasks as they are completed. If you find yourself getting bogged down, think about how you can streamline the process or adjust the original timeline.

As you are working on your project, continue to talk about it and get input from others, especially if you come to a challenging part or need to adapt your original idea. You don't have to do this project by yourself—make it a collaboration with others! (Just make sure to give them credit when your project is complete.)

Learning Reflection

You have just spent several weeks exploring a great deal of information about world history. It's important to take time to let what you've learned sink in, to ponder its relevance to modern life.

Let your mind wander back over what you've discovered in the past weeks. (It might help to look over the table of contents, reading material, or the assignments you did to refresh your memory.)

You can use the following questions to guide your reflections, but you shouldn't feel limited by them—reflections are personal, and each person will think about different aspects of what they've learned.

- What stands out as meaningful or baffling to you?
- What did you learn that was new or surprising?
- Did something raise a strong emotion in you, such as resentment, empathy, or wonder?

- What types of assignments did you most enjoy? Which were most challenging to you?
 - If you had a time machine, is this a time period you would wish to visit? Why or why not?
 - Is there some element of this time period that you wish was present in our modern culture?
 - Is there a lesson to be learned from the struggles, mistakes, and triumphs experienced by the people long ago?

When you have spent some time reflecting and turning over ideas in your head, express your thoughts in some sharable form. This can be in writing, poetry, music, art, discussion or interview format, or any other way you'd like to share your reflections.

Learning Checklist

Use this learning checklist to track how your skills are developing over time and identify skills that need more work.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Plan and implement a self-designed project				
Identify discrete project tasks				
Create a project timeline				
Produce a tangible outcome that can be shared				
Express thoughts related to self-reflection				

For Enrolled Students

If you would like to discuss your project ideas, get input, or have questions as you are working on your project, let your teacher know.

When you have completed your project and learning reflection, share them with your teacher.

Lesson



Renaissance, Reformation, and the Age of Enlightenment (1350–1815)

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- Complete the reading selections.
- Compare and contrast the ideas of Hobbes and Locke.
- Explain the relevance of Voltaire's ideas today.
- Choose a creative assignment to complete.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- Compare and contrast philosophical ideas.
- Relate ideas of the Enlightenment to today's world.
- Use reasoning to express ideas clearly.

Reading

Read the following reading selections:

- The European Renaissance (1400–1600)
- The Protestant Reformation (1517–1685)
- The Age of Enlightenment or Reason (1685–1815)

Continue to use your atlas or globe as you read.

Assignments

1. Think about the difference between Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, and their beliefs about the nature of human beings. Explain why you agree or disagree with these men. Compare their ideas and highlight how they are different. You may write this as an essay, a dialogue between the two of them, an interview, or a creative writing story in which you imagine yourself living in a society created by one or the other of these philosophers.



Reflect and Discuss

Think about relationships in your life involving either spoken or unspoken contracts. John Locke believed government should be a contract between people and their rulers in which the rulers were expected to protect the rights of the people. What contracts and agreements do you have in your life? How are these agreements different from the contract between a citizen and the government? Discuss your ideas with someone else and listen to what they have to say.

2. In your own words, restate Voltaire’s words, “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” How might this statement be relevant in today’s world? Do you agree or disagree with it? Explain your reasoning.
3. Choose one of the following creative assignments:
 - a. Draw a set of cartoons to portray the ideas of two or more different scientists or philosophers of the Enlightenment. Your cartoons should include key phrases that highlight the accomplishments or beliefs of these people.
 - b. Imagine you are planning to host a salon. Who would you invite? What kind of music would you include? What topics might be discussed at your salon? What controversial ideas might come forth? You may write this assignment as an essay, a story, or a dialogue. Alternatively, you could host a salon in person. If you do, write a summary of the discussion afterward.
 - c. Make your own mini-encyclopedia. Choose a minimum of three totally different inventions or natural objects. Your task is to present these items to someone who has never seen or heard of them before. Describe each one as thoroughly as you can, draw them carefully and beautifully, and, if possible, illustrate or write step-by-step instructions on how to make at least one of your chosen items.



Up for a Challenge?

Create a pamphlet that conveys information about a philosophy, political idea, controversial scientific breakthrough, or some other important thought from the Enlightenment. Your pamphlet should attempt to educate and persuade others to adopt this point of view. Include both words and drawings.

Learning Checklist

Use this learning checklist to track how your skills are developing over time and identify skills that need more work.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Explain key elements of philosophical ideas				
Compare and contrast differing philosophies				
Relate ideas from the Enlightenment to the modern world				
Express ideas with clear reasoning				

Reading Selections

The European Renaissance (1400–1600)

The **Middle Ages** or **Medieval** period in Europe marked the 1,000 years between the decline of the Roman Empire in the West beginning in the 5th century to the 15th century. At the time, Christianity was the dominant religion throughout Europe. As the Western Roman Empire declined, Germanic rulers of Europe banded together as the **Holy Roman Empire**. Some scholars mark the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire with the crowning of **Charlemagne** in the year 800. Over the next 800 years, the empire's territories grew to include all or part of present-day Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Italy, and Poland. In the meantime, the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire was expanding in the east. When the Holy Roman Empire had spread across Europe and the Mediterranean region, it became difficult to defend, support, and control such far-flung territories. The Roman Empire began to fail in the West, and the Byzantine Empire fell to the Ottomans in the East.

Thus, the Middle Ages were a time when the advances made by the Roman Empire began to fall apart. Roads, food and water supply systems, political structures, and other aspects of governance that create a stable community were no longer being supported by a prosperous empire. Facing challenges from a lack of political unity, interest and support of artistic and scholarly pursuits waned. This period of time is sometimes referred to as the **Dark Ages**, because there was very little organized record-keeping at this time (unlike the excellent record-keeping of the Roman Empire).

During the Middle Ages, life was organized around the **feudal system**. All the lands were owned by the king, who would grant property to favored loyal subjects. These men held the title of **baron**, and they paid the king rent, provided knights when the king needed military support, and swore **allegiance** to him. The wealthy barons ruled over their land in whatever way they chose, establishing systems of taxation and justice. Some barons were fair; some were not. Some were kind; some

were cruel. Barons granted pieces of their land to their knights in exchange for their service. The knights allowed *serfs* (or *villeins*) to live on their land in exchange for working the land and providing goods and services to the knight. Serfs' lives were strictly controlled by the landowners, and most were very poor.



This illustration from a 13th century book shows a knight in the center, a clergyman on the left, and a peasant farmer on the right, highlighting the feudal system of the Middle Ages. (Image credit: British Library/Bridgeman Art Library)

At this time, *clerics* (religious leaders) and scholars felt that life on Earth was not worth very much, and the task of humankind was to devote itself to preparing for what they believed would come after death: life in a wonderful, heavenly place. It didn't matter if you had a terrible life of poverty or hardship. They believed that life began only after death, and that focusing on the enjoyment of earthly life was sinful.

Before the 1500s, many Western Europeans believed it was best to rely on faith, and felt most truths were beyond the understanding of the common people. If one simply lived obediently by the rules of the church, without questioning its authority, that would be enough. Society was seen to be like a tree, with the peasants at the roots, the clergy and merchants in the lower branches, and the nobles at the very top. This perspective helped to strengthen rigid social classes, and it was considered natural

that some people would be poor and powerless while others were rich and powerful. Although this may seem very unjust to us today, at that time it was accepted. People felt secure in their own place in the world, and they understood what was expected of them, depending on their social class. Most people didn't question this social structure.

During the Middle Ages, the **Roman Catholic Church** gained power as Europeans increasingly turned toward the Church for guidance. As the Church asserted more and more control over not only the religious lives of the people but also their social, political, and military systems, the emperors, kings, and others in power began to clash with the leadership of the Catholic Church. At the same time, the spread of Islam from the East challenged the influence of Christianity. Slowly the power of the Roman Catholic Church declined. When this happened, social structures shifted.

New national *monarchies* formed in Italy, Spain, France, and England, and city-states in Italy. Rather than being ruled as part of an immense empire, a king or queen would rule over a single region or nation. These new structures gave citizens more influence over decisions that affected them directly. This new political and economic stability allowed other aspects of civilization to

expand. **Secular** (nonreligious) education became more popular and other cultural advances emphasized a new way of thinking.

This was the beginning of the European **Renaissance**, which means *rebirth*, which marked the end of the Middle Ages. The Renaissance was a time of transformation and renewal that brought new ideas about art, philosophy, and culture while recognizing the wisdom and value of classical Greek and Roman ideals. Debate, dialogue, inquiry, and exploration were all highly valued. The development of the printing press during this time allowed more people to have access to printed texts and become literate, thus allowing ideas to spread further and more quickly.

An intellectual movement called **humanism** took hold, first in Italy and then throughout Europe. This school of thought was focused on human beings and their place in the universe rather than on divine powers or God. It emphasized the potential of human beings, the validity of the human experience, and the innate goodness of people. **Rational** thought was prized over faith, and human beings were seen as having dignity and value. Emotions and personalities were important and worthy of respect. Humanists taught that people could improve their lives by understanding the world and changing it.

The value humanists placed on life on Earth opened up a great deal of interest in learning. As a result, all kinds of art, education, and scientific inquiry thrived during the Renaissance. European explorers were traveling to different cultures and bringing back new perspectives, new inventions, and new ideas. People began to see progress and change as a good thing.

Many people equate the Renaissance with the magnificent artistic achievements of that era. Art was elevated to a way of exploring humanity and the beauty and mystery of the natural world. In art, sculpture, and architecture, artists would blend sciences and mathematics with creative expression to produce impressive works of beauty, balance, and harmony. Artists such as Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo created masterpieces that left a lasting impact on the world.

Leonardo da Vinci is often held up as an example of a **Renaissance man**, a term that today refers to anyone with talents, skills, and knowledge in multiple and diverse areas of interest. He seemed to be interested in everything at once and excel at whatever he turned his hand to. He was a painter, architect, scientist, and engineer. His sketches reveal incredible innovations such as underwater diving apparatus, winged structures for human flight, and an aerial screw, which reveals elements of modern-day helicopters. His intricate drawings of the human form show incredible details of anatomy and



Renaissance painter Raphael depicted the ideas of open inquiry and educated dialogue in his famous painting, *School of Athens*. (Image credit: Public domain art/Wikimedia Commons)



Michelangelo Buonarroti was a renowned painter and sculptor, and many of his sketches and paintings showed intricate details of the human form. (Image credit: Slovak National Gallery)

his scientific and mechanical drawings were unsurpassed.

The Protestant Reformation (1517–1685)

Throughout the Renaissance, the Catholic Church continued to try to hold onto what power it had over society. The leaders of the church believed themselves to be the only ones capable of interpreting the Bible and its teachings. This position of superiority created a great divide between the people and their religious leaders, who were often accused of abusing their positions of power. Some people began to question the Church's ideas and practices.

One such person to question the Church was **Martin Luther**, who believed that the Bible, not the Church, should be the ultimate spiritual authority. Luther was a monk and a university professor in 1517. At that time, it was a common religious practice to allow people to pay money to the Church for their sins and wrongdoings (“indulgences”) to be forgiven, although traditional religious thought held that only God had the power to forgive sins. That meant that people who were rich enough could do whatever they wanted and then pay money to be forgiven. This injustice spurred Luther to write **95 Theses**, which outlined his objections to certain church practices. His hope was to encourage change from within the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, he was **excommunicated** (banned from the Church). He went into hiding and translated the Bible into German so that common people could read it—and interpret it—for themselves. He also printed many pamphlets explaining his ideas (the printing press allowed him to reach a wider audience than had been previously possible). Because of his protests and desire to reform the Catholic Church, the **Protestant Reformation** was born.

It wasn't long before new religious factions, called Protestants, began to form. Lutheranism was adopted throughout much of Germany, Scandinavia, and other countries around the Baltic Sea. The Catholic Church responded by organizing **Inquisitions**, groups of clergymen who were ordered to seek out those who held opinions contrary to those of the Catholic Church; any opposing opinions were deemed **heresy**. The punishment for **heretics** was often torture or execution. Decades of bloody conflict ensued, but the new Protestant religions were firmly established and growing.

The Age of Enlightenment or Reason (1685–1815)

The **Age of Enlightenment** (also called the **Age of Reason**) in Europe began in the 1600s and brought together the ideas of the Renaissance and the **Scientific Revolution**, which marked a time when many people began to feel that the only way to really understand life was through science (not, as had previously been thought, through religion).

During this period, many scientists made important contributions to the scientific understanding of the laws of nature. Their observations, experiments, and discoveries changed people's ideas about how the world works. Scientists **Nicolaus Copernicus**, **Johannes Kepler**, and **Galilei Galileo** challenged the belief that Earth was the center of the universe. They suggested Earth traveled in a path around the sun, along with other heavenly bodies (planets). This was a shocking idea because it meant that Earth and humankind were not at the center of the universe with everything revolving around them. This new idea was contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church. The Church forced Galileo to publicly deny his beliefs or be tortured, although legend has it that when Galileo left the courtroom, he whispered, "And yet it does move!"

The work of these scientists paved the way for philosophers to apply scientific reasoning to all aspects of life. During the Age of Enlightenment, philosophers believed that happiness didn't come from devoting one's life to God, as was previously thought, but from following a set of natural laws that would result in greater freedom for humankind. These philosophers and scientists saw the universe as a sort of machine, which was set in motion by its creator, then left alone to run by the laws that were designed to keep it going. They worked to understand and define these natural laws.

Scholars during this time said humans had an important advantage over animals because of their ability to reason. They said animals were only able to act from their emotions and instincts, but humans were able to make decisions by using their minds, and act by their own force of will rather than from their feelings. "Knowledge is power" was a key idea during the Enlightenment, and freedom of thought was crucial. Using their powers of reasoning, people were encouraged to challenge anything based on ignorance or superstition, and to question traditional authorities (which included the clergy). In the words of **Immanuel Kant**, a German philosopher in the 1700s, "The motto of the Enlightenment is 'Dare to Know! Have the courage to use your own intelligence!'"

Human progress was a common theme in philosophical writings, which included **humanitarianism**, a belief in the importance of improving people's daily lives. Easing human suffering was



Posthumous Portrait of Martin Luther as an Augustine Monk, by Lucas Cranach the Elder, circa 1546
(Image credit: Cranach Digital Archive)



Galileo Demonstrating the New Astronomical Theories at the University of Padua, by Félix Parra, 1873
(Image credit: Museo Nacional de Arte)

seen as a worthy goal, and the thinkers of the Enlightenment spoke out against religious persecution, slavery, and oppression of all kinds.

Of course, not everyone agreed on the nature of humanity. **Thomas Hobbes** believed people are basically wicked and selfish, and they need a strict ruler to keep them in order. This was in a time when most of the countries of Europe were strictly ruled by very powerful kings and queens; many political thinkers were promoting ideas of freedom and liberty. Hobbes thought that without an all-powerful government, people's lives would be "poor, nasty, brutish, and short" because people were basically driven by fear of each other and a desire for power, and therefore needed to be controlled.

In direct opposition to these beliefs were the ideas of **John Locke**, who said people have a right to life, liberty, and property. He said this was a "natural" right because humans are born free and equal. Locke believed people were reasonable beings who had a natural ability to govern themselves and work for the welfare of the whole society. In his mind, government should be a sort of contract between the people and their rulers, in which the rulers promise to protect the natural rights of the people. He encouraged rebellion against oppressive governments that abused these basic rights.

Several other philosophers also had an important impact on thinking during the Enlightenment years. **René Descartes** was a French philosopher and mathematician who fiercely believed in questioning everything. He said nothing should be accepted on faith, and everything should be doubted until it could be proved by reason. He knew himself to be a thinking, doubting, questioning person, and therefore he knew he existed. He is well known for his statement, "I think, therefore I am."

Voltaire was a popular writer who had strong political and philosophical opinions, especially concerning religious intolerance and anything else that interfered with the rights of individuals. He hated intolerance and injustice of any kind, and wrote, "I shall not cease to preach tolerance from the rooftops as long as persecution does not cease." The ideas of liberty and freedom that came out of the Enlightenment had never really been considered before, and would have lasting impact on Europe and the rest of the world.

A French philosopher named **Denis Diderot** spent almost 25 years amassing a huge collection of articles on literature, religion, government, science, and technology. Diderot wanted to show people all the wonders of modern reasoning and scientific thought. This great work was called **Encyclopédie** and it showed beautifully detailed illustrations of the latest machines of the day,

surgical techniques, birds and animals from newly explored continents, drawings that showed the step-by-step construction of a tennis racket, and many other amazing things that expanded the public’s view of the world. It also contained articles criticizing the government and the Catholic Church and praising religious tolerance.

The following excerpt from *Encyclopédie* shows some of the political views held during the Enlightenment:

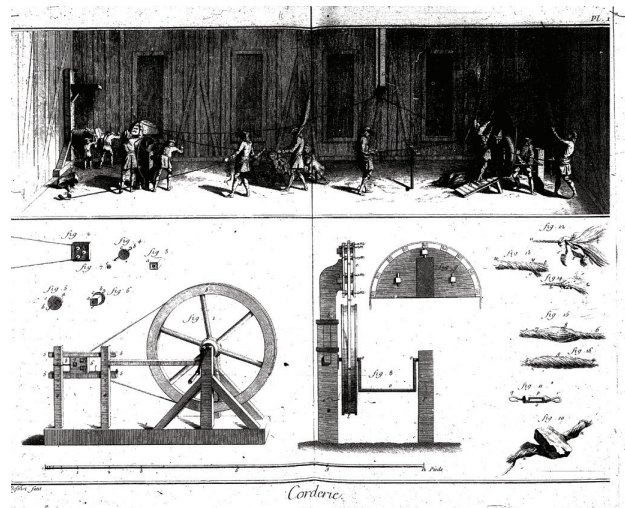
“No man has received from nature the right to rule others. Liberty is a gift of heaven and each individual of the same species has the right to enjoy it at soon as he enjoys reason. If nature has established any authority, it is paternal power, but paternal power has its limits, and in the state of nature it would end as soon as children were in a position of self-dependence. All other authority originates in something other than nature. Close examination will show that it derives from one of two sources, either the force and violence of those who take possession of it, or the consent of those who have submitted to it through a contract made or assumed between them and whoever they have vested with authority.”

Because of such statements, Diderot and some of the other men who worked on this massive enterprise went to prison, but *Encyclopédie* was read by many, and its ideas spread through Europe. Before long, English and Scottish writers, inspired by Diderot’s accomplishment, produced the first *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

At around the same time, the first daily and weekly newspapers began as a means for writers to share their ideas. More and more people learned to read, so the demand for written material increased. It was not uncommon for a group of working-class people to gather together to read pamphlets and newspapers aloud to each other and debate the ideas presented. Soon people began to gather in coffeehouses to argue and discuss politics, recent scientific developments, and anything else of interest.

Originating in Paris, it became fashionable in Europe for wealthy hostesses to invite poets, musicians, philosophers, and other interesting conversationalists to their homes for social gatherings called **salons**. These salons became intellectual centers where great artists, writers, and scientists would gather each week to share ideas. It was still generally believed that women were not as capable as men, and they couldn’t make real contributions in the arts and sciences, but the women who conducted salons achieved prominence by providing an important forum for the exchange of ideas.

As ideas changed and people broke free from old, rigid thought, the way was opened for



Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* was a massive compilation of the knowledge of the time and included detailed drawings on hundreds of subjects. (Image credit: Bibliothèque Nationale de France)

even bigger changes to come. People had higher expectations for a good quality of life. However, monarchs clung fast to their power. The discrepancy between people’s dreams and ideals on one hand, and the reality of poverty and powerlessness on the other, set the stage for enormous struggles ahead.

Lesson



The Age of Exploration (1500–1800)

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

- Complete the reading selections.
- Draw an infographic of the Columbian Exchange.
- Write an essay on the impact of European conquests in the Americas.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of the Columbian Exchange.
- Draw an infographic that combines text and images for a visual display of information.
- Express the impact of European conquests in the Americas.

Reading

Read the following reading selections:

- The Discovery of a “New World”
- The First Peoples of the Americas
- Spanish Conquest of the Americas Spreads
- European Conquest in South America
- Portugal’s Conquest of Brazil

Note that there is a good deal of reading in this lesson. Glance over everything—the reading selections and the assignments—before you begin so you can plan your time wisely. Remember to look up each location on an atlas, map, or globe as you read.

Assignments

1. Draw a graphic of the Columbian Exchange. Conduct research to find out the kinds of goods that were transported (don’t just rely on what you find in the reading selection). You can look online for ideas of how to do this, and then create your own hand-drawn infographic that

shows the flow of goods, people, and diseases between Europe, Africa, and the Americas. This does not have to be an elaborate drawing, but the text and illustrations should clearly convey this information. (Hint: using color in your infographic can help highlight the information more clearly.)

2. Write a brief essay (two or three paragraphs) that expresses your view of the impact of European conquests in the Americas. Make sure to address how the First Peoples and the European nations were influenced by this contact. You are not required to do additional research for this assignment. Focus on your own interpretation of these historical events.

Use an outline or graphic organizer to brainstorm ideas and put them in an effective order. Begin with a thesis statement (see the English Manual for tips on writing a thesis statement) and then present your key points with supporting details. Write a rough draft of your essay.

Save this draft—you will submit it along with your polished essay.

Read your rough draft aloud to yourself or to someone else to figure out where it needs more explanation or more effective word choices. Are there places where it is redundant? Is there awkward phrasing that needs fixing? Check that your ideas flow in a logical sequence. After saving your rough draft, revise your essay to improve the expressiveness of your writing. Edit the revised essay to check for ways to polish your writing. Ask yourself:

- Did you use topic sentences to introduce the main ideas of each paragraph?
- Did you use a variety of sentence lengths and types to give your writing more interest?
- Is everything spelled correctly?
- Does each sentence and each proper noun begin with a capital letter?
- Have you checked that the punctuation is correct?

When you have made these final edits, proofread your essay once more to catch any lingering errors. Strive to make your essay an example of your best writing.

Learning Checklist

Use this learning checklist to track how your skills are developing over time and identify skills that need more work.

SKILLS	Developing	Consistent	Competent	Notes
Identify relevant, reputable sources of information				
Display information in a visual format				
Express ideas clearly in writing				
Organize ideas in a logical sequence				
Use topic sentences to introduce ideas				
Demonstrate variety in sentence type and length				
Demonstrate skills in revision, editing, and proofreading				

For Enrolled Students

When you have completed your work, please submit lessons 9 and 10 to your teacher for feedback. Remember to include the rough draft of your essay as well as the final version.

Reading Selections

The Discovery of a “New World”

While European kings and queens were looking for ways to expand their empires and wealth, eyes turned toward the west. The goal was to find a quicker route to Asia and India. They did not expect to find an entire continent in the way! Two continents, actually—North America and South America—rose between the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

Latin America encompasses Mexico and the countries found in Central America and South America, as well as various islands in the Caribbean Sea. These countries are called Latin America because they all speak a language that is based on the old Roman language, Latin. Both Spanish and Portuguese are languages based on Latin, as is French, which is also spoken in certain countries in Latin America.

When Christopher Columbus made landfall in the Caribbean in 1492, he claimed the “new” land for Spain. Later explorers from France, England, and Portugal claimed the land they “found” for

their own countries. The fact that there were already thriving civilizations on these lands did not deter the newcomers, who were eager to take the land and people by force, and claim the rich resources—lumber, gold, precious metals, and more—for their homelands across the sea.

When Columbus arrived on the island he called Hispaniola or “Little Spain” (present-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic), the local **Taíno** culture was a well-organized communal society. Population estimates range from a few hundred thousand to nearly two million people. With permission from the local leader, Columbus’s exploration party established a small settlement. The following year more Spaniards arrived and moved to a permanent settlement.

Many of the local population became sick and died, unable to fight off the diseases carried by the Europeans; the Spaniards had been exposed to diseases all their lives and had built up strong **immunities**. But diseases such as smallpox, influenza, and measles were new to the local population and their bodies were unable to fight off the deadly illnesses.

By 1504, the Spaniards had taken control of the island by force. The Taíno who weren’t killed by war or disease were enslaved and put to work mining gold to send to Spain. With brutal working conditions, many Taíno were worked to death.

Within 25 years of the arrival of Columbus, only 32,000 Taíno survived from a once-thriving civilization. In order to replace the slave labor of the dwindling population, the Spanish began importing enslaved Africans, starting a horrific cycle of enslavement that would last for centuries and have devastating consequences for much longer.

Thus began an exchange of plants, animals, diseases, and enslaved people between the “Old World” of Europe and the “New World” of North and South America that would change the rest of the world forever. Termed the **Columbian Exchange** because it began with Columbus’s explorations, the importing and exporting had a generally negative effect on the local populations of North and South America—taking their resources and spreading disease—and an overall positive effect on the people of Europe. For instance, Europeans were introduced to foods such as potatoes, tomatoes, peanuts, and chilis that were easy to grow, nutritious, and of higher yield than their current crops, enabling them to feed more people and have a healthier population. Europeans also benefited from the abundant natural resources from Latin America that were usually harvested by locals forced to work for free and then shipped across the ocean.

The First Peoples of the Americas

Spanish explorers, like Columbus, traveled to the Western Hemisphere for the “three G’s”: God, gold, and glory. This time in European history was heavily influenced by the Protestant Reformation, which occurred in 1517. With so much conflict between the Protestant and Catholic religions, Spain was determined to spread the Catholic religion to new lands. As explorers landed in this “New World,” they planted the Spanish flag and claimed the land they found for Spain. Of course, the land was not theirs to take—there were already people living in these lands, in advanced civilizations with highly developed cultures.



When Columbus claimed land in the Caribbean Sea, there were already thriving civilizations who had lived there for more than 1,000 years. (Image credit: CIA The World Factbook)

Columbus and later explorers called the native people they encountered “Indians,” but it is important to know the names the local people used to refer to themselves almost always translated to “The People” in their own language. Many descendants of these indigenous people prefer the term **First Peoples** or **First Nations** to describe themselves.

When **hominids** first passed over the land bridge that existed in the area of the Bering Strait near modern-day Alaska between 12,500 and 70,000 years ago, they spread their nomadic culture southward until they had populated not only North America, but also Central and South America. Here they developed highly structured civilizations that included formal religion, unique languages, and cultural developments such as art and music. Many had large cities, written languages, sophisticated metallurgy (skill in metalwork), and advanced theories of astronomy and mathematics.

Among the most advanced of these cultures at the time of the Spanish incursions into the Western Hemisphere were the **Maya**, the **Inca**, and the **Aztec** (although by the time the Spanish arrived, the Maya had somewhat faded in the face of the expanding Aztec Empire). These were not primitive people who first met the Spanish as they began their conquest of the Americas. They were highly skilled, intelligent people with a rich cultural history.



Map of the Aztec Empire, 1519 (Image credit: Secretary of Public Education of Mexico/Giggette)

The *Aztec Empire* began in the southern region of North America (modern-day Mexico) around 1100 CE as a tribe of hunter/gatherers who slowly rose to power through military expertise, sophisticated negotiating techniques, and forced trade. Eventually this group settled in the valley of Mexico under the leadership of a visionary who had a dream predicting they would cease their nomadic ways and settle where they saw an eagle sitting on a cactus eating a serpent. (The symbol of the eagle sitting on a cactus eating a serpent can be seen today on the flag of Mexico.) That symbolic grouping was sighted on an island on Lake Texcoco, and there the Aztec built their capital city, *Tenochtitlan*.

The city was an immense, elaborate, and highly organized metropolis that was constructed in the middle of the lake. Through ingenious engineering, the small island was expanded into a massive 2,500 acres of usable land. The city included an extensive canal system, gardens, and roads, as well as sophisticated record-keeping systems, architecture, arts, education, and complex religious traditions. To better defend their great city, they built very few causeways between the island and the mainland, and if an enemy approached, the causeways were retracted.

The Aztec Empire flourished and spread until, at its height, it ruled between five and six million people, organized into hundreds of city-states. The Aztec worshipped many gods, as did many native tribes across the Americas. The sun and the moon were their major gods, but as the Aztec expanded their territory, they adopted many gods of their conquered peoples or neighbors as well. Human sacrifice was an important element of the Aztec religion, and scholars believe it was

a great honor to sacrifice one's life for the gods. In addition to complex religious practices and social structures, the Aztec excelled in art, metallurgy, astronomy, military tactics, trade, and the measurement of time.

Spanish Conquest of the Americas Spreads

The Spanish conquistador *Hernán Cortés* had come to the new world in the wake of Columbus's discoveries and settled in Hispaniola (modern-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and then in Cuba.

In 1519, Cortés set out to the mainland to search for gold, intending to use the “divide and conquer” strategy to get native tribes to fight against one another. For many years, the Aztec Empire had expanded out from their capital city, taking over many tribes and forcing them to become client states and pay taxes to the Aztec. Naturally, the Aztec were not well regarded by the native tribes they had dominated and conquered, so it was an easy task for Cortés to convince these tribes to join him on his expedition to overthrow Emperor *Montezuma* and his Aztec Empire.

When Cortés led a small force of conquistadors into Tenochtitlan in 1519, Montezuma received him willingly. Many scholars believe he was influenced by an Aztec belief that the feathered serpent god, Quetzalcoatl, was bound to return in a “reed year,” that he would come from the east, with red “feathers” on his head and face. In fact, 1519 was a “reed year,” Cortés and his expedition did come from the east, and Cortés had red hair! Montezuma welcomed him.

When Montezuma gave Cortés and his forces full access to the great island city of Tenochtitlan, Cortés imprisoned Montezuma and took control of the city. The great emperor was killed during rioting as Aztec forces opposed the Spanish, who were plundering the city. The Aztecs eventually forced the Spanish out of the city but soon afterward the conquistadors regained control of the native population, which had been *decimated* by measles and smallpox (two diseases carried by the Spaniards for which the Aztecs had no immunity).

Two years after Cortés first saw the magnificent Tenochtitlan, the city was destroyed, and its population massacred or scattered. Cortés founded *Mexico City* in the ruins of the once-great capital of the Aztec Empire. His conquest of the Aztec added tremendous reserves of gold and silver to the Spanish treasury while destroying a mighty civilization.

Similar scenarios would be repeated throughout Latin America. Looking for precious metals like gold and silver, conquistadores quickly enslaved the local population, whom the conquistadors saw as inferior. Along with their firearms, which were unknown to the indigenous people, and in the face of the confusion on the part of the natives, who had different methods of warfare and



Mural of Tenochtitlan by Diego Rivera
(Image credit: Palacio Nacional)



The Meeting of Cortés and Montezuma, artist unknown, circa 1650–1700 (Image credit: Jay I. Kislak Collection/Rare Book and Special Collections Division)

values regarding conflict and negotiation, it was easy for the European forces to impose their will on the trusting and curious people who were living in the Western Hemisphere at that time.

After Columbus first landed in the Caribbean Islands, more Spanish expeditions followed. From Florida to South America, many Spanish men came seeking their fortune. **Vasco Nuñez de Balboa** came to what was being called “New Spain” in 1501, and within ten years he had become the governor of a Spanish territory in Central America (modern-day Panama).

After hearing stories about a group of rich tribes living on the shores of “the other sea,” Balboa decided to explore the land for both gold and glory. In 1513, he battled his way across the **Isthmus of Panama**, the narrow strip of land between the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean that connects the North and South American continents. Balboa climbed a mountain and looked down upon an enormous expanse of water that looked so peaceful, he called it the *Pacific Ocean* (*pacific* means *peaceful or soothing*). When he found his way to the shore, Balboa waded into the water and “claimed” the ocean for Spain. After this, Balboa became entangled in politics—he wanted to keep exploring but others felt he had become too powerful—and in 1519, Balboa was condemned to death for treason and beheaded.

Juan Ponce de León explored the southern coast of North America in 1513, claiming the area of modern-day Florida for Spain. While de León was looking for riches, he was also very involved in a search for the **Fountain of Youth**, a mythical source of everlasting life. De León was wounded in a battle with the native Calusa people and went back to Cuba, where he died in 1521.

Hernando de Soto explored the middle and southeast part of North America looking for both a water passage to Asia and the mythical “The Seven Cities of Cibola,” which were purported to be made of gold. He spent much time exploring and mapping the area that is now the Southeastern United States. He is credited with being the first European to cross the great Mississippi River. The contact of de Soto and his men had a devastating effect on the local population, who had no immunity to European diseases such as measles, smallpox, and chickenpox. Everywhere conquistadors went, and even with peaceful encounters, there was massive loss of life among the First Peoples.

In other parts of North America, the English, French, Dutch, and other explorers were staking claim to lands long inhabited by the native populations. The first permanent English colony in North America was established at **Jamestown** (modern-day Virginia in the United States) in 1607. The Netherlands developed a trading outpost in what is now **New York City** in 1624, and in 1608, France established **Quebec City** in modern-day Canada. In most cases, European contact led to

diseases that the local population had no resistance to, such as smallpox, influenza, and measles, causing a disruption or obliteration of the tribal cultures who had lived in North America for tens of thousands of years.

In addition to being unable to fight off diseases brought by the Europeans, the trade relations with the newcomers proved disruptive to native societies. Metal tools and weapons, including firearms, were introduced to the daily lives of Native Americans, who began to shift their hunting patterns in order to have more goods to trade. The introduction of rum and other alcoholic beverages caused another cultural shift that would plague some tribal societies far into the future.

The greatest cultural destruction resulted in the on-going campaign to take control of tribal lands. Over hundreds of years, Native Americans were steadily and systematically fought and forced away from their homelands and into smaller and smaller territories, often ending up in geographical regions that lacked the natural resources to support their populations.

European Conquest in South America

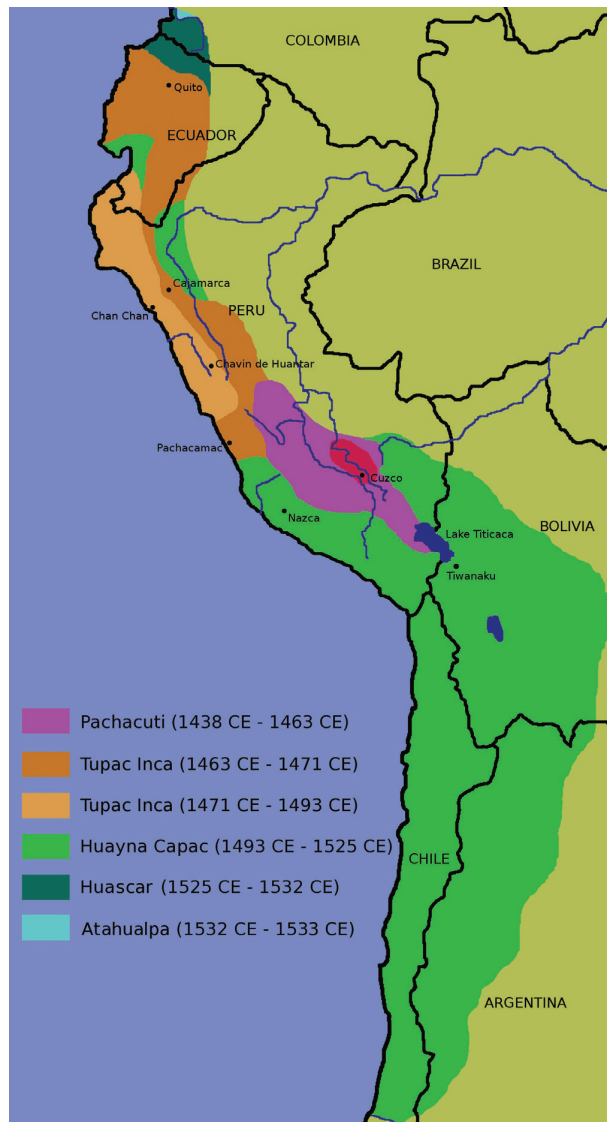
By 1493, when the Spanish were just establishing their first permanent settlement in the Caribbean, the **Inca Empire** had already become the most powerful kingdom in the Americas, with territories extending more than 3,000 miles along the western part of the South American continent (covering regions in modern-day Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile). This made it the largest empire ever seen in the Western Hemisphere and, at that time, the largest empire in the world, stretching 3,400 miles from north to south with 400,000 inhabitants speaking 30 languages.

The Inca developed an extensive network of roads and an effective system of governance to rule over this vast territory. They took a census to count the population and tax appropriately. They were skilled metalworkers, designing intricate objects of silver, copper, and gold. They were also sophisticated engineers who build cities and temples high in the Andes Mountains. They built extensive terraces for crops they discovered would grow in the often-extreme climate, such as maize and potatoes. They also built systems of aqueducts to carry water for irrigation as well as for drinking and bathing.

Like their northern neighbors the Maya and Aztec, the Inca worshipped the sun, whose god was called Inti. The emperor of the Inca was considered to be Inti's representative on Earth. It was believed that the sun was made of gold, so that all gold ornaments were made to honor the god Inti. The most famous of the Inca sites today is **Machu Picchu**, which is thought to have been a



Discovery of the Mississippi by De Soto, by William Henry Powell, 1853 (Image credit: Architect of the Capitol)



The Inca Empire expanded until it stretched along the entire west coast of South America. (Image credit: Zenyu~commons/wiki/JohnnyMrNinja)

Pizarro met with the Inca King, **Atahualpa**, a wise and compassionate leader who, to the Inca, was the representative of their god Inti on Earth. The next day, Pizarro carried out a successful ambush of the king's troops, killing thousands and taking Atahualpa captive. Pizarro demanded that the king convert to Christianity. When the ruler refused, a war broke out between the Spanish and the Inca. But the Inca had been weakened by years of civil war, and after two years the Spanish prevailed. The king's release was negotiated for a staggering quantity of gold and treasures. Even though the Inca gave in to his demands, Pizarro had Atahualpa executed in 1533, despite his promise to release him.

religious site dedicated to the worship of the gods.

The Inca Empire was constantly conquering new territories and using military might to bring the newly conquered people under their control. This made a somewhat volatile political situation, as hostages, forced laborers, and those required to convert to Incan religious traditions were eager to help whenever a rival or conqueror appeared to challenge Incan rule. Rebellion and civil war within the empire were common by the time the Spanish conquistadors arrived.

Francisco Pizarro was a conquistador who first came to New Spain in 1509. He heard of Cortés's conquest of Mexico but also heard stories of an even richer civilization found in the mountains of South America. Pizarro was a true soldier of fortune who wreaked havoc all over Central America in his quest for riches. He developed a ruthless attitude toward the native people. Even when the tribes were friendly and gave them food, he chose to steal their gold and precious metals and even enslave them when possible.

Finally, in 1532, after three years of searching—which included plundering villages and killing the inhabitants along the way—Pizarro and his forces found signs of a prosperous and well-ordered civilization high in the Andes.

Pizarro and his company then continued their march south to the capital of Cuzco. They plundered storehouses and continued overwhelming the Incas with their Spanish guns, horses, and effective military tactics. Cuzco fell to the Spanish conquerors in 1533, and those Inca who had not been killed by the Spanish were enslaved and all their treasures confiscated by Pizarro's forces.

Throughout the Incan Empire, the local population was forced into labor, building cities for Spanish settlers and mining the land for gold, silver, and gems. Soon Christian missionaries arrived and, in their zeal to convert the natives, destroyed temples, statues, and other Incan religious artifacts.

Pizarro spent the rest of his life trying to keep control of the land he now called Peru. In 1541, Pizarro was assassinated. His conquests added a vast amount of land and wealth to Spain and resulted in further decimation and enslavement of the indigenous populations.

As happened elsewhere, diseases carried by the Spanish conquistadors infected the Inca. The combination of disease, slavery, and enforced work, and the loss of their traditional livelihoods, destroyed the Inca population within a very short time. It is estimated that 80–90 percent of the indigenous population of South America died within 100 years. By the end of the Age of Exploration, Spanish rule had spread from the regions of the Southwestern United States all the way to the southernmost tip of South America.

Portugal's Conquest of Brazil

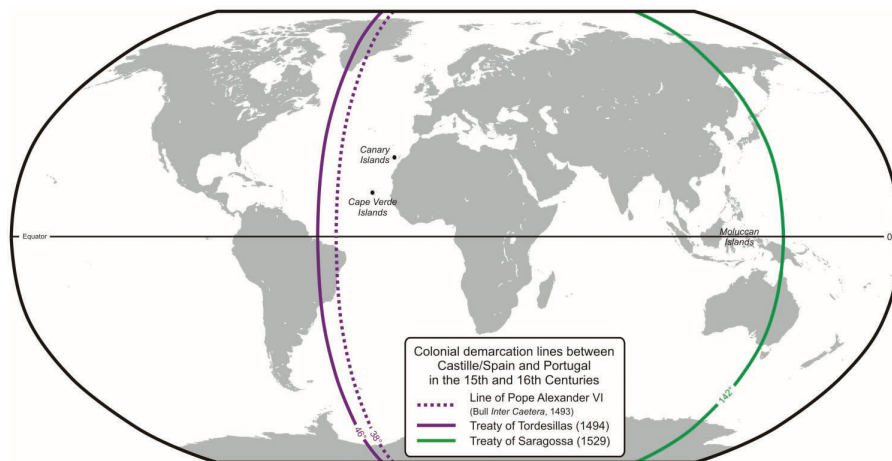
When Columbus bumped into the continents of the Western Hemisphere in 1492, Pope Alexander VI was concerned that Spain and Portugal would fight over the new lands discovered in the west. In 1494, the *Treaty of Tordesillas* declared a **Line of Demarcation** through the Atlantic Ocean. Portuguese explorers agreed to stay east of that line and Spanish expeditions were free to claim any land west of the line. This Line of Demarcation runs straight through modern-day Brazil. Of course, at the time it was drawn, no one in Portugal knew there was land there.



Systems of aqueducts built by Inca people are still in evidence today, as seen in this photo of Cuzco, Peru. (Image credit: Rainbowasi)



The ancient ruins of Machu Picchu show the elaborate terraced architecture of the mighty Inca civilization. (Image credit: Pedro Szekely)



This map shows the lines dividing territory, as agreed to by Spain and Portugal.
(Image credit: Lencer)

In 1500, **Pedro Álvarez Cabral**, a Portuguese nobleman and explorer, approached the Line of Demarcation while making a nautical maneuver called “turn of the sea.” Cabral had no intention of looking for land, but was simply taking a very wide turn after passing the Cape Verde Islands off the coast of Africa in order to catch a more

favorable trade wind to take him on a trade mission to the East. Instead, his men saw seaweed and realized that they were approaching land to the west on their side of the line, meaning they could claim it for Portugal.

Contrary to the experiences of Cortés and Pizarro, the native population who met Cabral’s men on the shore were Stone Age hunters and gatherers. They had no metal tools or weapons, and no complex cities and architecture. After claiming the land, erecting a gigantic wooden cross, and performing a religious ceremony, Cabral and his men returned to Portugal to notify the king they found land. Cabral left behind two condemned convicts to learn the language and the custom of the natives.

Portugal already had a rich trade empire in the East at this point, so there was no national interest in starting a New Portugal. Instead the king was content to give land grants to private individuals interested in exploiting the resources of this new possession, primarily to export Brazil wood, a source of red dye. Other European nations tried to infringe on this lucrative trade, at which point the king decided to start some official settlements.

Unlike the Aztec and Inca who fiercely opposed Spanish occupation, there were no wars between the Portuguese and the native people. At first, the Portuguese tried to enslave the local population to work on their expanding sugar plantations, but Portugal soon decided it was better to convert the locals to Catholicism. They threatened enslavement to any who refused to convert. Many chose Christianity over slavery.

The Portuguese and native people began to intermingle, and soon a new culture developed that combined traditions from both. By the end of the 1500s, native workers were hard to find, so the Europeans began to import enslaved Africans, who introduced African culture to Brazil, which is still prevalent in the country today.

As elsewhere, smallpox, pneumonia, and other European diseases killed many of the First Peoples, but most native tribes migrated to the interior of the country as the European population increased. Today, there are tribes in the Brazilian rainforest who have determinedly maintained their traditional culture, language, and way of life, despite the **encroachment** that began with the Spanish colonization following Cabral's arrival.