Chapter 1

New World Encounters

Summary
During the sixteenth century the Spanish, French, and English explored the Americas, displaced Native American cultures, and established colonies in the Western Hemisphere. These changes forced both cultures to adapt and change, though Native American cultures often suffered the most in these early exchanges.

Native American Histories Before Conquest
Humans occupied part of the Western Hemisphere thousands of years before the European “discovery” of America. The Mayans, Toltecs, and Aztecs in Central and South America created societies at least as sophisticated as that of the Europeans while along the Atlantic Coast, Native Americans formed diverse and mobile communities of hunters and gatherers. The arrival of Europeans in the “New World” brought into contact the three very different worlds of Europe, Africa, and America. The clashes that arose between the many Native American cultures and European cultures after 1492 often resulted in individual and tribal extermination. Many Native Americans who were not killed in battle died as a result of deadly diseases brought to the Americas by the European newcomers.

The Environmental Challenge: Food, Climate, and Culture
Environmental conditions played a monumental role in the story of America and her original settlers. Global warming ended the Ice Age, allowing Native American cultures to expand their populations and territorial habitations. As populations expanded, food sources changed forcing Native Americans’ cultures to adapt as well. Soon they developed semi-agricultural societies of considerable sophistication and technological development. Though scholars are not in total agreement, most acknowledge that at least four million Native Americans lived north of Mexico at the time of initial encounters with the Europeans.

Mysterious Disappearances
There remains today powerful evidence of the cultural and social achievements of native peoples before European contact, though many of them, especially in the Southwest and the Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys in North America, had disappeared just before the arrival of the Europeans. Archeological data of the Anasazi culture that was concentrated in Chaco Canyon on the San Juan River in present-day New Mexico reveals a highly developed society possessing an intricate highway system, a technologically sophisticated network of irrigation canals, and complex apartment-like housing structures. Cahokia, a Native American city in the Mississippian culture near present-day St. Louis, rivaled European cities in size and sophistication.

Aztec Dominance
The Aztecs, an aggressive, warlike people, conquered the other peoples of central Mexico developing a complex and successful empire shortly before Columbus began his first
journey across the Atlantic. In 1519 Tenochtitlàn, the center of Aztec culture, contained as many as 250,000 inhabitants.

**Eastern Woodland Cultures**
Along the Northeast Atlantic Coast and into the Eastern Great Lakes region, Native Americans formed diverse and relatively mobile communities who subsisted by supplementing farming with seasonal hunting and gathering. Despite sharing similar cultural values and assumptions and common linguistic roots, these Native Americans developed varied dialects, making communication difficult and alliances uncommon.

**A World Transformed**
Native Americans were profoundly changed by the arrival of the Europeans, though such change occurred at different rates across the continent. As their daily lives changed, Native Americans found they had to develop new ways to survive. They often participated in mutually beneficial trading arrangements with the Europeans, who typically misunderstood native ways, sparking social conflict that was often violent. While some adopted European religion, others tenaciously held onto their own world views.

**Cultural Negotiations**
Early Native American and European encounters had to overcome communication problems as well as cultural conflicts, but Native people were not passive victims of forces beyond their control. They made choices that suited their needs and desires, resisting most aspects of European culture, but readily accepting certain European material goods. The benefits of iron tools were easily seen while for most Native Americans, Christianity was irrelevant to their needs. Native people’s resistance to European efforts at “civilizing” them caused many settlers to perceive Indians as mostly obstacles to settlement.

**Threats to Survival: Trade and Disease**
European trade goods quickly became part of Native American material culture, and their efforts to gather furs for trade for these goods altered the ecological balance in much of the New World. This dependence also caused increasing conflicts between Indians and Europeans, as well as between different tribal groups. Despite the problems caused by the Native Americans’ increasing dependency on European trade goods, it was disease that ultimately destroyed the cultural integrity of many tribes. Some areas suffered a 90 to 95 percent population loss within the first century of European contact. The death of so many Natives resulted in a loss of indigenous cultural traditions and set in motion the search for a substitute labor force in Africa.

**West Africa: Ancient and Complex Societies**
A variety of intricate and sophisticated cultures dominated sub-Saharan West Africa at the time of the European colonization of the New World. Complicated trade routes stretched across the African continent, tying together diverse cultures. The Portuguese explored the coast of West Africa and began trading in slaves, beginning the massive forced migration of Black Africans to the Americas.
Europe on the Eve of Conquest
Except for a brief settlement by the Vikings in 984, Europe was unprepared to tackle transatlantic exploration until the sixteenth century when rapidly changing conditions led to the discovery, exploration, and conquest of the Americas.

Building New Nation-States
At the end of the latter Middle Ages, strong monarchs centralized power, forming modern nation-states; the Renaissance fostered a more expansive outlook inspiring bold and creative thinking; and the invention of the printing press aided in the spread of new ideas and new technologies in Europe.

Imagining a New World
By 1500 Spain had become the leading world power. The marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella led to the unification of Spain through a holy war known as the Reconquista. Not long after unification and well before the Spanish reached the New World, conquistadors -- men motivated by their desire for personal glory and gain and their loyalty to God and Spain -- conquered the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean, setting a precedent of subjugation they would replicate in the Americas.

Myths and Realities
Though his goal was to establish a western route to Asia, Christopher Columbus led the way for Spain to “discover” and establish the largest colonial empire in the New World.

The Conquistadores: Faith and Greed
Once in the New World, the strong and independent conquistadores led the Spanish in securing their colonial empire by first concentrating on the major islands of the Americas and finally conquering Montezuma and the Aztec Empire in Mexico.

From Plunder to Settlement
Spanish government officials soon realized the need for order and control in New Spain, establishing the encomienda system as a means of settlement. More than 400,000 Spaniards migrated to the New World by 1650. The establishment of Spanish authority brought some organization, class and caste distinctions, and Catholicism to the empire of New Spain at a considerable cost to the Native peoples. By the end of the sixteenth century, Spain had pushed the frontiers of their empire north into the lands of present-day Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California – a great deal more territory than they could effectively manage. The gold and silver from the New World was a mixed blessing for Spain and the rest of Europe.

The French Claim Canada
More than thirty years after Columbus’s “discovery” of the New World, the French began to settle parts of North America, primarily exploiting the valuable fur trade. With little support from the crown, the French population in the New World colony of Canada grew very slowly, necessitating a different kind of colonial relationship to develop between the French and the Native Americans than had evolved in New Spain. The French often worked and
lived more closely and cooperatively with the Native Americans, both trading with them and working to convert them to Christianity.

The English Enter the Competition
Though England began to venture out into the North Atlantic in the latter fifteenth century in search of better fishing areas and, possibly, a short route to Asia, English interest in the New World did not fully develop until the late sixteenth century. Between these first forays and the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the English people were preoccupied with domestic political and religious issues.

The Birth of English Protestantism
The Protestant Reformation permanently shattered English and European religious unity as the desire of Henry VIII for a male heir prompted a break with the Catholic Church and the establishment of the Church of England. The resulting turmoil, though it delayed England’s entry into the New World, also motivated it when it did happen.

Militant Protestantism
The teachings of Martin Luther and other Protestant theologians permanently shattered Europe’s religious unity and led to centuries of religious conflict. In particular the teachings of John Calvin, including the doctrine of predestination, would influence the colonization of North America through individuals known as the Puritans.

Woman in Power
Elizabeth I settled the religious debates in England and established in the nation as a stronghold of Protestantism.

Religion, War, and Nationalism
As Protestantism became increasingly associated with English nationalism, the English longed for victories over Catholic Spain and vice versa.

Irish Background for American Settlement
In the latter sixteenth century, the English established a pattern for colonization in Ireland.

English Conquest of Ireland
The English used Ireland as a testing ground for their theories of colonial rule. Irish cultural differences justified their theories of English superiority and led to social conflict between the colonizers and the colonized.

English Brutality
Governors of the Irish colonies often used brutal means to bring the Irish under English rule. So long as the Irish accepted their subservience and inferiority, English rule was benign, but when they rebelled, they were met with unprecedented brutality and wanton abuse. The behavior of the English in Ireland set the stage for English behavior in the New World. The Native Americans, like the Irish, were believed to be inferior beings destined to be conquered and controlled by the English.
An Unpromising Beginning: Mystery at Roanoke
By the mid-1570s, the English became actively interested in North America. An English pioneer of colonization, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, tried unsuccessfully to plant an outpost of the English nation in North America. Later, Sir Walter Raleigh similarly tried and failed to establish a settlement on Roanoke Island, Virginia. The fate of the “lost” colonists at Roanoke remains unknown even today.

Conclusion: Marketing Strategies
Richard Hakluyt popularized exploration by collecting and publishing explorers’ accounts of the New World, inspiring the English belief that it was necessary to England’s prosperity and independence to establish and settle New World colonies. In Hakluyt’s version of the New World, America was a paradise on earth just waiting for the arrival of the English.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
After mastering this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Explain how Ice Age hunters may have crossed the Bering Straits and began settling North America.

2. Discuss the sophistication of the cultures of the Mayans, Aztecs, Toltecs, and Algonquians and show the impact of the Columbian Exchange on the Native Americans.

3. Explain why the Norse discovery of America was ineffective.

4. List the changing social conditions and new scientific discoveries that resulted in European voyages of discovery.

5. Describe the economic, political, social, and religious factors of the Spanish colonial system, as well as the impact of this system on the Native peoples.

6. Compare the motives, elements, problems, and impact of the French colonial empire in North America with that of the Spanish.

7. Show the similarity between the British treatment of the Irish in the latter part of the sixteenth century and treatment of the slaves and Native Americans during the Colonial Era.

8. Discuss the early English attempts at planting colonies, including the work of Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh.
GLOSSARY

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms:

1. **nomadic** wandering, roaming, or migrating. "... involved small, independent bands of nomadic people."

2. **technology** the methods, tools, and techniques of accomplishing work. "... the early Indians developed many of the same technologies that were just then appearing in other parts of the world."

3. **bureaucracy** significant influence in government by minor officials. "... formed complex government bureaucracies that dominated large tributary populations."

4. **allocate** to give out, set aside, or distribute according to a predetermined system or plan. "These senior leaders allocated economic and human resources."

5. **provincial** of or related to a local area, sometimes implying unsophisticated. "Medieval kingdoms were loosely organized, and fierce provincial loyalties, ..."

6. **feudal** an arrangement or system of service and obligations, based on land, pertaining especially to the Middle Ages. "Before the mid-fifteenth century, feudal nobles dominated small districts throughout Europe."

7. **despotic** like an oppressive ruler or dictator. "While these new rulers were often despotic ..."

8. **mestizo** person of mixed parentage, especially Spanish and Indian. "... unions that produced 'mestizos'."

9. **militant Protestantism** more radical followers of the teachings of Martin Luther. "... Protestants such as John Calvin led religious dissent in central Europe."

10. **anticlericalism** a doctrine of opposition to the Roman Catholic Church. "Popular anticlericalism helped spark religious reformation in England."
IDENTIFICATION

Briefly identify the meaning and significance of the following terms:

1. Bering Straits
   
2. Eastern Woodland Tribal Groups
   
3. Ferdinand and Isabella
   
4. Amerigo Vespucci
   
5. Renaissance
   
6. Treaty of Tordesillas
   
7. Samuel de Champlain
   
8. Encomienda System
   
9. Agricultural Revolution
   
10. Conquistadores
MATCHING

A. Match each of the following people with the appropriate description:

_____ 1. Cardinal Wolsey  
   a. young and sickly monarch of England, under whom militant Calvinists influenced policy

_____ 2. Anne Boleyn  
   b. second wife of Henry VIII, and mother of Elizabeth I

_____ 3. Catherine of Aragon  
   c. first child of Henry VIII; tried to return England to Catholicism

_____ 4. Mary I  
   d. wealthy, powerful officer of the Catholic Church in England

_____ 5. Edward VI  
   e. author of an English language version of the Bible
   f. Spanish wife of Henry VII

B. Match each of the following explorers/leaders with the appropriate description:

_____ 1. Sir Humphrey Gilbert  
   a. able administrator and artist who led the second Roanoke Colony

_____ 2. Sir John Davies  
   b. sea-dog who financed the two attempts to settle the Atlantic Coast in 1585 and 1587

_____ 3. Sir Richard Grenville  
   c. cruel military governor of Munster in Ireland

_____ 4. Sir Walter Raleigh  
   d. courageous sea-dog who returned to England with a boatload of "fool's gold"

_____ 5. John White  
   e. leading figure in colonization of Ireland
   f. leader of the first settlement at Roanoke
COMPLETION

Answer the question or complete the statement by filling in the blanks with the correct word or words.

1. Native American farmers grew ______________, ______________, and ______________.

2. Most tribes located on the Atlantic Coast of North America belonged to a linguistic group known as ______________.

3. Eric the Red's son, Leif, established a small settlement in North America in the tenth century called ______________.

4. More maneuverable ships built in the fifteenth century with a new type of sail were called ______________.

5. The ______________, invented at some time in the 1430s by Johann Gutenberg, aided the spread of new knowledge.

6. In 1494, Pope Alexander VI divided newly discovered lands between Spain and Portugal by issuing the ______________.

7. The kings of Spain rewarded successful conquistadores with a grant of the labor of an Indian village. This grant was called an ______________.

8. The ______________ were the first Europeans to exploit Africa for slaves.

9. The creation of powerful ______________ in Europe contributed to the advent of the age of exploration.

10. The teachings of John Calvin, especially the doctrine of predestination, contributed to the development of a religious group known as the ______________ who would become instrumental in the settlement of North America.
TRUE/FALSE

Mark the following statements either T (True) or F (False):

_____1. The arrival of Europeans in the Western Hemisphere had little impact on the lives of the natives.

_____2. Europeans were successful in teaching Native Americans to adopt European culture.

_____3. New concepts in navigation and naval architecture helped stimulate the exploration of the New World.

_____4. Columbus greatly underestimated the distance from Spain westward to Asia.

_____5. The Spanish colonies received little or no support from the government.

_____6. Cortés easily defeated the Aztec empire.

_____7. Montezuma was briefly indecisive because he thought the Spanish may have been messengers from the god Quetzalcoatl.

_____8. Coronado's expedition resulted in quick and permanent settlement of the Spanish borderlands.


_____10. Semi-military colonies were planted in Ireland by the English in the 1560s and 1570s.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Circle the one alternative that best completes the statement or answers the question.

1. As a result of the successful domestication of maize (corn), beans, and squash, some Native Americans
   a. gained greater control over their environments.
   b. became primarily vegetarian.
   c. evolved into a single continental cultural unit.
   d. could continue a wandering, hunting lifestyle.
2. The result of the deadly diseases brought to the New World by Europeans was
   a. an extremely high mortality rate among the natives, destroying the culture of many tribes.
   b. a diminution of these diseases in Europe.
   c. some deaths, but a low number compared with those caused by guns.
   d. a death rate high only where Indians lived in great concentrations.

3. In what is now Mexico, the Aztecs, Toltecs, and Mayans
   a. lived in huts in small tribal villages.
   b. thwarted the Spanish in their effort to build a great colonial empire.
   c. migrated across the narrow straits from America to Asia.
   d. developed phenomenal cultures prior to European contact.

4. Which of the following was not a reason for the rise of European exploration and trade?
   a. an increase in the population of Europe
   b. availability of cheaper land
   c. increased demand for luxury items
   d. centralization of political authority into several strong nation-states

5. A fifteenth-century European development that stimulated later exploration was
   a. the increase in trade.
   b. the rise of nation-states.
   c. the development of new naval technology.
   d. all of the above

6. The English and Spanish colonial systems differed in that
   a. the English Crown totally funded the colonies, whereas the Spanish Crown offered little aid.
   b. the English efforts were private and the Spanish colonies were supported by the Crown.
   c. the English settled the interior lands, while the Spanish settled primarily the coastal regions.
   d. religion played a central role in all the English colonies, but had little or no impact in New Spain.

7. The encomienda was
   a. an appellate court in colonial New Spain.
   b. a Spanish town council.
   c. a system of social class distinctions.
   d. a royal grant of Indian labor and land in return for protection and guidance.
8. In Canada, the French colonial empire was
   a. based on exploiting Indian labor for growing staple crops.
   b. based primarily on the fur trade.
   c. a successful transference of French feudal institutions.
   d. overpopulated with rural peasants and urban artisans.

9. John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto) primarily wanted to
   a. finance a new expedition from Venice to China.
   b. find the northwest passage for England.
   c. reestablish the fishing enterprise on the Grand Banks.
   d. convince the English to establish colonies along Hudson Bay.

10. The key to the success of Protestantism in England was
    a. widely popular anticlericalism.
    b. the fact that Martin Luther and John Calvin were both English.
    c. the fervent Catholicism of the Tudor Kings.
    d. the English hostility to the French Huguenots.

11. The religious settlement of Elizabeth I
    a. ended religious controversy in England.
    b. resulted in the restoration of Catholicism.
    c. established a congregational organization in the Church of England.
    d. made the Church of England Catholic in organization and ceremony, but Protestant in doctrines.

12. The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588
    a. changed the attitude of England toward colonies and empires.
    b. totally destroyed the Spanish fleet.
    c. had no religious significance to the English.
    d. marked the decline of the Spanish empire.

13. Which of the following is true regarding the English colonization of Ireland?
    a. Its purpose was to spread the Protestant faith.
    b. The experience served as a model for the colonization of America.
    c. The process was mostly peaceful, with the violence being caused primarily by the Irish.
    d. The process was a joint and cooperative venture because the Irish invited the English to their country.
14. In his attempt to settle the Roanoke colony, Sir Walter Raleigh found that
   a. inadequate financing and difficulty in communication and supplies doomed the project.
   b. the location was so good that other English colonizers competed for the available land.
   c. the unwarranted hostility of the Indians made the collection of gold and silver too difficult.
   d. Sir Francis Drake destroyed the colony out of jealousy.

15. To keep the dream of America alive, Richard Hakluyt
   a. explored the New World and brought exotic products back to England.
   b. interviewed explorers and propagandaized their stories in a book.
   c. planted a successful colony that made reasonably good profits.
   d. wrote an extensive work on the variety and cultural diversity of Native Americans.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

To check your understanding of the key issues of this period, solve the following problems:

1. Describe the settlement of the Western Hemisphere from the perspective of a Native American. What were the positives and negatives of European expansion from their point of view?

2. What were the main causes, elements, and impact of the different approaches to colonies followed by the English, French, and Spanish?

3. What is the relationship between capitalism and Calvinism?

4. What led to European exploration and expansion in the sixteenth century?

5. In what manner was the discovery of the New World a kind of ecological revolution?
CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

After reading Christopher Columbus, “Letter to Luis De Sant’ Angel” (1493), Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, “Indians of the Rio Grande” (1528-1536), and Bartolomé de Las Casas, “Of the Island of Hispanola” (1542), answer the questions that follow the reading selections.

Christopher Columbus, Letter to Luis de Sant’ Angel (1493)

Sir,

As I know that you will have pleasure of the great victory which out Lord hath given me in my voyage, I write you this, by which you shall know that in [thirty-three] days I passed over the Indies with the fleet which the most illustrious King and Queen, our Lords, gave me: where I found very many islands peopled with inhabitants beyond number. And, of them all, I have taken possession for their Highnesses, with proclamation and the royal standard displayed; and I was not gainsaid. On the first which I found, I put the name Sant Salvador, in commemoration of His High Majesty, who marvelously hath given all this: the Indians call it [Guanhani]. The second I named the Island of Santa Maria de Concepción, the third Ferrandina, the fourth Fair Island, the fifth La Isla Juana; and so forth for each one a new name. When I reached Juana, I followed its coast westwardly, and found it so large that I thought it might be the mainland province of Cathay. And as I did not thus find any towns and villages on the seacoast, save small hamlets with the people thereof I could not get speech, because they all fled away forthwith, I went on further in the same direction, thinking I should not miss of great cities or towns. And at the end of many leagues, seeing that there was no change, . . . [I] turned back as far as a port agreed upon; from which I sent two men into the country to learn if there were a king, or any great cities. They traveled for three days, and found interminable small villages and a numberless population, but nought of ruling authority; wherewith they returned. I understood sufficiently from other Indians . . . that this land, . . . was an island; and so I followed its coast eastwardly for a hundred and seven leagues as far as where it terminated; from which headland I saw another island to the east [eighteen] leagues distant from this, to which I at once gave the name La Spanola. And I proceeded thither, and followed the northern coast, as with La Juana, easterly for a hundred and [eighty-eight] great leagues in a direct easterly course, as with La Juana.

The which, and all the others, are more [fertile] to an excessive degree, and this extremely so. In it, there are many havens on the seacoast, incomparable with any others that I know in Christendom, and plenty of rivers so good and great that it is a marvel. The lands thereof are high, and in it are very many ranges of hills, and most lofty mountains incomparably beyond the Island of [Tenerife]; all most beautiful in a thousand shapes, and all accessible, and full of trees of a thousand kinds so lofty that they seem to reach the sky. And I am assured that they never lose their foliage; as may be imagined, since I saw them as green and as beautiful as they are in Spain during May. . . .

And the nightingale was singing, and other birds of a thousand sorts, in the month of November, round about the way I was going. There are palm trees of six or eight species, wondrous to see for their beautiful variety; but so are the other trees, and fruits, and plants therein. There are wonderful pine groves, and very large plains of verdure, and there is honey, and many kinds of birds, and many various fruits. In the earth there are many mines of metals; and there is a population of incalculable number. Spanola is a marvel; the mountains and hills, and plains, and fields, and land, so beautiful and rich for planting and sowing, for breeding cattle of all sorts, for building of towns and villages.

There could be no believing, without seeing, such harbors as are here, as well as the many and great rivers, and excellent waters, most of which contain gold. In the trees and fruits and plants, there are great differences from those of Juana. In [La Spanola], there are many spiceries, and great mines of gold and other metals.

The people of this island, and of all the others that I have found and seen, or not seen, all go naked, men and women, just as their mothers bring them forth; although some women cover a single place with the leaf of a plant, or a cotton something which they make for that purpose. They have no iron or steel, nor any weapons; nor are they fit thereunto; not be because they be not a well-formed people and of fair stature, but that they are most wondrously timorous. They have no other weapons than the stems of reeds in their seeding state, on the end of which they fix little sharpened stakes. Even these, they dare not use; for many times has it happened that I sent two or three men ashore to some village to parley, and countless numbers of them sallied forth, but as soon as they saw those approach, they fled away in such wise that even a father would not wait for his son. And this was not because any hurt had ever done to any of them:-but such they are, incurably timid. It is true that since they have become more assured, and are losing that terror, they are artless and generous with what they have, to such a degree as no one would believe but him who had seen it. Of anything they have, if it be asked for, they never say no, but do rather invite the person to accept it, and show as much lovingness as though they would give their hearts. And whether it be a thing of value, or one of little
worth, they are straightways content with whatsoever trifle of whatsoever kind may be given them in return for it. I forbade that anything so worthless as fragments of broken platters, and pieces of broken glass, and strapbuckles, should be given them; although when they were able to get such things, they seemed to think they had the best jewel in the world. . . .

And they knew no sect, nor idolatry; save that they all believe that power and goodness are in the sky, and they believed very firmly that I, with these ships and crew, came from the sky; and in such opinion, they received me at every place were I landed, after they had lost their terror. And this comes not because they are ignorant; on the contrary, they are men of very subtle wit, who navigate all those seas, and who give a marvellously good account of everything-but because they never saw men wearing clothes nor the like of our ships. And as soon as I arrived in the Indies, in the first island that I found, I took some of them by force to the intent that they should learn [our speech] and give me information of what there was in those parts. And so it was, that very soon they understood [us] and we them, what by speech or what by signs; and those [Indians] have been of much service . . . with loud cries of "Come! come to see the people from heaven!" Then, as soon as their minds were reassured about us, every one came, men as well as women, so that there remained none behind, big or little; and they all brought something to eat and drink, which they gave with wondrous lovingness. . . .

It seems to me that in all those islands, the men are all content with a single wife; and to their chief or king they give as many as twenty. The women, it appears to me, do more work than the men. Nor have I been able to learn whether they held personal property, for it seemed to me that whatever one had, they all took share of, especially of eatable things. Down to the present, I have not found in those islands any monstrous men, as many expected, but on the contrary all the people are very comely; nor are they black like those in Guinea, but have flowing hair; and they are not begotten where there is an excessive violence of the rays of the sun. . . . In those islands, where there are lofty mountains, the cold was very keen there, this winter; but they endured it by being accustomed thereto, and by the help of the meats which they eat with many and inordinately hot spices. . . .

Since thus our Redeemer has given to our most illustrious King and Queen, and to their famous kingdoms, this victory in so high a matter, Christendom should take gladness therein and make great festivals, and give solemn thanks to the Holy Trinity for the great exaltation they shall have by the conversion of so many peoples to our holy faith; and next for the temporal benefit which will bring hither refreshment and profit, not only to Spain, to all Christians. This briefly, in accordance with the facts. Dated, on the caravel, off the Canary Islands, the 15 February of the year 1493.

Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, "Indians of the Rio Grande" (1528-1536)

They are so accustomed to running that, without resting or getting tired, they run from morning till night in pursuit of a deer, and kill a great many, because they follow until the game is worn out, sometimes catching it alive. Their huts are of matting placed over four arches. They carry them on their back and move every two or three days in quest of food; they plant nothing that would be of any use.

They are very merry people, and even when famished do not cease to dance and celebrate their feasts and ceremonials. Their best times are when "tunas" (prickly pears) are ripe, because then they have plenty to eat and spend the time in dancing and eating day and night. As long as these tunas last they squeeze and open them and set them to dry. When dried they are put in baskets like figs and kept to be eaten on the way. The peelings they grind and pulverize.

Here also they come up with cows; I have seen them thrice and have eaten their meat. They appear to me of the size of those in Spain. Their horns are small, like those of the Moorish cattle; the hair is very long, like fine wool and like a peajacket; some are brownish and others black, and to my taste they have better and more meat than those from here. Of the small hides the Indians make blankets to cover themselves with, and of the taller ones they make shoes and targets. These cows come from the north, across the country further on, to the coast of Florida, and are found all over the land for over four hundred leagues. On this whole stretch, through the valleys by which they come, people who live there descend to subsist upon their flesh. And a great quantity of hides are met with inland.

We remained with the Avavares Indians for eight months, according to our reckoning of the moons. During that time they came for us from many places and said that verily we were children of the sun. Until then Donates and the negro had not made any cures, but we found ourselves so pressed by the Indians coming from all sides, that all of us had to become medicine men. I was the most daring and reckless of all in undertaking cures. We never treated anyone that did not afterwards say he was well, and they had such confidence in our skill as to believe that none of them would die as long as we were among them. . . .

The women brought many mats, with which they built us houses, one for each of us and those attached to him. After this we would order them to boil all the game, and they did it quickly in ovens built by them for the purpose. We partook of everything a little, giving the rest to the principal man among those who had come with us for distribution among all. Every one then came with the share he had received for us to breathe on it and bless it, without which they left it untouched. Often we had with us three to four thousand persons. And it was very tiresome to have to breathe on and make the sign of the cross over every morsel they ate or drank. For many other things which they wanted to do they would come to ask our permission, so that it is easy to realize how greatly we were bothered. The
women brought us tunas, spiders, worms, and whatever else they could find, for they would rather starve than partake of anything that had not first passed through our hands.

While traveling with those, we crossed a big river coming from the north and, traversing about thirty leagues of plains, met a number of people that came from afar to meet us on the trail, who treated us like the foregoing ones.

Thence on there was a change in the manner of reception, insofar as those who would meet us on the trail with gifts were no longer robbed by the Indians of our company, but after we had entered their homes they tendered us all they possessed, and the dwellings also. We turned over everything to the principals for distribution. Invariably those who had been deprived of their belongings would follow us, in order to repair their losses, so that our retinue became very large. They would tell them to be careful and not conceal anything of what they owned, as it could not be done without our knowledge, and then we would cause their death. So much did they frighten them that on the first few days after joining us they would be trembling all the time, and would not dare to speak or lift their eyes to Heaven.

Those guided us for more than fifty leagues through a desert of very rugged mountains, and so arid that there was no game. Consequently we suffered much from lack of food, and finally forded a very big river, with its water reaching to our chest. Thence on many of our people began to show the effects of the hunger and hardships they had undergone in those mountains, which were extremely barren and tiresome to travel.

The next morning all those who were strong enough came along, and at the end of three journeys we halted. Alonso del Castillo and Estevanico, the negro, left with the women as guides, and the woman who was a captive took them to a river that flows between mountains where there was a village in which her father lived, and these were the first adobes we saw that were like unto real houses. Castillo and Estevanico went to these and, after holding parley with the Indians, at the end of three days Castillo returned to where he had left us, bringing with him five or six of the Indians. He told how he had found permanent houses, inhabited, the people of which ate beans and squashes, and that he had also seen maize.

Of all things upon earth that caused us the greatest pleasure, and we gave endless thanks to our Lord for this news. Castillo also said that the negro was coming to meet us on the way, near by, with all the people of the houses. For that reason we started, and after going a league and a half met the negro and the people that came to receive us, who gave us beans and many squashes to eat, gourds to carry water in, robes of cowhide, and other things. As those people and the Indians of our company were enemies, and did not understand each other, we took leave of the latter, leaving them all that had been given to us, while we went on with the former and, six leagues beyond, when night was already approaching, reached their houses, where they received us with great ceremonies. Here we remained one day, and left on the next, taking them with us to other permanent houses, where they subsisted on the same food also, and thence on we found a new custom. . . .

Having seen positive traces of Christians and become satisfied they were very near, we gave many thanks to our Lord for redeeming us from our sad and gloomy condition. Anyone can imagine our delight when he reflect how long we had been in that land, and how many dangers and hardships we had suffered. That night I entreated one of my companions to go after the Christians, who were moving through the part of the country pacified and quieted by us, and who were three days ahead of where we were. They did not like my suggestion, and excused themselves from going, on the ground of being tired and worn out, although any of them might have done it far better than I, being younger and stronger.

Seeing their reluctance, in the morning I took with me the negro and eleven Indians and, following the trail, went in search of the Christians. On that day we made ten leagues, passing three places where they slept. The next morning I came upon four Christians on horseback, who, seeing me in such a strange attire, and in company with Indians, were greatly startled. They stared at me for quite awhile, speechless; so great was their surprise that they could not find words to ask me anything. I spoke first, and told them to lead me to their captain, and we went together to Diego de Alcaraz, their commander.

Bartolomé de Las Casas, "Of the Island of Hispaniola" (1542)

God has created all these numberless people to be quite the simplest, without malice or duplicity, most obedient, most faithful to their natural Lords, and to the Christians, whom they serve; the most humble, most patient, most peaceful and calm, without strife nor tumults; not wrangling, nor querulous, as free from uproar, hate and desire of revenge as any in the world. . . .

Among these gentle sheep, gifted by their Maker with the above qualities, the Spaniards entered as soon as soon as they knew them, like wolves, tiger and lions which had been starving for many days, and since forty years they have done nothing else; nor do they afflict, torment, and destroy them with strange and new, and divers kinds of cruelty, never before seen, nor heard of, nor read of. . . .

The Christians, with their horses and swords and lances, began to slaughter and practice strange cruelty among them. They penetrated into the country and spared neither children nor the aged, nor pregnant women, nor those in child labour, all of whom they ran through the body and lacerated, as though they were assaulting so many lambs herded in their sheepfold.
They made bets as to who would slit a man in two, or cut off his head at one blow: or they opened up his bowels. They tore the babes from their mothers' breast by the feet, and dashed their heads against the rocks. Others they seized by the shoulders and threw into the rivers, laughing and joking, and when they fell into the water they exclaimed: "boil body so and so!" They spitted the bodies of other babes, together with their mothers and all who were before them, on their swords.

They made a gallows just high enough for the feet to nearly touch the ground, and by thirteens, in honour and reverence of our Redeemer and the twelve Apostles, they put wood underneath and, with fire, they burned the Indians alive.

They wrapped the bodies of others entirely in dry straw, binding them in it and setting fire to it; and so they burned them. They cut off the hands of all they wished to take alive, made them carry them fastened on to them, and said: "Go and carry letters": that is; take the news to those who have fled to the mountains.

They generally killed the lords and nobles in the following way. They made wooden gridirons of stakes, bound them upon them, and made a slow fire beneath; thus the victims gave up the spirit by degrees, emitting cries of despair in their torture.

1. How does Christopher Columbus enhance the potential of the New World in his letter? What might be his motivation to “sell” the features of the New World?

2. Compare the Native American perceptions of Christopher Columbus and Cabeza de Vaca. How might these views be different if we had written sources in their own words?

3. Describe the idealized image of the Native American expressed by Bartolomé de las Casas. How does this description reveal a possible split in Spanish opinions of the New World and its inhabitants?

4. From the documents, what can be inferred regarding differences between the Spanish and the English approaches to exploring the New World?

5. Looking at all three documents, evaluate the role of religion in the European perceptions of the New World.