

SESSION PREPARATION

To prepare for this, and subsequent sessions, read the introductory overview that includes information about the course, course components, and primary vs. secondary sources. It also includes details about our advisory board and education partners.

Read the following material before attending this workshop. As you read the excerpts, take note of the **“Questions to Consider”** as well as any questions you have. The activities in the workshop will draw on information from the readings and the video clips shown during the workshop.

UNIT INTRODUCTION

This six-hour workshop focuses first on the Historical Thinking Skills developed by the National Center for History in the Schools. The second portion of the session introduces pre-Columbian societies in North America.

UNIT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading the text materials, participating in the workshop activities, and watching the video clips, teachers will

- learn how to use Historical Thinking Skills in studying American History;
- explore how the achievements of indigenous Americans were as complex as those in Europe, Asia, and Africa;
- examine how geography and environment most influenced the development of pre-Columbian societies.

THIS UNIT FEATURES

- Textbook excerpts (sections of U.S. history surveys, written for introductory college courses by history professors)
- An excerpt about Historical Thinking Skills from the National Center for History in the Schools
- An article, “Native Americans, New Voices: American Indian History,” written by David R. Edmunds
- A timeline which reflects important events in the era of pre-Columbian America

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CONTENT OVERVIEW

Unit 1 serves as the introduction to *America's History in the Making*. This unit consists of two parts: Session Preparation Part 1 introduces the Historical Thinking Skills, as defined by the National Center for History in the Schools. Application of these skills will lead to deeper historical understanding, and the skills can be applied to any historical content. Session Preparation Part 2 focuses on pre-Columbian America, an era of American history that is often overlooked.

This unit focuses on the migration of people to the Americas, and explores the variety and complexity of their cultures.



ITEM 3786

Ansel Adams, ACOMA PUEBLO, FULL SIDE VIEW OF ADOBE HOUSE WITH WATER IN THE FOREGROUND (1941). Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.



ITEM 3776

Eduardo Matos Moctezuma, LA PIEDRA DEL SOL, CALENDARIO AZTECA, Sunstone, The Aztec Calendar (1992). Courtesy of the Library of Congress, General Collection (95.1).

SESSION PREPARATION PART 1

Overview of Standards in Historical Thinking from the *National Center for History in the Schools*

The study of history, as noted earlier, rests on knowledge of facts, dates, names, places, events, and ideas. In addition, true historical understanding requires students to engage in historical thinking: to raise questions and to marshal solid evidence in support of their answers; to go beyond the facts presented in their textbooks and examine the historical record for themselves; to consult documents, journals, diaries, artifacts, historic sites, works of art, quantitative data, and other evidence from the past, and to do so imaginatively—taking into account the historical context in which these records were created and comparing the multiple points of view of those on the scene at the time.

Real historical understanding requires that students have opportunity to create historical narratives and arguments of their own. Such narratives and arguments may take many forms—essays, debates, and editorials, for instance. They can be initiated in a variety of ways. None, however, more powerfully initiates historical thinking than those issues, past and present, that challenge students to enter knowledgeably into the historical record and to bring sound historical perspectives to bear in the analysis of a problem.

Historical understanding also requires that students thoughtfully read the historical narratives created by others. Well-written historical narratives are interpretative, revealing and explaining connections, change, and consequences. They are also analytical, combining lively storytelling and biography with conceptual analysis drawn from all relevant disciplines. Such narratives promote essential skills in historical thinking.

Reading such narratives requires that students analyze the assumptions—stated and unstated—from which the narrative was constructed and assess the strength of the evidence presented. It requires that students consider the significance of what the author included as well as chose to omit—the absence, for example, of the voices and experiences of other men and women who were also an important part of the history of their time. Also, it requires that students examine the interpretative nature of history, comparing, for example, alternative historical narratives written by historians who have given different weight to the political, economic, social, and/or technological causes of events and who have developed competing interpretations of the significance of those events.

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Students engaged in activities of the kinds just considered will draw upon skills in the following five interconnected dimensions of historical thinking:

1. **Chronological Thinking**
2. **Historical Comprehension**
3. **Historical Analysis and Interpretation**
4. **Historical Research Capabilities**
5. **Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making**

These skills, while presented in five separate categories, are nonetheless interactive and mutually supportive. In conducting historical research or creating a historical argument of their own, for example, students must be able to draw upon skills in all five categories. Beyond the skills of conducting their research, students must, for example, be able to comprehend historical documents and records, analyze their relevance, develop interpretations of the document(s) they select, and demonstrate a sound grasp of the historical chronology and context in which the issue, problem, or events they are addressing developed.

In short, these five sets of skills, developed in the following pages as the five Standards in Historical Thinking, are statements of the outcomes that students need to achieve. They are not mutually exclusive when put into practice, nor do they prescribe a particular teaching sequence to be followed. Teachers will draw upon all these Thinking Standards, as appropriate, to develop their teaching plans and to guide students through challenging programs of study in history.

Finally, it is important to point out that these five sets of Standards in Historical Thinking are defined in the following pages largely independent of historical content in order to specify the quality of thinking desired for each. It is essential to understand, however, that these skills do not develop, nor can they be practiced, in a vacuum. Every one of these skills requires specific historical content in order to function—a relationship that is made explicit in Chapters 3 and 4, which presents the standards integrating historical understandings and thinking for history for grades 5–12.

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Contents of Historical Thinking Standards for Grades 5–12

Standard 1. Chronological Thinking

- A. Distinguish between past, present, and future time.
- B. Identify in historical narratives the temporal structure of a historical narrative or story.
- C. Establish temporal order in constructing historical narratives of their own.
- D. Measure and calculate calendar time.
- E. Interpret data presented in time lines.
- F. Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration.
- G. Compare alternative models for periodization.

Standard 2. Historical Comprehension

- A. Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.
- B. Identify the central question(s) the historical narrative addresses.
- C. Read historical narratives imaginatively.
- D. Evidence historical perspectives.
- E. Draw upon data in historical maps.
- F. Utilize visual and mathematical data presented in charts, tables, pie and bar graphs, flow charts, Venn diagrams, and other graphic organizers.
- G. Draw upon visual, literary, and musical sources.

Standard 3. Historical Analysis and Interpretation

- A. Identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative.
- B. Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions.
- C. Differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations.
- D. Consider multiple perspectives.
- E. Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation, including the importance of the individual, the influence of ideas, and the role of chance.
- F. Challenge arguments of historical inevitability.
- G. Compare competing historical narratives.
- H. Hold interpretations of history as tentative.
- I. Evaluate major debates among historians.
- J. Hypothesize the influence of the past.

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Standard 4. Historical Research Capabilities

- A. Formulate historical questions.
- B. Obtain historical data.
- C. Interrogate historical data.
- D. Identify the gaps in the available records, marshal contextual knowledge and perspectives of the time and place, and construct a sound historical interpretation.

Standard 5. Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

- A. Identify issues and problems in the past.
- B. Marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances and contemporary factors contributing to problems and alternative courses of action.
- C. Identify relevant historical antecedents.
- D. Evaluate alternative courses of action.
- E. Formulate a position or course of action on an issue.
- F. Evaluate the implementation of a decision.

SESSION PREPARATION PART 1

STANDARD 1

Chronological Thinking

Chronological thinking is at the heart of historical reasoning. Without a strong sense of chronology—of when events occurred and in what temporal order—it is impossible for students to examine relationships among those events or to explain historical causality. Chronology provides the mental scaffolding for organizing historical thought.

In developing students' chronological thinking, instructional time should be given to the use of well-constructed historical narratives: literary narratives including biographies and historical literature, and well-written narrative histories that have the quality of "stories well told." Well-crafted narratives such as these have the power to grip and hold students' attention. Thus engaged, the reader is able to focus on what the narrator discloses: the temporal structure of events unfolding over time, the actions and intentions of those who were there, the temporal connections between antecedents and their consequences.

In the middle and high school years, students should be able to use their mathematical skills to measure time by years, decades, centuries, and millennia; to calculate time from the fixed points of the calendar system (BC or BCE and AD or CE); and to interpret the data presented in time lines.

Students should be able to analyze patterns of historical duration, demonstrated, for example, by the more than two hundred years the United States Constitution and the government it created has endured.

Students should also be able to analyze patterns of historical succession illustrated, for example, in the development, over time, of ever larger systems of interaction, beginning with trade among settlements of the Neolithic world; continuing through the growth of the great land empires of Rome, Han China, the Islamic world, and the Mongols; expanding in the early modern era when Europeans crossed the Atlantic and Pacific, and established the first worldwide networks of trade and communication; and culminating with the global systems of trade and communication of the modern world.

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STANDARD 1

The student thinks chronologically, therefore, the student is able to:

1. **Distinguish between past, present, and future time.**
2. **Identify the temporal structure of a historical narrative or story:** its beginning, middle, and end (the latter defined as the outcome of a particular beginning).
3. **Establish temporal order in constructing their [students'] own historical narratives:** working forward from some beginning through its development, to some end or outcome; working backward from some issue, problem, or event to explain its origins and its development over time.
4. **Measure and calculate calendar time** by days, weeks, months, years, decades, centuries and millennia, from fixed points of the calendar system: BC (before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini, "in the year of our Lord") in the Gregorian calendar and the contemporary secular designation for these same dates, BCE (before the Common Era) and CE (in the Common Era); and compare with the fixed points of other calendar systems such as the Roman (753 BC, the founding of the city of Rome) and the Muslim (622 AD, the hegira).
5. **Interpret data presented in timelines** by designating appropriate equidistant intervals of time and recording events according to the temporal order in which they occurred.
6. **Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration** in which historical developments have unfolded, and apply them to explain historical continuity and change.
7. **Compare alternative models for periodization** by identifying the organizing principles on which each is based.

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STANDARD 2

Historical Comprehension

One of the defining features of historical narratives is their believable recounting of human events. Beyond that, historical narratives also have the power to disclose the intentions of the people involved, the difficulties they encountered, and the complex world in which such historical figures actually lived. To read historical stories, biographies, autobiographies, and narratives with comprehension, students must develop the ability to read imaginatively, to take into account what the narrative reveals of the humanity of the individuals and groups involved—their motives and intentions, their values and ideas, their hopes, doubts, fears, strengths, and weaknesses. Comprehending historical narratives requires, also, that students develop historical perspectives, the ability to describe the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there. By studying the literature, diaries, letters, debates, arts, and artifacts of past peoples, students should learn to avoid “present-mindedness” by not judging the past solely in terms of the norms and values of today but taking into account the historical context in which the events unfolded.

Acquiring these skills begins in the early years of childhood, through the use of superbly written biographies that capture children’s imagination and provide them an important foundation for continuing historical study. As students move into middle grades and high school years, historical literature should continue to occupy an important place in the curriculum, capturing historical events with dramatic immediacy, engaging students’ interests, and fostering deeper understanding of the times and cultural milieu in which events occurred.

Beyond these important outcomes, students should also develop the skills needed to comprehend historical narratives that explain as well as recount the course of events and that analyze relationships among the various forces, which were present at the time and influenced the ways events unfolded. These skills include: 1) identifying the central question the historical narrative seeks to answer; 2) defining the purpose, perspective, or point of view from which the narrative has been constructed; 3) reading the historical explanation or analysis with meaning; 4) recognizing the rhetorical cues that signal how the author has organized the text.

Comprehending historical narratives will also be facilitated if students are able to draw upon the data presented in historical maps; visual, mathematical, and quantitative data presented in a variety of graphic organizers; and a variety of visual sources such as historical photographs, political cartoons, paintings, and architecture in order to clarify, illustrate, or elaborate upon the information presented in the text.

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STANDARD 2

The student comprehends a variety of historical sources, therefore, the student is able to:

1. **Identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative.**
2. **Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage** by identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed.
3. **Identify the central question(s)** the historical narrative addresses and the purpose, perspective, or point of view from which it has been constructed.
4. **Differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations** but acknowledge that the two are related; that the facts the historian reports are selected and reflect therefore the historian's judgement of what is most significant about the past.
5. **Read historical narratives imaginatively**, taking into account what the narrative reveals of the humanity of the individuals and groups involved—their probable values, outlook, motives, hopes, fears, strengths, and weaknesses.
6. **Appreciate historical perspectives**—the ability (a) describing the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there, as revealed through their literature, diaries, letters, debates, arts, artifacts, and the like; (b) considering the historical context in which the event unfolded—the values, outlook, options, and contingencies of that time and place; and (c) avoiding “present-mindedness,” judging the past solely in terms of present-day norms and values.
7. **Draw upon data in historical maps** in order to obtain or clarify information on the geographic setting in which the historical event occurred, its relative and absolute location, the distances and directions involved, the natural and man-made features of the place, and critical relationships in the spatial distributions of those features and the historical event occurring there.
8. **Utilize visual and mathematical data** presented in graphs, including charts, tables, pie and bar graphs, flow charts, Venn diagrams, and other graphic organizers to clarify, illustrate, or elaborate upon information presented in the historical narrative.
9. **Draw upon the visual, literary, and musical sources** including: (a) photographs, paintings, cartoons, and architectural drawings; (b) novels, poetry, and plays; and, (c) folk, popular and classical music, to clarify, illustrate, or elaborate upon information presented in the historical narrative.

STANDARD 3

Historical Analysis and Interpretation

One of the most common problems in helping students to become thoughtful readers of historical narrative is the compulsion students feel to find the one right answer, the one essential fact, the one authoritative interpretation. “Am I on the right track?” “Is this what you want?” they ask. Or, worse yet, they rush to closure, reporting back as self-evident truths the facts or conclusions presented in the document or text.

These problems are deeply rooted in the conventional ways in which textbooks have presented history: a succession of facts marching straight to a settled outcome. To overcome these problems requires the use of more than a single source: of history books other than textbooks and of a rich variety of historical documents and artifacts that present alternative voices, accounts, and interpretations or perspectives on the past.

Students need to realize that historians may differ on the facts they incorporate in the development of their narratives and disagree as well on how those facts are to be interpreted. Thus, “history” is usually taken to mean what happened in the past; but written history is a dialogue among historians, not only about what happened but about why and how events unfolded. The study of history is not only remembering answers. It requires following and evaluating arguments and arriving at usable, even if tentative, conclusions based on the available evidence.

To engage in historical analysis and interpretation students must draw upon their skills of historical comprehension. In fact, there is no sharp line separating the two categories. Certain of the skills involved in comprehension overlap the skills involved in analysis and are essential to it. For example, identifying the author or source of a historical document or narrative and assessing its credibility (comprehension) is prerequisite to comparing competing historical narratives (analysis). Analysis builds upon the skills of comprehension; it obliges the student to assess the evidence on which the historian has drawn and determine the soundness of interpretations created from that evidence. It goes without saying that in acquiring these analytical skills students must develop the ability to differentiate between expressions of opinion, no matter how passionately delivered, and informed hypotheses grounded in historical evidence.

Well-written historical narrative has the power to promote students’ analysis of historical causality—of how change occurs in society, of how human intentions matter, and how ends are influenced by the means of carrying them out, in what has been

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called the tangle of process and outcomes. Few challenges can be more fascinating to students than unraveling the often dramatic complications of cause. And nothing is more dangerous than a simple, monocausal explanation of past experiences and present problems.

Finally, well-written historical narratives can also alert students to the traps of lineality and inevitability. Students must understand the relevance of the past to their own times, but they need also to avoid the trap of lineality, of drawing straight lines between past and present, as though earlier movements were being propelled teleologically toward some rendezvous with destiny in the late 20th century.

A related trap is that of thinking that events have unfolded inevitably—that the way things are is the way they had to be, and thus that individuals lack free will and the capacity for making choices. Unless students can conceive that history could have turned out differently, they may unconsciously accept the notion that the future is also inevitable or predetermined, and that human agency and individual action count for nothing. No attitude is more likely to feed civic apathy, cynicism, and resignation—precisely what we hope the study of history will fend off. Whether in dealing with the main narrative or with a topic in depth, we must always try, in one historian’s words, to “restore to the past the options it once had.”

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STANDARD 3

The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation, therefore, the student is able to:

1. **Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas**, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions by identifying likenesses and differences.
2. **Consider multiple perspectives** of various peoples in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears.
3. **Analyze cause-and-effect relationships** bearing in mind **multiple causation** including (a) **the importance of the individual in history**; (b) **the influence of ideas, human interests, and beliefs**; and (c) **the role of chance**, the accidental and the irrational.
4. **Draw comparisons across eras and regions in order to define enduring issues** as well as large-scale or long-term developments that transcend regional and temporal boundaries.
5. **Distinguish between unsupported expressions of opinion and informed hypotheses grounded in historical evidence.**
6. **Compare competing historical narratives.**
7. **Challenge arguments of historical inevitability** by formulating examples of historical contingency, of how different choices could have led to different consequences.
8. **Hold interpretations of history as tentative**, subject to changes as new information is uncovered, new voices heard, and new interpretations broached.
9. **Evaluate major debates among historians** concerning alternative interpretations of the past.
10. **Hypothesize the influence of the past**, including both the limitations and opportunities made possible by past decisions.

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STANDARD 4

Historical Research Capabilities

Perhaps no aspect of historical thinking is as exciting to students or as productive of their growth in historical thinking as “doing history.” Such inquiries can arise at critical turning points in the historical narrative presented in the text. They might be generated by encounters with historical documents, eyewitness accounts, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, a visit to a historic site, a record of oral history, or other evidence of the past. Worthy inquiries are especially likely to develop if the documents students encounter are rich with the voices of people caught up in the event and sufficiently diverse to bring alive to students the interests, beliefs, and concerns of people with differing backgrounds and opposing viewpoints on the event.

Historical inquiry proceeds with the formulation of a problem or set of questions worth pursuing. In the most direct approach, students might be encouraged to analyze a document, record, or site itself. Who produced it, when, how, and why? What is the evidence of its authenticity, authority, and credibility? What does it tell them of the point of view, background, and interests of its author or creator? What else must they discover in order to construct a useful story, explanation, or narrative of the event of which this document or artifact is a part? What interpretation can they derive from their data, and what argument can they support in the historical narrative they create from the data?

In this process students’ contextual knowledge of the historical period in which the document or artifact was created becomes critically important. Only a few records of the event will be available to students. Filling in the gaps, evaluating the records they have available, and imaginatively constructing a sound historical argument or narrative requires a larger context of meaning.

For these purposes, students’ ongoing narrative study of history provides important support, revealing the larger context. But just as the ongoing narrative study, supported by but not limited to the textbook, provides a meaningful context in which students’ inquiries can develop, it is these inquiries themselves that imbue the era with deeper meaning. Hence the importance of providing students documents or other records beyond materials included in the textbook, that will allow students to challenge textbook interpretations, to raise new questions about the event, to investigate the perspectives of those whose voices do not appear in the textbook accounts, or to plumb an issue that the textbook largely or in part bypassed.

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Under these conditions, students will view their inquiries as creative contributions. They will better understand that written history is a human construction, that many judgments about the past are tentative and arguable, and that historians regard their work as critical inquiry, pursued as ongoing explorations and debates with other historians. On the other hand, careful research can resolve cloudy issues from the past and can overturn previous arguments and theses. By their active engagement in historical inquiry, students will learn for themselves why historians are continuously reinterpreting the past, and why new interpretations emerge not only from uncovering new evidence but from rethinking old evidence in the light of new ideas springing up in our own times. Students then can also see why the good historian, like the good teacher, is interested not in manipulation or indoctrination but in acting as an honest messenger from the past—not interested in possessing students' minds but in presenting them with the power to possess their own.

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STANDARD 4

The student conducts historical research, therefore, the student is able to:

1. **Formulate historical questions** from encounters with historical documents, eyewitness accounts, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, historical sites, art, architecture, and other records from the past.
2. **Obtain historical data** from a variety of sources, including: library and museum collections, historic sites, historical photos, journals, diaries, eyewitness accounts, newspapers, and the like; documentary films, oral testimony from living witnesses, censuses, tax records, city directories, statistical compilations, and economic indicators.
3. **Interrogate historical data** by uncovering the social, political, and economic context in which it was created; testing the data source for its credibility, authority, authenticity, internal consistency and completeness; and detecting and evaluating bias, distortion, and propaganda by omission, suppression, or invention of facts.
4. **Identify the gaps in the available records and marshal contextual knowledge and perspectives of the time and place** in order to elaborate imaginatively upon the evidence, fill in the gaps deductively, and construct a sound historical interpretation.
5. **Employ quantitative analysis** in order to explore such topics as changes in family size and composition, migration patterns, wealth distribution, and changes in the economy.
6. **Support interpretations with historical evidence** in order to construct closely reasoned arguments rather than facile opinions.

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STANDARD 5

Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

Issue-centered analysis and decision-making activities place students squarely at the center of historical dilemmas and problems faced at critical moments in the past and the near-present. Entering into such moments, confronting the issues or problems of the time, analyzing the alternatives available to those on the scene, evaluating the consequences that might have followed those options for action that were not chosen, and comparing with the consequences of those that were adopted, are activities that foster students' deep, personal involvement in these events.

If well chosen, these activities also promote capacities vital to a democratic citizenry: the capacity to identify and define public policy issues and ethical dilemmas; analyze the range of interests and values held by the many persons caught up in the situation and affected by its outcome; locate and organize the data required to assess the consequences of alternative approaches to resolving the dilemma; assess the ethical implications as well as the comparative costs and benefits of each approach; and evaluate a particular course of action in light of all of the above and, in the case of historical issues-analysis, in light also of its long-term consequences revealed in the historical record.

Because important historical issues are frequently value-laden, they also open opportunities to consider the moral convictions contributing to social actions taken. For example, what moral and political dilemmas did Lincoln face when, in his Emancipation Proclamation, he decided to free only those slaves behind the Confederate lines? Teachers should not use historical events to hammer home their own favorite moral lesson. The point to be made is that teachers should not use critical events to hammer home a particular "moral lesson" or ethical teaching. Not only will many students reject that approach; it fails also to take into account the processes through which students acquire the complex skills of principled thinking and moral reasoning.

When students are invited to judge morally the conduct of historical actors, they should be encouraged to clarify the values that inform the judgment. In some instances, this will be an easy task. Students judging the Holocaust or slavery as evils will probably be able to articulate the foundation for their judgment. In other cases, a student's effort to reach a moral judgment may produce a healthy student exercise in clarifying values, and may, in some instances, lead him or her to recognize the historically conditioned nature of a particular moral value he or she may be invoking.

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Particularly challenging are the many social issues throughout United States history on which multiple interests and different values have come to bear. Issues of civil rights or equal education opportunity, of the right to choice vs. the right to life, and of criminal justice have all brought such conflicts to the fore. When these conflicts have not been resolved within the social and political institutions of the nation, they have regularly found their way into the judicial system, often going to the Supreme Court for resolution.

As the history course approaches the present era, such inquiries assume special relevance, confronting students with issues that resonate in today's headlines and invite their participation in lively debates, simulations, and socratic seminars—settings in which they can confront alternative policy recommendations, judge their ethical implications, challenge one another's assessments, and acquire further skills in the public presentation and defense of positions. In these analyses, teachers have the special responsibility of helping students differentiate between (1) relevant historical antecedents and (2) those that are clearly inappropriate and irrelevant. Students need to learn how to use their knowledge of history (or the past) to bring sound historical analysis to the service of informed decision making.

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STANDARD 5

The student engages in historical issues-analysis and decision-making, therefore, the student is able to:

1. **Identify issues and problems in the past** and analyze the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those involved in the situation.
2. **Marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances** and current factors contributing to contemporary problems and alternative courses of action.
3. **Identify relevant historical antecedents** and differentiate from those that are inappropriate and irrelevant to contemporary issues.
4. **Evaluate alternative courses of action**, keeping in mind the information available at the time, in terms of ethical considerations, the interests of those affected by the decision, and the long- and short-term consequences of each.
5. **Formulate a position or course of action on an issue** by identifying the nature of the problem, analyzing the underlying factors contributing to the problem, and choosing a plausible solution from a choice of carefully evaluated options.
6. **Evaluate the implementation of a decision** by analyzing the interests it served; estimating the position, power, and priority of each player involved; assessing the ethical dimensions of the decision; and evaluating its costs and benefits from a variety of perspectives.

Kirk Ankeny, Richard del Rio, Gary B. Nash, David Vigilante, eds., *Bringing History Alive! A Sourcebook for Teaching United States History* (Los Angeles: National Center for History in the Schools, University of California, Los Angeles, 1996), 6-15.

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Question to Consider

How has the scholarship of Native Americans evolved over time?

1. Native American History and Scholarship

Excerpt from “Native Americans, New Voices: American Indian History, 1895–1995”

By R. David Edmunds

In October 1895, when the first number of the *American Historical Review* was mailed to members of the American Historical Association, the United States was poised on the brink of a new century. The country had recently been troubled by economic depression, a growing army of populists, and serious labor unrest, and much of the American public worried that the nation was caught in a maelstrom of political, social, and economic dissent. Yet, as the decade continued, Americans grew more optimistic, confident that the new political leadership and rapidly expanding technology would restore social order and economic prosperity. Indeed, as the Progressive Movement emerged, many intellectuals and academics subscribed to such optimism, confident that education, skillful management, and a renewed interest in the public’s welfare would ensure political, economic, and social reform. The country had changed. Progress was inevitable. The nineteenth century was ending, and many vestiges of that century would either be abandoned or soon extinguished.

Most historians envisioned Native Americans and their history as a part of this exclusion of what was past. In 1893, just two years before the initial publication of the *American Historical Review*, Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his now-famous essay at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, in Chicago. The essay, which celebrates the frontier and the alleged march of American civilization across the continent, discusses the Native American role as both a facilitator and an opponent of such expansion. Turner argued that while “the Indian trade pioneered the way for civilization,” the “Indian frontier” also served as a “consolidating agent ... a common danger demanding united action.” Yet, in 1893, both the frontier and Indian people seemed to be part of the past. Three years earlier, in 1890, the United States Bureau of the Census had reported that the frontier had vanished and that the Indian population had fallen to 248,253. Native Americans had played a major role in the history of the frontier, but the frontier was gone. For Turner and other historians, Indian people and their role in American history were also on the road to oblivion.

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Almost all the documents and essays focusing on Native Americans that were printed in the *AHR* during the first quarter-century of its existence reflected the limited scope of historians' interest in Indian people in this period. With the exception of Bolton's essay, the articles featured Europeans and their institutions and discussed Native Americans primarily as objects of European or early American actions or policies. For example, Farrand's "Indian Boundary Line" examined the efforts of British Indian agents William Johnson and John Stuart to implement British policies in the West, but it failed to address how these policies resulted from earlier Native American efforts to retain control over their lands and economies. In addition, Indians were rarely portrayed as initiating any important activity; they participated in or responded to European initiatives but seemed to be incapable of formulating agendas of their own. They remained the supporting cast in a drama whose plot and leading roles were European.

Europeans also formulated the dialogue. Like other historians during this period, those scholars who wrote about events in which Native Americans played major roles based their research on traditional sources. Since government records, military reports, religious documents, and economic entries were usually generated by European males, accounts using these sources reflect their biases. Although women's historians have pointed out in the past three decades that male observers often failed to record the important contributions American women made in a broad spectrum of political and economic activities, or were ignorant of the distinct and separate "women's spheres" in which women spent their lives, at least these women shared a language and some cultural patterns with the male observers, and at least some American women left their own written (though often misinterpreted or ignored) records and memoirs. In comparison, Native Americans were culturally different from early literate white observers and did not share the same native language. Even though most tribes maintained a rich oral tradition, in the early twentieth century this cultural and historical information was often dismissed as "myth" or "legend" and rarely used by historians. Since Indians initially produced no written records of their own, accounts of their history were formulated by Europeans, using records or accounts written by other Europeans, many of whom had relatively limited familiarity with the Native American cultures and languages they were describing.

Tragically, one of the greatest blunders committed by historians peripherally interested in Indians at the turn of the century was their failure to collect or use the oral accounts held by many tribal members whose lifetime spanned

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much of the nineteenth century. Many of these individuals, or their parents or grandparents, had participated in events early in the nineteenth century. Since extended families and tribal communities continued to exist, these oral accounts could have provided a considerably enlarged Native American perspective. Unfortunately, during the twentieth century, much of this valuable information was lost.

The middle decades of the twentieth century brought few changes. Native Americans remained marginalized in American history, and many academic historians considered Native American history to be “popular history” or “cowboys and Indians,” not worthy of serious research. In the four decades between 1920 and 1960, for instance, the *AHR* published only four articles on Native American subjects. Two written during the 1930s continued the pattern established at the beginning of the century. One examined American Indian policy in the Old Northwest during the War of 1812, while the second concentrated on British military policies and tactics during Braddock’s Defeat, while generally ignoring the Indian forces responsible for inflicting the heaviest loss of life on a European or American army in all of American history. In 1949, a third essay examined John Evans’s bizarre attempts to prove that prairie tribes such as the Omahas, Arikaras, and Mandans were of Welsh origin, but the essay focused on Welsh and American antiquarianism rather than the Indians. By far the most perceptive article during these years was Mary Young’s “Indian Removal and Land Allotment: The Civilized Tribes and Jacksonian Justice.” Published in the October 1958 number, the essay discussed the implementation of Jacksonian Indian policy, but Young also described the Indian response and argued that intra-tribal politics contributed to the loss of allotments.

...

During the 1960s, the study of Native American history was transformed. The emergence of the civil rights movement markedly increased both the public’s and the academy’s interest in the history of ethnic minority groups. As the consensus interpretation of American experience faded, many historians initially turned to the study of African Americans, but by 1968 scholars were also taking a new look at Native Americans and their contribution to the country’s past. Unquestionably, the war in Vietnam added impetus to the latter inquiry. Historians who opposed the conflict drew similarities between interpretations of modern American imperialism in Southeast Asia and earlier American expansion onto Indian lands in the West. Meanwhile, the soldier’s term “Indian Country,” commonly applied to those regions of the Vietnamese

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countryside held by the Vietcong, reflected a broader, if less sophisticated, recognition of these parallels. In some instances, such similarities were overdrawn, but American uncertainty over involvement in the war gave credence to a newer, more critical evaluation of the government's relations with tribal people. It is not surprising that Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, while not very good history, struck a responsive chord with the American public during these years.

The renewed interest in Native American history was also strengthened by the Red Power movement. Following the example of African Americans, younger, more militant Native American leaders appeared in the urban Indian communities and on university campuses in the West. While members of the American Indian Movement occupied Wounded Knee and the public spotlight, other activists in the urban Indian communities and on college campuses successfully petitioned university administrators to establish Native American Studies programs. Almost all these programs included courses in Native American history as part of their basic offerings, and history departments across the United States rushed to add undergraduate Native American History courses to their curricula. Although the job market was contracting, new openings in Native American history appeared. Eager for employment, many historians jumped on the buckskin bandwagon, marketed themselves as "Indian historians," and ventured forth into the classroom. Some were adequately trained, others were woefully lacking in their preparation.

Ironically, the burgeoning interest in Native American history coincided with a significant change in methodology. Excellent studies of the formulation and administration of federal Indian policy continued, but scholars now attempted to develop a Native American perspective. For years, historians had complained that although anthropologists possessed a better understanding of tribal cultures, their historical research was inadequate. Their prose was jargon ridden, and they often failed to place their analysis within a broader perspective. They knew what "was going on," but they did not know what "was happening." In rebuttal, anthropologists charged that historians were interested only in military or diplomatic affairs and were so dependent on written documents that they failed to understand the Native American viewpoint. They were writing "white man's history" about Native American people. They knew what "was happening," but they really did not know what "was going on."

...

Since 1970, the new Indian history has expanded in many directions. No longer

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interested primarily in federal policy or military affairs, historians have extended their investigations to subjects or periods previously ignored. During the past decade, the pre-Columbian period has attracted considerable attention. Long dismissed as irrelevant to the “mainstream” of American history, pre-Columbian Native Americans had been dehumanized in opening sections of textbooks, which often included pre-Columbian societies in general discussions of climate, topography, flora, and fauna. Unfortunately, most data on pre-Columbian societies had been supplied by archaeologists, who were more interested in describing and classifying artifacts than in discussing the people and societies who used them. Consequently, as Samuel Eliot Morrison stated in *The Oxford History of the American People*, “When we try to tell the story of man in America ... the lack of data brings us to a halt. There are plenty of surviving objects ... but no written records ... [T]he history of the American People is the history in America of immigrants from other countries.” Surveys of American history textbooks conducted as late as 1986 indicated that many authors and publishers still subscribed to such reasoning.

More recent scholarship has altered this pattern. During the past decade, some authors of American history survey textbooks have reexamined the pre-Columbian past and have placed pre-Columbian cultures within a broader context. Instead of depicting pre-Columbian North America as a cultural backwater, isolated from the general development of “civilized” societies in the Old World, historians have placed pre-Columbian cultures into a world-wide pattern, with manifestations similar to those of contemporary societies in Africa and Eurasia. Focusing on the Adena, Hopewellian, and Mississippian people of the eastern United States, scholars have drawn parallels to contemporary cultures in Europe or Mesopotamia. For example, the Mississippians, a riverine people, flourished between 700 and 1700 A.D. and constructed large earthen mounds that served as ceremonial and population centers. Governed by a theocracy, Cahokia, a Mississippian community opposite modern St. Louis, emerged as a nascent city-state that dominated the surrounding river valleys. An important trade center, in 1100 S. D. Cahokia has a population exceeding ten thousand. Several American history textbooks published within the past decade have featured Cahokia as indicative of the pre-Columbian societies, and interest in the pre-Columbian period continues. In 1992, *America in 1492: The World of the Indian Peoples before the Arrival of Columbus*, a volume edited by Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., and sponsored by the McNickle Center, offered a series of essays surveying pre-Columbian cultures; and, more recently, other scholars such as Charles Hudson and Francis Jennings have attempted to investigate the connections between pre-Columbian societies and historic tribes in the United States.

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Critical to the renewed interest in pre-Columbian societies are the revised estimates of pre-Columbian populations. In 1965, Morrison's *Oxford History of the American People* indicated that, although "the population of the Americas in 1500 is largely a matter of conjecture... the latest scholarly estimates of Indian population in the present area of Canada and the United States vary from 900,000 to 1,500,000." Today, these estimates have increased almost fivefold. Current figures range from 5 million to 12.5 million, with perhaps 6 to 7 million emerging as the most commonly accepted estimate. Obviously, the increased numbers give credence to the arguments for more sophisticated pre-Columbian societies, since larger populations could more easily provide the goods and services needed to support a complex, stratified society. Moreover, like "civilizations" in Eurasia, the pre-Columbian population and its complex societies appeared to rise and fall. Cahokia reached the height of its population and influence in about 1250 A.D.; by 1400, it had been abandoned.

Yet other, more ominous population losses loomed on the horizon, and recent scholarship has analyzed their magnitude. In 154, when Hernando De Soto journeyed across the Southeast, he encountered populous Mississippian societies residing in fortified towns surrounded by extensive fields of corn and other crops. De Soto was received by powerful leaders, draped with pearl, who rode in sedan chairs; when hostile warriors opposed his entrance, they fought in well-organized ranks, commanded by native officers. One century later, these populous societies were gone, swept away by a pestilential holocaust. Within the past two decades, scholars such as Alfred W. Crosby, Henry Dobyns, and Russell Thornton have investigated these events and have demonstrated that because Native American peoples possessed no natural immunities to Old World pathogens, they succumbed to these epidemics by the millions. At first, such a catastrophic loss of human life seemed almost incomprehensible, and some historians were reluctant to accept the magnitude of these figures; but, when demographers examined the impact of smallpox and other diseases on historic tribal communities, they could confirm by extrapolation that the initial estimates were valid. Indeed, scholars such as Peter Wood have shown that the epidemics continued to ravage the Mississippian homeland well into the eighteenth century.

The implications of such a holocaust are profound. In the early seventeenth century, when the British and French first established settlements on the eastern seaboard, they did not encounter well-organized, populous incipient city-states. Instead, they met the scattered remnants of a Native American population devastated by disease. The pandemics were so disruptive that they

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destroyed the social and political structures of most Mississippian peoples and played havoc with simpler woodland societies along the northwest coast. The golden age of the Missippians was gone. The towns and ceremonial centers had been abandoned. Native Americans had been plunged into a dark age not of their own making. They were vulnerable to the European immigrants who landed on the edges of their world.

R. David Edmunds, "Native Americans, New Voices: American Indian History, 1895–1995"
American Historical Review 100, no. 3 (June 1995) 717–40.

Questions to Consider

1. What role has archeological evidence played in understanding pre-Columbian Native American history?
2. What other perspectives might be helpful in studying this era?

2. First Founders

Even as far back as the sixteenth century, European newcomers to North America showed only occasional interest in the origins of the people who already lived there. Columbus, thinking he had reached the Asian islands close to India and China (“the Indies”), mistakenly lumped America’s peoples together as “Indians.” Europeans who were curious about Native Americans had little but the Bible to guide their inquiries. Christians speculated that North America’s original residents were descendants of the Lost Tribe of Israel who had somehow wandered to these lands in Old Testament times. Whatever their origin, these inhabitants could hardly have been here more than 3000 years, the Europeans reasoned, for the world itself was thought to be scarcely 6000 years old.

Such views had changed little by the nineteenth century when American settlers swarmed westward in search of farmsteads. The newcomers speculated on the origin of mysterious burial mounds they saw throughout much of the Mississippi valley. Impressed by the size of these structures but convinced that Indians could not have built them, these new settlers suggested that the hills had to be the work of another race. Perhaps the ancient builders were European in origin and had somehow fallen victim to ancestors of the Native Americans. By 1890, as decades of Indian wars on the Great Plains drew to a close, only a few scientists took an interest in who the earliest North Americans really were, where they came from, when they arrived on the continent, and how they lived.

...Scholars who explore and debate the long history of early North America have steadily learned more about the continent’s first inhabitants. An expanding American history now stretches back in time far before the Jamestown settlement and reaches broadly from coast to coast. Its earliest roots lie with the indigenous inhabitants of the continent over many millennia. In addition, the foreigners who suddenly intruded into portions of the Native American world in the sixteenth century—speaking Spanish, French, and occasionally English—also represent a significant beginning. All these people now number, in different ways, among America’s first founders.

Peter H. Wood and others, eds. *Created Equal: A Social and Political History of the United States* (New York: Pearson Education, 2003), 5–6.

3. The Anasazi: Chaco Canyon and Mesa Verde

The great urban centers of Peru and Mesoamerica had no counterparts farther north. The peoples inhabiting North America in the millennium before Columbus never developed the levels of social stratification, urban dynamism, architectural grandeur, astronomical study, or intensive corn agriculture that characterized the Mayans, Incas, or Aztecs. Yet elements of all these traits appeared in North America, especially in the Southwest and the Mississippi valley, with the emergence of increasingly settled societies and widening circles of exchange.

Modern scholars wonder whether the maize, squash, and bean agriculture, sun worship, and astronomical knowledge found among North America's southwestern peoples had roots farther south. After all, the Aztecs' ancestors had apparently migrated down from this dry region to the interior of Mexico after a.d. 1100. Could other north–south movements back and forth have occurred, earlier or later, between Central Mexico and the American Southwest? Links of migration or trade would help to explain the dozens of ancient ball courts, similar to those in Mesoamerica that archaeologists have excavated in Arizona. Recently, researchers have identified a north–south traffic in turquoise, highly prized in both Mexico and the Southwest.

Three identifiably different cultures were already well established in the North American Southwest by a.d. 500. The Mogollons occupied the dry, mountainous regions of eastern Arizona and southern New Mexico. Mogollon women were expert potters who crafted delicate bowls from the fine clay of the Mimbres River. Families lived in sunken pit houses that were cool in summer and warm in winter. The Hohokams, their neighbors to the west in south-central Arizona, did the same. The Hohokams also constructed extensive canal and floodgate systems to irrigate their fields from the Gila and Salt rivers. According to their Native American successors, who still dwell in the Phoenix area, the name *Hohokam* means “those who have gone.”

Farther north, in what is now the Four Corners Region, where Utah and Colorado meet Arizona and New Mexico, lived the people remembered as the Anasazi, or “ancient ones.” By a.d. 750 the Anasazi inhabited aboveground houses clustered around a central ceremonial room dug into the earth. They entered this circular space by descending a ladder through the roof. The climb back up from this sunken chamber, known as a *kiva*, symbolized the initial ascent of humans into the Upper World from below. European explorers used

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the Spanish word for town, *pueblo*, to describe the Anasazis' multiroom and multistory dwellings of masonry or adobe.

Beginning in the 850s, Chaco Canyon in the San Juan River basin of northwest New Mexico emerged as the hub of the Anasazi world. Wide, straight roads radiating out from Chaco let builders haul hundreds of thousands of logs for use as roof beams in the nine great pueblos that still dot the canyon. The largest of them, Pueblo Bonito, rises five stories high in places and has 600 rooms arranged in a vast semicircle. Yet the canyon's population remained small, perhaps dominated by priestly rulers who used violence to extract labor, food, and tribute from the region's inhabitants.

Violence and warfare played a significant part in Anasazi life, as they did in the Mesoamerican world of the same era. But in the end, environmental change exerted the greatest destructive force. Tree rings show that after 1130, a drought gripped the Colorado Plateau for half a century. The turquoise workshops of Chaco Canyon fell silent. Most of the inhabitants moved away. Some no doubt headed north, where dozens of Anasazi communities with access to better farming conditions dotted the landscape. Earlier, they had resided atop mesas (from the Spanish word meaning "table," for the region's distinctive hills with steep sides and level tops). But gradually—with populations growing, the climate worsening, and competition for resources stiffening—they moved into sheltered cliff dwellings built into the mesa walls. Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde in southwestern Colorado, with its 220 rooms and 23 kivas, remains the most famous today because of its ready access and careful preservation. Yet other sites were even larger. Reached only by ladders and steep trails, these pueblos offered protection from enemies and shelter from the scorching summer sun. Still, another prolonged drought (1276–1299) forced the Anasazi to move once again by 1300. Survivors dispersed south into lands later occupied by the Hopi, Zuni, and Rio Grande peoples.

Wood et al., 13–15.

4. The Mississippians: Cahokia and Moundville

Earlier, in the Mississippi Valley, the Hopewell people had prospered for half a millennium before a.d. 500 (in the era of the Roman Empire in Europe). The Hopewell lived primarily in southern Ohio and western Illinois. But their network of trade extended over much of the continent. Archaeologists excavating ornate Hopewell burial sites have found a wide array of objects, including pipestone and flint from the Missouri River Valley, copper and silver from Lake Superior, mica and quartz from Appalachia, sea shells and shark teeth from Florida, and artwork made from Rocky Mountain obsidian and grizzly-bear teeth. Hopewell trading laid the groundwork for larger mound-building societies, known as the Mississippian cultures that emerged in the Mississippi Valley and the Southeast in roughly the same centuries as the great Mesoamerican civilizations and the Anasazi in the Southwest.

The more elaborate and widespread Mississippian tradition developed gradually after a.d. 500. Then after a.d. 900, it flourished broadly for six centuries. Shifts in technology and agriculture facilitated the rise of the Mississippians.

Bows and arrows, long used in arctic regions of North America but little known elsewhere, began to see widespread use in the eastern woodlands around a.d. 700. At the same time, maize underwent a transformation from a marginal oddity to a central staple crop. Growers as far east as northern Florida were producing it by the eighth century, and it soon appeared farther north with the spread of a more hardy variety. By 1300, maize and bean agriculture reached all the way to the Iroquoian peoples around Lake Ontario and in the St. Lawrence River valley. Across the east, food supplies expanded as Native American communities planted corn in the rich bottomland soil along the region's many rivers. More and more people began settling in these fertile areas. Maize agriculture also spurred bureaucracy and hierarchy. With greater productivity, commercial and religious elites asserted greater control over farmers to take advantage of the community's expanding resources.

The extent of contacts, rivalries, and exchanges between separate Mississippian mound-building centers remains uncertain. Mississippian sites have been found as far apart as Spiro, in eastern Oklahoma, and Etowah, in northern Georgia. The largest complex was at Cahokia in American Bottom, the 25-mile floodplain below where the Illinois and Missouri rivers flow into the Mississippi. We will never know Cahokia's full extent, for city planners expanding St. Louis in the nineteenth century flattened more than two dozen mounds on the Mississippi's west bank, leaving little record of their work.

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Across the river, builders in East St. Louis, Illinois, and farmers eager to increase their acreage leveled more mounds. But nearby, on Cahokia Creek, dozens of rectangular, flat-topped temple mounds still remain after almost a thousand years. The largest mound at Cahokia—indeed, the largest ancient earthwork in North America—rises 100 feet in four separate levels, covering 16 acres and using nearly 22 million cubic feet of earth. A log palisade with gates and watchtowers once enclosed this temple mound and its adjacent plaza in a 200-acre central compound. In a separate construction nearby, residents used engineering and astronomy skills to erect 48 posts in a huge circle, 410 feet in diameter. This creation, now called Woodhenge after England's Stonehenge, functioned as a calendar to mark the daily progression of the sun throughout each year.

Cahokia's mounds rose quickly in the decades after a.d. 1050, as the local population expanded beyond 10,000. A succession of powerful leaders reorganized the vicinity's small, isolated villages into a strong regional chiefdom that controlled towns on both sides of the river. These towns provided the chiefdom's centralized elite with food, labor, and goods for trading. The elaborate religious rituals and the wealth and power of the leaders are seen in a burial site opened by archaeologists in the 1970s. The body of one prominent figure, presumably a chief, was laid out on a surface of 20,000 shell beads. Near him lay six young adults who must have been relatives or servants sacrificed at the ruler's funeral. They were supplied with hundreds of stone arrowheads—finely chipped and neatly sorted—plus antler projectile points, a rolled tube of sheet copper, bushels of glistening mica (a transparent mineral crystallized into very thin sheets), and 15 stone disks used in the popular spear-throwing game known as chunkey. Archaeologists found further evidence of sacrifice nearby. They uncovered the remains of four men, whose heads and hands had been cut off, and a pit filled with nearly four dozen young women who apparently had been strangled.

The population of Cahokia perhaps exceeded 15,000 people around a.d. 1100. It then waned steadily over the next two centuries as the unstable hierarchy lost its sway over nearby villages. As Cahokia declined, other regional chiefdoms rose along other rivers. The most notable appeared at Moundville in west-central Alabama, 15 miles south of modern Tuscaloosa. A century of archaeological work at this site has revealed clear phases of development after a.d. 900. First, the inhabitants adopted corn agriculture. This in turn allowed them to intensify craft production, and a budding elite emerged. Before long, the leaders directed the creation of mounds in several small villages. Shortly before 1250, workers laid out an 80-acre rectangular

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plaza at the Moundville site. They began construction on more than 20 flat-topped mounds (some larger than football fields), which provided dwelling sites and burial locations for the small ruling class. Excavated burial objects—ceremonial axes, beads carved from conch shells, and distinctive copper spools worn as giant earrings—reveal evidence of long-distance trade and elaborate rituals. But by 1400, Moundville had started to lose its grip as a dominant ceremonial center. The causes of this decline remain unclear, but once again small villages became the norm.

Wood et al., 15–17.

5. American Stories

Four Women's Lives Highlight the Convergence of Three Continents

In what historians call the “early modern period” of world history—roughly the fifteenth to seventeenth century when peoples from different regions of the earth came into close contact with each other—four women played key roles in the convergence and clash of societies from Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Their lives highlight some of this chapter's major themes, which developed in an era when the people of three continents began to encounter each other and the shape of the modern world began to take form.

Born in 1451, Isabella of Castile was a banner-bearer for *reconquista*—the centuries-long Christian crusade to expel the Muslim rulers who had controlled Spain for centuries. Pious and charitable, the queen of Castile married Ferdinand, the king of Aragon, in 1469. The union of their kingdoms forged a stronger Christian Spain now prepared to realize a new religious and military vision. Eleven years later, after ending hostilities with Portugal, Isabella and Ferdinand began consolidating their power. By expelling Muslims and Jews, the royal couple pressed to enforce Catholic religious conformity. Their religious zeal also led them to sponsor four voyages of Christopher Columbus as a means of extending Spanish power across the Atlantic. The first was commissioned in 1492, only a few months after what the Spanish considered a “just and holy war” against infidels culminated in the surrender of Moorish Granada, the last stronghold of Islam in Christian Europe. Sympathizing with Isabella's fervent piety and desire to convert the people of distant lands to Christianity, Columbus, after 1493 signed his letters “Christopher Columbus, Christ Bearer.”

On the other side of the Atlantic resided an Aztec woman of influence, also called Isabella by the Spanish, who soon symbolized the mixing of her people with the Spanish. Her real name was Tecuichpotzin, which meant “little royal maiden” in Nahuatl, the Aztec language. The first-born child of the Aztec ruler Moctezuma II and Teotlalco, his wife, she entered the world in 1509—before the Aztecs had seen a single Spaniard. But when she was eleven, Tecuichpotzin witnessed the arrival of the conquistadors under Cortés. When her father was near death, he asked the conqueror to take custody of his daughter, hoping for an accommodation between the conquering Spanish and the conquered Aztecs. But Tecuichpotzin was reclaimed by her people and soon was married to her father's brother, who became the Aztec ruler in 1520. After he died of smallpox within two months, the last Aztec emperor claimed the young girl as his wife.

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But then in 1521, the Spanish siege of Tenochtitlán, the Aztec island capital in Lake Texcoco, overturned the mighty Indian empire and soon brought Tecuichpotzin into the life of the victorious Spanish. In 1526, she learned that her husband had been tortured and hanged for plotting an insurrection against Cortés. Still only nineteen, she soon succumbed to the overtures of Cortés, agreeing to join his household and live among his Indian mistresses. Pregnant with Cortés's child, she was married off to a Spanish officer. Another marriage followed, and in all she bore seven children, all descendants of Moctezuma II. All became large landowners and figures of importance. Tecuichpotzin was in this way a pioneer of *mestizaje*—the mixing of races—and thus one of the leading Aztec women who launched the creation of a new society in Mexico.

Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry VIII who had established the Church of England and rejected the authority of the Catholic pope in Rome, became the key figure in encouraging English expansion overseas. Through her long rule of nearly a half-century, she inspired Protestant England to challenge Catholic Spain and France. Even Pope Sixtus V acknowledged that she was “a great woman, and were she only Catholic she would be without her match.” He also remarked, “She is only a woman, yet she makes herself feared by Spain, by France, by the Emperor, by all.” Commissioning buccaneers such as John Hawkins and Francis Drake, and sponsoring promoters of colonization such as Walter Raleigh and the Richard Hakluyts (both uncle and nephew), Elizabeth assured the planting of English colonies in North America. They would grow mightily after her death in 1603 and eventually challenge the Dutch, French, and Spanish, who also saw the Americas as a source of great wealth and power.

On the west coast of Africa was another powerful woman. Born around 1595 and named because she entered the world with the umbilical cord wrapped around her neck (which was believed to foretell a haughty character), Queen Njinga led fierce resistance to the Portuguese slave trade and the Portuguese attempts to control Angola. She knew the Portuguese had been trading for slaves in Angola and had even converted King Affonso I to Catholicism in the 1530s. She also knew that by the time Queen Elizabeth came to power in 1558 in England, the Portuguese had trapped her people into incessant wars in order to supply slaves to their Portuguese trading partners. Only when she assumed the throne of Ndongo (present-day Angola) in 1624 did Queen Njinga's people begin to resist Portuguese rule. Leading her troops in a series of wars, she gave a fierce battle cry that legend says was heard for miles, making her a heroic figure in Angolan history . . .

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. . . Too often in historical writing, Europeans reaching the Americas are portrayed as the carriers of a superior culture that inevitably vanquished people living in a primitive if not “savage” state. This renders Native Americans and Africans passive and static people—so much dough to be kneaded by advanced Europeans. But recent historical scholarship tells us that Africans and Native Americans were critically important participants in the making of American history—part of a complex, intercultural birthing of a “new world.” By examining the state of the societies of West Africa, North and South America, and Western Europe in the late fifteenth century, we will be better prepared to see how the complex, multicultural shaping of American history took place.

Gary B. Nash and others, eds. *The American People: Creating a Nation and a Society*, 6th ed. (New York: Pearson Education Inc., 2004), 2–4.

6. Hunters, Farmers, and Environmental Factors

Once on the North American continent, these early wanderers began trekking southward and then eastward, following vegetation and game. Even to reach what is now the Pacific Northwest took many centuries. In time, they reached the tip of South America—some 15,000 miles from the Asian homeland to Tierra del Fuego, the southernmost limit of South America. Moving eastward, they traversed some 6,000 miles from Siberia to the eastern edge of North America. American history has traditionally emphasized the “westward movement” of people, but for thousands of years before Columbus’s arrival, the frontier moved southward and eastward. Thus did people from the “Old World” discover the “New World” thousands of years before Columbus.

Archaeologists have excavated ancient sites of early life in the Americas, unearthing tools, ornaments, and skeletal remains that can be scientifically dated. In this way, they have tentatively reconstructed the dispersion of these first Americans over an immense land mass. Although much remains unknown, archaeological evidence suggests that as centuries passed and population increased, the earliest inhabitants evolved into separate cultures, adjusting to various environments in distinct ways. Europeans who rediscovered the New World thousands of years later would lump together the myriad societies they found. But by the late 1400s, the “Indians” of the Americas were enormously diverse in the size and complexity of their societies, the languages they spoke, and their forms of social organization.

Archaeologists and anthropologists have charted several phases of so-called Native American history. The Beringian period of initial migration ended about 14,000 years ago. During the Paleo-Indian era, 14,000 to 10,000 years ago, big-game hunters flaked hard stones into spear points and chose “kill sites” where they slew herds of Pleistocene mammals. This more reliable food source allowed population growth, and nomadism began to give way to settled habitations or local migration within limited territories.

Then during the Archaic era, from about 10,000 to 2,500 years ago, great geological changes brought further adaptations to the land. As the massive Ice Age glaciers slowly retreated, a warming trend turned vast grassland areas from Utah to the highlands of Central America into desert. The Pleistocene mammals were weakened by more arid conditions, but human populations ably adapted. They learned to exploit new sources of food, especially plants. In time, a second technological breakthrough took place, what historians call the agricultural revolution.

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Learning how to plant, cultivate, and harvest allowed humans certain control over once-ungovernable natural forces. Anthropologists believe that this process began independently in widely separated parts of the world—Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas—about 9,000 to 7,000 years ago. Though agriculture developed very slowly, it eventually brought dramatic changes in human societies everywhere.

Historians have sometimes imagined that these early people lived in a primordial paradise in harmony with their surroundings. But recent archaeological evidence points to examples of environmental devastation that severely damaged the biodiversity of the Americas. The first wave of intruders found a wilderness teeming with so-called megafauna: saber-toothed tigers, woolly mammoths, gigantic ground sloths, huge bison, and monstrous bears. But by about 10,000 years ago, these animals were almost extinct. Both overhunting and a massive shift of climate that deprived the huge beasts of their grazing environment were to blame.

The depletion of the megafauna left the hemisphere with a much restricted catalogue of animals. Left behind were large animals such as elk, buffalo, bear, and moose. But the extinction of the huge beasts forced people to prey on new sources of food such as turkeys, ducks, and guinea pigs. Their reduced food supply may have gradually reduced their population.

Over many centuries in the Americas, salinization and deforestation put the environment under additional stress. For example, in what is today central Arizona, the Hohokam civilization collapsed hundreds of years ago, much like that in ancient Mesopotamia, when the irrigation system became too salty to support agriculture. At New Mexico's Chaco Canyon, the fast-growing Anasazi denuded a magnificently forested region in their search for firewood and building materials. This, in turn, led to the erosion of rich soil that impoverished the region for the Anasazi.

When Native Americans learned to domesticate plant life, they began the long process of transforming their relationship to the physical world. Like all living organisms, human beings depend on plants to survive. For both humans and animals, plants are the source of life-sustaining fuel. The ultimate source of this energy is the sun. But in tapping solar energy, humans and animals had to rely on plants because they are the only organisms capable of producing significant amounts of organic material through the photosynthetic process. Plant life was—and still is—the strategic element in the chain of life.

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Dating the advent of agriculture in the Americas is difficult, but archaeologists estimate it at about 5000 b.c.e. Agriculture had already been developed in Southwestern Asia and in Africa and spread to Europe at about the time people in the Tehuacán Valley of central Mexico first planted maize and squash. Over the millennia, humans progressed from doorside planting of a few wild seeds to systematic clearing and planting of fields. As the production of domesticated plant food ended dependence on gathering wild plants and pursuing game, settled village life began to replace nomadic existence. Increases in food supply brought about by agriculture triggered other major changes. As more ample food fueled population growth, large groups split off to form separate societies. Greater social and political complexity developed because not everyone was needed as before to secure the society's food supply. Men cleared the land and hunted game, while women planted, cultivated, and harvested crops. Many societies empowered religious figures, who organized the common followers, directed their work, and exacted tribute as well as worship from them. In return, the community trusted them to ward off hostile forces.

Everywhere in the Americas, regional trading networks formed. Along trade routes carrying commodities such as salt for food preservation, obsidian rock for projectile points, and copper for jewelry also traveled technology, religious ideas, and agricultural practices. By the end of the Archaic period, about 500 b.c.e., hundreds of independent kin-based groups, like people in other parts of the world, had learned to exploit the resources of their particular area and to trade with other groups in their region. For centuries thereafter, native societies grew in size, developed more sophisticated agricultural techniques, and in some areas adopted a sedentary life.

Nash et al., 5–8.

7. Regional North American Cultures

While the regions north of Mesoamerica were never populated by societies of the size and complexity of the Aztecs, some of them, particularly in what is now the American Southwest, felt the influence radiating northward from the Valley of Mexico. But throughout the vast expanses of North America in the last epoch of pre-Columbian development, the so-called post-Archaic phase, many distinct societies evolved through a complex process of growth and environmental adaptation. In the southwestern region of North America, for example, Hohokam and Anasazi societies (the ancestors of the present-day Hopi and Zuñi) had developed a sedentary village life thousands of years before the Spanish arrived in the 1540s. By about 700 to 900 c.e., descendants of these people abandoned the ancient pit houses dug in cliffs and began to construct rectangular rooms arranged in apartment-like structures.

By about 1200 c.e., “Pueblo” people, as the Spanish later called them, were developing planned villages composed of large, terraced, multistoried buildings, each with many rooms and often constructed on defensive sites that would afford the Anasazi protection from their northern enemies. The largest of them, containing about 800 rooms, was at Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon. By the time the Spanish arrived in the 1540s, the indigenous Pueblo people were using irrigation canals, dams, and hillside terracing to water their arid maize fields. In their agricultural techniques, their skill in ceramics, their use of woven textiles for clothing, and their village life, Pueblo society resembled that of peasant communities in many parts of Europe and Asia. Don Juan de Oñate reported home in 1599 after reaching the Pueblo villages on the Rio Grande that the Indians “live very much the same as we do, in houses with two and three terraces . . .”

Far to the north, on the Pacific coast of the Northwest, native people formed societies around cedar and salmon. Tlingit, Kwakiutl, Salish, and Haida people lived in villages of several hundred, drawing their sustenance from salmon and other spawning fish. Plank houses displayed elaborately carved red cedar pillars and were guarded by gigantic totem poles depicting animals with supernatural power such as the bear, bald eagle, killer whale, sea otter, wolf, and frog. Reaching this region much later than most other parts of the hemisphere, early European explorers were amazed at the architectural and artistic skills of the Northwest indigenous people. “What must astonish most,” wrote one French explorer in the late eighteenth century, “is to see painting everywhere, everywhere sculpture, among a nation of hunters.”

Carving and painting soft wood from deep cedar forest surrounding their villages, Northwest native people defined their place in the cosmos with

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ceremonial face masks. The masks often represented animals, birds, and fish—reminders of magical ancestral spirits that inhabited what they understood as the four interconnected zones of the cosmos: the Sky World, the Undersea World, the Mortal World, and the Spirit World.

Ceremonial masks played a pivotal place in the Potlatch, a great winter gathering where through song, dance, and ritual Northwest peoples gave meaning to their existence and reaffirmed their goal of achieving harmony and balance in their world. In the Potlatch ceremonial dances, native leaders honored their family lineage and signified their chiefly authority in the tribe. By giving away many of their possessions, chiefs satisfied tribe members and in this way maintained their legitimacy. Such largesse mystified and often disturbed Europeans, who prized the individual accumulation of wealth. Attempts by American and Canadian authorities to suppress Potlatch ceremonies in the late nineteenth century never succeeded.

Far to the east, Native American societies evolved over thousands of years. From the Great Plains of the mid-continent to the Atlantic tidewater region, a variety of tribes came to be loosely associated in four main language groups: Algonquian, Iroquoian, Muskhogean, and Siouan. Their existence in eastern North America has been traced as far back as about 9000 b.c.e. Like other tribal societies, they had been transformed by the agricultural revolution. Gradually, they adopted semi-fixed settlements where they combined agriculture, food gathering, game hunting, and fishing. In time, these societies developed trading networks linking together societies occupying a vast region.

Among the most impressive of these societies were the mound-building societies of the Mississippi and Ohio valleys. When European settlers first crossed the Appalachian Mountains a century and a half after arriving on the continent, they were astounded to find hundreds of ceremonial mounds and gigantic sculptured earthworks in geometric designs or in the shapes of huge humans, birds, or writhing serpents. Believing all “Indians” to be forest primitives, they reasoned that these were the remains of an ancient civilization that had found its way to North America—perhaps Phoenicians, survivors of the sunken island of Atlantis, or the Lost Tribes of Israel spoken of in European mythology.

Archaeologists now conclude that the Mound Builders were the ancestors of the Creeks, Choctaws, and Natchez. Their societies, evolving slowly over the centuries, had developed considerable complexity by the advent of Christianity in Europe. In southern Ohio alone about ten thousand mounds, used as burial sites, have been pinpointed, and archaeologists have

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excavated another one thousand earth-walled enclosures, including one enormous fortification with a circumference of about three and one-half miles, enclosing one hundred acres, or the equivalent of fifty modern city blocks. From the mounded tombs, archaeologists have recovered a great variety of items that have been traced to widely separated parts of the continent: large ceremonial blades chipped from obsidian rock formations in what is now Yellowstone National Park; embossed breastplates, ornaments, and weapons fashioned from copper nuggets from the Great Lakes region; decorative objects cut from sheets of mica from the southern Appalachians; conch shells from the Atlantic seaboard; and ornaments made from shark and alligator teeth and shells from the Gulf of Mexico. All of this material shows that the Mound Builders participated in a vast trading network linking together hundreds of Indian villages across the continent.

The mound-building societies of the Ohio valley declined many centuries before Europeans reached the continent, perhaps attacked by other tribes or damaged by severe climatic changes that undermined agriculture. By about 600 c.e., another mound-building agricultural society arose in the Mississippi valley. Its center, the city of Cahokia with at least 20,000 (and possibly as many as 40,000) inhabitants, stood near present-day St. Louis. Great ceremonial plazas, flanked by a temple that rose in four terraces to a height of 100 feet, marked this first metropolis in America. This was the urban center of a far-flung Mississippi culture that encompassed hundreds of villages from Wisconsin to Louisiana and from Oklahoma to Tennessee.

Before the mound-building cultures of the continental heartlands declined, perhaps through climatic changes, their influence was already transforming the woodlands societies along the Atlantic coastal plain. The numerous small tribes that settled from Nova Scotia to Florida never equaled the larger societies of the midcontinent in earthwork sculpture, architectural design, or development of large-scale agriculture. But they were far from the “savages” that the first European explorers described. When Europeans arrived, they encountered scores of local tribes of the Eastern woodlands. Each maintained cultural elements peculiar to its people, although they shared in common many things such as agricultural techniques, the sexual division of labor, pottery design, social organization, and toolmaking. But the most important common denominator among them was that each had mastered the local habitat in a way that sustained life and ensured the perpetuation of their people.

In the far north were Abenakis, Penobscots, Passamaquoddys, and others, who lived by the sea and supplemented their diet with maple sugar and a few foodstuffs. Farther south, in what was to become New England, were Massachusetts, Wampanoags, Pequots, Narragansetts, Niantics, Mahicans,

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and others—small tribes occupying fairly local areas and joined together only by occasional trade. South of them, in the mid-Atlantic area, were Lenape, Susquehannock, Nanticoke, Pamunkey, Shawnee, Tuscarora, Catawba, and other peoples, who added limited agriculture to their skill in using natural plants for food, medicine, dyes, and flavoring and had developed food procurement strategies that exploited all the resources around them—cleared land, forests, streams, shore, and ocean. Most of these eastern woodlands tribes lived in waterside villages. Locating their fields of maize near fishing grounds, they often migrated seasonally between inland and coastal village sites or situated themselves astride two ecological zones. In the Northeast, their birchbark canoes, light enough to be carried by a single man, helped them trade and communicate over immense territories.

One of the most heavily populated regions of the North American continent was the Southeast, where rich and complex cultures, some of them joined in loose confederacies, were located. Belonging to several language groups, these peoples traced their ancestry back at least 8,000 years. Some of the most elaborate pottery-making in the eastern half of the continent occurred in the Southeast, beginning about 2000 b.c.e. Hopewell burial mound techniques also influenced these cultures, and a few hundred years before Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto marched through the area in the 1540s, grandiose ceremonial centers, whose construction involved earthmoving on a vast scale, had become a distinct feature of this region. Called “Mississippian” societies by archaeologists, the tribes of the Southeast learned how to do elaborate pottery and basket weaving and conduct long-distance trade. Favored by a global warming trend that increased the annual average temperature by a few degrees for about four hundred years after 900, agriculture flourished in this region. This led in some cases, as with the Natchez, to the development of highly stratified societies where chiefs and commoners were sharply divided and where priests led ritual ceremonies, meant to ensure successful crops and community well-being, that were based on the seasons and the solar cycle. These people were the ancestors of the powerful Creeks and Yamasees in the Georgia and Alabama regions, the Apalachees in Florida and along the Gulf of Mexico, the Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Natchez of the lower Mississippi Valley, the Cherokees of the southern Appalachian mountains, and several dozen smaller tribes scattered along the Atlantic coast. But after the “Little Ice Age,” which occurred for several centuries after about 1300, the ancestors had abandoned their mounded urban centers and devolved into less populous, less stratified, and less centralized societies.

Nash et al., 9–16.

8. The Iroquois

Far to the north of the declining southeastern mound-building societies, Iroquoian-speaking people were following a contrary path for several centuries before the arrival of Europeans. The most important of those that were beginning a process of growth and consolidation were the Iroquois. Their territory stretched from the Adirondack Mountains to the Great Lakes and from what is now northern New York to Pennsylvania. Five tribes comprised what Europeans later called the League of the Iroquois: the Mohawk (“People of the Flint”), Oneidas (“People of the Stone”), Onondagas (“People of the Mountain”), Cayugas (“People at the Landing”), and Senecas (“Great Hill People”). The Iroquois confederation was a vast extension of the kinship group that characterized the northeastern woodlands pattern of family settlement and embraced perhaps 10,000 people at the time Europeans began to build settlements in the northeastern region of the continent in the sixteenth century. Living across major Indian trade routes in the Northeast, they were positioned between what would become French and English zones of settlement, which would ensure that the Iroquois would be deeply caught up with the onrush of Europeans.

Not long before Europeans began coming ashore in eastern North America, the loosely organized and strife-ridden Iroquois strengthened themselves by creating a more cohesive political confederacy. By learning to suppress intra-Iroquois blood feuds, villages gained stability, population increased, and the Iroquois developed political mechanisms for solving internal problems and presenting a more unified front in parlaying with their Algonquian neighbors for the use of hunting territories to the north or in admitting dependent tribes to settle on their territory. This facilitated the development of a coordinated Iroquois policy for dealing with the European newcomers.

Work in the palisaded villages of Iroquoia, some bustling with more than a thousand people, was performed communally and land was owned not by individuals but by all in common. An individual family might till their own patch of land, but it was understood that this usage in no way implied private ownership. Likewise, hunting was a communal enterprise. Though individual hunters differed in their ability to stalk and kill deer, the collective bounty of the hunting party was brought back to the village and divided among all. Similarly, several families occupied a longhouse, but the house itself, like all else in the community, was common property. “No hospitals [poorhouses] are needed among them,” wrote a French Jesuit in 1657, “because there are neither mendicants nor paupers as long as there are any rich people among them.”

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Their kindness, humanity, and courtesy not only makes them liberal with what they have, but causes them to possess hardly anything except in common. A whole village must be without corn, before any individual can be obliged to endure privation.” One historian has called this “upside down capitalism,” where the goal was not to pile up material possessions but to reach the happy situation where they could give what they had to others.

Out of extended kinship groups, the Iroquois organized village settlements. Like many Africans, the Iroquois had matrilineal families where family membership was determined through the female rather than male line. A typical Iroquois family comprised an old woman, her daughters with their husbands and children, and her unmarried granddaughters and grandsons. Sons and grandsons remained with their kinship group until they married; then they joined the family of their wife or the family of their mother’s brother. If this puzzled Europeans, whose men controlled women strictly, so did the Iroquois woman’s prerogative of divorce; if she desired it, she merely set her husband’s possessions outside the longhouse door.

Iroquois society also invested the community’s women with a share of political power in ways the Europeans found strange. Political authority in the villages derived from the matrons or senior women of the *ohwachiras*—a group of related families. These women named the men representing the clans at village and tribal councils and appointed the 49 sachems or chiefs who met periodically when the confederated Five Nations met. These civil chiefs were generally middle-aged or elderly men who had gained fame earlier as warriors but now gained their prestige at the council fires. The political power of the women also extended to the ruling councils, where they caucused behind the circle of chiefs and made sure that the tribal council did not move too far from the will of the women who appointed them. The male chiefs were secure in their positions only so long as they could achieve a consensus with the women who had placed them in office.

Power divided between men and women was seen further in the tribal economy and in military affairs. While men did most of the hunting and fishing, the women were the community’s primary agriculturists. In tending the crops, they became vital to sustaining the community. When men were away on weeks-long hunting expeditions, women were left entirely in charge of village daily life. If “the forest belonged to the men,” one historian explains, “the village was the woman’s domain.” In military affairs women played a significant role, for they supplied the moccasins and food for warring expeditions. A decision to withhold these supplies was tantamount to vetoing a military foray. Clan

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matrons often initiated war by calling on the Iroquois warriors to bring them enemy captives to replace fallen clan members.

In raising children, Iroquois parents were more permissive than Europeans. They did not believe in harsh physical punishment, encouraged the young to imitate adult behavior, and were tolerant of fumbling early attempts. The mother nursed and protected the infant while hardening it by baths in cold water. Weaning ordinarily began at age three or four. Childhood interest in the anatomy and in sexual experimentation was accepted as normal. All this contrasted with European child-rearing techniques, which stressed accustoming the child to authority from an early age through frequent use of physical punishment, condemning early sexual curiosity, and emphasizing obedience and respect for authority.

The approach to authority in Iroquois society, like most other Indian societies in North America, lacked most of the complicated machinery developed by Europeans to direct individual lives. No laws and ordinances, sheriffs and constables, judges and juries, or courts or jails—the apparatus of authority in Europe—existed in pre-contact North America. Yet the Iroquois set boundaries of acceptable behavior firmly. They prized the autonomous individual yet maintained a strict code of right and wrong. But they governed behavior by imparting a sense of tradition and attachment to the group through communally performed rituals. Europeans dealt with crime through investigation, arrest, prosecution, and sentencing. But in Indian society, those who stole food, to take one example, were “shamed” and ostracized until the culprits atoned for their actions and proved ready for re-entry into village communal life.

Nash et al., 16–18.

9. Pre-contact Population

For many decades, anthropologists and historians estimated that the population of the Americas, and especially North America, was small, only about 10 percent of Europe's population at the time of Columbus's voyages initiated in 1492. Only recently have scholars conceded that most estimates made in the past were grossly understated because of the conventional view that Indian societies peopled by nomadic hunters and gatherers could not be very large.

But with massive archaeological research in recent decades, and with a firmer understanding of how sophisticated many Native American societies were five hundred years ago in agricultural techniques capable of sustaining large societies, the population estimates have soared. Today's scholars believe that the pre-contact population north of the Rio Grande River, on the eve of European exploration of the Americas, contained at least 4 million people, of whom perhaps half lived east of the Mississippi River and some 700,000 settled along the eastern coastal plain and in the piedmont region accessible to the early European settlers. Though estimates vary widely, the firmest counts about 50 to 70 million people living in the entire hemisphere when Europeans first arrived. This contrasted with some 70 to 90 million in Europe (including Russia) around 1500, about 50 to 70 million in Africa, and 225 to 350 million in Asia. The colonizers were not coming to a "virgin wilderness," as they often described it, but to a land inhabited for thousands of years by people whose village existence in some ways resembled that of the arriving Europeans and whose population matched that of the Europeans to the west of Russia.

In some important ways, however, Indian culture differed sharply from that of Europeans. Horses and oxen, for example, did not exist in the New World. Without large draft animals, Indians had no incentive to develop wheeled vehicles or, for that matter, the potter's wheel. Many inventions—such as the technology for smelting iron, which had diffused widely in the Old World—had not crossed the ocean barrier to reach the New World. The opposite was also true: valuable New World crops, such as corn and potatoes developed by Indian agriculturists, were unknown in the Old World before Columbus.

Nash et al., 18–20.

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Unit Conclusion

Over several thousands of years prior to the arrival of Europeans, Native Americans developed complex societies. They developed sophisticated agricultural systems, architecture, and political confederations. Each of these societies reflect the environmental conditions in which it was developed.



TIMELINE

- 25,000 to 11,000 years ago** Ocean levels expose land bridge between Asia and North America.
- 13,900 to 12,900 years ago** Clovis hunters cross into North America.
- 10,000 to 3000 years ago** Archaic period sees variety of Indian societies.
- 4000 to 2700 BCE** Poverty Point culture existing in Louisiana.
- 300 to 900 BCE** Mayan culture flourishes in Mesoamerica.
- 600 to 1100** Cahokia sees rise of mound-building cultures.
- 1200s** Pueblo societies develop in Southwest.
- 1300s** Rise of Aztec societies in Mexico.
- 1492** Columbus reaches Americas.



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