SESSION PREPARATION

Read the following material before attending the workshop. As you read the excerpts and primary sources, 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 shown during the workshop.

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Columbus’s arrival launched an era of initial encounters between Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans that continued for nearly 300 years. This unit examines how these contacts began the phenomenon now known as the Columbian Exchange, profoundly altering the way of life of peoples around the globe.

UNIT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading the text materials, participating in the workshop activities, and watching the video, participants will understand

- how initial encounters between indigenous Americans, Europeans, and Africans occurred across vast distances and over long periods of time;
- the far-reaching effects of the exchange of plants, animals, microbes, and other organisms among the cultures involved in these encounters;
- how historians use a variety of documents and artifacts to understand initial encounters.

THIS UNIT FEATURES

- Textbooks excerpts (sections of U.S. history surveys, written for introductory college courses by history professors)
- Primary sources (documents and other materials created by the people who lived in the period), including books, letters, journals, accounts of speeches, drawings, oral traditions, maps, and an artifact
- An excerpt from the article “Conquests of Chocolate,” from the *Magazine of History*, which uses both primary sources and secondary sources (other articles and books written by historians)
The history of initial encounters between Africans, Europeans, and Native Americans in the land that would become the United States is extraordinarily complicated. These diverse encounters occurred across a vast continent and over a span of several hundred years.

Columbus arrived in the Americas while trying to get to the rich markets of Asia; many later navigators sought a water passage to China and Japan through some part of North America. Not until the voyages of Britain's Captain James Cook, nearly three centuries after Columbus, was it clear that no Northwest Passage existed.

But, newcomers found much of value in the Americas: the gold, silver, and gems of central Mexico; crops; possible sources of labor; and potential religious converts.

North America's indigenous peoples (who are also referred to as Indians and Native Americans) inhabited every part of the continent. Consequently, as Europeans and Africans explored this new land, they had a wide variety of encounters.

The Spanish began spreading across Florida and other parts of the Gulf Coast in the early 1500s, shortly after Columbus landed in the Caribbean, and soon they ranged far into the interior of North America. The French, Dutch, Swedish, English, and other western Europeans soon joined the Spanish, Russians, and even representatives from the young United States joined, later joined them. But the size and difficulty of travel postponed some initial encounters in the American interior until the early 1800s, some 300 years after Columbus's arrival.

The linking of the eastern and western hemispheres marked the beginning of a truly global and interconnected human history, a process known as the Columbian Exchange. It involved many positive and intentional exchanges of goods and people across the Atlantic Ocean, but it included accidental and devastating transfers as well, such as the introduction of new diseases. Europeans ships carried American crops that would eventually prove highly significant in Europe and Africa, and Europeans integrated trade with North America into their expanding economy.

These encounters dramatically changed the economies and societies of the world in ways that no one would have predicted in 1492. Native Americans adopted European animals, such as horses and cattle, and tools, such as metal knives or guns. They did so even as invasive diseases—such as measles, typhus, whooping cough, and smallpox—killed millions. These encounters also had profound effects on populations across the Atlantic, as foods from the Americas such as corn, tomatoes, chilies, and potatoes were adopted and embraced globally.

Europeans, Asians, and Africans had traded with each other for centuries; similarly, the many indigenous societies in the Americas had created a web of trade routes connecting from modern day Canada through South America.

These complex events and processes would unfold over long stretches of years and miles, under conditions so varied and unpredictable that power sometimes shifted swiftly between Native Americans, Africans, and Europeans.
Historical Perspectives

Historians have become more likely to describe the arrival of Europeans in the Americas as “encounters” than “discoveries.” The encounters that followed the arrival of newcomers could be violent and catastrophic, although sometimes they were mutually beneficial. The intentions of those involved often shaped the encounter.

Faces of America

Written records are often used when studying the past. By going beyond the written record and examining other sources, however, historians are able to develop a richer, deeper understanding of the past.

Esteban was captured from North Africa, enslaved, and sent to Florida as part of a Spanish expedition in 1587. The surviving descriptions of this remarkable individual—who moved so ably between many cultures—are fragmentary, and none were written by him.

John Webber was a young English artist when he joined the final voyage of Captain James Cook. His representations, while offering Europe a first look at indigenous life, do not reflect how the Native Americans viewed the encounters.

Watkuweis was a young woman when she was kidnapped from the Nimipuu (Nez Perce). The Nez Perce’s oral tradition preserved her story and helps us to see early encounters from an indigenous point of view.

Hands on History

The growing field of culinary history allows us to understand how food has affected our history.

Jessica Harris is a food historian who uses many academic disciplines and a variety of historical sources to explore how food can describe the nature of culture and society. She traces the diffusion or distribution of food across the Atlantic Ocean and its impact on Creole culture.
**Theme One:** Early encounters between Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans expanded existing trade practices, uniting previously isolated regions and initiating the Columbian Exchange.

**Overview**

Europe could not rival the sophistication of China’s cities or bureaucracies in the 1400s. The Muslim world, which included much of central and southern Europe and northern and western Africa, was arguably better governed and educated. Asians and East Africans were already carrying on an extensive trade with each other. But Western Europe’s emerging nation states were aggressive—taking risks and embracing innovation in search of greater wealth, power, and markets.

A desire for Asian spices and textiles drew the Portuguese south in the 1400s, along the shores of West Africa, where they traded for slaves and eventually made their way around the continent to India. Columbus hoped for a more direct route and made the first of four journeys to the Americas in 1492. His accidental landing in the Caribbean initiated what is now termed the Columbian Exchange, a sustained exchange of people and other organisms across the Atlantic Ocean.

The Columbian Exchange was facilitated by extensive Native American trade routes, which had predated Columbus by more than a thousand years. These trade routes connected major urban centers, such as Cahokia in Illinois and Etowah in Georgia, with other communities.
1. Oceanic Travel and the Beginnings of Globalization

[Most Native Americans and Europeans generally knew little of each other until the fifteenth century.] What Europeans did know, vaguely, was the existence of the distant Chinese Empire. They called the realm Cathay, a term used by Italian merchant Marco Polo, who journeyed from Venice across Asia along the fabled Silk Road in the 1270s. Polo returned to Italy in 1292 to publish his Travels, an account of adventures in China during the reign of Kublai Khan. He told of many things unknown to Europeans, including rocks that burned like wood (coal) and spices that preserved meat. Lacking winter fodder for their herds, Europe’s farmers regularly slaughtered numerous cattle in the fall and pickled or salted the beef to preserve it. Asian spices such as nutmeg, cinnamon, pepper, ginger, and cloves, if they could be obtained, would offer new preservatives.

The desire to obtain oriental spices at their source fueled European oceanic exploration, leading eventually to the transformation of the Americas, yet it was China, not Europe, that first mastered ocean sailing. In 1281, during Marco Polo’s sojourn in Beijing, Kublai Khan’s formidable navy sailed with 4500 ships to invade Japan, only to fall victim to a huge typhoon en route. Still, China increased its deep-sea commerce with Southeast Asia, India, and the Persian Gulf. Chinese strength in overseas exploration and trade reached its height in the early fifteenth century under Admiral Zheng He (pronounced “Jung Huh”). Between 1405 and 1433, this brilliant officer led seven large fleets to the Indian Ocean, sailing as far as east Africa. Then, abruptly, China turned away from the sea, losing its opportunity to become the first global maritime power and to play a leading role in shaping oceanic trade and the destiny of North America. Within a century of Zheng He’s accomplishments, the empire grew dismissive of foreign trade and turned inward. Chinese officials destroyed the log books of earlier voyages and curtailed production of oceangoing vessels. Instead of powerful China on the Pacific, it was tiny Portugal, overlooking the Atlantic from the Iberian peninsula, that emerged as the leader in maritime innovation and exploration in the fifteenth century. [Portugal would lead the way; other European nations would soon follow.]

2. Reasons for European Expansion

Europe’s exploratory urge had two initial objectives: first, to circumvent overland Muslim traders by finding an eastward oceanic route to Asia; and second, to tap the African gold trade at its source. Since the tenth century, Muslim middlemen in North Africa had brought the precious metal to Europe from West Africa. Now the possibility arose of bypassing these non-Christian traffickers.

Likewise, Christian Europeans dreamed of eliminating Muslim traders from commerce with Asia. Since 1291, when Marco Polo returned to Venice with tales of Eastern treasures such as spices, silks, perfumes, medicines, and jewels, Europeans had bartered with the Orient. But the difficulties of the long eastward overland route through the Muslim world kept alive the hopes of Christian Europeans that an alternative water route existed. Europe’s mariners would eventually discover that they could voyage to Cathay (China) by both eastward and westward water route.

These voyages satisfied intellectual and economic desires. Such journeys could boost European knowledge of the unknown, based upon observations of the real world, and they might well open new markets for trade if technical difficulties could be overcome.

3. Looking for The Indies

During the 1480s, following a war with Spain, the Portuguese continued their African designs. In 1482 they erected a trading fort called Elmina Castle on the Gold Coast (modern Ghana) to guard against Spanish competition and to support exploration toward the east. But they soon encountered a new obstacle: Africa’s long coastline turned abruptly south and continued in that direction for a vast distance. This led Portuguese captains below the equator, where they observed strange new constellations of stars in the night sky. Rather than sailing directly east toward China, as they had hoped, they had entered the unfamiliar Southern Hemisphere for the first time.

Meanwhile, the rulers of rival Spain, who were reconquering their realm from Muslim control at great expense, gambled on finding a profitable westward route to the Indies. In 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella finally succeeded in driving Islam from their realm by military means. The monarchs imposed Christian orthodoxy and forced Jews into exile. That same year, they agreed to sponsor an Atlantic voyage by Christopher Columbus.

Leaving Spain with 90 men aboard three small vessels, the Italian-born navigator headed for the Canary Islands, eluding Portuguese caravels sent to stop him. From the Canaries, he sailed due west on September 6. After a voyage of three or four weeks, he expected to encounter the island of Cipangu (Japan), which Marco Polo had mentioned, or to reach the coast of Asia.

Upon his return to Europe, Columbus told the Spanish court that he had reached the Indies off the Asian coast, and he displayed several natives he called “Indians” to prove it . . .

But in fact, San Salvador, the tiny islet where Europeans had waded ashore on October 12, 1492, was not close to Asia but rather a part of the Bahamas (now called Watling’s Island). Columbus’s island of Hispaniola was half a world away from Cathay. The people who inhabited the region, Tainos and Caribs, were not subjects of the Great Khan, nor was Cuba the land of Cipangu (Japan), which Marco Polo had mentioned.

Wood et al., 20–23.
**Theme One Primary Source**

**World Maps by Martellus and Waldseemüller**

Henricus Martellus, WORLD MAP, FROM "INSULARIUM ILLUSTRATUM", PLATE VII (1489). Courtesy Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource, NY.

*See Appendix for larger image – pg. 42*

continue to next map by Waldseemüller…

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**Creator:** Henricus Martellus  
**Context:** Martellus created this map in 1489, several decades after the Portuguese had sailed along the coasts of Africa.  
**Audience:** Educated Europeans  
**Purpose:** To better understand the world’s extent  
**Historical Significance:**
Mapping neatly expresses the Renaissance’s emphasis on the scientific and practical consequences of exploration. What knowledge could be more basic, more fundamental to the human prospect than tracing the physical extent and features of this world—its breadth, depth, oceans, shores, and mountains? These representations were essential to the act of exploring and navigating across a globe that they dimly understood.

Henricus Martellus, a German cartographer working in Florence, Italy, created this map. It was published in 1489.
**World Maps by Martellus and Waldseemüller continued...**

**Questions to Consider**

1. There are obvious differences between the two maps. What are the similarities?
2. Which parts of the maps are the least accurate or have the least amount of detail? Why?

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**Creator:** Martin Waldseemüller

**Context:** This map was created just fifteen years after Columbus's first landing in the Americas.

**Audience:** Educated Europeans

**Purpose:** To better understand the world's extent

**Historical Significance:**

This map, completed by German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller in 1507, reveals how profoundly Europe's view of the world had changed just a quarter century later. The world's five major continents are more defined—though Europeans' knowledge remained distorted and incomplete.

*Item 1492*

Martin Waldseemüller, *UNIVERSALIS COSMOGRAPHIA SECUNDUM PTHOLOMAEI TRADITIONEM ET AMERICI VESPUCII ALIORVMQUE LUSTRATIONES*, (1507)

Courtesy Library of Congress.

*See Appendix for larger image – pg. 43*
4. **The Columbian Exchange**

In the wake of Columbus’ voyages, more Spanish crossed the Atlantic. With them came animal and plant life that altered ecosystems and transformed the landscape. Westward-bound Spanish ships brought wheat, rye, barley, oats, and other European grains; fruits such as cherries, peaches, pears, lemons, oranges, melons, and grapes; and vegetables such as radish, salad greens, and onions. All of these, unknown in the Americas, perpetuated European cuisine and were gradually incorporated into Indian diets.

But much more important were the herd animals of the Europeans: cattle, goats, horses, burros, pigs, and sheep. A burro pulling a wheeled cart could move ten times as much corn or cordwood as a human. A horse could carry a messenger twice the speed of the fleetest runner and spread quickly across the continent’s interior.

Still more transformative were livestock. Cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs flourished, grazing in the vast grasslands of the Americas, safe from the large carnivores that attacked them in the Old World but did not exist in the Americas. Cattle reproduced so rapidly that feral livestock swarmed across the countryside, often increasing tenfold in three or four years. They flourished so well that in time they ate themselves out of their favorable environment, stripping away plant life, which soon led to topsoil erosion and eventually to desertification.

Pigs were even harder on the environment. Reproducing at staggering rates, they tore into the manioc tubers and sweet potatoes in the Greater Antilles where Columbus first introduced eight of them in 1493. They devoured guavas and pineapples, ravaged lizards and baby birds, and in short, stripped the land clean. Similar swine explosions occurred on the mainland of Mexico and Central America, where along with cattle, they devastated the grasslands.

American crops also transformed much of Europe, Asia, and Africa. From its first introduction in northern Spain in the late 1500s, the potato slowly spread northward and eastward through Europe. From the North Sea to the Ural Mountains, farmers on the northern European plain learned slowly that by substituting potatoes for rye—the only grain that would thrive in the short and often rainy summers—they could quadruple their yield in calories per acre. Columbus had been dead for more than a century before potato and corn production took hold in Europe. But when this happened, as it did in Ireland in the mid-1660s, the transition to New World potato allowed for population growth and strengthened the sinew of Europe’s diet—though reliance on the potato would eventually cause great harm in Ireland.

Nash et al., 50–52.
Questions to Consider

1. How does Garrido justify his request?
2. What hints, if any, are there in this letter of Garrido’s African ethnicity?

I, Juan Garrido, black resident [de color negro vecino] of this city [Mexico], appear before Your Mercy and state that I am in need of making a probanza to the perpetuity of the king [a perpetuad rey], a report on how I served Your Majesty in the conquest and pacification of this New Spain, from the time when the Marqués del Valle [Cortés] entered it; and in his company I was present at all the invasions and conquests and pacifications which were carried out, always with the said Marqués, all of which I did at my own expense without being given either salary or allotment of natives [repartimiento de indios] or anything else. As I am married and a resident of this city, where I have always lived; and also as I went with the Marqués del Valle to discover the islands which are in that part of the southern sea [the Pacific] where there was much hunger and privation; and also as I went to discover and pacify the islands of San Juan de Buriquén de Puerto Rico; and also as I went on the pacification and conquest of the island of Cuba with the adelantado Diego Velázquez; in all these ways for thirty years have I served and continue to serve Your Majesty—for these reasons stated above do I petition Your Mercy. And also because I was the first to have the inspiration to sow [wheat] here in New Spain and to see if it took; I did this and experimented at my own expense.

Questions to Consider

1. What does this article tell us about indigenous American cultures prior to contact?
2. Why did it take so long for widespread adoption of chocolate by Europeans?

Juan Garrido, black in color . . . says that he, of his own free will, became a Christian in Libson, [then] was in Castile for seven years, and crossed to Santo Domingo where he remained an equal length of time. From there he visited other islands, and then went to San Juan de Puerto Rico, where he spent much time, after which he came to New Spain. He was present at the taking of the city of Mexico and in other conquests, and later [went] to the islands with the marquis. He was the first to plant and harvest wheats [wheat] in this land, the source of all that there now is, and he brought many vegetable seeds to New Spain. He is married and has three children, and is very poor with nothing to maintain himself.


**Creator:** Francisco A. De Icaza, drawing from The Autobiographical Dictionary of Conquerors and Settlers of the New Spain

**Context:** Spaniards were interested in the lives of the conquistadores.

**Audience:** The general public

**Purpose:** To educate

**Historical Significance:**
Juan Garrido was an African (though perhaps one born in Spain) who came to the Americas in about 1510, probably as a servant or slave. He participated, with other Africans, in the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlán in 1521. He lived in Mexico City for many years, where he owned African and Indian slaves and struggled to prosper. He was evidently the first person in the Americas to plant wheat, a European plant that the Spanish preferred to corn. Garrido was one of a small but important group of Africans in early Spanish America.
Chocolate—along with tomatoes, potatoes, maize, and tobacco—originated in the Americas. How did chocolate make its way to Europeans and Europe? One might think that Europeans knew a good thing when they saw it, and immediately began exporting chocolate to savor in the “Old World.” Or maybe Europeans found chocolate overly bitter and strange tasting and so thought to sweeten it with sugar and Old World spices and make it “European.” Both of these answers are wrong. Europeans neither found chocolate instantly tantalizing nor did they begin to experiment with Indian chocolate recipes to suit their palates right away. To understand how Europeans developed a taste for chocolate and integrated it into their culture requires understanding something about Mesoamerica, Spanish colonialism, and their interactions. Liking chocolate required learning to like chocolate. And in learning to like the Indian taste of chocolate, Europeans also absorbed several important Indian ideas about chocolate.

Chocolate in Native America

Before Europeans arrived in the Americas, chocolate and cacao were restricted to Mesoamerica—the region most famously associated with Aztec and Maya peoples. Mesoamericans greatly esteemed cacao beans and the chocolate beverages they yielded. Fermented and ground cacao “beans,” actually the seeds found within the large fleshy fruit pods of the cacao trees, were the basis for many beverages.

Though there were countless ways to prepare chocolate, the classic concoction was “finely ground, soft, foamy, reddish bitter,” based on cacao and water, mixed with achiote to give it a reddish tint, chili peppers for a spicy edge, and wild bee honey for sweetening effect.

Chocolate was also enhanced with the aromatic tropical flowers, designated by their Nahuatl names: tlilxochitl (vanilla); xochinacaztli; and mecaxóchitl. The texture and visual effects of chocolate were just as important, as suggested by the Mesoamerican insistence on the “foamy” head, and the special drinks and serving spoons with which they consumed it (1).

Chocolate featured in the tribute that the Mexica, as the Aztecs called themselves, required of conquered people. Cacao beans as well as special cups fashioned from hollowed gourds were among tribute items listed in The Essential Codex Mendoza (2). The Mexica also participated in trading networks...
that crossed Mesoamerica. This long distance trade was another way for them to procure cacao from trees that did not readily grow in the arid highlands of the Valley of Mexico.

Cacao was necessary for chocolate, but it also served as currency throughout Mesoamerica, which is evidence of its status as a precious good throughout the region.

Chocolate in the Mexica world was associated with status within a deeply stratified society. One of the privileges of status was special, perhaps exclusive, access to chocolate. “If he who drank [chocolate] were a common person,” the Spanish missionary Bernadino de Sahagún observed of preconquest customs, “it was taken as a bad omen.” Chocolate was also used to reward soldiers for heroic service, for which warriors were also entitled to smoke fragrant pipes and carry special flowers, wear cotton cloaks, and adorn themselves with precious stones and feathers (3). Chocolate was also ritually consumed at betrothal and wedding ceremonies, and presented to visiting dignitaries. It was associated with a lifeforce, originating from or strengthened by its blood red coloring achieved by adding achiote.

Chocolate, then, played an important role in Mesoamerican society as a drink that denoted status and that was embedded in a range of social, diplomatic, and religious rituals. The first recorded European encounter with chocolate took place on Christopher Columbus’s fourth voyage in 1502, when he and his crew were near the coast of Mayan Honduras. They captured a trading vessel and found “almond”-shaped objects, cherished by the Mayans, among its cargo (4). Yet it took more than twenty years for Spaniards to learn more about the uses and taste of these objects. It was during Hernando Cortés’s invasion of Mexico that Spaniards acquired their first taste, or at least view, of chocolate. This initial encounter did not predict a great future for the commodity. In the spring of 1519, Cortés and his retinue landed on the coast of Veracruz. Two envoys of Moctezuma presented Cortés and his officers with jewels, precious stones, and feather works as well as abundant dishes of food. The Spaniards delighted in the durable goods, “staring at them with great happiness and contentment,” but they expressed hesitation about the foodstuffs. The Spanish missionary, Diego Durán, who heard this story from Indian informants, reported that “when the time came to drink the chocolate that had been brought to them, that most highly prized drink of the Indians, they were filled with fear. When the Indians saw that they dared not to drink they tasted from all the gourds and the Spaniards refreshed themselves with chocolate, because in truth, it is a refreshing beverage” (5).
For all their initial dislike of the drink, the Spanish saw the importance of chocolate in Aztec rites of diplomacy. This education was reinforced during the siege of Tenochtitlán, the Mexico capital and modern day Mexico City. The men who accompanied Cortés and participated elsewhere in the Spanish conquest of the Americas were men preoccupied with status and eager for opportunities for advancement and fortune. It did not take long for these honor- and status obsessed men to learn that in Aztec society chocolate connoted, if not conferred, high social rank.

Spaniards had to learn to like chocolate and they did so through their continued dependence on Indians even as they assumed dominant positions. A distinctive feature of colonial Mexico was the creation of a mestizo, or mixed society. The first conquistadores who established homes in New Spain, as they named the colony, often took Indian wives or mistresses who were responsible for the domestic sphere, including cooking, and who introduced Spaniards to chocolate. As Spanish emigration increased and Spanish women began to come in larger numbers in the 1540s, elite Spaniards no longer married Indian women, though commoners continued to do so, but Indian women still were an indispensable part of the household as domestic servants. Early Spanish missionaries also forged close relations to Indian parishioners and reported on their gifts of chocolate.

**Chocolate Arrives in Europe**

By the second half of the sixteenth century, chocolate was fully part of creole or European colonial life. Chocolate’s arrival in Europe was more hesitant. Erratic importations of chocolate occurred throughout the sixteenth century, offered as an exotic novelty by visiting retinues of Indians or brought home by a returning friar. The chocolate “take-off” appears in Seville in the first decades of seventeenth century. The first publication devoted to chocolate, aimed at Spanish consumers, appeared in Seville in 1624, Santiago de Valverde Turíces’s *Un Discurso de Chocolate*. By the 1620s, thousands of pounds of cacao and chocolate were imported annually. By 1633, enough of a chocolate manufacturing industry existed in Madrid for city authorities to institute licensing requirements for those who wanted to make and sell chocolate. And by the spring of 1727, Madrid had more than seven hundred thousand pounds of cacao and chocolate in stores and warehouses for a population of about one hundred thirty thousand.

Why did chocolate take so long to get a foothold in Europe? As there was nothing automatically appealing to Europeans about chocolate, a critical mass of chocolate aficionados—those with extensive New World experience for example—needed to develop in Spain before a market for chocolate could
exist. This threshold was not crossed until the end of the sixteenth century. Not surprisingly, some of the precocious chocolate consumers came from communities with connections on both sides of Atlantic. For instance, members of ecclesiastical orders helped disseminate the chocolate habit, as they had people constantly coming and going from far-off places.

There is a common—and erroneous—belief that Europeans needed to “transform” chocolate in order to make it appetizing. While it is true that Spaniards put sugar, which was unknown to indigenous Americans, into chocolate, this additive was not as innovative as it is often taken to be. Mesoamericans already sweetened chocolate with honey, and the step from honey to sugar—increasingly more available than honey because of expanding sugar plantations in the Americas—is a small one. Sugar can be seen as an “import substitute” for honey to approximate the taste of the original. Moreover, Europeans maintained the spice complex used by Mesoamericans. Like Mesoamericans, the first chocolate-drinkers in Europe mixed their chocolate with vanilla, xochinacaztli—flowers nicknamed orejuelas or “little ears” by the Spanish for their ear-shapes, mecaxóchitl, and achiote. Like Mesoamericans, Europeans valued “foam” on chocolate—perhaps the antecedent to the contemporary custom of putting marshmallows in hot chocolate. Spaniards even adopted Mesoamerican chocolate drinking vessels—the special cup named jícara, after the Nahua xicalli.

There were changes, of course. Spaniards began to use jícaras made of porcelain, rather than hollowed gourds. They tinkered with the recipes by using Old World spices—cinnamon, black pepper, anise, and sesame—but even so, the spices they chose suggest that they were trying to replicate the harder-to-find native flowers. Black pepper could be used instead of chilies and mecaxóchitl; cinnamon and cloves were found to be adequate substitutions for the orejuelas. Sugar replaced honey. Yet they intended to simulate original tastes, rather than create new palate sensations.

By the end of the eighteenth century, all that remained of the spice complex was cinnamon and sugar. But there is no indication the Spaniards deliberately tried to change the original chocolate. Rather, the inconvenience of imports and extension of consumers probably led to its simplification. Moreover, by then enough time had passed and the preparation of chocolate had become sufficiently simplified that the origins of the concoction were no longer remembered correctly. The myth that chocolate had conformed to European taste was consistent with the Spanish ideology of conquest that took for granted that colonialism involved the Europeanization of Indians. The reality, however, was that Europeans unwittingly developed a taste for Indian chocolate,
which involved not only bodily changes but also the absorption of cultural material. Just as Spaniards—in Spain as well as America—learned to replicate the taste, fragrance, look, and texture of Mesoamerican chocolate, they also learned to attribute Mesoamerican social meanings to it. For one, they had internalized the association between chocolate and noble distinction. By the seventeenth century, royal ceremonies in Spain itself involved chocolate. New allocations of household space similarly underscored chocolate’s arrival as part of the requisite trappings for noble life. The most important aristocrats apportioned living quarters—chocolate rooms—exclusively for chocolate. These spaces seem to have been conveniently ensconced between the large hall and a drawing room where guests were received, emphasizing the often social nature of chocolate consumption. Spaniards learned from Aztecs that chocolate could assist in the maintenance of social distinctions in a heavily stratified society.

It did not take long before the chocolate habit spread beyond Spain to other parts of Europe. The European elite were a cosmopolitan bunch, and novel ideas, goods, and habits could spread quickly. Missionary orders, such as the Jesuits, and European aristocratic circles were important disseminators who provided a human network for the transfer of new habits such as chocolate drinking. Once people in England, Holland, France, Germany, and Italy had developed an appetite for the stimulating drink of chocolate, they were ready to embrace the caffeinated beverages of tea and coffee that would eventually surpass path-breaking chocolate as the choice beverage.

Endnotes

6. The Great Dying

Spanish conquest of major areas of the Americas set in motion one of the most dramatic and disastrous population declines in recorded history. Spanish contacts with the natives of the Caribbean basin, central Mexico, and Peru in the early sixteenth century triggered a biological epidemic.

The results were catastrophic. In 1518, the smallpox virus erupted on Hispaniola. The Spanish priest Bartolomé de las Casas recorded that “of that immensity of people that was on this island and which we have seen with our own eyes” only about one thousand were spared among a population of between 1 and 3 million that had existed when Columbus arrived in 1493 . . .

In most areas where Europeans intruded in the hemisphere for the next three centuries, the catastrophe repeated itself. Whether Protestant or Catholic, whether French, English, Spanish, or Dutch, whether male or female, every newcomer from the Old World participated accidentally in the spread of disease that typically eliminated, within a few generations, at least two-thirds of the native population. Millions of Native Americans who had never seen a European died of European diseases, which swept like wildfire through densely populated regions.

Nash et al., 49-50.
INDIAN HOLOCAUST AND SURVIVAL: A POPULATION HISTORY

Questions to Consider
1. Without looking at the key, can you guess what illness each image represents?
2. What do these drawings convey that words could not?

Answers: (a) Measles, (b) Whooping Cough, (c) Small Pox, (d) Starvation, (e) Dropsy, (f) Cholera.

Item 3844

See Appendix for larger image – pg. 44

Historical Significance:
The Lakota of the Great Plains commonly recorded their history through winter counts. Ordinarily placed on buffalo robes, in a spiraling succession, these pictures identified the most important event of the year for an individual or a village. Some winter counts stretched over two or three generations.

The Columbian Exchange transformed relations between Native American groups on the Great Plains. The intersection of horses, buffalo, and firearms drew Lakota groups (such as the Santee) westward in the early 1700s, where they enjoyed great success as hunters, raiding at the expense of more sedentary and horticultural tribes like the Pawnee.

But the European presence brought devastating microbes as well as horses and guns. The first smallpox epidemic evidently arrived in the 1730s, killing great numbers of Native Americans by the 1780s. The figures reproduced below—which are drawn from several robes—depict diseases and other hardships that afflicted the Lakota after contact.
**Questions to Consider**

1. What objects or tools does this pictograph emphasize?
2. Is this as useful for historical understanding as the winter count figures? Why or why not?
3. How do the figures vary from each other, and why?

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**Creator:** The Navajo, or Diné  
**Context:** This evidently shows the Narbona (Spanish) expedition of 1805 deep into Navajo country. Canyon de Chelly, where this drawing was made, was perhaps the Navajo’s most secure refuge.  
**Audience:** Other Navajo  
**Purpose:** To record their impression of the expedition  

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**Historical Significance:**

The Navajo, or Diné, arrived in what would become the southwestern United States only a few generations before the Spanish came in the 1540s, and had long been moving southward. Unlike the Pueblo, who had been colonized by the Spanish in the late sixteenth century, the Navajo remained independent. They traded with the Spanish, and the two groups raided each other for slaves and other forms of wealth.

This pictograph, made by painting and engraving rock walls, from the Canyon de Chelly probably depicts the Narbona expedition of 1805, one of many Spanish attempts to weaken and enslave the Navajo. Narbona reported that he killed 125 Navajo and took 33 as prisoners. Many historians believe that this pictograph shows the Navajo view of the raid.
Conclusion

The arrival of Europeans and Africans in North America brought unprecedented dangers and opportunities for the continent’s indigenous peoples. All three groups had different interests, and the circumstances of their encounters varied dramatically. These encounters, furthermore, served to disperse exotic diseases and other organisms that spread in unexpected and powerful ways. Early encounters were full of chance.

Questions to Consider

1. How does the history of early encounters in North America fit with the history of the rest of the world in the 1400s and 1500s?
2. What were the unintended consequences of sustained contact between North America, Europe, and Africa? What unintended consequences did the movements between these continents of people, germs, plants, and animals have?
Theme Two: Initial encounters occurred over three centuries and a vast geographic region.

Overview
More and more Europeans and Africans came to North America beginning in the sixteenth century. Africans—sometimes free, but often enslaved—continued to form a significant minority of many exploration parties. Portugal, France, England, and the Netherlands joined Spain in the western hemisphere.

The indigenous tribes that these Europeans encountered were extremely diverse. Most were hunters and gatherers, but some practiced intensive agriculture. Some traded extensively, while others were more isolated.
1. Spain’s Northern Frontier

Spanish explorers began charting the southeastern region of North America in the early sixteenth century, beginning with Juan Ponce de León’s expeditions to Florida in 1515 and 1521 and Lucas Vasquez d’Ayllón’s short-lived settlement at Winyah Bay in South Carolina in 1526. For the next half century, Spaniards planted small settlements along the coast as far north as Chesapeake Bay, where their temporary encampment included enslaved Africans. The Spanish traded some with the natives, but the North American coast, especially Florida, was chiefly important to the Franciscan friars, who attempted to gather the local tribes into mission villages and convert them to Catholicism.

The Southwest became a more important region of early Spanish activity in North America. Francisco Vásquez de Coronado explored the region from 1540 to 1542, leading an expedition of several hundred Spanish soldiers, a number of Africans, and a baggage train of some 1,300 friendly Indians, servants, and slaves. Coronado never found the Seven Cities of Cibola, reported by earlier Spanish explorers to be fabulously decorated in turquoise and gold. But he opened much of Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado to eventual Spanish control, happened upon the Grand Canyon, and probed as far north as the Great Plains. His interior explorations, together with the nearly simultaneous expedition of de Soto in the Southeast, established Spanish claims to the southern latitudes of North America and gave them contacts, often bloody, with the populous corn-growing Indian societies of the region.

Nash et al., 32–34.
How We Followed the Corn Route

Questions to Consider

1. Does this account provide any clues as to why some Native Americans treated newcomers hospitably?
2. What does the account tell us about slaves’ responsibilities and capabilities on expeditions?

We enjoyed a great deal of authority and dignity among them, and to maintain this we spoke very little to them. The black man always spoke to them, ascertaining which way to go and what villages we would find and all the other things we wanted to know. We encountered a great number and variety of languages; God Our Lord favored us in all these cases, because we were able to communicate always. We would ask in sign language and be answered the same way, as if we spoke their language and they spoke ours. We knew six languages, but they were not useful everywhere, since we found more than a thousand differences.

Throughout these lands those who were at war with one another made peace to come to greet us and give us all they owned. In this way we left the whole country in peace. We told them in sign language which they understood that in heaven there was a man whom we called God, who had created heaven and earth, and that we worshipped him and considered him our Lord and did everything that he commanded. We said that all good things came from his hand and that if they did the same, things would go very well for them.

We found that they were so well disposed for it that, if we could have communicated perfectly in a common language, we could have converted them all to Christianity. We tried to communicate these things to them the best we could. From then on at sunrise, with a great shout they would stretch their hands towards heaven and run them over their entire bodies. They did the same thing at sunset.

Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *La Relación, the narrative of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (1555)*, Chapter 31. Courtesy of the Southwestern Writers Collection, Alkek Library, Texas State University-San Marcos.

Creator: Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca

Context: Cabeza De Vaca was one of a few survivors of an ambitious Spanish expedition to Florida in 1528 and wandered thousands of miles over several years.

Audience: Spanish readers

Purpose: To win readers, fame, and sympathy

Historical Significance:
The Pánfilo de Narváez expedition of 1528 vividly illustrates how Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans could assume very different roles as conditions shifted. The contingent of 300 plundered its way through Florida before fleeing on makeshift barges from the powerful Apalachee Indians. They landed many miles west, on or near Galveston Island, where they were enslaved by the Karankawa Indians.

Years later, in 1534, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and three other survivors of the Narváez expedition slipped away from their captors and set out for Spanish territory in Mexico. They gained renown as holy men and healers, particularly Esteban, a Moorish slave. In 1836 they ran across some Spaniards—though the quartet’s escort, Pimas, could not believe that the band of Spanish slave hunters could be of the same culture. De Vaca drew a stark contrast between the two groups of outsiders: “We healed the sick, they killed the sound; we came naked and barefoot, they clothed, horsed and lanced; we coveted nothing but gave whatever we were given, while they robbed whomever they found.”

Cabeza de Vaca had traveled a long way—in miles, years, and experiences—from the days of when he had done his part in ravaging the Indians of Florida.

Cabeza de Vaca’s account was published in Spain just six years later and depicted indigenous peoples who were at once exotic and humane. The excerpts below describe Cabeza de Vaca’s arrival on or near Galveston Island, in what would become Texas, and the small party’s travels in the interior.
**Zuni Ts’akwayna Katsina Doll**

**Questions to Consider**

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of artifacts as historical sources compared to written documents?
2. What would we need to know about this doll to be able to interpret it fruitfully, to be able to learn more about Esteban and the Zuni?

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**Creator:** Zuni Artist

**Context:** Esteban, an African guiding a Spanish expedition, encountered and was killed by the Zuni in 1539.

**Audience:** Zuni, present and future

**Purpose:** Religious instruction

**Historical Significance:**

The details of Esteban’s spring 1539 encounter with the Zuni—an agricultural, sedentary society living in what would become New Mexico—are difficult to discern. The dark-skinned Moroccan had been among the few survivors of the ill-fated Narváez expedition that had wandered from Florida to the Rio Grande River. Though still considered a slave, he was now guiding a Spanish contingent searching for the fabled Seven Golden Cities of Cibola. Esteban was accompanied by Pima, Papago, Opata, and Tarahumara Indians, who regarded him as a potent healer, and he “wore bells and feathers on his ankles and arms, and carried plates of various colors.” [Fray Marcos de Niza, “Relacion del viaje a Cibola, reino de las siete ciudades” (1539)]

Esteban evidently sent word to the Zuni cacique or chief that “he was coming to establish peace and to heal them,” [letter to Mendoza from Francisco Vasquez de Coronado (1540)] and he was undeterred by messages telling him to turn back. Esteban reportedly arrived in the village, told its leaders that white gods were coming, and demanded gifts. The details of what transpired vary, but it is thought that the Zuni killed Esteban soon after his arrival.

Native Americans remembered the Esteban in their oral traditions and by creating katsina figures, representing spirit beings. These Katsina figures were used to frighten disobedient children, suggesting that the Pueblo peoples associated Esteban with calamity.
2. Exploring the Mississippi Valley

Encouraged by the government of Louis XIV, French Canadians moved steadily across the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi River. (They mastered the interior waterways by learning to handle Native American canoes, just as Indian hunters soon learned to ride European horses on the Great Plains.)

As early as 1634, Champlain had sent Jean Nicolet west across Lake Huron to find a route to China. Thinking that Asia might be close at hand, Nicolet even carried a letter of introduction to the Chinese emperor as he paddled through the Straits of Mackinac with his Huron Indian companions. They ended up near modern-day Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Wood et al., 82–84.
Section 9th, Reception given to the French in the last Village which they saw. The manners and customs of those savages. Reasons for not going farther.

Questions to Consider

1. What evidence does this diary contain about the goals of this expedition?
2. What evidence does this diary contain about what Native Americans hoped to gain from the French?

We embarked early on the following day, with our interpreter; a canoe containing ten savages went a short distance ahead of us. When we arrived within half a league of the Akamsea,* we saw two canoes coming to meet us. He who commanded stood upright, holding in his hand the calumet, with which he made various signs, according to the custom of the country. He joined us, singing very agreeably, and gave us tobacco to smoke; after that, he offered us sagamit, and bread made of Indian corn, of which we ate a little. He then preceded us, after making us a sign to follow him slowly.

A place had been prepared for us under the scaffolding of the chief of the warriors; it was clean, and carpeted with fine rush mats. Upon these we were made to sit, having around us the elders, who were nearest to us; after them, the warriors; and, finally, all the common people in a crowd.

We fortunately found there a young man who understood Illinois much better than did the interpreter whom we had brought from Mitchigamea. Through him, I spoke at first to the whole assembly by the usual presents. They admired what I said to them about God and the mysteries of our holy faith. They manifested a great desire to retain me among them, that I might instruct them.

We afterward asked them what they knew about the sea. They replied that we were only ten days' journey from it, that we could have covered the distance in 5 days; that they were not acquainted with the Nations who dwelt there, because their enemies prevented them from trading with those Europeans; that the hatchets, Knives, and Beads that we saw were sold to them partly by Nations from The east, and partly by an Illinois village situated at four days' journey from their village westward.

Creator: Père Jacques Marquette
Context: In 1673, Marquette participated in a French party's exploration of the Mississippi River.
Audience: Reverend Father Claude Dablon, Superior of the Missions
Purpose: To expand knowledge of the area and to show himself in a favorable light

Historical Significance:

Father Jacques Marquette was one of many Jesuit priests to play a key role in France's expansion into North America's interior. Unusually adept at learning Indian languages, he was stationed on Lake Superior when he learned of the Mississippi River from some visiting Illinois Indians.

In the spring of 1673, Marquette left the Great Lakes area with Louis Joliet and a party of Frenchmen. They hoped to find the mouth of the Mississippi and to challenge Spanish claims further South and West. From Green Bay, they paddled up the Fox River and then down the Wisconsin River to the Mississippi, which they followed to the mouth of the Arkansas River, where they were obliged to turn back.

Marquette kept a diary, rewriting passages from memory after the original was lost when his canoe capsized. In this excerpt, Marquette explains why the expedition turned back—and reveals the web of political relations between various Native American groups and Europeans.
They also told us that the savages with guns whom we had met were Their Enemies, who barred Their way to the sea, and prevented Them from becoming acquainted with the Europeans, and from carrying on any trade with them; that, moreover, we exposed ourselves to great dangers by going farther, on account of the continual forays of their enemies along the river,- because, as they had guns and were very warlike, we could not without manifest danger proceed down the river, which they constantly occupy.

3. Pacific Exploration, Hawai’ian Contact

British captains pressed their own Pacific explorations. Early British efforts had concentrated on fishing and fur trading in the North Atlantic, though plundering Spanish treasure ships in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans soon offered higher profits. The growing economic and maritime power prompted more interest in far-flung exploration and trade in the eighteenth century.

The most skilled and successful explorer was James Cook, who ranged from the Arctic Circle to Antarctica during three momentous voyages beginning in 1768. In January 1778, during Cook’s final voyage, his two vessels happened upon the Hawai’ian Islands, eight volcanic isles stretching over 300 miles.

More than 13 centuries earlier (a.d. 300–500), seafaring Polynesians had migrated here in remarkable ocean-sailing canoes. They had arrived from the Marquesas Islands far to the south, and their descendants, perhaps as many as 300,000 people, lived in agricultural and fishing communities dominated by powerful chiefs.

After the captain’s death, his two sloops returned to the North Pacific and then stopped at the Chinese port of Macao. There, the crew sold their furs at an enormous profit. They then sailed back to England in 1780 with word of the money to be made selling North American sea otter pelts in China. The voyagers also confirmed a disturbing rumor: Russia already had a foothold in this lucrative Pacific traffic.

Wood et al., 188.
The chief sent some men on board to see what the wonderful thing was. Those who went were Kane-a-ka-ho’owaha, the kahuna Ku-’ohu, wearing a whaletooth ornament to show his rank, the chief Ki’ikiki’, and some paddlers. When they drew near and saw how much iron there was along the side of the ship and on the rails they said excitedly to each other, “Oh, how much pahoa (dagger material) there is here!” for they called iron “pahoa” because that was what they used in the old days for their fighting daggers. One of them went on board and saw many men on the ship with white foreheads, sparkling eyes, wrinkled skins, and angular heads, who spoke a strange language and breathed fire from their mouths. The chief Ki’ikiki’ and the kahuna Ku-’ohu, each clothed in a fine girdle of tapa cloth about the loins and a red tapa garment caught about the neck stepped forward with the left fist clenched and, advancing before Captain Cook, stepped back a pace and bowed as they murmured a prayerl then, seizing his hands, they knelt down and the tabu was freed. Captain Cook gave Ku-’ohu a knife, and it was after this incident that Ku-ohu named his daughter Changed-into-a-dagger (Ku-a-pahoa) and The-feather-that-went-about-the-ship (Ka-hulu-ka’a-moku). This was the first gift given by Captain Cook to any native of Hawai’i.

4. The Russians Lay Claim to Alaska

Another colonizing power immediately exploited indigenous people’s labor to further their economic goals.

Before reaching Alaska in 1741, rough Russian trappers (known as promyshlenniki) had gathered furs in Siberia for generations using a cruel and effective system. They captured native women and children, then ransomed them back to their men in exchange for a fixed number of furs.

In Alaskan waters, the trappers lacked the numbers, the boats, and the skill to collect large supplies of furs on their own. So they put their brutal hostage system into practice there as well. “They beach their vessels and try to take hostages, children and women from the island or nearby islands. If they cannot do this peacefully, they will use force,” one Russian captain explained. “No matter where the Natives hunt, on shore or at sea, they must give everything” to the trappers. Native Alaskans resisted these intruders where possible, but many eventually submitted in a desperate effort to survive.

Wood et al., 188–90.
Conclusion
The example of the Russians in Alaska may seem typical in its brutal simplicity. But most encounters between Native Americans and Europeans and Africans were more complex.

These complexities are rendered more opaque by the fragmented and biased sources that we have of them. But the historical record, even with its distortions and omissions, depicts a great deal of variety.

Questions to Consider
1. What accounts for the varied ways that Native Americans responded to first encounters with Europeans and Africans?
2. How did the goals of Europeans vary in North America?
Theme Three: A wide variety of historical records illustrate how differing experiences and expectations shaped initial encounters.

Overview

Initial encounters were bound to be diverse, encompassing so much time and space, and so many different European and African and Native American peoples. For indigenous peoples, the arrivals—human, animal, botanical and microbial—brought unprecedented dangers and opportunities. Their responses to these arrivals varied, contributing to the complexity and unpredictability of these early encounters, and the records of these encounters (such as the Katsina doll representing Esteban) are often difficult to interpret. The textbook excerpts and primary sources provided below describe several examples of these many encounters—and the sort of records that we have of them.
1. **Contrasting Worldviews**

The gulf separating people in Europe and North America was shaped not only by their material cultures but also by the way they viewed their relationship to the environment and defined social relations in their communities. Having evolved in complete isolation from each other, European and Indian cultures exhibited a wide range of differing values. [Africans differed from Europeans and Native Americans but also each other. Some lived in highly centralized kingdoms, others in small bands. Those from North African or the northern interior or West Africa were Muslim; those on or near the coast continued to practice animism. Many practiced intensive agriculture.]

Europeans and Native Americans conceptualized their relationship to nature in starkly different ways. While Christians believed that God ruled the cosmos and alone commanded supernatural forces such as earthquakes, hurricanes, drought, and flood, Europeans gradually gained confidence that they could comprehend the natural world—and therefore eventually control it. Separating the secular and sacred parts of life, they placed their own relationship to the natural environment mostly in the secular sphere. Native Americans, however, did not distinguish between the secular and sacred. For them, every aspect of the natural world was sacred, inhabited by a variety of “beings,” each pulsating with spiritual power and all linked together to form a sacred whole. [Many West Africans has similar beliefs.] Consequently, if one offended the land by stripping it of its cover, the spiritual power in the land—called “manitou” by some eastern woodlands tribes—would strike back. If one overfished or destroyed game beyond one’s needs, the spirit forces in fish or animals would take revenge, because humans had broken the mutual trust and reciprocity that governed relations between all beings—human or nonhuman. To neglect reciprocal obligations in Nature’s domain was to court sickness, hunger, injury, or death. Illustrating this point, Mohawks told the story to Europeans in the seventeenth century that in traversing Lake George, in what is today upstate New York, they always rested their canoes to make an offering of burnt tobacco at a rock they believed contained the spiritual power to control the often-violent winds.

[Native Americans placed a great deal of emphasis on kinship, on often complex webs of mutual responsibility that bound people to scores or even hundreds of people. Many of them reckoned kinship through mothers, not fathers, and most of them allowed women and men to terminate unsatisfactory marriages. Europeans, particularly missionaries, believed that such practices were uncivilized and sinful.]

In economic relations, Europeans and Indians differed in ways that sometimes led to misunderstanding and conflict. Over vast stretches of the continent, Indians had built trading networks for centuries before Europeans arrived, making it easy for them to trade with arriving Europeans and incorporate new metal and glass trade items into their culture. But trade for Indian peoples was also a way of preserving interdependence and equilibrium between individuals and communities. This principle of reciprocity displayed itself in elaborate ceremonies of gift giving and pipe smoking that preceded the exchange of goods. Europeans saw trade largely as economic exchange, with the benefit of building good will between two parties sharply limited in comparison with Indians.

Nash et al., 20–22.
The Son of an old woman had died. She wailed for him for a whole year and then she stopped. Now one day she went to Seaside. There she used to stop, and she returned. She returned walking along the beach. She nearly reached Clatsop, now she saw something. She thought it was a whale.

When she came near it she saw two spruce trees standing upright on it. She thought, “Behold! This is no whale. It is a monster!” She reached the thing that lay there. Now she saw that its outer side was all covered with copper. Ropes were tied to those spruce trees, and it was full of iron. Then a bear came out of it. He stood on the thing that lay there. He looked just like a bear, but his face was that of a human being. Then she went home. She thought of her son, and cried, saying, “Oh my son is dead and the thing about which we have heard in tales is on the shore.”

When she (had) nearly reached the town she continued to cry. (The people said), “Oh, a person comes crying. Perhaps somebody struck her.” The people made themselves ready. They took their arrows. An old man said, “Listen!” Then the old woman said again and again, “Oh my son is dead and the thing about which we have heard in tales is on the shore.” The people said, “What can it be?” They went running to meet her. They said, “Ah, something lies there and it is thus. There are two bears on it, or maybe they are people.”

Then the people ran. They reached the thing that lay there. Now the bears, or whatever they might be, held two copper kettles in their hands. The people were arriving. Now the two persons took their hands to their mouths and gave the people the kettles. They had lids. The men pointed inland and asked for water. Then (the) two people ran inland. They hid themselves behind a log. They returned again and ran down to the beach.
One man [of the people of the town] climbed up and entered the thing. He went down into the ship. He looked about in the interior; it was full of boxes.

He found brass buttons in strings half a fathom long. He went out again to call his relatives, but they had already set fire to the ship. He jumped down. Those two persons had also gone down. It burned just like fat. Then the Clatsop gathered the iron, the copper, and the brass. Then all the people learned about it. The two persons were taken to the chief of the Clatsop. Then the chief of the one town said, “I want to keep one of those men with me!” the people almost began to fight. Now one of them (sailors) was returned to one town, and the chief there was satisfied. Now the Quinault, the Chehalis, and the Willapa came.

The people of all the towns came there. The Cascades, the Cowlitz, and the Klickitat came down to Clatsop. The Quinault, the Chehalis and the Willapa went. The people of all the towns went there. The Cascades, the Cowlitz and the Klickitat came down river . . .

Strips of copper two fingers wide and going around the arms were exchanged for one slave each. A piece of iron as long as one-half the forearm was exchanged for one slave. A piece of brass two fingers wide was exchanged for one slave. A nail was sold for a good curried deerskin. Several nails were given for long dentalia. They bought all this and the Clatsop became rich.

Then iron and brass were seen for the first time. Now they kept those two persons. One was kept by each [Clatsop] chief, one was at the Clatsop town at the cape.

### Reported in a Letter from Marie de l’Incarnation to the Ursuline Superior at Tours, 1640

#### Questions to Consider

1. Do you think that the missionary who recorded this message did so in an accurate manner? Why or why not?
2. Compare the strengths and shortcomings of this sort of source (a Native account recorded on the spot by a European) with the strengths and shortcomings of the Chinook oral tradition.

It is the Black Robes who make us die by their spells; listen to me, I prove it by the reasons you are going to recognize as true. They lodged in a certain village where everyone was well, as soon as they established themselves there, everyone died except for three of four persons. They changed location and the same thing happened. They went to visit the cabins of the other villages, and only those where they did not enter were exempted from mortality and sickness. Do you not see that when they move their lips, what they call prayers, those are so many spells that come forth from their mouths? It is the same when they read in their books. Besides, in their cabins they have large pieces of wood (they are guns) with which they make noise and spread their magic everywhere. If they are not promptly put to death, they will complete their ruin of the country, so that there will remain neither small nor great.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creator:</th>
<th>Prominent Huron woman (recorded by a French missionary and translated by an English historian)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context:</td>
<td>In the early seventeenth century disease spread as French missionaries spread into the eastern interior of North America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience:</td>
<td>Native Americans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose:</td>
<td>To mobilize resistance to the priests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Significance:</td>
<td>French priests were often the first Europeans that Indians around the Great Lakes encountered. These “black robes,” as the Native Americans called them, proselytized aggressively and often effectively, in part because they were determined to understand Indian languages and culture. But many indigenous people distrusted them, both for their religious beliefs and because their appearance was so often accompanied by new and devastating diseases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Our understanding of early encounters between Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans is clouded by the incomplete and biased sources that describe those encounters. Europeans, who were ignorant of, and often repulsed by indigenous cultures, created most of those accounts. The work of utilizing all-too-rare indigenous or African primary sources is complicated by the fact that Europeans often shaped these documents. Read carefully, however, all of these sources reveal and suggest much about the nature of first encounters.

Questions to Consider

1. What can perspective did Europeans bring to initial encounters? What perspective did Native Americans bring? Africans?
2. What sort of primary sources are most and least biased?

Unit Conclusion

Historians are always constrained by the nature of the primary sources they rely on. This is particularly true for those who study the history of early encounters between Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans in North America. The perspectives of Native Americans and Africans were seldom recorded, and records from Europeans can only offer a limited perspective.

But the European dominance over the recording of these encounters should not be interpreted as meaning that Europeans dominated all of the actual encounters. To be sure, European diseases and greed often brought death and violence. But Native Americans pursued and often accomplished their own agendas in these encounters, meetings that transpired over thousands of miles and hundreds of years. Even Africans, who were typically enslaved, involuntary participants in these encounters, sometimes found or created circumstances in which they could exercise some autonomy. Early encounters were dynamic, and often unpredictable.

The creation of permanent colonies peopled by Europeans and Africans would profoundly change the ways that they interacted with indigenous peoples. But much of the complexity and fluidity of the earlier encounters would remain.
**Timeline**

1440s  Portuguese begin to trade for enslaved Africans

1492  Christopher Columbus lands on San Salvador and encounters the Tainos

1493  Christopher Columbus introduces pigs to the Greater Antilles

1513  The Ais and Calusas harass Ponce de León’s expedition across Florida

1518  Smallpox virus erupts on Hispaniola

1521  Juan Garrido participates in siege of Tenochtitlan

1528–1536  Esteban and his companions travel across Southwest, where they are first enslaved by the Karankawa, but later assisted by the Pima and the Avavre

1534  The Micmac encounter Jaques Cartier on Gaspé Peninsula in eastern Quebec

1539–1543  Hernando De Soto expedition wages war on Timucua

1578  Miwok Indians encounter Sir Francis Drake on California coast

1589  Spanish establish New Mexico colony

1607  English establish Jamestown Colony in Virginia

1634  Jean Nicolet travels with Huron through Straits of Mackinac

1665  Father Jean Claude Allouez founds trading post on Chequamegon Bay and trades with Sioux and Illinois Indians

1673  Jacques Marquette learns of the Mississippi River from the Native Americans in Illinois

1730s  Smallpox epidemic decimates Sioux

1741  Bering’s expedition and Aleuts meet in what will become Alaska

1778  Hawai’ian islanders welcome James Cook’s expedition and establish trade

1805  Watkuweis and Nez Perce aid Lewis and Clark expedition

1805  Narbona invades Navajo territory in Navajo territory
UNIT REFERENCE MATERIALS


FURTHER READING


**Visit the Web Site**

Explore these themes further on the America’s History in the Making Web site. See how this content aligns with your own state standards, browse the resource archive, review the series timeline, and explore the Web interactives. You can also read full versions of selected *Magazine of History* (MOH) articles or selected National Center for History in the Schools (NCHS) lesson plans.
THEME ONE PRIMARY SOURCE

Item 1492
THEME ONE PRIMARY SOURCE


Answers: (a) Measles, (b) Whooping Cough, (c) Smallpox, (d) Starvation, (e) Dropsy, (f) Cholera.
THEME TWO PRIMARY SOURCE ITEMS

Shannon L. Parker, ZUNI TSA’KWAYNA KATSINA DOLL (n.d. [collected in 1890]). Courtesy of the School of American Research, catalog number SAR.1999-9-512.