



The Spanish and Native Americans

MAIN IDEA

Spanish rule in the Americas had terrible consequences for Native Americans.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The destruction of Native American cultures created social problems that continue today.

TERMS & NAMES

viceroyalty	Popé
encomienda	plantation
hacienda	Bartolomé de Las Casas
mission	Columbian Exchange

ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

Huamán Poma, a Peruvian Native American, wrote to King Philip III of Spain to complain about the abuse the Spanish heaped upon Native Americans.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

It is their [the Spanish] practice to collect Indians into groups and send them to forced labor without wages, while they themselves receive the payment.

Huamán Poma, *Letter to a King*

In his letter, Poma asked the king to help the Native Americans and uphold the rule of law in Peru. If the king actually read the letter, it made no difference. Spanish colonists continued to mistreat Native Americans as the Spanish Empire expanded in the Americas.



A Spanish priest forces a Native American woman to work at a loom.

Spanish Colonies in the Americas

The Spanish Empire grew rapidly, despite efforts by other European countries to compete with Spain. By 1700, it controlled much of the Americas. Spain took several steps to establish an effective colonial government. First, it divided its American empire into two provinces called New Spain and Peru. Each province was called a **viceroyalty**. The top official of each viceroyalty was called the viceroy. He ruled in the king's name.

The Spanish also built new roads to transport people and goods across the empire. These roads stretched outward from the capitals at Mexico City and Lima. The roads helped Spain to control the colonies by allowing soldiers to move quickly from place to place. Roads also improved the Spanish economy because materials, such as gold and silver, could be transported efficiently to the coast and then to Spain.

Taking Notes

Use your chart to take notes about establishing colonies and the Columbian Exchange.

Event/Idea	Notes
Exploration	
Establishing Colonies	
European Competition	
Columbian Exchange	
Origins of Slavery	



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Maps

- 1. Location** Which viceroyalty included the West Indies?
- 2. Region** Which viceroyalty covered more territory?

Life in Spanish America

Spanish colonists received *encomiendas* to help them make the colonies productive. An *encomienda* was a grant of Native American labor. Hernando Cortés received a grant of more than 100,000 Native Americans to work his estate.

The Spanish rulers also created large estates, called *haciendas*, to provide food for the colony. *Haciendas* usually became large farms where Native Americans worked to grow cash crops, such as coffee and cotton. The *encomienda* and *hacienda* systems put much of the power and land in the hands of a few people.

The Spaniards made sure that people with Spanish backgrounds held power in the colonies. Spanish-born colonists such as Cortés made up the top layer of colonial society. Just below the Spanish were the

Creoles—people of Spanish descent who were born in the colonies. The next step down the social order were the *mestizos*. *Mestizos* are people of mixed Spanish and Native American ancestry. The people with the least power and fewest rights were Native Americans and enslaved Africans.

The Role of the Church

The Catholic Church played an important role in Spanish colonial society. In places like New Mexico and California, the church built **missions**, settlements that included a church, a town, and farmlands. The goal of the missions was to convert Native Americans to Christianity. The missions also increased Spanish control over the land.

Missionaries helped the Native Americans to create a better supply of food. They also offered Native Americans protection against enemies. Many Native Americans learned how to read and write in the missions. Others developed skills such as carpentry and metalworking.

Over time, however, many Native Americans grew increasingly unhappy. The missionaries often worked them as if they were slaves. The missionaries also tried to replace Native American religions and traditions. As a result, some Native Americans ran away, while others rebelled. Some destroyed churches and killed missionaries.

In 1680, a man named **Popé** led the Pueblo Indians in a rebellion against the Spanish. His forces surrounded the Spanish settlement at

Background

The problem of unequal wealth, especially in land, continues to trouble Latin American societies today.

ReadingHistory

A. Summarizing

How did the Spanish missions change the lives of Native Americans?

Santa Fe, in present-day New Mexico, and forced the colonists to flee. Popé ordered the churches and other Spanish buildings to be destroyed. He then tried to revive native customs that had been lost under Spanish rule. But before long, attacks from neighboring tribes weakened Pueblo control. In 1692, the Spanish regained control of Santa Fe.

Sugar Plantations Develop

The Spanish also forced Native Americans to work on **plantations**, large farms that raised cash crops. These crops were usually exported to Europe. The most important crop was sugar.

Although sugar was in great demand in Europe, there was not much land there to grow it. The resulting demand led to the development of sugar plantations in the Americas. On his second voyage to the Americas, in 1493, Columbus brought sugar cane to Hispaniola, one of the Caribbean islands he had landed on in 1492. He found ideal conditions for sugar production there. Spanish planters soon expanded operations to the nearby islands that Spain colonized.

Sugar plantations required many workers, so the Spanish planters turned to native peoples, such as the Taino. Through *encomiendas*, the Spaniards forced thousands of Taino to work in the fields. The plantations thrived, but many of the Taino suffered and died.

The Abuse of Native Americans

Most Spaniards treated the Native Americans as little more than beasts of burden. According to Fray Toribio de Benavente, a Catholic missionary, the Spanish “do nothing but command. They are the drones who suck the honey which is made by the poor bees, the Indians.”

Not all Spaniards approved of this treatment. One man in particular fought for better treatment of Native

Background

Other plantation crops included tobacco, cotton, cochineal (a dye), and cacao.

HISTORY through ART

Theodore de Bry created this picture, *Sugar: the greatest gift of the Old World to the New*, in the 1600s. It shows workers processing sugar in the Americas. Europeans brought sugar production to the Americas from the Mediterranean.

How does the picture help explain why the Europeans used slaves to make sugar?





Americans. His name was **Bartolomé de Las Casas**. Las Casas had come to Hispaniola in 1502 and taken part in the conquest of Cuba a decade later. For his part in the conquest, he received an *encomienda*. Las Casas was also a Catholic priest, however, and he soon faced a moral dilemma: How can a person serve God and enslave Native Americans at the same time?

In 1514, Las Casas gave up his claim to the Native Americans who worked for him. For the next 50 years, he fought against the abuse of Native Americans, earning the title “Protector of the Indians.”

Because of his efforts, the Spanish king issued the New Laws in 1542. These laws ordered the gradual freeing of all enslaved Native Americans. Holders of *encomiendas* who were found guilty of mistreating Native Americans had their *encomiendas* taken away. However, Spanish colonists strongly protested against the New Laws, and the king eventually reversed many of them.

The Columbian Exchange

The arrival of the Spanish in the Americas brought more than a clash of peoples and cultures. It also brought a movement of plants, animals, and diseases between the Eastern and Western hemispheres. This movement of living things between hemispheres is called the **Columbian Exchange**.

One result of the Columbian Exchange was the transfer of germs from Europe to the Americas. When Europeans came to America, they brought with them germs that caused diseases such as smallpox, measles, and influenza. Native Americans had no immunity to them.

Although exact numbers are unknown, historians estimate that diseases brought by Europeans killed more than 20 million Native Americans in Mexico in the first century after conquest. Many scholars agree that the population of Native Americans in Central America decreased by 90 to 95 percent between the years 1519 and 1619. The

Reading History

B. Making Inferences What might have happened if Native Americans had been immune to European diseases?

result was similar in Peru and other parts of the Americas. A Spanish missionary in Mexico described the effects of smallpox on the Aztecs.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

There was a great havoc. Very many died of it. They could not walk. . . . They could not move; they could not stir; they could not change position, nor lie on one side; nor face down, nor on their backs. And if they stirred, much did they cry out. Great was its destruction.

Bernardino de Sahagún, quoted in *Seeds of Change*

Other effects of the Columbian Exchange were more positive. The Spanish brought many plants and animals to the Americas. European livestock—cattle, pigs, and horses—all thrived in the Americas. Crops from the Eastern Hemisphere, such as grapes, onions, and wheat, also thrived in the Western Hemisphere.

The Columbian Exchange benefited Europe, too. Many American crops became part of the European diet. Two that had a huge impact were potatoes and corn, which are highly nutritious. They helped feed European populations that might otherwise have gone hungry. Potatoes, for example, became an important food in Ireland, Russia, and other parts of northern Europe. Without potatoes, Europe's population might not have grown as rapidly as it did.

By mixing the products of two hemispheres, the Columbian Exchange brought the world closer together. Of course, people were also moving from one hemisphere to the other, blending their cultures in the process. The next section focuses on one important aspect of the movement of peoples: the forced migration of enslaved Africans to the Americas.

Background

In Ireland, the population increased from 3.2 million in 1754 to more than 8 million in 1845, largely because of the high level of nutrients in potatoes.

Now and then

KILLER BEES

Even today, plant and animal species continue to move from one hemisphere to the other. A recent example of this is the killer bee (shown below).

Killer bees were first brought to Brazil from Africa to help make honey in the 1950s. Killer bees are aggressive, however, and can kill large animals when they swarm. After some of these bees escaped from a Brazilian laboratory in 1957, they began to migrate. In recent years, they have been responsible for the deaths of a number of pets in the American Southwest.



Section 3 Assessment

1. Terms & Names

Explain the significance of:

- viceroyalty
- *encomienda*
- *hacienda*
- mission
- Popé
- plantation
- Bartolomé de Las Casas
- Columbian Exchange

2. Using Graphics

Use a cluster diagram like the one below to show how Spain organized its colonies.



How did these actions help the Spanish control the Americas?

3. Main Ideas

- What were the four levels of Spanish colonial society?
- What was the main crop grown on colonial plantations?
- How were Native Americans abused in the colonies?

4. Critical Thinking

Recognizing Effects

What were the positive and negative effects of the Columbian Exchange?

THINK ABOUT

- disease
- food
- livestock

ACTIVITY OPTIONS

ART

LANGUAGE ARTS

Make a **collage** that shows the plants and animals involved in the Columbian Exchange, or write a **story** that tells how Native Americans reacted to the animals.