Historical Context
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In the late 1400s, European explorers found the American continents. Native American peoples who were already living in North and South America had created a system of government and society that rivaled Europe’s. The cultural exchange between the “New World” and the “Old World” (America and Europe, respectively) is often called the *Columbian Exchange* in reference to Christopher Columbus.
Historical Context: 1492 - Columbus finds land

[YouTube Video Link: youtu.be/o9W1G3Tn31A]
Task

- Columbus Day is a U.S. holiday that commemorates the landing of Christopher Columbus in the New World on October 12, 1492.

**Should this day be a national holiday?**

- Evaluate both the positive and negative effects of Columbus’ voyages on the Americas.
- What role did the Atlantic slave trade play?
- Your essay should be well organized with an introductory paragraph that states your position. **Complexity requires that you address both sides.**
Gettysburg Address a Bold Move

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this (document #3).

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which
Content

**REQUIRED**

**Terms**
- Christopher Columbus
- colony
- Hernando Cortes
- conquistador
- Atlantic slave trade
- middle passage

**Documents**
- At least *five* documents
- At least *two* direct quotes

**RECOMMENDED**

**Patterns of Interaction**
- Chapter 20, Page 553
- [Document #2: Time magazine article](#)
“Native Americans and other groups have protested the celebration of an event that indirectly resulted in the colonization of the Americas and the death of millions: European settlers brought a host of infectious diseases, including smallpox and influenza, that decimated indigenous populations; warfare between Native Americans and the colonists claimed many lives as well. The image of Christopher Columbus as an intrepid hero has also been called into question.”
Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492. On Oct. 12, 517 years later, the story of his New World trek is still told and retold. And there’s no mail. And despite being a federal holiday, for most in the U.S. it’s another day at the office.

Observed on the second Monday in October, the holiday celebrates Christopher Columbus, a man who lived almost three centuries before the U.S. Federal Government even existed, much less issued a Day to celebrate. Columbus Day, monuments to him himself, is reviled by critics who feel Columbus’ arrival in the New World opened the doors to hundreds of years of exploitation. Is it really worth it? (Read "The Trouble with Columbus.")

Many Italian Americans in particular think so. Columbus Day, they say, is a day to celebrate pride, a celebration of the Italian explorer’s “discovery” of the Americas when he landed on a Caribbean island in what’s now Haiti on Oct. 12, 1492. The 300-year anniversary of Columbus’ landing prompted the first recorded celebration of the achievement in 1792. On the 400th anniversary, President Benjamin Harrison issued the first official proclamation urging America to observe the day. Unlike Columbus himself, largely Italian, Roman Catholic membership, to lobby heavily led the Knights of Columbus, an organization with a national mission to lobby the Federal Government to make Columbus Day official. Franklin Roosevelt created the first federal observance of Columbus Day with a proclamation in 1972.

New York City continues to show Columbus Day pride — the day is still a paid holiday for city employees. But others have made it clear they are not sold on Columbus. As a typical example, New York’s Central Park is still called Columbus Park, a name that has provoked frequent protests from Native Americans, who make them think Columbus made for it in the country. But these public shows of support are rare. Recent research has suggested that Columbus didn’t discover nothing — indigenous populations were living in the Americas long before European explorers made their first landfall. Columbus himself didn’t like his name, and was derisively called Marco Polo when he arrived. The Spanish king wanted him to be called back by his Spanish royal sponsors in 1500. (See pictures of Italians in America.)
Reconsider Columbus Day

youtu.be/il5hwpdJMcg
President Benjamin Harrison, 1882

“Now, therefore, I, Benjamin Harrison, President of the United States of America, in pursuance of the aforesaid joint resolution, do hereby appoint Friday, October 21, 1892, the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus, as a general holiday for the people of the United States. On that day let the people, so far as possible, cease from toil and devote themselves to such exercises as may best express honor to the discoverer and their appreciation of the great achievements of the four completed centuries of American life.

Columbus stood in his age as the pioneer of progress and enlightenment. The system of universal education is in our age the most prominent and salutary feature of the spirit of enlightenment, and it is peculiarly appropriate that the schools be made by the people the center of the day's demonstration. Let the national flag float over every schoolhouse in the country and the exercises be such as shall impress upon our youth the patriotic duties of American citizenship.

In the churches and in the other places of assembly of the people let there be expressions of gratitude to Divine Providence for the devout faith of the discoverer and for the divine care and guidance which has directed our history and so abundantly blessed our people.”
Columbus Day: No Apologies

Christopher Columbus & His Crimes Against Humanity
Global Interaction

Europeans
- Beginning around 1500, the Spanish and Portuguese colonize Central and South America and establish prosperous overseas empires.
- Throughout the 1600s and 1700s the English, French, and Dutch battle for control of North America, with the English emerging victorious.

Native Americans
- Between 1521 and 1533, the once mighty Aztec and Incan empires fall to the invading Spanish.
- Throughout the Americas, the native population is devastated by European conquests and diseases.

Africans
- Beginning around 1500, millions of Africans are taken from their homeland and forced to labor as slaves in the Americas.
- Africans eventually become an important part of the Americas, as they populate the various regions and share aspects of their culture.
Native Population of Central Mexico, 1500–1620

- 1519: 25.3 million
- 1523: 16.8 million
- 1548: 6.3 million
- 1605: 1.0 million

Source: The Population of Latin America: A History
Africans were captured and then taken to depots, where they were imprisoned. From the depots, they were sent far from Africa and sold into slavery. Where were enslaved Africans sent?
1. The Atlantic slave trade begins in the mid-1400s.

2. In the Americas, Indian slaves die off early and are replaced with Africans.

3. 1,670,000 enslaved Africans die in passage to the Americas.

4. Slavery is abolished in Brazil in 1888.
European powers claim most traditional Native American lands.

European land claims and early cities 1750

- Land Claims including Settlement Regions:
  - English
  - French
  - Spanish
  - Portuguese
  - Dutch

- Main Economic Activity:
  - Mining
  - Plantation farming
  - Fur trapping
  - Fishing

- 1565: Date city was founded

Native Americans stay on their lands as long as possible despite foreign claims.

Europeans settle or mine part of the land they claim but they do not use most of it.

Europeans in Middle and South America made money through activities such as sugar production and silver mining. What were the main economic activities of colonies in North America?
“The Indians are really better to us, than we are to them. They always give us food at their homes, and protect us from hunger and thirst. But we do not do the same for them. We let them walk by our doors hungry. We look upon them with scorn and disrespect, and think them, little better than beasts in human shape. If we thought out it, we would realize that even without religion and education, we have more evils than these savages do.”
John Lawson: *New Voyage to Carolina*

“These Indians are the freest people in the world and they are not intruding upon us. We are the one who left our home to drive them out and take their land. We do not give any allowance for their natural character, wilderness training and strange customs. We trade with them, it’s true, but we have furnished them with the vice of drunkenness, and daily cheat them in every thing we sell.”
Diary of Spanish governor de Soto, 1542

“The Indians spent 15 days with the Spanish in peace, and they played with them. They sway among Spanish and helped them very much in every way.

Later the Spaniards continued on their journey to another village where they rounded up the Indians and put them in iron collars and chains. They took the Indian prisoners to keep them as slaves or servants and to carry the supplies.”
Olaudah Equiano, a slave

“I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation (greeting) in my nostrils as I never experienced in my life; so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat ... but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables; and on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands, and laid me across ... the windlass, while the other flogged me severely.”
President Franklin D. Roosevelt

Roosevelt viewed Columbus Day as a time to honor the qualities of vision, faith, courage and perseverance, not as an reason to disparage America. It is an opportunity to reflect on the efforts that resulted in the creation of the world’s greatest, freest, most prosperous nation. He said, “The promise which Columbus’s discovery gave to the world, of a new beginning in the march of human progress, has been in process of fulfillment for four centuries. Our task is now to make strong our conviction that in spite of setbacks that process will go on toward fulfillment.”