

Economic Expansion, Social Change, and Religious Wars, 1550–1650

The European encounter with the Americas, as a result of exploration and colonization, changed the world. Not only were Europeans forced to rethink cultural and intellectual assumptions, they gained access to riches, which shifted the balance of power politically in Europe and caused untold destruction to the colonized cultures. The resulting global economy, often termed the Commercial Revolution, altered economic and social structures in Europe. Moreover, this era also saw the effects of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations played out in a century of religious wars, never free from political and economic considerations. A major result of these developments was to shift the locus of European power from the Mediterranean to those nations on the Atlantic.

Key In Chapter 5 addresses the following KCs from the Course Description:

- **KC 1.2** The role of religion, warfare, and political theory in relation to states.
- **KC 1.3** Effects of religious reform and warfare on the state.
- **KC 1.4** Motives and means of exploration; establishment of empires; effects of colonization.
- **KC 1.5** Economic and social structures that reflect both growth of a money economy and persistence of medieval institutions and practices.

The Opening of the Atlantic¹

Motives and Means

Europe's outward expansion began in 1095 with the Crusades and continued throughout the Middle Ages, with the *reconquista* in Spain, Marco Polo's journey to China, and the first tentative Portuguese steps to explore the coastline of Africa. What accounts for the burst of exploration in the 15th and 16th centuries? The usual explanation is "God, gold, and glory," a mantra that captures the missionary impulse, economic incentives, and personal motives of the conquistadores. However, we should not overlook the role that technological developments played, as well as the sponsorship provided by competitive states eager to reap the political advantages of this exploration.

For centuries, Europe's access to the coveted goods of the East was provided by Arab and Ottoman middlemen. Direct control of spices, silks, sugar, porcelain, precious metals, gems, and strategic minerals would reduce costs and ensure a ready supply of profit-making goods. With the growth of towns and commerce in the Middle Ages, merchants and governments were keen on exploiting opportunities to fill their private and state coffers with newfound wealth. And missionaries considered the lands of the East rich ground for spreading the Gospel message. Though many viewed religion as a pretext rather than a motive for exploration, others were genuinely driven by piety, even if it was misplaced. In fact, once the Reformation was under way, religious groups like the Jesuits viewed the new colonies as a proving ground of religious commitment. Motives, then, for exploration were clearly in place; now all that was needed were the means.

The 15th century climaxed a long chain of navigational and intellectual advances that supported overseas exploration. The Chinese had already made contact with Africa and the Indian Ocean basin in the early 15th century but did not follow up their successes. China considered itself culturally and economically superior and thus not desirous of the goods or ideas of other cultures. However, China's ingenuity served Europe well, as its compass and axial rudder allowed Columbus and others the ability to conduct voyages far from their homelands. In addition, the quadrant (and related astrolabe) allowed explorers to measure the angle of the Pole Star to

1 THEME MUSIC

Here we begin our investigation of the Interaction of Europe and the World theme (INT). As you study, focus on the motives, means, methods of control, and results of exploration. These issues will recur throughout the course.

2 EXAMPLE BASE

These examples of technology and learning may not be vital per se, but try to link them to broader intellectual and cultural developments, such as the Renaissance and subsequent Scientific Revolution.

determine latitude. New maps, called *portolani*, provided detailed information about headlands and direction, though limited information regarding the open ocean. New ship designs, such as the caravel (a light maneuverable craft) and lateen (or triangular) sail, which allowed a crew to tack against the direction of the wind, made blue-water voyages possible. Finally, perspective geometry and the rediscovery of Ptolemy’s *Geographica* (a 2nd-century Greek astronomer) provided for the gridlike structure found on most modern maps, even if Ptolemy had overestimated the size of Asia (a fact that Columbus would use to his advantage)².

Not all states were positioned to exploit these technologies. Because Portugal and Spain were the first to establish monarchical control over their diverse realms, they became the first nations to sponsor long-distance sea voyages. Setting up and administering colonies on far-flung lands required resources, bureaucracy, and sustained political energy. Though many early explorers hailed from Italy (Columbus, Vespucci, Verrazano, the Cabots), that country sponsored no overseas voyages; it couldn’t, because it was divided and preoccupied with foreign invasion. Also, centralized governments had gained a monopoly on violence and were thus able to employ new techniques and technologies in warfare, such as cannons, steel weapons, and plate armor, which simply overwhelmed colonial opponents.

The Development of Colonial Empires

One nation that experienced a substantial economic boost from exploration was Portugal. In retrospect, Portugal’s rise is amazing. A nation lacking natural resources with only about 1 million inhabitants, tucked in the southwestern corner of Europe, Portugal by 1510 had established a worldwide trading empire. Prince Henry (1394–1460), nicknamed The Navigator, founded a school for seafarers at Sagres, which trained the first generation of sailors who settled the Azores Island chain (a basing area for transatlantic voyages) and explored along the west coast of Africa. Though the Portuguese plucked the gold, pepper, and slaves of Africa, they still had not found the coveted sea route to the East. Then Vasco da Gama (c. 1469–1524) in 1498 made it around the Cape of Good Hope and to the riches of India. The single returning boat earned a 1,000% profit for its investors!

Da Gama followed up his success by returning with cannons, which overwhelmed the advanced civilizations of the Indian Ocean basin. By 1510, the Portuguese had established control of several strategic choke points in the East, which allowed them to extract trade concessions and radically reduce the cost of luxury products. Though Portugal lacked the population and resources to maintain extensive settlements, their maritime empire fed Europe’s appetite for trade with the East until it was taken over by the Dutch at the end of the 16th century.

Not far behind the Portuguese were the Spanish. Though Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) completed four voyages to the Americas, he never recognized his miscalculation of the earth’s circumference. Subsequent explorers welcomed the prospect of exploiting two previously unknown continents, and in the decades that followed, the Spanish monarchy sponsored expeditions that would lead to the subjugation of an entirely “New World.”

Before describing the Spanish empire, let’s review the accomplishments of several major figures in the history of exploration, keeping in mind that with this topic, the AP exam will focus less on personalities and more on motives and effects:

- *Hernando Cortez* (1460–1547)—*Conquistador* who overwhelmed the advanced Aztec civilization through use of horses, cannons, and diplomacy. Cortez helped establish the Spanish presence in North America.
- *Ferdinand Magellan* (1480–1521)—Skilled Portuguese seaman who sailed under the flag of Spain. He led his men through the treacherous straits at the tip of South America, now named for him, before perishing in the Philippines. Magellan is credited with the first successful circumnavigation of the earth.
- *St. Francis Xavier* (1506–1552)—Jesuit missionary who used wit and zeal to establish Christianity in India, Indonesia, and Japan.

- *Francisco Pizarro* (c. 1475–1541)—Brutal conqueror of the Incas in the Andes. He was aided by disease, as he and less than 300 men laid claim to South America.

Following Columbus’s discovery, the Portuguese and Spanish negotiated the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), which divided the world in half for purposes of colonization. Eventually Portugal laid claim to Brazil in South America, but the primary force in the Americas proved to be Spain, a presence that had profound consequences for both the colonizer and the colonized.

Soon after the Spanish conquest of the Americas, the exploitation of native peoples began. To provide for the orderly development of the new continents, the Spanish introduced the *encomienda* system. According to this system, settlers were given grants of land and native labor, in return providing for the Christian instruction and protection of their workers. In reality, the indigenous people were brutally exploited in mining and other operations, prompting the rapid decline in their populations. The Potosi mine in present-day Bolivia stands as a fearful example of how the system quickly went awry. Though the mine became the primary supplier of Spanish silver, this wealth came at the expense of the native civilizations.

The indigenous population found a defender in the Dominican monk Bartolome de Las Casas (1484–1566), whose *Brief Account of the Devastation of the Indies* (1542) highlighted the issues of abuse and devastation. Las Casas’s account eventually led to the New Laws, which reformed the *encomienda* system. Unfortunately, it was too late; most of the native population had been decimated by neglect and disease. The resulting labor shortage led to another negative legacy from exploration: African slavery. Though the slave trade dated back to the early 15th century, it didn’t take off until exploitation of the Americas increased demand for menial labor. In all, approximately 12 million Africans suffered the horrors of the so-called Middle Passage across the Atlantic in Portuguese, Spanish, and ultimately Dutch and English ships. Though Africans were able to create new cultures in a new land, the issue of African slavery has left a deep imprint on the history of four continents.

Of all the colonial empires, Spain’s operated in the most centralized fashion. Policies were administered directly, if sometimes slowly, by the Council of the Indies, under the control of the Spanish monarchy. Imperial administrators tended to be loyal to Spain rather than to the Spanish Americans they governed. The New World was divided into two viceroyalties—New Mexico and Peru—which were subdivided into captaincies-general for more direct control. To assist and oversee royal governors, *audiencias* served as advisory bodies and courts. To settle in Spanish America, one was required to adhere to the Catholic faith. Over time, remaining native peoples were converted to Catholicism, and the hierarchical structure of the Church was transferred to Spanish America, resulting even today in the largest concentration of Catholics in the world.

The Meeting of Two Worlds: Effects³

Intellectual and Cultural Impact

A key impact of exploration was the **Columbian Exchange**, the cultural and economic diffusion of practices and goods across the Atlantic. Exploration efforts were richly rewarded with a bounty of new crops and goods from the Americas, such as potatoes, tobacco, tomatoes, cocoa, gold and silver, beans, corn, peanuts, and possibly syphilis. Many of the crops and animals now considered natural to the Americas, in fact, originated in the Old World: horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, honey bees, rice, wheat, sugar cane, and, most notoriously, diseases. These last, including measles, smallpox, typhus, and malaria, decimated native peoples, who lacked immunity to such infectious pestilences. Along with abusive treatment, by the end of the 16th century the thriving populations of the Americas had been reduced by 90%, though historians disagree on the pre-1492 population levels (between 20–70 million).

Colonization also reoriented Europe’s intellectual world. Contact between two previously unknown civilizations was bound to prompt all parties to rethink some of their cultural assumptions. First, Europeans set about creating new maps that more accurately depicted the world in precise, scientific, and abstract space (e.g., with grids and keys). The pioneer in this field was

3 SKILL SET

The Columbian Exchange offers a rich opportunity for applying HTS. First, you may wish to create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast its effects on both Europe and the Americas (COMP). Also, the Exchange sparked changes in the economy, which leads to a CCOT analysis. Finally, to help you develop your Argumentation (ARG) ability, try writing a brief statement of how 1492 represents a turning point in world economic and political history (PER).

Gerardus Mercator (1512–1594), a Flemish mapmaker who succeeded in mass-producing the first globes and also rendering a three-dimensional space (the earth) on a two-dimensional surface—the still-standard map that continues to bear his name. Also, even though Europeans approached indigenous peoples with little regard for their cultures, some used the encounter to reevaluate and even critique European society. Probably influenced by Las Casas, Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), a French lawyer and inventor of the essay, introduced a new skeptical attitude toward European customs, even suggesting that native cannibalism was no worse than many of the atrocities of Europe’s religious wars. A final legacy of 1492 was the creation of entirely new cultures in the New World from the mixing of the old. From the racial blending of the *mestizos* to the religious practices of voodoo to the Gullah and Creole dialects and finally to the music of jazz, the Americas continue to bear the legacy of exploration and colonization.

4 THEME MUSIC

This section provides a brief conceptual synopsis of the PP theme, particularly how Europe moved from a subsistence agriculture system to one based on money and capital. Be careful not to overstate the changes, as much of traditional economy persisted in regions and localities well into the 19th century.

The Commercial Revolution, Phase I⁴

Europe’s colonization of the Americas and its creation of maritime empires led to significant changes within Europe. We examine some of the economic and social changes here; in a later chapter, we’ll take a turn at the diplomatic and political results.

The economic result of exploration and colonization is termed the **Commercial Revolution**—an acceleration in global trade involving new goods and techniques. Often underestimated as a topic, the Commercial Revolution fed the growth of modern society. Two of these changes were an increase in Europe’s population (to about 90 million in 1600, finally surpassing the pre-plague level) and a steady rise in prices. This latter development promoted a money-oriented economy, which further undermined the feudal system in western Europe. Though traditionally the **Price Revolution** was attributed to the importation of precious metals from New World, more recent interpretations have stressed population growth as the source. With rising demand chasing a limited supply of goods, prices for scarce products were bid up. Landowners benefited from the inflation, unless they had leased their land via long-term rents, and many turned to the production of cash crops (those for sale, not consumption). A new class of independent farmers, outside the feudal structure and focused on producing for the market, began to arise. In England, they were called the **gentry** (gentlemen), and they attempted to imitate the lifestyles of the lords and nobles. Like the bourgeoisie, they were resented by those below and scorned by those above.

Traditionally the **guilds** dominated the production of goods in towns and cities; workers owned the capital *and* performed the labor. With the increase in profit from trade, merchants began to invest their earnings in long-distance business ventures, often ending up in banking like the Medici in Italy or the Fuggers in Germany. Families such as the Fuggers formed close relationships with monarchs, as with Charles V, loaning money for state enterprises such as mining. Eventually larger banks were formed from the resources of numerous investors. One of the more prominent, the Bank of Amsterdam (founded in 1609), fueled the commercial dominance of the Netherlands. By this time, bankers ignored the traditional Christian prohibition against usury (the charging of interest on loans); the profits were just too great to ignore.

The separation of capital and labor is a major feature of **capitalism**, and the divergence became more pronounced beginning in the 16th and 17th centuries. Entrepreneurs began investing in their own manufacturing enterprises. To sidestep the guild structure, they provided (or “put out”) the raw materials to rural families eager to supplement their marginal incomes by finishing goods. This was especially pronounced in the textile industries, where the various steps of manufacture—spinning, carding, weaving—were mechanized at different times. The **putting-out system** (**cottage industry**) signaled the decline of the guild structure and served as an intermediate step toward factory production in the late 18th century. Other industries did not fit neatly into the guild structure and also received stimulus from the new capital—printing, bookmaking, mining, shipbuilding, and weapons manufacture.

During the late 16th and into the 17th centuries, Europeans gained a strong appetite for luxury and staple items from overseas. As the goods became more common, such as tea and coffee, they

gradually exercised a cultural influence on European styles and diet, often beginning with the aristocracy and seeping down through the bourgeoisie into the lower classes. The New World tomato and potato took a strong hold on European diets, though the latter had to overcome resistance to its appearance and taste. Eventually, however, the potato became the salvation of many nations, especially Russia, Germany, and Ireland, because of its versatility and ease of cultivation. Coffee- and tea-drinking provided opportunities for socializing outside more traditional networks (in coffeehouses) and also gave workers a jolt of midday energy, particularly when combined with the largest profit-maker of the era—sugar.

A status-conscious aristocracy and its middle-class imitators craved symbols of style and status. This meant silks and porcelain from China, calicoes (light, brightly colored cotton cloth) from India, and **spices** from the East Indies. Hunger for luxury goods fed the Commercial Revolution; competition among nations encouraged new trading techniques and the search for new goods, carried in the merchant marines of trading powers⁵.

To pool financial resources and share risk, investors created joint-stock companies. Of these, the Dutch and British East India Companies (both founded in the first decade of the 17th century) were the most famous and profitable. Such companies gained monopoly status from government charters and were expected to provide an increase in trade as well as imports of gold and silver. Gradually the Dutch pushed the Portuguese out of the East Indies and, along with England, began to challenge the dominance of the Iberian empires. Colonial competition among the Netherlands, England, France, and Spain accelerated throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, culminating with a series of decisive commercial wars.

Global trade on a large scale fed the rise of commercial capitalism in Europe. The credit, financial, and mercantile systems described above defined the nature of capitalism until the rise of mechanized mass production in textiles in the late 18th century. In an effort to exploit the potential for wealth, European nations adopted the economic theory of **mercantilism**. This theory—which generally guided the policies of most nations until the *laissez-faire* ideas of Adam Smith—was based on three essential tenets:

- *Scarcity*—The total amount of global resources and wealth are limited. Therefore, any advances by one nation come at the expense of another; trade is a “zero-sum game.”
- *Wealth = specie (hard money)*—Mercantilists held that real wealth equaled the amount of gold and silver flowing into a nation. Given this assumption, governments attempted to promote exports through trade monopolies, acquisition of colonies, and subsidies at the same time that they limited imports, via tariffs, trade restrictions, and war aimed at an enemy’s mercantile potential.
- *Government intervention*—Though governments did not generally own the means of production, they did actively intervene to promote national objectives. States provided incentives to key industries, sought new colonies, and worked to establish national markets by building roads and canals and abolishing localism. The ultimate goal of these efforts proved to be a favorable balance of trade, i.e., more specie flowing into the nation than flowing out. In the next chapter, we’ll examine the mercantilist policies of specific nations.

Changing Social Structures, 1500–1700

Early modern society experienced significant change alongside entrenched stability. Many of the social structures of the period 1500–1700 will seem alien to contemporary students. As you read through this section, try to step outside your assumptions and judgments. Capturing the mentalities of early modern Europeans requires sensitivity to historical context, aided by a vivid imagination. This period serves as a rich area for questions on the AP exam, though it is often overlooked by students. As you study the period, try to establish strong grounding in *specific* developments that influenced the lives of Europeans. When addressing any period, locate it clearly in time and place. Avoid expressions like “throughout history” or “women have always cooked and cleaned,” as they reveal an anachronistic (“misplaced”) understanding of the past.

5 EXAMPLE BASE

These products became key consumer goods, but in some instances, they also changed cultures. For example, the European desire for sugar stimulated the slave trade and plantation economies in the Americas. Coffee and tea led to new venues for public discussion of ideas and culture, which relates to the SP theme (“other institutions of power”).

6 SKILL SET

Students often overlook the issue of demographics (study of population) throughout the course. A key figure on the topic is Thomas Malthus, who introduced a theory that explained why populations cannot expand progressively in the long term. You are strongly encouraged to trace European population developments throughout the course, especially in explaining the changes and continuities (CCOT) in Europe's interaction with its environment.

Demographic Changes and Social Structures

As noted previously, an increasing population caused a structural change in early modern European society. Until about 1550, this increase helped bring fertile land under cultivation as Europe recovered from the Black Death. After 1550, however, Europe's population began to strain existing resources, resulting in the Price Revolution described earlier. Population continued to increase throughout the rest of the century, but poor weather, war, lack of resources, and periodic famine caused a decline in population throughout the 17th century. The discrepancy between population and the resources to sustain it is termed the “**Malthusian trap**,” after the 18th-century British political economist. In fact, some nations, such as Spain, experienced a steep drop in population, which seriously hampered its economy and threatened its great-power status. Though governments did not keep accurate census data until the late 18th century, local studies have revealed the serious negative impact of poor economic conditions on daily life, as revealed by a serious drop in marriages and births during hard times. For the big picture—Europe's population maxed out at 100 million about 1550, dropped to around 80 million by 1650, and had recovered to 100 million again by 1700.

Economic developments altered the class structure. Though the traditional system was not overturned, some changes were evident by 1700. The aristocracy maintained its primary position despite the addition of new blood, that is, members of the middle class who were able to acquire noble status through the purchase of an office, which often became hereditary with a payment of a tax (called the *paulette* in France). Sometimes resented by the older nobles (“nobles of the sword”), these new nobles were termed the “nobles of the robe” and played a more important role as governments expanded their bureaucratic functions.

Below the nobles were the *bourgeoisie*, or burghers, meaning those who lived in towns. Technically outside the feudal structure, the middle class made their livings in a variety of economic activities. The middle class was by no means a monolithic group. Some owned large tracts of land and lived off of rents, others traded goods as merchants, and still others filled out the growing professions, such as physicians, clergy, and attorneys. In addition, towns also thrived on the labor of the lower middle class or *petit bourgeoisie*, who labored as shopkeepers, artisans, grocers, and store owners. As the money economy and world trade expanded in the 16th and 17th centuries, the middle class increased, though they were not as yet able to translate these numbers into political power.

Agriculture and the Countryside

The lives of the vast majority of Europeans were dictated by the seasons and the paces of agricultural life. Agriculture was generally practiced in a village setting, with decisions made communally. This **subsistence agricultural system**—growing enough to feed the village with little left over for export—was defined by the **three-field crop rotation** system in the north and the **two-field** system in the south. In these systems, one section of land was left fallow (uncultivated) to allow for replenishment of the soil, limiting full use of resources. Each village included a commons area, used for livestock grazing, wood-gathering, hunting, or eking out a marginal existence for the landless. Throughout the 16th century, England began selling off common land for purchase by wealthy landowners. The practice had the double effect of creating a new non-aristocratic class of wealthy landowners, the **gentry**, as well as increasing the numbers of landless poor, who either had to contract out their labor or move to the cities. Between these two groups stood the yeomanry, small freeholders who owned their land. As often occurs with economic changes, some took advantage and improved their status while others found their already marginal existence threatened further.

The paths of western and eastern Europe began to diverge further during the 17th century. As most of the peasants of western Europe were freed from serfdom and other feudal obligations, those of eastern Europe were drawn more tightly into a highly codified system of laws governing an individual's life. While western peasants continued to owe their lords manorial

obligations, such as the payment of taxes, fees for the use of ovens and mills, and the hated labor service (called *corvée* in France, *robot* in the east), they were generally free to leave the land and could call on a set of traditional prerogatives to protect themselves against excessive landlords. Such was not the case in eastern Europe as, for example, **serfdom** became state law in the mid-17th century in Russia. Large manors, often exploiting the labor of up to 100,000 serfs, dominated nations such as Poland and Hungary, where nobles made up 10% of the population, compared to 2%–3% in France or England.

The Life of the Towns

Though only 10%–20% of Europeans lived in towns or cities, urban centers played an economic and a cultural role out of proportion to their numbers. Compared with our contemporary individualistic spirit, early modern Europeans were embedded in a web of social relationships—guild, village, neighborhood, church, city, class, family. In fact, popular metaphors for society construed it as a complex organism, with each group playing the appropriate role assigned it—the Great Chain of Being or the Body Politic. Institutions tended to be **hierarchical** in theory, though traditions and the desire to avoid social conflict often prevented social superiors from becoming arbitrary. In this period, cities attracted from the countryside both landless laborers and those seeking opportunity. By the end of the 16th century, most cities could no longer adequately handle the influx of new residents. The working poor comprised the majority of city dwellers and survived by finding odd jobs (e.g., unloading ships, hard manual labor, or domestic service) or by begging.

By 1550, when the economy was stressed, **poverty** reached crisis proportions in many European nations. Many of the poor resorted to begging; some even maimed themselves to garner sympathy. Traditional religious and charitable institutions were overwhelmed, so governments began to enact strict regulations that distinguished between the “**deserving**” (disabled, elderly, children) and “undeserving” (able-bodied males) **poor**. England’s Poor Law of 1601, for example, provided charitable relief but also seriously punished those who violated its regulations.

Crime often accompanied poverty. Both property and violent crime increased in the period 1500–1700. Because governments lacked modern police forces and prisons, they tended to inflict cruel and often hideous punishments on captured criminals as an example to others. Public executions were common, even for property crimes such as theft. Not until the 18th century did reformers call for the changes in the legal and penal system.

Family and Communal Life⁷

As today, the most basic institution in European life was the family. In western Europe, the **nuclear family** (parents, children, and perhaps an elderly grandparent) predominated. Because taxes in nations like Russia and Hungary were assessed on households, extended families proved more common. Unlike Renaissance Italy, the average age of marriage for men was mid- to late 20s and early to mid-20s for women, though these averages increased in hard economic times. Women of the aristocracy tended to marry somewhat earlier and, on average, experienced eight to nine live births, whereas women of the middle and lower classes experienced on average six to seven live births. Part of this disparity can be explained by the use of wet nurses among the upper classes (breast-feeding tends to dampen fertility). Old age was rare because of high infant mortality and low life expectancy. As a result, remarriage and blended families were common. Despite the stereotype of female labor as primarily domestic, women were, in fact, integral to the family economy. A wife’s death often drove a widower to remarry as soon as possible. In artisan households, for example, women supervised the workers, kept the books, and marketed the products.

By standard interpretation, the concept of childhood did not exist until its invention during the Enlightenment. In fact, evidence indicates that in the early modern period, parents did love their children and considered the loss of a child a tragedy. Nonetheless, children were expected to contribute labor to the family unit—often overseen by the father—and were subjected to corporal punishments for disobedience. Also, keep in mind that neither society nor parents

7 THEME MUSIC

Be careful of turning the Individual and Society (IS) theme into a collection of descriptions. Beginning with this period, try to establish a baseline of practices, customs, and attitudes for issues of gender, family, child-rearing, and village life. Also, be careful not to project modern stereotypes onto the past.

provided compulsory schooling or age-appropriate toys, reading materials, or clothing for children. In most nations, children did not earn full legal rights at a specific age, but only when they established their own residences. Female children were expected to bring a dowry into a marriage (land, furniture, personal property, cash), though in Germany, for example, tradition protected a father from arbitrarily depriving a daughter of her inheritance.

Early modern leisure differs significantly from our modern diversions. Whereas our forms of amusement tend to be consumptive (shopping, amusement parks, dining, etc.) and in small groups, Europeans of the 16th and 17th centuries engaged in **communal leisure**. Early-modern rhythms of life were governed by the seasons; periods of extended labor were followed by those of extended celebration. In Catholic nations, the **church calendar**, with its cycle of saints' feast days and rituals, dictated the pace of work and leisure. Carnival, the period right before Lenten fasting and penance, served as the largest of these festivals. For over a week, villagers and townspeople consumed large amounts of food and alcohol, while playing traditional games and engaging in a higher-than-normal amount of sexual activity. In addition, classes and genders switched roles for the “world turned upside down,” which played the important role of letting off discontent in a ritualized way before returning to the normal hierarchy. With the Reformation, many Protestant and even some Catholic areas tried to restrain what they considered the excesses of the practice. Finally, to ensure social conformity, many localities imposed rituals of public humiliation on those who stepped outside of community standards, such as a husband who could not control his wife or a woman who committed adultery. In France, this practice was called *charivari* and in England skimmington.

Witchcraft Persecution

A striking phenomenon of early modern Europe was the **persecution of witches**. The height of the scare occurred from 1580 to 1700, during which approximately 100,000 people, mostly women, were executed for being in league with the devil. The practice strikes our modern sensibilities as backward and barbaric. However, we should try to understand what beliefs and socioeconomic conditions gave rise to the phenomenon. First, almost all Europeans, even the educated, believed in witches and demons. Increased Bible-reading because of the Protestant Reformation emphasized both the reality of the devil and the supposedly weak and credulous nature of women. Second, the early modern period experienced rapid social and economic change—enclosure, religious wars, poverty, crime, and overpopulation—that tended to undermine or challenge traditional practices. Third, religious passions were inflamed by the Protestant and Catholic Reformations and resulting religious wars, creating suspicion among communities, especially in regions divided by religious belief. Finally, those targeted for accusation tended to exist on the margins of the community—the poor, older women, those living alone—and thus beyond the reach of social norms. Women, in particular, were believed to have special knowledge of and powers over the body (because of their role in childbirth) and often supplemented family incomes by preparing traditional cures or potions. In fact, some may have even considered themselves to practice white magic. With the general acceptance of scientific explanations by elites, the witch trials declined markedly after 1720 and were almost gone by 1750⁸.

8 SKILL SET

You may find the topic of witchcraft fascinating. It is, but make sure to avoid presentism, i.e., judging the past by present standards. Turn the topic into a Causation (CAUS) question and create a visual to show how and why the phenomenon accelerated (after 1550) and then faded (after 1680). Work toward capturing complexity in your portrayal.

The Religious Wars

One of the more complex and challenging topics you will study this year is the religious wars. Amidst the numerous personalities and rapidly changing motives, try to keep your eye on the key issues: the causes, nature, and end results of the wars. Though historians term these “religious” wars, each conflict was also influenced by political and territorial ambitions.

Philip II: Catholic Protector

At the center of the religious conflicts of the second half of the 16th century stood Philip II (1556–1598), ruler of Spain and the Low Countries, parts of Italy, and the New World. Like his

Habsburg father, Charles I (V as Holy Roman Emperor), Philip saw himself as the political protector of Catholicism in Europe, though Philip lacked Charles's more cosmopolitan background. Philip was a Spaniard and was influenced by that nation's strong Catholic tradition and crusading mentality. El Escorial, Philip's palace on the arid plains outside Madrid, reflected the ruler's personality. Part residence, part monastery and religious retreat, the Escorial formed the central governing point of a huge empire stretching across oceans. Philip insisted on overseeing even the minutest details of government, earning him the nickname the "King of Paper," after his habit of reviewing each document from his diverse realm. Philip's first area of concern was France, even though he did not directly rule that nation.

The French Wars of Religion

France's long series of religious conflicts (1560–1598) grew from religious *and* political roots. Despite Francis I's (1516–1547) attempts to stamp out the spread of Protestant faiths, Calvinism continued to grow in his kingdom, often indirectly aided by the patronage of his sister, Marguerite of Navarre (1492–1529), a deeply religious woman and author of several controversial stories and religious works. Calvinism found fertile ground among the French aristocracy in particular, perhaps because they already believed themselves "the elect." By 1560, 40% of French nobles advocated the Huguenot faith (as French Calvinists were called), which, because nobles held important positions in the government and military, posed a threat to the Catholic Valois monarchy. These religious causes were exacerbated when the strong French king Henry II (1547–1559) died tragically in a jousting accident. His death plunged France into a civil conflict over control of the throne *and* over France's religion.

The conflict in France is best viewed as a three-sided struggle. In the middle stood the Catholic Valois family, now led by Henry's widow, the moderate yet cunning Catherine de Medicis (1519–1589). Like the future Henry IV and Elizabeth I of England, Catherine advocated political stability over religious orthodoxy, being known as a *politique*. In addition, Catherine attempted to maintain the throne for her three weak sons—Francis II (1559–1560), Charles IX (1560–1574), and Henry III (1574–1589). Against the Catholic Valois, on one side, stood a faction of Protestant nobles who laid claim to the throne through Henry Bourbon (of Navarre) and wished free worship for those of the Huguenot faith. Also opposed to the Valois and with the backing of the Jesuits, the papacy, and Philip II were the Guise family, or ultra-Catholics. The ultra-Catholics viewed the Valois monarchy as weak in the face of the Protestant threat and wished to restore a more strongly Catholic king.

Religious conflict in France was played out in a series of 13 short wars, with numerous attempts at compromise by Catherine and her sons. One of these attempts at compromise led to one of the worst atrocities during this violent period. In 1572, Henry Bourbon agreed to marry Catherine de Medicis's daughter as a sign of reconciliation. However, during the wedding celebration in Paris, rumors flared that Protestants were plotting to take over the government. What followed was a slaughter of the Protestant nobles, in Paris and throughout France, known as the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. In all, approximately 10,000 French Protestants were killed, though Henry Bourbon escaped by converting to Catholicism (a conversion he quickly renounced). The event seemed to show the corruption of the Valois monarchy and deepened resistance to it.

The final stage of France's civil war is called the War of the Three Henries. In 1588, Henry Guise (leader of the ultra-Catholics) took the city of Paris, threatening the Valois hold on the nation. Henry III, of Valois, felt he had no alternative but to form an alliance against the ultra-Catholics with Henry Bourbon, whom he promised to make next in line to the throne. On the pretext of compromise, both Henries invited Guise to the palace and had him assassinated. In reprisal, a fanatical monk killed Henry III in 1589, making Henry Bourbon (IV) ruler of France. However, Henry IV's (1589–1610) way to Paris was barred by Spanish troops, and he would spend the next decade winning control of the nation. To bring peace to France, Henry converted back to Catholicism (the majority religion of France), supposedly saying "Paris is worth a mass,"

9 SKILL SET

You will notice the complexity of motives, changing courses, and groups/individuals involved in the religious wars. To prevent yourself from bogging down in minutia, focus on a major interpretative question—the relationship between religious and political or economic motives for the wars. Take a position and defend it, using examples from any of the conflicts in this section (INTR & EVARG).

and then issued the **Edict of Nantes**, which allowed Huguenots to practice their religion outside Paris and to fortify towns to protect their hard-won liberties. Over the next several years, Henry IV became one of the most beloved monarchs in French history and established a strong Bourbon dynasty, laying the foundations for absolutism.

The Wars of Spain⁹

An important part of Philip's inheritance was Burgundy, the 17 provinces known as the Low Countries, where his father Charles had been raised. Philip was an outsider to those in the Low Countries, who wished to maintain their traditional decentralized political structure and religious freedoms. Philip's policies eventually sparked a revolt, which had at its base religious, political, and economic causes. First, Philip attempted to increase taxes to fund the cost of the Spanish empire, thus alienating many in the middle classes. Next, Philip determined to stamp out heresy by tightening the church structure in the Netherlands (another name for Burgundy) and by employing the Inquisition. Because the 17 provinces stood astride important trade routes and had a tradition of religious tolerance, they attracted many adherents of Calvinism.

In response to Philip's tax policy, discontented Burgundians in 1566 directed their ire against the symbols of Catholicism, smashing statues and church decorations, in what was known as the iconoclast revolt. Philip sent the Duke of Alba to the Netherlands to crush the revolt. Alba established the so-called Council of Blood and executed a number of leading Protestant nobles, which only further inflamed the provinces. Soon a leader of the revolt emerged—William “the Silent” (1533–1584—from the House of Orange in Holland), so-called because of his reluctance to discuss his strategies with others. William was aided by the “sea beggars,” ships that engaged in acts of piracy against the Spanish. When Spanish troops pillaged the city of Antwerp in 1576 (they had not been paid because Spain lacked funds), all 17 provinces called for the end of Spanish rule in the Netherlands, an event known as the Pacification of Ghent. This action caused Philip to change tactics, and it overshadowed the great Spanish naval victory over Ottoman forces in 1571 at Lepanto, which cleared the western Mediterranean of the Muslim threat.

Philip appointed his nephew Alexander Farnese (1545–1592), the Duke of Parma and a brilliant military leader, to subdue the Netherlands through reward and punishment. Farnese succeeded by 1578 in prying away the southern 10 provinces from the revolt and winning their allegiance to Spain with the Union of Arras. These provinces were populated primarily by the French-speaking Walloons. In response, the northern, mostly Dutch-speaking Flemish 7 provinces in 1581 formed the Union of Utrecht with the intent of separating from Spain. Throughout the conflict, Elizabeth I of England quietly provided the Dutch with financial and naval aid, including attacks on Spanish shipping by the “sea dogs” such as Sir Francis Drake (c. 1540–1596). By 1588, Philip was determined to end English meddling and teach Elizabeth, his one-time sister-in-law who had spurned his offer of marriage, a lesson. Philip's Spanish Armada did not have a chance against the more maneuverable English ships and because his plan for an invasion was too complex. Spain's “confident hope of a miracle” turned into a rout in the “Protestant wind,” which signaled the rise of England and the relative decline of Spain as maritime powers, though Philip would raise other armadas and continue to fight on.

Though Philip never admitted defeat in the Netherlands, his successor Philip III in 1609 signed a Twelve Years' truce with the Union of Utrecht, which all but granted the Dutch independence. The southern 10 provinces remained loyal and became known as the Spanish Netherlands. Once the strongest nation in Europe, Spain slowly declined throughout the 17th century. There were several reasons for this loss of power. First, the Spanish had overextended themselves politically and militarily, taxing their subjects excessively and allowing the nation to fall behind economically. Second, the Iberian crusading mentality led the Spanish to persecute talented minorities, like the *moriscos* (Muslim converts to Catholicism), who were driven out in the early 17th century. Finally, internal revolts over high taxes and government centralization, combined with population decline, sapped Spain's internal energy. By the end of the Thirty Years' War, to

which we now turn, Spain's *siglo de oro* (Golden Age) was over, an important lesson for nations that believe that power entails invincibility.

The Thirty Years' War, 1618–1648

Prior to the world wars of the 20th century, the most devastating conflict in European history was the Thirty Years' War. The conflict began as a civil war over religion in Germany but escalated into a continental conflagration involving territorial and political ambitions. Years before war started, German Catholics and Protestants geared up for battle by forming alliances with outside powers. These alliances—the Protestant Union and Catholic League—ensured that when war did come, it would involve the great powers of Europe.

Following the Peace of Augsburg (1555), Germany divided between Lutheran and Catholic states. However, the treaty did not take into account the fastest growing denomination after 1560—Calvinism. When the ruler of the Palatinate, Frederick V (1610–1623), converted to Calvinism, the delicate religious balance in Germany seemed threatened. It became apparent that neither Protestant nor Catholic leaders had any intention of treating Augsburg as a permanent settlement to Germany's religious division. What complicated matters was the elective nature of the Holy Roman Emperor, nominally the political leader of Catholicism and still a position of importance. According to the Golden Bull of 1356, the emperor was elected by seven states, three of which were controlled by Catholic rulers and three by Protestants. To gain control of the last electoral state (Bohemia), the next Habsburg in line (the traditional imperial ruling house)—Ferdinand II (1620–1637)—promised the Bohemian nobles he would respect their religious liberties if they would elect him the king of Bohemia (whereby he could in turn vote for himself as emperor). After Ferdinand was elected king in 1618, he betrayed his promise to the Bohemian nobles, thus initiating the conflict.

The event that set off the conflict was the so-called Defenestration of Prague (1618), in which Bohemian nobles tossed two imperial officials out of the Prague castle. Following this act of rebellion, the nobles elected Frederick V of Palatine as their new king. Subsequent fighting is often divided by historians into four distinct phases, which are outlined below. You are encouraged to take note of the shifting motivations and alliances of states.

Phase	Events	Groups/Leaders	Results
Bohemian, 1618–1625	The Protestant forces under Frederick V were defeated soundly at White Mountain. Once Ferdinand II (Habsburg) was elected emperor, he confiscated the lands of the rebellious Bohemian nobles, redistributed them, and then brought the Counter-Reformation to Bohemia.	*Frederick V of Palatine *Ferdinand II (Habsburg) and Holy Roman Emperor.	Catholic forces emerged victorious as Bavaria, leader of the Catholic League, took over much of the Electorate Palatine.

Phase	Events	Groups/Leaders	Results
Danish, 1625–1629	Christian IV, the Lutheran king of Denmark, entered the conflict both to support the Protestant cause and to gain territory in the Baltic. Wallenstein defeated Christian, thus giving imperial forces the upper hand.	*Christian IV (1588–1648) of Denmark *Albrecht von Wallenstein (1583–1634)—unpredictable leader of imperial forces who funded his own war machine.	Ferdinand confidently issued the Edict of Restitution (1629), which returned all confiscated Church lands since 1517, angering Protestant and Catholic nobles alike who had gained from this confiscation. The Habsburgs appeared on the verge of completing a centuries-old dream of centralizing power in central Europe.
Swedish, 1629–1635	Sweden’s great military leader, Gustavus Adolphus, entered the conflict to revive the Protestant cause and to secure trade in the Baltic. At Breitenfield and Lutzen, Gustavus succeeded in defeating the imperial forces and brought the war to the Catholic south. In an example of the war’s horrifying effect, the city of Magdeburg was sacked and burned by imperial forces, killing thousands of civilians.	*Gustavus Adolphus (1611–1632) *Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642)—advisor under Louis XIII (1610–1643) who brought France into the conflict to reduce the power of the Habsburgs. *Wallenstein was assassinated with the approval of the emperor for negotiating independently with the Swedes.	To end the war, the emperor (now Ferdinand III—1637–1657) revoked the Edict of Restitution and signed in 1635 the Peace of Prague with the other German states. However, the fighting continued and devolved into a continental struggle between the Spanish Habsburgs vs. the Swedes and French (also supported by the Dutch).
Franco-Swedish, 1635–1648	In the most violent phase of the war, Germany became the battleground for the territorial and political ambitions of its neighbors. At the battle of Rocroi (in the Spanish Netherlands) in 1643, the French soundly defeated the Spanish, signaling the rise of the former as the major military power in Europe.	*Philip IV (1621–1665) of Spain—continued to use Spain’s dwindling resources to fight against France, despite facing internal rebellions by Portugal (which regained its independence in 1640) and the province of Catalonia.	By the end of the conflict, all sides were exhausted. However, peace negotiations dragged on for years before the war was finally ended in 1648.

The **Peace of Westphalia** (1648), which ended the Thirty Years' War, marks an important turning point in European politics and diplomacy. After this point, the **Holy Roman Empire no longer played a major role** in the affairs of central Europe, though the Austrian Habsburgs turned to the east in subsequent years to revive their imperial fortunes. The treaty formally recognized the independence of Switzerland and the Dutch Republic, as well as reflected a shift in the balance of power. Emerging stronger were France, Sweden, Prussia (in Germany), and the Dutch. Losing energy were the Holy Roman Empire and Spain, which now fell into the rank of the second-tier powers, beset by a declining population and economy¹⁰.

Historians often view the Westphalia settlement as the “final nail in the coffin of the Middle Ages” because it recognized the sovereignty of each nation over its own religious affairs and ended any hopes of religious unity of Europe. Indeed, the papacy was virtually ignored in the peace negotiations and would play a sharply reduced role in future diplomacy. Though Europe as a whole moved toward a grudging religious tolerance, Germany was decimated. Estimates vary, but Germany's population may have declined by 20%–33%. In areas of heavy fighting, entire towns ceased to exist, and economic life was severely curtailed. Central Europe was left a power vacuum that would soon be filled by the emergence of two competing German powers—Prussia and Austria—whose fortunes will be traced in the next chapter.

As a result of the Thirty Years' War, Europe underwent a **military revolution**. Gunpowder and the foot-soldier (pikemen and musketeers) played a major role, with the **infantry** square formation employing massed volleys (firing at the same time). Tactics became more flexible, with the use of lighter and more mobile cavalry, pioneered by Gustavus Adolphus. In addition, to fund the increasing costs of war and oversee its complexity, governments grew larger and more centralized. Warfare had become the primary function of European states, who often spent up to 80% of their budgets on fielding, training, supplying, and of course, using armies (to meet their political objectives). As we'll see in Chapter 7, this trend caused a further expansion of the state's power in the age of absolutism.

Additional Resources

Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Columbus* (1991)—Interesting study of a complex figure, includes provocative interpretations.

Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (1994)—A vivid and engaging study of the topic.

Carlo Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy, 1000–1700* (rev. 1994)—A wealth of information and data on every major feature of economic activity prior to the 18th century.

Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (1972)—For those of a scientific bent, this book explains how colonization affected the world exchange of plants, animals, and diseases.

Richard S. Dunn, *The Age of Religious Wars, 1559–1715* (1979)—Another fine survey from the Norton History of the Modern World.

J.H. Elliott, *Europe Divided, 1559–98* (rev. 2000)—Fast-paced and informative introduction to European politics during the period.

Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost: England Before the Industrial Revolution* (1983)—A study of family life in England.

Brian Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (1987)—Surveys the many explanations for the phenomenon.

Steven Ozment, *The Burgermeister's Daughter: Scandal in a Sixteenth-Century German Town* (1997)—Told like a novel, this book shows how the historian works to recreate the features of everyday life.

10 THEME MUSIC

The Thirty Years' War and its settlement reveal key issues in the SP theme—the relationship between church and state, the role of warfare in expansion of state power, and the shifting balance of power among the nations of Europe. Be prepared to explain briefly each of these relationships.

Geoffrey Parker, *Europe in Crisis, 1598–1648* (1979)—Comprehensive overview of the many complex developments in European politics in this period.

J.H. Parry, *The Age of Reconnaissance: Discovery, Exploration, and Settlement, 1450–1650* (rev. 1981)—Brief introduction to the voyages of exploration and their effects.

Peter N. Stearns, ed., *Encyclopedia of European Social History, 1350–2000* (2000)—If you can find it at a nearby library, these volumes are a wonderful resource on all areas of social history.

http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Thirty_Years_War.aspx—Provides an overview of the Thirty Years' War.

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/about/food.jsp>—From Yale University, this site examines changes in food regimes as a result of the Columbian Exchange.

Practice MC Questions

Questions 1–4 are based on the image below.



Theodore de Bry, French engraver, silver mines of Potosi (Bolivia), 1602

1. The scene above directly resulted from all of the following factors EXCEPT:
 - A. the desire of European states to gain direct access to goods and wealth.
 - B. European military superiority in the form of steel weapons and cannons.
 - C. the spread of classical ideas depicting mythical ancient civilizations.
 - D. advances in navigational and cartographic techniques and technologies.
2. In what way did the process depicted above most change the European economy in the 16th and 17th centuries?
 - A. It stimulated the growth of a new landed elite, such as the gentry in England.
 - B. It led to the development of a money-oriented and commercial economy.
 - C. It motivated the nobles and states of Eastern Europe to codify serfdom.
 - D. It reinforced the importance of hierarchy in determining economic standing.

3. In contrast to the scene above, the impact of exploration on Africa:
- A. led to the establishment of large territorial empires in Africa.
 - B. did not involve competition in Africa among states for resources.
 - C. had minimal effect on Africa’s role in the world economy.
 - D. led to the slave trade and plantation economies in the Americas.
4. An historian studying the topic of exploration would most likely use this source as evidence to make conclusions in which of the following areas?
- A. The motivations of Europeans in seeking colonies
 - B. The impact of exploration on artistic styles
 - C. The effect of colonization on indigenous peoples
 - D. The effects of colonization on European rivalries

Questions 5–8 are based on the map below.



5. All of the following caused the situation above EXCEPT:
- competition among nation-states for territory and power.
 - rivalry between England and France over colonies.
 - efforts by the Habsburgs to restore Catholic unity.
 - pursuit of commercial dominance in the Baltic.
6. The settlement above confirmed which of the following?
- Spanish control of the Mediterranean
 - State control over internal religious policy
 - The dominance of the Holy Roman Empire
 - Noble control of state and military institutions
7. Which of the following best expresses how the situation above represented a turning point in European politics and diplomacy?
- Commercial and professional groups solidified their control of the state.
 - Atlantic states were able to focus on the expansion of American empires.
 - With aid of the Jesuits, the papacy reestablished its diplomatic influence.
 - Religion ceased to be a major source of conflict among European states.
8. The state that experienced the most significant loss of power from the treaty above was:
- England.
 - France.
 - Spain.
 - Sweden.

See Chapter 18 for answers and explanations.

Short-Answer Question with Sample and Commentary

“Every political action was publicly cloaked in religious terms, but religion seemed to be used more and more to rationalize actions motivated by secular interests.”

Hajo Holborn, historian, *A History of Modern Germany: The Reformation*, 1959

- Choose TWO examples from the religious wars and explain how they support the interpretation above.
- Choose ONE example from the religious wars and explain how it contradicts the interpretation above.

(HTS: Interpretation and Use of Evidence)

- The historian thinks that religion was really just a cover for secular motives, like power. This seems to be the case during warfare of this era. During the Thirty Years’ War, France supported the Protestant side when they were fighting in Germany. This was done to promote the power of the French state, since France was a mainly Catholic nation helping the opposite religious side.

Also, the Dutch revolted against the Spanish because they wanted to follow their own political rule. Philip II tried to impose Spanish rule, and the Netherlands resented this, since the people there thought of him as a foreign power. They just wanted to do their own thing.

- France had its own internal religious conflict. Political factors mattered, like the competition for the throne between the Valois and Bourbon branches. But the war was really about control of religion. That’s why outside Catholic groups, like the Jesuits, got involved. They wanted to promote the cause of Catholic unity. So in that sense, the historian was wrong.

This student takes the right approach in getting to her point quickly and also indicating which parts of the question she is addressing. Though brief, each example provides adequate explanation to earn the point. First, the response correctly in simplified fashion notes French actions during the Thirty Years’ War in support of Protestant forces. The second part on the Dutch argues the primacy of political factors; even if the example could relate more explicitly back to the religious dimension, the explanation is apropos and earns the point. In Part B, the student correctly points out a religious element to the French civil conflict, a seeming contradiction to Holborn’s argument regarding the secular priority of the so-called religious wars. 3 points