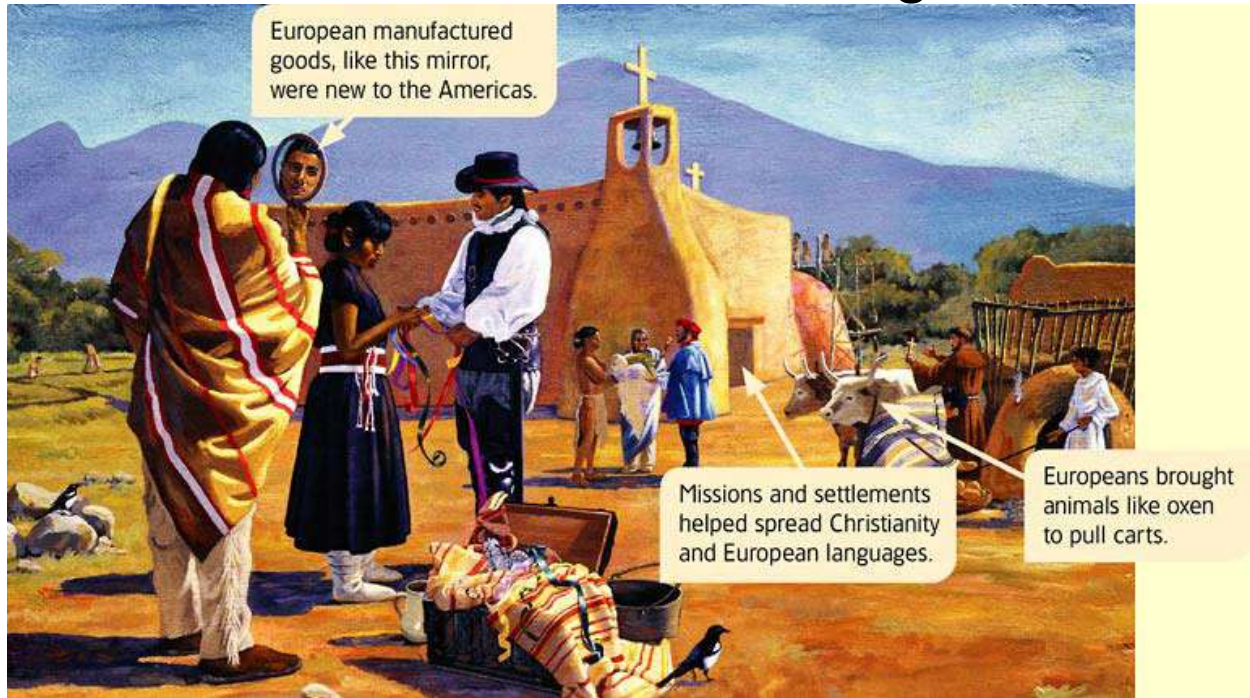


# The Columbian Exchange



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## Introduction

The Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Age of Exploration were times of great discovery and learning that impacted the way people viewed themselves and the world around them. After the discovery of the **New World** by Christopher Columbus, European nations such as Spain, Portugal, France, England, and the Netherlands wanted to claim land there. This had an impact on the people who lived on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

## Arrival in the Americas

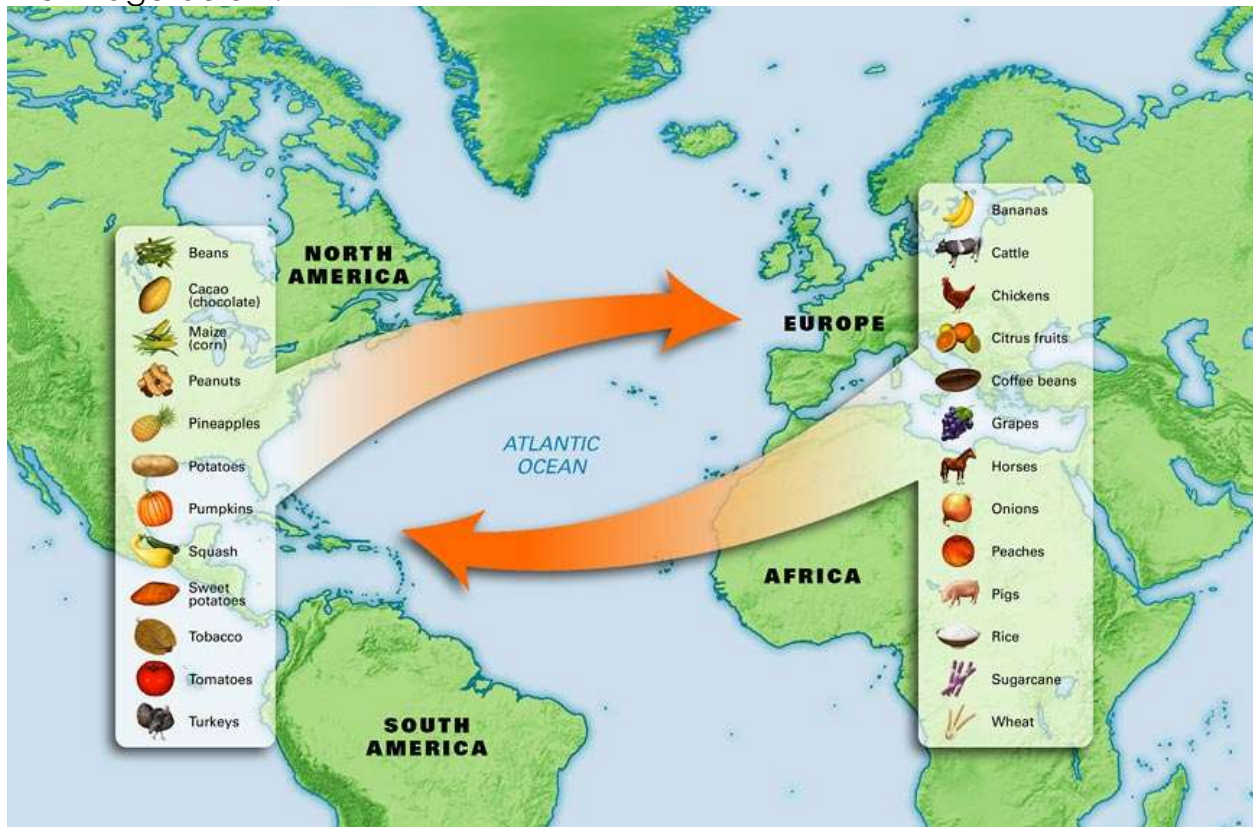
When European explorers came to the Americas, they traveled great distances using ships over the Atlantic Ocean. This trip took several months, so explorers had to plan accordingly. They brought with them the animals and crops they would eat and use on the trip and when they arrived in the New World. Animals and plants weren't the only things Europeans brought with them when they explored; they also brought diseases, technology, religion, language, and slavery.

When the European explorers would return to their home nations, they would tell people about the new plants, animals, and people they discovered in the Americas. They brought back examples, too. The movement of plants, animals, people, ideas, diseases, and technology between the New World (the Americas) and the **Old World** (Europe) is called the **Columbian Exchange**.

**Question: Why do you think it is called the Columbian Exchange?**

## **What Exactly Did the Europeans Bring With Them?**

Europeans brought many different things with them to the Americas. Look at the image below.



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As you can see from the map, Europeans brought with them chickens, cows, horses, and pigs. These animals had never been in the New World before the Europeans' arrival (note: horses *had* been in North America before the last Ice Age but had migrated off the continent). They also brought fruits and vegetables like bananas, oranges, grapes, onions, peaches, and limes. Many of these fruits and vegetables the Europeans were exposed to during the Crusades. Lastly, Europeans brought grains like rice and wheat to the Americas.

What kind of effect do you think this had on the Native Americans who already lived in the Americas? First, it impacted (changed) their diet. Native Americans started eating these animals and plants as well. Next, they began to rely on some of these animals, like the horse. Native Americans who lived on the Great Plains used the horse for transportation. Imagine—before the discovery of the

New World, there were no horses here! Native Americans had never ridden a horse before 1492.

These seem like great things, but there were negative impacts as well. Europeans created large plantations to grow the crops, especially rice and sugarcane. European explorers and settlers were usually the nobility, and were used to having servants do work for them. They weren't going to work on the plantations as farmers. The Europeans forced the Native Americans into slavery. The Native Americans often died from overwork, but more frightening was the fact that they had never had the diseases that the Europeans had. They lacked immunity to these diseases, such as the **flu**, **smallpox**, and **measles**. Immunity is a way your body fights infections and diseases. Native Americans had never had the flu, smallpox, or measles ever, so their bodies had no antibodies to fight off the illnesses. Millions of Native Americans died. Without Native Americans to work on the plantations, Europeans turned to using Africans as slaves.



In the picture to the left, a Native American is taking care of a sick person. In the first block you can see man is breathing in the same air as the sick one. Later, that healthy man becomes sick with the same disease. This is because he has no immunity to the illness. Millions of Native Americans died simply because they had never been sick

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### **Question: How did the Columbian Exchange impact Africans, and why?**

Besides plants, animals, and disease, Europeans brought new forms of technology to the New World. Europeans used **gunpowder** and **firearms** to conquer much of the land in the Americas, even though the Native Americans greatly outnumbered them.

### **The Columbian Exchange Impacts Europe and Asia**

The Europeans were surprised to find animals and plants in the Americas they had never seen as well. They would take these things back to Europe with them. (Refer back to the map.)

Many of the foods from the Americas benefited Europe and Asia. **Potatoes** and **corn** became very important to Europeans. Both improved their nutrition and



increased the population. Europeans began to live longer and healthy lives.

**Tomatoes** and **chocolate** became wildly popular. Just think—before Christopher Columbus' discovery of the New World, there were no tomatoes in Italy, so no tomato sauce for pizza or pasta!

Europeans and Asians became wealthy from the discovery of the Americas. European nations like England, France, and Spain began to send settlers to start plantations and colonies. Crops like **tobacco** became a great source of wealth for these early colonies. The more wealth Europeans made from the Americas, the more land they conquered from the Native Americans.

**Question: What other fruits, vegetables, and animals came from the New World and were brought over to Europe?**