

## Lesson 3

### Colonization of the New World

**Vocabulary:** These words will help you understand this lesson.



Word/Term	Definition
<b>Vikings</b>	Scandinavians who first settled in the Americas hundreds of years before Columbus
<b>Treaty of Tordesillas</b>	arranged by the Pope; it divided the New World into Spanish and Portuguese possessions
<b>conquistadores</b>	Spanish for <i>conquerors</i> ; the name given to the military explorers who defeated native armies and conquered the peoples of the Americas for Spain
<b>encomienda</b>	a grant by the Spanish crown to a noble or conquistador in the New World of a specified number of natives for whom they were to take responsibility to protect the natives from warring tribes, and to instruct them in the Spanish language and the Catholic faith

Most historians currently agree that the first Europeans to find the Americas were the **Vikings**. This happened hundreds of years before Christopher Columbus's famous trip. The Vikings, led by Leif Erikson, built a brief settlement in Vinland. This area is now called Newfoundland, Canada. Viking settlements created in Greenland survived longer than those in Vinland. Still, by 1492 the Viking colonies in America had collapsed.

#### **Columbus: the Man who Started it All**

Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas in 1492. This led to a period of non-stop European voyages to the New World. The leading powers of Europe raced to make claims in

the Western Hemisphere. European diseases played an important role in colonization. They wiped out as much as 90% of native populations. That made it easier for European nations to take over the land and peoples of the Americas. The Columbian Exchange resulted in cultural changes for both Europe and the New World. This period of history is one in which European nations greedily took the natural resources of the Americas and abused the indigenous peoples (the natives that Columbus called “Indians”) there.

Columbus simply set out to prove that he could find a new route to India. Instead he ended up leading the world into a new era. In his lifetime, Columbus was honored for his discoveries. However, recent historians have blamed him for the events following his discovery. Christopher Columbus actually played a very small part in colonization.

## **Colonization and Mercantilism**

Mercantilism was an economic theory that encouraged colonization. It said that control of trade with another country or area would make a nation rich. Thus, if a European nation-state had colonies and controlled trade with them, it would become rich. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as is true today, wealth means power.

Not all European nations were prepared to establish colonies in the New World, but many tried. Four leaders in colonization emerged. They were Portugal, Spain, France, and England. Sweden, Holland, Germany, Russia, and Scotland also attempted to start colonies in the Americas and Asia. Their colonies either failed or were taken over by others.

## **Portugal**

At the beginning of colonization, Portugal led the way. Columbus brought Spain into the arena. The two nations competed for colonies to the point of conflict. To settle the issue, Pope Alexander VI arranged for the **Treaty of Tordesillas** in 1494. It divided the New World into Spanish and Portuguese possessions. In April of 1500, Pedro Alvares Cabral landed on the coast of Brazil. Temporary trading posts were set up to collect Brazilian wood and dye. In 1532 the Portuguese built their first permanent colony there.

The first colony led to the first industry – sugar cane. Portuguese colonists built large sugar cane plantations and put the natives to work. In 1549 San Salvador became the capital.

Immediately after, Jesuit missionaries arrived and began efforts to convert the natives to the Roman Catholic faith. The Portuguese destroyed a French colony that had been at Guanabara Bay for ten years and built the city of Rio de Janeiro in March of 1567.

The Dutch colonized the northern coasts of Brazil. That led to many battles with the Portuguese. By 1654 the Netherlands (the Dutch) had surrendered. They returned all of Brazil to Portugal. The Portuguese did not divide their colonial lands. All were united under the name of Brazil. The government operated out of San Salvador. Other European nations *did* divide their territories. This difference made Brazil's history unique. In the 1820s, while other colonies were breaking into independent states, Brazil remained united. It also influenced their decision to be a monarchy in the first stage of independence.

## Spain

Spanish colonization started in the small islands of the Caribbean. From these first bases the Spaniards moved to take over Central America, most of South America, Mexico, and the southern-most parts of the U.S. The native civilizations of the Caribbean were quickly destroyed by disease and abuse. The great empires of the Aztecs and Incas tumbled next. After the Spanish defeated the native tribes, they claimed the land for themselves.

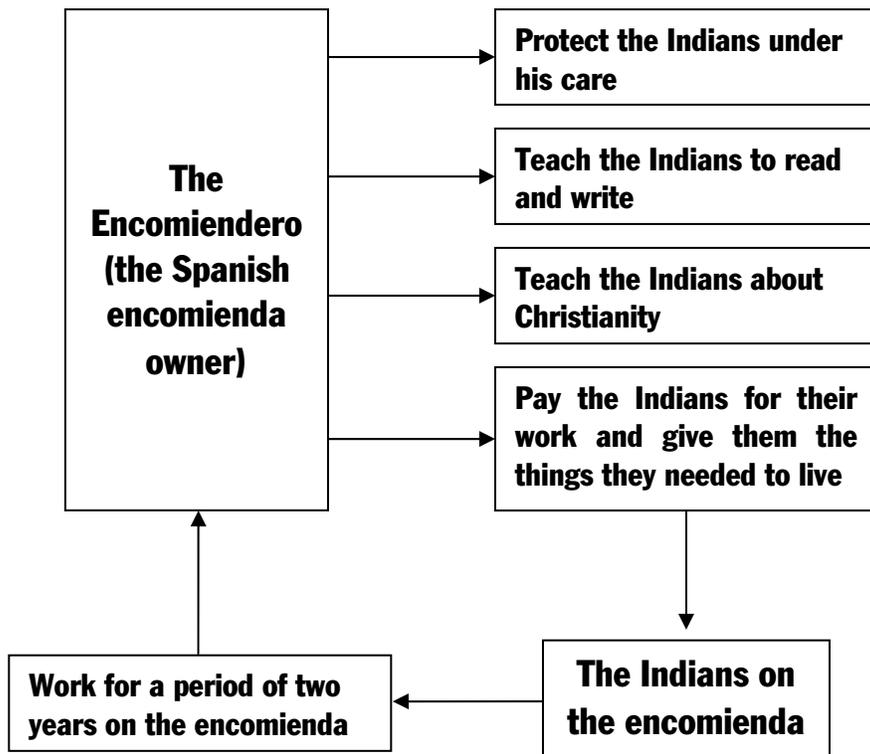
The first years of Spanish colonization were filled with a struggle between the conquistadores and the Crown. The conquistadores had conquered the native peoples and set up colonies for Spain. They were powerful men who wanted to be rewarded for their services. To manage their new colonies and to satisfy the **conquistadores**, the Spanish government set up the **encomienda** system.

### The Encomienda System

Conquistadores were given *encomiendas* – huge amounts of land and natives to work on that land. The Spanish Crown (the king and his government) wanted the conquistadores to govern these lands much as feudal manors had been governed. In Spain the noble owned the land. The peasants worked the land in return for safety and having their needs met. The system provided labor for nobles and security for peasants. The Crown expected that the conquistadores would manage their lands in the Americas in the same way. They believed this was for the good of the native people.

The Spanish thought that the Indians needed to be Christians. They thought it was impossible for the native Indians to live and work as Christians without *proper direction*. To the Spanish, the culture of the native peoples seemed uncivilized. Natives wore barely any clothing. The clothing of Europeans covered everything, except faces and hands. Spanish explorers looked on the Indians as simple and childlike, because they could not read or write. They thought they could teach natives these skills as they taught them about the Christian God. To Spanish eyes, their rule and order would improve the native peoples in their colonies. However, even with improvement, the Spanish conquerors would never regard a native the equal of a European.

The chart shows the way the encomienda system was supposed to work.



The Spanish crown thought that they could make Spaniards in the New World responsible for the Indians' well-being. The encomienda system did not work as the government in Spain thought it would. The problem was that many of the Spanish owners saw the encomienda as a chance to make a lot of money. Some Spaniards did help the Indians on their encomiendas, but most did not. They did not pay the Indians, nor did they teach them to read or write. They did

not teach them Christianity. Instead they forced the Indians to work for them. The Aztecs had always demanded tribute; thus, the Indians thought the Spanish were the same. Over time, the native Indians lost all rights and became slaves.

### **New Laws**

Some Spanish were not greedy. They really tried to help the Indians. Many of them told the King and Queen how the Indians were being abused. One famous Spaniard who spoke out for the Indians was Bishop Bartolomé de Las Casas. He saw the evils of the encomienda system and spent his life trying to stop it.



Bartolomé de Las Casas

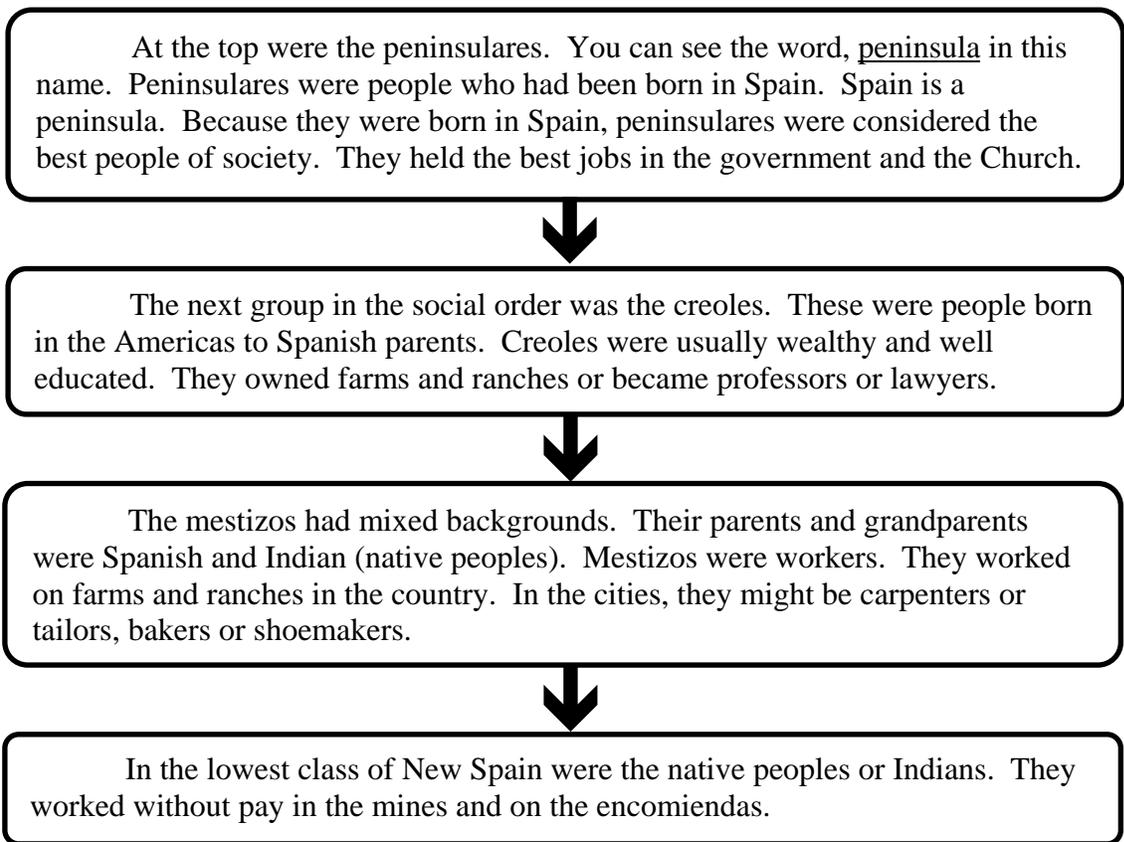
The Spanish crown tried to keep abuse from happening by passing the New Laws in 1542. The New Laws permitted Indians to own property. It could not be taken away from them. Slavery was abolished, or made illegal. The New Laws said that Spaniards could explore, live, and trade on native lands, but only if they did not harm the Indians living there. The laws made it illegal to force Indians to work in the mines. Christians could preach, but they could not punish the Indians if they chose not to become Christians.

The intent of the New Laws was to improve the treatment of native peoples in the Spanish colonies of the New World. The New Laws did not work as the crown had hoped. One problem was the distance between Spain and the Americas. Communication was by ship. The voyage across the Atlantic Ocean and back took many months. It was hard to enforce laws over that distance and time. To overcome this problem, the Audencia was formed. It was a group of officials who were supposed to enforce Spanish laws in the Americas. The Audencia soon became filled with owners of encomiendas. They enforced only the parts of laws that were in their best interests. That usually did not include reforms for the native peoples.

The New Laws were meant to abolish the encomienda system. In the end, they formally recognized it. Even though the encomienda system was started with good intentions, it actually hurt native peoples of the Spanish colonies. The encomienda system became a symbol of the abuse of native people. Unfortunately this kind of abuse happened all too often in the Age of Exploration.

Spain's abuse of natives cannot be denied. However, it is also important to study this period of history in an appropriate context. The Spanish were not all bad. Many, especially within the Catholic Church, worked hard to educate and help native people. The forced conversion of natives to Catholicism is considered insulting by some historians. However, it must be remembered that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this was done to save the natives. To the Spanish, the attempt to bring Catholicism and the Christian religion to the native peoples was a sign they cared about them.

The Spanish empire in the New World was called New Spain. It had its own order of social classes.



The Spanish mixed with native peoples more than other colonial powers. New ethnic groups and cultures resulted. Modern Mexico is an example of this. It still has a Native American population, but the majority of its people are of mixed Spanish and Native American heritage. They are known as mestizos. The culture, language, and history of Mexico highly reflect Spain's influence.

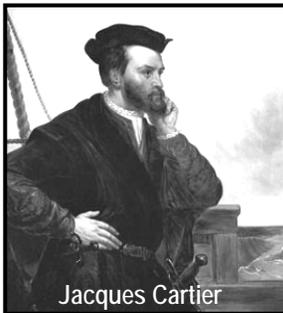
New Spain included possessions in North America, Central America, and South America. Spanish rule of its colonies is full of controversy. However, it cannot be denied that its influence was powerful and long-lasting.

## The French Colonies – New France

France originally sent explorers to North America to find a northern water route to Asia – the Northwest Passage. It was never found. Instead, French explorers and missionaries claimed land for France in the New World. Giovanni Verrazano was hired by the French king in 1524. He explored the Atlantic coast of North America and discovered

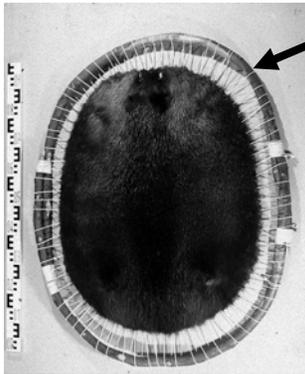


Ten years later, Jacques Cartier sailed up the St. Lawrence River until the rapids stopped his ships. He claimed eastern



Canada for France. Today, it is the province of Quebec and the city of Montreal. Samuel de Champlain followed in the 1600s. He founded the city of Quebec, France’s first permanent colony in the New World. The lake that separates northern New York State and Vermont is named after him.

The French did not find gold or silver in the areas they explored. However, they did find resources and products that were just as valuable. Huge numbers of fish were caught, preserved, and sent back for sale in Europe. The forests of North America provided a source of wood for building ships. Fur was the most valuable resource. Fur-bearing animals in Europe were getting hard to find. The French traded with Native Americans for furs of all kinds, but especially beaver fur. People in Europe wanted it because it was waterproof. The fur trade provided more wealth than all the gold and silver the Spanish ever found. The French called the animal skins and furs of North America *l’or du Nord* or “gold of the North”. The French treated Native Americans differently than other Europeans did. They realized that native peoples were excellent trading partners.



Furs like this beaver pelt were used for warmth and fashion in Europe. The cuffs of the French King Louis XIV (at right) are fur.



In exchange for the valuable furs, the French sold them useful metal objects like:

- pots and pans
- axes
- kettles
- needles
- guns
- knives
- pins
- ammunition

Native peoples also traded for French-made fabric, thread, and clothing. They taught the French traders and explorers how to travel the inland waterways by canoe and barges. The French learned which rivers connected to lakes and how to carry tons of cargo on them. Samuel de Champlain set up a French trade system that used native trade routes. In this way, the French were able to trade with peoples from all over the northern part of the New World.

Champlain also sent out young Frenchmen to learn the languages of the Native Americans and their ways. This kind of training was a “school” for new explorers. For these reasons, Samuel de Champlain is known as the *Father of Canada*. He was an explorer who founded a major city. He organized a fur trade that made France rich. He recognized the importance of Native Americans and the value of good relations with them. New France’s success was due, in part, to him.



Samuel de Champlain

Further south, Robert LaSalle explored the lands along the great Mississippi River. He claimed land for France all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico. Some of that land was also claimed by Spain. French settlements were set up along the Gulf coast, in the modern states of Alabama and Mississippi. The French tried to settle Florida as well, but the Spanish were already there and stopped them.

The fur trade produced great wealth for France; settlements did not. Traveling along the inland waterways and trading with Native Americans worked well. Trading posts sprang up where trade routes or rivers intersected. Small communities of French settlers grew there. Farming villages near the rivers were scattered far apart. There were few towns and fewer cities. New France covered a huge part of North America. However, there were very few French people actually living on all that land – only 10,000 by 1680. Of this number, a third lived on farms along the St. Lawrence River.

Like the government of New Spain, the government of New France was controlled directly by the King. Settlers had little freedom. It is not surprising then, that two-thirds of the French in North America were traders who roamed freely among the natives.



Just as the Spanish did, the French left their mark on North America. In Canada, the province of Quebec still has the largest group of French-speaking people in the world, outside of France. Montreal and Quebec City are bilingual cities: French and English are spoken there. Place names in the United States show where the French were: Louisiana, New Orleans, and Baton Rouge; Des Moines, St. Louis, and Detroit.

The French claim to the Louisiana Territory had resulted from LaSalle's exploration of the Mississippi River. The main city of the colony of Louisiana was New Orleans. French culture is still visible in this city. The French Quarter in New Orleans, Louisiana, is a historic district dating back to 1718. Every year, on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, thousands of people travel to New Orleans to celebrate *Mardi Gras*. This famous, city-wide party is based on the French *Carnival*.



In French, *Mardi Gras* means “fat Tuesday”. It has been a day of celebration in France since the Middle Ages. It is the last day of happy parties and balls, before the Catholic season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. New Orleans began to hold *Mardi Gras* in the early 1700s. The tradition continues today. People dress in costumes and masks. There are parties in homes and parades on the streets.

New Orleans is famous for this annual event.



In 1697 the French were given one-third of the island of Hispaniola under the terms of the Treaty of Ryswick which ended the War of the Grand Alliance. The Spanish gave France the western third, a settlement called St. Dominique. It was the birth of modern Haiti. In 1795 France gained more land. A slave rebellion in 1804 forced the French out of the colony. It was at this time the country was renamed Haiti. This largest colony in the Caribbean was mainly used for the export of sugar.

As a result of a defeat by Britain, France suffered the loss of most of its colonial lands in the late 1700s. French territory in North America was divided between England and Spain. Spain took the part of Louisiana west of the Mississippi. Britain took Canada and Louisiana from the Mississippi to the Appalachian Mountains. In India, the British became the dominant European power. Many of the French losses were due to the weakness of French leadership at home.

## England

English colonies in the Americas began during the early 1600s. For almost a century, Spain had dominated expansion in the New World. It was the most powerful European nation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, England began to challenge Spain’s power in the New World. English privateers attacked Spanish galleons (treasure ships). They took Spanish riches back to England and gave them to their queen, Elizabeth I. You have already read about Catholic Spain’s attempt to invade and conquer Protestant England. The defeat and failure of the Spanish *Armada* increased England’s power. That encouraged it to join the race for colonies.

The first English colony in the New World was founded in 1607 in Virginia. Religious groups founded colonies further north during the 1620s and '30s. For the next hundred years, England added more colonies in America. English colonies were started with a charter from its monarchs. Charters were granted to companies, religious groups, and individuals. In 1707, England and Scotland signed the Acts of Union and became the combined kingdom of Great Britain. It grew to be one of the two greatest colonial powers in the Americas and soon colonized as much land as the Spanish. Most of its colonies made up the eastern half of North America. British colonies in the Caribbean included Saint Kitts, Barbados, Bahamas, Jamaica, British Virgin Islands, and the Cayman Islands. In Central and South America, they were Belize, Mosquito Coast, British Guiana, and the Falkland Islands.

Like Spain, Great Britain disrupted and harmed Native American populations. Its goal was to become a great colonial power. Great Britain followed a policy of mercantilism with regard to its colonies. It received resources from them and sold them finished goods. In this system, Great Britain was called the *mother country*. That name symbolized the relationship between Britain and its colonies – that of a parent and its children. Different colonies in America supplied different things. Canada exported fish and fur. New England colonies sent timber, fish, and rum. Grain came from the Middle colonies; tobacco, rice, and cotton from the Southern colonies. In the Bahamas, British trade relied heavily on sugar and the slave trade.

Unlike Spain and France, Great Britain allowed its colonies some self-government. As long as a colony provided wealth to the mother country, it could run its own affairs. The British government did not interfere with it.

### **European Politics and the Colonies**

Power struggles and rivalries in Europe often affected colonies in the Western Hemisphere. In the mid-1700s, war broke out between the British and French and their allies. In North America, the European Seven Years' War became known as the French and Indian War. Great Britain and British colonists fought against the French and their Native American allies. Great Britain won. The victory meant the end of New France in North America. In the 1763 Treaty of Paris, French colonies became British possessions. In India, Sir Robert Clive

had defeated the French forces in 1757. After 1763, France’s colonial empire was gone. Great Britain was on the way to becoming a global imperial power.

1. Think about the Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494, who created it, and what it did.

a. What does the Treaty tell you about the Catholic Church of the time, compared to the modern Catholic Church?

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b. Summarize what the Treaty said and explain your opinion of what it did. Provide details.

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2. Which four European countries were the leaders in colonization?

a. \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name two reasons the encomienda system failed to achieve the goals of the Spanish crown.

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_

4. How was the encomienda system supposed to benefit native peoples?

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5. *The French treatment of native peoples in the New World differed from that of other European colonial powers.* Discuss this statement. Provide supporting details.

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6. Summarize the differences between the British rule of its colonies and Spanish rule of its colonies.

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7. Explain the connection between Sir Robert Clive’s victory in India in 1757, and the result of the French and Indian War in North America.

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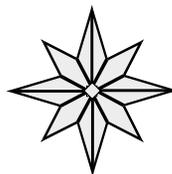
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