

Honors U.S. History I

2016 Summer Assignment

"History is who we are and why we are the way we are." David McCullough

Welcome to Honors Level U.S. History I. This is a rigorous course that is the first part of a two year cycle in American History which covers the story of our nation from the legacy of its earliest inhabitants through the period of the Gilded Age which ends in 1900. Next year you will be enrolled in Advanced Placement U.S. History II with the opportunity to sit for the AP test and earn college credit.

In order to acquaint you with the first unit of study and to prompt you to think about history over the summer, you are asked to read, think and annotate the following assignment. While no formal writing is required, you are asked to be prepared to discuss the questions posed with evidence of close reading of text. You are free to annotate, write, or list your responses in any way that works for you to be able to engage in a robust discussion of this material. Your formal understanding of these documents will be assessed as part of the first unit of study. Please have this completed and ready to discuss with your teacher in the first days of school.



*Detail from sketch of Secotan Village, published in *Americae pars decima* by Theodor de Bry, 1619, based on a drawing by John White. (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)*

Questions to consider as you read the following essay by Elliott West:

1. An author's **thesis** is a theory that is put forward "as a premise to be maintained or proved." What is Elliot West's thesis about American Indians?
2. It is assumed that you have some background knowledge about the Native Americans who occupied our continent before the arrival of Columbus. Given that, what did you read in this essay that surprised and/or shocked you?
3. According to West, "The first Europeans encountered a land far more culturally varied than the one they had left." Using textual evidence, how might you support this statement?

American Indians

by Elliott West

If history is the story of what people have done, then American history began thousands of years ago, and by far most of it is that of Indian peoples and their ancestors before Europeans arrived. Historians, however, disagree over answers to fundamental questions about that long history. Some say the first migrations into the Americas from today's Siberia happened twelve or thirteen thousand years ago, others say as early as twenty-five thousand years ago. That migration continued southward by land along both sides of the Rocky Mountains, according to some, while others lean toward a route down the Pacific coast, partly by boat.

Estimates of the New World population in 1492 range from thirty million to one hundred twenty million, and those for North America above Mexico range from five million to thirteen million. (The best guesses today are around fifty million and seven million respectively.) On some points, however, all agree. In 1492 what is today the United States was home to an extraordinary number of cultures of breathtaking variety. There were more than five hundred peoples, most of them divided into smaller related groups. Each people spoke their own language, many with separate dialects.

Many languages were grouped in half a dozen families but many were not, and the difference between, say, the language of the Pomo of California and that of the Chickasaws of Mississippi was as great as the difference between German and Chinese. The disparate peoples expressed themselves in rich artistic traditions—elaborate redwood carvings in the Pacific Northwest; basketry of grasses woven into gorgeous, intricate patterns in the Southwest and California; garments on the plains decorated delicately with shells, porcupine quills, and elk teeth. Indians worshipped by cosmologies as varied as their art and languages. Pawnees believed the stars were living beings who had sung and chanted everything into existence. Hopis could point to a spring where they had emerged from several worlds beneath this one and from which sustaining spirits visited annually.

Each Indian people supported themselves by a savvy and complex use of their particular place, and in America's diverse geography that meant a bewildering array of economies. Those in the wooded East lived in permanent villages and practiced diversified "safety net" economies blending gardening, gathering, hunting, and fishing. Southwestern peoples like the Hopis and Zunis farmed with the help of elaborate irrigation systems. In the Missouri River valley people living in villages of large earth lodges cultivated extensive gardens and hunted from huge herds of bison to the west. Downstream on the lower Mississippi palisaded cities thrived, fed by great cornfields, fishing, and trade, while on the high plains other peoples lived semi-nomadically in small groups as hunters and gatherers. On the Pacific coast there was virtually no agriculture but dense populations supported themselves by gathering, hunting, and fishing—in the Northwest especially of the salmon that returned annually in unimaginable numbers.

Tying together this splay of cultures and economies was an intricate and well-trafficked trade network. Goods from across the continent and beyond passed through major trading centers and annual rendezvous into a webbing that ultimately reached the remotest villages. Bison meat and hides from the plains were swapped for corn in the Southwest and fish and conch shells in the Southeast. Mica from the Appalachian Mountains made its way to the northern Rocky Mountains, and obsidian from the Rockies traveled to the upper Ohio River and deep into Mexico. From Mexico in turn came a whole array of goods, including colorful bird feathers. Everywhere daily life featured details from hundreds of miles away. Men along the eastern Great Lakes wore necklaces of grizzly claws from the far West, while others on the upper Rio Grande listened to music from flutes fashioned from the leg bones of Gulf coastal whooping cranes.

The first Europeans, then, encountered a land far more culturally varied than the one they had left. They would only gradually realize that variety, however. Early reports from America, whether from the English and French on the Atlantic coast or from the Spanish on the Gulf coast and Southwest, pictured Indians in similar terms that were both clichéd and contradictory. Indians were described as simple, childlike, and innocent but also savage, dangerous, godless, and debased. American Indians' impressions of Europeans are much harder to determine, but natives also misunderstood much of what they saw. Certainly they underestimated the forces about to be unleashed and the changes that would follow.

Indians often were first impressed by what they might gain from the newcomers. A pictograph from the Lene Lenape (later called the Delawares) expresses their initial response to whites who had come "from north and south." It shows a ship, and its accompanying memory is, "They are peaceful; they have great things; who are they?" Indians took in much that was immaterial.

European contact brought an expanded view of the world's expanse and new notions of people's relations to God, the *Great Mystery*. The most immediate effects, however, came from the "great things" changing their daily lives. Metal goods ranked high among them. Iron pots and axe heads, a point for a lance or arrow, and something as simple as a metal awl to replace a sharpened piece of bone to punch a hole in an animal hide—these were near miraculous advances that eased the labors and heightened the comforts of Native peoples. Such items coursed through the long-established trading network linking coast to coast and the Arctic to tropical rainforests. This initial European impact, the vigorous spout of life-transforming goods, preceded the Europeans themselves into much of the interior. Impressions of the newcomers traveled with the pots and spearpoints. In 1542 Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, the first European to sail along the Pacific coast, heard from Indians that to the east "men like us were traveling about, bearded, clothed and armed . . . killing many native Indians."

That would have been the expedition of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado (1540-1542) or Hernando de Soto (1539-1542), maybe both. Coronado's rode out of Mexico into Arizona and New Mexico, with a thrust through modern-day Texas up into Kansas. De Soto landed in Florida and marched through what is today Georgia, the Carolinas, Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas, with an offshoot to eastern Texas. Both epitomized Spain's two dominant motives—wealth and souls—and the Native response to them. Both Coronado and de Soto hoped to find opulent cities and storehouses of wealth like those conquered in Mexico and Peru. The second motive was religious. Columbus's first voyage was in the same year that Spain finally expelled Muslim forces that had occupied part of Iberia for nearly eight centuries. Fired by that victory, the Spanish saw the unexpected revelation of the Americas as a duty to save its peoples' souls through conversion to Roman Catholicism.

In both cases some American Indians welcomed the newcomers at first, hoping to obtain Spanish goods and to acquire whatever spiritual powers they thought useful. Soon, however, the *conquistadors'* demands, abuses, and intolerance soured relations. De Soto's large command, about seven hundred men at the outset, was especially brutal, and Indians put up stiff resistance, killing as many as two hundred in one battle. De Soto died of a fever, and the accounts brought back by the expedition's survivors, like those of Coronado on his return from the Southwest, discouraged further expeditions. In 1565 Pedro Menendez de Aviles founded San Augustine on the Atlantic coast of Florida, and thirty-three years later Juan de Onate established missions and military outposts among the Pueblo peoples along the upper Rio Grande in New Mexico. Now Spain's purpose was religious and strategic—to spread the faith and to protect more valuable holdings to the south in the Indies and Mexico from imperial competition.

Spain's first competitors were the French, who explored the Atlantic coast and attempted to colonize present-day South Carolina, from which they also preyed on the treasure fleets bearing gold and silver back to Spain. Menendez destroyed one colony and set out as well to dominate Indians of the Southeast, but the isolated, thinly garrisoned outposts held only a tenuous toehold in Florida in 1620. By then the English also were making their bid for the Atlantic coast. Their colony at Roanoke in North Carolina, begun in 1585, vanished during a long delay in resupplying it. In 1607 England tried again, landing 105 colonists on the James River in Virginia. Unlike those of the Spanish, English goals were mainly commercial, with plans for Indians to supply labor and support for the production of such big-ticket items as wine, silk, and caviar. Native Virginians, a confederation numbering perhaps twenty thousand persons, had little interest in that, however. As had others elsewhere, their leader, Powhatan, at first courted English trade, but, also as elsewhere, English demands and cultural misunderstandings soon brought conflict. In 1620 Jamestown, like

Spanish St. Augustine, was barely hanging on. In that year another English colony, Plymouth, with another motive, to be a religious refuge for radical English Protestants, was planted on Massachusetts Bay.

With a few isolated exceptions, Indian peoples in what is today the United States were firmly in command of their world in 1620. They vastly outnumbered Europeans. In many ways they had benefited from goods Europeans offered, and they were increasingly savvy to the newcomers' ways and how to deal with them to their advantage. By then, however, their vulnerabilities to the new arrivals were clear. In time those vulnerabilities would undermine their independence, cripple their economies and threaten their cultures and even their very existence.

The greatest threat came from diseases—smallpox, typhus, influenza, measles, malaria, and others. With no earlier exposure, Indians had little resistance to them, and the toll was horrific. Pathogens brought by de Soto's expedition apparently swept away vast numbers of southeastern natives and led to the abandonment of many cities described by the invaders. The terrible losses from diseases were followed by economic disruption, which brought hunger, social disarray, and further deaths. Like trade goods, epidemics often moved in advance of Europeans themselves. Traders, fishermen and privateers infected Indians along the North Atlantic coast on the eve of the first colonies. Plymouth was founded on the ruins of a Wampanoag village abandoned after a pestilence, possibly typhus, had swept away its peoples in 1616-1617. More than fifty New England settlements rose from other devastated villages. Diseases would move in waves across the continent, eventually reducing the overall Indian population by 80 percent or more.

Europeans brought domesticated animals that Indians had never known. Some were welcomed. Especially in the far West after 1680, horses would revolutionize Native life. Initially, however,

horses were hugely helpful in subduing Indians and in maintaining European settlements. Animals introduced diseases—de Soto's herds of pigs may have carried dangerous contagions—and pigs, cattle, horses, sheep and goats threatened Indian economies by destroying their crops and competing with game animals for forage. The effects of Europe's technology, like its animals, cut both ways. While trade goods offered great advantages, the more Indians used them, the more reliant on them they became, and thus the more leverage Europeans had in economic exchanges. As the newcomers' numbers grew and Indians were less able to supply what they wanted, that disparity would prove deeply troubling.

The greatest threats to Indian peoples in 1620 were so fundamental they are easy to miss. Europe held far more people than did North America—and in fact the Indian population was shrinking due to epidemics. European nations could focus resources and power against Native American divided into hundreds of different societies. European nations were highly motivated to invade and exploit a continent brimming with resources, and they looked upon its natives not as partners but as people to convert or to conquer. The Indians' firm command of what is now the United States was not to last. By 1820 they had lost control of land east of the Mississippi River, and a mere sixty years later the descendants of those newcomers perched so precariously on the Atlantic in 1620 dominated the continent all the way to the Pacific. The ways of life of all American Indian peoples were under siege.

[1] "Translation from the Spanish of the Account by the Pilot Ferrel of the Voyage of Cabrillo along the West Coast of North America in 1542," in *Report upon United States Geographical Surveys West of the One Hundredth Meridian*, George Montague Wheeler, et al. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1879), 7:305.

Questions to consider as you read this primary source:

1. On a scale of one to ten with one being negative and ten being positive, how would you rate Columbus's view of the New World and the Natives he encountered? What evidence would you cite from the text?
2. What value does this letter have to a student of history? What limitations do you think this correspondence has? In other words, what should historians be wary of?
3. How does Columbus's account agree or disagree with the information in Elliot West's essay?

Columbus reports on his first voyage, 1493

Christopher Columbus' letter to Ferdinand and Isabella

Letter from Christopher Colom [Columbus]: to whom our age owes much; on the recently discovered Islands of India beyond the Ganges. In the search for which he had been sent out eight months earlier under the auspices and at the expense of the most invincible Ferdinand and Helisabet [Isabella], rulers of Spain...

AS I know that it will afford you pleasure that I have brought my undertaking to a successful result, I have determined to write you this letter to inform you of everything that has been done and discovered in this voyage of mine.

On the thirty-third day after leaving Cadiz I came into the Indian Sea, where I discovered many islands inhabited by numerous people. I took possession of all of them for our most fortunate King by making public proclamation and unfurling his standard, no one making any resistance.

To the first of them I have given the name of our blessed Saviour, whose aid I have reached this and all the rest; but the Indians call it Guanahani. To each of the others also I gave a new name, ordering one to be called Sancta Maria de Concepcion, another Fernandina, another Isabella, another Juana; and so with all the rest. As soon as we reached the island which I have just said was called Juana, I sailed along its coast some considerable distance towards the West, and

found it to be so large, without any apparent end, that I believed it was not an island, but a continent, a province of Cathay. But I saw neither towns nor cities lying on the seaboard, only some villages and country farms, with whose inhabitants I could not get speech, because they fled as soon as they beheld us. I continued on, supposing I should come upon some city, or country-houses. At last, finding that no discoveries rewarded our further progress, and that this course was leading us towards the North, which I was desirous of avoiding, as it was now winter in these regions, and it had always been my intention to proceed Southwards, and the winds also were favorable to such desires, I concluded not to attempt any other adventures; so, turning back, I came again to a certain harbor, which I had remarked. From there I sent two of our men into the country to learn whether there was any king or cities in that land. They journeyed for three days, and found innumerable people and habitations, but small and having no fixed government; on which account they returned. Meanwhile I had learned from some Indians, whom I had seized at this place, that this country was really an island. Consequently I continued along towards the East, as much as 322 miles, always hugging the shore. Where was the very extremity of the island, from there I saw another island to the Eastwards, distant 54 miles from this Juana, which I named Hispana; and proceeded to it, and directed my course for 564 miles East by North as it were, just as I had done at Juana.

The island called Juana, as well as the others in its neighborhood, is exceedingly fertile. It has numerous harbors on all sides, very safe and wide, above comparison with any I have ever seen. Through it flow many very broad and health-giving rivers; and there are in it numerous very lofty mountains. All these island are very beautiful, and of quite different shapes; easy to be traversed, and full of the greatest variety of trees reaching to the stars. I think these never lose their leaves, and I saw them looking as green and lovely as they are wont to be in the month of May in Spain. Some of them were in leaf, and some in fruit; each flourishing in the condition its nature required. The nightingale was singing and various other little birds, when I was rambling

among them in the month of November. There are also in the island called Juana seven or eight kinds of palms, which as readily surpass ours in height and beauty as do all the other trees, herbs, and fruits. There are also wonderful pinewoods, fields, and extensive meadows; birds of various kinds, and honey; and all the different metals, except iron.

In the island, which I have said before was called Hispana, there are very lofty and beautiful mountains, great farms, groves and fields, most fertile both for cultivation and for pasturage, and well adapted for constructing buildings. The convenience of the harbors in this island, and the excellence of the rivers, in volume and salubrity, surpass human belief, unless one should see them. In it the trees, pasture-lands and fruits differ much from those of Juana. Besides, this Hispana abounds in various kinds of species, gold and metals. The inhabitants of both sexes of this and of all the other island I have seen, or of which I have any knowledge, always go as naked as they came into the world, except that some of the women cover their private parts with leaves or branches, or a veil of cotton, which they prepare themselves for this purpose. They are all, as I said before, unprovided with any sort of iron, and they are destitute of arms, which are entirely unknown to them, and for which they are not adapted; not on account of any bodily deformity, for they are well made, but because they are timid and full of terror. They carry, however, canes dried in the sun in place of weapons, upon whose roots they fix a wooded shaft, dried and sharpened to a point. But they never dare to make use of these; for it has often happened, when I have sent two or three of my men to some of their villages to speak with the inhabitants, that a crowd of Indians has sallied forth; but when they saw our men approaching, they speedily took to flight, parents abandoning children, and children their parents. This happened not because any loss or injury had been inflicted upon any of them. On the contrary I gave whatever I had, cloth and many other things, to whomsoever I approached, or with whom I could get speech, without any return being made to me; but they are by nature fearful and timid. But when they see that they are safe, and all fear is banished, they are very guileless and honest,

and very liberal of all they have. No one refuses the asker anything that he possesses; on the contrary they themselves invite us to ask for it. They manifest the greatest affection towards all of us, exchanging valuable things for trifles, content with the very least thing or nothing at all. But I forbade giving them a very trifling thing and of no value, such as bits of plates, dishes, or glass; also nails and straps; although it seemed to them, if they could get such, that they had acquired the most beautiful jewels in the world. For it chanced that a sailor received for a single strap as much weight of gold as three sold;...and so others for other things of less price, especially for new blancas, and for some gold coins, for which they gave whatever they seller asked; for instance, an ounce and a half or two ounces of gold, or thirty or forty pounds of cotton, with which they were already familiar. So too for pieces of hoops, jugs, jars, and pots they bartered cotton and gold like beasts. This I forbade, because it was plainly unjust; and I gave them many beautiful and pleasing things, which I had brought with me, for no return whatever, in order to win their affection, and that they might become Christians and inclined to love our King and Queen and Princes and all the people of Spain; and that they might be eager to search for and gather and give to us what they abound in and we greatly need.

They do not practice idolatry; on the contrary, they believe that all strength, all power, in short all blessings, are from Heaven, and I have come down from there with these ships and sailors; and in this spirit was I received everywhere, after they had got over their fear. They are neither lazy nor awkward; but, on the contrary, are of an excellent and acute understanding. Those who have sailed these seas give excellent accounts of everything; but they have never seen men wearing clothes, or ships like ours.

As soon as I had some into this sea, I took by force some Indians from the first island, in order that they might learn from us, and at the same time tell us what they knew about affairs in these regions. This succeeded admirably; for in a short time we understood them and they us both by gesture and signs and words; and they were of great service to us. They are coming now with

me, and have always believed that I have come from Heaven, notwithstanding the long time they have been, and still remain, with us. They were the first who told this wherever we went, one calling to another, with a loud voice, *Come, Come, you will see Men from Heaven.* Whereupon both women and men, children and adults, young and old, laying aside the fear they had felt a little before, flocked eagerly to see us, a great crowd thronging about our steps, some bringing food, and others drink, with greatest love and incredible good will.

In each island are many boats made of solid wood; though narrow, yet in length and shape similar to our two-bankers, but swifter in motion, and managed by oars only. Some of them are large, some small, and some of medium size; but most are larger than a two-banker rowed by 18 oars. With these they sail to all the islands, which are innumerable; engaging in traffic and commerce with each other. I saw some of these biremes, or boats, which carried 70 or 80 rowers. In all these islands there is no difference in the appearance of the inhabitants, and none in their customs and language, so that all understand one another. This is a circumstance most favorable for what I believe our most serene King especially desires, that is, their conversion to the holy faith of Christ; for which, indeed, so far as I could understand, they are very ready and prone.

I have told already how I sailed in a straight course along the island of Juana from West to East 322 miles. From this voyage and the extent of my journeyings I can say that this Juana is larger than England and Scotland together... I learned from the Indians, whom I am bringing with me, and who are well acquainted with all these islands.

This island is to be coveted, and not to be despised when acquired. As I have already taken possession of all the others, as I have said, for our most invincible King, and the role over them is entirely committed to the said King, so in this one I have taken special possession of a certain large town, in a most convenient spot, well suited for all profit and commerce, to which I have given the name of the Nativity of our Lord; and there I ordered a fort of be built forthwith, which ought to

be finished now. In it I left as many men as seemed necessary, with all kinds of arms, and provisions sufficient for more than a year; also a caravel and men to build others, skilled not only in trade but in others. I secured for them the good will and remarkable friendship of the King of the island; for these people are very affectionate and kind; so much so that the aforesaid King took a pride in my being called his brother.

Although they should change their minds, and wish to harm those who have remained in the fort, they cannot; because they are without arms, go naked and are too timid; so that, in truth, those who hold the aforesaid fort can lay waste the whole of that island, without any danger to themselves, provided they do not violate the rules and instructions I have given them.

In all these islands, as I understand, every man is satisfied with only one wife, except the princes or kings, who are permitted to have 20. The women appear to work more than the men; but I could not well understand whether they have private property, or not; for I saw that what every one had was shared with the others, especially meals, provisions and such things. I found among them no monsters, as very many expected; but men of great deference and kind; not are they black like Ethiopians; but they have long, straight hair. They do not dwell where the rays of Sun have most power, although the Sun's heat is very great there, as this region is twenty-six degrees distant from the equinoctial line. From the summits of the mountains there comes great cold, but the Indians mitigate it by being inured to the weather, and by the help of very hot food, which they consume frequently and in immoderate quantities.

I saw no monsters, neither did I hear accounts of any such except in an island called Charis, the second as one crosses over from Spain to India, which is inhabited by a certain race regarded by their neighbors as very ferocious. They eat human flesh, and make use of several kinds of boats by which they cross over to all the Indian islands, and plunder and carry off whatever they can. But they differ in no respect from the others except in wearing their hair long after the fashion of women. They make use of bows and arrows made of reeds, having pointed shafts fastened to the

thicker portion, as we have before described. For this reason they are considered to be ferocious, and the other Indians consequently are terribly afraid of them; but I consider them of no more 8
Columbus reports on his first voyage, 1493

account than the others. They have intercourse with certain women who dwell alone upon the island of Mateurin, the first as one crosses from Spain to India. These women follow none of the usual occupations of their sex; but they use bows and arrows like those of their husbands, which I have described, and protect themselves with plates of copper, which is found in the greatest abundance among them.

I was informed that there is another island larger than the aforesaid Hispana, whose inhabitants have no hair; and that there is a greater abundance of gold in it than in any of the others. Some of the inhabitants of these islands and of the others I have seen I am bringing over with me to bear testimony to what I have reported. Finally, to sum up in a few words the chief results and advantages of our departure and speedy return, I make this promise to our most invincible Sovereigns, that, if I am supported by some little assistance from them, I will give them as much gold as they have need of, and in addition spices, cotton and mastic, which is found only in Chios, and as much aloes-wood, and as many heathen slaves as their majesties may choose to demand; besides these, rhubarb and other kinds of drugs, which I think the men I left in the fort before alluded to, have already discovered, or will do so; as I have delayed nowhere longer than the winds compelled me, except while I was providing for the construction of a fort in the city of Nativity, and for making all things safe.

Although these matters are very wonderful and unheard of, they would have been much more so, if ships to a reasonable amount had been furnished me. But what has been accomplished is great and wonderful, and not at all proportionate to my deserts, but to the sacred Christian faith, and to the piety and religion of our Sovereigns. For what is the mind of man could not compass the spirit of God has granted to mortals. For God is wont and listen to his servants who love his

precepts, even in impossibilities, as has happened to me in the present instance, who have accomplished what human strength has hitherto never attained. For if any one has written or told anything about these islands, all have done so either obscurely or by guesswork, so that it has almost seemed to be fabulous.

Therefore let King and Queen and Princes, and their most fortunate realms, and all other Christian provinces, let us all return thanks to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who has bestowed so great a victory and reward upon us; let there be processions and solemn sacrifices prepared; let the churches be decked with festal boughs; let Christ rejoice upon Earth as he rejoices in Heaven, as he foresees that so many souls of so many people heretofore lost are to be saved; and let us be glad not only for the exaltation of our faith, but also for the increase of temporal prosperity, in which not only Spain but all Christendom is about to share.

As these things have been accomplished so have they been briefly narrated. Farewell.

Christopher Colom,

Admiral of the Ocean Fleet

Lisbon, March 14th.