



WHP 1200 Unit 2 Frames | World History Project

The world from 1200-1450, the period covered in this unit, was one of astounding diversity. Most societies were disconnected from people in distant places, so lifestyles, beliefs, and cultures were unique around the globe. But there was also remarkable interconnectedness during this period that set the stage for the rapid global transformations to come. By exploring the 250 years covered in this unit from the communities, networks, and production and distribution frames, this video reveals what the world was like during this period as well as the many ways things changed in this time.

0:12 The world in 1200 looked very different depending on where you were standing.

Today, we connect with our friends and family across the world instantaneously. And our cultures and the things we consume are widely shared across countries and continents.

Illustration of world map.

But in the period 1200 to 1450—the dates covered in this unit— humans in Afro-Eurasia had little to no contact with humans living in the Americas or the far reaches of the Pacific.

Image of different terrain.

Indeed, for most of human history, most societies were pretty disconnected from people in distant places. Vast oceans, tall mountains, formidable deserts hindered exchanges between them.

So as a result, the world in Unit 2 was a world of astounding diversity. The ways that people lived, their beliefs, their foods, their fashions, and so many other aspects of life wove a rich global tapestry.

1:05 Still, given the challenges, this was also a period of remarkable interconnection between societies in many parts of the world. And thanks to these connections—the changes in this unit helped set the stage for many of the rapid and global transformations that you'll encounter in later units.

Graphic and text on course frames.

Now, just as the your location might give you a different view of the world from 1200 to 1450, the frame you use to examine it might give you a very different picture of what was going on. But together, the three frames can help us understand how this world was different from our own and also what changed in the 250 years between 1200 and 1450.

Communities frame graphic.

For example, if we view this era through the Communities frame, we can see diverse and distinct communities—from tiny villages to massive empires—in every corner of the globe.

Map, illustration, and text on Mongol Empire.

Indeed early in this unit, beginning around 1206, one of history's largest communities emerged—the mighty Mongol Empire. This empire conquered and governed peoples from Korea to Eastern Europe under a single empire.

2:14 By comparison, relatively small Polynesian communities dotted the expanse of the Pacific Ocean. And each of these far-flung communities developed distinct cultures and systems of belief and governance. Still, thanks to enduring connections, they also shared a lot of commonalities.

Illustrations of ships in the ocean.

Illustrations of Aztec empire.

Powerful empires and kingdoms emerged in every part of the world. In the Americas, for example, the Aztec Empire conquered their neighbors and collected tribute from their diverse subjects.

Networks frame graphic and world map illustration.

And many of the large empires that you'll encounter in this unit allowed for the creation of an unprecedented expansion of long-distance trade networks. So the Mongol Empire, for example, allowed merchants to travel across its territory, making trade on the Silk Roads faster and safer than ever. And similar long-distance networks were thriving in the Indian Ocean, in the Pacific Ocean, in the Americas, and across the Sahara Desert, and all of them allowed for the flow of goods and ideas and transformed societies.

3:18

Illustrations of Islamic people.

In Afro-Eurasia, we also in this period see the expansion of a network based on the shared Islamic faith. Islam provided a common set of beliefs that allowed individuals, like the fourteenth-century Moroccan scholar, Ibn Battuta, to travel from West Africa to Southeast Asia, finding a familiar community of believers in each port.

Illustration of the spread of Black Death.

But all good things come with consequences. You see, more than just silk and spice that traveled across networks. So in the fourteenth century, the Black Death devastated societies across Afro-Eurasia, killing as many as 200 million people.

Production and distribution frame graphic.

Viewing this era through the Production and Distribution frame, we can see important changes and continuities happening. In this period, the ways that people made and used stuff still looked a lot like it had for centuries.

4:12

Illustration of early farming.

Most people were farmers, and the goods they made and used were produced locally, and they used methods that would have been familiar to people living hundreds of years earlier.

Illustration of different technologies.

Yet, all those long-distance trade networks I mentioned earlier also moved new ideas and technologies to new places. The compass, astrolabe, and gunpowder all traveled from China and the Islamic world to Western Europe during this period. Diseases made the voyage as well. You'll learn more about the consequences of this technological exchange in Unit 3.

But as you'll see in this unit, nothing in history happens in a straight line. Things change at different speeds, and change happens sometimes in one direction, and sometimes in another. But by the end of this unit, the pace of change will be starting to increase, so hold on tight and keep your frames nearby!



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