



## WHP 1200 Unit 3 Frames | World History Project

Unit 3—the era from 1450–1750—was a time of intensive changes. At the start of this period, large, land-based empires emerged in Afro-Eurasia and ruled vast territories within and around the former Mongol realm. But, perhaps the most dramatic of these changes was the linking of Afro-Eurasia with the Americas. The results of these changes can be interpreted through all three frames. Products were exchanged, new systems of production arose, and distribution routes expanded. Some existing communities were conquered or destroyed, and new oceanic empires arose. Global networks connected people and transmitted ideas, beliefs, and philosophies.



**0:13**

*Map sequence of different empires with text on the Columbian Exchange.*

The world in 1450 stood on the precipice of great change.

You see, the collapse of the Mongol Empire had set the scene for the rise of a number of new, large, land-based empires, and each of them began to dominate huge swaths of the Afro-Eurasian landmass. And at the same time, people on the far western edge of Afro-Eurasia crossed the Atlantic Ocean and made contact with people in the Americas. What followed is called the Columbian Exchange, and it's a major change that first connected the two hemispheres.

We often hear that the Columbian Exchange is the world's first global system. We now know that Christopher Columbus was not the first person from Afro-Eurasia to make contact with societies in the Americas. But after his arrival, the Afro-Eurasian and American systems began a permanent, sustained relationship for the first time. And that's a pretty big deal.

**1:12**

But what really changed as a result? And how can we understand these changes in the context of our three frames?

Certainly, we can look at the Columbian Exchange in terms of new ideas about community.

*Community frames graphic and illustrations of results of European conquest.*

The European entry to the Americas—and gradual conquest that follows—permanently devastated a lot of American communities. Before, these communities looked like loose confederations, small egalitarian communities, and even vast empires like those of the Inca and Aztec. And they never really recovered from European conquest. In fact, we still don't know a great deal about some of these societies and the ways they were organized.

*Illustration of the transatlantic slave trade.*

And at the same time, the transatlantic slave trade became a big part of the Columbian Exchange and this transformation caused lasting damage to many African societies.

*Illustration of ships sailing the ocean.*

All of these connections also allowed some European states to develop new oceanic empires. Now many of these empires were also a new kind of community even because they were run as partnership between corporations and states—like the Portuguese Company of the Indies and the Dutch East India Company.

**2:26**

*Map outlining major empires.*

Still: the big story of the period, at least at the beginning, were the large, land-based empires of Afro-Eurasia which continued to look like the dominant world powers. Building on the example of the Mongols, these new states: the Ottoman, Mughal, Ming, Russian, and Safavid empires each ruled vast territories within and around the former Mongol realm. And they each carefully controlled the movement of people and goods through their territories.

But by the end of this unit, their dominance was beginning to fade as those European empires began to challenge them.

*Production and distribution graphic.*

Now, the same historical processes that reshaped communities in both hemispheres also dramatically altered global patterns of production and distribution.

**3:15**

*Text “Transatlantic Slave Trade” and “Plantation System”.*

*Illustrations and images of farming and mining in European colony.*

*Illustrations of trade ships.*

*Painting of European bankers.*

**4:25**

*Networks frame graphic.*

*Illustrations of European missionaries and merchants.*

**5:13**

The new European-based empires in the Americas, you see, created new methods to produce the goods they wanted, and these included two new systems: the transatlantic slave trade and the plantation system.

Together these systems allowed the European-based empires to extract huge amounts of raw materials from their colonies in the Americas—like sugar and tobacco—and they used these to fuel production at home as well as trade abroad. The new colonies in the Americas also produced more silver than the world had ever seen. And Europeans used this silver to buy their way into the biggest markets of them all—the vast economies of China and South Asia.

Now all of these items were circulated—sugar and tobacco crossing the Atlantic to Europe, silver crossing the Pacific to Asia and fine silk and porcelain coming back to Europe—and they were all carried on bigger and better ships and travelled through wider system of distribution than ever before. And people were moving along with them—not only traders and migrants, of course, but also enslaved people.

To pay for these trips, Europeans developed new banking and finance technologies.

And these new technologies—both physical and financial—moved both goods and people. But they also carried ideas, philosophies, and religions, throughout what was now a new global network. Visitors and migrants moved to new areas with new ideas. And these ideas were mixing to create new concepts and belief systems. The Americas in particular were becoming a place of cultural blending as Indigenous, African, and European faiths and philosophies mingled. Travelers were also bringing experiences back from the places they visited.

Europe in particular benefited from experiences and learning gained by missionaries and merchants who traveled abroad in Asia, the Pacific, Africa, and the Americas.

But of course, not everyone benefitted equally from these new networks, or the new systems of production and distribution, or the new communities. Understanding how and why peoples’ places in these systems differed, and the long legacies of those differences, even up until today, is one important way we can use history to understand the present.



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