Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Explain theories surrounding the migrations of peoples into North America and their subsequent movement across the continent.
2. Identify and examine innovations and achievements made by natives prior to the arrival of Columbus and note the importance of each to the creation of a distinct culture.
3. Describe the various native communities that emerged throughout North America and note the characteristics that defined each.
4. Compare and contrast native cultures with those found in Europe during the same time period.
5. Interpret information presented visually to further understand significant elements presented within the unit.
6. Describe Europe at the brink of the Era of Exploration and identify key factors that led to this exploration as well as key figures associated with it.
7. Identify early European colonial settlements in the New World and the characteristics that defined them.
8. Outline the methods used to overtake early America and discuss how these methods were developed.
9. Identify the role of economics in the exploration and colonization of the Americas.
10. Identify the actions taken by European powers to keep their strength within the New World.

Unit Summary

Unit I is composed of Chapters 1 and 2. This opening unit focuses on the introduction of the native cultures of the American continents and the history of the rise and role of expedition into the American world. More than just focusing on who came to America, this unit is concerned with reasons for expedition, the cultures that were here prior to the European exploration, and native tribes like the Inca, Aztec, and other “Indian” cultures of the “New World.”

Chapter 1 focuses on inhabitants of the Americas prior to Columbus’ discovery. The chapter addresses the multiple migrations of these inhabitants and theories surrounding these migrations. It chronologically follows their adaption to and modifications of the surrounding environment. It focuses on perhaps the most significant modification – the development of farming and the cultural effects this development had on native societies. Finally, the chapter categorizes the societies based on cultural region and provides defining characteristics of each region.
Chapter 2 focuses on the exploration and subsequent conquest of the Americas by Europeans. The chapter addresses the factors present in European society that led to expansion. While describing the early Europeans involved in colonization, it points out the dominance of the Spanish Empire in the early days of conquest. Finally, it outlines the consequences - both positive and negative - to Europeans as well as to Natives that resulted from this colonization.

This unit provides an introduction to European and Native relations and provides a basis to understanding the relations that develop between the two groups as the story of America unfolds.