Claims and Cargo

Trace how European rivalry changed land, labor, and trade.

MWH.C.2.5 "Analyze migration, settlement patterns, and the impact on indigenous peoples caused by a competition among European nations during the Age of Exploration..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two goals that drew Europeans across the Atlantic, circle two harms to Indigenous peoples, and number three phrases that show how plantation growth led to the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Who Gained from Atlantic Trade?

1. When Spain and Portugal sailed west, rulers wanted new trade routes, wealth, and converts to Christianity. Spanish expeditions reached the Caribbean and then the American mainland; Portuguese voyages established claims in Brazil. European leaders invoked the Doctrine of Discovery, a Christian claim that they could take lands not ruled by Christians. This claim ignored Indigenous peoples' own governments and rights. Rival empires divided territory without Indigenous consent, and settlers built towns on lands where Indigenous communities already lived.

2. Competition reshaped trade. Under mercantilism, governments sought colonial resources and markets to increase national wealth; private investors also hoped to earn profits, a feature of emerging capitalism. Spain extracted silver from Mexico and Peru, while Portugal developed sugar plantations in Brazil. Colonists seized land and forced Indigenous people to work, sometimes enslaving them. Warfare, displacement, and epidemics devastated many communities. As colonies expanded, the demand for plantation labor grew beyond what colonists could obtain locally.

3. The Columbian Exchange moved crops, animals, and diseases across the Atlantic. Maize and potatoes spread from the Americas to Europe, while horses, cattle, and wheat arrived in the Americas. New foods changed diets, but diseases brought by Europeans killed many Indigenous people who lacked prior exposure. To supply labor, traffickers forcibly transported enslaved Africans across the Atlantic, especially to sugar-growing regions such as Brazil and the Caribbean. Sugar sales connected colonial plantations to European merchants and helped finance further overseas trade.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Doctrine of Discovery support European expansion, and whose rights did it ignore?

2. How did European goals help shape Spanish and Portuguese settlement in the Americas?

3. Explain how plantation growth helped expand the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

4. How did the Columbian Exchange change both diets and Indigenous communities?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum case holds a silver coin and a sugar bowl. Write a four-sentence label connecting both objects to European trade goals, Indigenous land loss, and the forced movement of Africans. Include one cause-and-effect link you infer.

ANSWER KEY

Claims and Cargo

HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.C.2.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two goals that drew Europeans across the Atlantic, circle two harms to Indigenous peoples, and number three phrases that show how plantation growth led to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Doctrine of Discovery support European expansion, and whose rights did it ignore?	**It was used to justify taking lands not ruled by Christians, ignoring Indigenous peoples' governments and land rights.**
2	How did European goals help shape Spanish and Portuguese settlement in the Americas?	**Rulers sought wealth, trade, and Christian converts. Spain expanded into the Caribbean and mainland, while Portugal established claims and sugar plantations in Brazil.**
3	Explain how plantation growth helped expand the trans-Atlantic slave trade.	**Growing plantations needed more labor, so traffickers forcibly transported enslaved Africans across the Atlantic, especially to sugar-growing regions.**
4	How did the Columbian Exchange change both diets and Indigenous communities?	**Crops such as maize and potatoes spread to Europe, while wheat reached the Americas. Diseases brought by Europeans killed many Indigenous people.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A silver coin points to Spain's search for wealth through mines in Mexico and Peru. A sugar bowl points to Portugal's plantations in Brazil, which produced crops for sale. Europeans claimed land without Indigenous consent, clearing the way for mines and plantations that displaced Indigenous communities. The growing demand for plantation labor helped drive the forced transport of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic.

Accept other accurate connections supported by the passage. The label should address both objects and explain a link between colonial expansion and forced labor.