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**The Columbian Exchange**

**Key Terms:**

Columbian Exchange: sharing of plants, animals, diseases, human populations, technology, and ideas between the Western and Eastern Hemispheres as a direct result of Columbus’ arrival to the Americas in 1492.

Triangular Trade: trade between Africa, Europe and Americas of slaves, manufactured goods, and raw goods

New World: the Americas

Old World: Europe, Asia, Africa

Encomiendasystem: system of forced labor which Native Americans worked on Spanish-owned estates

**Essential Questions:**

* Why is the legacy of Columbus so controversial?
* What were the political, economic and cultural effects of European exploration on Europe, Africa, and the Americas?

**What was the Columbian Exchange?**

* The term, “Columbian Exchange” refers to the exchange of biological commodities and ideas between the Old World and the New World as a result of the European voyages of exploration that started with Christopher Columbus.
* “Biological commodities” means living things, or things that were once alive. Examples would include domestic animals, agricultural products, microbes (bacteria and viruses), and even people—some of whom (slaves) were actually treated as commodities to be bought and sold.
* Prior to 1492, many of these biological commodities had never crossed the ocean. When the two hemispheres finally came into contact, the Columbian Exchange would dramatically and permanently affect human societies and the natural environment on both sides of the ocean.

**Causes for the Age of Exploration**

* A desire to find a new route to the riches (i.e. spices) of Asia
* Curiosity about the world inspired by the Crusades, the tales of Marco Polo, and the Renaissance.
* The desire to spread Christianity by converting other peoples.
* To find new sources of gold and silver.
* A desire to enhance political and economic power through territorial expansion.

**Christopher Columbus**

* Columbus hoped to find a route to the east by sailing west.
* In 1492 he discovered what would become known as “The New World” and established the first recorded European contact with Native Americans.
* There is continuing debate over evidence concerning his treatment of the Natives.
* Columbus made three voyages to the “New World”.
* “Discovered” the Americas for Europe in 1492.
* Between 1493-1496 he attempted to set up a colony is Hispaniola.
* The colony on Hispaniola failed.
* Controversial legacy.
  + Great sailor and explorer or ruthless conqueror?
  + Should we celebrate Columbus Day?

Effects of the Columbian Exchange

* Overseas expansion led to increased power and wealth for European powers
* Christianity and the culture of Western Europe spread throughout the world.
* The ethnocentric attitudes of Europeans led to the mistreatment of native peoples.
* Millions of Native Americans were wiped out by warfare and disease.
* Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade began, also known as the “Triangular Trade.”