

ANALYSIS AND EVIDENCE: SAMPLE ESSAY

Columbian Exchange Sample Essay

Prompt: How did the Columbian Exchange transform the Americas from c. 1500 to 1750 CE?

From the year 1500 to 1750, the world underwent an intense wave of transformations. The Americas, a set of continents that had originally been thriving on its own, suffered the brunt of the violence and greed that was transferred from continent to continent along with people, disease, and goods through the Columbian Exchange. The Columbian Exchange brought disease, violence, and racial diversity to the Americas.

The Columbian Exchange engendered a more diverse population in the Americas. As shown in Document 6, Europeans displaced hundreds of thousands of African men and women who were to be used as slaves along the east coasts of North and South America and parts of the Caribbean. In Georgia and the Carolinas alone, Europeans brought about 210,000 enslaved Africans. Likewise, Southeast Brazil saw the arrival of 2,281,000 Africans, 390,000 enslaved Africans were brought to the Spanish Caribbean, 779,000 to Cuba, and so on.

The consequence of such a forced exodus from Africa was a diversified population in the Americas: whereas before c. 1500 the Americas had only consisted of those native to the continents, it now consisted of people from Africa and Europe. In addition to altering the human population, the Columbian Exchange also brought goods and animals native to Afro-Eurasia to the Americas, such as wheat and horses, and animals and plants such as turkeys and maize from the Americas to Afro-Eurasia.

The Columbian Exchange transformed the population of the Americas through disease and violence. The Columbian Exchange destroyed indigenous cities. But unfortunately, their buildings were not all that were destroyed. Europeans carried germs and diseases that the Indigenous American population had not had the chance to become immune to like their European counterparts. After the conquest of the Tenochtitlan by Cortes and his army in 1521, an Aztec poet wrote that “The houses are roofless now; and their walls are red with blood... We have pounded our hands in despair against the adobe walls. For our inheritance, our city, is lost and dead” (Doc. 3). Europeans transformed the thriving Aztec communities that had a rich culture and impressive architecture into a shattered empire.

The Columbian Exchange radically transformed the population of the Americas, the presence and influence of the indigenous people survived. These transformations and the events that produced them helped to create the modern North and South America

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today. It is important to remember all parts of a country's history and the people that may have suffered at the making of it. The Americas did not completely lose their influence and culture. Ned Blackhawk professor of history at Yale and a member of the Te-Moak tribe of the Western Shoshone wrote about how there are still some enduring indigenous powers including the Iroquois Confederacy in the Northeast, the Algonquian-speaking alliances of the Great Lakes, and the equestrian powers across the Plains. Furthermore, he notes that indigenous self- rule continued through the 18th century and that "treaties and federal patterns of diplomacy bound the new nation with the continent's oldest confederations and peoples" (Doc. 5). So even though the American continents underwent vast changes because of the Columbian Exchange, these communities did not let its effects completely wipe them out. They still managed to maintain their presence in America along with their culture and values.