

What does the Europeans' treatment of peoples they came into contact with reveal about their worldview?

Vocabulary
imperialism -

The Treaty of Tordesillas

In the late 1400's, Portugal and Spain people in search of trade routes to Asia. To make sure that Portugal got its fair share of the trade goods, an imaginary line was drawn, dividing the world into two halves. According to the Treaty of Tordesillas, Spain had the land west of the imaginary line, running north and south through the Atlantic Ocean, and Portugal had all the land east of the line.

Many countries were angry with this treaty, but England and France ignored the terms and sent explorers across the North Atlantic. With the expansionist worldview, many powerful countries used imperialism as their reason.

Taking Charge

This new territory that was discovered by Columbus and other Spanish explorers was now called New Spain. The Spanish government allowed people to settle in New Spain to mine for precious metals and set up plantations for growing crop that was to be exported to Spain. The indigenous people were forced to work in terrible conditions for the landowners and in time, millions of people were worked to death in the silver mines and the fields.

Imperialist Treasure

Spain became one of the wealthiest nations after its conquest of the Aztec and Incan empire. Thousands of tonnes of gold, silver and jewels were mined in Peru, Bolivia and other areas, then shipped to Spain.

With small, fast, highly manoeuvrable vessels, the English were able to attack the much larger, slower-moving Spanish boats and the English began to raid the Spanish ships and sea ports for their treasures. This act of piracy was supported by the monarch in England even though the Spanish ambassador to England protested this act.

There Terrible Cost of Imperialism

It did not take long for the Europeans to destroy the thriving civilizations of Central and South America. No matter where the Europeans explored, "the Indigenous people paid a terrible cost".

- 1600 - less than one-tenth of the original population remained in the Americas
- 90 million Indigenous people died during this hostile form of colonization.
- Many died of diseases such as smallpox, measles, influenza, bubonic plague, yellow fever, cholera, and malaria
- Entire groups completely died - Beothuk of Newfoundland and Ona of Tierra del Fuego

Telling the Indigenous Story

Over time, many of the written records of the Indigenous people were destroyed, along with the cities and monuments.