

Columbian Exchange Map Activity

Background:

The **Columbian Exchange** has been one of the most significant events in the history of world ecology, agriculture, and culture. The term is used to describe the enormous widespread exchange of plants, animals, foods, human populations (including slaves), communicable diseases, and ideas between the Eastern and Western hemispheres that occurred after 1492. In that year, Christopher Columbus' first voyage launched an era of large-scale contact between the Old and the New Worlds that resulted in this ecological revolution: hence the name "Columbian" Exchange.

The Columbian Exchange greatly affected almost every society on earth, bringing destructive diseases that depopulated many cultures. By some estimates, nearly 80 percent of the native population of the Americas was wiped out from the introduction of European diseases. The contact between the two areas also circulated a wide variety of new crops and livestock. This exchange of plants and animals transformed European, American, African, and Asian ways of life. Cultures also mixed and blended as evidenced by the slave trade.

Part 1: Label regions and bodies of water

Europe	Africa	North Americas	South America
Atlantic Ocean	Pacific Ocean		

Part 2: Disease Diffusion

(Read below about the diseases that were diffused during the Columbian Exchange. Use arrows, color, words, and at least ONE image to show the exchange. Make sure to include ALL of the diseases mentioned.)

Perhaps the most tragic trade among the three continents came about as the direct and unavoidable consequence of human contact. During the period leading up to the age of exploration, many Europeans lost their lives to epidemic diseases. The Black Death of the fourteenth century, for example, wiped out over a third of Europe's population. Exposure to smallpox, measles, typhus, and other serious diseases often had devastating results, but Europeans gradually developed resistance to them. In contrast, the Indian peoples whom Columbus and other European explorers encountered lived in an environment in which contagious diseases were never a serious threat until the Europeans arrived, so they had no acquired immunity to the various bacteria and viruses that Europeans carried. As a result, the new diseases spread very rapidly and were much more deadly among the native peoples than they were among Europeans.

Controversy rages over the number of Indians killed by imported European diseases. Estimates of how many people lived in America north of Mexico in 1492 run from a high of 25 million to a low of 1 million. At the moment, most scholars accept a range of from 3 to 10 million. Even if the most conservative estimate is correct, the raw numbers of people who died of smallpox, typhus, measles, and other imported diseases were enormous. In areas of early and continuing association between Europeans and Indians, between 90 and 95 percent of the native population appears to have died of disease during the first century of contact. Although the percentage was probably lower in areas where contact was infrequent and where native populations were sparse, disease took a terrible toll as it followed the lines of kinship and trade that held native North America together.

Disease, however, did not flow in only one direction—from Europe to the New World. Some diseases that originated in Africa found their way to both North America and Europe. And at least one, syphilis, may have originated in the Western Hemisphere and migrated eastward. This exchange of microorganisms created a peculiar pattern of contagion and immunity within the populations that converged in North America. American Indians appear to have been less devastated physically by syphilis, to which they may have possessed partial immunity. Africans were largely unaffected by various malarial fevers that ravaged both European and native populations. Europeans found measles to be a mildly unpleasant childhood disease, but for both Africans and Indians it was a mass killer. The march of exchanged diseases across the North American landscape and their effects on various populations provided a constant backdrop for the continent's history.

Part 2: Animals and Crops

(Read below about the animals and crops that were diffused during the Columbian Exchange. Use arrows, color, words, and at least THREE images to show the exchange. Make sure to include ALL mentioned.)

Less immediate but perhaps equally extreme ecological effects arose from the passage of plants among Europe, North America, and Africa. The introduction of plants into the New World expanded a process that had been taking place for centuries in the Old World. Trade with Asia had carried exotic plants such as bananas, sugar cane, and rice into Africa as early as 2,300 years ago. From Africa, these plants were transplanted to Iberian-claimed islands like the Canary Islands off the coast of Africa and eventually to America where, along with cotton, indigo, coffee, and other imports, they would become cash crops on European-controlled plantations. Grains like wheat, barley, and millet were readily transplanted to suitable areas in North America, as were grazing grasses and various vegetables like turnips, spinach, and cabbage.

North American plants traveled from west to east in the Columbian Exchange. Leading the way in economic importance was tobacco, a stimulant used widely in North America for ceremonial purposes and broadly adopted by Europeans and Africans as a recreational drug. Another stimulant, cocoa, also enjoyed significant popularity among Old World consumers. In addition, New World vegetables helped to revolutionize world food supplies. Remarkably easy to grow, maize thrived in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. In addition, the white potato, tomato, manioc, squash, and beans and peas native to the Western Hemisphere were transplanted throughout the world.

Animals also moved through the Columbian Exchange. North America teemed with deer, bison, elk, moose, and uncounted species of rodents, but these animals had to be hunted rather than herded and were useless as work animals. Europeans brought horses, pigs, cattle, oxen, sheep, goats, and domesticated fowl to America, and these Old World domesticated animals did well in their new environment.

The transplanting of European grain crops and domesticated animals reshaped the land itself in North America. Changing the contours of the land by clearing trees and undergrowth and by plowing and fencing changed the flow of water, the distribution of seeds, the nesting of birds, and the movement of native animals. Gradually, imported livestock pushed aside native animals, and imported plants choked out native ones. The introduction of some harmful imports was entirely accidental. Dandelions, for example, were probably introduced into the New World accidentally. But partly as the result of overgrazing by European livestock, this aggressive weed was able to force out plants with greater food value.

Part 3: Silver Diffusion

There were 2 routes that silver took: the Eastern Route and the Western Route. Use 2 different colors for these routes. (Feel free to Google these locations if you are not sure where they are.)

Eastern Route	Western Route
Mexico to Spain Spain to the Cape of Good Hope The Cape of Good Hope to India	Mexico to Manila (Philippines) Manila to China India to China

Part 4: Slave Trade

(Read the chart about the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Use arrows, color, words, and. Make sure to include ALL the locations mentioned. Feel free to Google the locations if necessary.)

Africa to South America (total 4.3 million)	Africa to Central America (total = 12 million)	Africa to Europe (total = 1 million)
Brazil	Jamaica Puerto Rico Dominican Republic Mexico	Spain Portugal

(Don't forget to answer the questions on the back of the map.)