

Conflict Over North American Lands

Cross-Curricular Focus: History/Social Sciences



The time between the early 15th century and the mid 17th century is known as the Age of Exploration. During this time period, European nations were aggressively exploring the world by sea. Their main purpose in the beginning was to find people with whom they could trade goods for a profit, and to find shorter routes to their existing trade partners. Some adventurers were simply interested in discovering new information about their world. Cartographers were constantly drawing and revising maps based on the latest travels. Through the maps and journals of this time period, people of the known world greatly increased their knowledge of geography.

Spain was the first European nation to make land claims in the Americas in the 1560's, and they were eager to get as much land as possible in the name of Spain. Much of Mexico, South America, and Florida once belonged to Spain. England wanted to claim its share as well, arriving in North America in 1607. France claimed land in the area that is now Canada, and settlers from the Netherlands claimed the area that is now New York. The Spanish began claiming Californian land, building the first mission in 1769 on the site that became the city of San Diego.

Why was there so much interest in the Americas? Although there were many Native Americans already living on the continent of North America, the area was rich in desirable resources. European nations valued the many **raw materials** that seemed to be in never-ending supply. The English discovered tobacco, a crop that would finance the success of the early colonies. The Dutch from the Netherlands realized great profits from the fur trade, selling beaver furs at trading posts that were established along commonly traveled river and land routes. Spain claimed gold and silver from Aztec resources in Mexico.

With so many valuable resources to be had, there were many **conflicts** over North American lands. Colonies founded by different countries were located near each other, and there were disagreements and fears between the settlers. Wars were fought to control areas that were particularly rich in resources. Native Americans were caught between the warring colonists, and were often seen as obstacles to be conquered.

Name: _____

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

1) Why did European nations send out so many explorers during the Age of Exploration?

2) Infer: Why is French spoken in many parts of Canada?

3) Without the ability to grow and sell tobacco, the early American colonies may not have survived. Now we know that tobacco is harmful. If colonists knew it was harmful then, would it have been right for them to sell it anyway? Explain your thinking.

4) Native Americans believed that land could not be owned. Why do you think they had this belief?

5) Is a war for the purpose of taking someone's land moral? Explain your thinking.
