

Conflict Over North American Lands

Cross-Curricular Focus: History/Social Sciences



The Age of Exploration lasted from the early 15th century until the middle of the 17th century. During this time period, European nations explored the world by sea. They wanted to trade goods with other people to make a profit. They also wanted to find shorter routes to their existing trade partners. Some adventurers wanted to find out information about the world. Cartographers were constantly revising maps based on the latest travels. Through the maps and journals of explorers, people of the known world improved their knowledge of geography.

Spain was the first European nation to claim land in the Americas in the 1500s. They were eager to get as much land as possible for 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. Settlers from the Netherlands claimed the area that is now New York. The Spanish began claiming Californian land. They built the first mission in 1769 on the site that became the city of San Diego.

Why was there so much interest in the Americas? Many Native Americans were already living in the Americas. The area was rich in desirable resources. European nations valued the many **raw materials** that seemed to be in never-ending supply in North America. The English discovered tobacco, a crop that would finance the success of the early colonies. The Dutch from the Netherlands made a lot of money in the fur trade. They sold 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. There were disagreements and tears between the settlers. Wars were fought to control areas that were particularly rich in resources. Native Americans were caught between the warring colonists. They 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) Why do you think French is spoken in some parts of Canada?

3) Who were the early settlers of New York?

4) Which European nation was the first to claim land in the Americas?

5) Why were the Americas so desirable to the Europeans?
