

## Lesson 10 - Era Overview: The First Global Age, 1400–1800

*What changed the world more between 1400 and 1800—trade, travel, weaponry, or ideas?*

### Section 1 - Introduction

On November 16, 1532, two worlds came face to face in the highlands of Peru. On one side was a small band of Spanish soldiers, representing the most powerful kingdom in Europe. On the other was the massive Incan army, representing the greatest empire of the Americas. Although vastly outnumbered, the Spanish used superior weapons and the element of surprise to inflict a deadly blow on the Incas. They were able to capture the Incan emperor and conquer his empire. They went on to build their own empire stretching across the Americas east to west from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

A century before, these events would have been impossible for people of the time to imagine. In 1400, the people of Europe and the Americas knew nothing about each other's lands. Much of the world was disconnected. Even large parts of Asia and Africa were shrouded in mystery for those not living there.

Over the next few centuries, however, many of the geographic and cultural barriers that divided the world came down. Europeans, in particular, traveled the globe, making discoveries and conquering new lands. They created networks of trade and cultural exchange that began to bring the world together. It was the first global age.

The conquest of the Americas triggered in an era of global encounters, bringing the disconnected regions of the world together. Although Europe emerged as the major political and economic force, this new power worked in connection with other emerging states such as India, China, and Persia. The peoples and cultures from these lands, along with those of Africa and the Americas, all helped to shape the new global world.

### Themes

**Cultural Interaction** Voyages of exploration brought the world closer together and aided the spread of ideas and technologies.

**Political Structures** States and empires with centralized governments extended their power over large areas.

**Economic Structures** The world economy developed rapidly as a result of global trade and commerce.

**Social Structures** A more interconnected world brought social changes and increased contact among different racial and ethnic groups.

**Human-Environment Interaction** The environment was transformed by the exchange of people, products, and diseases around the world.

### Section 2 - An Emerging Global World

The Spanish conquest of the Americas was one of the most dramatic events in history. It was also part of a larger pattern of **globalization [globalization: the process by which the regions, peoples, and economies of the world are becoming increasingly interconnected]** that began in the 15th century and continues to this day. Globalization is the linking of the world's regions, peoples, and economies in a larger global system.

**New Global Networks** Between 1400 and 1800, increased global interaction brought many changes to the world. In many ways, this period set the stage for the modern era. Several key developments took place at this

time:

1. The world's regions became more connected. The movement of people, goods, and ideas increased.
2. Global population nearly tripled, from around 375 million in 1400 to 950 million in 1800.
3. New technologies—including innovations in navigation, printing, and weaponry—revolutionized travel, communication, and warfare.
4. States took on increased political and military power. New empires formed around the world.
5. New ideas and scientific knowledge influenced society and culture.

Beginning in the 1400s, increased global interaction expanded Europeans' view of the world. The "New World" of the Americas is the focus of this 18th-century Spanish map.

Networks of trade and cultural exchange expanded greatly during this era. Such networks were not new, of course. Ancient trade routes had long linked Asia, Africa, and Europe, allowing for the exchange of goods and ideas. Similar networks existed in the Pacific islands and the Americas. But these networks of exchange became truly global during this period.

The most obvious example of this change was the new contact between the "Old World" of Africa, Europe, and Asia, and the "New World" of the Americas. This contact had major consequences for the world as a whole. At the same time, connections also grew among the continents of the Old World. By the late 1700s, Australia and the Pacific islands were becoming part of this expanding global network.

**A Spirit of Exploration** Many underlying factors helped produce the first global age. The most direct cause was increased sea travel and exploration. Beginning in the late 1400s, European countries bordering the Atlantic Ocean launched sea expeditions and explored the world.

The European explorers of this era were not the first people to travel great distances by ship. The Vikings had crossed the North Atlantic centuries before, traveling as far as Newfoundland. Arab, Indian, and Chinese sailors regularly traveled the seas between Asia and Africa. In the early 1400s, for example, the Chinese admiral Zheng He (JEHNG HUH) led a series of great voyages from China to India and East Africa. These expeditions, sponsored by the Ming dynasty, were much larger than later European voyages. The greatest Ming expedition consisted of more than 60 ships and up to 40,000 men. China, however, did not take advantage of these voyages to extend its power or conquer new territory. European states, on the other hand, developed sea travel and used it to serve their economic and political goals. They built large empires and grew rich and powerful in the process.

**Motives for Sea Travel** European states had various reasons to promote sea travel. The first motive was to increase trade. During the Crusades, Europeans had developed a taste for spices and other luxury goods from Asia. Muslim traders carried these goods to the eastern Mediterranean, where they sold them to Venetian merchants who then brought them to Europe. These goods were expensive, however, since the various middlemen involved all made a profit. In addition, the capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in 1453 put the trade routes at risk. European countries wanted to establish direct sea routes to Asia so they could reduce costs and gain better access to Asian goods.

A second motive for sea travel was to increase political and military power. Increased trade and commerce would help European states accumulate wealth and pay for larger, more powerful armies. This, in turn, would give them an edge over their European rivals. Exploration also offered these states the chance to form overseas empires, thus adding to their wealth and power.

A third reason for sea travel had to do with ideas. European rulers, supported by the Catholic Church, wanted to spread their religious beliefs and win converts to Christianity. Some Europeans also wanted to learn

more about the world. The ideals of the **Renaissance [Renaissance: the flowering of art and culture that began in Italy in the 1300s and later spread to the rest of Europe]** , the artistic and cultural flowering of the time, helped inspire this thirst for knowledge.

Another factor that encouraged sea travel was the development of seafaring skills and technologies. Europeans built ships to navigate the open seas. They made use of the magnetic compass, an invention made independently by Europeans and Chinese, and the astrolabe, an ancient Greek tool that allowed sailors to measure latitude. Europeans also advanced the art and science of cartography, or mapmaking.

Portugal, a small nation with a long seafaring tradition, pioneered many of these innovations. The Portuguese developed a light, seaworthy ship called the caravel. This ship was nimble enough to slip into small bays but sturdy enough to travel long distances and carry heavy cannons. Portuguese sailors combined Arab knowledge of math and astronomy with their own practical experience of the sea. With the support of the Portuguese monarchy, they set off on voyages of discovery.

**Europe's Great Voyages** The aim of the Portuguese was to find a sea route to Asia by sailing south and east, around Africa. In 1488, a Portuguese ship rounded the tip of Africa. Ten years later, an expedition under Vasco Da Gama reached India. By 1510, the Portuguese had begun to establish forts and trading posts around the Indian Ocean. From there they moved on to the fabled Spice Islands of the East Indies. They established a base at Malacca, in present-day Malaysia, and another at Macao, in southern China. By 1520, they were the masters of the southern seas.

Meanwhile, Spain was launching its own voyages of exploration. Instead of heading east, however, the Spanish sailed west in the belief that Asia lay just across the Atlantic. In 1492, Christopher Columbus landed in the Americas, claiming these lands for the Spanish crown. He thought he had reached the Indies, but later voyages proved him wrong. In 1519, another Spanish expedition, led by Ferdinand Magellan, set out to reach Asia by sailing around South America. Magellan crossed the Pacific, but was killed in the Philippines. One of his ships made it back to Spain, however, after a three-year journey. It was the first voyage to circle the globe.

Other European countries also sent expeditions across the Atlantic. The Portuguese arrived in Brazil in 1500 and later established a colony. The English, French, and Dutch came to North America and the Caribbean and formed colonies of their own. European states had extended their reach across the Atlantic and connected the Americas to the rest of the world.

Later, in the 1700s, the British sent expeditions into the Pacific Ocean. Captain James Cook explored and mapped Australia, New Zealand, and a number of Pacific islands, including Hawaii. He also landed on the west coast of North America. Cook's voyages helped bring the Pacific region into the new global system.

**The Impact of Exploration** The impact of the age of exploration was profound. As a result of these discoveries, people began to have a better understanding of world geography. In the Middle Ages, Europeans had thought of Jerusalem as the center of the world, with Africa, Asia, and Europe spread around it. By the 1600s, they had a more accurate view of the world.

The world was also more connected. It was no longer clearly divided into separate worlds: European, Mediterranean, Indian, or Chinese. During this era, economic activity increased as expanded global networks opened up new channels of trade and commerce. The world trading system nearly doubled in size during this period, moving a greater volume and variety of goods than ever before. It was the beginning of a global economy.

Trade was not the only type of exchange that expanded. The movement of people, ideas, and technologies also increased dramatically. So did the transfer of plants, animals, and diseases, which had a major impact on the

environment. One of the great tragedies of this era was the death of millions of Native Americans from Old World diseases. Similarly tragic was the enslavement and forced migration of millions of Africans to the Americas. At the same time, increased contact among different racial and ethnic groups had important, long-term effects on societies and cultures.

This era also saw the growth of European power and influence. In the Middle Ages, Europe had been overshadowed by the ancient civilizations of Asia. By the end of the 18th century, however, Europe had emerged as a dominant force. Europe's cultural influence began to spread around the world. This process of **westernization [westernization: the spread of ideas and values originating in Europe and the Western world]**—the spread of European ideas and values—would become a defining feature of the modern era to come.

### Section 3 - The Growth of State Power

As the world expanded, the power of states and empires also grew. New state systems took greater control over people and territories. This growth of state power was evident in Europe and across much of Asia.

**Absolute Rule in Europe** In western Europe, powerful monarchs began to take control in the 1500s. Previously, feudal lords and the Catholic Church had limited the power of kings and queens. Between the 16th and 18th centuries, however, many monarchs centralized power and authority under their rule. Because these rulers had absolute power, their form of rule was known as **absolutism [absolutism: a system of rule in which a monarch or other ruler enjoys unlimited power]** .

Absolute monarchs claimed that their right to rule came from God, a concept known as **divine right [divine right: the notion that a ruler's power is derived from God and cannot be questioned]** . This notion of God-given authority was not new. In China, rulers had long claimed the Mandate of Heaven to support their rule. A Chinese emperor who governed poorly could lose this mandate, however, and be overthrown. In contrast, European monarchs argued that any attempt to remove them or limit their power was against God's will. In their view, the ruler and the state were inseparable. King Louis XIV of France expressed this belief when he reportedly said, "L'état, c'est moi," meaning "I am the state."

European monarchies backed up their rule with military force because nation-states wanted to secure their borders and sometimes expand them. They used new weaponry based on gunpowder technology adopted from China. They developed cannons for use on land and sea. They created trained, professional armies that relied on guns rather than pikes and spears. They also designed new fortifications to resist artillery attacks.

These advances, known as the **gunpowder revolution [gunpowder revolution: the military advances that resulted from the development of gunpowder weaponry]** , had a major impact on warfare. They also cost a lot of money. European rulers paid for their new military power with taxes, bank loans, and the wealth gained from global trade and commerce. During this period, the most powerful European states spent an increasing share of their revenues on the military. This commercializing of warfare was a key factor in the gunpowder revolution.

**Gunpowder Empires** The gunpowder revolution also took place in eastern Europe and Asia. Strong states used gunpowder weapons to conquer territory and build large, land-based empires. These "gunpowder empires" arose across Eurasia, from Russia, Turkey, and Persia to India and East Asia.

The Ottoman Turks built one of the most powerful empires. Spreading out from Anatolia in the 1300s, they conquered southeastern Europe and the Arab lands of North Africa and the Middle East. By 1550 they dominated a region stretching from the Balkans to the Persian Gulf and the southern shores of the

Mediterranean.

The Ottoman conquests relied on well-trained armies and heavy artillery. During the siege of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans battered the city's walls with huge cannons. The largest was reported to be more than 26 feet long, weighed 25 tons, and fired stone balls up to 1,500 pounds in weight. No city's defenses could withstand such an assault for long.

The Ottomans created a centralized state to support their empire. They used an efficient **bureaucracy** [**bureaucracy: a complex system of officials and workers who manage the activities of a government**] of government officials to manage the state and enforce its laws. With their successful military and state organization, the Ottomans maintained a strong empire into the 1700s.

To the north, Russia also built a powerful state and empire. Expanding outward from Moscow in the 1400s, Russian rulers conquered the surrounding territory and then pushed into Central Asia. By 1700, Russia occupied lands extending all the way to China and the Pacific Ocean. Russian czars, or emperors, modernized the army and ruled with absolute power. In the late 1500s, a British diplomat described the cruel force exercised by Czar Ivan IV, commonly known as Ivan the Terrible:

*To show his sovereignty over the lives of his subjects, the late emperor Ivan Vasilevich, in his walk or progresses, if he disliked the face or person of any man whom he met by the way, or that looked upon him, would command his head to be struck off. Which was presently done, and the head cast before him.*

—Ambassador Giles Fletcher, quoted in *The European Emergence*

In Persia, the Safavid Empire arose during this era. Between 1501 and 1722, the rulers of the Safavid Empire used gunpowder weaponry to control the lands between the Ottoman Empire to the west and India to the east. Unlike the Ottomans, who were Sunni Muslims, the Safavids were followers of Shi'a Islam. Under their greatest ruler, Shah Abbas, they built a strong, centralized state. They promoted the arts and built a splendid capital at Isfahan.

During the same period, Muslim invaders from Central Asia took power in India and established the Mughal Empire, which lasted from 1526 to 1707. The Mughals defeated much larger Indian armies by using firearms and cannons. Eventually they gained control over most of the Indian subcontinent. They established an effective government and grew rich from the trade in cotton cloth and spices. Under their rule, the economy and culture of India flourished.

East Asian states also increased their power during this era. In China, the Ming dynasty ruled until 1644, when it fell to Manchu invaders from the north. The Manchus formed the Qing dynasty and expanded the Chinese empire. They maintained China's economic prosperity, while restricting European access to Chinese trade. Between 1400 and 1800, the Chinese population more than quadrupled, to around 330 million, or one third of the world's population. During this period, the Chinese traded with the Americas. New foods brought to China provided more calories than foods from Europe, causing a population boom.

In the 1500s, Japan also built a centralized state under strong military rulers, called shoguns. The shoguns used guns to defeat local lords and unify the country. They founded the Tokugawa Shogunate, which brought more than two centuries of peace and stability to Japan. The Tokugawa rulers maintained tight control and isolated Japan from most foreign contact.

**Emerging European Dominance** Despite their success, most of the gunpowder empires had declined by the late 1700s. The Safavid Empire had collapsed, and the Ottoman and Mughal empires were failing. Even Qing China was showing signs of weakness. Asia remained prosperous, with the largest economies and populations

in the world. But Asia's power was beginning to fade.

In contrast, Europe was getting stronger. Several interrelated factors help account for Europe's rising power by the late 18th century. A major factor was the **Commercial Revolution [Commercial Revolution: the rapid expansion of trade and commerce that transformed Europe, starting in the 16th century]**. This was the rapid expansion of business, fueled by overseas trade and colonization. European colonial powers, particularly Spain and Portugal, exploited the resources and markets of their overseas colonies. Other countries, such as Britain and Holland, devised new methods of business and banking. These changes gave rise to **capitalism [capitalism: an economic system in which all resources are privately owned and markets determine how those resources are distributed]**, an economic system based on private enterprise. As commercial activity spread throughout Europe, living standards rose and wealth increased. This new wealth, in turn, enhanced the military and political power of European states.

Europe was in a good position to benefit from the Commercial Revolution. Its states and societies were younger than those of Asia, and its social, political, and economic structures were more flexible. As commerce increased, merchants and bankers took on more power in society and politics. The rise of capitalism began to affect work patterns, social classes, and many other aspects of European life.

Ideas and culture were changing too. During this era, new ways of looking at the world swept across Europe. These ideas ranged from new religious beliefs to the **secular [secular: non-religious, related to concerns of the world]** principles of science. All these factors—economic, political, social, and cultural—helped propel Europe's rise to power.

## Section 4 - Atlantic Empires

Europe's expansion across the Atlantic was a key element of the first global age. By founding American colonies, western European countries built empires and created new networks of exchange that had a deep impact on the rest of the world.

**Colonization of the Americas** Spain and Portugal formed the first American colonies. Spanish colonization began in the Caribbean, or West Indies, in the late 1400s. From there, Spain went on to occupy large portions of North and South America. Portugal colonized Brazil in the early 1500s. A century later, the British, French, and Dutch all claimed colonies in the West Indies. They also colonized the east coast of North America, occupying lands that would later become the United States and Canada.

The colonization of Spanish America began with the Spanish conquest. Small armies of Spanish **conquistadors [conquistadors: Spanish conquerors of the Americas]** defeated the Aztec and Inca empires and brought millions of Indians under their control. They destroyed great civilizations whose roots went back thousands of years. In their place, Spain established a colonial empire that stretched from the American Southwest to the southern tip of South America.

Spain tried to maintain tight control over its American empire. A system of royal officials managed the colonies under direct orders from the crown. Spain was far away, however, so local officials often governed as they saw fit. In 1552, one colonist in Guatemala wrote to the king, "Oh sacred Majesty, how just and good are the royal orders you send to this province, and how officials mold them here and do what they wish!"

The social structure of the Spanish colonies was based largely on race. White colonists—born either in Europe or the Americas—made up the top social class. They enjoyed the most power and privileges. Next came the **mestizos [mestizos: persons of mixed European and Native American ancestry]**, or mixed-race descendants of Europeans and Indians. At the bottom were native Indians and, later, black Africans.

The Catholic Church also played an important role in colonial society. The church and crown were closely linked, and most Spaniards were devout Catholics. The spread of Catholic beliefs was a prime motive of the Spanish conquest. One conquistador wrote that he had come “to serve God and his Majesty, to give light to those who were in darkness, and to grow rich, as all men desire to do.”

**Economies of Silver** Silver mining became the main economic activity in the Spanish colonies. The Spanish forced Indians to labor in the mines. Thousands of tons of silver were shipped from the Americas. The richest deposits were at Potosí, in modern-day Bolivia. By 1600, Potosí was producing half the world’s silver and had become one of the world’s largest cities.

Silver from the Americas had an enormous impact on the world economy. Minted into coins, it dramatically increased Europe’s money supply. Suddenly there was much more money available for trade and investment. Much of this silver ended up in China, where it was exchanged for Chinese silks and other valuable goods.

Wealth from silver financed European monarchies and increased personal fortunes. It stimulated the rise of capitalism. But this flood of money also caused **inflation [inflation: rising prices, usually caused by an increase in the money supply]**, or rising prices. Countries that invested wisely, such as Britain and Holland, prospered despite inflation. But other countries, including Spain, found that sudden wealth could do more harm than good. Rather than investing in agriculture and industry, they spent their money and warfare, leaving them deeper in debt.

Agriculture was less important than mining in the colonies, at least until the development of the plantation system. The Spanish crown granted large estates to some colonists, stripping the land from Indian communities. These landed estates, called *haciendas*, supplied food to growing colonial cities and reinforced the power of wealthy families. But they were not a major economic enterprise.

Plantations were another story, however. These large estates grew crops for export, including sugar, cacao, tobacco, indigo, and cotton. Sugar was the first plantation crop. Columbus brought sugarcane to the West Indies, but it was in Brazil that sugar production really took off. By the early 1600s, Brazil was the world’s leading sugar producer. French and British colonies in the West Indies later caught up and surpassed Brazil. During the 18th century, all these colonial producers made huge fortunes supplying sugar to the world market.

**A Continental Exchange** Sugarcane was just one of a host of plants and animals brought to the Americas by European colonizers. In turn, Europeans took many American foods back to the Old World. The exchange between the hemispheres is known as the **Columbian Exchange [Columbian Exchange: the transfer of plants, animals, and diseases between the eastern and western hemispheres]**. It had a major impact on the world’s cultures and environment. Without the Columbian Exchange, the Americas would not have had grains like wheat, rice, and oats. It would not have had onions, bananas, grapes, coffee, or citrus fruits. Nor would it have had livestock like horses, cattle, pigs, and sheep.

For its part, Europe would not have had foods such as potatoes, corn, beans, tomatoes, peppers, peanuts, squash, and chocolate. These crops had major nutritional benefits. Potatoes and corn, in particular, helped Europeans eat better and live longer. As a result, their populations increased.

Africa and Asia also benefited from the Columbian Exchange. Cassava, or manioc, a root crop native to Brazil, thrived in the poor soils of Africa and nourished millions of Africans. Other crops, including sweet potatoes and chili peppers, became staple foods across Africa and Asia. In fact, more than a third of the crops grown in China today originally came from the Americas.

The Columbian Exchange had negative effects, too. Some Old World plants grew out of control in the Americas. For example, clover, spinach, mint, and artichoke grew like weeds, choking out native species.

Rats brought over on European ships became a plague across the Americas. Worst of all, many Old World diseases spread like wildfire, with deadly effects on Indian populations.

**Death and Slavery** Native Americans had no immunity to diseases that people of Europe and Asia had been contracting for thousands of years. They had never been exposed to smallpox, measles, influenza, and other illnesses common to the Old World. When these diseases arrived in the Americas, their impact was devastating. Indians began dying in horrifying numbers. One eyewitness in Peru noted deaths “by scores and hundreds. . . . Villages were depopulated. Corpses were scattered over the fields or piled up in the houses or huts.” Smallpox was especially deadly, as one Spaniard observed in the late 1500s:

*Large bumps spread on people, some were entirely covered. . . . [Victims] could no longer walk about, but lay in their dwellings and sleeping places, no longer able to move or stir. . . . [M]any just starved to death; starvation reigned, and no one took care of others any longer.*

—Bernardino de Sahagún, *General History of the Things of New Spain*

Scholars estimate that during the 16th century Old World diseases killed at least 50 percent of the native population, amounting to tens of millions of people. Many died even before making contact with Europeans, as viruses spread from one community to another. It was, in the words of one scholar, “the greatest destruction of lives in human history.” Historians call this tragedy the **Great Dying [Great Dying: the devastation of American Indian populations by diseases brought over from Europe]** .

The spread of deadly disease made the European conquest of the Americas much easier. It weakened Indian resistance and opened up the land for European settlement. It also deprived the colonizers of Indian workers and harmed colonial economies. To remedy this problem, the colonies began to import black slaves from Africa. Spain brought the first African slaves to the West Indies in 1502. But the Atlantic slave trade really began with Portuguese shipments of slaves to Brazil in the mid-1500s. A century later, African slaves were working on plantations across the Americas.

Slavery had existed since ancient times. The Sumerians, Greeks, Romans, and Arabs had all used slaves. Most slaves in the ancient world were debtors or prisoners of war, however. States and kingdoms in Africa had long traded slaves. When the Portuguese arrived on the African coast in the early 1400s, they began buying slaves from African traders, too. Eventually, the British, French, and Dutch got involved. By the 1800s, more than ten million African slaves had been shipped to the Americas. Around one in six died en route.

The slave trade had a major impact on Africa. It uprooted millions of Africans and tore African societies apart. It also strengthened African states and warlords involved in the slave trade and introduced European goods, including guns, into many parts of Africa.

The slave trade had an even greater impact on the Americas. It supported plantation economies rooted in violence and brutality, leaving a legacy of racism and inequality that persists to this day. It also brought millions of Africans to the hemisphere and spread African culture to the New World. In the process, it transformed the social and cultural landscape of the Americas

## **Section 5 - The Movement of Religion and Ideas**

The world of ideas expanded along with the growing connections brought on by exploration, empire building, and trade. As regions became more connected, ideas and religious beliefs spread more rapidly from place to place. This movement of ideas and religion also helped transform the world.

**Spreading Faith in the Americas** Several major religions extended their global reach during this period. Christianity was a prime example. The colonization of the Americas brought two large continents into the

Christian world. In Spanish America, Catholic priests converted millions of American Indians to Christianity. In most cases, Indians blended Christian teachings with their own traditional beliefs. The British and French also brought Christianity to their North American colonies.

At the same time, Catholic missionaries traveled to Africa and Asia. The Portuguese established missions along the coasts of Africa and India, in the East Indies, and in East Asia. Spaniards brought the Catholic faith to the Philippines. They also expelled Jews and Muslims from Spain, making that country uniformly Catholic. Portugal also forced Jews and Muslims to convert or leave soon after Spain began this policy.

Islam expanded during this period, too. The Ottomans carried Islam into southeastern Europe, while the Mughals did the same across much of India. Muslim traders and missionaries took Islam to the East Indies and Southeast Asia. They also continued to spread their faith across Africa.

A new religion called Sikhism also developed in India. This religion combined elements of Islam and Hinduism. It spread rapidly in northern India, adding another element to India's rich spiritual tradition.

In Asia, Buddhism gained a wider following. Mongols in Central Asia began converting to Tibetan Buddhism in the late 1500s. Buddhism also gained strength in China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia.

**New Ideas in Europe** During this era, new ideas and ways of thinking also arose in Europe. Artists and thinkers of the Renaissance revived classical art and culture and helped shape new views of the world. They promoted **humanism [humanism: a Renaissance philosophy emphasizing the worth of the individual and balancing religious faith with secular learning]**, a belief in the value of the individual. They combined religious faith with a secular interest in human society and the natural world.

By encouraging new ways of thinking, the Renaissance helped pave the way for the **Reformation [Reformation: a reform movement of the 16th and 17th centuries that split the Catholic Church and gave birth to the Protestant religion]**. This religious movement split the Catholic Church and gave birth to Protestant religion. It began in 1517 with the actions of Martin Luther, a German monk and teacher. Luther believed that the church had grown corrupt. He called for reform and a more personal approach to faith. His views, spread by the printing press, sparked cries for religious change across Europe. Religious wars broke out and ravaged much of the continent. But the Reformation resulted in the creation of new Protestant faiths.

The printing press was crucial to the Reformation, and to the spread of ideas in general. The Chinese were the first culture to invent paper and develop a way of printing from carved woodblocks. Moveable type made from clay was first developed in China in the 11th century. More significant to the advance of printing technology, Koreans developed moveable type made from metal in the 1200s. In 1377, the Koreans printed a text for Buddhists that today is the world's oldest known book printed with moveable metal type. German metalworker Johannes Gutenberg advanced printing technology in Europe another 200 years later. In about 1450, Gutenberg invented a printing press that used moveable metal type and that could turn out 300 pages in a single day. Gutenberg's press made printing faster and more efficient.

The Catholic Church responded to the Reformation with its own reform movement, the **Counter-Reformation [Counter-Reformation: the movement to revive Catholicism in response to the Reformation]**. This movement sought to revive and strengthen Catholicism. As part of this effort, the church expanded its missionary work and funded new art and architecture to glorify the Catholic faith.

Meanwhile, another major shift was taking place in the world of ideas. By the 1600s, scholars and thinkers inspired by the Renaissance and the discoveries of the global age had begun to study the natural world in new ways. They applied the power of reason to the observation of nature. This new approach to learning is known as the **Scientific Revolution [Scientific Revolution: a shift in thinking about the study of nature that**

**began in the mid-1500s and moved beyond religious teachings]** . Early scientists made key advances in astronomy, physics, biology, medicine, and many other fields. The methods and discoveries of science would have a profound impact on the world.

In the 1700s, European thinkers also turned their attention to the workings of society and government. They applied scientific principles to the study of human affairs, hoping to bring about a new age of reason. This school of thought was known as the **Enlightenment [Enlightenment: an 18th-century movement that sought to apply scientific methods to the study of society and its problems]** .

Some European monarchs were drawn to the Enlightenment and tried to govern according to its principles. They wanted to modernize their societies and promote economic progress. For the most part, however, the Enlightenment undermined the rule of kings. It promoted the idea of democratic rights and freedoms. In the end, these ideas would give rise to reform movements and revolutions around the world.

## Summary

**In this lesson, you learned about the first global era, from 1400 to 1800. During this period, the world expanded and changed in many ways.**

**Cultural Interaction** Voyages of exploration brought the world closer together and promoted the spread of ideas and beliefs. Christianity and Islam extended their reach, while new currents of thought in Europe began to alter views of nature and society. New technologies arose, advancing travel, communication, and warfare.

**Political Structures** European monarchs built strong states and ruled with absolute power. Gunpowder empires in Asia also expanded. Through overseas conquests, European countries built their own empires in the Americas, extending their power across the Atlantic.

**Economic Structures** Trade networks expanded, producing a global economy. As commerce increased, the ideas of capitalism began to develop. The slave trade also grew, fueling the plantation system and placing millions of Africans in bondage.

**Social Structures** Social classes in Europe began to change with the development of capitalism. New social systems also developed in the American colonies. The expansion of slavery produced a legacy of racism and inequality. But it also brought African cultural influences to the New World and enriched American societies.

**Human-Environment Interaction** European colonization of the Americas prompted migration across the Atlantic. It also caused the transfer of plants, animals, and diseases between the hemispheres. These changes had important effects on the global environment.