The global interactions of this era resulted in an unprecedented volume of exchange in the biological and commercial realms.
The Columbian Exchange

**Definition:** The global diffusion of plants, food crops, animals, human populations, and disease pathogens which took place after the voyages of exploration by Columbus and other European mariners.

**Effect:** By creating links between biological zones previously isolated from each other for thousands of years, these voyages triggered a biological exchange which permanently altered the natural environment and human geography all over the world.
Diseases like smallpox, measles, diphtheria, whooping cough, and influenza claimed a large number of victims

- Especially children
- Survivors were left with immunity to the disease due to exposure at a young age
Carried by unsuspecting Europeans, these same diseases reached the previously unexposed populations of the western hemisphere.

- Entire societies were annihilated
- Took the worst toll on densely populated areas
  - Aztec and Incan empires
- Not limited to those that had direct contact with Europeans explorers or settlers
- Same impact in the Pacific Islands as in N/S America
The Worst Demographic Catastrophe in Human History!

In the era 1500-1800, more than 100 million people died as a result of diseases imported into the Pacific Islands and North and South America.
It wasn’t all bad...

Over time, the Columbian exchange resulted in an increase in human population in the New World due to the introduction of new food crops and animals.

- Wheat and vines
- Horses, cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, and chickens
Back in Europe

American food crops such as maize, beans, peanuts, and especially the potato contributed to a sharp increase in calories available.

After an initial dip due to infectious disease, the world population, in the 14th and 15th centuries, grew by 50% from 1300 to 1400.
Migration Patterns

The largest migration in this era was that of enslaved Africans forcibly transported to North and South America, including the islands of the Caribbean.

In addition, a sizable group of Europeans migrated to lands in world regions depopulated by disease.
Due to the trading-post empires established by the Portuguese, Dutch, and English merchants, Asian and European markets were linked through goods transported on European ships.

• Those same ships soon began carrying goods within the Asian markets of the Indian Ocean basin.

• By the late 16th century, European merchants and Arab merchants were nearly equal in the trading patterns in the Indian Ocean basin.
Mariners from European nations carried goods around the world by way of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans.

- Valuable cargo = sugar, silver, tobacco, textiles, guns, furs, and enslaved humans
SILVER

Became the desired medium of exchange for the Manila galleons as it was highly valued in China and easily exploited from South America.

• In much the same way, cowry shells from India were a highly desirous medium of exchange throughout West Africa.
Demand for furs in China, Europe, and North America decimated the ecological balance in fur-producing regions like 17th century Siberia and 18th century North America.
Demand for coffee, tea, tobacco, cotton, and especially sugar dramatically stimulated the market for enslaved workers.
By 1750...

All parts of the world, except Australia, participated in this global commercial network with European merchants fulfilling the most prominent roles. Previously unconnected populations became economically dependent on each other.
For the rest of class and as homework...

Columbian Exchange Document Analysis

By Friday: Columbian Exchange essays in preparation for a Socratic Seminar