

American Civilization



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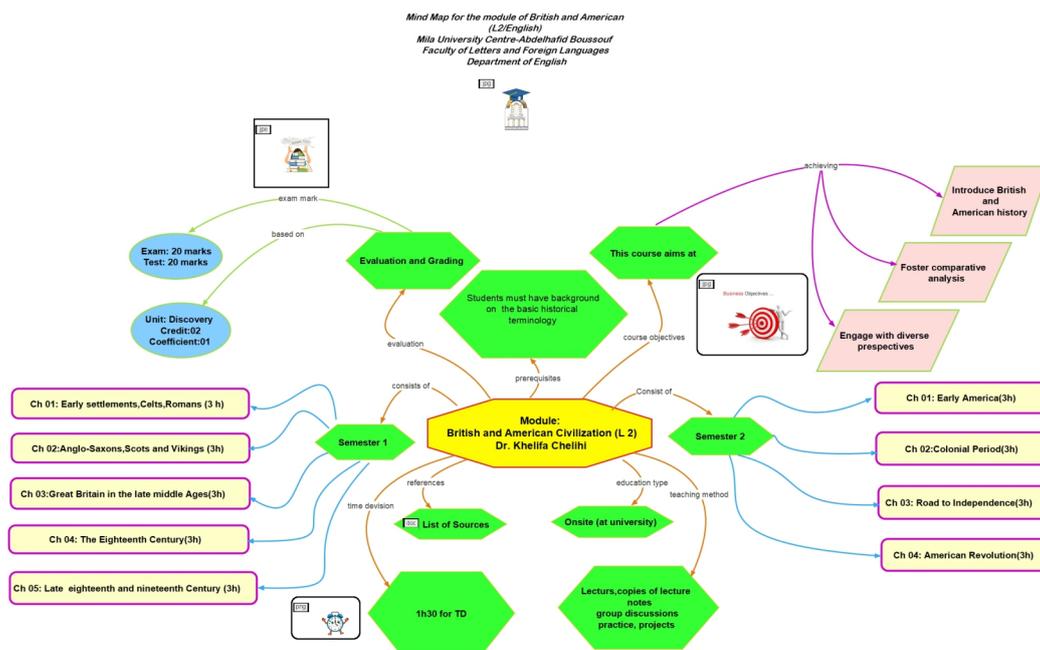
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Objectives

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the migration of early humans to North America.
2. Explore the Major Prehistoric Cultures of North America.
3. Analyze the Impact of Agriculture on Early American Societies.
4. Examine the Decline and Legacy of Early American Cultures.
5. Develop Critical Thinking and Historical Analysis Skills.
6. Learn why European powers like England, France, and Spain sought to colonize North America.
7. Examine how geography shaped the economies, cultures, and societies of the New England, Middle, and Southern Colonies.
8. Understand how the transition from indentured servitude to African slavery shaped colonial economies and societies.

I Mind-map



mindmap

II Pr-requisites

To be able to properly follow the lesson of American Early Cultures , the students must have some prior knowledge, likewise:

- Students should be familiar with regions like the Southwest and Midwest, and how the environment shaped different cultures.
- Learners should be familiar with one or more groups of Native American peoples.
- Students must know that the earliest peoples were hunters, gatherers, and nomads.
- Students must know how humans started farming, which allowed them to settle in one place and build villages.



pre

III Introduction

The history of *Early America* traces the complex journey of *human settlement, cultural development, and colonial expansion* on the *North American continent*. This lesson explores the origins of the first inhabitants who migrated from Asia via a land bridge during the Ice Age, forming rich and diverse Native American civilizations such as the *Anasazi, Hohokam, Adena, and Hopewell*. It then transitions to the age of European exploration, highlighting the Norse voyages and later expeditions by *Spanish, French, and British explorers*, whose quests for land, resources, and mythical treasures laid the foundation for colonization. The lesson concludes with *the establishment of the first permanent English colony at Jamestown and the rise of the 13 British colonies*, each shaped by distinct *geographical, economic, and cultural characteristics*. It also examines *the growing tensions between colonists and Native populations*, and the gradual *development of colonial self-governance* that would eventually inspire *American independence*.

IV Theme1:Early America

1. Objectives

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Identify the main European explorers and the reasons behind their arrival in the Americas.
- Explain the initial attempts at colonization and the founding of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement.
- Evaluate the effects of early colonization on the economy, society, and politics.



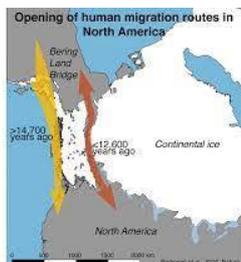
Objectives

2. Warm up

1. Why do you think people migrated across this land bridge? What challenges might they have faced?
2. Discuss how climate, food sources, and survival needs influenced migration.
3. Which large Ice Age animal did early Americans hunt for food, clothing, and tools?

[cf. USA history]

Why do you think people migrated across this land bridge? What challenges might they have faced?

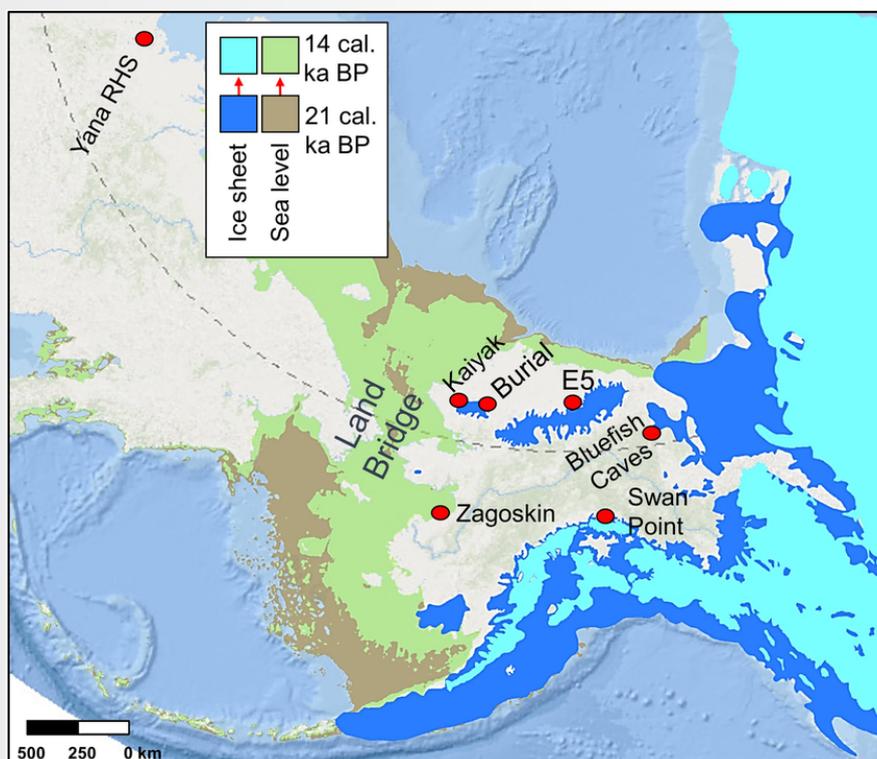


3. Introduction

The history of *Early America* traces the complex journey of **human settlement, cultural development, and colonial expansion** on the **North American continent**. This lesson explores the origins of the first inhabitants who migrated from Asia via a land bridge during the Ice Age, forming rich and diverse Native American civilizations such as the **Anasazi, Hohokam, Adena, and Hopewell**. It then transitions to the age of European exploration, highlighting the Norse voyages and later expeditions by **Spanish, French, and British explorers**, whose quests for land, resources, and mythical treasures laid the foundation for colonization. The lesson concludes with **the establishment of the first permanent English colony at Jamestown and the rise of the 13 British colonies**, each shaped by distinct **geographical, economic, and cultural characteristics**. It also examines **the growing tensions between colonists and Native populations**, and the gradual **development of colonial self-governance** that would eventually inspire **American independence**.

4. The land bridge Beringia

📍 Fundamental



Land Bridge

More than fifteen thousand years ago, huge sheets of ice* covered much of **Canada** and **the northern United States**. In some places, the ice was thousands of feet thick. Scientists call this time **the Ice Age**. Much of the world's water was frozen into ice.

There was less water in the oceans than there is today. Some lands that are now under water were dry. That is why **dry land once connected Asia to North America**. During the Ice Age, this dry land formed an area that scientists today call **Beringia** (/buh*rin*ge) or **the land bridge***.

Although there were no ice sheets on Beringia, the weather was very cold. At that time, no one in the world knew how to farm. Even if they had known how, it was too cold in Beringia to raise anything. Only tiny plants grew there.

+ *Extra*

There were no towns, no stores, and no government, just a vast, cold wilderness. So how did people in Beringia live? They had to look for plants and animals to eat. Small groups of just a few families, perhaps twenty-five to fifty people, helped each other as they moved around in search of food. People who live this way are called **hunter-gatherers**.*

While the women and children of the Ice Age looked for plants and berries, the men and older boys hunted. They tracked herds of **mammoth*** and **musk ox** back and forth across Beringia.

| Theory | Description | Evidence |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Bering Land Bridge | Humans crossed from Siberia to Alaska via a land bridge exposed by lower sea levels. | Genetic studies, linguistic evidence, archaeological sites in Alaska |
| Coastal Migration | Humans migrated by boat along the Pacific coast. | Evidence of early settlements along coastal regions |
| Solutrean Hypothesis | Europeans crossed the Atlantic via ice sheets during the Ice Age. | Similar stone tool technologies between Solutrean and Clovis cultures (debated) |

Table 1: Early Human Migration Theories

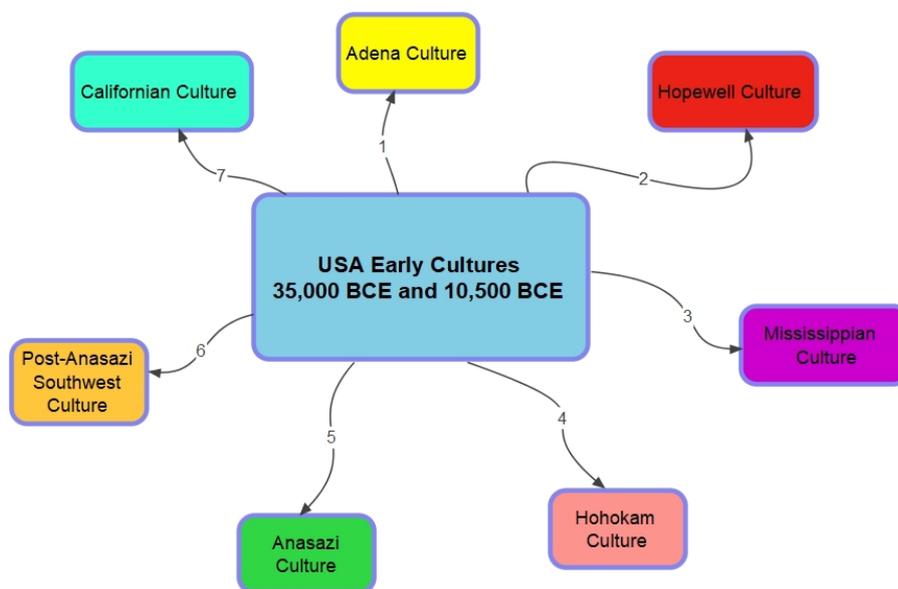
5. Early Cultures

Between **35,000 BCE and 10,500 BCE**, people from **Siberia migrated to North America** by crossing **the Bering Strait into Alaska**, which was dry land during the Ice Age due to lower sea levels. Linguistic evidence suggests they likely arrived in multiple waves, spreading across the continent.

This period, known as the **"Paleo-Indian"** era, is the longest phase of North American prehistory, lasting from around **35,000 BCE to 8000 BCE** (or even 4500 BCE in some areas).

During this time, the indigenous people were hunter-gatherers, primarily focusing on hunting **large animals (megafauna)** such as **woolly mammoths, mastodons, camels, bison, giant sloths, giant beavers, and musk**

oxen. They also faced dangerous predators like *saber-toothed tigers, American lions, and giant short-faced bears*. Up until around 9200 BCE, they used *wooden spears* with fire-hardened tips for hunting and employed *stone and bone tools* for tasks like *chopping and scraping*. In addition to hunting, their diet included *a variety of wild plants, including seeds, berries, roots, and bulbs*.



Mind map of USA early Culture

5.1. Adena culture

From about *1000 BC* some groups began supplementing their hunter-gatherer way of life with small-scale farming. This allowed villages to grow, often semi-permanent in nature: they moved to new locations as local soils became exhausted. The people of *the Adena culture*, which flourished between *1000 BCE* and *200 CE*, and which originated in the Ohio Valley before spreading out into neighboring areas, carried on the tradition of mound building – but with a difference. Whereas previously these *earthworks* seem to have been *purely ceremonial*, they are now *burial mounds*.

*



Adena

Note

The Adena earthworks were larger and more complex than those of the Poverty Point culture, and this must reflect a more complex society. **The grave goods** show that some individuals enjoyed higher status and wealth than others.

5.2. Hopewell culture

As time went by farming became more important to the economy of the people of the eastern woodlands. The Adena culture was eventually displaced by the Hopewell culture, which emerged around 200 BCE and came to an end about 700 CE. This shared many features with the Adena, but on a larger and more sophisticated scale; it also covered a much larger area than the Adena had done.

*

5.3. Mississippian culture

Eventually **the Hopewell culture** was succeeded by another, **the Mississippian**. And just as **the Hopewell had been more advanced than the Adena**, so the Mississippian was more advanced than the Hopewell.

Whilst **the Mississippian culture** carried on many of the traditions pioneered by the Adena and Hopewell, it also displayed new features, possibly derived from contact with **the Mesoamerican world** to the south. Most notably, the Mississippians constructed **not just burial mounds, but temple mounds** as well – a strikingly **Mesoamerican characteristic**.*

Extra

The Mississippian people's society was the most complex of all the "**mound-building**" cultures of the eastern woodlands, and was **moving towards urbanism**. Indeed, their larger settlements, the most famous example being **Cahokia**, on the banks of the Mississippi, were the size of major European cities of the time, though lacking the density of true urban settlements.

The Mississippian culture as a whole lasted until just before contact times, though remnants of it, for example amongst **the Natchez people**, endured into **the 18th century**.



Mississippi

 *Note*

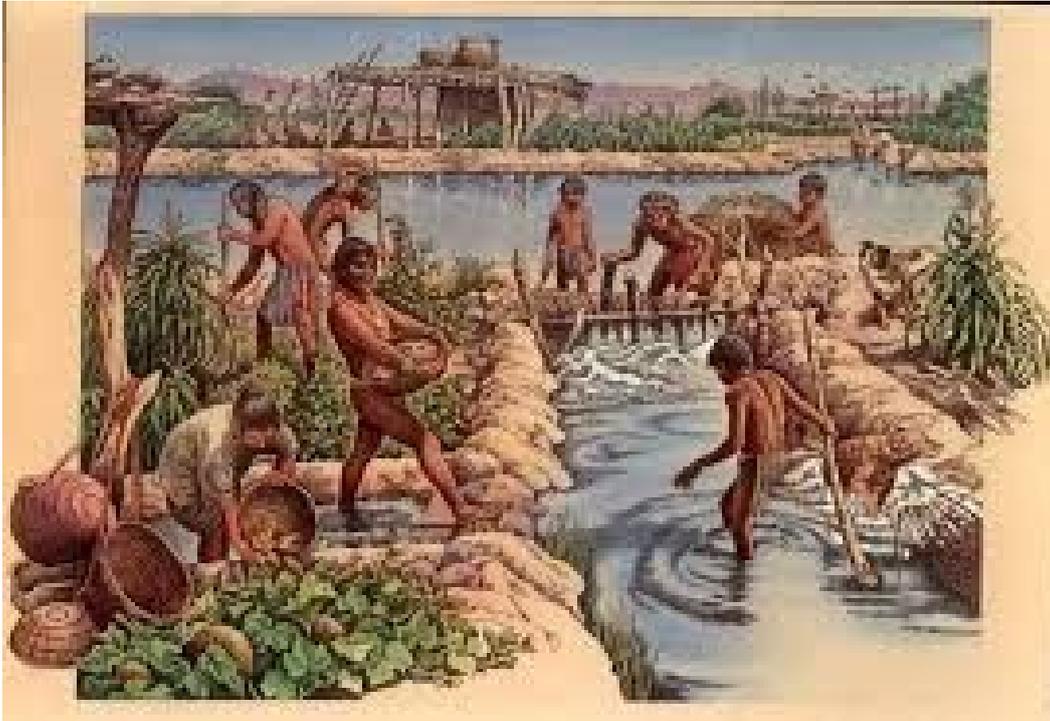
For further detail refer to the attached pdf

[cf. Mississippian Culture]

5.4. Hohokam culture

To the west of the Mogollon, ***the Hohokam culture*** developed around 100 BC, exhibiting many similarities to other regional cultures. A key aspect of Hohokam society was their reliance on ***irrigation-based agriculture***.

The Hohokam culture abruptly declined around 1500 CE. Their descendants are typically identified as ***the Akimel O'odham (Pima) and Tohono O'odham (Papago) tribes***.



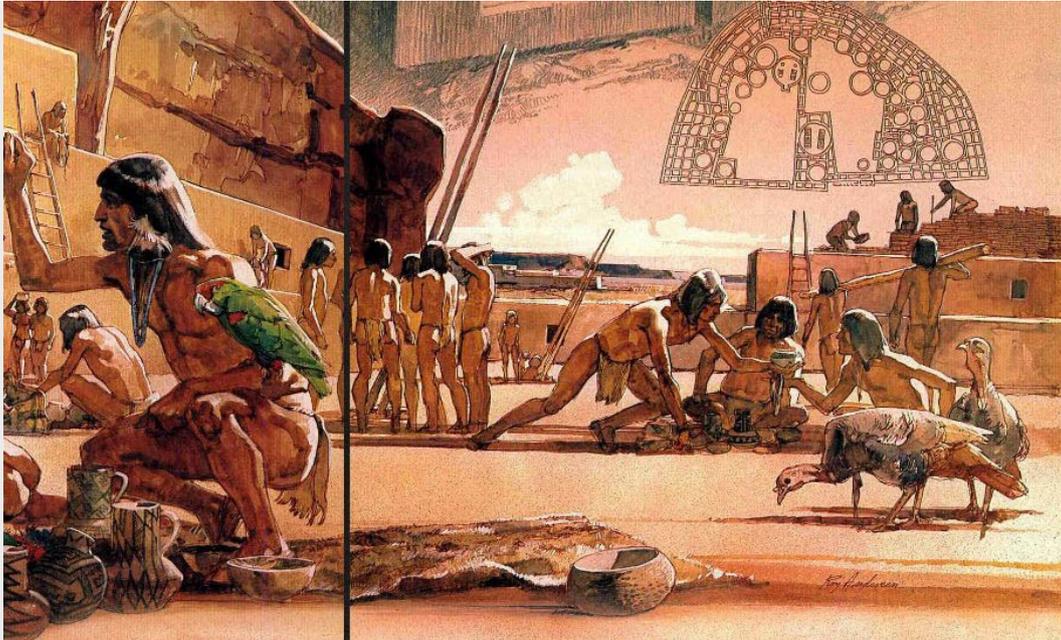
Hohokam

5.5. Anasazi Culture

The Anasazi culture was the most advanced of the southwestern cultures. It emerged to *the north east of the Hohokam culture*, and at about the same time as. It was from c. 750 CE, however, that *the Anasazi developed a new kind of architecture*, the pueblo, for which their descendants are still famous.

Fundamental

As the Anasazi people increasingly established their communities, the production of trade items expanded. *They crafted beautiful and practical baskets and sandals.* Eventually, they acquired skills to *produce and decorate pottery and jewelry.* They also discovered how to cultivate cotton and weave it. They also learned how to use *the bow and arrow.*



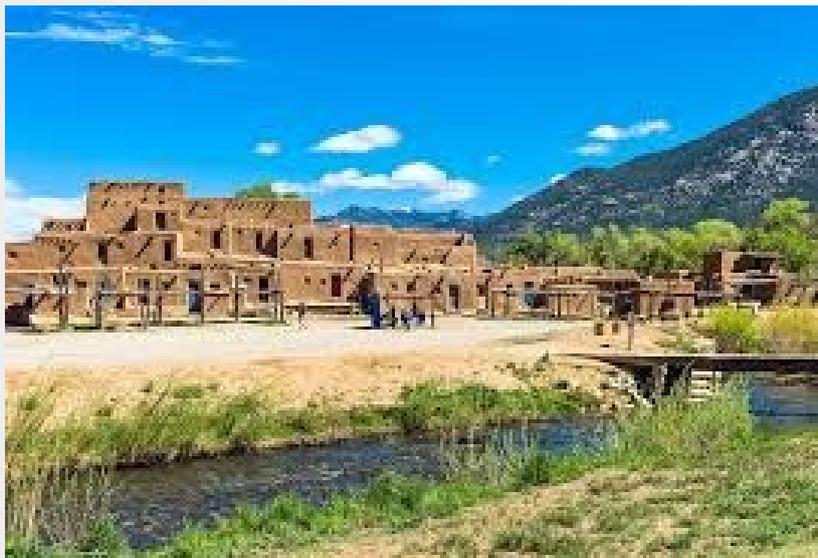
Anasazi

5.6. Post-Anasazi Southwest

The Anasazi culture began to go into decline from about **1300**. Many of the survivors moved south and settled in *the Rio Grande and Little Colorado valleys*. Here they maintained the cultural traditions of the Anasazi and became ancestral to present-day Pueblo peoples such as *the Zuni, Keres, Tiwa and Hopi*.

💡 *Fundamental*

Most modern pueblos are located on **mesa tops**. There are also some villages situated in the desert lowlands, or along rivers. These displayed other types of **houses – pole-framed huts** covered with **plant mats or earth**.



Post-Anasazi

🕒 Example

Maize was the most important of all crops, probably providing more nutrition than all the other crops combined. After maize, **the most important food crops were beans and squash**. Other crops were not grown for food. **Fiber plants** such as **cotton** were a major source of fabrics – only in the southwest of North America were **true looms** in use. Also, **dye plants, ornamental plants, medicinal herbs and stimulants** (such as tobacco) were grown.



Maize

⊕ Extra

Other groups have arrived in the region in more recent times, from c. 1000 CE onwards. These came in from the north, following **a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle**. Later they took to raiding farming settlements to supplement their diets, and may have played an important part in the decline of the older, more settled cultures. These peoples included **the Apache and the Navajo (Dineh)**. The latter, after contact with the Spanish and their sheep, eventually took to a herding lifestyle.

5.7. Californian cultures

The Californian coast also gave rise to **a dense hunter-gatherer-fisher population**. This landscape was not as mountainous as the northwest, nor the tree cover as dense (and in the south almost disappears). This made wood resources less available. Though wood plank houses similar to those of the Northwest were by no means unknown, particularly in the north, the inhabitants constructed many other kinds of dwellings as well. Among the most common were **cone-shaped structures** made from **poles**, and covered with **brush**, grass and reeds. There were also **domed earth-covered pit-houses**.

*



California

6. Conclusion

The early history of America, from its prehistoric roots to the colonial era, laid the groundwork for the nation's development. Indigenous cultures demonstrated remarkable adaptability and innovation, while European colonization introduced new social, economic, and political structures. These periods also brought profound challenges, including displacement, conflict, and the establishment of slavery. Understanding this history helps us appreciate the complexities of America's past and its enduring impact on modern society.

7. Exercice : What do you know about the American history?

[solution n°1 p.29]

What was Beringia?

- A large ice sheet that covered North America
- A land bridge connecting Asia and North America
- A prehistoric ocean between Europe and America
- A type of shelter used by early hunter-gatherers

8. Exercice

[solution n°2 p.29]

Which of the following best describes the lifestyle of Paleo-Indians?

- They were primarily farmers
- They built large cities and temples
- They were hunter-gatherers who relied on large game
- They established complex trade routes across continents

9. Exercice

[solution n°3 p.29]

What was a significant feature of the Adena culture?

- The development of written language
- The construction of burial mounds
- The creation of vast road networks
- The domestication of horses

10. Exercice

[solution n°4 p.29]

Was Beringia, and how did it help early humans migrate to North America?

11. Exercice

[solution n°5 p.30]

Who were the first known cultures to develop in early America, and what were their main characteristics?

12. Exercice

[solution n°6 p.30]

When did the first humans arrive in North America, and what evidence supports this timeline?

13. Exercice

[solution n°7 p.30]

Where did the Adena culture originate, and how did it influence later civilizations?

V Exercice

[solution n°8 p.30]

The War (1675-1676) was a violent conflict between Native Americans and New England settlers.

VI Exercice

[solution n°9 p.30]

The colony of Pennsylvania was founded by as a haven for Quakers.

VII Exercice

[solution n°10 p.30]

The Compact was an agreement made by the Pilgrims to establish self-government in Plymouth Colony.

VIII Exercise

[solution n°11 p.30]

Which colony was founded by the Pilgrims in 1620?

- Jamestown
- Rhode Island
- Plymouth
- New York

IX Exercice

[solution n°12 p.31]

Which of the following best describes the Middle Colonies?

- A society dominated by Puritan values and small farming
- An economy focused on plantation agriculture and enslaved labor
- A diverse society with religious tolerance and strong trade networks
- A colony primarily focused on fur trading and military alliances

X Exercice

[solution n°13 p.31]

What was the outcome of the French and Indian War?

- The British lost control of their colonies
- France gained new territories in North America
- The war resulted in Native American sovereignty
- Britain won and attempted to limit colonial expansion westward

XI Exercice

[solution n°14 p.31]

How did geography influence the economic and social structures of the different colonial regions?

XII Exercice

[solution n°15 p.31]

What were the benefits and drawbacks of colonization for different groups, including European settlers, Indigenous peoples, and enslaved Africans?

XIII Conclusion

The early history of America, from its prehistoric roots to the colonial era, laid the groundwork for the nation's development. Indigenous cultures demonstrated remarkable adaptability and innovation, while European colonization introduced new social, economic, and political structures. These periods also brought profound challenges, including displacement, conflict, and the establishment of slavery. Understanding this history helps us appreciate the complexities of America's past and its enduring impact on modern society.

XIV Quiz:

Write an essay of 800–1000 words addressing the following prompt: Describe the development of early American societies from the first human migrations to the establishment of the British colonies. In your essay, discuss:

- The migration and cultures of the first Native Americans (e.g., Anasazi, Hohokam, Adena, Hopewell).
- The motivations and impacts of European exploration (Norse, Spanish, French, British).
- The founding and characteristics of the Jamestown colony and later colonial regions (New England, Middle, Southern Colonies).
- Differences in geography, economy, society, and colonial governance across the three regions.
- The evolving relationships between Native Americans and European settlers.

Exercises solution

> **Solution n° 1**

Exercice p. 17

What was Beringia?

- A large ice sheet that covered North America
- A land bridge connecting Asia and North America
- A prehistoric ocean between Europe and America
- A type of shelter used by early hunter-gatherers

> **Solution n° 2**

Exercice p. 17

Which of the following best describes the lifestyle of Paleo-Indians?

- They were primarily farmers
- They built large cities and temples
- They were hunter-gatherers who relied on large game
- They established complex trade routes across continents

> **Solution n° 3**

Exercice p. 18

What was a significant feature of the Adena culture?

- The development of written language
- The construction of burial mounds
- The creation of vast road networks
- The domestication of horses

> **Solution n° 4**

Exercice p. 18

Was Beringia, and how did it help early humans migrate to North America?

Beringia was a land bridge that connected Asia and North America during the Ice Age. It allowed early humans to migrate from Siberia to Alaska in search of food and a better climate.

> **Solution n°5**

Exercice p. 18

Who were the first known cultures to develop in early America, and what were their main characteristics?

The first known cultures included the Ancestral Puebloans (Anasazi), Adena, Hopewell, Mississippian, Hohokam, and Californian cultures. They were hunter-gatherers who later developed farming, built mounds, and created advanced societies with trade networks.

> **Solution n°6**

Exercice p. 18

When did the first humans arrive in North America, and what evidence supports this timeline?

The first humans arrived in North America around 12,000–35,000 years ago. Evidence includes archaeological sites, stone tools, and genetic studies of Indigenous peoples.

> **Solution n°7**

Exercice p. 18

Where did the Adena culture originate, and how did it influence later civilizations?

The Adena culture originated in the Ohio Valley and influenced later cultures like the Hopewell and Mississippian by introducing mound-building for burials and ceremonies.

> **Solution n°8**

Exercice p. 19

The King Philip's War (1675-1676) was a violent conflict between Native Americans and New England settlers.

> **Solution n°9**

Exercice p. 20

The colony of Pennsylvania was founded by William Penn as a haven for Quakers.

> **Solution n°10**

Exercice p. 21

The Mayflower Compact was an agreement made by the Pilgrims to establish self-government in Plymouth Colony.

> **Solution n°11**

Exercice p. 22

Which colony was founded by the Pilgrims in 1620?

- Jamestown
- Rhode Island
- Plymouth

- New York

> **Solution** n° 12

Exercice p. 23

Which of the following best describes the Middle Colonies?

- A society dominated by Puritan values and small farming
- An economy focused on plantation agriculture and enslaved labor
- A diverse society with religious tolerance and strong trade networks
- A colony primarily focused on fur trading and military alliances

> **Solution** n° 13

Exercice p. 24

What was the outcome of the French and Indian War?

- The British lost control of their colonies
- France gained new territories in North America
- The war resulted in Native American sovereignty
- Britain won and attempted to limit colonial expansion westward

> **Solution** n° 14

Exercice p. 25

How did geography influence the economic and social structures of the different colonial regions?

Geography played a crucial role in shaping colonial economies. The New England Colonies had rocky soil and a cold climate, leading to small-scale farming, fishing, and trade. The Middle Colonies had fertile land and a moderate climate, promoting agriculture and commerce. The Southern Colonies had a warm climate and fertile soil, making plantation farming, particularly tobacco and rice cultivation, the dominant economic activity.

> **Solution** n° 15

Exercice p. 26

What were the benefits and drawbacks of colonization for different groups, including European settlers, Indigenous peoples, and enslaved Africans?

European settlers benefited from land, economic opportunities, and religious freedom, but also faced hardships such as disease and conflicts. Indigenous peoples suffered displacement, violence, and cultural loss. Enslaved Africans faced forced labor, brutal conditions, and loss of freedom, but also created resilient cultural traditions.

Glossary

hunter-gatherers

small groups of people who feed themselves by hunting animals and gathering plants.

Ice sheet

a very thick piece of ice that covers a large area of land for an extended period of time.

land bridge

A small strip of land that connects two large land masses .

Mammoth

a large, prehistoric elephant-like animal covered with hair.

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Early America, North America
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