

Unit 3 Expanding contacts:
Discovery and exploration

Introduction
to Expanding
contacts: Discovery
and exploration

The period between about 1400 CE and 1600 CE marks the end of the medieval period in Europe and the birth of the modern age. This period was known as the **Renaissance** and led to the birth of new ideas and discoveries about art, architecture, politics science and religion, particularly in Italy.

During this period, societies across Europe (including the Spain) also set out on voyages of discovery.

In this chapter you will learn how different beliefs and religions, social structures, laws, and governments influenced these societies in Europe. You will also learn more about the

factors that encouraged these societies to embark on journeys of discovery and exploration.

17A

- 1 Why caused societies in Europe to begin a period of discovery and exploration?

17B

- 1 What were the key factors leading to discovery and exploration?



Can we cut two lines
of text here?

Source 1 An artist's impression of Christopher Columbus – an Italian explorer hired by the Spanish Royal Family – discovering the Americas aboard his ship the Santa Maria in 1492.

chapter
17

Unit 3 The Asia–Pacific World

This unit offers a choice of two topics:

- Renaissance Italy (obook only)
- The Spanish conquest of the Americas

You must choose AT LEAST ONE of these topics for study.

17.1 The where and when of expanding contacts: discovery and exploration

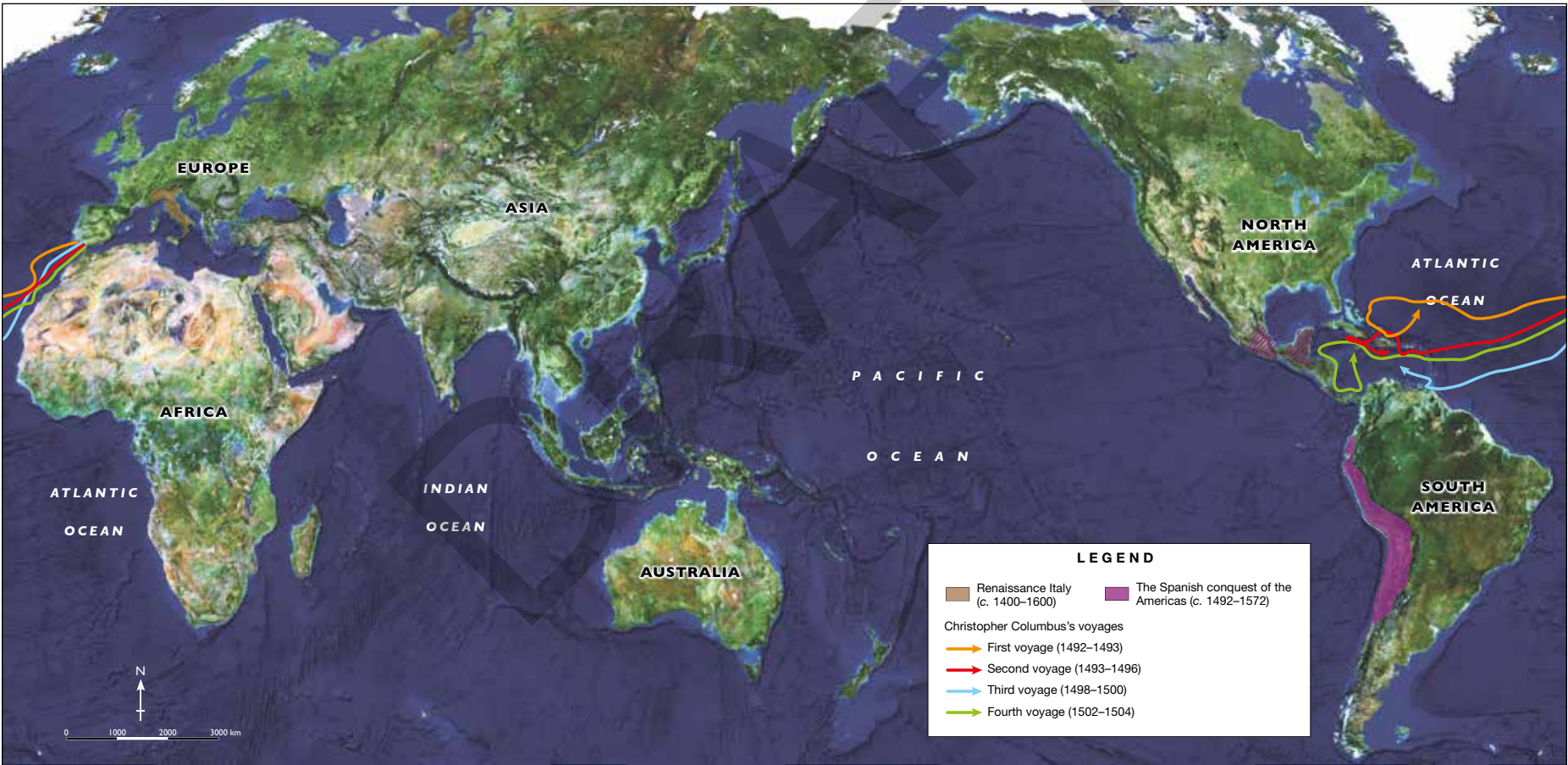
In this unit you will be learning about a number of different civilisations and events that took place across Europe that led to a period of discovery and exploration. To help you get a better understanding of these civilisations and events, it helps to look briefly at some of the factors that were common to them and think about how their development was linked.

The world map (Source 1) shows the location and size of the civilisations you will be learning about in this unit, including:

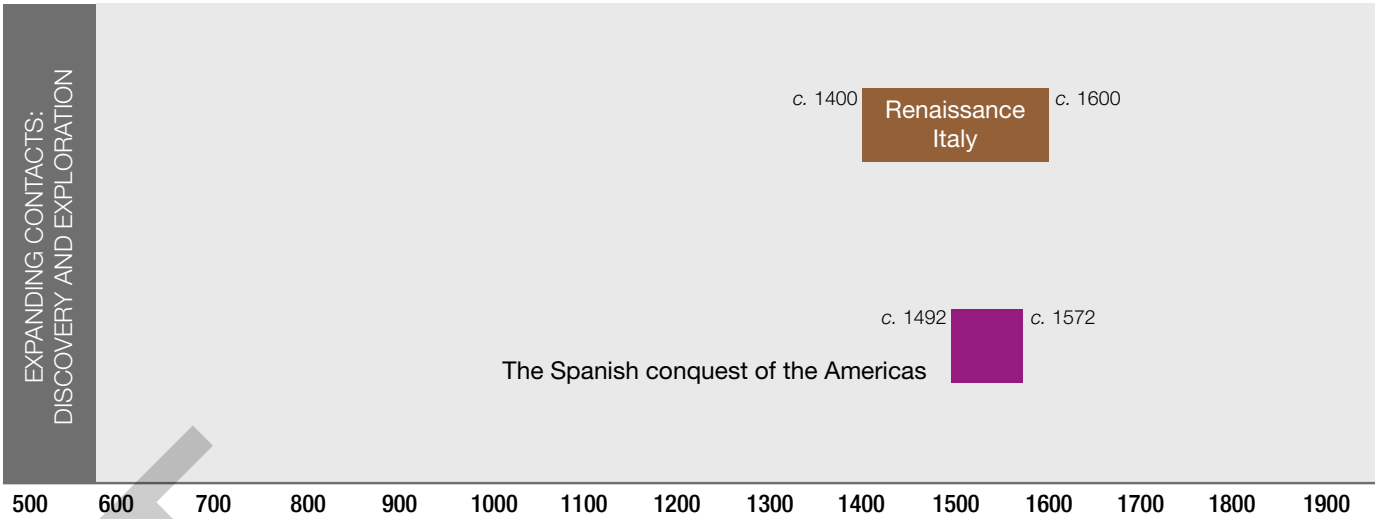
- the location of a group of separate **city-states** in Italy where the Renaissance started. These city-states were independent walled cities (sometimes including surrounding farmland) that governed themselves and had their own rulers
- the routes of the four voyages taken by explorer Christopher Columbus from Spain to the Americas. Christopher Columbus was an Italian hired by the Spanish Royal Family to discover new lands and wealth
- the areas of South America that were taken by Spanish conquistadors (conquerors) and colonised by Spain. Before the arrival of the Spanish, there were two dominant empires there:
 - the Aztec Empire – in the southern part of what is now Mexico
 - the Inca Empire – along the western side of South America, stretching from what is now Ecuador in the north to Chile in the south).

The dates for this period of discovery and exploration are also shown in the timeline (Source 2).

WORLD: KEY EVENTS AND CIVILISATIONS OF THE RENAISSANCE



Source 1 This satellite image of Earth shows the some key events that took place during Europe's age of discovery and exploration.



Source 2 This timeline shows the key dates of Europe's age of discovery and exploration.

Check your learning 17.1

Remember and understand

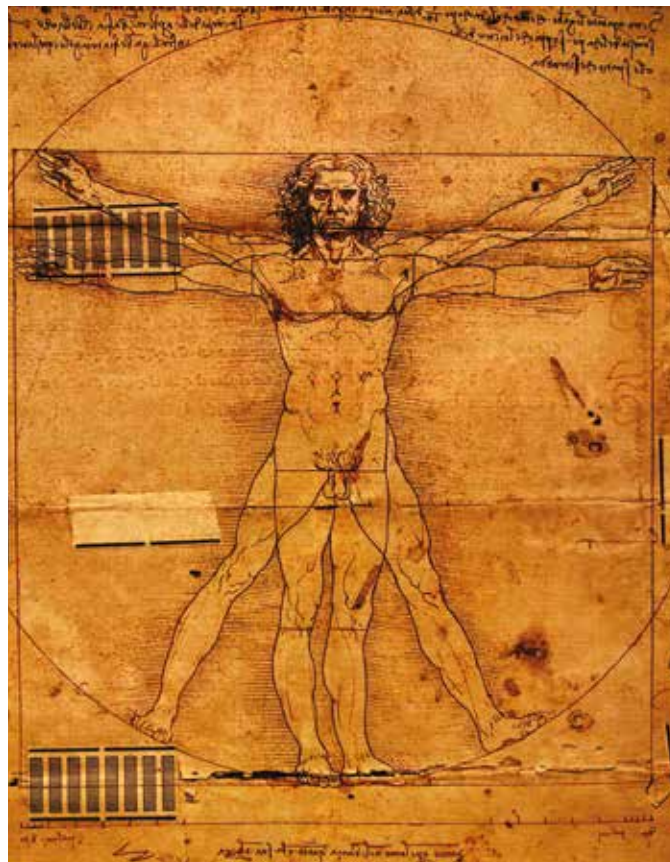
- What is mean by the term city-state?
- Who was Christopher Columbus?
- Look carefully at Source 1 and complete the following tasks:
 - Identify the locations of the Inca Empire and the Aztec Empire before the Spanish arrived.
 - How many voyages of discovery did Christopher Columbus make?
 - What direction did Christopher Columbus set sail from Spain in? What ocean did he sail across to reach the Americas?

Apply and analyse

- What is meant by the Spanish word conquistador? What does this word tell you about the attitude of the Spanish towards local peoples living in the Americas at the time?

17.2 Key factors leading to the age of discovery and exploration

Belief systems and religions were one of the main reasons that led to Europe's age of discovery and exploration. Towards the end of the medieval period in Europe, religious teachings and the authority of the Catholic Church still influenced almost every aspect of daily life. In fact, religious beliefs and values were often among the main reasons why societies in Europe decided to do the things they did – like go to war and expand their power and control. A dedication to Christian beliefs – in particular the belief that their actions were the will of God – was a very powerful motivator for some European rulers. However, from around 1400 onwards, people began to question the authority of the Church and a number of significant changes took place.



Belief systems and religions

Renaissance Italy

During the medieval period in Europe, the country we now know as Italy was made up of a collection of independent cities known as **city-states**. Each of these city-states had separate rulers and were independent. There were big differences in the way each of these city-states was ruled, but their rulers and people all had one thing in common – the belief in a Christian god.

Hundreds of years before the formation of these city-states, in around 394 CE, Roman **emperor** Constantine had converted to Christianity and made it the official religion of all people living in the Roman Empire. From this time onwards, the Roman Catholic Church began to control many aspects of life in Italy and the spiritual leader of the Church – the Pope – was based in Rome. From around 1400 though, people in many different city-states began to question the authority of the Church. Although people still had a strong faith in God, they became more critical of the amount of power and wealth controlled by the Church and began to question its actions. Some people became interested in seeking the answers to spiritual questions through the study of art, philosophy, science and music. This period became known as the **Renaissance** – a French word meaning 'rebirth'. The Renaissance period across the Italian city-states eventually led to a number of other movements such as:

Source 1 During the Renaissance period, the study of art, law, philosophy, science and music began to challenge the teachings and long-held authority of the Church. Leonardo da Vinci is perhaps the most famous thinker of the Renaissance. His paintings, scientific research and inventions have inspired generations. In this drawing of the Vitruvian Man, he examined the relationship between geometry and the human body.

- **Humanism** – a group of philosophies centred on the importance of human beings, values and evidence, rather than gods, religions and supernatural matters
- the **Scientific Revolution** – a change in thinking among 16th and 17th century European scholars (academics) that placed a new focus on the laws of science and the natural world rather than the spiritual world
- the **Enlightenment** – a school of French-inspired thinking that spread through Europe in the 18th century; its view was that reason, tolerance and equality should replace superstition, cruelty and injustice
- the **Reformation** – a movement that began in Europe in the 16th century when the scholar-monk Martin Luther publicly challenged the Catholic Church; it shifted the balance of power in Europe away from dominant control by the Church.

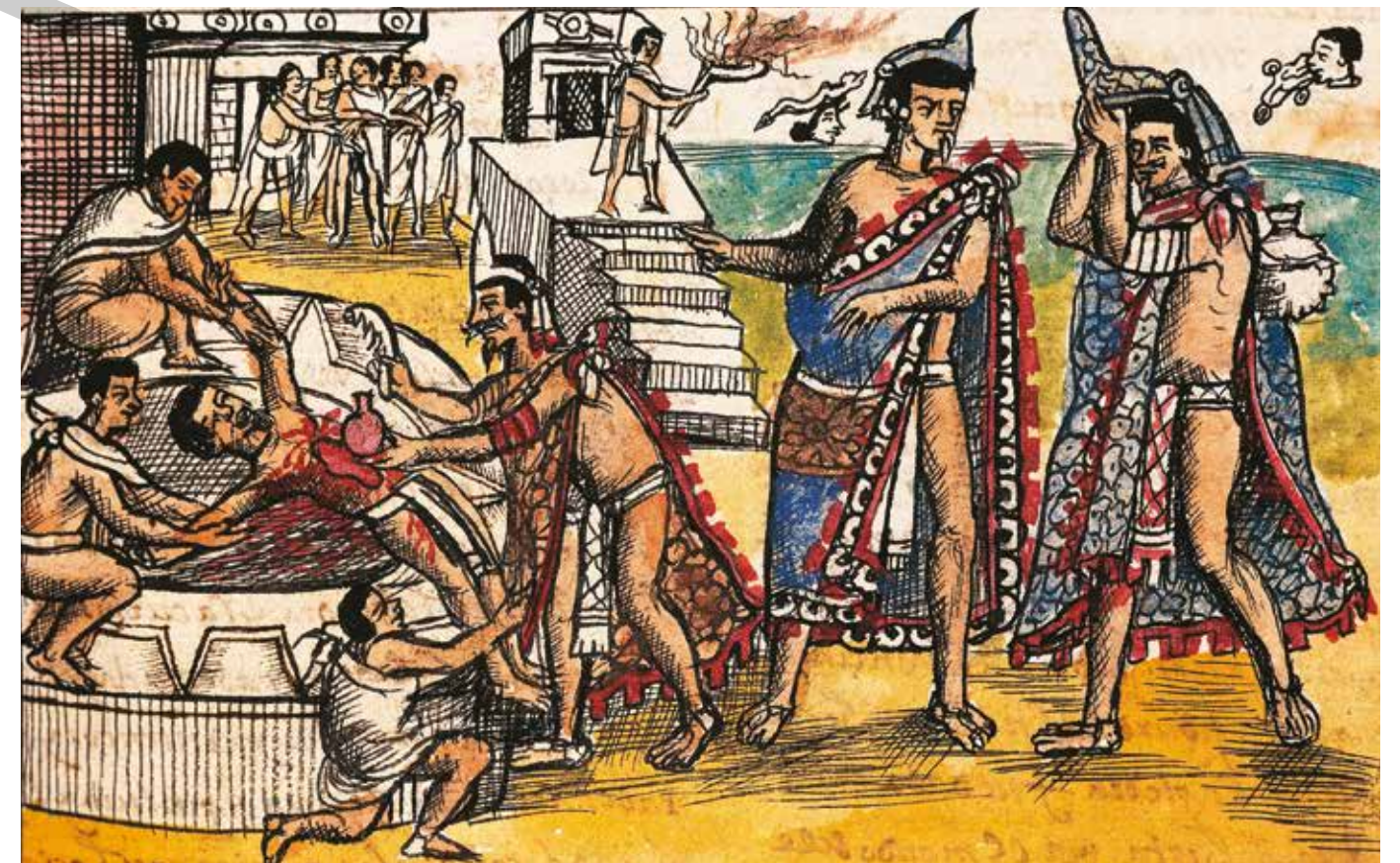
Each of these movements changed or reduced the power and influence of the Church in their own way.

The Spanish conquest of the Americas

As populations slowly recovered from the horrors of the **Black Death** in Europe, the search for new trade routes began. By this time, the Mongol Empire had broken apart and existing overland trade routes such as the **Silk Road** were no longer safe to use. Without the security and stability of Mongol rule, travellers and merchants travelling over land were now being regularly attacked and robbed. As a result, a new generation of European explorers began to set sail across uncharted oceans. By the early 15th century, an age of exploration and discovery had begun.

In 1492, explorer Christopher Columbus sailed west seeking a safer and more direct passage to Asia. The Catholic king of Spain, Ferdinand II, funded the voyage hoping to gain control of the spice trade. On this first voyage, Columbus discovered the area now known as the Bahamas, beginning the Spanish conquest of the Americas.

Before the arrival of the Spanish, there were two dominant empires in the Americas – the Aztec



Source 2 This Spanish artist's impression of an Aztec religious ceremony shows the beating heart of a human sacrifice being offered to the sun god. When the Spanish arrived in the Americas in the 15th century, they regarded both the Aztec and Inca people as godless savages. They saw it as their religious duty to convert them to Christianity.

Empire (in the southern part of Mexico) and the Inca Empire (along the western side of South America, extending from Ecuador in the north to Chile in the south). At this time, the spiritual beliefs of both the Aztecs and the Inca influenced all levels of their societies. The Aztecs believed that nature and human activities on Earth were controlled by many different gods and spirits. Many of these gods were greatly feared by the Aztecs, so they made offerings to please them. For example, in order to keep the sun shining and the earth fertile, most people performed blood-letting ceremonies in their homes – cutting themselves and letting their blood drip on the earth. In addition to this, the Aztecs believed that it was necessary to perform public human sacrifices to please the gods. Large, tiered temples were built specifically for this purpose. The beating hearts of victims were cut out of their chests and their bodies were thrown down the steep stairs of the temple.

The Inca believed that their ruler, known as the Sapa Inca, was the direct descendant of the Sun god, Inti. He had absolute power over his subjects. Like the Aztecs, Inca beliefs were closely tied to nature. The first Inca ruler was believed to be a god who was sent to Earth to teach humans how to farm, use weapons and worship. The Inca also made offerings to the gods; however, human sacrifices were extremely rare. Instead, animals were sacrificed. The Sapa Inca would also offer golden cups of maize (corn) beer, cocoa leaves and holy bread to the sun god.

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When Spanish conquistadors (conquerors) arrived they saw both the Aztecs and Inca to be primitive barbarians. The Spanish brought very strict Catholic beliefs with them to the Americas and set about converting the natives. They saw this not only as their duty to God but their right as cultured and educated people. Spanish missionaries built permanent settlements to educate the natives and save their souls. In addition to converting the natives to Christianity, the Spanish set about enslaving large sections of the population, looting the cities and murdering anyone who resisted them. Many Indigenous people believed their own gods had abandoned them. They saw the Spanish conquest and devastating loss of life from European diseases as a sign of this. As a result, large numbers converted to Christianity. Some Spanish missionaries saw how terribly native peoples were being treated and called for an end to slavery.

Governments, laws and social structures

Renaissance Italy

As mentioned, during the medieval period in Europe, the Italian Peninsula was divided into a number of independent city-states. Each one had its own ruler and government. These city-states had formed

over time as a result of marriages, political alliances (agreements) and conflicts. As a result, each developed its own system of government. For example, some were ruled by kings, others were ruled as **republics**, and others were ruled by the Pope (who was the religious leader of the Roman Catholic Church). These city-states often changed borders and there were many changing political alliances between the Church, ruling families and merchants (who formed powerful organisations known as **guilds**). Source 3 outlines some key city-states in Italy.

Source 3 City-states of the Italian Peninsula during the 15th century

Name of city-state	Features of government
Kingdom of Naples	The only city-state to officially have a king
The Papal State	Rome – governed by the Pope as head of the Roman Catholic Church
Duchy of Milan	Ruled over by a duke
Two republics: FlorenceVenice	Governed by elected representatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a council called the signoria in Florence• a leader (elected for life) and a council in Venice.

During the Renaissance, wealthy citizens in some city-states showed off their money and power by becoming supporters (known as ‘patrons’) of artists and intellectuals. Because of this support, thinkers and scholars were able to spend their days avoiding ordinary jobs, instead travelling around Italy, studying ancient ruins and rediscovering ancient Greek and Roman texts.

Italian merchants and bankers brought back exotic goods from their travels, as well as ideas from ancient classical texts they found preserved in the great libraries of ancient cities such as Constantinople. When Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Empire in 1453, many of the Greek scholars fled and found safety in Italy. The ideals and values of ancient classical philosophers, politicians, poets and writers inspired and encouraged the thinkers of Renaissance Italy. Scholars studied and discussed these ideals and applied them to their own world, influencing governments, laws and social structures.

Source 4 During the Renaissance period, the Italian Peninsula was divided into several city-states. This 15th-century woodcut shows one of those city-states, Florence, at the height of the Renaissance.



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Source 5 This artwork painted in 1519 shows Aztecs being massacred by Spanish soldiers.

The Spanish conquest of the Americas

The Spanish conquest of the Americas had a huge impact – not only for people in Spain and the Americas – but all around the world. For the native people, the Spanish conquest had a devastating impact on societies in the Americas – almost completely destroying the Aztec and Inca cultures.

The populations of both societies were almost wiped out through the battles they fought against the Spanish and by the spread of diseases the Spanish brought with them from Europe (like smallpox) to which they had no immunity.

The consequences of so many deaths were drastic. People's faith in their traditional religions and leaders was severely weakened. These deaths also had economic impacts. The Aztecs and Inca lost vast numbers of skilled citizens such as craftspeople and farmers. There were severe labour shortages and it became difficult to grow and harvest crops to feed the population.

While devastating for the Aztecs and Inca, the Spanish conquest of the Americas was a hugely

positive development for Spain and Europe. In Spain, the riches discovered in the Aztec and Inca empires created huge wealth for the Spanish king. The success of the conquests also made Spain a powerful force in Europe. In addition to being sources of precious metals like gold and silver, Spanish colonies in the Americas were a rich source of slaves and labour. Because so many Indigenous people in the Americas had died from disease or battles with the Spanish, slaves started being brought from Africa to work on plantations and in mines. This was the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade that would continue until the 19th century.

Conquest and colonisation also allowed the Spanish king to gain more wealth through taxes. By colonising the Americas, the Spanish continued to make money by taxing the local population, rather than just taking their treasures and leaving.

The **New World** (as it became known) was also an important source of crops for Spain and for Europe. Many crops that we take for granted around the world today had never been seen in Europe until

they were brought back from the Americas. These included chocolate, tobacco, potatoes, tomatoes, bananas, chilli, corn, turkey, pumpkin, rubber, avocado, peanuts, vanilla and pineapple. Some of these crops, such as tobacco, were extremely valuable in monetary terms. Others, such as potatoes, were valuable for improving the nutrition of Europeans. Potatoes could yield more calories per acre than anything Europeans had grown before, providing a great source of energy. In addition, foods such as tomatoes and chillies were a rich source of vitamins. In the Mediterranean, these foods enriched diets and improved the health of the population. These improvements in health and nutrition also helped to trigger population growth in Europe. They were critical to the advancement of European civilisations after this time.

Check your learning 17.2

Remember and understand

- 1 What is the meaning of the word 'renaissance'? In your own words, describe what happened during the Renaissance period in Italy.
- 2 The Renaissance in Italy led to the development of a number of other philosophical and scientific movements. Describe each of these.
- 3 What motivated people in Europe to look for new trading routes by sea rather than land?

Apply and analyse

- 4 What effect did the Spanish colonisation of the Americas have on the Aztec and Inca peoples? Can you think of another example of a European power colonising a country with similar effects?

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