

**The Americas to the 1600s**  
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**Thesis and Food-for-thought questions:** When Europeans first “discovered” the “New World,” it was already full of hundreds of diverse and rich cultures with their own spiritual and moral beliefs, economic networks, and social and political hierarchies. Today we still tend to think of pre-contact American indigenous peoples as *primitive*, but how do we define *primitive* or *savage* behavior? How did contact-era European and Native Americans describe *civilization* and *barbarism*? What similarities and differences existed between European and Indian ideas about *civilization*?

- I. Introduction: Diversity of New World civilizations
- II. Worldviews of the New World’s indigenous peoples: spirituality, warfare, and concepts of reciprocity
  - A. Examples of warfare and spirituality: Mexica (Aztecs) and Iroquois
  - B. Examples of reciprocity: Iroquois and Cherokee
- III. After the “discovery:” Europeans’ definitions of the Other
  - A. Written language
  - B. Christianity
  - C. The concept of “race”
  - D. Mapping and describing the landscape
- IV. After the “discovery:” Native Americans’ definitions of the Other
  - A. Prophecies and first impressions
  - B. European “magic” and American Indians’ spiritual beliefs
  - C. Physical characteristics and the Other
  - D. Expectations of reciprocity: the rites of diplomacy and trade
  - E. American Indian humor at the Europeans’ expense
  - F. Native American tourists in Europe: Impressions of “civilization”
- V. The winners write history: “First Encounters” myth and reality