

Major Issues in Colonization: Comparing How Europeans Treated Africa and North and South America

How did the Broad Trends Lead to Differences in How the Europeans Treated Africa and the Americas?

The loss of nearly 11 million people from a continent to slavery in a New World is horrific, but the Europeans did not split up Africa until the late 1800s. They split up the New World very quickly. The table highlights some of the difference conditions in Africa and the Americas and therefore some of the different consequences.

Difference	With Africa	With North and South America
Disease at the time of contact between the Europeans and the	Killed Europeans—therefore the Europeans needed to stay on the coast.	Killed Native Americans—with estimates at 90% plus.
Gold, availability of	Available for trade at the coast	Available by conquest in the South's coastal empires.
Territories, access to entry at the coast—that is, how do the Europeans get a foothold when they are few in number?	Populated by organized states, with armies—thus a barrier to European entry	In the North, relatively unpopulated and with many language groups, resulting in lack of centralization In the South, vulnerable at the time of first contact because of civil war (Incas) and of attempts to tighten centralization (Aztecs)
Territories, access to the interior	Mixed—much of territory considered unknown through end of 1700s and beyond	In the North, Mississippi River network (comparatively easy to travel). In the South, Native American empires (Aztec and Inca) on the coast and comparatively easy to reach by European ships.
Trade, access to	At the coast, initially on the Africans' terms	In the interior, initially on the Native Americans' terms

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