

# Effects on the New World

## Introduction:

In order to assess the effects on the New World we will critically examine the interaction of the two groups: the Indigenous Peoples and the Europeans.



*The Arrival of the Spanish and with it a new way of doing things*

The Spaniards believed that their culture and way of life was superior to that of the Indigenous Peoples that they conquered. Therefore they set about to establish their way of life. They seemed to think that the Indigenous Peoples should feel honored to adopt this way of life. As a result they did not exercise much tolerance or patience when dealing with the natives. In fact, they felt that their superior way of life and weapons justified their use of force as well as their obnoxious and prejudiced behavior to these people.

**Let us examine some of the changes or effects under these headings:**

## 1. Trade

At first the Spaniards pretended to be friendly '**visitors**'. The island Tainos in particular began to trade with them. Columbus was able to take back items to

Spain as evidence that he had reached new lands because of this trade.

## 2. New crops and animals introduced

The Spaniards introduced all citrus except the grapefruit which the Indigenous peoples already had. They also introduced banana, grapes, sugar cane and so on. They also raised **fowls (chickens) pigs, cow, goats and even sheep**. Thus the natives were introduced to a wider variety of meat though we do not know for sure to what extent they actually ate these new foods.

## 3. New methods

The indigenous peoples were forcibly introduced to new ways of doing a number of things:

(a) The Spaniards used **horses** for transportation.

(b) The Spanish practiced **surplus production**. For example, they established **haciendas** or ranches on which they reared cattle for its meat and hides to sell to passing ships.

(c) They erected large stone buildings such as government offices and churches. They also built different types of houses using different materials and of Spanish or European architecture. The entire landscape changed. Villages were rapidly converted into towns.

(d) They were forced to accept the new Spanish system of government. Their own political system with the Chief and nobles ruling was totally ignored. In fact there were instances where even the chief was put to work in the mines. The Spaniards showed no regard nor respect for these people.

## 4. New Culture

A new **language**: Spanish replaced the many languages of the Indigenous Peoples. At first there was a terrible language barrier. With time a new kind of patois developed. Later English, Dutch and French would also be introduced as different illegal traders came to the Caribbean hoping to 'get a piece of the pie'.

You will recall that majority of the indigenous people who were single went naked. They were now introduced to new **clothes** much of which was not suitable for the tropical climate of the Caribbean.

## 5. Genocide of the Indigenous Peoples

In a short time the natives became extinct. For example, in 1493, there were approximately 300,000 Tainos in Hispaniola. By the end of 1496, only three years later two thirds of them were dead!

They were exterminated due to several reasons. The idle intruders played all sorts of deadly games with the scared and defenseless natives. For example, they placed bets to see who could chop off a Taino's head with one blow of the machete.

They were also killed by the thousands in battle with the Europeans. The Amerindians simple weapons were no match for the Europeans' guns and cannons. To make matters worst, the Indigenous Peoples were on foot while the Europeans were on horse back. The latter had a distinct advantage with their long range weapons.

The newcomers realized that the natives were terrified of dogs. They used some vicious bloodhounds to literally tear the indigenous peoples to pieces.



*Death of the Natives*

Some were killed in raids by the newcomers for food, land and women. One example of this was in Hispaniola at La Navidad in 1493. They were overworked in the mines and on the ranches. The natives were not used to this kind of strenuous work. Many of them died from exhaustion and respiratory related illnesses.

## 6. Introduction of deadly diseases

The Spaniards did not only bring animals and plants with them across the Atlantic. They introduced deadly diseases that the Indigenous Peoples had no immunity to nor cure for, such as smallpox and measles. A small pox epidemic swept through different islands and the mainland alike claiming many victims.

## 7. Enslavement

In 1502, the Governor of Hispaniola, **Don Nicholas de Ovando** instituted the **Encomienda System**. It was intended to be a labor system but in practice it was a slave system. A number of Indigenous Peoples were shared out to a Spanish land owner. He was supposed to provide food and shelter for them and see to it that they were converted to Christianity. In return they were to provide him with labor for his land.

That did not happen. The encomendero (master) overworked the natives either in the mines or on his farm. They were underfed, ill-treated and not given adequate medical attention. They had to produce enough to feed the encomendero and themselves. They also labored on roads, bridges and massive buildings such as Churches.



*Nicolás de Ovando*

## 8. Rape and Sexual Relations

The intruders raped the Indigenous women. This was particularly rampant in the earlier period of colonization when there were only a few women in the New World. They had not yet migrated in large numbers. Sexual contact between the Indigenous Peoples and the Europeans led to the creation of a new group of people known as '**mestizos**'.

## 9. Tax System

The natives were forced to pay taxes to the Europeans! All males 14 years and older were required to pay a hawk's bell full of gold every three months. All others were required to pay 25 pounds of spun cotton or be subjected to several

weeks of unpaid labor.

#### **10. Destruction of Property**

(a) The animals that the Spanish introduced roamed the area freely trampling the crops and food supply of the natives. The lazy settlers were unwilling to provide the necessary fencing that would keep the out of the plots and provision grounds.

(b) The intruders deliberately destroyed the gods and houses of the Indigenous People. This was some sort of joke and game to them.