

The Expansion of Europe in the Eighteenth Century



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- I. Agriculture and the Land
 - A. The Open-Field System
 - 1. The open-field system was the great accomplishment of medieval agriculture.
 - 2. Three field rotations helped keep fields fertile.
 - 3. Traditional village rights reinforced traditional patterns of farming.
 - 4. Peasants were exploited in a number of ways, with those in eastern Europe generally the worst off.
 - B. The Agricultural Revolution
 - 1. The use of more complex systems of crop rotation increased cultivation.
 - 2. Grain crops were alternated with nitrogen-storing crops.
 - 3. The open-field system was ended by “enclosing” the fields, particularly in England.
 - 4. The enclosure movement meant an end to common lands and to the independence of the rural poor who relied on them to survive.
 - C. The Leadership of the Low Countries and England
 - 1. The Dutch advantage was due to a very dense population.
 - 2. Jethro Tull gained fame in experimental agriculture and animal husbandry.
 - 3. By the mid-eighteenth century, English agriculture was in the process of a radical transformation.
 - D. The Cost of Enclosure
 - 1. Half of all English land was enclosed by 1750.
 - 2. By 1700 a distinctive pattern of landownership and production existed in England.
 - 3. Tenant farmers were the key to mastering new methods of farming.
 - 4. Enclosure marked the emergence of market-oriented estate agriculture and of a landless rural proletariat.
 - II. The Beginning of the Population Explosion
 - A. Limitations on Population Growth

1. Famine, disease, and war were the usual checks on growth.
 2. Europe's population growth was kept fairly low.
 - B. The New Pattern of the Eighteenth Century
 1. Fewer deaths occurred, in part due to the disappearance of the plague.
 2. Advances in medicine did little to decrease the death rate.
 3. Improved sanitation promoted better public health.
 4. An increase in the food supply meant fewer famines and epidemics.
- III. The Growth of the Cottage Industry
 - A. The Putting-Out System
 1. The two main participants in the putting-out system were the merchant capitalist and the rural worker.
 2. Merchants loaned, or "put out," raw materials to workers who processed the raw materials and returned finished goods to the merchant.
 3. The putting-out system grew because it had competitive advantages.
 4. Rural agriculture did not spread across Europe at an even rate.
 - B. The Textile Industry
 1. Throughout most of history, the textile industry has employed more people than any other industry.
 2. Most participants in cottage industry worked in textiles.
 3. Cottage industry was a family enterprise.
 4. Relations between workers and employers were often marked by conflict.
- IV. Building the Atlantic Economy
 - A. Mercantilism and Colonial Wars
 1. English mercantilism was characterized by government regulations that served the interests both of the state and of private individuals. Mercantilism in other European countries generally served only state interests.
 2. The Navigation Acts of 1651-1663 were a form of economic warfare against Dutch domination of Atlantic shipping. They gave British merchants and ship owners a near monopoly on trade with Britain's North American colonies.
 3. After defeating the Dutch, England fought a series of wars with France for maritime domination of the world.
 - a. War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713)
 - b. War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748)
 - c. The Seven Years' War (1756-1763) ended with British winning full control over India and North America.
 - B. Land and Labor in British America
 1. In Britain's North American colonies cheap land and scarce labor resulted in the following:
 - a. rapid increase in the colonial population in the eighteenth century.
 - b. import of African slaves to tobacco plantations in southern colonies.
 - c. growing prosperity for British colonists.
 - C. The Growth of Foreign Trade
 1. Britain and especially England profited from the mercantile system.

2. As trade with Europe stagnated, colonial markets took up the slack.
 3. English exports grew more balanced and diverse.
- D. The Atlantic Slave Trade
1. The forced migration of millions of Africans was a key element in the Atlantic system and western European economic expansion.
 2. After 1700, Britain was the undisputed leader of the slave trade.
 3. Increasing demand led to rising prices for African slaves.
 4. Africans participated in the trade.
 5. After 1775, a campaign to abolish slavery developed in Britain.
- E. Revival in Colonial Latin America
1. Under Philip V (r. 1700-1746) Spain recovered economically and successfully defended her American colonies.
 2. Rising silver exports in the eighteenth century helped create a class of wealthy Creole (American-born white) merchants.
 3. Creole estate owners dominated much of the peasant population through debt peonage, really a form of serfdom.
- F. Adam Smith and Economic Liberalism
1. Smith challenged mercantilist ideas with his defense of free trade and his argument for keeping government interference in the economy to a minimum (*The Wealth of Nations* [1776]).
 2. Smith was one of the Enlightenment's most original thinkers.
 3. His work became the basis of the classic argument for economic liberalism and unregulated capitalism.