



Setting the Stage for Columbus



1491



A New Chapter in Human History Begins....

- a. Europeans are coming out of the Crusades, costly civil wars, and seeking new routes of trade that are no longer controlled by their Islamic adversaries. New technologies such as the gun have enabled the Europeans to expel their enemies.
- b. Across the European continent, new nations have arisen and new technologies such as the printing press have changed the nature of sharing information and the growth of a more literate population.
- c. The Portuguese have established plantation systems on tiny islands using slave labor off of the coast of West Africa. The Portuguese have also sailed down the coast of West Africa and are on the verge of rounding the tip of Africa to make the journey to India— but, it's quite long and dangerous, too. New technologies from the East, such as the compass, the lateen sail and the caravel make these journeys a possibility.
- d. The Native Americans are living in harmony with nature and have developed sophisticated societies that are based on both agriculture and hunting and gathering. These complex societies are very diverse in nature and span across two continents.

Thought Questions

- a. How do we know what we know about the Native Americans?
- b. Which product heavily influenced the development of the slave trade?
- c. What set of circumstances heavily influenced the development of a system of plantation-based agriculture?

