Intro: **European guns, germs, & steel** decimated native populations. 

*Remember Diamond’s thesis from the fall?*

Believes **uneven distribution of resources** shaped the course of global history & played a vital part in the **epic story of continental competition**:

Like: *wheat, cattle, & writing*

**Diamond also focused on physical geography.**

Ex.) *Natural impediments such as mountain ranges or bodies of water created isolated civilizations.*

He argued that **continents which were easily traversable**, such as Europe **encouraged trade among different people & stimulated development.**

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**Geographic Luck**

Steel: The Great Conqueror

Power of **Germs**
Across Eurasia: Crops & animals could spread easily

Places of same latitude automatically share same day length, climate, & vegetation... & later technology.

Eurasia is spread 8,000 miles from E-W.

Spanish are “geographically blessed” they enjoyed the benefit of technologies & ideas that spread easily across

Maya had writing very early in history.

But why didn’t it spread to the Incas?

Americas: long & thin. 8,000 miles from N-S

Americas are opposite of Eurasia. From N-S, you travel through different day lengths, climate zones, & dramatically different types of vegetation.

These differences hindered spread of crops, animals, people, ideas, & technologies. Incans were chronically isolated.
Steel weaponry provided European civilizations with a distinct advantage.

Episode 2: Guns, Germs & Steel: “Conquest” Spanish Conquistadors & how use of steel weapons enabled their overthrow a much larger Inca army. Thus taking control of land, people, & their riches.

Historical significance of steel weaponry: Examines power & impact that advanced technology & weapons have provided to those who possess them throughout history.
The Columbian Exchange:

Dramatically widespread exchange of animals, plants, culture, human populations (including slaves), communicable disease, & ideas between American & Afro-Eurasian Hemispheres following voyage to Americas by Christopher Columbus in 1492.

Term coined in 1972 by Alfred W. Crosby, historian at University of Texas at Austin, in work of environmental history.

YouTube: Crash Course Columbian Exchange
Columbian Exchange

Enormous network of communication, migration, trade, the spread of disease, & the transfer of plants & animals, all generated by European colonial empires in the Americas.

2 “old worlds” were joined, increasingly creating a single biological regime, a “new world” of global dimensions.

Long-term benefits: VERY unequally distributed...

Western Europeans were clearly the dominant players in the Atlantic world, & their societies reaped the greatest rewards.

Mountains of new information flooded into Europe, shaking up conventional understandings of the world & contributing to revolutionary new way of thinking (Scientific Revolution).
Columbian Exchange

Wealth of the colonies: Precious metals, natural resources, new food crops, slave labor, financial profits, colonial markets - provided one of the foundations on which Europe’s Industrial Revolution was built.

Colonies also provided an outlet for the rapidly growing population of European societies & represented an enormous extension of European civilization.

Colonial empires of Americas greatly facilitated a changing global balance of power, which now... thrust the previously marginal Western Europeans into an increasingly central & commanding role on the world stage.
“Without a New World to deliver economic balance in the Old,” concluded a prominent world historian, “Europe would have remained inferior, as ever, in wealth and power, to the great civilizations of Asia.”
Plants & Animals of the Columbian Exchange

18th Century Peruvian painting (right) illustrates 2 of the many biological species that crossed the Atlantic.

Cattle from Europe flourished in the Americas, while **cassava** (also known as manioc), shown in the bottom of the picture, was native to South America but spread widely in Asia, & especially in Africa, where its edible root provided a **major source of carbohydrates**.
Americas Demographic Effects:

**Precise figures remain in debate.**

Greatest pop. concentration were in MesoAmerica & Andean (Inca) Coast.

- ~100 million people in Americas, 1492
- ~100 million people in Europe, 1492

Densely pop. peoples in Americas died in greatest number.

**Mexico**: 10 to 20 mil. people died c. 1492. *Died of disease or hunger*

Fields or crops could not be worked.

War often ensued between Native American rivals, trying to take advantage of territorial weakness.

Many natives chose to work with the Europeans, in hopes of surviving & gaining a measure of political power.

*European Point of View...*

“Good hand of God at work.”
Series & Combination of Diseases:
Smallpox, Measles, Mumps, Typhus, Chicken Pox

- Native Americans had **no familiarity with these diseases**
- Mostly due to the fact that they **did not have the population of domesticated animals** (initial source of virus/disease)

The Big 5:
1. Horse
2. Cow
3. Pig
4. Sheep
5. Goat
Native Americans also had generally cleaner living conditions than those in crowded, walled-in Europe. In response to disease filling natives inhabitants with dread, warfare often resulted among rivals.
Impact of Columbian Exchange: Migration of Millions

World transformed by massive transoceanic movement of peoples: Largest in human history up to that time Migration of millions of Europeans was fundamental to the formation of New World society.

European settlement & diseases devastated indigenous populations & led to a scramble for lands on a continental scale.

Results: Checkerboard of Euro-American societies from the Hudson Bay in northern Canada to Tierra del Fuego, an island group off the southern tip of South America.

From Atlantic ports of Europe (Britain/Spain/Portugal) wave after wave of settlers, rich & poor, took ships seeking their fortune “beyond the seas.”
Demographic Effects:

★ **American**: Food crops nutritional foundation for **immense population growth**
Calories from **corn & potatoes** helped human population numbers to increase:
   From 60 mil. in 1400 to 390 mil in 1600

★ **China**: corn, peanuts, & sweet potatoes supplemented traditional rice & wheat to sustain China’s modern pop. explosion

★ **Africa**: corn used as **cheap food for human cargos** of transatlantic slave trade

★ **Corn, peanuts, & cassava** underwrote some of Africa’s pop. growth & partially offset population drain of the slave trade.
Demographic Effects:

★ **Slave trade**: Lasting link among Africa, Europe & Americas while scattering people of African origin throughout the W. Hemisphere

★ **Colonies**: An outlet for the rapidly growing population of European societies an enormous extension of European civilization & culture
Environmental Effects:

- **Columbian Exchange Homogenized the Biological Landscape:** Since Columbus the number of plant & animal species has continually diminished. Variation in species has diminished dramatically.

- **The planet became biologically singular.** No longer was the planet split into 2 major hemispheres that were separate.

*Never before, in human history had such a large-scale & consequential exchange of plants & animals operated to remake the biological environment of the planet.*
Environmental Effects:

★ **Silver mines** in Mexico & Peru transformed the landscape & resulted in **economic explosion** for European countries & Chinese/Asian trade

★ **Sugarcane plantations** created enormous shipments of **sugar** to meet a new demand across the globe, but did so with **slave labor**, mostly from Africa.

★ **“Soft Gold”** or **Fur** became highly sought after, due to the climate shift referred to as **The Little Ice Age**.

2 “old worlds” were joined, increasingly creating a single biological region of “new world” or global dimensions.