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# Introduction

## The Beginning of the Global Age

In the year 1500, few people around the world could have known what a boundary had just been crossed. For most ordinary people then, no change of any real importance could have been detected. A peasant in Europe, for example, could look forward to a life of backbreaking toil little different from what he or she would have experienced five centuries earlier. As in earlier centuries, the seasonal rhythms of life would have been punctuated by occasional famines, epidemics, and wars. Change would have seemed entirely cyclic, with ups and downs over the decades but with no discernible direction toward anything fundamentally new.

With the voyages of Columbus, however, a new age, the world's first global age, had in fact already begun. For the first time, all major regions of the world were in continuous contact. Instead of developing separately, these regions would, from this point on, influence and interact with one another in a sustained and ever-deepening way.

Moreover, this momentous shift arrived as many other kinds of change accelerated and began to radiate out from Europe to affect every other society. This change would, in time, transform life at all levels—technical, economic, scientific, religious, social, cultural, and political.

The twelve prints and cartoons in this booklet are meant to help bring this age of global change to life in a vivid way. To help you use them most effectively at the right points in your history courses, we have grouped them into four lessons. Each lesson touches on one key aspect of this pivotal era in world history. Briefly, the lessons are as follows:

**Lesson 1: Accelerating Change and Global Interaction.** The illustrations in this lesson focus on a Europe still ignorant of other regions and cultures but growing in technical prowess and in the power of the state. Europe also is beginning to explore the world and establish its first colonial empires.

**Lesson 2: The Renaissance and Reformation in Europe.** The print of Erasmus in this lesson captures the Renaissance faith in human understanding and human mastery. This spirit may have contributed to the revolt against religious orthodoxy known as the Reformation, which added to intellectual ferment and to secular power.

**Lesson 3: Eurasia and Its Empires.** Despite Europe's rise, the rest of the Eurasian landmass contained many other highly civilized empires—in China, India, Persia, and Southwest Asia. In the case of the Ottoman Empire, Europe's very survival at times seemed threatened.

**Lesson 4: Europe and the World.** By the mid-1700s, however, Europe's dominance was increasingly clear. The Ottoman Empire was already in decline. Great Britain's conquest of India had begun. In addition, in many less developed regions, even those not yet under direct colonial control, European diseases, ideas, goods, and technology were already transforming ways of life.

## Using Political Cartoons and Other Prints to Teach World History

Johann Gutenberg invented his printing press in the mid-1400s. For the first time, a much wider distribution of knowledge became possible. Thus was born also the era in which the political cartoon could flourish. However, political cartoons did not really emerge in anything resembling their present form until the eighteenth century. Only then (and even then, still mainly in Great Britain, France, and North America) did a mass public with an ongoing interest in newspapers and public affairs first develop. Up until then, books, pamphlets, illustrations, and prints tended to be produced for much smaller, more elite audiences. The political cartoon, with its irreverence, its use of common and shared symbols, and its advocacy of alternative views, is uniquely a product of the age of democracy.

Political art, however, did exist before the 1700s. In the 1500s, a growing number of paintings, woodcuts, and engravings were produced depicting various secular topics. Compared with today's political cartoon, the imagery in these works is often rich and detailed, and the political and social implications are often obscure. Yet these works of art can provide many insights about the daily concerns, viewpoints, tastes, and prejudices of times otherwise quite remote from our own.

This booklet uses twelve prints, paintings, and early political cartoons as the basis for four lessons on this key era in world history. The accompanying discussion points focus both on the content and on the cultural point of view of these illustrations. You will get the most out of the lessons if you call attention to both aspects of these fascinating works of political art.

## How to Use This Booklet

This booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

### **A BACKGROUND-INFORMATION SHEET**

This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

### **DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY PAGES FOR EACH VISUAL DISPLAY**

Each page includes one image, and a sequence of questions is provided to help you plan an all-classroom discussion while examining the image. The questions take students step-by-step through an analysis of the visual. For students who require more support to answer the questions, you may hand them an entire discussion-activity page reproducible in order to provide more visual support. For students who need less support to answer questions, keep the page yourself, and ask the questions of the class as a whole in order to provide a listening and response-writing activity. In addition to these questions, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. The instructions for these activities are directed to the student. Some are individual assignments while others work best as small-group or all-class activities. You may reproduce any of these pages for classroom use. Answers to factual questions are also provided on the inside back cover of the booklet.

### **ILLUSTRATIONS AND OTHER VISUAL ART**

Images are printed alongside discussion questions and follow-up activities on reproducible pages, making them readily available to students. Stand-alone versions of all images, also reproducible, can be found in the appendix. Using images without the text may prove useful for testing or to encourage students to formulate their own analyses before consulting the text.

Booklet I: *The Beginning of the Global Age*

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## OBJECTIVES

1. Students will see increasing global interaction after 1500 as a central theme in world history.
  2. Students will better appreciate the powerful impact this interaction had both on Europe and on other cultures.
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# Accelerating Change and Global Interaction

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*Below are some brief points summarizing the three cartoons for this lesson. Reproduce copies of these summaries for your class, or use them to guide a discussion of the cartoons as you work with the three activity sheets that follow.*

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## POINTS TO MAKE WITH YOUR STUDENTS

- 1. Illustration 1.** This strange drawing of hound-headed men helps to show how isolated Europe still was in the late Middle Ages and how ignorant it was of other parts of the world. Myths abounded in Europe about monsters in faraway lands, especially Asia. In the twelfth century, for example, many Europeans believed that strange, dog-headed men existed in India. Debates were even held about whether such creatures could be converted to the Christian faith. Rumors about these dog-headed men persisted into the 1300s. The rumors only faded as trade with Asia increased, especially after 1497, when Vasco da Gama rounded Africa's Cape of Good Hope and discovered a direct sea route to India.
- 2. Illustration 2.** This battle scene shows the siege of Namur, in what is now Belgium, during one of Louis XIV's wars in the late 1600s. The specific circumstances of the battle are not that important here. The drawing is useful for calling attention to the changes in warfare that helped end the Middle Ages and gave European monarchs the ability to begin consolidating larger nation-states. Even when fortified with earthworks, the castles of lesser nobles became increasingly vulnerable to gunpowder, bombards, lighter and more mobile bronze and iron cannons, early arquebuses, and muskets. As trade revived, growing tax revenues gave certain monarchs the resources needed to assemble and equip large armies. As they extended their realms, these monarchs also found it easier to finance the explorations that led to the launching of the world's first truly global age.
- 3. Illustration 3.** This rather grisly painting captures one of the least attractive aspects of Europe's age of discovery. It shows the Spaniards and their allies as they began the conquest of the Aztecs in Mexico in 1519. In addition to warring with native peoples, Europeans also inadvertently spread diseases against which the original Americans had no natural defenses. Native populations in the Americas were cut to a small fraction of their original size as Europeans colonized the Americas. Sympathy for native peoples, however, need not lead to romanticizing them. For example, the American Indian allies of the Spaniards in this illustration had also been conquered by the Aztecs, who often gloried in sacrificing their victims by the thousands to Aztec gods.