

Name _____ Class Period _____

Using the following documents, answer the prompt:

How did *mercantilism* influence the overseas expansion of many European countries?

Document A

Mercantilism is a political and economic system that arose in the 17th and 18th centuries. It states that a country's economic strength is directly related to the maintenance of a positive **balance of trade**. That is, in order to remain economically and politically strong a country must **export** more than it **imports**. Such a positive balance of trade, according to mercantilist thought, results in a surplus of gold in the practicing country's treasury. Therefore, mercantilism was treated as a national obligation—that is, a country was responsible for gaining as much wealth as possible, from sources inside and outside the country, to create a favorable economic condition for its citizens.

—Definition of Mercantilism from www.referenceforbusiness.com

Document B



Portuguese Ships on the Atlantic Ocean

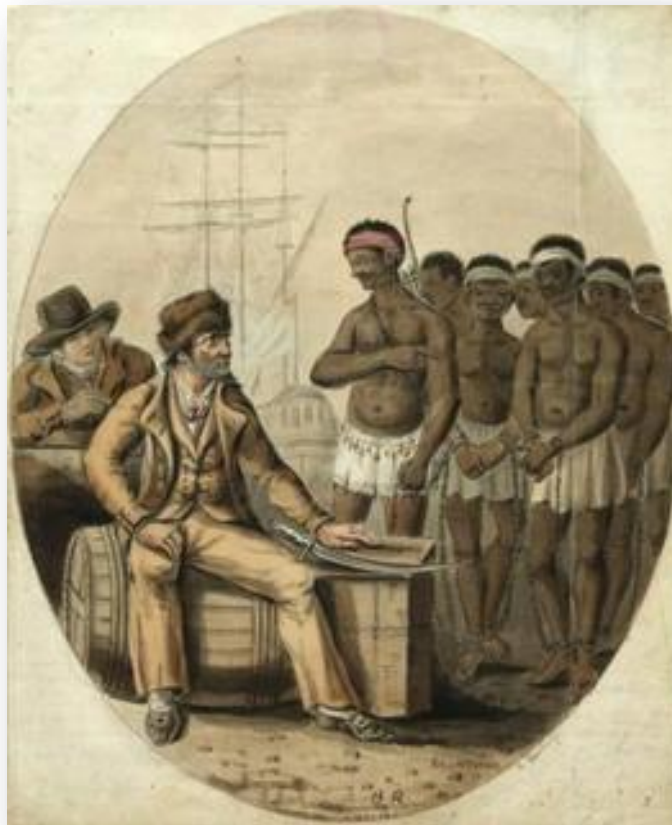
Document C

I will now give my opinion about ships going to the Island of Espanola, and the order that should be maintained; and that is, that the ships should only be allowed to discharge in one or two ports designated for the purpose, and should register there whatever cargo they bring or unload; and when the time for their departure comes, that they should sail from these same ports, and register all the cargo they take in, that nothing may be concealed.

In reference to the transportation of gold from the island to Castile, that all of it should be taken on board the ship, both that belonging to your Highnesses and the property of every one else; that it should all be placed in one chest with two locks, with their keys, and that the master of the vessel keep one key and some person selected by the governor and treasurer the other; that there should come with the gold, for a testimony, a list of all that has been put into the said chest, properly marked, so that each owner may receive his own; and that, for the faithful performance of this duty, if any gold whatsoever is found outside of the said chest in any way, be it little or much, it shall be forfeited to your Highnesses.

— *Christopher Columbus' Letter to the King and Queen of Spain, 1494*

Document D



European Merchants Buying and Selling Slaves

