Big Picture:
1. Assume for the moment that the Chinese had not ended their maritime voyages in 1433. How might the subsequent development of world history have been different? Is there value in asking this kind of “what if” or counterfactual question? Or is it an irrelevant waste of time?

2. How does this chapter distinguish among the various kinds of societies that comprised the world of the fifteenth century? Are there other ways of categorizing the world’s peoples that might work as well or better?

3. What would surprise a knowledgeable observer from 500 C.E., were he or she to make a global tour in the fifteenth century? What features of that earlier world might still be recognizable?

4. What predictions about the future might a global traveler of the fifteenth century reasonably have made? Would it depend on precisely when those predictions were made?

Margin Review:
5. In what ways did the gathering and hunting people of Australia differ from those of the northwest coast of North America?

6. What kinds of changes were transforming West African agricultural village societies and those of the Iroquois as the fifteenth century dawned?

7. What role did Central Asian and West African pastoralists play in their respective regions?

8. How would you define the major achievements of Ming dynasty China?

9. What political and cultural differences stand out in the histories of fifteenth-century China and Western Europe? What similarities are apparent?
10. In what ways did European maritime voyaging in the fifteenth century differ from that of China? What accounts for these differences?

11. What differences can you identify among the four major empires in the Islamic world of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries?

12. What distinguished the Aztec and Inca empires from each other?

13. How did Aztec religious thinking support the empire?

14. In what ways did Inca authorities seek to integrate their vast domains?

15. In what different ways did the peoples of the fifteenth century interact with one another?