

## Exploring the Americas

### Lesson 2 Early Exploration

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

*Why do people trade?*

#### GUIDING QUESTIONS

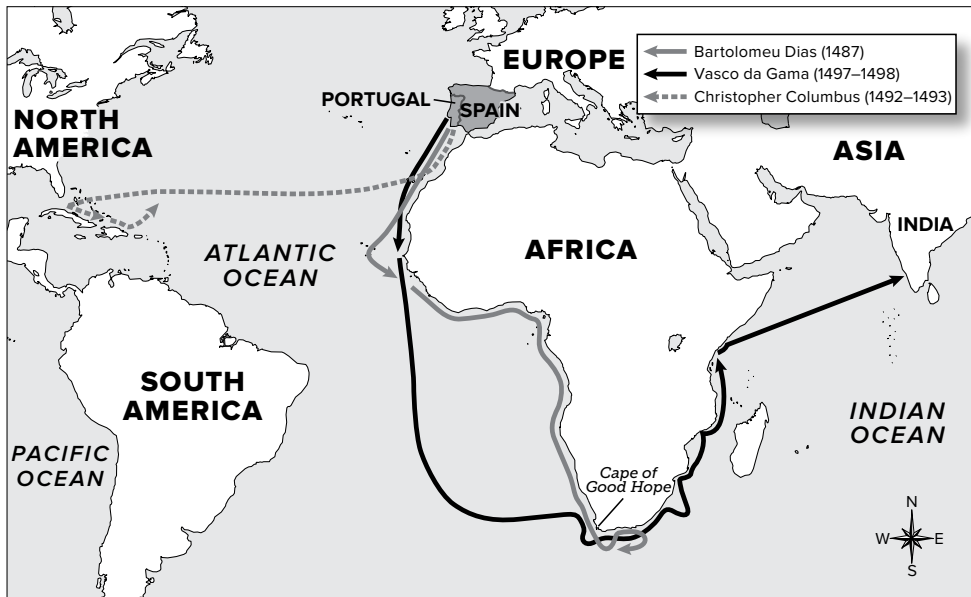
1. Which country took the lead in finding a trade route to India?
2. How did Spain and Portugal protect their claims in the Americas?

#### Terms to Know

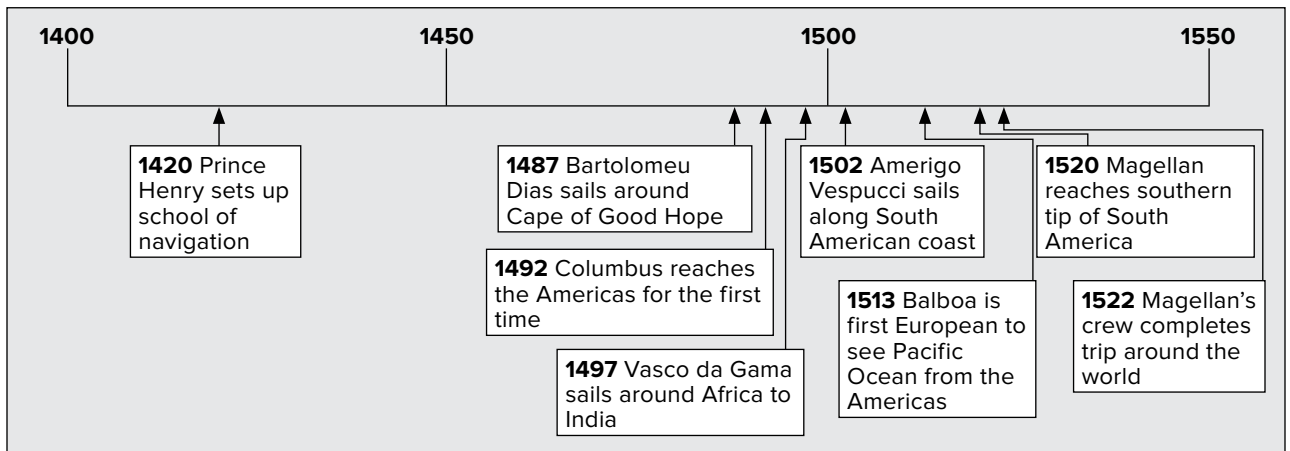
**cape** a point of land that sticks out into water, much like a peninsula

**circumnavigate** to travel completely around something, usually by water

### Where in the world?



### When did it happen?



**Exploring the Americas**

**Lesson 2** Early Exploration, *Continued*

**The Search for New Trade Routes**

When Columbus began his voyage to America in 1492, he did not know North America existed. The maps that sailors used showed just three continents joined together—Europe, Asia, and Africa. Columbus believed that by sailing west, he would reach the Indies islands near China. Explorers believed that the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans were a single large body of water they called the Ocean Sea.

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The first European nation to explore the world in the 1400s was Portugal. Portuguese traders did not have a port on the Mediterranean Sea. This stopped them from using the same routes as other Mediterranean nations. Portugal’s rulers wanted to find a new route to China and India. They also wanted to get gold from West Africa.

Around 1420, Prince Henry of Portugal set up a “school of navigation” in southwestern Portugal. At the school, astronomers, geographers, and mathematicians worked with sailors and shipbuilders. Mapmakers made new maps when explorers returned with new information.

The route of the Portuguese ships went south along the coast of West Africa. The Portuguese set up trading posts along the African coast. There they traded for gold and ivory. Later, they began to trade for enslaved Africans.

King John II of Portugal wanted to set up a trading empire in Asia. He believed ships could get to India and China. They just had to sail around Africa and keep on going. If they could do this, Portugal could trade directly with Asia. They would not have to rely on caravans to bring goods across Asia and North Africa.

In 1487 Bartolomeu Dias sailed around the southernmost point of Africa. King John called this point the Cape of Good Hope. A **cape** is a point of land that sticks out into water. He hoped that the passage around Africa's cape might lead to a route to India.

In 1497 Vasco da Gama led the first Portuguese voyage around Africa. They sailed around Africa and reached Africa's eastern coast. They met an Indian pilot who guided them the rest of the way. They sailed across the Indian Ocean and on to India.

Six months later, Pedro Álvares Cabral sailed from Portugal with 13 ships. They, too, were headed for India. His route took them so far west of Africa that they reached what is now Brazil. Cabral claimed this land for Portugal. He went on to India and



1. Place a one-tab Foldable along the dotted line to cover the text beginning with “The first European nation ...” Create a memory map by writing the title *Portugal* in the middle of the Foldable tab and draw four arrows around the title. List four words or phrases that describe Portugal’s connection to world exploration. Use the reverse side to write additional information.



**Marking the Text**

2. Underline the groups of people that contributed to Prince Henry’s “school of navigation.”



**Locating**

3. Where is the Cape of Good Hope?  
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## Exploring the Americas

### Lesson 2 Early Exploration, *Continued*



#### Identifying

4. Who was the first European to reach the Americas? What date did he do it?

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#### Comparing

5. How were the missions of Spanish and Portuguese explorers similar in the 1400s?

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#### Drawing Conclusions

6. Why did Christopher Columbus name the native people “Indians”?

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returned with spices and other goods. The Portuguese continued their voyages to India. Soon, Lisbon, the Portuguese capital, became an important marketplace in Europe.

### Columbus Crosses the Atlantic

Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy, in 1451. He became a sailor for Portugal. After many voyages north and south, he came up with a new idea. He planned to reach Asia by sailing west, not east.

Columbus had studied the works of Ptolemy (TAHL •uh •mee). Ptolemy was an ancient Greek astronomer. Based on his works, Columbus thought Asia was 2,760 miles (4,441.8 km) from Europe. However, Ptolemy was incorrect, so Columbus believed Asia was much closer than it is.

Columbus was not the first European to sail to the Americas. Hundreds of years earlier, people from northern Europe, called Vikings, had already sailed there. Norse sagas, or traditional stories, tell of a Viking sailor named Leif Eriksson who explored a land west of Greenland around A.D. 1000. Some ruins in eastern Canada suggest this may be true. But Europeans did not know about Viking voyages.

Spain saw the success of Portugal’s sailing voyages. They wanted to trade with Asia as well. Spain’s queen, Isabella, agreed to pay for Columbus’s voyage. She had two reasons for doing this:

- Columbus promised to bring Christianity to any lands he found.
- If Columbus found a sea route to the Indies, Spain would become very wealthy. Trade would increase.

On August 3, 1492, Columbus set out from Spain. He had a crew of about 90 sailors. They had three ships, the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the larger *Santa María*. Columbus was captain of the *Santa María*. They sailed with a six-month supply of food and water. A little over two months later, on October 12, 1492, the ship’s lookout saw land. The land he saw was in an island chain now called the Bahamas. When Columbus went ashore, he claimed the island for Spain. He named it San Salvador. Columbus believed he had reached the East Indies near China because of the earliest maps. He named the people he saw “Indians.”

**Exploring the Americas**

**Lesson 2** Early Exploration, *Continued*

He returned to Spain. Spain’s king and queen, Ferdinand and Isabella, received him with great honor. They agreed to pay for more voyages. He made three more trips: in 1493, 1498, and 1502. He explored the Caribbean islands. These included what are now Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Jamaica. He sailed along the coasts of Central America and part of South America. He made maps of the coastline of Central America.

Spain and Portugal wanted to protect their claims in the new world. With the help of the Pope, they chose a line down the center of the Atlantic Ocean. Portugal would control all new lands east of the line. Spain would control everything to the west. They divided the entire unexplored world between them.

Others followed Columbus. As a result of their voyages, the Spanish built an empire in the Americas. In 1502 Amerigo Vespucci (veh • SPOO • chee) sailed along the coast of South America. He discovered that South America was a continent. “America” is named for him.

In 1513, Vasco Núñez de Balboa (bal • BOH • uh) landed in Panama in Central America. He hiked through the jungle and saw the Pacific Ocean. He was the first European to see it from the Americas.

Ferdinand Magellan was a Portuguese seaman. He wanted to **circumnavigate**, or sail around, the world. In 1520 he reached the southern tip of South America. He sailed through a narrow sea passage to another ocean. He noticed that the waters were very calm. *Pacifico* means “peaceful” in Spanish. Magellan named the ocean the Pacific. Magellan died on the journey, but his crew kept on going. In 1522 they returned to Spain.

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**Check for Understanding**

List two reasons Spain chose to pay for Columbus’s voyage.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

What effect did the Portuguese school of navigation have on future explorations?

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**? Evaluating**

7. Which voyage of exploration do you think was the most important? Why?

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**FOLDABLES®**

8. Place a one-tab Foldable along the dotted line to cover Check for Understanding. Create a memory map by writing the title *Columbus* in the middle of the tab and drawing four or more arrows. List words or phrases describing Christopher Columbus’s first voyage. Use the reverse side to write additional information. Use your Foldable to help answer Check for Understanding.