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6 The Age of Exploration

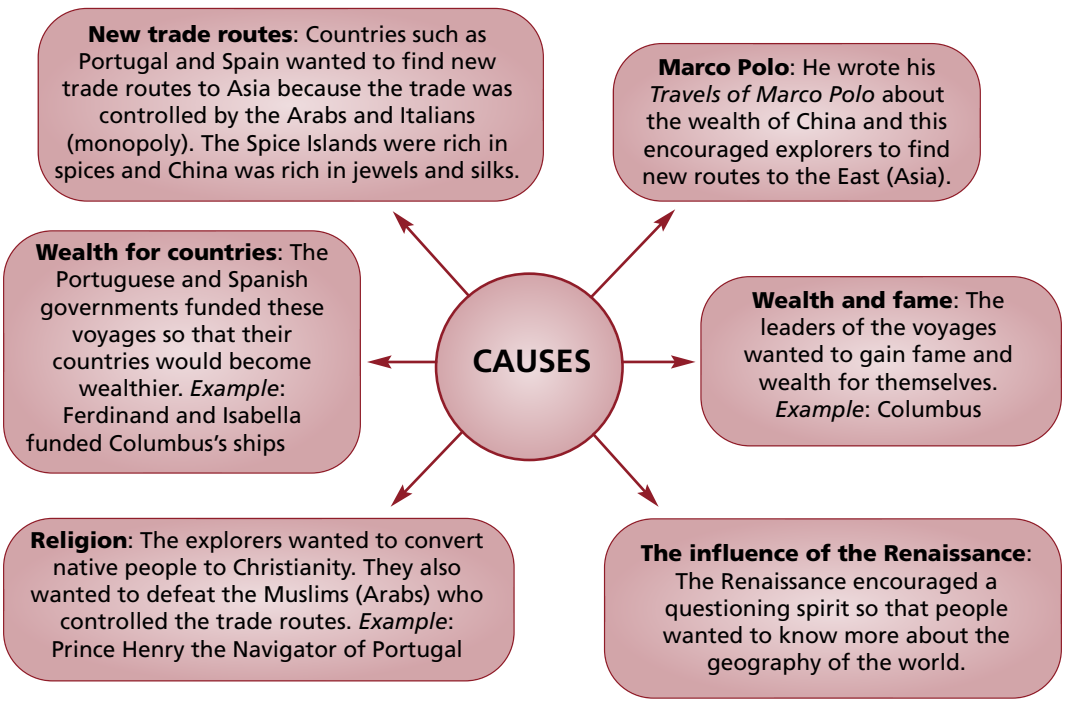
aims

- To understand why the Age of Exploration began
- To know the part played by Portugal and Spain in the Age of Exploration
- To understand the part played by Columbus and others in the Age of Exploration
- To describe the impact of the Age of Exploration

What was the Age of Exploration?

In the 15th and 16th centuries, Europeans began to explore other parts of the world. This is called the Age of Exploration or the Age of Discovery.

What were the causes of the Age of Exploration?

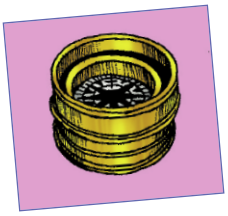


What made the voyages of exploration possible?

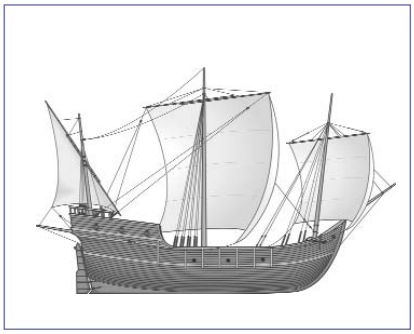
Improvements in ships and navigation

1. **New ships**: A new ship, the **caravel**, was developed which could sail on longer voyages. It had a lateen sail (to sail against the wind), square sails (to sail with the wind) and rudders for steering. It was clinker-built (the boards overlapped) which made it stronger.

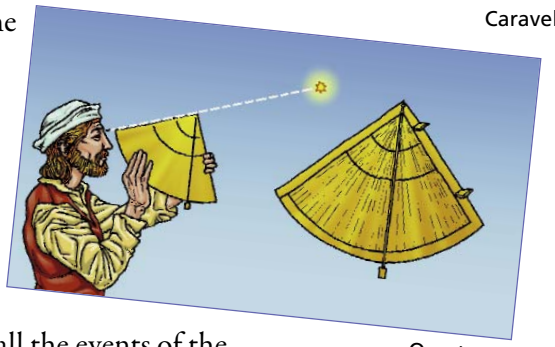
2. **Compasses**: These were used to find direction.
3. **Latitude**: Latitude (north and south of the equator) was worked out using a **quadrant** or an **astrolabe**.
4. **Maps**: **Portolan charts** showed places along the coast joined by straight lines. Newer maps were developed to include the new discoveries.
5. **Speed**: A log and line was used to work out the speed of the ship in knots (nautical miles).
6. **Depth**: A lead and line was used to work out the depth of the water along the coast.
7. **Logbook**: The Logbook kept a record of all the events of the voyage so it was used again in later voyages.



Compass



Caravel



Quadrant

The Portuguese voyages

Why did the Portuguese explore?

1. The Portuguese drove the Muslims from their own country and heard of gold mines in Africa.
2. The Portuguese believed they could join forces with a Christian king, Prester John, to attack the Muslims in Africa.
3. The Portuguese wanted to profit from trade with Africa.

Who was Prince Henry the Navigator?

4. The Portuguese voyages were organised by **Prince Henry the Navigator**. He founded a school for navigation at **Sagres** where mapmakers, shipbuilders and astronomers met to plan voyages along the coast of Africa.
5. Prince Henry sent ships along the coast of Africa. A **stone pillar** (*padrão*) was erected at the end of each voyage. The Portuguese discovered the Azores and the Canary Islands.

What did Diaz achieve?

6. Diaz sailed three ships along the coast of Africa as far as the Orange River. Here he was blown by a storm further southwards.
7. When Diaz turned eastwards he discovered he had rounded the southern tip of Africa. He called this the Cape of Storms, but the king of Portugal later called it the **Cape of Good Hope**.

What did da Gama achieve?

8. Da Gama sailed four ships, including his flagship, the *São Gabriel* from Lisbon. He sailed southwards into the Atlantic Ocean and away from the coast of Africa in order to avoid northerly winds and currents.
9. Da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope and sailed to **Calicut in India** with the help of an Arab pilot. He was the first European to reach India.

Portuguese trade

10. The Portuguese later defeated the Arabs and controlled the **trade** from the Spice Islands.

What were the Spice Islands?

These were islands in south-east Asia which produced spices which were desired by Europeans to flavour and preserve food.

What were the results of the Portuguese voyages?

1. Portugal grew prosperous on trade from Africa, India and the Spice Islands.
2. The Portuguese empire included countries in Africa – Angola, Mozambique – and Asia.
3. The Portuguese language and culture and the Catholic religion spread to these countries.
4. Portugal also got part of South America – Brazil – under the terms of the Treaty of Tordesillas, which divided the lands discovered during the Age of Exploration between Portugal and Spain.

Special study – A voyage of exploration: The first voyage of Christopher Columbus

Why did Columbus explore?

1. Columbus believed the earth was smaller than it actually is.
2. He believed that the world was round and that if he sailed westwards, he would reach Cathay (China) and Cipango (Japan).
3. He also wanted to convert native people to Catholicism.
4. He wanted to become famous and wealthy.

Who gave him help?

5. Columbus asked Portugal, England and France for support for his voyage of exploration, but they refused.

You can use the story of Columbus's first voyage to answer the *People in History* question on 'a **named leader** of a voyage of discovery during the Age of Exploration' or 'a **sailor** on a voyage of discovery during the Age of Exploration'.

6. Instead, Columbus was helped by **Ferdinand** and **Isabella**, king and queen of Spain. They provided him with three ships, the ***Santa María***, the ***Niña*** and the ***Pinta***.
7. He was promised that he would become the governor of the lands he would discover, as well as getting the title Admiral of the Ocean Sea.

What happened on his voyage?

8. In 1492, Columbus sailed from **Palos**, in the south of Spain, with a crew of about 90 sailors, mostly from the local area. Some sailors were experienced; others sought adventure, fame and riches. He headed for the Canary Islands, where he carried out repairs and took on fresh water and supplies.
9. Columbus sailed westwards, helped by a following wind – the **trade winds**. He kept two **logbooks** – one in which he recorded the correct distances the ships were travelling, and one in which he recorded shorter distances so as not to alarm his crew. They were frightened about travelling so far away from the normal sea routes.
10. When the sailors got anxious, he promised he would return to Spain if they did not see land within a few days.

What did he discover?

11. Shortly after, the *Pinta* fired a cannon shot to signal sight of land.
12. Columbus landed on **San Salvador** in the Bahama Islands.
13. He later explored **Cuba** and **Hispaniola**. Columbus thought he had found Cipango (Japan), but he couldn't find the great cities mentioned by Marco Polo.
14. The ***Santa María*** ran aground and he constructed a fort with its timbers. He set sail for Spain, leaving behind 40 men in the fort.
15. He took with him gold, pineapples and six Indians. He was praised by Ferdinand and Isabella when he got home.

What were the results of his voyage?

16. Columbus went on later voyages and discovered more islands as well as the coast of South America. He still thought he had discovered the **Indies**.
17. Instead, he had discovered a new continent which was eventually named 'America' after another explorer, **Amerigo Vespucci**, who realised that a new continent had been discovered.
18. Spain brought **settlers** to these lands, spread the Spanish culture and language and the Catholic religion. Gold and silver were sent back. As a result, Spain grew rich and powerful.
19. The Pope got Spain and Portugal to agree to the **Treaty of Tordesillas** in which they divided the newly discovered lands between them. Land to the west of the **line of**

You are only allowed 2 marks for **background information**. So when you are writing about Columbus's voyage of discovery, keep the background information brief. *Example*: 'Columbus was an Italian sailor who sailed for Spain. He believed the world was round and that if he sailed west, he would reach Cipango (Japan) and the Spice Islands...'

Tordesillas belonged to Spain; land to the east belonged to Portugal. This meant that most of South America became Spanish but Brazil became Portuguese.

What is the New World?

The New World refers to North and South America, as opposed to the Old World, which was Europe, Asia and Africa.

HL

People in History

A sailor on a named voyage of discovery during the Age of Exploration

I was a sailor on **Columbus's** first voyage of discovery. I lived in **Palos**, where Columbus began his voyage. I was an **experienced** sailor but others were freemen who came along with promises of fame and riches and 'gold-covered' houses. In all, there were about **90** of us on the three ships which Columbus got from **Ferdinand and Isabella**, the king and queen of Spain. I sailed on the ***Santa María*** which was the flagship, and the others were the ***Niña*** and the ***Pinta***. The ***Santa María*** was about 18 metres long and it had a **lateen sail** and two square sails.

Columbus believed that the world was **round**, that it was **smaller** than it really is and that if he sailed **westwards** he would reach Cipango (Japan) and Cathay (China). He wanted to discover the riches described by **Marco Polo** in his book of travels. He was promised by Ferdinand and Isabella that he would become the **governor** of all he discovered and would get the title **'Admiral of the Ocean Sea'**.

We first sailed for the **Canary Islands** to take on board fresh water and food. This was our last stop before we sailed out into the Atlantic Ocean. As we headed westwards, we were helped by the **trade winds** and were able to sail about 100 miles a day.

Conditions on board were rough. Our food was dry and salted. We were given one hot meal a day, which was cooked in the **firebox** on deck. We also got wine or water.

As we sailed on, we were afraid that if we went too far we would not be able to get back. But Columbus kept two **logbooks** – one recorded the true distance we travelled, the other one recorded a shorter distance. We were told the shorter distance. Very soon we forced him to promise to turn back if land was not discovered within a few days. But soon after, the ***Pinta*** fired a shot – the signal that its crew had sighted land. I was with Columbus as we landed on this new island, which Columbus called **San Salvador**.

We next sailed to **Cuba** and **Hispaniola**, where the ***Santa María*** ran aground. Columbus believed that these islands were islands off the coast of Asia. We returned to Spain and Columbus was given a great welcome by Ferdinand and Isabella. We brought back gold, pineapples, parrots and six natives, whom Columbus called **Indians**.