



The Race for Riches

Inspired during the Renaissance, European inventors built ships that could travel long distances. The desire to grow rich and spread Christianity started an age of European exploration in the 1400s.

Europeans loved the spices and other luxury goods that came from Asia. The goods were brought along trade routes through the Middle East and Italy. Arab and Italian merchants charged high prices for the imported goods.

European merchants and the monarchs of England, Spain, Portugal, and France wanted a share of these profits. They desired a sea route to Asia so that they could buy goods directly and save money.

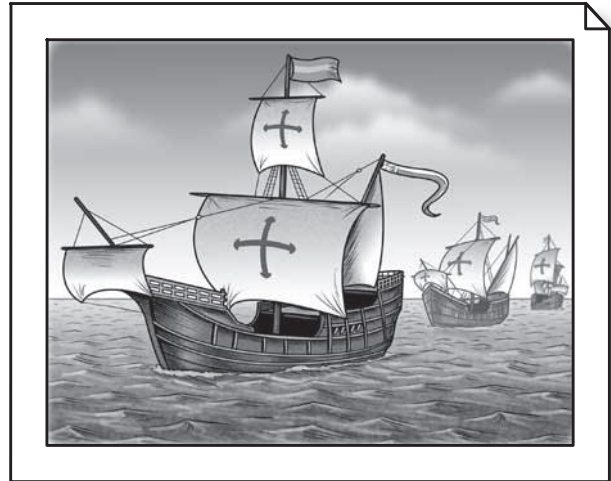
Portugal's Vasco da Gama made a successful 27,000-mile voyage around the tip of Africa to India in 1497. It took ten months, and many sailors died on the trip. But the survivors sold their cargo of spices at a 3,000-percent profit! Portugal built a trading empire throughout the Indian Ocean and took control of the spice trade. Portuguese merchants brought goods from Asia at lower prices than Arab and Italian traders had charged.

Other nations wanted to build their own trading empires in Asia. The Dutch established trading headquarters on the island of Java. By 1700, they controlled much of Indonesia. The English and French started trading posts in India. Spain claimed the Philippines.

In the competitive time of exploration, Christopher Columbus decided to find an alternate trade route to Asia. Like most educated people, he knew the Earth was round. In 1492, Columbus sailed west across the Atlantic. He thought he could sail around the world and get to Asia in a new way. Columbus was unaware of the size of the Earth. He did not know entire continents stood between him and Asia.

When Columbus landed on an island in the Caribbean Sea, he thought he was in Asia. He claimed the islands for Spain. The Spanish sent Columbus back to the Caribbean to turn the islands into colonies, or lands controlled by another nation.

Europe's leaders eventually realized that Columbus had traveled to continents Europeans had never been to before. Spain and Columbus started a process of colonization that would reach nearly every part of the Americas. Over the next 200 years, European explorers traveled to the Americas. The French, English, Dutch, and Portuguese also sailed across the Atlantic in search of unclaimed lands.





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Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

1. Europeans loved the spices and other luxury goods that were imported from _____.

- A. Asia
- B. Africa
- C. the Americas
- D. Antarctica

2. Vasco da Gama sailed around the tip of _____ in 1497.

- A. Argentina
- B. Australia
- C. Africa
- D. Chile

3. _____ built trading empires in Asia.

- A. Portugal and Spain
- B. England and France
- C. The Dutch
- D. all of the above

4. _____ wanted to find an alternate sea trade route to Asia.

- A. Vasco da Gama
- B. Christopher Columbus
- C. Prince Henry the Navigator
- D. Ferdinand Magellan

5. Columbus claimed islands in the Caribbean Sea for _____.

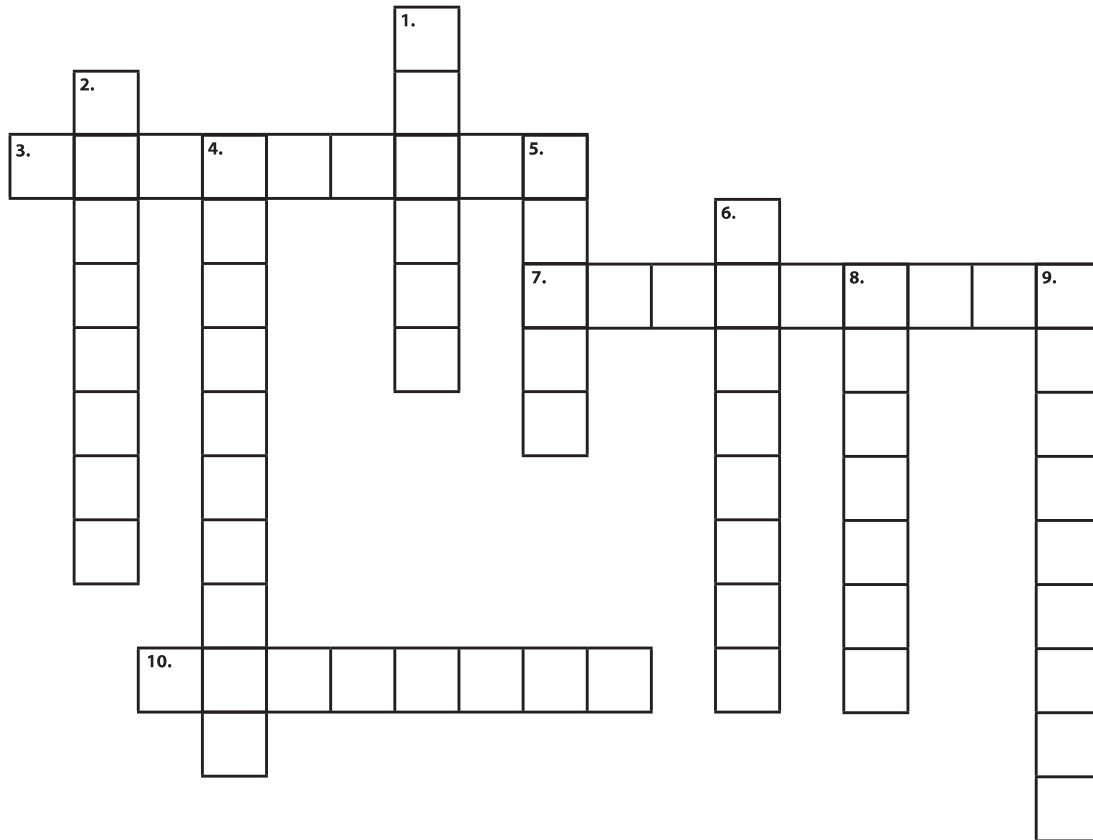
- A. France
- B. Portugal
- C. England
- D. Spain



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Crossword Puzzle

Write the best answer in each blank, and complete the crossword puzzle.



ACROSS

- Arab and Italian _____ charged Europeans high prices for imported goods from Asia.
- The Dutch controlled much of the trade in _____.
- European explorers sailed across the _____ in search of unclaimed lands.

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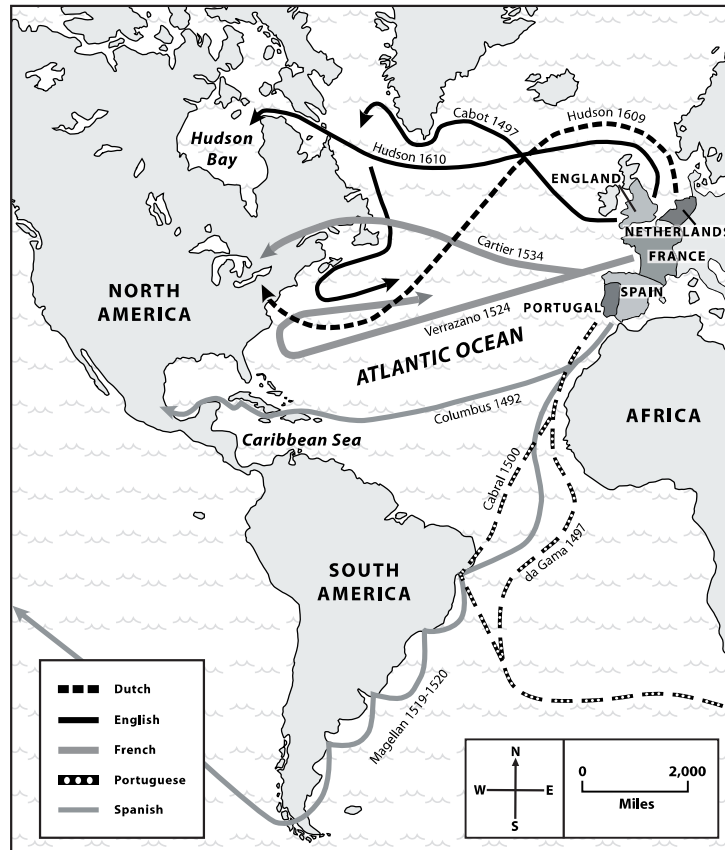
- Vasco da Gama's 27,000-mile voyage to India took ten _____.
- Europeans wanted to find a/an _____ to Asia.
- Columbus did not know that entire _____ stood between Europe and Asia.
- European inventors built _____ that could travel long distances.
- Spain sent _____ to turn the Caribbean islands into colonies for Spain.
- European nations wanted to build trading _____ in Asia.
- Christopher Columbus wanted to find a/an _____ sea trade route to Asia.



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Map – European Expeditions to the Americas

Use the map to answer the following questions. Write the answers in complete sentences.



1. Where did Cartier sail from?

2. Where did Magellan sail to?

3. How many trips did Hudson make?



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Extension Activities

Choose one of the following activities to complete. Write the answer in complete sentences.

- 1.** Who was Prince Henry the Navigator? Where did he travel? What year? Look in your textbook, on the Internet, or at the library to find out.

- 2.** What was the Treaty of Tordesillas? What did it do? Look in your textbook, on the Internet, or at the library to find out.

- 3.** Which explorer would you have liked to travel with? Explain your answer.



Quiz: The Race for Riches

True/False

Decide if each statement is true or false, and write "true" or "false" in the blank.

- _____ 1. Vasco da Gama sailed around the tip of Africa.
- _____ 2. Columbus claimed islands in the Mediterranean for Spain.
- _____ 3. Spices and luxury goods were imported to Europe from Asia.
- _____ 4. Asian nations wanted to build trading empires in Europe.
- _____ 5. Columbus knew he was sailing to the Caribbean.

Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

6. Arab and Italian merchants charged _____ prices for imported goods.

A. high
B. low
C. sale
D. discount

7. Columbus did not know that entire continents stood between him and _____.

A. Spain
B. Asia
C. Portugal
D. France

Short Answer

Answer the following question in complete sentences.

8. Name two European countries that started trading posts in Asia.
