

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

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The Age of Exploration 1500–1800

Lesson 1 European Exploration and Expansion

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What are the effects of political and economic expansion?

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

overseas beyond or across the sea

Content Vocabulary

caravel a small, fast, maneuverable ship that had a large cargo hold and usually three masts with lateen sails

conquistador a leader in the Spanish conquest of America

colony a settlement of people living in a new territory, linked with the parent country by trade and direct government control

TAKING NOTES: *Summarizing*

ACTIVITY Use the following graphic organizer to identify which European nations and individuals explored which region(s).

Nation	Explorer(s)	Region(s)

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IT MATTERS BECAUSE

The Europeans had many motives, or reasons, for traveling east and west beginning in the 1400s. Their motives included wealth, politics, religion, and simply the desire for new experiences. The Europeans made connections with regions that were new to them. These connections helped create the modern world.

Motives and Means

Guiding Question *What were the motivations behind European exploration of distant lands?*

For almost a thousand years, Europeans mostly remained in their small area of the world. Then, between 1500 and 1800, European explorers traveled to the rest of the world. Europeans had improved their sailing ships, and these new ships helped make exploration possible. First Portugal and Spain, and then the Netherlands, England, and France, gained economic success because of their worldwide trade.

At the end of the fifteenth century, Europeans began an amazing series of **overseas** (across oceans) journeys. What caused them to go on these dangerous voyages?

Europeans had been interested in Asia for a long time. In the late thirteenth century, Marco Polo had traveled from Venice with his father and uncle to China. He spent time at the court of the great Mongol ruler Kublai Khan (KOO•bluh KAHN). He wrote a book about his experiences known as *The Travels*. Many Europeans read the book and were fascinated by what they imagined as the exotic East. However, in the fourteenth century, the Ottoman Turks made conquests in eastern Europe. As a result, it was difficult for Westerners to travel by land to the East. People then spoke of needing to travel to Asia by sea.

Economic motives were one of major causes of European expansion. Merchants, adventurers, and government officials hoped to expand trade. They especially wanted the spices of the East. Europeans used the spices to give flavor to their food and to preserve it. The spices from the East were very expensive in Europe. They had to come long distances from eastern Asia, and then Arab traders shipped them to Europe. Adventurers also wanted to return to Europe from their travels as heroes. Europeans also had hopes of finding precious metals.

Some say that the phrase “Gold, glory, and God” explains the motivations for European expansion. The phrase suggests another reason for this expansion: religious zeal. Many people shared the ideas of Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conqueror of Mexico. He said Europeans had to ensure that the people in other places learned to follow the Catholic religion.

Spiritual and secular affairs were connected in the sixteenth century. Many Europeans wanted to convert the natives to Christianity. However, a desire for adventure also played a major role in European expansion.

Europeans had also created new technology for sailing. Their new ships could travel long distances. The Portuguese invented a new, faster ship called the **caravel**. This ship made long voyages of exploration possible and made the cost of transportation lower. The caravel had a large hold for cargo. The caravel had triangular sails (also called lateen sails). These sails, which were developed by the Arabs, allowed ships to sail against the wind.

European explorers of this time had more accurate maps. Improvements in cartography, which is the art and science of mapmaking, had resulted in these better maps. Sailors used an instrument

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called the astrolabe, an invention of ancient Greek astronomers. The astrolabe was used to find their latitude using the sun or stars. The magnetic compass, invented in China, also helped sailors to chart a course across the ocean.

European explorers also had a better knowledge of the wind patterns of the Atlantic Ocean. The winds, currents, and climate all have important effects on a ship sailing across the ocean. The Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans have spiraling currents, which are called gyres. These currents result from winds and other forces. Winds blow south and west in the North Atlantic, and they are called trade winds. Some ocean winds blow from the west to the east, and they are called westerlies. These winds were studied, and explorers used this knowledge to help them in their ocean travels.



Reading Progress Check

Explaining What does the phrase “Gold, glory, and God” mean?

A Race for Riches

Guiding Question *How were Spain and Portugal able to take the lead in discovering new lands?*

During the fifteenth century, Europeans sailed out into the world in new directions. Portuguese ships took the lead when they sailed south, along the west coast of Africa.

Portuguese Explorers

Beginning in 1420, Prince Henry the Navigator sponsored the voyages of Portuguese fleets. The fleets explored the western coast of Africa. There they discovered a new source of gold. For this reason, Europeans named the southern coast of West Africa the Gold Coast.

Portuguese sea captains heard reports of a route to India around the southern tip of Africa. In 1488, Bartholomeu Dias (Bar•tol•o•mew DE•as) managed to reach the tip of Africa. (This tip was later called the Cape of Good Hope.) Later, Vasco da Gama went around the tip of Africa and sailed east across the Indian Ocean to the coast of India. In May 1498, da Gama arrived at the port of Calicut. There he obtained a cargo of spices, which he brought back to Portugal. He made a huge profit on the sale of the spices.

Portuguese fleets returned to the East, and they took over control of the spice trade from the Muslims. The Portuguese Admiral Alfonso de Albuquerque (AL•buh•KUR•kee) established a port at Goa, India. Later, Albuquerque sailed into Melaka, a busy, successful trade port on the Malay Peninsula, and he gained control of it. As a result of this conquest, the Portuguese destroyed the Arab control of the spice trade. Melaka became a stopping place on the long journey to the Moluccas, then known as the Spice Islands.

The Portuguese signed a treaty with the local Moluccan ruler. It gave them control of the spice trade. The Portuguese had a number of trading posts on the coasts of India and China. These helped

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the Portuguese establish a trading empire. However, the Portuguese did not have the resources to establish colonies in those Asian regions. So they did not send settlers in large numbers to make their homes there.

Spanish Explorers

Europeans with an education knew that the world was round. However, they often used faulty formulae to determine its circumference and the size of the Asian continent. They also did not know that there were continents between Europe and Asia. Both the Portuguese and the Spanish wanted a route to Asia. The Portuguese sailed south along the coast of Africa and then east through the Indian Ocean. The Spanish, however, sailed westward across the Atlantic Ocean.

Christopher Columbus believed that he could reach Asia by sailing west across the Atlantic Ocean. Columbus persuaded Queen Isabella of Spain to finance an expedition. In October 1492, he reached the Americas. There he explored the coastline of Cuba and the island of Hispaniola.

Columbus believed that he had reached Asia. After three voyages, he still had not found a route to Asia. In his four voyages to the Americas, Columbus reached all the major Caribbean islands, as well as Honduras, on the mainland of Central America. He called these places the Indies because he thought he was near India.

Spain financed another important explorer. His name was Ferdinand Magellan. In September 1519, Magellan sailed from Spain. He was looking for a sea passage through the Americas to Asia. Magellan traveled across the Atlantic and down to the southern tip of South America. There, in October 1520, he passed through a waterway, later called the Strait of Magellan. He then entered the Pacific Ocean. His fleet later reached the Philippines, but people there killed Magellan. Only one of his ships returned to Spain. Although he did not return to Spain, Magellan is remembered as the first person to sail completely around the globe because he was the leader of the expedition.

New Lands to Explore

On their voyages, the Portuguese and Spanish explorers had found lands new to the Europeans. Spain and Portugal each feared that the other country would claim some of its territories. The two countries ended their worries with the Treaty of Tordesillas (tor• da• SEE• yas), in 1494. The treaty established a boundary line that extended from north to south through the Atlantic Ocean and the eastern part of the South American continent. Unexplored territories to the east of the line would be controlled by Portugal, and territories to west of the line would be controlled by Spain. This treaty gave Portugal control over its route around Africa, and it gave Spain control over almost all of the Americas.

Soon, the governments of many other countries joined the race to the Americas. They sponsored explorers. England hired the Venetian sailor, John Cabot. He explored the New England coastline of the Americas and claimed it for England. The Portuguese sea captain Pedro Cabral landed in South America in 1500.

His trip established Portugal's claim to the area that is now Brazil. Amerigo Vespucci (veh• SPOO•chee), an Italian from Florence, went along on several early voyages of exploration. He described the lands he saw in letters. These letters were widely read and led to the use of the name America (after his first name, *Amerigo*) for the new lands.

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Reading Progress Check

Interpreting How were the first explorations of Spain and Portugal similar and different?

Connections to Today

Mapping Ocean Winds

A contemporary use of ocean winds is to drive wind turbines producing electricity. To harness this resource, scientists first need to identify areas in the oceans that have strong winds, using data from NASA satellites. Then, scientists can prepare maps that indicate potential sites for wind farms.

The Spanish Empire

Guiding Question *What were the results of Spanish and Portuguese conquests in the Americas?*

Spain conquered, or gained control of, many lands in the Americas. The Spanish conquerors of the Americas are known as **conquistadors**. They used guns, their skill at organization, and determination to conquer the great empires in the Americas. With their people and resources, the Spanish established an overseas empire. This empire was quite different from the Portuguese trading posts.

Conquest of the Aztec

For a century, the Aztec ruled much of central Mexico from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific coast. Most local officials in that area accepted the authority of the Aztec king. He had his capital in Tenochtitlán (Ta•NOCH•te•tlahn), which is the location of modern-day Mexico City.

In 1519, a Spanish force under the command of Hernán Cortés landed at Veracruz, on the Gulf of Mexico. Cortés marched toward Tenochtitlán with a small number of troops—550 soldiers and 16 horses—and two translators. As he went, he made alliances with city-states that were tired of oppressive Aztec rule. Particularly important was the alliance with Tlaxcala. In November of 1519, Cortés arrived at Tenochtitlán. There he was welcomed by the Aztec monarch Montezuma II (also spelled Moctezuma II). The Aztec were astounded to see men on horseback with guns, cannons, and steel swords. These were all things that they had never seen before. The weapons gave the Spanish a great advantage in fighting the Aztec. The Spanish were equally amazed at the sight of the great capital of the Aztec, with its majestic towers and houses, which rose out of the waters of a lake.

Eventually, conflict arose between the Spaniards and the Aztec. The weapons used by the Spanish gave them a great advantage in fighting the Aztec. The Aztec used spears and slings for weapons. The

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Spanish took Montezuma II hostage. They began to pillage the city, taking goods by force. In the fall of 1520, one year after Cortés had first arrived, the local population revolted. They drove the invaders from the city, and many of the Spanish were killed.

However, the Aztec soon experienced new disasters. Many Aztec became sick and died from the new diseases of the Europeans. The Aztec had no natural immunity to European diseases, especially to smallpox. Meanwhile, Cortés received fresh soldiers from his new allies in city-states such as Tlaxcala and he returned to Tenochtitlán. After four months, the Aztec surrendered.

The forces of Cortés leveled pyramids, temples, and palaces. The Spanish used the stones to build government buildings and churches. They filled in Aztec canals to make roads. The magnificent city of Tenochtitlán was no more. During the 30 years after the fall of the Aztec Empire, the Spanish expanded their control to all of Mexico.

Conquest of the Inca

The Inca Empire was still flourishing when the first Spanish expeditions arrived in the central Andes (the mountain chain that extends down the western coast of South America). In early 1531, Francisco Pizarro landed on the Pacific coast of South America with a small group of only about 180 men. However, like Cortés, Pizarro brought steel weapons, gunpowder, and horses. The Inca had never before seen these things.

The Spanish also brought smallpox. Like the Aztec, the Inca had no immunities to European diseases. Smallpox soon caused the death of many people, sometimes of entire villages. Even the Inca emperor was a victim.

When the emperor died, both of his sons claimed the throne. This led to a civil war. Pizarro took advantage of the divisions among the Inca. He captured Atahualpa (At•a•WAL•pa), the new emperor. Inca warriors had only stones, arrows, and light spears to fight against the Spanish horses, guns, and cannons, and they were defeated.

Pizarro executed Atahualpa. Pizarro, his soldiers, and their Inca allies pillaged Cuzco, the Inca capital. By 1535, Pizarro had established a new capital at Lima for a new **colony** of the Spanish Empire.



Reading Progress Check

Comparing and Contrasting How were the conquests of the Aztec and the Inca similar and different?

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European Rivals

Guiding Question *Which other European countries explored and settled in the Americas?*

By the end of the sixteenth century, several new European rivals started to challenge the Portuguese and Spanish for new territories. These included the Dutch, the French, and the English. These countries sent explorers to the Americas to look for wealth and for trade opportunities.

The Dutch formed the West India Company. It made some temporary gains in Portuguese Brazil and the Caribbean. However, the company did not have the resources and power to keep these gains.

In the early seventeenth century, the Dutch established settlements on the North American continent. The colony of New Netherland extended from the mouth of the Hudson River as far north as present-day Albany, New York. New Netherland and other Dutch settlements were never very successful because of the West India company's commercial goals. The company focused on fur trading. Fur trading needed remote outposts and did not result in permanent settlements.

After 1660 the Dutch lost its commercial empire in the Americas to its rivals, the English and the French. In 1664 the English gained control of the colony of New Netherland from the Dutch. They renamed it New York. The Dutch West India Company soon went bankrupt.

During the seventeenth century, the French colonized parts of what is now Canada (then named New France) and Louisiana. In 1608 Samuel de Champlain founded Quebec, in modern-day Canada, the first permanent French settlement in the Americas. New France became a royal province in 1663, with its own governor, military commander, and soldiers. From that time, the population grew and the colony developed. During this same period, English settlers founded Virginia and the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the English had established control over most of the eastern coast of North America. They had also established sugar plantations on several Caribbean islands. However, the North American colonies were not a very important part of England's economy. In contrast, Spain's empire in Latin America provided it with great wealth.



Reading Progress Check

Locating Where were the earliest settlements of the Dutch, French, and English in the Americas?
