

LESSON 1 - THE SPICE SEEKERS

THE SPICE SEEKERS

"Sofia! Sofia!" Giovanni [/joe*von*ee/] called out excitedly. "Last night, Father told me that he and Uncle Gino are going to take me with them to the Indies! *The Indies are a part of the continent of Asia.*



THE SPICE SEEKERS

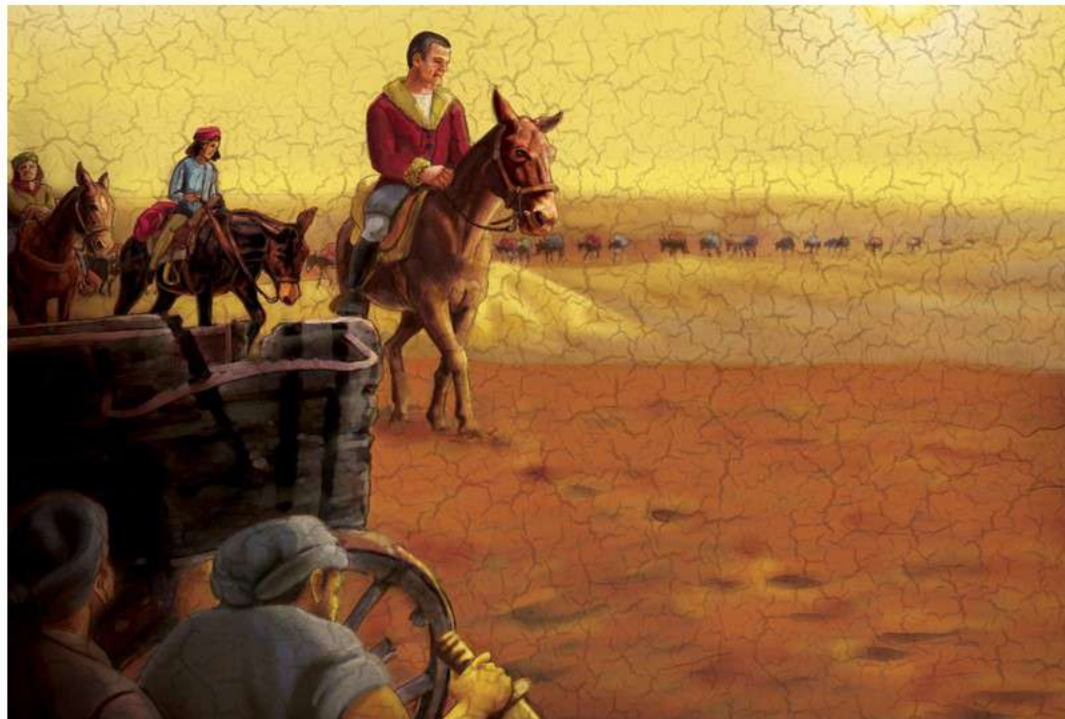
As he tells his cousin Sofia about his plans, Giovanni imagines himself making the journey on a mule.

"We are going to buy delicious, good-smelling spices to make our food taste better. *Spices are items that come from plants and that add flavor to food.* We'll even get some spices to use in perfume to make people smell good. And in the Indies they have bright, beautiful cloth for making clothes much finer than ours. Father says that if we can bring these things home, we can sell them for a lot of money and be rich! We might even find gold there and be even richer!"



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Sofia looked horrified. "But Giovanni, everyone knows that is a long, dangerous journey. Sometimes it takes years to get to the Indies and back, if you make it home at all. You must walk or ride on the backs of mules and horses. Bandits *[Point to the bandits in the picture.]* hide out in mountain passes, waiting to ambush travelers and steal their money. *Travelers are people who go to faraway places.* If you get past the bandits, you still have to cross wide, dry deserts. If you run out of water there, you will die of thirst, and . . . " *What is Sofia imagining will happen on Giovanni's journey?*



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“Stop, Sofia!” said Giovanni, holding up his hand. “Uncle Gino knows people who have made the trip, so don’t worry so much. *The word trip means a journey or travel.* They’ve told him all about it. We’ll make it—you’ll see— and I will bring you back some beautiful cloth so you can make a dress to wear.” Sofia was not convinced, but Giovanni seemed sure that he was right.



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Just a few days later, however, Giovanni sadly told his cousin, "We cannot go after all. In order to get to the Indies, we must pass through the great city of Constantinople. Father has just learned that the people of Constantinople have decided not to let Europeans travel through their city anymore. They are blocking our passage."



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[Point out a path from Italy through the city of Constantinople —shown by the marker—and then to the Indies in Asia.] If the road is blocked in Constantinople, Giovanni and his people can't get to the Indies by land. Why do you think the people of Constantinople would block the passage to the Indies?

Giovanni sadly continued, "The people of Constantinople don't want us to go and get our own gold, spices, and other things. They want to send their own people east to buy these valuable items, and then sell them to us for a much higher price." They wanted to sell them for a lot more money. Giovanni was upset, but Sofia was secretly glad he would not try to make the dangerous journey.



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Giovanni and his family were not the only disappointed people. All over Europe, people wanted things they could get only from Asia, the lands to the east. Some of these people were kings and queens. They thought, "We are rich and powerful. We could be even richer if we could buy Asian spices and sell them for higher prices in other parts of Europe, just as the people of Constantinople want to do with us. But how can we do this? We have people we could send, and money enough to pay for their trip, but now the road is closed to them."



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[Point to Europe and then Asia.] Can you think of any other way that people from Italy might be able to travel to the spice lands other than by land—walking or riding on the backs of animals? We said that they didn't have airplanes, trains, or buses back then, but what did they have? European kings and queens had a new thought. "Maybe we could send ships or large boats sailing to the Indies. Our sailors could fill the ships with wonderful treasures, such as gold, cloth, and spices, then sail them back home. But how can our ships reach the Indies? [Trace the path on the map as you read the following text.]



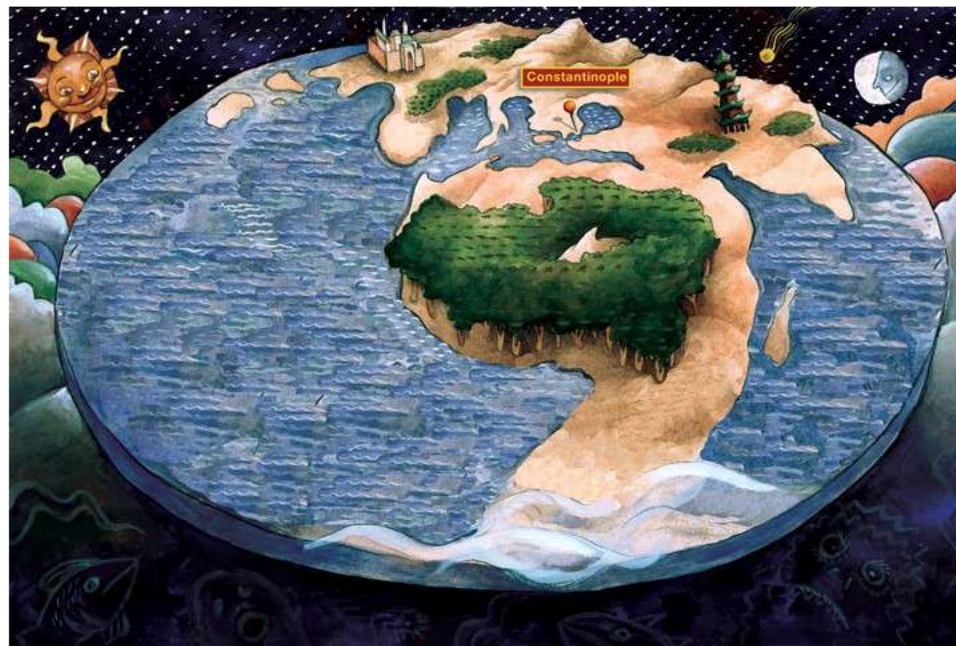
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“They would have to sail south in the great Atlantic Ocean, far from the lands we know well, and into waters that are new to us. They would have to go all the way down the edge of Africa, around the bottom, and then sail up the other side to get to the Indies.



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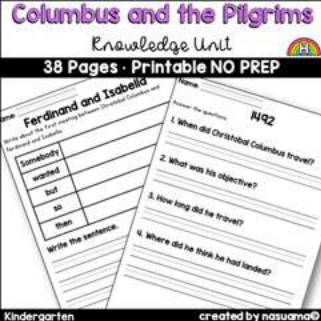
"No one has ever done that. We don't even know how big Africa is, or if the ocean goes all the way around it to the Indies. Maybe there are huge, hungry, sea monsters waiting to attack our ships and eat the sailors who fall into the water! *Do you really think there will be sea monsters?* Maybe there are strangers who would not want our sailors to travel near their countries and might try to stop them. Hmm . . . sailing to the Indies may be even harder than going by land. We had better ask the smartest people we know what they think before we decide what to do."



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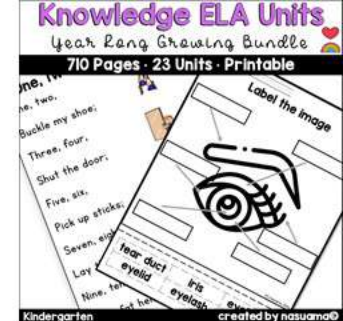
So the kings and queens began looking for people who could help them. They needed to find excellent sailors and brave explorers ready for adventure. Do you think the sailors will be able to reach Asia by ship?





COLUMBUS AND THE PILGRIMS


BUNDLE



Name: _____

The Continents

Cut and paste the name of the continents.



Africa	Australia
Asia	South America

DO YOU NEED EXTRA ACTIVITIES?



Europe	North America
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