

Unit 2: The Age of Exploration & Global Contact

Part B. The Explorers

Textbook Chapter 2.1

*The Age of Exploration would be a time where European nations began to explore not only the New World, but also other parts of the world. European nations, such as **France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands**, would explore the waters, but not before **Spain** and **Portugal** came to control these new lands, new trade routes, and desirable commodities such as spices that close to all European markets would buy for high prices making the **Iberian Peninsula** the home to very rich, and very powerful, nations.*

Portugal

*Portugal is one of two nations to be a part of the Iberian Peninsula. Located west of Spain, Portugal has two sides of its nation touching the Atlantic Ocean. Understanding the geography of this nation makes it easy to see how Portugal would come to dominate exploration from 1487 to 1500. Cape Saint Vincent is the westernmost point of land in all of Europe and it just so happens to be in Portugal. It would be in this area that the Portuguese would begin to explore the coasts of Africa and the “New” World. **Four** explorers will be discussed when talking about Portuguese exploration.*

***Prince Henry the Navigator** was never much a sailor. In fact, he never even took to the seas during the Age of Exploration. However, he would open a world famous navigation center located close to Cape Saint Vincent. This navigational school would become a center of learning as astronomers, geographers, **cartographers**, and sailors would exchange information about stars, wind patters, tides, and even new lands. During the Renaissance, we saw patrons, such as the pope or wealthy merchants, fund artists during their painting process. Sailors would have to go through the same process. In this case, Prince Henry would be the one to organize and fund the initial expedition to explore the west coast of Africa, often called **the Gold Coast**. By the time of Prince Henry’s death, Portugal has set up many trading posts along the Gold Coast, which did great business in **gold, ivory, and slaves**, and now they dreamed of rounding the southernmost tip of Africa and reaching Asia.*

***Bartolomeu Dias** would be that Portuguese sailor to reach the southernmost tip of Africa in 1488 and it would be named the **Cape of Good Hope**. Dias, however, would not sail into the Indian Ocean. It would not be until 1497 that the Portuguese would have the resources and planning to be able to sail past the Cape of Good Hope and **Vasco de Gama** would be the sailor to do it. Sailing for ten months straight, de Gama eventually reached Calicut, India wherein he noticed that Indian markets were filled with rare **silks** from China, **spices** from Pacific Islands, and other rare materials such as **valuable gems**. Two years after de Gama’s initial departure from Portugal, he would return with pricey goods such as **pepper** and **cinnamon**, but most importantly, he returned with a direct sea route to India that was now controlled entirely by the Portuguese.*

*The last Portuguese sailor that will be discussed was a man by the name of **Pedro Cabral**. Sailing in the year 1500, Cabral was able to cross the Atlantic and explore a vast land in what would be South America. This nation today still has ties to Portugal by being the only nation in South America that's primary language is Portuguese: Brazil.*

Spain

*The second nation to take to the oceans before other major European nations was Spain (Spain is the second nation that makes up the Iberian Peninsula!). Despite Portugal finding a sea route to Asia by going around the Cape of Good Hope, Spain had found a different way to travel. However, this route that the Spanish had discovered would not be exactly what they had expected. **Three** explorers will be discussed when talking about Spanish exploration.*

*Arguably the most well known explorer from this time period is **Christopher Columbus**. Born in Italy, Columbus was an expert navigator and a brilliant sailor. Towards the end of the 15th century CE, Columbus approached the Spanish royalty with a proposal. Columbus stated that he could sail west and find a new sea route to Asia that would be quicker than the route the Portuguese used when sailing along and around the coast of Africa. King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella granted Columbus the funds to take to the Atlantic and, in doing so, would make Spain the most powerful nation on earth.*

*Columbus would make four voyages under the Spanish flag, but the first voyage would be his greatest. Sailing from the Canary Islands, Columbus would have three ships at his disposal: the **Nina**, the **Pinta**, and the **Santa Maria**. Columbus estimated that the trip would take no longer than a month to complete. However, after more than thirty-three days at sea, Columbus' crew began to talk of mutiny, as they feared they would die in the vast Atlantic Ocean. Before this could happen, several crew members began to spot birds flying and branches with flowers on them floating in the water. The day was October 12th, 1492 and on the Pinta the lookout began to call out that he had spotted land. Columbus believed he had finally reached the East Indies (the islands that largely make up the nation of Indonesia today) when really he was more than 9,000 miles away from where he believed he was. Columbus, in reality, was standing on the island of **San Salvador** in the **Bahamas**.*

*The natives who had inhabited the island, the **Arawaks**, came out to meet these new strangers, but as Columbus believed he had found the East Indies he incorrectly called the native peoples "Indians". Columbus would not find many valuables on his first voyage, but would explore more islands in the Bahamas, **Cuba**, and even the island of **Hispaniola** (modern day Haiti and Dominican Republic). Without finding gold or spices, Columbus would take some Arawak natives as slaves and head back to Spain with various other goods such as pineapple, corn, and even a parrot. He received a hero's welcome upon his return to Spain. Columbus spoke of a land inhabited with gold and plenty of natives that could be converted to Christianity. Columbus would be*

granted a second voyage, but would not return with much. His third and fourth voyages would end with the same outcomes, as he would be unable to find a passage to Japan. Columbus would return to Spain poor and alone and would die believing that he had found a way to the East Indies. But the impact Columbus would have would be monumental, both for the world and for Spain.

***Amerigo Vespucci** would take to the seas at the beginning of the 1500s and would quickly correct the mistake Columbus had made in believing he had reached the outskirts of Asia. While exploring, Vespucci wrote letters describing the coastline and how it was not the coast of Asia at all. Instead, he reasoned, it was an entirely new landmass that had not before been explored. The coast Vespucci was looking at was the coast of Brazil and the name Amerigo Vespucci would live on forever when one of his letters would fall into the hands of a German cartographer. On a newly published map in 1507, the German cartographer included a great new landmass in the western hemisphere that was named “America” in honor of this Spanish sailor. Yet, despite having a new continent with a new name there were still many questions left unanswered about America that needed to be solved.*

*Columbus’ idea of reaching Asia by sailing the Atlantic would be brought up again by **Ferdinand Magellan**. Magellan believed that if one were to sail around the southernmost tip of the newly discovered continent that they would eventually reach Asia. Leaving Spain in 1519 with five ships, Magellan hoped to be the first to **circumnavigate** the world. By 1520, Magellan had reached the southernmost tip of South America wherein he would sail around it and explore the western coast of South America eventually sailing out into the Pacific Ocean (which is roughly three times larger than the Atlantic Ocean.). Many members of Magellan’s crew would die on this cross Pacific trip reaching the Philippines almost three months later. Finally, Magellan had reached Asia, but their journey was far from over. For Magellan, though, his trip would end in the Philippines, as he would be killed during a tribal feud. His crew would escape the island and sail back home to Spain crossing the Indian Ocean. In 1522, three years after leaving, one ship would sail into a Spanish port successfully completing the first sea voyage around the globe. Of the roughly 241 original crewmembers to leave on the voyage, only 18 survived to see Spanish land again.*

***Congratulations. You finished The Explorers.
Be sure to note any questions you may have on the material.***

What to discuss in class:

- 1. Map work with nations and islands labeled*
- 2. Routes that each sailor took using different colored pencils*
- 3. France, Great Britain, Netherlands exploration (just go over what lands they reached)*
- 4. Discuss what Columbus found and go more in depth about his journey. (Discuss the Taino Arawaks as a lead up to the next reading)*
- 5. Importance of Vespucci and maps before and after 1507. West Indies become a thing.*
- 6. Treaty of Tordesillas splitting the world into two (line of demarcation)*
- 7. Impact of exploration (new lands, new superpowers, the world is a lot bigger than people thought it was, spread of culture, slavery, goods exchanged, etc...)*

Links to use: