

Age of Exploration

The Age of Exploration started in the 1400's. Europeans were desperate to get spices from Asia. Spices were used to preserve foods and keep them from spoiling. Spices, however, were expensive and dangerous to get. European rulers began to pay for explorations to find a sea route to Asia so they could get spices cheaper.

Portugal was the first country that sent explorers to search for the sea route to Asia. After Bartholomew Dias and his crew made it to Africa's Cape of Good Hope, Vasco da Gama and his crew became the first to sail around Africa and through the Indian Ocean to India in 1497. Spain, however, would soon take over the lead in exploration. When Portugal refused to finance Christopher Columbus' idea to sail west to find the shortcut to the Indies, Columbus convinced Spain's King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to finance it. On October 12, 1492, Christopher Columbus and his crew reached the island of Hispaniola. Although Columbus believed he had reached Asia, he had actually discovered the entire continent of North America and claimed it for Spain.

Spain quickly colonized North America. Ponce de Leon discovered Florida, and the first European settlement in the New World was later established at St. Augustine. Hernando Cortes crushed the Aztec empire in Mexico and claimed it for Spain. Francisco Pizarro did the same to the Incan Empire in South America. Other explorers such as Francisco Coronado and Hernando de Soto claimed other portions of North America for Spain. Vasco Nunez de Balboa even claimed the entire Pacific Ocean for Spain. As the Spanish empire grew, explorers forced native populations into slavery and to convert to Christianity. Meanwhile, France began to explore North America. Explorations by Giovanni Verrazano and Jacques Cartier resulted in French claims of much of Canada and the north Atlantic coast. England would soon attempt to make its presence known by financing pirates such as Francis Drake to plunder Spanish settlements and steal gold from Spanish sea vessels. England also established a settlement in North Carolina in 1587. Territorial disputes and constant pirating resulted in a series of major wars between the competing nations. In 1588, the British Army defeated the vaunted Spanish Armada. The British victory proved a serious blow to Spanish influence in the New World.

Although Spain still controlled much of the New World after defeat, England and France were able to accelerate their colonization. England soon established successful colonies throughout the eastern portions of the United States, and France had colonies in Canada and the middle portions of the United States. By the mid 1700's, new territorial disputes between England and France eventually resulted in England gaining control over much of North America after the French and Indian War. English colonies flourished in North America until 1776 when the colonists declared their independence. The Revolutionary War ensued and resulted in independence for the colonists. The United States of America was formed.

1.) What country was the first to send explorers to search for a sea route to the Asia?

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

2.) Who was the first explorer to sail through the Indian Ocean to India?

- A. Christopher Columbus
- B. Vasco Nunez de Balboa
- C. Vasco da Gama
- D. Hernando Cortes

3.) Christopher Columbus believed he had reached the _____.

4.) Circle all of the following that were claimed by Spain.

- A. Florida
- B. Pacific Ocean
- C. Canada
- D. South America

5.) What country established the first permanent European settlement in the New World?

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

6.) What happened first?

- A. October 12, 1492
- B. Vasco da Gama sails to India
- C. Ponce de Leon discovers Florida
- D. Vasco Nunez de Balboa claims the Pacific Ocean for Spain

7.) What happened last?

- A. 1588
- B. The English establish a settlement in North Carolina
- C. The Revolutionary War
- D. Vasco Nunez de Balboa discovers the Pacific Ocean

8.) Which of the following best describes why the Age of Exploration occurred?

- A. England and Spain wanted to expand their empires
- B. Spain had claimed North and South America
- C. European rulers wanted to find a cheaper way to obtain spices from Asia
- D. The English defeated the Spanish Armada

9.) Which of the following is true?

- A. The English defeated the Spanish Armada in 1587
- B. Vasco da Gama claimed the Pacific Ocean for Spain
- C. Hernando Cortes conquered the Incan empire in South America
- D. Explorations by Giovanni Verrazano and Jacques Cartier resulted in French claims of much of Canada

10.) Which of the following is false?

- A. Sir Francis Drake was an English pirate.
- B. Spain was the first country to search for a sea route to the Asia.
- C. Spices were used to preserve food.
- D. Vasco da Gama sailed for Portugal.