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*History*  
UNFOLDING

# THE AGE OF EXPLORATION

*THE WAY WE SAW IT*  
IN ILLUSTRATION AND ART

A Teacher's Resource Booklet

With Lesson Plans and Reproducible Student Activity Assignments



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The well-crafted lessons in MindSparks materials use editorial cartoons, photos, and other visuals to generate spirited yet carefully ordered classroom interactions. The materials are primarily booklets with the ImageXaminer included on CD-ROM. These curriculum supplements cover all major areas of the social studies, with some literature-based materials of interest to language arts teachers. MindSparks products are content-rich materials using visual primary source documents to promote classroom discussion, small-group interaction, and individual student research projects.

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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-57596-121-7

Product Code: HS833

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# Introduction

## The First Global Age

In the early 1400s, several huge Chinese fleets visited the Indian Ocean and points as far west as East Africa. Yet soon after, the Chinese retreated into isolation, content to deal only indirectly with much of the world.

The Islamic lands also had the technical means to take to the seas and discover a “New World.” But their control of Indian Ocean trade routes, as well as their key role in overland routes to China, gave them little incentive to go farther.

As a result, it fell to Europe to launch this great age of discovery. It was an age that would, for the first time, link all the major landmasses and cultures of the world directly. This first truly global age was, therefore, also to be an age of Western dominance.

Why Europe? Why did it take up this momentous challenge? It’s unlikely that any definitive answer to this question can be provided. Yet the question is at the core of the way this set is organized. The illustrations provide clues only. But they help students better grasp the enormous challenge of the undertaking, the factors contributing to its success, and its larger significance for all of world history.

Each lesson in this set uses three visual displays to explore one broad topic in the overall story. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

### **Europe’s New Vigor**

The images focus on the emergence of Europe from the Middle Ages, and the growing power of the state. As powerful monarchies extended their reach, they took a growing interest in overseas trade and exploration.

### **Looking Outward**

A series of technical achievements in navigation and shipbuilding made it easier for Europeans in the 1400s to take the enormous risks of sailing into the oceans far from any coastline. The spirit of the Renaissance perhaps sparked a renewed interest in inquiry and adventure. And a burning desire to outflank the Muslim world and its merchants motivated the search for direct routes to Asia.

### **Explorers, Conquerors, Missionaries, Merchants**

The voyages of exploration were motivated (and financed) for a very wide variety of reasons—greed, pride, and a thirst for power, but also curiosity and religious idealism.

### **The Interconnected Globe**

For the first time, humanity gained a full and accurate mental image of the surface of the planet and the locations of its key geographical, cultural, and political regions. The cultural contacts resulting from this took a great many forms—both positive and negative. In any case, for just about every society on earth, isolation would no longer be possible.

## Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Most textbooks today are full of colorful visuals. But all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. But only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

## How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

**A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET** This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

**CD-ROM WITH IMAGES** The ImageXaminer allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions. The CD-ROM also includes a folder containing all of the discussion questions and follow-up questions in pdf format. All of the images are also in pdf format, should you wish to create overhead transparencies.

### **DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS FOR EACH ILLUSTRATION**

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while viewing the images in the ImageXaminer. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments, while others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

## The Age of Exploration

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### OBJECTIVES FOR THIS LESSON:

1. Students will better understand some of the key changes taking place in Europe in the 1400s that enabled it to undertake the risky and costly business of exploring the globe.
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# Europe's New Vigor

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

#### Illustrations 1A & 1B

Europe's Middle Ages were a time of strict economic limits, uncertainty, and fears about the world beyond the local village or town. The fortified manor house (Illustration 1A) conveys a sense of the narrow limits within which most people lived. Life had slowly begun to improve even as early as the 12th century. But in the 1400s, Europe's knowledge of the world, present and past, suddenly began to expand. Wealthy city-states such as Venice (Illustration 1B) traded for luxury goods from Asia. Growing contacts with the Muslim world opened new realms of knowledge to Europe. This wealth and knowledge would soon help Europeans launch a mighty age of discovery that would transform the world.

#### Illustrations 2A & 2B

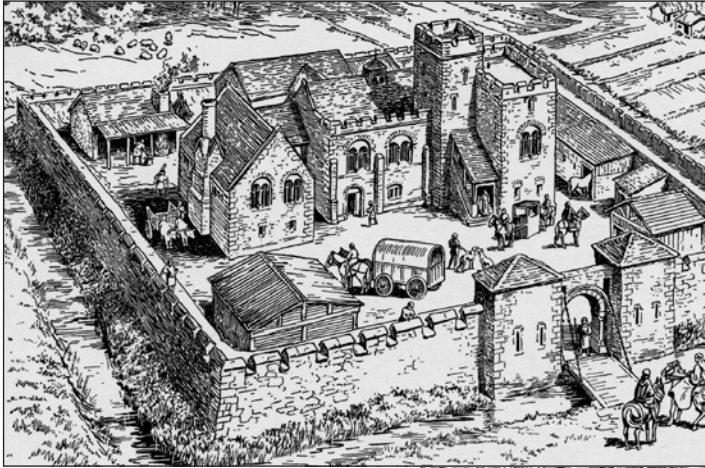
Also making this possible was the rise of the nation-state. The feudal age of armed knights (as in Illustration 2A) was ending. New and improved forms of weaponry and war gave kings and their armies the advantage. At the Battle of Crecy in 1346, during the Hundred Years' War, the English showed that a combination of archers with the new longbow, and dismounted men-at-arms could defeat a charge of armored knights on horseback. The longbow proved decisive also at the Battle of Poitier in 1356 (Illustration 2B). Later, gunpowder and cannons were even more decisive in making armored knights obsolete. Only kings with great financial resources could afford to equip and field such armies, shifting the power balance in their favor.

#### Illustrations 3A & 3B

England's King Henry VIII and Spain's King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella are examples of the strong monarchs who appeared in Western Europe in these centuries. Portugal's King John was another. His son Prince Henry (Illustration 3A) sponsored mapmakers, mathematicians, and astronomers, and soon became known as "Henry the Navigator" for his efforts to organize important voyages of exploration into the Atlantic and down Africa's west coast. The goals were economic, political, and religious. Portugal wanted to find a route to Asia that would bypass the Middle East and Indian Ocean trade controlled by Muslim merchants. By gaining control of the spice trade with the East, Portugal would grow rich and strong and check the power of Islam.

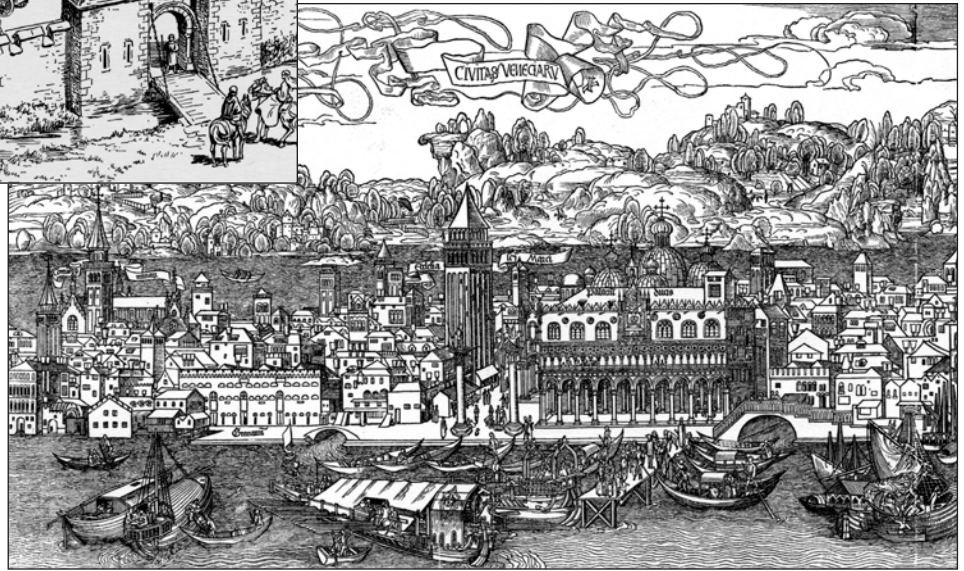
# Illustrations 1A & 1B

1A



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1B



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## Discussing the Illustration

1. In the 1300s, Europe was still in its so-called Middle Ages. Many Europeans lived in villages, small towns, or fortified manors such as the one shown here. What do historians mean by the term “Middle Ages”? In what way does this manor (Illustration 1A) help show what life was like for people in the Middle Ages?
2. By the 1300s, Europe had begun to change. This was especially so in certain Italian cities such as Venice (Illustration 1B). Why were these cities growing in population and wealth at this time? How do the details in this illustration help to show why these cities were growing?
3. A great movement of renewed interest in learning and the world at large soon took hold in these cities. What is that movement called? It may have been a factor leading Europeans to launch what is often called the “Age of Exploration,” starting in the 1400s. What is meant by the phrase “Age of Exploration”? How might this movement have helped bring on this Age of Exploration?

## Follow-up Activities

1. Prepare a report on daily life in the Middle Ages. Use the fortified manor house shown here as a reference. What was the manorial system? Why were manor houses like this fortified? Discuss what life in this setting would have been like—both for the lord and his family, as well as for the peasants. A good Web site to visit for ideas is located at:  
<http://www.learner.org/exhibits/middleages/>
2. **Small-group activity:** Read more about the Italian city-states of the Renaissance and their trade links with other parts of the world. Then create a bulletin-board display, with the centerpiece being a map of the Italian city-states, their colonies, and the trade routes linking them with the Byzantine Empire, the Islamic lands of the Middle East, India, and China. In addition to the map, include photos and drawings about points of interest on the routes, pictures of typical products, and explanations of why these were important to trade.



## Lesson 1—Europe's New Vigor

# Illustrations 2A & 2B

2A



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2B



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### Discussing the Illustration

1. Throughout the Middle Ages, Europe was divided among thousands of princes, dukes, and other feudal lords. What do historians mean by the word “feudal”?
2. Feudal knights like the two in Illustration 2A pledged to fight for a lord in return for land. How does the illustration help explain what made these knights the key military unit of the Middle Ages, and why they needed grants of land and peasants to support themselves as warriors?
3. In the 1300s, kings began to gain power over smaller feudal lords. The longbow was one new weapon that helped them. Illustration 2B shows the English using it effectively against French knights in the Battle of Poitiers (1356) during the Hundred Years War. What made it so effective against mounted knights? What details in the image help to show the effectiveness of the longbow?
4. What other weapons further weakened feudal lords and increased the power of kings in these centuries?

### Follow-up Activities

1. The longbow was decisive also at the Battle of Crecy in 1346. You are a feudal French lord who just fought in that battle. Write a letter to another feudal lord about what you saw, the lessons you think should be learned from the battle, and what you think it means for the future of the feudal system. Be sure to make your letter as realistic as possible regarding the age in which it was written.
2. Small-group activity: The discovery of gunpowder influenced states outside as well as inside Europe. It played an important role in the Middle East. For example, it contributed to the power of the three so-called “Gunpowder Empires”—the Ottoman, Safavid (in Persia), and Mughal (in India) empires. Have one or two members of your group each learn about one of these three Middle Eastern empires. Then, as a group, lead a discussion in class on this question: “How were these three empires similar to and different from the new nation-states on the rise in Europe in the 1400s and 1500s?”

## Lesson 1—Europe's New Vigor

# Illustrations 3A & 3B

3B

3A



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### Discussing the Illustration

1. During the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, European kings began to unify large areas of their holdings into nations ruled by a single powerful government. Using the map shown here, can you name some of these nations?
2. One such nation with a powerful king and government was Portugal. Illustration 2A is of Prince Henry the Navigator, son of Portugal's King John I. In the early 1400s, Henry started a school for navigators in the port city of Sagres. What do you know about this school? Why was it so important to the Age of Exploration? How does the illustration of Prince Henry convey the idea of Henry's significance in this story?
3. Portugal's location gave it the ability and helped give it the will to find new all-water routes to Asia, which was a key goal of European explorers in 1400s. From the map, can you explain?

### Follow-up Activities

1. Imagine you are in Portugal as an ambassador from an Italian city-state. Prince Henry has just recently set up his school for navigators. You believe it's important to let your sovereign back in Italy know what Henry is up to and its implications for the Italian city-states. To make your letter as realistic as possible, be sure first to learn as much as you can about Henry and his school.
2. Small-group activity: Each member of the group should select one of the European nations shown in Illustration 3B. Then conduct further research to find out how that nation changed from 1300 to 1600, during this era of exploration and discovery. Use this map (or one like it) as the centerpiece of a bulletin-board display with illustrations and text summing up key changes in each of the countries your group researches. Be sure to explain what, if anything, each nation contributed to exploration and discovery, and what made it able to do so.

*The Age of Exploration***OBJECTIVES  
FOR THIS LESSON:**

1. Students will understand some of the key innovations that enabled Europeans to launch the Age of Exploration in the 1440s.
2. Students will better understand the motives that led Europeans to undertake such explorations.

# Looking Outward

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS****Illustrations 1A & 1B**

Asia's spices were enormously valuable. Not only did they help preserve meat in an age before refrigeration, they were also used for perfumes, cosmetics, and medicine. Valuable yet small in size, these goods were easy to carry long distances. Overland routes were still expensive, however, mainly because they involved so many middlemen. European merchants would earn huge profits if they could trade directly with Asia by sea. In the late 1400s, Portugal finally proved this could be done by rounding Africa and crossing the Indian Ocean to India. The Portuguese port city of Lisbon (Illustration 1A) soon replaced the Italian city-states as the hub of this new, European-dominated spice trade.

**Illustrations 2A & 2B**

A variety of technical improvements in navigation made the Portuguese explorations possible. Two are shown here: a mariner's astrolabe and a map. The astrolabe made its way to Europe from the Muslim societies of the Middle East and North Africa. It was a metal disk with a rotating part used to measure the altitude of the sun or a star in order to find a ship's latitude. The astrolabe was far from perfect: under cloudy skies, it was useless. The map is a 1502 Portuguese maritime chart of the world. It lacks lines of longitude, but the lines it does have are mathematically plotted to help ship pilots get from one port to another. Other devices such as the compass and the quadrant also made it easier to venture out into the ocean far from the sight of land.

**Illustration 3**

The 1400s also saw major improvements in shipbuilding, such as the sternpost rudder and lateen (or triangular) sails that allowed ships to sail into the wind. These and other improvements were incorporated into the lighter, sleeker, faster vessels called "caravels." Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias's caravel is shown here. These ships were crucial to Portugal's success in exploring down the African coast in the early 1400s. In 1488, Dias rounded the southern tip of Africa—the Cape of Good Hope—proving that ships could indeed reach Asia that way. Finally, in 1497–98, Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama actually sailed all the way from Portugal to India. The water route to Asia had been found.



## Lesson 2—Looking Outward

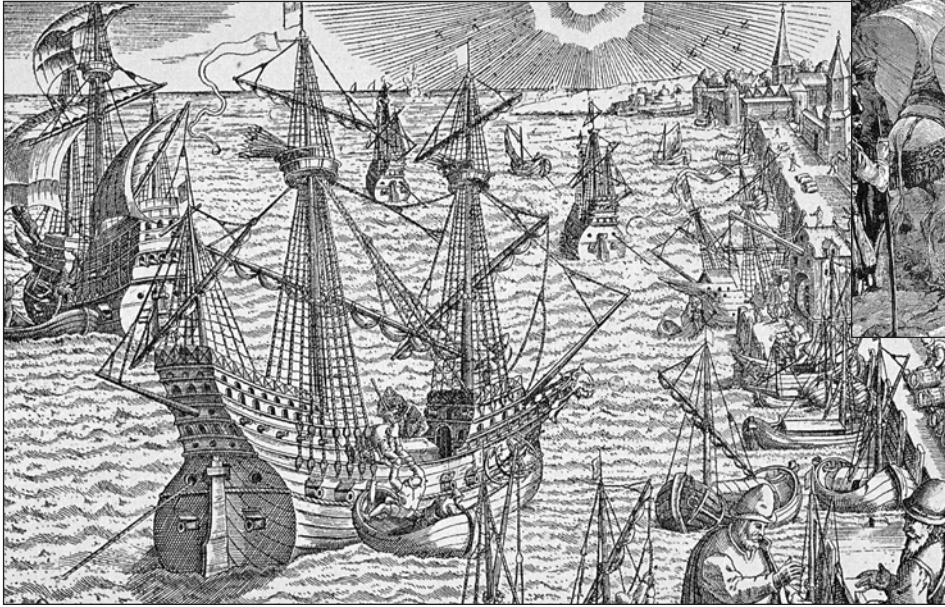
# Illustrations 1A & 1B

1B



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1A



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### Discussing the Illustration

1. Europeans set out to find new routes to Asia in the 1400s for several reasons. The key reason was economic: goods from Asia were in great demand and highly valued. Can you name some of these goods and why they were so valued?
2. Illustration 1B shows how traders usually carried goods from Asia to Europe. For many Europeans this was highly undesirable, given where these overland routes were and who controlled them. Can you explain? Does the illustration suggest in any way the drawbacks of such a transportation system?
3. Port cities like Lisbon, Portugal (Illustration 1A), became centers of the earliest efforts to find a direct sea route to Asia. Around which continent did this route pass? What can you learn from this illustration about European ships and port cities at this time?
4. Why were western European nations like Portugal more interested than Italian city-states like Venice in finding new trade routes to Asia?

### Follow-up Activities

1. Learn more about European trade with Asia in the 1400s. Why did Europe's desire to find a direct sea route to Asia grow stronger in the 1400s? Create a map showing the earlier trade routes from Europe to Asia versus the direct sea route around the horn of Africa. Use the map in a brief presentation to class in which you talk about changes in Asia and the Middle East in the 1300s and 1400s that might have added to Europe's determination to find a sea route to Asia.
2. In early 1400s, Chinese emperor Yung-lo sent Admiral Zheng He and 62 ships on a voyage to southern Asia. Later voyages journeyed as far as East Africa. After Yung-lo's death in 1424, China ended all further voyages of exploration. Why? Why did the Chinese not become world explorers and discoverers instead of the Europeans? How does your world history textbook explain this? How might history have been different if the Chinese had kept up their efforts at exploration? Sum up your views in a brief talk in class.



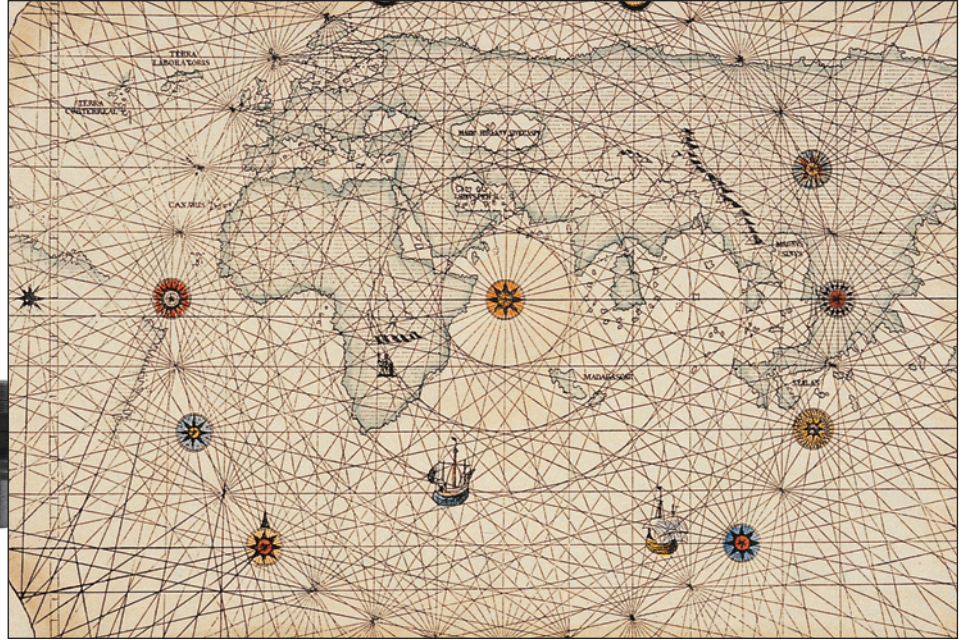
## Lesson 2—Looking Outward

### Illustration 2A & 2B

2A



2B



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#### ***Discussing the Illustration***

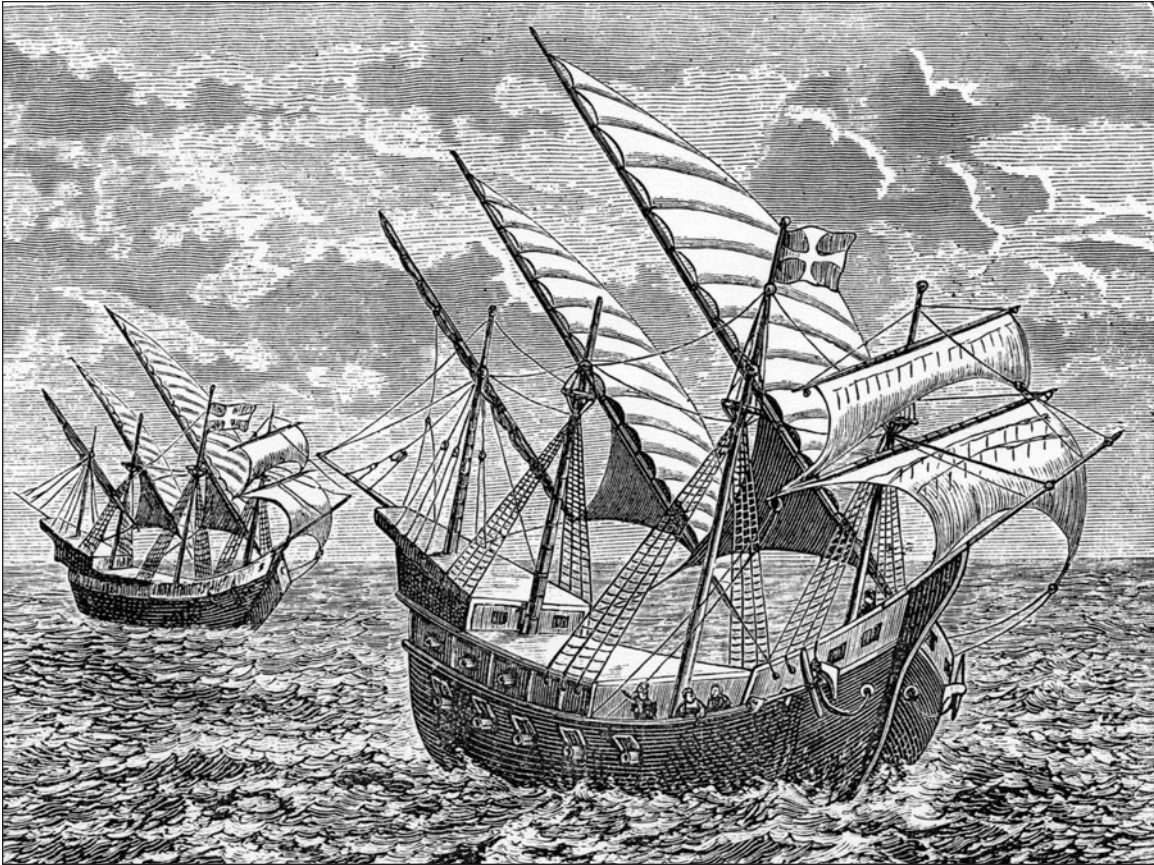
1. A general increase in knowledge and a number of new improvements in navigation technology helped make the age of European exploration possible. One example was the astrolabe, shown in Illustration 2A. Using the illustration, can you explain how the astrolabe helped navigators?
2. In the 1400s, maps began to improve greatly. On the right is a Portuguese maritime map. What parts of the world are shown most accurately on it? From your history reading, can you describe any other improvements or discoveries that might have aided European seafaring explorers in the 1400s?
3. The astrolabe was adapted from instruments developed by Muslim societies. These Muslim lands were a source of other techniques and ideas that aided the early European explorers. Why might merchants in Portugal, Spain, and the Italian city-states be especially likely to learn from these Muslim societies?

#### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. Learn more about the improvements in mapmaking in the 1400s—especially “portolani,” which were detailed charts of the coastlines. Also learn about key tools that made Portuguese exploration easier, such as the compass, the astrolabe, and other ways of determining location on sea, along with the technique of dead reckoning. Then create a bulletin-board display with pictures you find or draw yourself of all the key innovations, along with explanations of how they contributed to exploration.
2. In many ways, European explorers had Chinese and Muslim inventors to thank for many of the advances in navigation that made their journeys possible. The magnetic compass, for example, originated in ancient China. The astrolabe, though first used by the ancient Greeks, was perfected by Arab peoples. Find out more about the ways Chinese and Islamic civilization helped Europeans learn more about navigation, mapmaking, and shipbuilding. Present your findings to the class.



## Illustration 3



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### **Discussing the Illustration**

1. Shipbuilding breakthroughs in the 15th century were also key to the age of exploration. Shown here is a caravel. The caravel's lateen (triangular) sails, its rudder, and its sleek design were key in making overseas exploration possible. Using the illustration, can you explain what made these features so important for overseas exploration?
2. The caravels shown here are those of Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias. Who was he and why was he so important to the age of discovery?
3. Dias, like many Portuguese explorers, hoped to replace Middle East caravans and Indian Ocean traders by finding a direct sea route to Asia. His motives were economic, but also religious. Can you explain what religious motive he had—and how a direct sea route to Asia would have given him and other Europeans a big victory in what they saw as an effort to defend Christianity?

### **Follow-up Activities**

1. Learn more about the importance of the caravel. How was it different from other ships at the time? What features made it especially useful to explorers? Create a diagram of a typical caravel based on a picture you find. Include arrows pointing to all the features that made this ship such an effective tool of overseas discovery. Display your diagram for the class and explain it in a brief talk.
2. In 1488, Bartolomeu Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope; a sea route to India had been found. Upon returning to Lisbon, he reported to Portugal's King John. Also present when Dias made his report was Christopher Columbus. Write an imaginary conversation between the two men following their audience with the king. Be sure to find out why Columbus was there in the first place. Also, keep in mind that this was four years before Columbus made his historic voyage of discovery.

*The Age of Exploration*

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**OBJECTIVES  
FOR THIS LESSON:**

1. Students will better understand the wide range of motives that led Europeans to engage in their worldwide explorations.
- 

# Explorers, Conquerors, Missionaries, Merchants

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

### Illustration 1

In 1492 Christopher Columbus changed the course of history. His was an encounter with a whole new world, although he never quite realized it. Columbus sought a shorter water route to Asia to make himself and Spain rich, but also to spread the Christian faith and hem in the Muslim world. Believing he had reached India, he called the islanders he met “Indians.” His words here are from a slightly edited version of a letter he wrote to Spain’s king and queen upon his return. Columbus appears to have been as puzzled and as fascinated with the Indians as they were with him. He is often described as a heroic explorer, and just as often as a ruthless conqueror. He was a bit of both—and more. Here he depicts the Indians in a somewhat idealized or romanticized way. Yet it is also a way that could be used to justify their enslavement and/or conversion.

### Illustrations 2A & 2B

The early explorers may have been inspired by curiosity and religious idealism. But they were also driven by greed, pride, and a thirst for power. Such was the case with the Spanish conquistador Hernando Cortes. He landed in Mexico in 1519 and within two years had conquered the entire Aztec empire. Cortes and the other conquistadors made their way through Central and South America, claiming territory, treasure, and subjects for the king of Spain. Though their mission was to convert the natives to Christianity, they often ended up brutally mistreating them in order to impose Spain’s new political and economic order.

### Illustration 3

The voyages of exploration were very expensive. The risk of failure was great. And failure meant that investors would lose all their money. They learned to reduce this risk by forming joint-stock companies. By selling shares of stock, a joint-stock company enabled many investors to split the profits and risks of a series of voyages. Some joint-stock companies were given a government-granted monopoly over certain types of trade, as well as political authority in certain areas. For example, the Dutch East India Company had a monopoly on Dutch trade with Africa and the East Indies. Here, that company is commissioning Henry Hudson to claim land in North America. Commercial innovations like the joint-stock company were part of what made the Age of Exploration possible.



## Illustration 1

*“These people [the inhabitants of the islands] practice no kind of idolatry; on the contrary they firmly believe that all strength and power, and in fact all good things are in heaven, and that I had come down from thence with these ships and sailors; and in this belief I was received there after they had put aside fear. Nor are they slow or unskilled, but of excellent and acute understanding; and the men who have navigated that sea give an account of everything in an admirable manner; but they never saw people clothed, nor these kind of ships. As soon as I reached that sea, I seized by force several Indians on the first island, in order that they might learn from us, and in like manner tell us about those things in these lands of which they themselves had knowledge; and the plan succeeded, for in a short time we understood them and they us, sometimes by gestures and signs, sometimes by words; and it was a great advantage to us. They are coming with me now, yet always believing that I descended from heaven, although they have been living with us for a long time, and are living with us to-day.”*

*Christopher Columbus*



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### Discussing the Illustration

1. On the right is one artist's idea of one of the great moments in exploration. It took place in October 1492. What momentous event was it? What view of it does this illustration convey, and how?
2. Many people say Columbus was the greatest explorer of all. What are some reasons for this view? Others see Columbus more as a conqueror than an explorer. Can you explain why? With which of these two views do you agree more? Why?
3. The words here are from a letter Columbus wrote to Spain's king and queen after his first journey to America. Can you explain why he would want to write to them as soon as he was back?
4. In the letter, Columbus describes the native peoples he found. What, if anything, do we really learn about these natives from this letter? What do we learn about Columbus? And what, if anything, can we conclude about his reasons for writing what he has here to the Spanish king and queen?

### Follow-up Activities

1. Is this version of Columbus's letter accurate evidence of his own views? Some historians wonder about this. To see why, read the first chapter (pp. 9–20) of *Reading Columbus*, by Margarita Zamora (University of California Press, 1993). It describes the discovery of the true Columbus letter and how it may have been edited slightly, possibly for public-relations reasons. Several different versions of the letter were published throughout Europe in the months after Columbus returned from his first voyage. The passage shown above is from a version posted on the World Wide Web by the Osher Map Library and Smith Center for Cartographic Education at the University of Southern Maine. You can find the complete letter at the following URL:

<http://www.usm.maine.edu/~maps/columbus/toc.html>

Based on what you learn, choose several passages of the letter that interest you. Then give a class talk about the letter, the passages you've chosen, and the debates about the letter's accuracy and authenticity.



## Illustrations 2A & 2B

2A



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2B



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### Discussing the Illustrations

1. Christopher Columbus certainly wanted wealth and fame from his explorations. He also wanted to spread the Christian faith. Other explorers were moved more than Columbus by greed and a desire for conquest. Illustration 2A is of Hernando Cortes. What do you know about Cortes? What impression of him does this illustration suggest, and why?
2. In 1521, Cortes captured the city of Tenochtitlan, the capital of a great empire. What empire was that, and in what present-day nation was it located?
3. What do you know about the way Cortes and other Spanish conquerors dealt with the Indians? From what you know, does Illustration 2B appear to be accurate? Why or why not?
4. The conquest of Mexico is only one example of the ruthlessness of the Spanish conquistadors. From your history reading, how would you explain the fact that Europeans and Native Americans both often reacted to one another so violently?

### Follow-up Activities

1. Small-group activity: The Spanish conquest of the Americas did not go unquestioned. Father Bartolome de las Casas devoted a good portion of his life to defending the rights of the Indians of the Americas. In 1550, in response to Las Casas and others, the Spanish king suspended all further conquests and set up a commission to debate their morality. Las Casas argued against conquest, saying, "The Indians are our brothers, and Christ has given his life for them." Arguing against Las Casas was Juan Gines de Sepulveda, a Spanish scholar who had published a book claiming that the Spanish conquest of the Americas was fully justified. The Indians were not fully human, said Sepulveda, and some peoples "were born to serve." Find out more about Las Casas, Sepulveda, and their debate. Write a report summing up each side's arguments. Then, as a group, conduct a similar debate in front of the class, with half the group taking one side, half the group the other.



## Illustration 3



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### ***Discussing the Illustration***

1. Exploration was very expensive—even for the most powerful European monarchs. What expenses would make a voyage of exploration so costly?
2. This illustration shows how these costs were paid, at least in some nations. The man standing before the table is explorer Henry Hudson. What do you think is happening in this scene?
3. These merchants made up a joint-stock company known as the Dutch East India Company. Briefly explain what these joint-stock companies were. What does the illustration suggest about the attitudes and personalities of the men leading such companies?
4. How did joint-stock companies make it easier to raise the money needed for voyages of exploration and settlement? Can you name any other joint-stock companies from the age of exploration?

### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. Small-group activity: Have each member of the group learn more about one of the following joint-stock companies:

Dutch East India Company  
British East India Company  
French West India Company  
Hudson's Bay Company

As a group, create a large map or chart showing how these companies were organized, where they explored, and what products they sold.

2. Small-group activity: In 1621, the Dutch government founded the Dutch West India Company to establish colonies in the Americas. The Avalon Project at Yale Law School has posted the Charter of the Dutch West India Company here:

[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th\\_century/westind.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/westind.asp)

As a group read and discuss the charter. Choose several passages to use in a brief presentation to the class explaining how the charter worked.

*The Age of Exploration***OBJECTIVES  
FOR THIS LESSON:**

1. Students will better appreciate the various ways in which the Age of Exploration linked the major regions and cultures of the world into one interconnected global system.

# The Interconnected Globe

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS****Illustrations 1A & 1B**

For centuries, medieval *mappae mundi*—world maps—had been based as much on Biblical stories as on actual geographical knowledge. By the 1400s, the accuracy of those maps was improving, especially after the work of Greek-Egyptian geographer Ptolemy was rediscovered. This 1493 map, (Illustration 1A) was based on Ptolemy's work. Yet like the *mappae mundi*, it still shows the world as made up of only the three continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe, with the holy city of Jerusalem at the center. Such maps still combined Bible stories with sounder geographical knowledge. Illustration 1B is a map from about 100 years later. Within just a century of discovery, a near-complete picture of the Earth and its continents became available for the first time in human history. In mapmaking, the Age of Discovery gave birth to a new global understanding of the world.

**Illustrations 2A & 2B**

But the explorers gave us much more than geographical knowledge. They launched the first age in which all major regions were linked and began to interact. These illustrations suggest just how varied the forms of contact could be. In Asia, Europeans found strong cultures that were often highly suspicious of them and of the trading ties they sought. This is hinted at in Illustration 2A, showing Vasco da Gama greeting the ruler of Calicut. In the "New World," on the other hand, Europeans encountered much weaker cultures, which they conquered with relative ease. The West Indies slave plantation (Illustration 2B) suggests how a new and massive form of slavery linked Africa with that New World in a tragic way.

**Illustrations 3A & 3B**

These images suggest two other key aspects of the global impact of Europe's Age of Exploration. Illustration 3A shows French explorer Jacques Cartier landing in present-day Quebec and praying to God. The image reminds us of the enormous impact Christianity was to have, for good or bad, on the cultures Europeans encountered. Illustration 3B is of the first foothold in North America gained by the English—the colony of Jamestown, founded in 1607. Colonists by the thousands and then hundreds of thousands would in centuries to come alter many societies drastically and link them in a new global network of civilizations.



# Illustrations 1A & 1B

1A



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1B



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## Discussing the Illustrations

1. These two world maps show how drastically people's understanding of the world changed during the Age of Exploration. Illustration 1A is from 1493. What differences between it and present-day maps stand out most?
2. For centuries, Europe's maps were even less accurate than the one in Illustration 1A. They were based as much on Biblical stories as on actual geographical knowledge. Why do you think Bible stories influenced Europeans in creating maps?
3. Illustration 1B is a map drawn only 100 years later, in the 1590s. What big changes does it show compared with the other one? What explains these changes?
4. Some people say Columbus set out to prove that the world was round. Actually, this fact was well known in Europe by 1492. In fact, Columbus sailed west to Asia in part because of his ignorance of the world, not his knowledge about it. Can you explain?

## Follow-up Activities

1. Read the first chapter (pp. 3–42) of *The Imaginative Landscape of Christopher Columbus*, by Valerie I. J. Flint (Princeton University Press, 1992). Based on your reading, explain what *mappemondes* (or *mappae mundi*) were and their role in shaping the ideas about the world held by medieval Europe and by Columbus himself. In what ways and to what degree were these maps accurate pictures of the world? In what ways were they mythological or religious in nature and purpose? Write an essay summing up what you have learned about *mappae mundi* and about Columbus.
2. The 1493 map on top here was based on the work of the ancient scientist Ptolemy, even though it is also like Medieval *mappae mundi* in some ways. Ptolemy lived in the second century CE. But his ideas were lost to Europe until the 1400s. Learn more about Ptolemy, and write a brief essay explaining why his rediscovery by Europeans in the 1400s helped make the age of exploration possible.



## Illustrations 2A & 2B

2A



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2B



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### Discussing the Illustrations

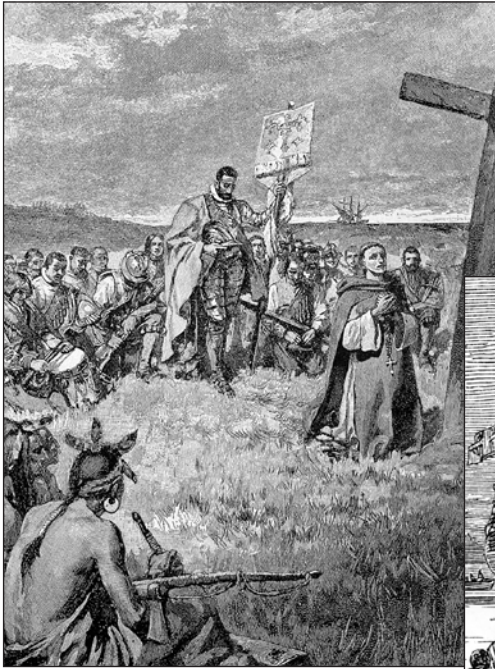
1. During the Age of Exploration, Europeans came into contact with a vast number of different cultures. Illustration 2A shows Vasco da Gama asking a local ruler to grant his nation trading rights. From the illustration and what you know about da Gama, in what land was this ruler located?
2. How does the illustration suggest that da Gama may not have found it so easy to convince the ruler to allow Portugal to trade in his lands? Do you think the painting is accurate in this respect? Why or why not?
3. The West Indies slave plantation (Illustration 2B) makes it clear that Europeans did not always deal as equals with the other cultures they encountered. How does the illustration make this clear?
4. Europeans treated the slaves they bought as inferiors. But this was not as true of their dealings with the African nations from whom they obtained slaves. Can you explain? Why do you think Europeans treated some cultures with respect and not others?

### Follow-up Activities

1. Small-group activity: Learn more about the different cultures the European explorers found on their journeys. Include the contacts Europeans had with the people of the West Indies, Mexico, and South America, as well as with the people and rulers in China, Japan, and the slave-trading cultures of West Africa. Try to find images that help illustrate these encounters. Using images you find, create a bulletin-board display titled "Exploration and the Beginning of the Global Age." Prepare short captions for all of your illustrations. Divide the display in half. Use one half to show encounters in which Europeans took advantage of or dominated another culture. Use the other half to show encounters in which Europeans dealt with other cultures more equally.
2. Europeans arrived in India by sea during the rule of the Mughal Empire there. Learn more about this empire. Then write an essay on how the existence of the Mughal Empire affected Europe's dealings with India as compared to its dealings in America.

## Illustrations 3A & 3B

3A



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3B



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### Discussing the Illustrations

1. Illustration 3A depicts French explorer Jacques Cartier landing in present-day Quebec. What does the illustration suggest about Cartier's motives for discovering new lands?
2. Why is Christianity so important in understanding the impact of European exploration on the world? How accurate a view of Cartier do you think Illustration 3A provides?
3. Another form of interaction was European settlement and colonization. The settlement of Jamestown in 1607 is shown here. Why is Jamestown important in the history of the United States? Using details in the illustration, explain what made such ventures both so challenging and so exciting.
4. European colonization of the Americas, India, Africa, and the East Indies had a profound impact both on Europe and the rest of the world. In your view, what were the negative aspects of this impact? What were the positive aspects? Explain your answers.

### Follow-up Activities

1. Small-group activity: The 1991 movie *The Black Robe* tells the story of a 17th-century Jesuit priest and his efforts to spread the Christian faith among an Algonquin Indian tribe in Quebec. As a group, watch the movie. Then draw up a “viewer's guide” to the movie answering key questions, such as:
  - Who were the Jesuits?
  - Why were they sending missionaries to the Indians in this part of North America?
  - How much success did they have in converting the Indians?
  - What did the Indians think of the missionaries?
  - Of those Indians who helped the missionaries, what did they hope to achieve—that is, what was in it for them?

Hand your viewer's guide out to the class. Watch the movie as a class. Then as a group, lead a class discussion of the movie. Base your discussion on the questions you included in your viewer's guide.



# Answers to Factual Questions

(Answers provided only to questions  
requiring a single correct answer)

## Lesson 1

**Illustration 1** Question 1: Generally, between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance

Question 2: The Italian city-states grew as trade revived with the Middle East and Asia, and with Northern Europe

Question 3: The Renaissance; the Age of Discovery was a period when Europeans explored and “discovered” many lands unidentified in the past

**Illustration 2** Question 1: A decentralized social system based on personal bonds between rulers and subordinates, etc.

Question 3: Longbows could fire arrows through body armor

Question 4: Gunpowder, cannon, etc.

**Illustration 3** Question 1: France, England, Spain, Portugal, etc.

Question 2: Henry’s school worked on many problems having to do with overseas navigation and exploration

## Lesson 2

**Illustration 1** Question 1: Silks, spices, etc.; as luxury items, as well as food preservatives, and were easy to carry, etc.

Question 2: Often carried by Muslim merchants on the Indian Ocean or on difficult inland routes across Asia

Question 3: Africa

Question 4: They were not near the overland routes, etc.

**Illustration 2** Question 1: It measured the sun’s angle to calculate latitude

Question 3: They were in the closest contact with them

**Illustration 3** Question 1: Ships were faster, could sail into the wind, etc.

Question 2: Portuguese explorer, the first European to round the tip of Africa and sail into the Indian Ocean

Question 3: By bypassing trade routes under Islamic control

## Lesson 3

**Illustration 1** Question 1: Christopher Columbus’s first landing in the Americas

Question 3: King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella had financed his voyage and would be anxious for news about it

**Illustration 2** Question 2: Aztecs; Mexico

**Illustration 3** Question 1: Ships, provisions for many months, pay for sailors, insurance (ships were often lost at sea), etc.

Question 2: Hudson is receiving a charter from his financial backers, i.e., the Dutch East India Company

Question 3: These companies enabled many people to invest in all of a company’s voyages instead of one, thereby spreading the risk and sharing the costs.

## Lesson 4

**Illustration 1** Question 4: He thought the world had a far smaller circumference

**Illustration 2** Question 1: India

Question 4: They had to follow the rules set by the African nations with whom they dealt, etc.

**Illustration 3** Question 3: Jamestown was the first permanent British colony in what would become the United States.



# History

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## UNFOLDING

