

Summary: First Explorers

Europeans Arrive in North America

In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed from Spain across the Atlantic Ocean. He wanted to go to Asia. He landed on an island near North America instead.

Columbus's voyage made others want to sail to North America. The Spanish king sent explorers to North America to claim land, riches, and fame. They also came to convert American Indians to the Catholic religion, which was Spain's main religion.

Ponce de León was the first Spanish conquistador to arrive in Florida. He wanted to find new land and riches. In 1513, he landed near the present-day city of St. Augustine.

Two Conquistadors

Spain sent more conquistadors to Florida after Ponce de León. Spain wanted to control the new land. In 1528, Pánfilo de Narváez landed near Tampa Bay to start a settlement. Narváez found gold objects in the area. He started an expedition to look for more riches.

Narváez captured American Indians on the way and made them work as guides. He stole the Indians' crops. Narváez did not find gold. He and many of his men drowned in a storm as they tried to sail to Mexico.

In 1539, Hernando de Soto sailed to Florida to start a settlement. Like Narváez, de Soto landed near Tampa Bay. De Soto gave up his settlement plans when he heard about riches to the north. Like Narváez, de Soto's men killed, kidnapped, and enslaved the American Indians they met. The Indians attacked de Soto's army. De Soto finally traveled north out of Florida. He was still looking for gold when he died.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

convert *verb*, to convince someone to join another religion

conquistador *noun*, the Spanish word for conqueror

expedition *noun*, a journey made for a special reason, such as exploration



After You Read

REVIEW Why did explorers come to North America? What did explorers want to find? What did they want to do? Highlight two sentences that tell the answer.

REVIEW How were the expeditions of Narváez and de Soto alike? Draw a box around the paragraph that tells how de Soto was like Narváez.