

Summary: Traders, Explorers, and Colonists

Trade Between Europe and Asia

Before the Renaissance, merchants traveled to North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean. They wanted spices such as pepper, cinnamon, and cloves, which were expensive to transport. In the 15th century, European explorers began looking for a new route to Asia. Portugal's Prince Henry the Navigator hoped to find a shortcut. He sent explorers down the African coast.

In 1488, Bartolomeu Dias rounded Africa's southern tip. Within the next 10 years, Vasco da Gama traveled from Portugal to India. Portugal set up trading posts along the Indian Ocean coast. Spices and other goods could now be taken directly to Europe.

Other countries tried to find routes to Asia. Spain's Queen Isabella asked Christopher Columbus to reach Asia by sailing west. Columbus set sail in 1492. After several weeks, instead of Asia, he reached an island in the Caribbean Sea.

After Columbus

Spain also funded a Portuguese explorer, Ferdinand Magellan. In 1519, his crew set sail and 18 months later reached the Philippines. The journey was difficult. Many sailors died. Magellan was killed in the Philippines. One boat and 18 sailors returned to Spain. It had taken three years, but they circumnavigated the globe.

Most European explorers did not reach Asia. Instead, European countries set up colonies along the coasts of Africa, North America, and South America. Many of the lands already had large self-ruling populations. But Europe controlled the economy and government of these conquered lands. This practice was called imperialism.

The arrival of the Europeans had many effects on the native peoples. European missionaries tried to convert them to Christianity. The missionaries spread diseases and thousands of native people died from measles, smallpox, and malaria.

Exploration caused the slave trade to expand. The Portuguese bought West Coast Africans to work as slaves.

Before You Read

Find and circle each vocabulary word.

circumnavigate *verb*, to sail completely around

imperialism *noun*, the practice of one country controlling the government and economy of another country or territory

After You Read

REVIEW What land did Columbus reach, and where did he think he was?

Draw a box around the words that tell where Columbus landed. Underline the word that tells where he thought he was.

REVIEW What effect did European exploration have on people in Africa?

Highlight the sentences that tell the effects European exploration had on people in Africa.