First Explorers

Searching for a New Route
In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed west from Spain. He was looking for a new trade route to Asia. Instead, Columbus landed in North America. Soon, other Europeans began exploring North America. Giovanni da Verrazano reached New York Harbor, and Jacques Cartier explored the St. Lawrence River. Samuel de Champlain explored northern New York and started a fur trade with the Huron and Algonquian Indians. In 1609, Henry Hudson sailed up the Hudson River, where he claimed land for the Netherlands.

Dutch Colonies
In 1624, Dutch settlers started the colony of New Netherland in the Hudson River Valley. Under the leadership of their governor, Cornelius May, Dutch settlers traded furs peacefully with the Algonquian Indians. In 1643, Governor Willem Kieft attacked the Algonquians, and many Native Americans left the area. Soon, English settlers began claiming land around the Hudson River as well. The English population grew quickly. The English built more colonies, which would later cause conflicts with the Dutch.

Before You Read
Find and underline a form of each vocabulary word.

route noun, a road or waterway that travelers follow
claim verb, to declare that land belongs to a country
colony noun, land ruled by another country
governor noun, the official in charge of a colony

After You Read
Why did Columbus sail west from Spain in 1492?
Highlight the sentence that tells the answer.

What led to conflicts between Dutch and English settlers?
Circle the sentences that tell the answer.

SKILL Reading Maps
In what present-day state was the southernmost Dutch colony located?
Circle the name of the state.