

Viking Voyagers

Vikings were the first Europeans to land in the New World. They were pirates that originally came from Scandinavia. Scandinavia referred to the northern part of Europe and included the area that is today known as Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Vikings were both feared and fearless. They sailed the oceans looking for food and wealth. They were excellent sailors and used the stars instead of instruments to guide them on their journeys.

About A.D. 870, the Vikings, also known as Norsemen, sailed westward and discovered Iceland, an island west of Norway. They established a settlement, and over the years, those who remained in this settlement prospered and became farmers. They formed a democratic government and developed a beautiful and comprehensive literature that reveals the history of these people and their country.

About 100 years after that first Icelandic settlement, Eric the Red, a Viking leader, decided to sail west. He found land, and although much of it was covered with a glacier, he explored the land for three years and established a settlement. He called the land Greenland to encourage others to move to his settlement. He successfully led 500 people to his new settlement and the land he had discovered.

Eric the Red's son was named Leif Ericson and was sometimes called Leif the Lucky. He heard the story of another Viking, Bjarni Herjulfson, who had made a mistake while sailing to Greenland and passed it, but found another country with beautiful and heavy forests. Many people believe that he had seen what we now know as North America. Leif Ericson decided to go to these forests and get wood to build new ships. In 1001, Leif set sail to the west.

Eventually, Leif arrived in a land that not only had thick forests, but it also had an abundance of grapes. He named the land "Vinland." From the description of the land he found, scientists think that Leif landed in Newfoundland, which is now the easternmost province of Canada. He explored this new land and probably traveled southward to Nova Scotia and other parts of the coast that is now known as New England. A settlement was established in this new land, but did not last long. Several other Viking expeditions occurred at later dates.

Since the people of Iceland had little to do with those who lived in southern Europe, the discovery of this new land remained a secret from the rest of the world. In fact, exact information about Viking expeditions is scarce and unreliable even today. The problem is that the Vikings did not write their discoveries down, but rather told them to one another. The stories, called sagas, were passed down from generation to generation. Historians did not know if the stories were true or if they were just created in the imaginations of bragging sailors. Several years ago, however, scientists found evidence that there was a Viking settlement in Newfoundland that dated back several centuries. The excavation provides evidence for the Viking sagas that tell of Leif Ericson's voyage and the settlement that he established in the New World.



Christopher Columbus

Asians had crossed the Bering Strait and had been living in what we now call North America thousands of years before Columbus was born. The Vikings had explored and settled in parts of what is now Canada and the United States 500 years before Columbus's first voyage, yet most people give Christopher Columbus credit for discovering the "New World."

Christopher Columbus was an Italian navigator who was born in Genoa in 1451. As a young boy, he went to sea and gained a great deal of sailing experience before he decided to sail to Asia. He had read the famous travel book written by Marco Polo, which told of his exciting adventures in Asia during the thirteenth century, and like many Europeans, Columbus wanted to travel to Asia for spices, silk, gold, and other goods.

But Columbus had a different idea. He wanted to reach the Indies by a new route—the sea. In Columbus's time "the Indies" referred to India, Japan, and China. While most educated people of Columbus's time knew the earth was round, few believed that Asia could be reached by traveling west instead of east. Columbus, however, believed that it was possible to sail west to get to Asia. The fact that no one had ever traveled west to visit Asia did not bother Columbus. What he was mainly concerned about was the distance of the trip. Since no one had ever made the trip before, he did not know how long the voyage would take. He needed to know how much food, water, and other provisions he would need for the journey. He also needed money to finance his trip.

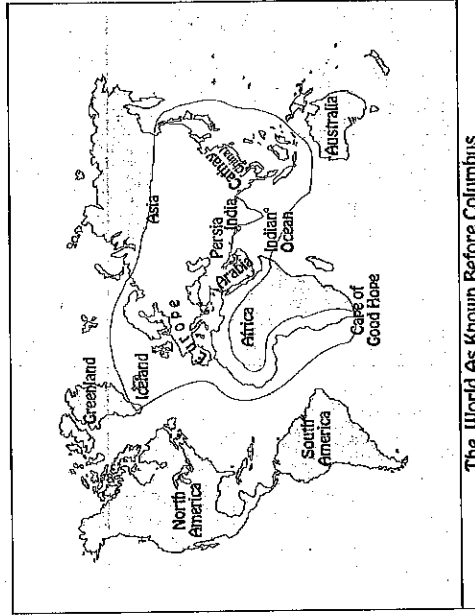
Columbus first asked King John II of Portugal to finance his trip. In return, Columbus promised to bring riches back to Portugal and to claim any new land he discovered for Portugal. The king refused to finance the voyage, so Columbus traveled to Spain to ask King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella for money. He made his request, but the King and Queen were concerned with other state matters and postponed a decision. After seven years, Columbus had given up and was ready to go to France to seek money for his trip, when Queen Isabella agreed to pay for his voyage.

Columbus provided one ship, and Spain provided two other ships. The ships were called the *Pinta*, the *Niña*, and the *Santa María*. Columbus and his crew left Palos, Spain, on August 3, 1492, and arrived in the Canary Islands 700 miles away about a week later. After preparing their ships for the voyage, they sailed to the west. They sighted land and went ashore on the morning of October 12, 1492. Most historians believe the land they sighted was an island in the Bahamas. Columbus named this island San Salvador, which means *Holy Savior*. Columbus thought he had reached the Indies, so he called the people he found living there "Indians."

Columbus then sailed to other islands that are now called the West Indies. He established a settlement on an island he named Hispaniola, which means *Spanish Land*. In January of 1493, he sailed back to Spain where he was praised for finding a new route to the East.

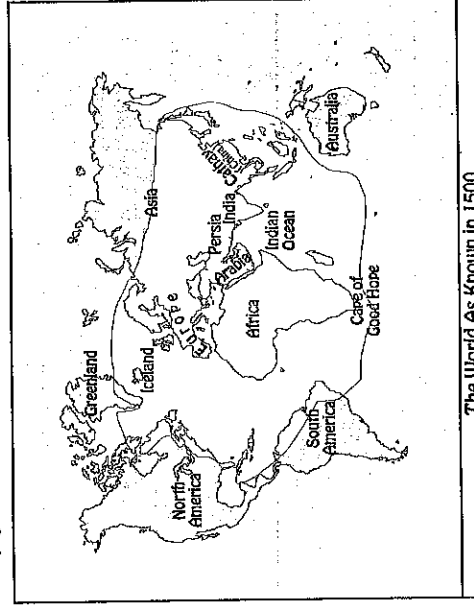
Columbus eventually made three other voyages trying to find India. Instead, he found what is now Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Trinidad, Haiti, Central America, and South America. Since he never brought back treasures or new trade, however, the King and Queen took back the honors they had originally bestowed on Columbus. He died in 1506 disgraced and poor.





The World As Known Before Columbus

Before Columbus made his famous voyage in 1492, only a small part of the earth had been explored. Vikings had been to Iceland and Greenland. India, Japan, and China had also been visited. Portuguese sailors had sailed down to Africa searching for India. Four years before Columbus made his first voyage, Bartholomeu Dias rounded the southern cape of Africa. The light area indicates the part of the world known before Columbus's voyage.



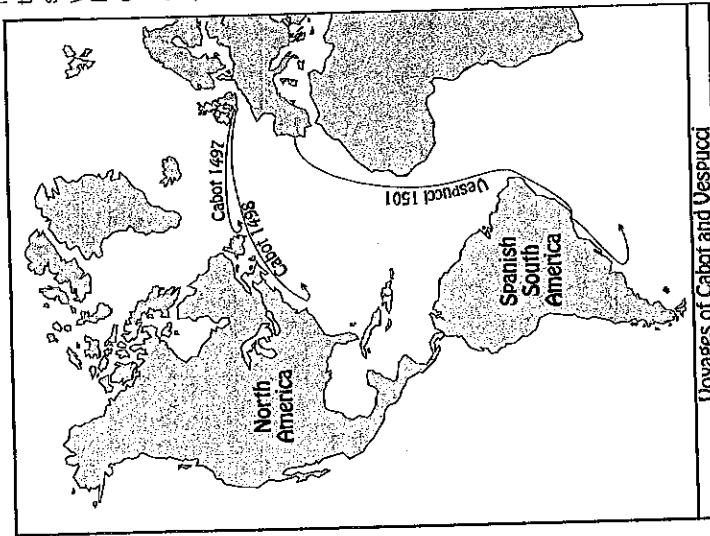
The World As Known in 1500

Just eight years after Columbus made his first voyage, explorers discovered the western shores of the Atlantic and visited what they would eventually learn was two new continents—now named North and South America.

Voyages of Cabot and Vespucci

In 1497, a year before Columbus made his third voyage and saw South America, another sailor from Genoa, Columbus' hometown, sailed to the new world. His name was John Cabot, and he was financed by English merchants who felt that they should compete with Spain and Portugal for newly-discovered lands. Cabot decided to cross the northern Atlantic so that he would not clash with the Spanish or Portuguese claims. It is believed that he was the first European since the Vikings to go ashore in North America. He named the land that he saw "New Found Land." He planted an English flag and claimed the land in the name of King Henry. The next year Cabot again sailed west across the Atlantic. This time he took his son Sebastian with him. Together with a fleet of several ships, Cabot, his son, and the crew explored the coast of North America. It should be pointed out that while they were exploring the coast of North America, they were still looking for Cathay, which is the ancient name for China. Like Columbus, Cabot's goal was to find a shorter route to the East. In the hold of his ship were goods the English merchants who financed Cabot's voyage hoped to trade. Obviously, he never reached Cathay, and when he returned to England, his sponsors and King Henry were upset that he had failed to trade their goods for the riches in Cathay. They refused to sponsor anymore of his voyages. In spite of their disappointment, England was to later claim all of the land of North America based on Cabot's discoveries.

Although two Italian sailors—Columbus and Cabot—had discovered the new world, it was not named after either one of them. It was named after Amerigo Vespucci, an Italian navigator and geographer who sailed to what is now South America in 1499. Vespucci was the first person to suggest that the lands discovered by Columbus, Cabot, and himself were not really part of Asia but part of a previously unknown continent. A German mapmaker published a description of Vespucci's voyages, along with maps plotting his journey. This mapmaker named the newly-discovered land "America," after Amerigo Vespucci. Originally the name America only referred to Brazil, since this is where Vespucci traveled on two of his voyages. Over time, however, the name referred to all of the western hemisphere.



Voyages of Cabot and Vespucci

Other Early Explorers

Other early explorers of this period did not discover new worlds but helped people understand the world better. During the fifteenth century, Portugal was the world leader in sea exploration, but it was the Italians who controlled the trade with the East. Goods such as silks, dyes, spices, and gems were brought overland by Arabs. They traded these goods with Italian merchants who resold them to other Europeans. It was an expensive way to trade and gave the Italians a monopoly on goods from the East. Other countries wanted to trade directly with the merchants from China, India, and the East Indies. That is why sailors such as Columbus were looking for sea routes to the East. A sea route would be cheaper and safer than traveling over land.

At about the same time that Columbus was trying to get money to finance his voyage westward in order to find a new route to the Indies, Bartholomeu Dias, a Portuguese sailor, sailed to the southern tip of Africa, also looking for new water routes to China and the Indies. He sailed around the tip of Africa but did not reach the East because his crew mutinied. Dias named the tip of Africa, "Stormy Cape," but King John of Portugal changed the name to the "Cape of Good Hope" because he felt that now Portugal had "good hope" of reaching India by an all-water route.

In 1497, before Columbus left on his third voyage, and the same year that Cabot reached the Newfoundland coast, Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese sailor, sailed around the tip of Africa trying to reach India. He followed Dias's route to the Cape of Good Hope, then continued his voyage along the eastern coast of Africa. He eventually located a route to India. By 1513, the Portuguese were regularly trading with China and Japan. Vasco da Gama's voyage was so important that most people forgot all about Columbus. Spurred by Portugal's success, England, France, Spain, and Holland began to send ships around the Cape of Good Hope and also trade with the East.

In spite of the accomplishments of Columbus, Cabot, Vespucci, Dias, and da Gama, no sailor had reached the Indies by sailing west. The person to accomplish this tremendous feat was a Portuguese navigator named Ferdinand Magellan. Magellan was hired by Spain, and in 1519, he set sail with five ships westward toward Brazil. He sailed southward along the coast of what is now known as South America. Magellan not only had to face uncharted seas, unknown dangers in unexplored lands, and a harsh winter, but his own crew also mutinied. The mutiny was crushed and Magellan continued. Eventually, he reached the southern tip of South America and found a passage through the land. A passage or channel of water that joins two larger bodies of water is called a **strait**. This passage is now called the Strait of Magellan. When he passed through the strait, he reached another ocean. This was the same ocean that Balboa had seen seven years before when he was exploring Central America. The ocean seemed calm and peaceful compared to the Atlantic Ocean, so Magellan named it the "Pacific Ocean."

Magellan continued. His crew was sick and hungry, but eventually he reached the Philippines, where he was killed in a fight with the natives. Only one ship out of the five that began, and only 18 sailors of the original 300, completed the journey and returned to Spain.

Magellan's trip was the most extraordinary achievement in the history of navigation and yielded the following information:

- It proved the earth was a sphere and the East could be reached by sailing westward.
- The earth was larger than people thought.
- The Pacific was the largest body of water in the world.
- There was more water on earth than land.
- The lands discovered by Columbus, Cabot, and others were not islands but continents.
- There were no passages south through the new continents. Future explorers would need to explore northward for a passage.

Spanish Conquistadors

After Columbus made his discoveries known in Europe, several explorers sailing under the Spanish flag came to the New World in search of riches. They were soldiers and were called **conquistadors**, which means "conqueror."

Juan Ponce de Leon. In 1513, a Spanish nobleman named Juan Ponce de Leon heard of a "Fountain of Youth" that was supposed to exist in the new world. He believed that if he found this wonderful fountain and were to bathe in it, he would become young again. He did not find the fountain but instead discovered Florida. He was killed by Native Americans some years later.

Hernando Cortés. Hernando Cortés left Cuba in 1519 and sailed to Mexico. He conquered the Aztec Indians and killed their leader, Montezuma. He robbed the Aztecs of gold, silver, and jewels.

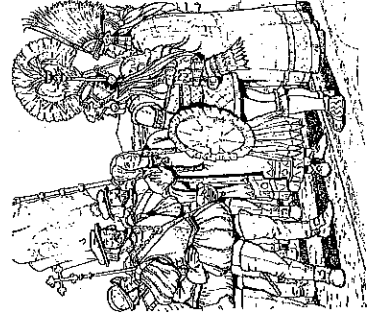
Francisco Pizarro. When the Spanish were conquering Mexico, they heard stories of vast wealth to the south in what is now Peru. Eager to acquire gold, in 1531, Francisco Pizarro assembled about 200 men and set out to find their fortune. After a dangerous journey, they arrived in Peru, overwhelmed the natives, and robbed them of their valuables. He then claimed Peru as part of the Spanish empire.

Francisco de Coronado. In 1540, Coronado set out to find Cibola, the Seven Cities of Gold. It was said that gold and silver in Cibola was so plentiful, that it was used for everyday items, such as tools and utensils. Coronado spent two years looking for this celebrated city. He eventually found it, but it was just a poor Indian town. He returned to Mexico City with only 100 of the original 300 men who began the journey.

Panfilo de Narvaez and Cabeza de Vaca. In 1528, Narvaez mounted an expedition to find riches in the new world, just as Cortés and Pizarro had done. He landed in Florida and explored the southwest. They fought hostile natives, wild animals, and disease, and struggled through jungles. Narvaez was drowned near what is now Galveston, Texas. The survivors continued the exploration. One was named Cabeza de Vaca. After eight years, only four men of the original 300 who began the search were still alive.

Hernando de Soto. Encouraged by the success of Cortés and Pizarro, one of Pizarro's soldiers, Hernando de Soto, decided to make his fortune farther north, in what is now the United States. In 1539, he and his small army landed on the coast of Florida, but he found nothing but jungles, swamps, and poor Indian villages. He continued his journey farther inland and discovered the Mississippi River. He died of fever in 1541, and his men dropped his body into the Mississippi River to hide it from the Indians. Fewer than half of his 600 men returned safely.

Vasco Nuñez de Balboa. In 1513, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa arrived at the Isthmus of Panama as a stowaway. The natives told him of another sea, which he set out to discover. He pushed his party through 45 miles of swamp, forest, and jungles until he found an ocean he called the "South Sea." He claimed the sea in the name of the king of Spain. Seven years later, when Magellan was on his voyage around the world, he also found the same body of water. The ocean was so calm, he named it the "Pacific Ocean."



French Explorers

At the time Spanish explorers were exploring the southern parts of North America and parts of Central and South America, France also sent explorers to North America. However, their expeditions were sent to the northeast. There were fewer French expeditions, because France was entangled in a number of wars.

Two years after the successful voyage around the world by the crew of Magellan, the king of France decided his country should also become involved in exploring the new world. He sent Giovanni da Verrazano, an Italian sailor, on an expedition to find a northwest passage to the East Indies. In March 1524, Verrazano sighted the coast of what is now North Carolina. He continued north and entered New York Bay and anchored at what is now Newport, Rhode Island. He then sailed to Newfoundland, and when his provisions began to run low, he returned to France.

Since Verrazano had failed to find a northern route to the East, the king sent Jacques Cartier in 1534. While sailing along the east coast of North America, he discovered the St. Lawrence River and explored it. Cartier named the country he had discovered "New France." This voyage gave France a claim to part of North America. The New France Cartier had discovered is now known as Canada.

About 70 years later, in 1608, Samuel de Champlain, a French explorer and fur trader, came to New France and established a fort and built a settlement called Quebec. Champlain explored the Great Lakes as he was searching for a route to China. He also discovered Lake Champlain. The maps Champlain drew, along with his record of events, made this area of the world known to Europe. Champlain lived with the Indians, traded with them, and became their friend.

Two other French explorers, Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet had very different backgrounds. Father Marquette was a French priest sent to America to be a missionary among the Indians. Louis Joliet, born in Quebec, Canada, went to Europe to study, and then returned to Canada to search for copper. He was a trader, a trapper, and a mapmaker. Father Marquette learned from the Indians of a great river that started in the north and flowed south to the sea. This was the Mississippi River that the Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto had discovered. In 1673, Louis Joliet was chosen to explore this river. Father Marquette was picked as the chaplain of the expedition. Marquette and Joliet set out from Lake Michigan, went up the Fox River, traveled over land to the Wisconsin River, and finally made it to the Mississippi. They sailed down the Mississippi as far as Arkansas. They discovered that the Mississippi flowed into the Gulf of Mexico and not the Pacific.

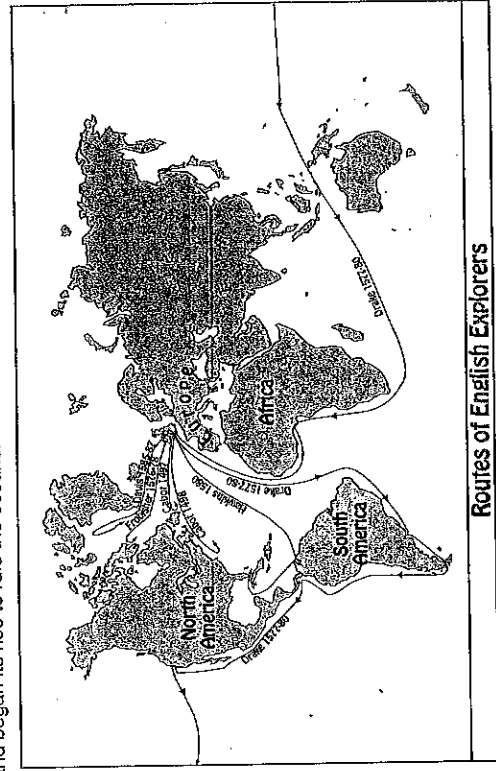
Perhaps the greatest French explorer was Robert de La Salle. La Salle was inspired by Marquette's expedition down the Mississippi. He traveled down the Mississippi River, discovered the Ohio River, and eventually reached the mouth of the Mississippi in 1682. By doing so, he was able to claim the entire Mississippi valley for France. He named this newly-claimed land "Louisiana" in honor of the French King, Louis XIV.

English Explorers

While John Cabot claimed part of North America for England in 1497, the English did not follow up on the claim for many years. About 40 years later, Cartier had claimed for France some of the same land Cabot had claimed. At the end of the sixteenth century, England renewed her interest in the New World. Magellan had succeeded in reaching the Indies by sailing southwest, but the trip was too long. English explorers continued to search for a shorter "northwest passage" to the Indies. From 1576 to 1616, English sailors such as Martin Frobisher, John Davis, Henry Hudson, and William Baffin searched the north for a passage to the Indies. None of these expeditions were successful.

During this same period, Queen Elizabeth I urged some of her sea captains to challenge Spain's land claims and to break the trade monopoly Spain had developed. These English captains built up the English navy so that it was strong enough to challenge Spain's navy. At every opportunity, these English sailors intercepted Spanish ships laden with treasure from the New World and robbed them. Perhaps the most famous English captain at this time was Francis Drake. He plundered Spanish ships as he sailed around the world. The route he followed was similar to the one Magellan had charted about 60 years before. Queen Elizabeth was so impressed with Drake's accomplishments that she knighted him on the deck of his ship when he arrived back in England in 1580.

The Spanish were angry that their ships and ports were being looted by the English. So they built up their navy, and eight years after Drake's trip around the world, they sent their fleet into the English Channel. Their fleet was called the Armada, and they intended to challenge the English navy. The Spanish ships were old, large, and clumsy. The English ships were smaller, lighter, and more easily maneuvered. The Spanish Armada proved no match for the faster, smaller English ships. During the battle, a storm arose, which further hindered the Spanish. The Armada fled, and England began its rise to rule the oceans.



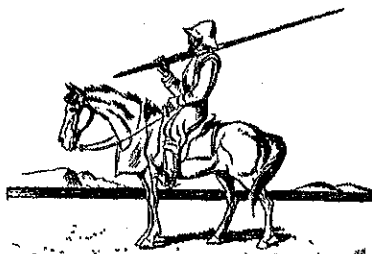
Routes of English Explorers

Name: _____ Date: _____

Spanish Conquistadors Quiz

Fill in the blank with the correct answer.

1. Ponce de Leon was looking for: _____
2. The first European to see the Pacific Ocean was: _____
3. Spanish explorers were called: _____
4. Cortés conquered the civilization called the: _____
5. Cortés conquered the country we now call: _____
6. The Spanish were mainly interested in finding: _____
7. Pizarro conquered the country we now call: _____
8. Ponce de Leon explored the area that is now the state of: _____
9. The Aztec leader that Cortés killed was: _____
10. What is the name of the country that Pizarro claimed for Spain? _____
11. Where did Narvaez land when he explored the southwest? _____
12. Narvaez was drowned near the city that is now known as: _____
13. One survivor of Narvaez' party was named: _____
14. How many survivors were there of Narvaez' party? _____
15. Coronado set out to find the Seven Cities of: _____
16. These Seven Cities were called: _____
17. Instead of the Seven Cities, Coronado found: _____
18. De Soto discovered a river we now call the: _____
19. When de Soto died, his men dropped his body into the: _____
20. De Soto's men wanted to hide his body from the: _____
21. Balboa discovered an ocean he called the: _____
22. This ocean was later named: _____
23. The explorer who renamed the ocean Balboa discovered was: _____
24. Balboa learned of the sea from the: _____
25. Balboa arrived at the Isthmus of Pañama as a: _____
26. *Conquistadors* means: _____
27. How many miles did Balboa travel before he reached the ocean? _____
28. Ponce de Leon was a Spanish: _____



Name: _____

Date: _____

Famous Explorers

Based on the accomplishment shown on the right of the chart, fill-in the appropriate explorer, country, date, and purpose of the voyage. In the column "country," be sure you list the country sponsoring the voyage, not the home country of the captain. Use the explorers listed at the bottom of the page.

EXPLORER	COUNTRY	DATE	PURPOSE	ACCOMPLISHMENT
				Sailed to the southern tip of Africa
				Reached America by sailing west from Europe
				Laid the basis for British claim to North America
				First European to reach India by the sea route
				The explorer after whom the New World was named
				Discovered the Pacific Ocean
				First to circumnavigate the globe
				Conqueror of the Aztecs and Mexico
				Laid basis for French claims in North America
				Conquered Peru
				Discovered and explored the St. Lawrence River
				Discovered the Mississippi River
				Explored the southwestern part of the United States
				Founded Quebec; called the Father of New France
				Explored the Hudson River
				Discovered the Ohio River; explored the Mississippi

Use these names:

- | | | | | | |
|---------|-------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Balboa | Cabot | Champlain | Coronado | Cortés | Da Gama |
| De Soto | Dias | La Salle | Pizarro | Verrazano | Vespucci |
| | | Magellan | | | |