



# THE AGE OF EXPLORATION KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER



## Summary

**The Age of Exploration** (often referred to as the Age of Discovery) took place between the **early 1400s** and the **mid 1600s**.

It was a time in which **seafarers from Europe began to explore other areas of the world**. The main purposes of their expeditions were to find new routes and goods to trade.

The Age of Exploration was possible because people had developed their skills of **shipbuilding** and **navigation, and cartography**. They could now explore far-flung places for the first time!

The main European countries involved were **Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and England**, setting foot in places like the Americas and Australia.

**A painting of Christopher Columbus' *Santa Maria* boat, which sank near Haiti.**



## Key People



### Christopher Columbus (1451-1506)

-Christopher Columbus was an Italian explorer. He is famous for his voyages across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas. He is often thought of as the first person to reach North America, but this is in fact false. He was one of the first Europeans to reach many places in the Caribbean (1492-96), and also central and south America (1498-1500).  
-At the time of Columbus, many people believed that the world was flat. Columbus aimed to prove that the world was round. He knew that if he sailed west for long enough, he would find new routes to Asia and the 'spice islands.' Of course, he was correct in a way, but he underestimated the size of the Earth!  
-He encountered a number of difficulties on his travels. For example, his Santa Maria hit rocks and sank.



### Vasco de Gama (1460s-1524)

-Vasco de Gama was a Portuguese explorer. He was the first European to visit India by sea. Before da Gama, no explorer had ever sailed further than South Africa.  
-He went around the Cape of Good Hope (at the bottom of South Africa) in order to reach southern Asia. This opened an important trade route between Europe and Asia.  
-He had been commissioned to explore this by the King of Portugal, who realised he could become rich by establishing a new trade route between Portugal and Southern Asia.  
-De Gama visited India 3 times in total. Whilst his discoveries helped to improve our understanding of the world, de Gama also did some bad things. For example, he looted many of the places that he visited.



### Abel Tasman (1603-1659)

-Abel Tasman was a Dutch seafarer, explorer and merchant. In his voyages of 1642 and 1644, he was the first European to discover New Zealand and Tasmania.  
-He also made the first known European sightings of large parts of Australia.  
-Several places have been named after him, including Tasmania (a large island off Australia), the Tasman Peninsula, Tasman Island and the Tasman Sea.  
-His employers thought his discoveries were a 'disappointment', as he didn't find any trade routes!

## Answers to Important Questions

### How did the Age of Exploration happen?



-A number of European nations became able to build better ships. They were stronger, larger, and could travel further. They could also withstand high seas and rough waves.  
-Carvel construction techniques were used to make ships larger, so that they could carry more cargo, needed for longer journeys. Navigation also improved. People began to use the magnetic compass. Cartography (making maps) also became more accurate. Europeans wanted to explore mainly to find better routes for trade. There was a lot of demand for the spices and golds that could be found in Asia and Africa.

### Where did they visit?



-In the 1400s, the Age of Exploration was mainly led by four countries: Portugal, Spain, England and France. Whilst all of the countries influence was widespread, in general Portugal and Spain explored much of South America, whilst France and England focused more on North America. All of the countries explored Asia.

### How did the explorers treat the native people?



-Many explorers at the time behaved in ways that we today would deem inappropriate. The behaviour of the explorers towards indigenous peoples was often extremely cruel.  
-Europeans often thought of the native people as 'savages' who did not deserve to be treated like people. As a result, they felt that they had a right to rule over them.  
-In some cases, the European explorers robbed and destroyed places they visited. Some even killed natives.  
-They started imperialism (rich countries ruled poorer countries) and built colonies (their own settlements).

## Key Vocabulary

Age

Exploration

Discovery

Voyage

Carvel construction

Cargo

Trade

Seafaring

Navigation

Shipbuilding

Cartography

Colony

Imperialism

Native

Indigenous

## Top 10 Facts!

- Exploring was dangerous! Many ships sank, and many explorers never returned.
- The Age of Exploration has had a huge, lasting influence on many cultures.
- For example, almost all of the countries in South America still have either Spanish or Portuguese as their first language.
- Many trips were funded by European royalty.
- Before the Age of Exploration, most people thought that the world was flat.
- At the time, Southeast Asia and India was known as the 'East Indies.'
- The Arctic and the Antarctic also began to be discovered at this time.
- However, it wasn't until 1906 that Roald Amundsen first reached the South Pole!
- European became rich from the goods that they found in other countries.
- Eventually, Great Britain began to dominate all other nations. They built the British Empire.

## Timeline of The Age of Exploration

1415: Portugal begins exploring northern and western Africa.

1492: Columbus lands in the Caribbean.

1493-1497: Portugal and Spain begin dividing South America between themselves.

1498: Vasco de Gama reaches India by rounding Africa.

1507: A German mapmaker names the New World 'America.'

1519: Hernan Cortes lands in South America and defeats the Aztecs.

1522: The Vittoria completes a circumnavigation (circle) around the Earth. The leader, Ferdinand Magellan, does not survive the trip.

1600-1602: European nation set up companies to take control of Asian spices.

1642-1644: Abel Tasman discovers New Zealand and Tasmania.