

EXPLORERS—A TIMELINE

1002—LEIF ERICSON

Reason for Exploration: He wanted to find wood for Viking settlements in Greenland.

Accomplishment: He became the first European to set foot on the North American continent.

1271—MARCO POLO

Reason for Exploration: He wanted to travel to China to get spices, jewels, perfumes, and silks to take back to Italy.

Accomplishment: After 17 years in China, he returned to Italy and wrote of his exploits. His book inspired future explorers.

1410–1460—PRINCE HENRY THE NAVIGATOR

Reason for Exploration: He was fascinated by the sea and wanted his fleet to find an all-water route between Portugal and Asia.

Accomplishment: He established a school of navigation and opened an observatory and shipyard.

1488—BARTHOLOMEU DIAS

Reason for Exploration: He wanted to find an all-water route to Asia by heading around Africa.

Accomplishment: He made it as far as the southern tip of Africa.

1492–1504—CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

Reason for Exploration: He wanted to head west to find an all-water route to Asia.

Accomplishment: He opened up the Western Hemisphere to Europe.

1497—JOHN CABOT

Reasons for Exploration: He wanted to find an all-water route to Asia by traveling north and west.

Accomplishment: He explored the waters off Canada, but thought he was in Asia. He discovered the Grand Banks, a rich fishing area.

1498—VASCO DA GAMA

Reason for Exploration: He wanted to find an all-water route to Asia by heading around Africa.

Accomplishment: He became the first person to find an all-water route around Africa to Asia.

1507—AMERIGO VESPUCCI

Reason for Exploration: He was inspired by the stories of Columbus.

Accomplishment: He realized that Columbus had discovered a world unknown to Europeans. America was named after Vespucci.

1513—JUAN PONCE DE LEÓN

Reasons for Exploration: He was looking for gold and the "fountain of youth."

Accomplishment: He claimed Florida for Spain.

1513—VASCO NÚÑEZ DE BALBOA

Reason for Exploration: He wanted to find riches and a way across America.

Accomplishment: He was the first European to reach the Pacific Ocean.

1519—HERNANDO CORTÉS

Reason for Exploration: He wanted to conquer the Aztecs for their gold and silver.

Accomplishment: He conquered the Aztecs, stole their gold and silver, and claimed their land for Spain.

1519–1522—FERDINAND MAGELLAN

Reason for Exploration: He wanted to reach the Indies by sailing west.

Accomplishment: Though he was killed, his crew reached the Indies and sailed around the world.

1524—GIOVANNI DA VERRAZANO

Reason for Exploration: He wanted to find a Northwest Passage to Asia.

Accomplishment: He explored the coast of North America from what is now the state of North Carolina up to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in Canada.

1531—FRANCISCO PIZARRO

Reason for Exploration: He wanted to conquer the Incas and take all of their gold and silver.

Accomplishment: He conquered the Incas, took their riches, and claimed their land for Spain.

1534—JACQUES CARTIER

Reason for Exploration: He wanted to find a Northwest Passage to Asia.

Accomplishment: He discovered the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the St. Lawrence River and claimed the area for France.

1539—HERNANDO DE SOTO

Reason for Exploration: He was looking for the fabled Seven Cities of Gold.

Accomplishment: He claimed much of the southeastern part of today's United States for Spain.

1540—FRANCISCO CORONADO

Reason for Exploration: He was looking for the fabled Seven Cities of Gold.

Accomplishment: He claimed much of the southwestern part of today's United States for Spain.