

Follow-up Discussion

- Bartolomeu Dias sailed around the tip of Africa ten years before Vasco da Gama but turned back before reaching India. Encourage students to imagine what it felt like to be a sailor on a long voyage during the 15th century. Brainstorm with them reasons that could have made da Gama successful where Dias was not.
- Consider the Portuguese strategy of pardoning prisoners condemned to death in order to send them on explorations. Do students feel this policy was immoral or unjust? Ask students to argue either for or against this practice.
- When they erected a pillar and cross on the coast of Africa, da Gama's crew was following a Portuguese practice of marking lands they had discovered. Discuss this practice with students from the perspective of the Africans already living there. What reasons might Africans have had for taking down the pillars?

Follow-up Activities

- Divide students into small groups to represent the interests of three groups involved in the spice trade (i.e., the Portuguese, Arab traders and the Indians). Ask students to discuss the issues from these perspectives and to decide on the best strategies for their group. Students can then role-play a negotiation over trading rights.
- Have students research Vasco da Gama's second and third voyages, during which he committed numerous atrocities against Muslims and Indians. How do these acts change their perception of da Gama or his influence on history? Ask students to write obituaries for da Gama in which they reflect on his complex legacy.
- Have students write an alternative history of what might have occurred if da Gama had completed his voyage to the Spice Islands before Christopher Columbus tried to reach Asia by sailing west. Would Spain still have supported Columbus' voyage? How would the world today be different if the "New World" had not been discovered then?
- Ask students to imagine the perspective of the African man whose capture was described in the crew member's journal. Have them rewrite this encounter from the prisoner's perspective.
- Until James Lind discovered a treatment for scurvy in the mid-18th century, this illness killed numerous passengers and sailors on long-distance voyages. Have students research the history of scurvy and the discovery of vitamins. What impact did the discovery of vitamin C have on sea travel? Where are different vitamins found? What other ailments are caused by vitamin deficiencies?

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

- www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/eurvoya/portuguese.html
University of Calgary's "European Voyages of Exploration" site contains facts about Portugal and its explorers with an emphasis on the contributions of Prince Henry.
- www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1497degama.html
Translation of the journal kept by one of Vasco da Gama's crew members about their voyage to India.
- www.mariner.org/age/menu.html
This curriculum guide for the Mariner's Museum features Portuguese explorers and 15th century ships and navigational systems.
- www.ruf.rice.edu/~feegi/
Rice University's "Latitude" site explores the development of navigational technology and exploration during the 15th and 16th centuries.

Suggested Print Resources

- Aaseng, Nathan. *You Are the Explorer*. Oliver Press, Minneapolis, MN; 2000.
- Goodman, Joan. *A Long and Uncertain Journey: The 27,000 Mile Voyage of Vasco da Gama*. Mikaya Press, New York, NY; 2001. Appropriate for younger readers.
- De Camões, Luís Vaz, Landeg White, translator. *The Lusíads*. Oxford University Press, New York, NY; 1997. A classic of Portuguese literature, this 16th-century epic poem centers on the voyages of Vasco da Gama.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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Teacher's Guides Included
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The Explorations of Vasco da Gama

Grades 7–12

This guide is a supplement designed for teachers to use when presenting the video *The Explorations of Vasco da Gama*.

Before Viewing: Give students an introduction to the topic by relaying aspects of the historical overview to them. Select pre-viewing discussion questions and vocabulary to provide a focus for students when they view the program.

After Viewing: Review the program and vocabulary, and use the follow-up questions and activities to inspire continued discussion. Encourage students to research the topic further with the Internet and print resources provided.



Historical Overview

During the late 15th century, European exploration centered on the quest to find a sailing route to the Spice Islands in order to break the Venetian and Arab monopoly on spices and other luxuries from India and the Far East. The king of Portugal, a small but commercially powerful nation, sent a series of explorers along the African coast seeking a viable trading route. In 1498, Vasco da Gama and his crew achieved this goal, becoming the first Europeans to reach India by sea. Along their journey, they faced challenges ranging from unfavorable currents and poor nutrition to hostility from Arab traders long established in the area. Da Gama's negotiations with Zamorin, king of Calicut, opened the door for European commercial and colonial expansion into Asia and marked the beginning of cultural and economic globalization. During two later voyages to India, Vasco da Gama displayed great ruthlessness and cruelty towards any who opposed his goals. His travels inaugurated a new relationship between the East and the West.

Time Line

c.1469 — Vasco da Gama is born in Sines, Portugal.

1487 — Bartolomeu Dias rounds the Cape of Good Hope, discovering the southern tip of Africa. Dissent among his crew forces him to turn back before reaching Asia.

1494 — Spain and Portugal sign the Treaty of Tordesillas, dividing possession of all newly discovered lands between them.

1497 — Vasco da Gama and his fleet leave Lisbon. Later that year, da Gama and his crew sight the west coast of Africa.

1498 — Da Gama and his crew arrive at Calicut, India.

1499 — Vasco da Gama returns to Lisbon, Portugal.

1500 — Pedro Álvares Cabral departs for India, discovering Brazil on the voyage.

1502 — Vasco da Gama makes his second trip to India.

1524 — Vasco da Gama, now Viceroy of India, makes his third and final voyage. On December 24, da Gama dies in India.

Vocabulary

Spice Islands — Islands in the Indian Ocean which were the sources of mace, nutmeg, cloves, and pepper. The area known as the Spice Islands today is part of Indonesia.

Silk Route — A network of trade routes connecting Asia and Europe. Also known as the Silk Road.

monopoly — An economic situation in which only one interest, be it an individual, organization or country, has a controlling grasp on the financial operations of a commercial market.

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flagship — The ship carrying the commander of a fleet and thus flying his flag.

extant — Still existing; not destroyed or lost.

nau — Large, heavy Portuguese ship used in the 15th century primarily for transporting goods via ocean routes.

reconnaissance — Exploration of an area in order to gather information about an enemy or potential enemy.

scurvy — A disease caused by lack of vitamin C. Scurvy was formerly common among sailors who had no access to fresh foods.

estuary — The wide mouth of a river where it meets the sea, mixing fresh and salt water.

astrolabe — A navigational tool that was invented by Arab scientists and used by sailors during the 16th century. The astrolabe was used to determine latitude.

latitude — Imaginary lines around the Earth that run in an east-west direction. Together with lines of longitude, these lines are used to determine the location of places on the Earth.

longitude — Imaginary lines around the Earth that run in a north-south direction. Together with lines of latitude, these lines are used to determine the location of places on the Earth.

demarcation — A boundary line dividing two areas.

helmsman — The person who steers a ship.

quadrant — A navigational tool for determining latitude that was widely used in the 15th century. The quadrant tended to be less accurate than the astrolabe.

animosity — Strong dislike or hostility.

dhows — Highly maneuverable ships used for centuries by Arab traders on the Indian Ocean. Their hulls were made of planks stitched together with fibers or cord, and they used triangular or “lanteen” sails.

Ottoman Empire — An empire formed by Turkish tribes in the 13th century that lasted until 1918.

pilot — The person qualified to guide a ship through dangerous waters.

monsoon — Seasonal strong winds which blow across the Indian Ocean and bring heavy rains.

globalization — Interdependence on a worldwide scale. This term refers to the interconnectedness of people around the globe and to our ever-increasing economic, technological and cultural interdependency.

Occident — The Western hemisphere. Often used in opposition to the Eastern Hemisphere, or Orient.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Discuss the Age of Exploration and encourage students to imagine what motivated sailors to make such trips into the unknown. What risks did explorers face? What were their possible rewards? What characteristics did successful explorers share?
- The arrival of the European Vasco da Gama in India can be seen as marking the beginning of present-day globalization. Ask students to define the term “globalization” and discuss the positive and negative effects of being part of a global community. Who benefits and how? Are there people for whom globalization has harmful consequences? What goods or services are available to students because of globalization?
- Prior to Vasco da Gama's first voyage, Arab merchants held a monopoly on trade in the Indian Ocean. Prompt students to imagine themselves first as established traders and to describe how they might react towards the newly-arrived Europeans. Then ask students to put themselves in the place of the Portuguese and discuss what issues the explorers might have faced as newcomers.
- During the 15th century, governments treated maps as secret documents. Discuss why this was the case. Ask students to consider what documents present-day governments or companies treat as secret and why.

Focus Questions

1. Why did governments keep their maps secret during the 15th century?
2. Why did the Portuguese want to find a route to the Spice Islands?
3. What important explorations preceded da Gama's voyage?
4. Describe the kind of ship which da Gama sailed.
5. What did the sailors eat on this journey?
6. How do we know the details of da Gama's expedition?
7. What role did the currents play in exploration?
8. Why do some experts believe that the Portuguese had already discovered Brazil in 1497, when da Gama sailed?
9. When the fleet landed in Africa, how did they attempt to find out if this was the land of spices they sought?
10. Why were the Arabs unhappy about the Portuguese arrival in India?
11. How was da Gama received in Calicut?
12. Why was the return voyage so difficult?
13. What impact did da Gama's voyage have on Europe?