

### Follow-up Activities

- The *conquistadors* were true adventurers, possessing traits such as fearlessness, courage and audacity. Have students develop a “help wanted” advertisement to place in a fictional Madrid newspaper of the 16th century that clearly describes the suitable candidate for this job with the necessary background and skills.
- Share selections from the original writings of Cabeza de Vaca with your class (see [www.floridahistory.com/cab-text.html](http://www.floridahistory.com/cab-text.html)). Based upon the adventures related in this primary source, encourage your students to develop and perform history skits.
- Have students trace de Soto's travel route from Florida to Mexico using present-day sites and roads (see [www.floridahistory.com/inset69.html](http://www.floridahistory.com/inset69.html)). The class can then develop a general wall map of where de Soto traveled and the places that he explored along the way. Students can also write to the chambers of commerce in these present-day areas to learn more about them.
- In addition to being ruthless conquerors, the *conquistadors* were also strong leaders. As a class research project, students can investigate the leadership qualities and challenges of many Spanish explorers. After sharing their information with the class, students can then vote for the most effective leader and the leader who had the most difficulty achieving his goals.
- In 1519, Balboa was executed for rebellion, treason and other transgressions. Hold a mock trial in your classroom in order to charge Balboa with these crimes and render a verdict based upon students' research of the proceedings of the original trial.

### Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

• [www.floridahistory.com/](http://www.floridahistory.com/)

This “Spanish Exploration and Conquest of Native America” web site contains information about de Soto, Cabeza de Vaca, Coronado and their journeys, in addition to presenting the Native American perspective on Spanish exploration.

• [www.english.swt.edu/CSS/Vacaindex.HTML](http://www.english.swt.edu/CSS/Vacaindex.HTML)

The “Windows to the Unknown: Cabeza de Vaca's Journey to the Southwest” site provides information based on primary source documents and artifacts about this Spanish explorer and his expedition. Provides history and background on Cabeza de Vaca, pictures of artifacts from the time period and articles about his expedition.

• [www.artifacts.org/conquest.htm](http://www.artifacts.org/conquest.htm)

This site entitled “The Age of Spanish Exploration, Conquest and Early Colonization” presents information and artifacts from Spain's exploration in the New World.

### Suggested Print Resources

- Brown, Virginia Pounds. *Cochula's Journey*. Black Belt Press, Montgomery, AL; 1996. This story is a fictional recollection of a Native American girl who is kidnapped by Hernando de Soto and taken along on his famous expedition through the Southwest.
- Cabeza de Vaca, Álvar Núñez. *The Account: Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's Relacion*. Arte Publico Press, Houston, TX; 1993.
- Gaines, Ann. *Hernando de Soto and the Spanish Search for Gold in World History*. Enslow Publishing, Berkeley Heights, NJ; 2002.
- Harmon, Dan E. *Juan Ponce De León and the Search for the Fountain of Youth*. Chelsea House Publishers, Philadelphia, PA; 2000.
- Millar, Heather. *Spain in the Age of Exploration*. Benchmark Books, New York, NY; 1999.
- Wilson, Leonore. *The Spanish Exploration of the Southwest*. Mason Crest, Philadelphia, PA; 2003.

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## SPANISH EXPLORERS

Grades 5–8

This guide is a supplement designed for teachers to use when presenting programs in the video series *Explorers of the World*.

**Before Viewing:** Give students an introduction to the program 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.

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## Historical Overview

During the 1500s, Spain engaged in a competition with its neighbor, Portugal, for a shorter and safer route to the East and all its treasures. Spain sent explorers westward across the Atlantic Ocean in search of unhindered access to spices, precious metals, silks and other valuable commercial products, avoiding all middlemen in the process.

The success of Spanish exploration was due mainly to the *conquistadors*, daring and sometimes ruthless adventurers who explored and conquered the New World in search of riches and power. Men like Vasco Núñez de Balboa, who claimed the Pacific Ocean for Spain, and Juan Ponce de León, who discovered Florida, exemplified the determination exhibited by the *conquistadors*. Other Spanish explorers and conquerors, including Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Hernando de Soto and Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, blazed trails across the southwestern part of the United States, demonstrating tenacity and resolve as they claimed lands for Spain.

Through the efforts of these men, Spain not only became a major European sea power, its explorers also conquered lands on two continents and established colonies where gold and silver were mined to support the nation's wealth. This increase in Spanish wealth affected the financial growth of Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, and was a principal but not sole cause of the religious, commercial and industrial revolutions that would change Europe over the next 300 years. Despite the influence of its exploration, Spain never found a shorter sea route to the East and its wealth did not permanently enrich its people or economy.

## Time Line

**1513** — Vasco Núñez de Balboa sights the Pacific Ocean and claims it for Spain.

**1513** — Juan Ponce de León lands in Florida.

**1516** — Ponce de León makes landfall at Yucatán.

**1519** — Balboa executed in Panama.

**1528** — Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca begins trek across southeastern United States.

**1536** — Cabeza de Vaca's party reaches Mexico City.

**1539** — Hernando de Soto lands in Florida.

**1539** — Francisco Vázquez de Coronado leaves in search of the Seven Golden Cities of Cibola.

**c.1540** — Coronado's party reaches the Grand Canyon.

**1541** — De Soto's party discovers and crosses the Mississippi River.

**1543** — De Soto's party reaches Mexico.

## Vocabulary

**conquistadors** — From the Spanish word for “conquerors,” this term refers to the Spanish explorers who were responsible for the European conquest of the New World, especially of Mexico and Peru, particularly in the 16th century. Mostly commoners in their homeland, they sought fame and fortune in the New World. Overall, the *conquistadors* were considered to be a group of fierce and ruthless fighters.

**exploration** — The process of investigating in search of a goal, such as wealth, information or colonization.

**terra incognita** — From the Latin word for “unknown land,” this term was used by geographers to indicate those areas of the Earth that were unknown before the Age of Exploration.

**plantations** — Estates established for farming and agriculture and usually worked by slave labor. During the 16th century, the Spanish established plantations on the islands of the West Indies to produce sugar, which became a significant cash crop.

**farce** — A ridiculous imitation or show.

**Fountain of Youth** — A mythical spring from which people could drink and never grow old, as described in an old Native American tale.

**Gulf Stream** — A warm ocean current that runs along the North American coast in a northeast direction across the North Atlantic Ocean.

**Yucatán** — A state in the northern Yucatán Peninsula in southeastern Mexico. Ponce de León reached Yucatán in 1516.

**Seven Golden Cities of Cibola** — Legendary cities made of gold that were sought by the Spanish *conquistadors* during the 16th century.

**pueblo** — The term *pueblo* comes from the Spanish word for “town.” Pueblos were dwellings built by Native Americans in the southwestern part of the United States. These homes were often multistoried and their walls were made of a mix of stone, clay and sand.

## Pre-viewing Discussion

- Many of the *conquistadors* were known as cruel and ruthless conquerors. How might these character traits have aided these explorers in their travels? How could they have been hindered by their harsh nature?
- Many Spanish explorers in the 16th century like Ponce de León discovered places rather than riches. Have students discuss the value of discovering and claiming land versus precious metals or spices. Which would be more lucrative and beneficial for a nation immediately? Over time?
- All explorers have certain needs that must be met during an exploration. Have students develop a list of needs common to explorers such as food, clothing, modes of transportation and navigational tools. Then compare how Spanish explorers in the 16th century and modern-day explorers might meet these needs.

## Focus Questions

1. Which nation was Spain's greatest European rival for exploration and the search for riches?
2. What were the Spanish *conquistadors*' goals for exploration?
3. What did Balboa's discovery mean to the Spanish in terms of their dreams of finding a short water route to the East?
4. Who was the Spanish explorer who discovered Florida? Why were the Spanish exploring Florida in the first place?
5. Who discovered the Gulf Stream? Why was this discovery significant?
6. Who discovered Mexico in the name of Spain?
7. What made Cabeza de Vaca and his men different in attitude from most other Spanish *conquistadors*?
8. How did the book *The Shipwreck* spread Spanish influence in North America?
9. What did Coronado discover even though he never found his fabled cities of gold?
10. Who discovered the Mississippi River in the name of Spain?
11. How has our perception of Coronado's exploration changed from that of 300 years ago? Why?

## Follow-up Discussion

- Spanish explorers set out on journeys in search of mythical places such as the Fountain of Youth and the Seven Golden Cities of Cibola. Have students discuss the role of myths, legends and stories in the Spanish exploration of the New World.
- The story of Vasco Núñez de Balboa contains interesting themes, including suspicion, murder, power and struggle. In light of Balboa's history, discuss with students whether they feel Balboa was a criminal, a rogue, a hero, an adventurer or a combination of some or all of these roles. Have the students decide which qualities made Balboa such a good explorer.
- *Conquistadors* were generally known to be ruthless and cruel to the native people they encountered. However, Cabeza de Vaca and his men not only developed respect for the Native Americans they encountered, they also learned their language and integrated their culture. Encourage students to compare these two patterns of interaction. What are the benefits and drawbacks of each?
- Have students contemplate the word “discovery” in relation to the exploration of the New World by the Spanish *conquistadors*. If native people often lived in the places that the *conquistadors* “discovered,” did they actually discover them?