Lesson 3

MAIN IDEAS

1. Geography Seeking an ocean route to Asia, Portugal sent out explorers on sea voyages.

2. Geography Searching for a new route to Asia, Columbus sailed west across the Atlantic and reached the Americas.

3. Geography After Columbus’ first voyage, a number of explorers made the trip to the Americas.

TAKING NOTES

Reading Skill: Summarizing

To summarize is to restate a passage in fewer words. After you read Lesson 3, write a sentence or two summarizing each of the three main sections. Use a chart like the one below to record your summaries. Each summary statement is started for you.

The Age of Exploration

The Portuguese used advances in technology to help . . .

By sailing west across the Atlantic, Columbus . . .

After Columbus’ first voyage, several European nations . . .

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CALIFORNIA STANDARDS

7.11.1 Know the great voyages of discovery, the locations of the routes, and the influence of cartography in the development of a new European worldview.

Framework This unit begins with the age of exploration, with special attention given to Spanish and Portuguese explorations in the New World.

CST 2 Students construct various time lines of key events, people, and periods of the historical era they are studying.
The Age of Exploration

Build on What You Know  Inventions and a spirit of investigation helped bring about many scientific discoveries. In this lesson, you will learn how scientific developments and the desire for wealth led to an age of exploration.

Portugal Leads the Way

ESSENTIAL QUESTION  How did Portugal find an ocean route to Asia?

Since the Middle Ages, Europeans had craved luxury goods, such as silks and spices, from Asia. During this time, Italian and Muslim merchants controlled overland trade between Europe and Asia. Merchants from such countries as Portugal, Spain, England, and France wanted a share of this trade. To do this, these merchants needed to find a sea route to Asia.

Henry the Navigator  Portuguese merchants were the first Europeans to establish sea trade with Asia. They were able to do this, in part, because they had government backing. Prince Henry, the son of Portugal’s king, was a strong supporter of exploration. He set up a school on Portugal’s southwest coast for mapmakers, navigators, and shipbuilders. He also sponsored voyages of exploration. A sponsor is a person who gives money for an undertaking, such as a voyage. Even though he rarely boarded a ship, Henry became known as “the Navigator.”
Technology and Exploration

Technological advances made at Henry the Navigator’s school aided Portuguese exploration. Shipbuilders there perfected the **caravel**, a ship designed for long voyages. Caravels had both the square sails used on European ships and the triangular lateen sails used on Arabian ships. Square sails provided caravels with power, and lateen sails permitted quick turns.

Portuguese sailors also borrowed instruments from other cultures. They tracked their direction with a compass, a Chinese invention. The Portuguese also used the astrolabe, which was invented by the ancient Greeks and improved by the Arabs. An **astrolabe** measures the angle of the stars above the horizon. This information helped sailors find their ship’s latitude, or the distance north or south of the equator.

**Reaching India** By the time that Henry the Navigator died in 1460, the Portuguese had set up trading posts along Africa’s west coast. There they developed a profitable trade for gold, ivory, and slaves. Soon, however, they set their sights beyond Africa.

In 1488, the Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias rounded Africa’s southern tip. (See the map on this page.) He then sailed up part of Africa’s east coast before returning home. Vasco da Gama extended Dias’s route, sailing east all the way to India in 1498. A few years later, the Portuguese set up a trading post in India. Then they continued moving eastward. In time, they set up several trade centers in the Spice Islands—present-day Indonesia.

Overland trade from Asia to Europe tended to be expensive, because cargo had to be loaded and unloaded many times. Sea trade, however, was much cheaper. The cargo did not have to be handled so frequently. As a result, the Portuguese could charge less for spices. For a time, Portugal dominated European trade with Asia.

**REVIEW** What type of technology aided Portuguese exploration?
Columbus Reaches America

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION** Why did Columbus sail west across the Atlantic, and what did he find?

While the Portuguese headed east to secure trade routes, an Italian navigator named Christopher Columbus looked west. He hoped to find a westward route to the riches of Asia.

**Columbus’ First Voyage** By studying existing maps and reports, Columbus knew that Earth was round. Because of this, Columbus thought that he could reach Asia sooner if he sailed west instead of east around Africa. However, Columbus miscalculated the distance around Earth. He estimated this distance at only three-quarters as far as it actually was.

To many people, Columbus’ idea of sailing west to get to the east seemed a little strange. The Portuguese rejected it, preferring to continue their search for an eastern route to Asia. Even Spain, which was eager to compete for trade, was skeptical. After six years, however, Columbus convinced Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella to sponsor his plan.

In early August 1492, Columbus left Spain with three caravels and about 90 men. After almost ten weeks at sea, Columbus’ crew grew restless. They had not seen land for over a month and wanted to return home. Columbus persuaded them to continue. Then, on October 12, a sailor called out “Tierra, tierra” [Land, land].

**Columbus’ Mistake**

Columbus thought this land was India. He even called the people who greeted him and his men *Indios* (Indians). Once again, he was mistaken. He actually had landed on an island in the Caribbean Sea. Columbus explored other islands but did not come across any trade goods. Even so, he was still excited at finding what he thought was a route to Asia. He set up a settlement on the island of Hispaniola and then sailed back to Spain.
The Treaty of Tordesillas  Ferdinand and Isabella wanted to make sure that Portugal, their trading rivals, did not benefit from Columbus’ expedition. The Portuguese feared that if Columbus had found a route to Asia, Spain might claim lands that Portugal had already claimed. In 1494, Spain and Portugal signed the Treaty of Tordesillas (tawR•day•SEEL•yahs). This drew an imaginary line from north to south around the world. (See the map on the opposite page.) Spain could claim all lands west of the line. Portugal could claim all lands to the east. This gave Portugal control of one area in the Americas—present-day Brazil.

Additional Voyages  Ferdinand and Isabella were excited with the results of Columbus’ first voyage. They sent him on three more journeys west to find mainland India. Although Columbus landed on many islands, he found no proof that he was in Asia. Eventually, Ferdinand and Isabella lost patience with him. Columbus died in 1506, a bitter and lonely man. Right up to his death, he continued to insist that he had reached India. However, people soon realized that Columbus had found a vast land previously unknown to them.

Review  What miscalculations did Columbus make?
Exploration After Columbus

ESSENTIAL QUESTION Which other European countries explored and claimed parts of the Americas?

After Columbus’ journeys, several European countries sponsored voyages of exploration to the Americas. Many of the explorers who undertook these expeditions were, like Columbus, searching for a fast route to Asia. Others simply were in search of wealth.

Circling the Globe In 1519, the Spanish sponsored a voyage captained by a Portuguese sailor named Ferdinand Magellan. He set out from Spain with five ships and about 250 men. His goal was to circumnavigate the globe. **Circumnavigate** means to travel completely around the world. Up to this time, no one had accomplished this feat.

Magellan sailed around the southern tip of South America and into the vast waters of the Pacific Ocean. (See the map below.) The ships sailed on for several months without sighting land. Eventually, the ships arrived in the Philippine Islands. There, Magellan was killed in a local war. His crew, under the leadership of Juan Sebastián del Cano, continued on to the Spice Islands and then home. After a nearly three-year voyage, only one ship and 18 of the original crew members made it back to Spain. Still, the expedition had successfully traveled around the world. In addition, it was an economic success. The ship’s hold was full of Asian spices.
Spanish Conquerors  In the early 1500s, many Spanish explorers came to the Americas in search of gold. As you read in Chapter 12, Spanish explorer Hernán Cortés conquered the rich Aztec empire in Mexico. Within ten years, Spain had gained control of all of present-day Mexico and Central America. The Spanish enslaved most of the people who lived in these regions.

Not long after, Spanish explorer Francisco Pizarro and his soldiers attacked the Incan Empire in South America. They captured and killed the emperor. Soon the Incan Empire collapsed. By 1535, the Spanish controlled most Incan lands. Many Inca became slave laborers in the mines and on the farms that the Spanish set up.

Further Explorations in the North  The desire for gold also drew Spanish explorers to travel north. From 1539 to 1542, Hernando de Soto explored territory in the present-day southern United States. In 1540, Francisco Coronado began to search what is now the western United States. However, neither explorer found gold.

The English and French made several attempts to find a shortcut to Asia. They sponsored expeditions to find a Northwest Passage, a legendary water route through northern North America to Asia. In the late 1490s, Italian sailor John Cabot headed two voyages for the English. He claimed coastal lands in present-day eastern Canada and the United States for England. However, he did not find the passage.

In 1524, Giovanni da Verrazzano (VEHR•uh•ZAH•noh), another Italian sailor, searched for the Northwest Passage for France. Although he failed to discover a route to Asia, he did explore what today is New York harbor. Ten years later, the Frenchman Jacques Cartier (kahr•TYAY) sailed about 150 miles inland along Canada’s St. Lawrence River. He was sure that this river would take him to Asia. In time, however, Cartier realized that he had not found a Northwest Passage.

Mapmaking and a New Worldview  Each discovery made by explorers helped to change the way Europeans looked at the world. Before Columbus’ voyages, the European view of the world focused on the Mediterranean Sea and the lands that surrounded it. After
Columbus’ explorations, the European worldview stretched from the Americas in the west to the Spice Islands in the east.

Cartographers, or mapmakers, played a leading role in changing this worldview. Maps of the early 1500s began to show two new continents in the west. One mapmaker named these continents “the Americas” after Amerigo Vespucci (vehs•POO•chee). Vespucci was one of the first to explore and map the coasts of this region. An account of his explorations was published under the title *New World*.

**REVIEW** How did exploration in the Americas change the European worldview?

**Lesson Summary**

- The Portuguese established trade routes by sea to Africa and Asia.
- Searching for a new route to Asia, Columbus sailed west and reached the Americas.
- Several nations explored North and South America and established claims there.

**Why It Matters Now . . .**

European exploration and settlement of the Americas had a major impact on the cultures found in the United States today.