

World History

Worksheet: Biographies



Christopher Columbus

Known as 'the man who discovered America', Columbus was in fact trying to find a westward sea passage to the Orient when he landed in South America in 1492.

Christopher Columbus (born 1451) wanted to discover a sea route to the Indies, so King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain agreed to sponsor an expedition, and on 3 August 1492, Columbus set sail across the Atlantic.

Ten weeks later, land was sighted. On 12 October, Columbus and a group of his men set foot on an island in what later became known as the Bahamas. Believing that they had reached the Indies, the newcomers dubbed the natives 'Indians'.

He had actually discovered South America which later became known as the 'New World' by the Spaniards. He returned to Spain in triumph and was made 'admiral of the Seven Seas' and viceroy of the Indies. Within a few months, he set off on a second and larger voyage. He brought back to Spain many discoveries and spices including a very hot peppery spice that we now call paprika.

Adapted from BBC History Columbus biography: www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/columbus_christopher.shtml



John Cabot

Cabot was an Italian-born explorer who, in attempting to find a direct route to Asia, became the first early modern European to discover North America.

John Cabot was born in Italy but in around 1490 he moved to Bristol, England. In May 1497, with the support of the King Henry VII, Cabot sailed west from Bristol in the hope of finding a route to Asia.

On 24 June, he sighted land and called it New-found-land. He believed it was Asia and claimed it for England. It was actually the coast of North America but his maps did help explorers in the next century such as Sir Walter Raleigh.

Adapted from BBC History Cabot biography: www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/cabot_john.shtml



Vasca da Gama

Da Gama was a Portuguese explorer and navigator, and the first person to sail directly from Europe to India.

Vasco da Gama was born in about 1460 into a noble family. In 1497, the King of Portugal asked him to find a route via the sea to India. In May 1498 after sailing around Africa they reached Calicut (now Kozhikode), India.

This voyage launched the all-water trade route from Europe to Asia. On his return to Portugal, the king immediately dispatched another expedition to secure a trading post at Calicut. These exhibitions led to an increase in the trade of Indian spices, particularly pepper.

Adapted from BBC History Da Gama biography: www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/da_gama_vasco.shtml



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He discovered North America

Cabot

He ensured ship loads of pepper and spices could get to Europe

Columbus

He discovered South America

Vasca da Gama

He brought Paprika to Europe

Cabot

He discovered a sea route to India

Columbus

He lived in England

Vasca da Gama

He was sponsored by the Spanish

Cabot

He worked for the Portuguese

Columbus

His mapping of the coast of North America helped other British explorers such as Sir Walter Raleigh

Vasca da Gama