

## THE AGE OF EXPLORATION: PART II

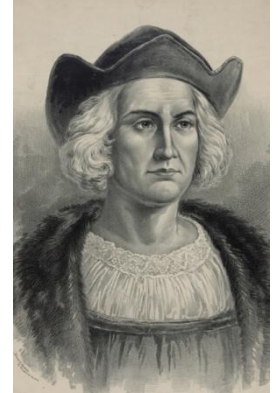
*Essential Question: How did the Age of Exploration change the way Europeans viewed the world?*

### SECTION 4: SPAIN'S EARLY EXPLORATIONS

In the late 1400s, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain were determined to make their country a powerful force in Europe. One way they thought to do this was to sponsor explorations to claim new lands for Spain.

**Key Explorers for Spain:** It was Ferdinand and Isabella who sponsored the voyages of Christopher Columbus. The Italian-born Columbus thought that the Indies, or eastern Asia, lay on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. He believed sailing west would be the easiest route to reach it.

When Columbus failed to win Portuguese support for his idea, Ferdinand and Isabella agreed to pay for the risky voyage. They wanted to beat Portugal in the race to control the trade wealth of Asia. They also wanted to spread Christianity.



Library of Congress  
Christopher Columbus



Library of Congress - Explorer Christopher Columbus convinced King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to support his westward voyages.

Thinking they were in the Indies, the Spanish soon called all the local people “Indians.”

In March 1493, Columbus arrived back in Spain. He proudly reported that he had reached Asia. Over the next ten years, he made three more voyages to what he called the Indies. He died in Spain in 1506, still insisting that he had sailed to Asia.

Many Europeans, however, believed that Columbus had actually found a land mass that lay between Europe and Asia. One of these was Ferdinand Magellan (muh-JEL-uhn), a Portuguese explorer. Magellan believed he could sail west to the Indies if he found a strait, or channel, through South America. The strait would connect the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, allowing ships to continue on to Asia.

In August 1492, three ships left Spain under Columbus’s command. For the crew, venturing into the open ocean was frightening.

As the weeks went by, some of the men began to fear they would never see Spain again. Then, on October 12, a lookout sighted land. Columbus went ashore on an island in the Caribbean Sea, and claimed it for Spain.

For three months, Columbus and his men explored nearby islands with the help of native islanders, whom the Spanish called Taino (TY-noh).

Magellan won Spain's support for a voyage to find the strait. In August 1519, he set sail with five ships and about two hundred and fifty men.

Magellan looked for the strait all along South America's east coast. He finally found it at the southern tip of the continent. Today, it is called the Strait of Magellan.

After passing through the strait, Magellan reached the Pacific Ocean in November 1520. It took another three months to cross the Pacific. Continuing west, Magellan visited the Philippines. There he became involved in a conflict between two local chiefs. In April 1521, Magellan was killed in the fighting.



iStockphoto.com - Ferdinand Magellan

Magellan's crew sailed on to the Spice Islands. Three years after the expedition began, the only ship to survive the expedition returned to Spain. The 18 sailors on board were the first people to travel completely around Earth.

**The Impact of Early Spanish Exploration** The early Spanish explorations changed Europeans' view of the world a great deal. The voyages of Christopher Columbus revealed the existence of the Americas. Magellan's expedition opened up a westward route to the Indies. It showed that it was possible to sail completely around the world. It also proved that Columbus had indeed found a "New World"—one that Europeans hadn't realized was there.

Columbus's voyages marked the beginning of Spanish settlement in the West Indies. Spain earned great wealth from its settlements. Settlers mined for precious minerals and started sugar plantations. The Spanish also brought new crops, such as sweet potatoes and pineapples, to Europe.

For the native people of the West Indies, however, Spanish settlement was extremely **detrimental** [**detrimental: something that does harm or damage**]. The Spanish forced native people to work as slaves in the mines and on the plantations. Priests forced many of them to become Christians. When the Spanish arrived, perhaps one or two million Taino lived on the islands. Within fifty years, fewer than five hundred Taino were left. The rest had died of starvation, overwork, or European diseases.

Like Portugal, Spain looked to West Africa for new laborers. From 1518 through the mid-1800s, the Spanish brought millions of enslaved Africans to work in their American colonies.



To increase their nation's power, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain sponsored several expeditions in search of better trade routes and new lands to control.



## SECTION 5: OTHER EUROPEAN EXPLORATIONS

Spain and Portugal dominated the early years of exploration. But rulers in rival nations wanted their own share of trade and new lands in the Americas. Soon England, France, and the Netherlands all sent expeditions to North America.

**Key Explorers** Explorers often sailed for any country that would pay for their voyages. The Italian sailor John Cabot made England's first voyage of discovery. Cabot believed he could reach the Indies by sailing northwest across the Atlantic. In 1497, he landed in what is now Canada. Believing he had reached the northeast coast of Asia, he claimed the region for England.

Another Italian, Giovanni da Verrazano, sailed under the French flag. In 1524, Verrazano explored the Atlantic coast from present-day North Carolina to Canada. His voyage gave France its first claims in the Americas. Unfortunately, on a later trip to the West Indies, he was killed by native people.

Sailing on behalf of the Netherlands, English explorer Henry Hudson journeyed to North America in 1609. Hudson wanted to find a northwest passage through North America to the Pacific Ocean. Such a water route would allow ships to sail from Europe to Asia without entering waters controlled by Spain.

Hudson did not find a northwest passage, but he did explore what is now called the Hudson River in present-day New York State. His explorations were the basis of the Dutch claim to the area. Dutch settlers established the colony of New Amsterdam on Manhattan in 1625.



[Wikipedia Commons](#)  
[Giovanni da Verrazano](#)



[Library of Congress](#) – This early 20<sup>th</sup> century illustration shows Henry Hudson meeting native people in North America.

In 1610, Hudson tried again, this time under the flag of his native England. Searching farther north, he sailed into a large bay in Canada that is now called Hudson Bay. He spent three months looking for an outlet to the Pacific, but there was none.

After a hard winter in the icy bay, some of Hudson's crew rebelled. They set him, his son, and seven loyal followers adrift in a small boat. Hudson and the other castaways were never seen again. Hudson's voyage, however, laid the basis for later English claims in Canada.

**The Impact of European Exploration of North America** Unlike the conquistadors in the south, northern explorers did not find gold and other treasure. As a result, there was less interest, at first, in starting colonies in that region.

Canada's shores did offer rich resources of cod and other fish. Within a few years of Cabot's trip, fishing boats regularly visited the region. Europeans were also interested in trading with Native Americans for whale oil and otter, beaver, and fox furs. By the early 1600s, Europeans had set up a number of trading posts in North America.

English exploration also contributed to a war between England and Spain. As English ships roamed the seas, some captains, nicknamed "sea dogs," began raiding Spanish ports and ships to take their gold. Between 1577 and 1580, sea dog Francis Drake sailed around the world. He also claimed part of what is now California for England, ignoring Spain's claims to the area.



The English, Dutch, and French also sent out explorers in search of new land claims and new trade goods.

The English raids added to other tensions between England and Spain. In 1588, King Philip II of Spain sent an armada, or fleet of ships, to invade England. With 130 heavily armed vessels and about thirty thousand men, the Spanish Armada seemed an unbeatable force. But the smaller English fleet was fast and well armed. Their guns had a longer range, so they could attack from a safe distance. After several battles, a number of the armada's ships had been sunk or driven ashore. The rest turned around but faced terrible storms on the way home. Fewer than half of the ships made it back to Spain.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada marked the start of a shift in power in Europe. By 1630, Spain no longer dominated the continent. With Spain's decline, other countries—particularly England and the Netherlands—took a more active role in trade and colonization around the world.