

History Revision – The Age of Exploration and Discovery

The World View in 1400;

In the first century A.D. the geographer **Ptolemy** had written a book about the world and how big it was, with a list of place names. Much of Ptolemy's "facts" were wrong but most people trusted the book because it had been in use for so long.

Marco Polo wrote a book called "**Travels**" in the 13C describing a visit to China. It was a huge seller and inspired many of the explorers we will study in this section. Most ordinary people believed that the world was flat, with three continents and three seas - the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and the Red Sea. A Map showing this flat world is called **Mappa Mundi** and is found in **Hereford Cathedral** in England.

Portolan Charts showed the Ports and Coasts of Western Europe and North Africa. They detailed the winds, tides, currents and the shape of the coastline. Little was known of the world beyond these charts.

Why Did The Age Of Exploration And Discovery Begin? ;

- **New Ships** - Northern Europeans used slow, heavy, **Clinker- built hull**, square sailed ships. While these ships were strong they could only sail with the wind and were dependent on the weather. Sailors in the Mediterranean used **Lateen Sails**, which could sail against the wind however they were too fragile to withstand ocean storms and were not suitable for long voyages. The Portuguese combined the two kinds of ship and developed the **Caravel**, which had both Square and Lateen sails and a Clinker - built hull. This made them both fast and strong and meant that longer voyages could now be undertaken.
- **New Developments in Navigation** - the **Compass**, showed where North was even in daylight and was more accurate than looking at the Pole Star. **Quadrants and Astrolabes** helped sailors calculate their Latitude and work out their position at sea. **The Log and Sand Glass** both helped sailors calculate their speed. **Throwing the Lead** was a method used to measure the depth of the sea.

Reasons for Exploration;

- **To Find a New Route to the East** - in 1453 the Ottoman Turks captured the city of Constantinople. Europeans could no longer travel to the East for Spices, which were an important ingredient in flavouring food.
- **To increase a country's wealth and prestige.**
- **To spread the Christian Religion** - People at the time believed that only Baptised Christians went to heaven. Therefore there was genuine concern in Europe that the peoples of the new lands would be converted to Christianity for the sake of their souls.
- **To increase knowledge of the world.**

PORTUGUESE EXPLORERS;

(A) Prince Henry the Navigator - 1394 - 1460; He established a school for Navigators at Sagres in Portugal and this attracted the best pilots, sailors and shipbuilders of the day. They developed the Caravel ship and he sent his sailors to explore the west coast of Africa to seek a route to India.

(B) Bartholomew Diaz - 1450 - 1500; He was the first European to round the tip of Africa and enter the Indian Ocean. He named the tip the Cape of Storms but King John, knowing that the long awaited route to India had been found renamed it The Cape of Good Hope. Diaz wanted to continue the voyage to India but his sailors rebelled and forced him to return to Portugal.

(C) Vasco de Gama - 1469 - 1525; Left Lisbon in 1497 and followed the route of Diaz to round the Cape of Good Hope. He sailed up the east coast of Africa and captured an Arab Navigator who guided them across the Indian Ocean and on to Calicut in India. He established a trading post, loaded his ships with spices and returned to Lisbon in 1499.

SPANISH EXPLORERS;

(A) Christopher Columbus -1451 -1506; Born in Genoa, Italy. He spent many years in the Portuguese Navy and visited Galway. He believed the world was round and that India could be reached by sailing west across the Atlantic Ocean. He sought ships from the Portuguese to try out his ideas but they refused him help. He then moved to Spain where he convinced King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to sponsor him. In August 1492 he left Spain with three old ships **the Pinta, the Nina and the Santa Maria**. The voyage was an unhappy one, the crew were ill and afraid, they threatened mutiny and Columbus had to

alter the ship's log to conceal the amount of distance they were covering in a day. Finally on 12 October 1492 they sighted land, they named it San Salvador. They were sure they had reached India. They found no sign of the cities that were in India and returned home disappointed but determined to ask the King and Queen to sponsor another voyage. Columbus made two other voyages and it slowly dawned on him that he had discovered a new continent. He died in 1505 a bitter disappointed man convinced he had failed.

(B) Ferdinand Magellan - 1480 - 1521; King Charles V of Spain sponsored him to **circumnavigate the Globe**. August 1519 he left Seville with five ships the **Trinidad, Concepcion, Victoria, Santiago,** and the **San Antonia**. Crossing the Atlantic they made their way down the East coast of South America. They stopped at Port St Julian from March to August of 1520 repairing their battered ships. When the time came to leave two of his captains mutinied and demanded a return to Spain. Magellan had them beheaded and left behind some of their supporters to starve when he left. One of those stranded was a priest; he had no more challenges to his authority after that. On 21 October 1520 they reached the bottom of South America and turned west. For 38 days they battled huge storms to round the tip until finally on 28 November they entered the first calm seas they had seen in a month they christened it the Pacific Ocean. During the storms however they had been deserted by the San Antonia, which returned to Spain. This was a bad blow as it had contained most of their food.

They sailed northwest for 96 days during which they suffered great hunger and thirst. At the end of March 1521 they reached the Philippines. In April they became involved in a local war between the tribes and Magellan was killed by a poisoned arrow to the face. Sebastian Del Cano, the Navigator took over the leadership of the Voyage. Having repaired and reprovisioned their ships they set off in search of the Spice Islands which they reached on 21 November 1521. During this section of the trip they lost two more ships. They took on full cargoes of cloves and cinnamon and sailed for home. As the depleted mission continued across the Pacific towards the east coast of Africa they lost another ship. Finally on 8 September 1522, three years after leaving home the remaining ship the Victoria sailed into Seville harbour. Out of a starting crew of 284, only 18 sailors returned home. But they had proved that the earth was round.

THE CONQUISTADORES

These were Spanish Adventurers who explored vast areas of South and Central America in search of wealth and fame. **Hernando Cortez** conquered the **Aztecs** of Mexico, while **Francisco Pizarro** conquered the **Incas** of South America.

CORTEZ AND THE AZTECS;

In the early years of the 1500's rumours began to circulate of a vast and wealthy empire in the interior of the new continent, where Mexico is today. Hernando Cortez decided to find out if they were true. In 1519 Cortez landed from Cuba with 600 men, 18 horses and 4 cannon. News of him spread quickly to the Aztec Emperor **Montezuma** at the capital of **Tenochtitlan**. At this time the Aztecs had built massive Pyramid Temples where they performed human sacrifice to their gods. The Aztecs could read and write but they had not discovered iron or how to make the wheel. They had never seen horses either.

Montezuma was shocked because an ancient prophecy foretold that a bearded white skinned god would defeat the Aztecs in the year of the Rabbit. 1519 was the year of the Rabbit. The Emperor tried to placate Cortez by sending him gifts of gold and silver. But these only made Cortez greedy for more. He marched for Tenochtitlan. Attacked on the way by Montezuma's army; the Spaniards easily defeated the Aztecs who were terrified of the guns and the horses. On 8 November 1519 Cortez marched into the Aztec capital, a vast city sitting on a lake bigger than any city in Europe. Still convinced that the Spaniards were gods the Aztecs offered no resistance. However the Spaniards were greedy and the Aztecs soon began to hate them. They turned this anger against Montezuma and killed him, and then they turned the Spaniards out of Tenochtitlan, massacring 70% of them in the process.

Reinforcements arrived and Cortez laid siege to the city. In August 1522 the city fell to the Spaniards. By 1525 the whole of Mexico was under Spanish control. It was renamed "**New Spain**" and Charles V appointed Cortez as Governor. Cortez became very wealthy but had no real power he returned to Spain where he died in 1547 a deeply disappointed man.

THE SPANISH EMPIRE

The Spanish created a huge land empire. The Government was determined to treat the natives well but the colonists had no fear of a government so far away. They set up vast estates and enslaved the natives.

THE EFFECTS OF EXPLORATION AND COLONISATION

- Spain became very wealthy because it extracted tons of gold and silver out of the America's.
- Millions of natives died of European diseases to which they had no immunity at all
- Millions more natives were turned into slaves to work the land which they had owned before the arrival of the Spanish.
- The native religion died as the Aztecs were converted to Christianity.
- The native languages died out as Spanish and Portuguese became the language of the new colonies.