



The 15th-century map of North America on the left has been turned upside down so that north is at the top of the map. By looking at the map on the right, can you tell which part of the coastline the 15th-century map represents?

Routes of Exploration to the New World

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, you read about why Europeans crossed the Atlantic Ocean and sailed to the Americas. In this chapter, you will read about eight European explorers. You will discover why these explorers came to the New World and how their arrival affected the native peoples.




In 1492, Christopher Columbus landed on a Caribbean island and claimed it for Spain. Columbus's voyage prompted others to explore the Western Hemisphere. **Conquistadors** (cone-KEES-tah-dors), or Spanish explorers, planted the Spanish flag throughout the Caribbean and throughout Central and South America.

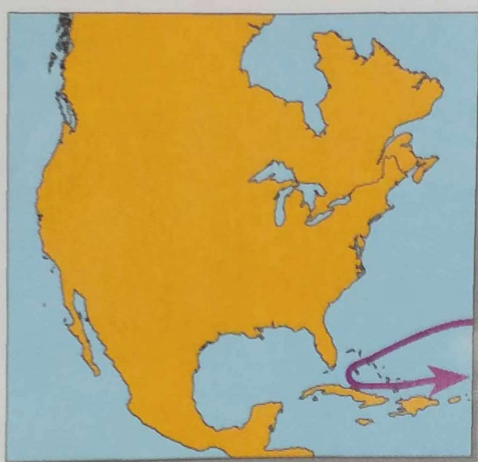
Explorers from England, France, and Holland also came. They wanted to find a **Northwest Passage**, a shortcut from Europe to Asia through North America. The explorers never found such a passage. But they quickly claimed North American land for their European sponsors—the countries that paid for their voyages.

Some people call the explorers great men. Certainly their accomplishments were great. Their voyages established new trade routes and produced better world maps. However, as you will learn, they also killed many native people who opposed them. They also infected them with **contagious diseases**, sicknesses that spread quickly.

Look at the matrix on this page. A matrix is a chart with rows and columns, useful for organizing and comparing information. As you read this chapter, think about how you can use this matrix to compare the explorers with one another.

Comparing New World Explorers

	Columbus	Cabot	Ponce de León		
Personal Background		?	?		
Sponsor		?	?		
Motives		?	?		
Dates	?	?	?		
Route of Exploration	?	?	?		
Impact	?	?	?		



The route of Christopher Columbus's first voyage to the New World

5.2 Christopher Columbus

Christopher Columbus was born in 1451 in Genoa, a busy seaport on the coast of Italy. As a child, Columbus had read about the travels of Marco Polo. In the late 1200s, Polo had journeyed to Asia and brought back gold, jewels, and spices from China. Columbus was also interested in exploring these faraway lands.

So, around the age of 15, Columbus became a sailor. He sailed on ships that went south along the coast of Africa and north to Ireland. They may have gone to Iceland. Viking sailors from Norway had already explored as far as Greenland and the eastern Canadian shores. But Columbus and others did not know about these voyages.

The Portuguese were trying to get to Asia by sailing south around the southern tip of Africa. In the 1400s, people knew much less about the world than is known today. Columbus thought the Earth was much smaller than it is. He also believed it had just one ocean. He thought that he could reach Asia faster by sailing west across the Atlantic.

Columbus tried to find someone to pay for his voyage. The kings of Portugal, France, and England turned him down. Their advisors thought that the route around Africa was shorter. Finally, after almost 13 years, Columbus convinced Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain. They gave him three small ships and about 90 men. Columbus promised to return with gold and spices to make Spain rich.

On August 3, 1492, Columbus left Spain with three ships, the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*. They sailed southwest past the Canary Islands and then west across the Atlantic Ocean. Early on the morning of October 12, a sailor spotted an island with white beaches and dense green forests.

Columbus named the island San Salvador, which means "Holy Savior" in Spanish. He claimed it for Spain. Friendly people greeted him. Columbus called them *Indians*, because he thought that he had reached the **East Indies**. Columbus captured some Indians as prisoners. He made them take him to the island of Cuba, where he found people wearing gold ornaments and pearls.

For three months, Columbus searched for gold and spices. In 1493, he sailed back to Spain, carrying a few gold ornaments and Indian captives. Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand rewarded Columbus and agreed to pay for more voyages.

East Indies: Southeast Asia, including India, Indonesia, and Malaysia

Columbus promised to bring them “as much gold as they need...and as many slaves as they ask.”

Columbus made three more voyages, exploring more islands around Cuba and the coasts of South and Central America. He found very little gold. In fact, when he died in 1506, he didn't know that he had reached the New World.

Other Spanish and Portuguese explorers did find gold. They also found the perfect climate for growing crops, such as sugar cane and tobacco. These discoveries helped them establish wealthy **colonies** in the New World. But to do this, they forced the Indians to work in fields and mines. They hanged or burned those who resisted.

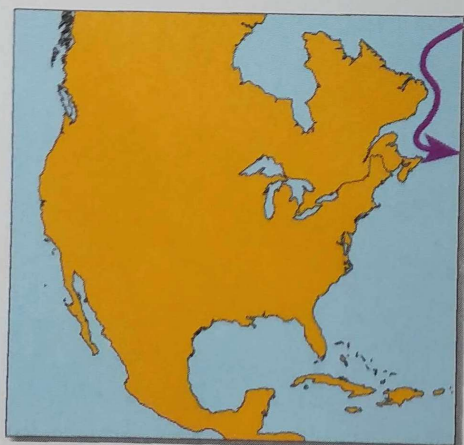
colonies: places ruled by another country, not by their own people

Early on the morning of October 12, 1492, Christopher Columbus landed on the island of San Salvador in the Caribbean Sea.





John Cabot, standing near the bow of the ship, leaves the coast of Labrador, Canada, to return to England.



John Cabot's first voyage to the New World in 1497

5.3 John Cabot

The trading that interested Columbus caught the attention of other explorers as well. Giovanni Caboto, later called John Cabot, was a young merchant (shopkeeper) in Venice, Italy. He was a skilled navigator who wanted to explore the world. Also, he had seen the spices and silks that were being traded from Asia. He wanted to find the place these goods came from. So, he set out to find the East Indies. Like Columbus, he thought the fastest route to Asia was to sail west.

In 1496, some merchants in England agreed to pay for his voyage. King Henry VII gave Cabot permission to explore any "unknown land." Cabot left Bristol, England, in May 1497, with one small ship and 17 men. They sailed around the coast of Ireland and then north and west across the Atlantic. They sailed north

of Columbus's route to avoid territory claimed by Spain.

On June 24, Cabot reached the eastern coast of Canada and claimed the land for England. He saw thick green forests and plentiful fish, but no golden Chinese cities. Cabot returned to England to tell the king that he had found Asia and would soon find its wealth.

The next year, Cabot sailed back to North America. This time he explored at least as far south as Chesapeake Bay, near modern-day Maryland. But his ship sank, and he never returned to England.

Like Columbus, Cabot never realized that he had discovered a new continent. He did not know that his voyage opened the way for English settlers to come to North America.

5.4 Juan Ponce de León

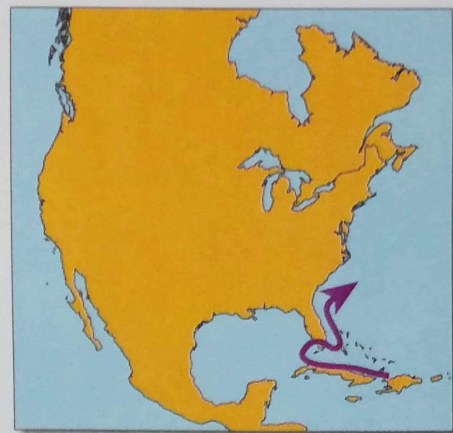
When Columbus left for his second voyage to the New World, a young soldier named Juan Ponce de León came along. Once in the New World, he settled on a Caribbean island named Hispaniola. (Today, this island is divided into the countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic.) On Hispaniola, he became a military commander under the governor.

In 1506, Ponce de León explored an island named Borinquen (later renamed Puerto Rico). There, he met an Indian carrying a large nugget of gold. Hoping to discover more gold, Ponce de León led soldiers to conquer Puerto Rico. Although Ponce de León killed many Native Americans, King Ferdinand of Spain made him governor of the island.

Ponce de León soon heard stories of another island, one with a magic fountain. This was the “fountain of youth” whose waters were said to make old people young again. Ponce de León asked permission to search for this island. He wanted the glory of finding such a wonderful spot.

Ponce de León sailed from Puerto Rico in 1513. After a month, he reached a coast with palm trees, sweet-smelling flowers, and beautiful birds. That day was the feast day of the Easter of Flowers, called *Pascua Florida* in Spanish. Ponce de León named the land Florida and claimed it for Spain. He sailed up and down the coast, but he didn’t find the fountain of youth. So he went back to Puerto Rico.

In 1521, he returned to Florida to start a settlement. He brought 200 men with horses, cattle, and seeds. The Indians resented the invasion. They attacked, and an arrow struck Ponce de León. Wounded, de León sailed to Cuba and died soon after. He never knew that Florida was not an island but part of a vast continent.



The route of Juan Ponce de León

Can you find Florida on this 1555 map of North America?

