

Use the information provided to answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

The **Age of Exploration** was a period of global history that started in the 15th century and continued into the 18th century. During this time, Europeans sailed on **exploration voyages** around the world, discovering new routes to Asia, and coming into contact with North and South America which were unknown to people in the Eastern Hemisphere.

The Age of Exploration led to the **first truly global turning point**, the **Encounter** between the “Old World” (Africa, Asia, and Europe) and the “New World” (North and South America).

For several years, Christopher Columbus lobbied the Spanish court to fund an **expedition** that would find a new route to Asia. Columbus was finally funded and in 1492, **explorer** Christopher Columbus landed on the Caribbean islands. Believing he’d arrived in India, he called the **indigenous** people he encountered Indians. The indigenous people he encountered were actually called Tainos. His exploration spurred repeated waves of Spanish **conquistadors** who arrived in the Americas with plans to reap the economic benefits of exploration by **conquering** the indigenous people in the Americas.

exploration: (n) the action of traveling in or through an unfamiliar area in order to learn about it

voyages: (n) a long journey involving travel by sea or in space

turning point: (n) a time when an important change happens

Encounter: (n) the first contact between Columbus and peoples in the Americas

expedition: (n) a journey or voyage undertaken by a group of people with a particular purpose

explorer: (n) a person who explores an unfamiliar area; an adventurer.

indigenous: (adv) describing a person who originates from a particular region

conquistadors: (n) a conqueror, especially one of the Spanish conquerors of Mexico and Peru in the 16th century

conquer: (v) overcome and take control of (a place or people) by use of military force

1. What was the “Encounter”? Why is it considered the “first truly global turning point”?

Cause #1: European Interest in Asia

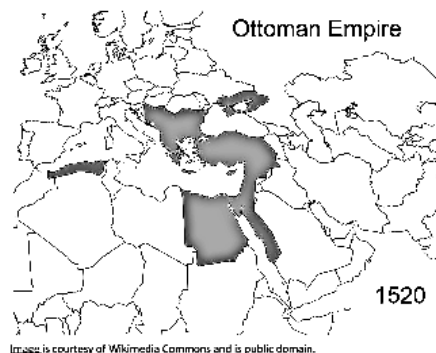
Though Western Europe was isolated from trade with Asia during most of the Middle Ages, the Crusades and books by travelers like Marco Polo kept Europeans interested in Asia. Stories about the riches of China and India, and the limited availability of goods like silk and spices from those areas, fueled European desire for adventure and profit.

2. Why were Europeans interested in Asia?

Cause #2: Ottoman Dominance of Trade Routes

In the **Middle Ages**, Europeans had access to spices and other goods from Asia because they could easily trade with the **Byzantine Empire**, a **Christian** empire that controlled the city of **Constantinople** which was a crossroads for trade. In 1453, the **Ottoman Empire conquered Constantinople** and continued to expand in the 1500s under the rule of **Suleiman the Magnificent**. It became increasingly more difficult to trade through the Ottoman Empire because of European Crusades that created distrust between the Muslim Ottomans and the Christian Europeans. Italian city-states like Genoa, Milan, Florence, and Venice had a good trading relationship with the Ottomans and became wealthy from what they imported from the Middle East, but other European countries wanted direct access to the trade as well.

3. In the Middle Ages, why was the relationship with the **Byzantine Empire** important for Western Europeans?



4. What effect did the expansion of the **Ottoman Empire** have on trade between Western Europe and Asia?

Even after the Ottoman Empire's dominance of the trade routes, Europeans still wanted more goods from Asia, especially **spices** like pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, and turmeric. However, by the time the spices travelled from Southeast Asia to Europe they were incredibly expensive. To get spices to Europe, Europeans travelled from Southeast Asia in caravans along the **Silk Roads** or on ships along the **Indian Ocean Complex** to the Middle East where they were then shipped across the Mediterranean Sea to European markets. It was rare for one trader to buy the spices in Southeast Asia and take them all the way to Europe. Instead, **the spices were bought and sold many times from their origin to their final destination**. To make a profit, **every merchant that bought the spices from another raised the price**, so buying pepper in Malaysia was cheapest, India was a little more expensive, buying it in the Middle East was more expensive still, then the price went up in Constantinople, it was bumped up higher in Venice, and so on and so forth all the way through Europe. Spices in places as far away as Portugal, Spain, or England were so expensive that only the wealthiest Europeans could afford them.

5. Why were **spices** so expensive in Western Europe?

Cause #3: Catholic Religious Zeal

Portugal and Spain were the first European countries to send ships out on trading expeditions. Both countries were located on the Iberian Peninsula, the region of Europe that is closest to North Africa, only separated by the Strait of Gibraltar. In the 700s, Muslim forces invaded from North Africa and settled in parts of both Portugal and Spain. For almost 800 years there were battles between Christian (Roman Catholic) forces and Muslims over the land. The Christian monarchs and Popes declared **Crusades** to rally forces against Muslims. In the 1200s, the momentum swung in favor of the Christian armies and in 1492 the Muslim government that controlled Granada signed a treaty with Ferdinand and Isabella, the King and Queen of Spain, finally ending what the Christians called the *Reconquista*, the reconquering of the Iberian Peninsula from Muslims.



After 800 years of fighting religious wars, the Portuguese and Spanish turned their devotion for the Catholic Church to those they encountered through exploration. Explorers were **sponsored (funded) by the Catholic Kings and Queens of their countries**. They viewed voyages to the coast of Africa and eventually to the Indian Ocean and the Americas as **opportunities to convert people to their faith**. They believed that their religion was the only true religion and that it would benefit them and the soon-to-be converts if they spread the lessons of the Bible. Many ships had priests on board for the sailors and to teach the people they encountered about Christianity.

The Crusades pushed Christians to feel it was their duty to spread their religion and convert people to Christianity. This grew into a religious zeal [enthusiasm] to spread Christianity far and wide. One Spanish soldier who helped conquer the Americas wrote that he joined the exploration to “serve **God** and His Majesty [the King of Spain], **to give light to those who were in darkness**, and to grow rich, as all men desire to do.” For that soldier and for many Europeans, spreading Christianity was an important reason for going too far away lands.

6. Since the 700s, what was the relationship between Muslims and Christians on the **Iberian Peninsula**?

7. How did this relationship impact the desire of Christian nations in the Iberian Peninsula to spread Christianity?

Cause #4: Mercantilism & the Pursuit of National Wealth

At the end of the 15th century, **absolute monarchs** ruled in almost every country in Europe. The monarchs of Spain, France, Portugal, England, the Holy Roman Empire, and other areas **centralized the power in their countries** by raising large armies, controlling the people of their countries through harsh laws and military force, and tying their rule to God through the theory of divine right.

Absolute monarchs and the officials working in their governments followed an economic policy that we now call **mercantilism**. Mercantilists believed that a country was strongest if it had a lot of gold and silver, so monarchs did everything they could to get it. There were two methods for filling their treasuries with gold and silver:

1. Maintain a Favorable Balance of Trade

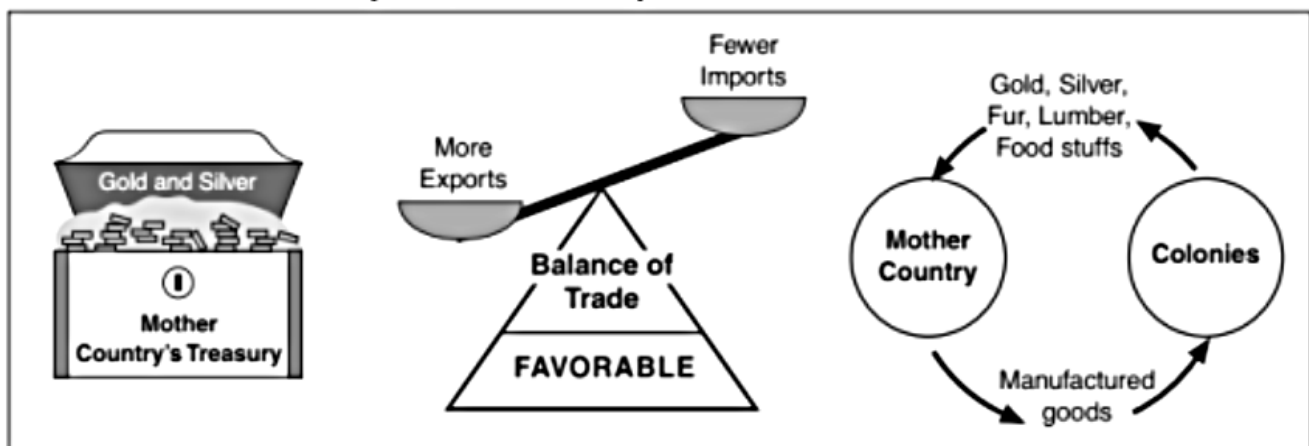
When thinking about **mercantilism**, imagine a whole country as one business and the absolute monarch is the CEO. If the country sells (exports) more than it buys (imports), it will have more money (gold and silver). For absolute monarchs, a “favorable” balance of trade is one with a lot more exports than imports.

2. Establish Colonies, Import their Raw Materials

Absolute monarch saw establishing colonies as a great way to bring in silver and gold through mining and through trade. When explorers were sent out to Africa, Asia, or the Americas, the kings and/or queens that sent them hoped they would find **new sources of gold and silver**. Monarchs also hoped to find people they could trade with.

By following the policy of **mercantilism**, monarchs hoped to get more gold and silver that they could use to pay for larger armies who could be used to conquer more land to continue to secure more silver and gold.

Important Concepts of Mercantilism



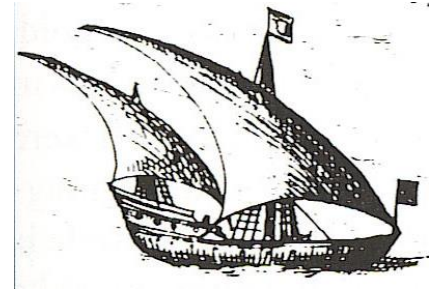
8. What did mercantilist governments believe would make a country the strongest?

9. Why would a mercantilist government be interested in other areas of the world?

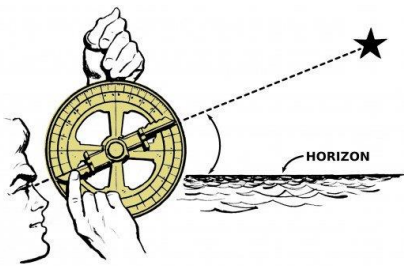
How did technological innovation impact the Age of Exploration?

The knowledge and technology that came to Western Europe through contact with other societies and through innovations as a result of the Renaissance and Scientific Revolution, made it possible for the Age of Exploration to begin and contributed to their ability to conquer the inhabitants of the lands they traveled to.

The **caravel** was a small, fast, and highly maneuverable ship developed in the 15th century by the Portuguese that uses triangular lateen sails. The caravel used lateen sails which allowed the ship to tack “against the wind”.



The **compass** is a device that uses magnetic forces to help the user determine which direction is North. The compass helped travelers more accurately determine which direction they were headed which was especially difficult at sea and on cloudy nights when one could not use the stars to navigate. It was invented in China during the Han Dynasty and its use spread to Western Europe through trade routes in the Indian Ocean and Silk Roads, to the Middle East and through the Mediterranean Sea.



An **astrolabe** is a device that allows one to determine their latitude and the time of day by “sighting” a star through the astrolabe and using the markings on the device. The astrolabe was useful for navigation and determining distance traveled. It is not certain if they invented it, but Arab traders and mathematicians were most well known for using the astrolabe during the 600s CE and spreading the technology to other societies.

Gunpowder was invented in China in the Tang Dynasty (9th century), but it was not until the 1200s that the Chinese started using gunpowder to launch projectiles in warfare. Gunpowder and its use as a weapon spread West. The Ottoman Empire used cannons and long-barrelled muskets (at right) in to expand their empire and conquer Constantinople. That technology spread to Western Europe where, by the 15th century, cannons and muskets were a regular part of warfare.



Portolani were detailed charts [maps] that provided navigators with valuable information like the shape of coastlines, distance between ports, and compass bearings. Due to the mathematical and scientific advances in the Renaissance and Scientific Revolution, sailors had much more accurate maps.

10. Which of the technological advances above was most important for the European’s age of exploration? **Explain** your answer.