Station 1

**Vasco De Gama**

In 1497 Vasco de Gama was hired by his king to see if it was possible to reach India by using the route around the southern tip of Africa. De Gama left Portugal with four ships and 170 men and sailed for Africa. De Gama hired sailors who helped guide him to Mozambique on the east coast of Africa. The Sultan of Mozambique boarded de Gama’s ship and was offered many small gifts from Portugal. The sultan was not impressed with the gifts. The people of Mozambique (who were Muslim) were not very happy about having a Christian European interfering with their trade.

De Gama continued up the East African coast and eventually crossed the Indian Ocean to India. After a journey of over 13,000 miles, the ships finally landed in Calicut, India. De Gama made quick friends with Calicut’s king and was able to establish direct trade between India and Portugal. Many of de Gama’s men died from scurvy (170 men started on the journey but only 55 survived to return to Portugal). De Gama brought back great wealth to Portugal and paved the way for many more explorers.

Station 2

**Scurvy**

Explorers would take long sea trips, usually lasting from 4-6 months, one way. During these trips many men died due to a variety of diseases. A major disease was scurvy, which cost many lives.

Fresh food was very hard to come by after being at sea for many months. A lack of Vitamin C was the cause of scurvy. Victims would suffer from terrible sores, lose their teeth and waste to nothing. Horsemeat was a favorite type of meat but it could only be preserved by coating it with salt. Salt can make you very thirsty and it was very difficult to keep water fresh for long periods. Thus, sailors often drank large quantities of beer. The sailor’s diet was low in vitamins as a result, sailors suffered from terrible scurvy.

Station 3

**Spice Trade with India**

Spices originally grew only in southern Asia and Southeast Asia. Spice trade had existed throughout the East for many centuries. In the 1400s, Venice held a very powerful position in the spice trade with the Eastern Hemisphere. To disrupt their near monopoly, other countries took to the seas to explore new sources of spices and other valuable goods. This massive enterprise became known as the Age of Discovery, since it resulted in the discovery of many new lands as well as foreign cultures. Several of the European explorers set out in search of precious metals and jewels. However, in doing so, they carved out an important trade route for silk and spices.

Spices were easy to handle and look after, and large quantities can be broken into small portions for sale. Before Portugal started trading with India, the price of spices was very expensive. After Vasco de Gama opened trade with India, the price of spices slightly dropped, as there was more competition for the goods. Among the most prominent explorers were Henry the Navigator, Christopher Columbus and Ferdinand Magellan. These explorers set out in search of spices such as cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric, and other Indian spices.

Station 4

**Exploration of East Africa**

When Vasco de Gama set out to find a route to India, he sailed up the coast of East Africa. Following several months of sailing, he rounded the Cape of Good Hope and began making his way up the eastern coast of Africa, toward the uncharted waters of the Indian Ocean. By January 1498, many of da Gama's crewmembers were sick with scurvy, forcing the expedition to anchor for rest and repairs for nearly one month. In early March of 1498, da Gama and his crew dropped their anchors in the port of Mozambique, a Muslim city-state that sat on the outskirts of the east coast of Africa and was dominated by Muslim traders.

De Gama expected to find cow herders and farmers on the East coast of Africa but instead found intelligent businessmen and ship captains who were highly advanced in using the compass and navigational charts. The people of Mozambique were even dressed in linen trimmed with gold and silk!

East Africa was a Muslim area and the people disliked Christians. These feelings often produced unfriendly relationships between the two groups but the posts along the east coast of Africa provided new ports of trade for explorers.

Station 5

**The Portuguese Conquer East African Swahili City-States**

When the Portuguese first arrived in Africa; they found a continent full of diverse kingdoms, languages and cultures. The people who lived on the East coast of Africa called themselves the Swahili meaning “people of the coast.”

Some of the Swahili lived in small towns while others lived in large and wealthy city-states. Trade in gold and other riches supported these wealthy city-states. Ports in East Africa were full of ships loaded with animal skins, gold, ivory, silk, etc.

After Vasco de Gama returned to Portugal and told of the wealthy Swahili city-states, the Portuguese decided they would seize them for their own. They sailed heavily armed ships to east African harbors, took control over the local governments and seized man valuable goods. Any town that resisted was destroyed. Portugal gained control of the Swahili city-states and remained in control for over 100 years.

Station 6

**Cabral claims Brazil**

After Vasco da Gama’s pioneering voyage, three years later the king entrusted Pedro Cabral with the command of the second major expedition to India. He was to follow the route taken earlier by [Vasco da Gama](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Vasco-da-Gama), strengthen commercial ties, and further the conquest his predecessor had begun.

His fleet sailed southwest past the African coast before turning out into the Atlantic to get the benefit of the prevailing winds and currents. Apparently carried further west than intended, Cabral’s ships crossed the Atlantic at its narrowest point and bumped accidently into Brazil. This land belonged to Portugal because it was to the east of the Treaty of Tordesillas’ line.

Cabral is reported to have made a special effort to treat the inhabitants kindly, receiving them on board his caravel. Nonetheless, he took formal possession of the country and dispatched one of his ships to Portugal to inform the king.

Station 7

**Vasco Nunez de Balboa**

When Columbus reached America in 1492, Balboa was just seventeen years old. Columbus’ voyages influenced Balboa to become an explorer, and at a time when many people in Spain were seeking their fortunes in the New World, Balboa joined an expedition to South America. Afterward, he returned to the island of Hispaniola (present-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and sought to make his living as a farmer. While there, he got into debt and fled, hiding away on a ship headed for the fledgling colony of San Sebastian.

By 1511, Balboa was acting as interim governor of Darién, the first stable Spanish settlement in South America. Under his authority, the Spaniards dealt harshly with native inhabitants of the region in order to get gold and other riches; from some of these Indians, they learned that a wealthy empire lay to the south (possibly a reference to the Incas). In September 1513, Balboa led an expedition of some 190 Spaniards and a number of Indians southward across the Isthmus of Panama.

Later that same month, Balboa was the first European to see (and stand in) the waters of the Pacific Ocean. Balboa did not name the Pacific Ocean but he claimed the water and all of the shoreline for Spain. This opened the way for Spanish exploration and conquest along the West coach of South America.

Worksheet for Stations

**Station 1- Vasco De Gama**

1. Why did the king hire Vasco De Gama?

2. What religion did people in East Africa practice?

3. Did Vasco de Gama reach India? How do you know?

**Station 2- Scurvy**

1. What causes scurvy?

2. What are some effects of scurvy?

3. Describe the challenges of eating horsemeat and why it caused health concerns.

**Station 3- Spice Trade in India**

1. Who had a monopoly over the spice trade in the early 1400’s, and how was it broken?

2. Why were spices easy to trade?

3. After Vasco de Gama reached India, why did spices become cheaper?

**Station 4- Exploration of East Africa**

1. What city state did da Gama’s crew reach in March of 1498?

2. What were Vasco da Gama’s expectations upon reaching East Africa, and how were they proved wrong?

3. How did religion create conflict in East Africa during the Age of Exploration?

**Station 5- The Portuguese conquer east African Swahili City-States**

1. Who were the Swahili people and where did they live?

2. What goods were traded by the Swahili people?

3. Describe how Portugal took control of the Swahili city-states.

**Station 6- Cabral claims Brazil**

1. To where was Cabral originally sailing?

2. Why did Brazil belong to Portugal?

3. Use context clues to define ‘caravel’.

**Station 7- Vasco Nunez de Balboa**

1. Balboa was the first European to discover what area?

2. Describe Balboa’s time as governor of Darien.

3. Why was Spain the “owner” of the area Balboa discovered?