

European Exploration of North America

Spain and Portugal dominated the early years of exploration. 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.

The next year, Cabot set out on another voyage with five ships. The fate of this expedition is uncertain. Cabot may have returned to England, or he may have been lost at sea.

Another Italian, Giovanni da Verrazano, sailed under the French flag. In 1524, da Verrazano explored the Atlantic coast from present-day North Carolina to Canada. His voyage gave France its first claims in the Americas. Like many explorers, however, he met an unhappy end. On a later trip to the West Indies, he was killed and eaten by native people.

Sailing for 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. Twenty years later, Dutch settlers (people from the Netherlands) began arriving in the Hudson River valley.

The next year 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.

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 otter skins, whale oil, and beaver and fox furs. By the 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, 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 raids added to other tensions between England and Spain. In 1588, King Philip II of Spain sent an armada, or fleet, to invade England. With 130 heavily armed vessels and about 31,000 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

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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 an active role in trade and colonization around the world.

Questions

1. What contributions did each of these individuals make to the European exploration of North America?
 - John Cabot
 - Giovanni de Verrazano
 - Henry Hudson
2. What impact did the European exploration of North America have on the people of Europe?