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# Early European Explorers

## BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you read about a period of changes in European society. Some of these changes spurred trade.

In this section, you will read how Europeans searched for all-water routes to Asia. Europeans wanted to trade there.

## AS YOU READ

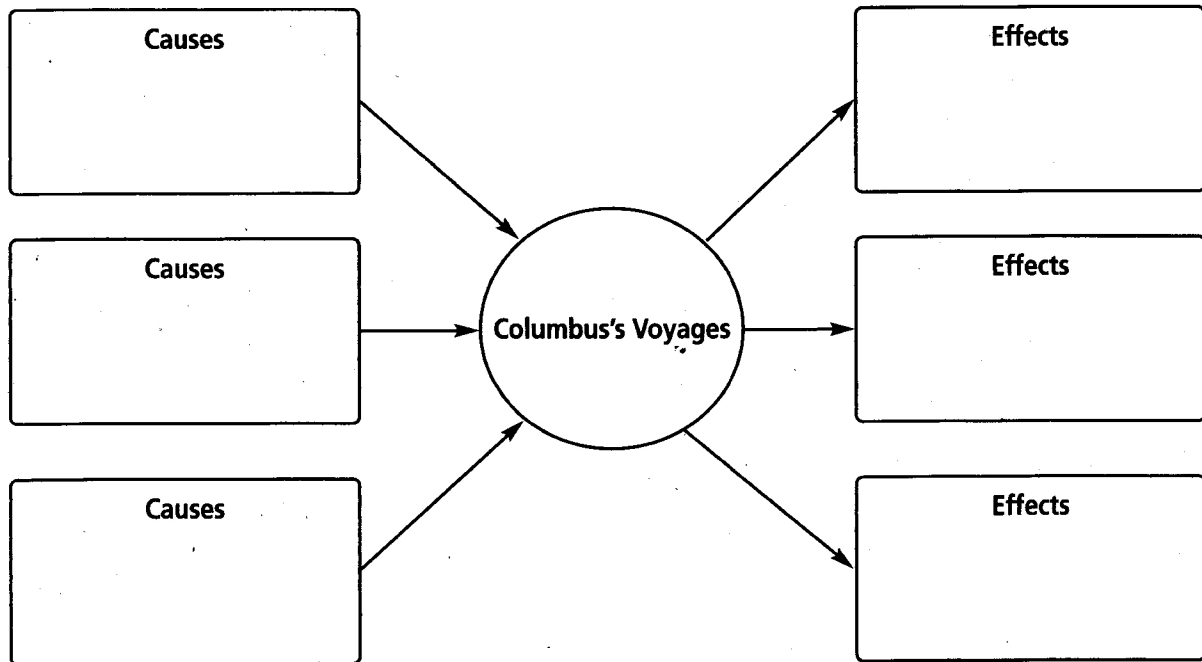
Use this diagram to take notes on the causes and effects of Columbus's voyages.

## TERMS & NAMES

**navigator** A person who plans the course of a ship using instruments to find its position

**caravel** A ship with triangular and square sails that improved the ability of sailing nearly into the wind

**Christopher Columbus** An Italian sailor who reached the Americas when he sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in search of Asia



## A Water Route to Asia (pages 49–50)

**Why did the Portuguese merchants become rich?** Finding an all-water route to Asia required good **navigators**. The Portuguese also developed a ship, the **caravel**. It was better than other ships at sailing nearly into the wind. This ship had triangular sails as well as square sails. Square sails carried the ship forward when the wind was at its back. Triangular sails allowed the caravel to sail more nearly into the wind.

In 1488, the Portuguese explorer, Bartolomeu

Dias, reached the southern tip of Africa. This tip is now known as the Cape of Good Hope. Ten years later, Vasco da Gama found an all-water route to Asia. This meant that the Portuguese could trade with Asia without the Italians and Muslims. Portugal took over the spice trade. Portuguese merchants grew rich.

### 1. Why was an all-water route to Asia important to the Portuguese?

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## **Columbus's Plan; Help from Spain's Rulers** (pages 50–51)

*Why did the Portuguese rulers refuse to finance Columbus's voyage?*

An Italian sailor, **Christopher Columbus**, thought he knew a faster route to Asia. He thought that sailing west across the Atlantic would be a short way to Asia. But Columbus figured the distances incorrectly. He relied on the writings of two people who were wrong about the size of Asia. He also thought the distance around the globe was smaller than it is. In 1483, Columbus asked the king of Portugal to pay for his voyage. The king refused because his advisers said that Columbus was wrong.

Spain's rulers were King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. They wanted to share in the rich Asian trade. Isabella also wanted to spread Christianity. But they had reasons not to support Columbus. A royal council had doubts about Columbus's calculations. They told the king and queen not to pay for the voyage. Also, Spain was fighting a costly war to drive the Muslims from Spain. Finally, Columbus wanted a high payment for his services.

In 1492, the Spanish conquered the last Muslims in Spain. So the Spanish rulers had more money. They agreed to pay for Columbus's voyage.

### **2. What caused the Spanish rulers to finance Columbus's voyage?**

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## **Setting Sail; Reaching the Americas** (pages 51–53)

*Where did Columbus think he had landed?*

Columbus began his voyage in August of 1492. His three ships sailed southwest toward the Canary Islands. Then Columbus relied on trade winds to speed his ships across the ocean. Columbus kept two logs. One was to show his men. The other he kept secret because it recorded the truth about the journey.

By October 10, the crew lost confidence in Columbus. To avoid mutiny, Columbus agreed to turn back if they did not sight land within three more days. On October 12, they sighted land.

The ships landed on a Caribbean island. Columbus thought he had reached the Indies—lands in Southeast Asia where spices grew. So he called the islanders Indians. Columbus named the island San Salvador. He set sail soon after in search of Japan. For the next three months, he visited several Caribbean islands. He found gold and precious objects on the island we call Hispaniola today. Columbus believed he had found an all-water route to Asia. So he decided to sail back to Spain.

### **3. Why didn't Columbus realize he had reached an unknown continent?**

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## **An Expanding Horizon** (page 53)

*What geographic knowledge did Columbus bring back?*

Columbus made three more voyages to the Americas. He failed to bring back the treasures he promised Spain's rulers. He did not spread Christianity. Instead he treated the people of Hispaniola badly. He also made them slaves. This angered Isabella. After the fourth voyage, Spain's rulers refused to give Columbus any more help.

He died believing he had reached Asia. But his voyages changed European views of the world. People realized that Columbus had reached continents that had been unknown to them before. They stopped seeing the Atlantic Ocean as a barrier. The ocean became a bridge. It linked Europe, Africa, and the Americas.

### **4. How did Columbus change European views of the world?**

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