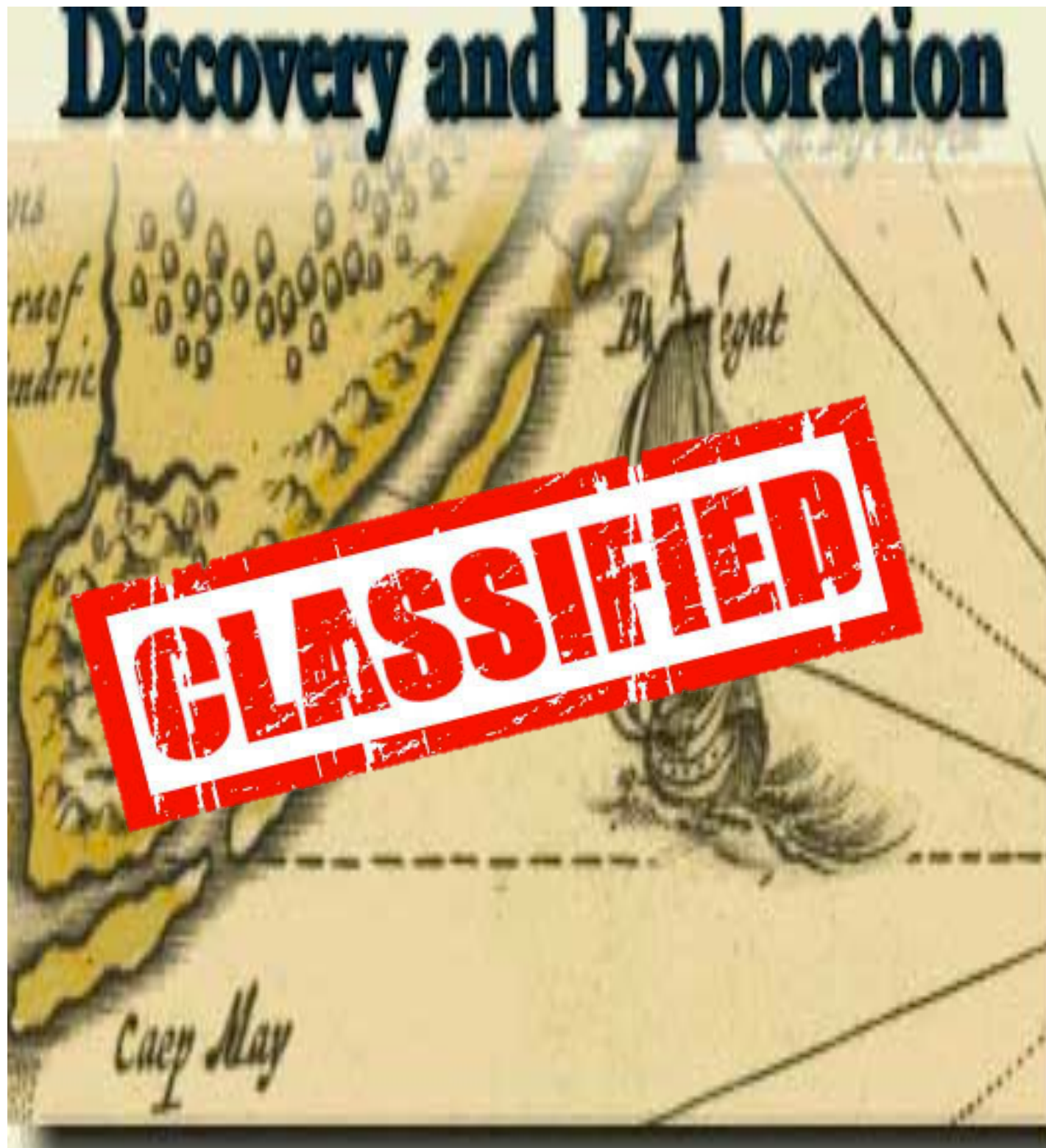


BRAINIAC CASE FILE #1



Portugal Begins the Age of Exploration

Key Explorers



PRINCE HENRY

The key figure in early Portuguese exploration was Prince Henry, the son of King John I. Nicknamed “the Navigator,” Henry was not an explorer himself. Instead, he encouraged exploration and directed many important expeditions.

Beginning in about 1418, Henry sent explorers to sea almost every year. He also started a school of navigation where sailors and mapmakers could learn their trades. His cartographers made new maps based on the information captains brought back.

Henry’s early expeditions focused on the west coast of Africa. He wanted to continue the crusades against the

Muslims, find gold and take part in trade.

Gradually Portuguese explorers made their way farther and farther south. In 1488, Bartolomeu Dias became the first European to go around the Southern tip of Africa. Later, Dias died in a storm at sea.

In July 1497, Vasco da Gama set sail with four ships to chart a route to India. Da Gama’s ships rounded Africa’s southern tip and then sailed up the east coast of the continent. With the help of a sailor who knew the route to India, they crossed the Indian Ocean.



BARTOLOMEU DIAS

Da Gama arrived in the port of Calicut, India in May 1498. There he obtained a load of cinnamon and pepper. On the return trip to Portugal, da Gama lost half of his ships. Many of his crew members died of hunger or disease. Still, the valuable cargo he brought back paid for the voyage many times over. His trop made the Portuguese even more eager to trade directly with Indian merchants.

In 1500, Pedro Cabral set sail for India with a fleet of 13 ships. Cabral first sailed southwest to avoid calms

(areas where there are no winds to fill sails). But he sail so far west that he reached the east coast of present-day

Brazil. After claiming this land for Portugal, he sailed east and rounded Africa. Arriving in Calicut, he established a trading post and signed trading treaties. He returned to Portugal in June 1501 after battling several Muslim ships.



VASCO DA GAMA



PEDRO CABRAL

Spain's Early Explorations

Key Explorers



CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

It was King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella who sponsored the voyages of Christopher Columbus. The Italian-born Columbus thought that the Indies, or Eastern Asia lay on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. He believed that sailed west would be the easiest route to the Indies.

When Columbus failed to win Portuguese support for his idea, he turned to Spain. Ferdinand and Isabella agreed to pay for the risky voyage. They wanted to beat Portugal in the race to control the wealth of Asia. They also wanted to spread Christianity.

In August 1492, three ships left Spain under Columbus's command. For the crew, venturing into the open ocean was frightening. As the weeks went by, some of the men began to fear they would never see Spain again.

Then on October 12, a lookout cried "Land!"

Columbus went ashore on an island in the Caribbean Sea. Thinking he had reached the Indies, Columbus

claimed the island for Spain.

For three months, Columbus and his men explored nearby islands with the help of native islanders, whom the Spanish called Taino. Thinking they were in the Indies, the Spanish soon called all the local people "Indians."

In March 1493, Columbus arrived back in Spain. He proudly reported that he had reached Asia. Over the next 10 years, he made three more voyages to what he called the West Indies. He died in Spain in 1506, still insisting that he had sailed to Asia.

Many Europeans, however, believed that Columbus had actually found a land-mass that lay between Europe and Asia. One of these people was Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese explorer.

Magellan believed he could sail west to the Indies if he found a strait or channel, through South America. The strait would connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans allowing ships to continue to Asia.

Magellan won Spain's backing for a voyage to find the strait. In August 1519, he set sail with five ships and 250 men.

Magellan looked for the Strait all along South America's east coast. He finally found it at the southern tip of the continent. Today it is called the Strait of Magellan.

After passing through the strait, Magellan reached the Pacific Ocean in November 1520. It took another three months to cross the Pacific. During the crossing, Magellan's men ran out of food and were plagued by disease and thirst. They reached an island in the western Pacific just in time.

Continuing west, Magellan visited the Philippines. There he became involved in a battle between two local chiefs. In April 1521, Magellan was killed in the fighting.

Magellan's crew sailed to the Spice Islands. Three years after the expedition began, the only ship to survive the expedition returned to Spain, loaded with cloves. The 18 sailors on board were the first people to circumnavigate the globe.



FERDINAND MAGELLAN

Later Spanish Exploration and Conquest

Key Explorers



HERNAN CORTES

In 1519, Spanish explorer Hernan Cortes and a band of conquistadors set out to explore present day Mexico. From native people, Cortes learned about the Aztecs. The Aztecs had built a large and wealthy empire in Mexico.

With the help of a native woman named Malinche, Cortes and his men reached the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan (Tay-no-cheet-lan). The Aztec ruler, Montezuma, welcomed the Spanish with great honors. Determined to break the power of the Aztecs, Cortes took Montezuma hostage.

Cortes now controlled the Aztec capital. In 1520, he left Tenochtitlan to battle a rival Spanish force. While he was gone, a group of conquistadors attacked the Aztecs in the

midst of a religious celebration. In response, the Aztecs rose up against the Spanish. The soldiers had to fight their way out of the city. Many of them were killed during the escape.

The following year, Cortes mounted a siege of the city, aided by thousands of native allies who resented Aztec rule. The Aztecs ran out of food and water, yet they fought desperately. After several months, the Spanish captured their leader, and Aztec resistance collapsed. The city was in ruins. The mighty Aztec Empire was no more.

Four factors contributed to the defeat of the Aztec Empire. First, Aztec legend had told of the coming of a white-skinned god. When Cortes appeared, the Aztecs welcomed him because they thought he might be their god Quetzalcoatl (Kwa-zee-coat-al). Second, Cortes was able to make allies of the Aztec's native enemies. Third, their horses, armor, and superior weapons gave the Spanish an advantage in battle. The Aztecs had never seen any of these things before. Fourth, the Spanish carried disease that caused deadly epidemics among the Aztecs.

Aztec riches inspired Spanish conquistadors to continue their search for gold. In the 1520s, Francisco Pizarro received permission from Spain to conquer the Inca Empire in South America. The Incas ruled an empire that ran along most of the Andes Mountains. By the time Pizarro arrived, however, a civil war had weakened the empire.

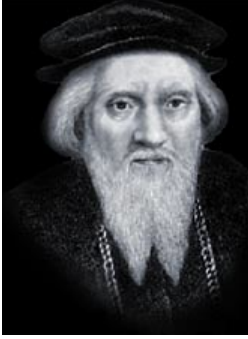
In April 1532, the Incan emperor, Atahualpa (Ah-ta-who-al-pa), greeted the Spanish as guests. Following Cortes's example, Pizarro launched a surprise attack and kidnapped the emperor. Although the Incas paid a roomful of gold and silver for Atahualpa's ransom, the Spanish killed him the following year. Without their leader, the Incas' empire quickly fell apart.



FRANCISCO PIZARRO

European Exploration of North America

Key Explorers



JOHN CABOT

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.



HENRY HUDSON

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 the 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.



GIOVANNI DA VERRAZANO

European Exploration and Land Claims, 1488–1610

