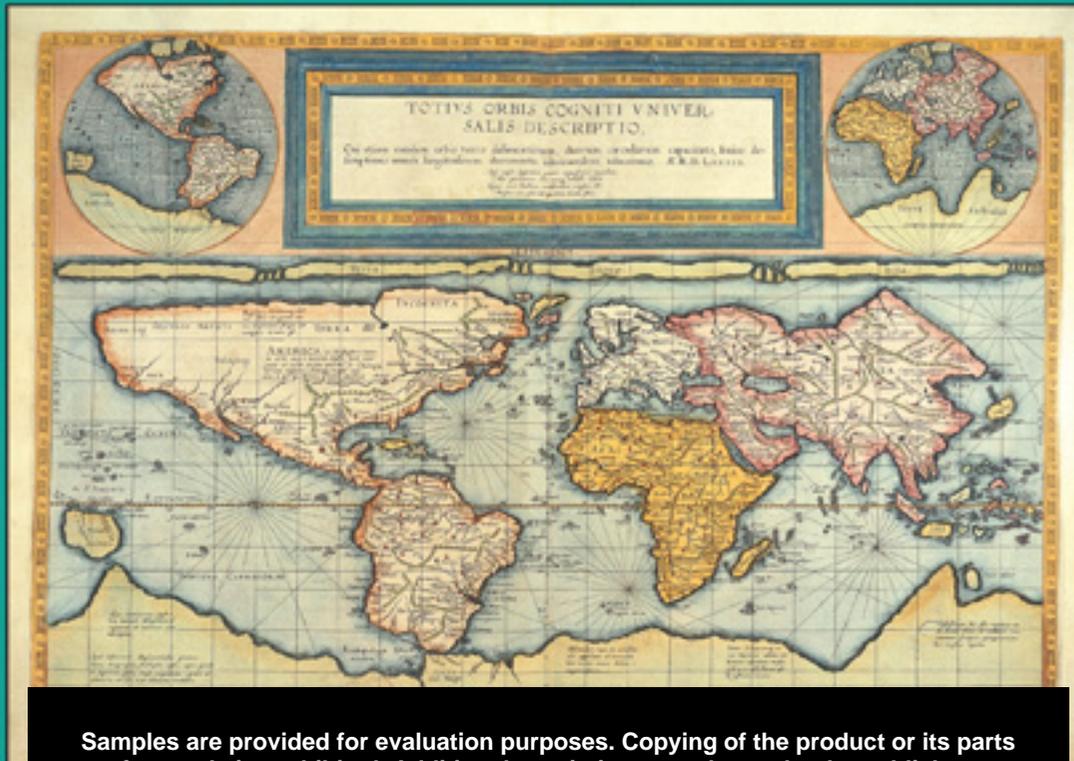


History UNFOLDING

THE AGE OF EXPLORATION



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Introduction

The First Global Age

In the early 1400s, several huge Chinese fleets visited the Indian Ocean and points as far west as East Africa. Yet soon after, the Chinese retreated into isolation, content to deal only indirectly with much of the world.

The Islamic lands also had the technical means to take to the seas and discover a “New World.” But their control of Indian Ocean trade routes, as well as their key role in overland routes to China, gave them little incentive to go farther.

As a result, it fell to Europe to launch this great age of discovery. It was an age that would, for the first time, link all the major landmasses and cultures of the world directly. This first truly global age was, therefore, also to be an age of Western dominance.

Why Europe? Why did it take up this momentous challenge? It’s unlikely that any definitive answer to this question can be provided. Yet the question is at the core of the way this set is organized. The illustrations provide clues only. But they help students better grasp the enormous challenge of the undertaking, the factors contributing to its success, and its larger significance for all of world history.

Each lesson in this set uses three visual displays to explore one broad topic in the overall story. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

Europe's New Vigor

The images focus on the emergence of Europe from the Middle Ages, and the growing power of the state. As powerful monarchies extended their reach, they took a growing interest in overseas trade and exploration.

Looking Outward

A series of technical achievements in navigation and shipbuilding made it easier for Europeans in the 1400s to take the enormous risks of sailing into the oceans far from any coastline. The spirit of the Renaissance perhaps sparked a renewed interest in inquiry and adventure. And a burning desire to outflank the Muslim world and its merchants motivated the search for direct routes to Asia.

Explorers, Conquerors, Missionaries, Merchants

The voyages of exploration were motivated (and financed) for a very wide variety of reasons—greed, pride, and a thirst for power, but also curiosity and religious idealism.

The Interconnected Globe

For the first time, humanity gained a full and accurate mental image of the surface of the planet and the locations of its key geographical, cultural, and political regions. The cultural contacts resulting from this took a great many forms—both positive and negative. In any case, for just about every society on earth, isolation would no longer be possible.

Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DIGITAL IMAGES The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

*The Age of Exploration***OBJECTIVE**

1. Students will better understand some of the key changes taking place in Europe in the 1400s that enabled it to undertake the risky and costly business of exploring the globe.

Europe's New Vigor

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustrations 1A & 1B**

Europe's Middle Ages were a time of strict economic limits, uncertainty, and fears about the world beyond the local village or town. The fortified manor house (Illustration 1A) conveys a sense of the narrow limits within which most people lived. Life had slowly begun to improve even as early as the 12th century. But in the 1400s, Europe's knowledge of the world, present and past, suddenly began to expand. Wealthy city-states such as Venice (Illustration 1B) traded for luxury goods from Asia. Growing contacts with the Muslim world opened new realms of knowledge to Europe. This wealth and knowledge would soon help Europeans launch a mighty age of discovery that would transform the world.

Illustrations 2A & 2B

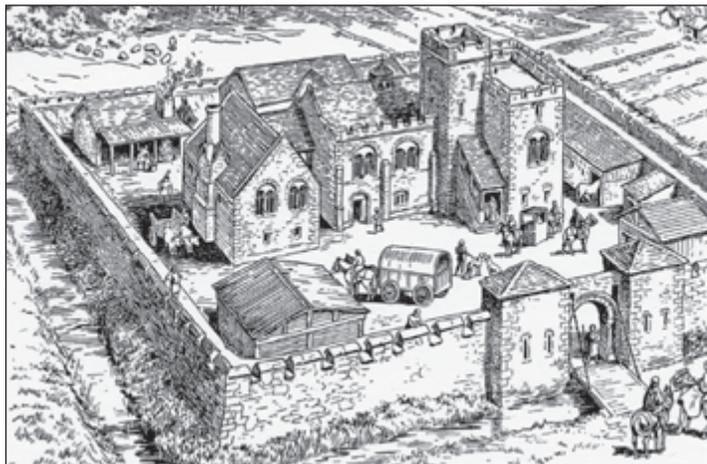
Also making this possible was the rise of the nation-state. The feudal age of armed knights (as in Illustration 2A) was ending. New and improved forms of weaponry and war gave kings and their armies the advantage. At the Battle of Crecy in 1346, during the Hundred Years' War, the English showed that a combination of archers with the new longbow, and dismounted men-at-arms could defeat a charge of armored knights on horseback. The longbow proved decisive also at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356 (Illustration 2B). Later, gunpowder and cannons were even more decisive in making armored knights obsolete. Only kings with great financial resources could afford to equip and field such armies, shifting the power balance in their favor.

Illustrations 3A & 3B

England's King Henry VIII and Spain's King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella are examples of the strong monarchs who appeared in Western Europe in these centuries. Portugal's King John was another. His son Prince Henry (Illustration 3A) sponsored mapmakers, mathematicians, and astronomers, and soon became known as "Henry the Navigator" for his efforts to organize important voyages of exploration into the Atlantic and down Africa's west coast. The goals were economic, political, and religious. Portugal wanted to find a route to Asia that would bypass the Middle East and Indian Ocean trade controlled by Muslim merchants. By gaining control of the spice trade with the East, Portugal would grow rich and strong and check the power of Islam.

Lesson 1—Europe's New Vigor Illustrations 1A & 1B

1A



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1B



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Discussing the Illustrations

1. In the 1300s, Europe was still in its so-called Middle Ages. Many Europeans lived in villages, small towns, or fortified manors such as the one shown here. What do historians mean by the term “Middle Ages”? In what way does this manor (Illustration 1A) help show what life was like for people in the Middle Ages?
2. By the 1300s, Europe had begun to change. This was especially so in certain Italian cities such as Venice (Illustration 1B). Why were these cities growing in population and wealth at this time? How do the details in this illustration help to show why these cities were growing?
3. A great movement of renewed interest in learning and the world at large soon took hold in these cities. What is that movement called? It may have been a factor leading Europeans to launch what is often called the “Age of Exploration,” starting in the 1400s. What is meant by the phrase “Age of Exploration”? How might this movement have helped bring on this Age of Exploration?

Follow-up Activities

1. Prepare a report on daily life in the Middle Ages. Use the fortified manor house shown here as a reference. What was the manorial system? Why were manor houses like this fortified? Discuss what life in this setting would have been like—both for the lord and his family, as well as for the peasants. A good Web site to visit for ideas is located at: <http://www.learner.org/exhibits/middleages/>
2. **Small-group activity:** Read more about the Italian city-states of the Renaissance and their trade links with other parts of the world. Then create a bulletin-board display, with the centerpiece being a map of the Italian city-states, their colonies, and the trade routes linking them with the Byzantine Empire, the Islamic lands of the Middle East, India, and China. In addition to the map, include photos and drawings about points of interest on the routes, pictures of typical products, and explanations of why these were important to trade.