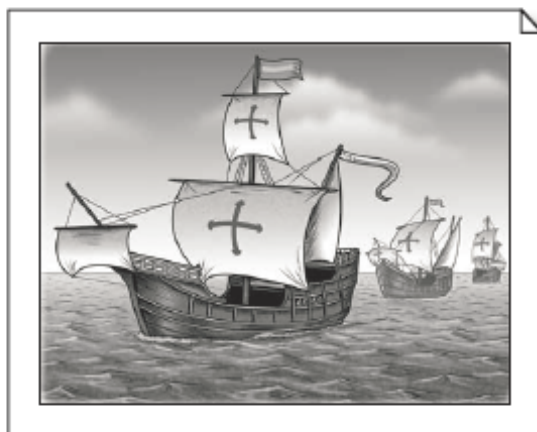




The Race for Riches

Inspired during the Renaissance, European inventors built ships that could travel long distances. The desire to grow rich and spread Christianity started an age of European exploration in the 1400s.

Europeans loved the spices and other luxury goods that came from Asia. The goods were brought along trade routes through the Middle East and Italy. Arab and Italian merchants charged high prices for the imported goods. European merchants and the monarchs of England, Spain, Portugal, and France wanted a share of these profits. They desired a sea route to Asia so that they could buy goods directly and save money.



Portugal's Vasco da Gama made a successful 27,000-mile voyage around the tip of Africa to India in 1497. It took ten months, and many sailors died on the trip. But the survivors sold their cargo of spices at a 3,000-percent profit! Portugal built a trading empire throughout the Indian Ocean and took control of the spice trade. Portuguese merchants brought goods from Asia at lower prices than Arab and Italian traders had charged.

Other nations wanted to build their own trading empires in Asia. The Dutch established trading headquarters on the island of Java. By 1700, they controlled much of Indonesia. The English and French started trading posts in India. Spain claimed the Philippines.

In the competitive time of exploration, Christopher Columbus decided to find an alternate trade route to Asia. Like most educated people, he knew the Earth was round. In 1492, Columbus sailed west across the Atlantic. He thought he could sail around the world and get to Asia in a new way. Columbus was unaware of the size of the Earth. He did not know entire continents stood between him and Asia.

When Columbus landed on an island in the Caribbean Sea, he thought he was in Asia. He claimed the islands for Spain. The Spanish sent Columbus back to the Caribbean to turn the islands into colonies, or lands controlled by another nation.

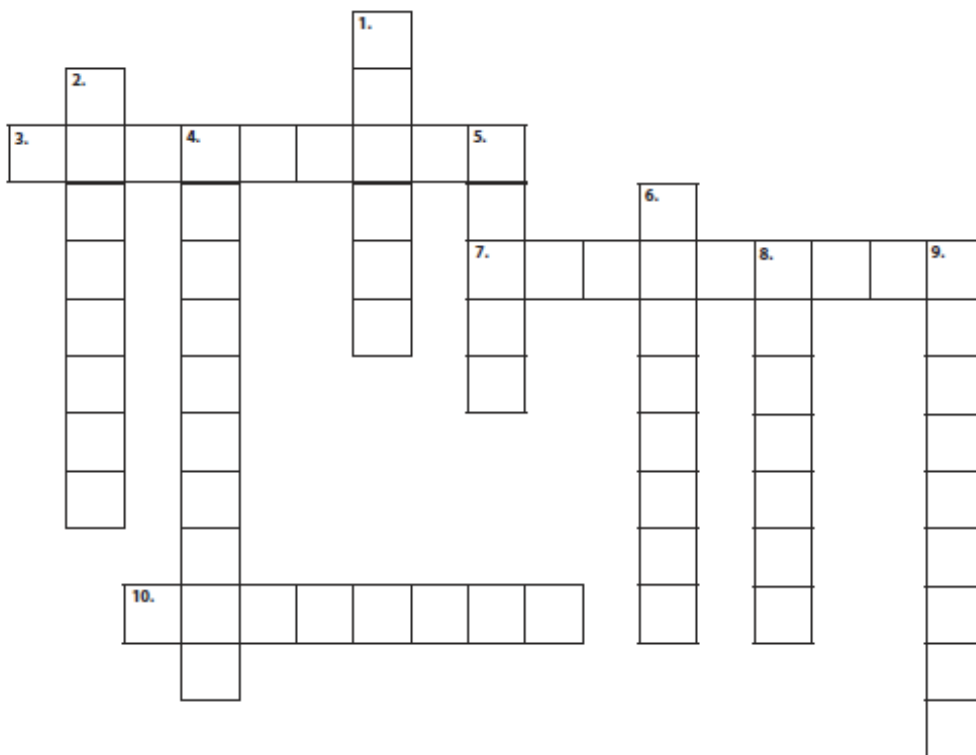
Europe's leaders eventually realized that Columbus had traveled to continents Europeans had never been to before. Spain and Columbus started a process of colonization that would reach nearly every part of the Americas. Over the next 200 years, European explorers traveled to the Americas. The French, English, Dutch, and Portuguese also sailed across the Atlantic in search of unclaimed lands.



The Race for Riches

Crossword Puzzle

Write the best answer in each blank, and complete the crossword puzzle.



ACROSS

- Arab and Italian _____ charged Europeans high prices for imported goods from Asia.
- The Dutch controlled much of the trade in _____.
- European explorers sailed across the _____ in search of unclaimed lands.

DOWN

- Vasco da Gama's 27,000-mile voyage to India took ten _____.
- Europeans wanted to find a/an _____ to Asia.
- Columbus did not know that entire _____ stood between Europe and Asia.
- European inventors built _____ that could travel long distances.
- Spain sent _____ to turn the Caribbean islands into colonies for Spain.
- European nations wanted to build trading _____ in Asia.
- Christopher Columbus wanted to find a/an _____ sea trade route to Asia.