Age of Exploration Worksheet

Grade 7 – 8 social studies · voyages and exchange

Name: Date: Score: / 26

Means, motive and money

Long-distance sea voyages did not begin in the fifteenth century because people suddenly became curious. They began because three things arrived at once.

The **means**: better ships, above all the **caravel**, which could sail against the wind, plus the magnetic **compass** and the **astrolabe** for finding direction and latitude out of sight of land. The **motive**: spices, silk and gold were worth enormous sums in Europe, and the overland routes were long and controlled by others. And the **money**: rulers willing to fund voyages in exchange for a share of whatever came back.

What followed was not only exploration. Contact between continents that had been separated for thousands of years moved crops, animals and diseases in both directions — the **Columbian Exchange**. Potatoes and maize transformed European diets. Horses transformed life on the American plains. And smallpox, to which people in the Americas had no immunity, killed on a scale no army ever matched.

Part A — Vocabulary match each term to its meaning (8 marks)

1. Caravel	_____	A. An instrument for working out latitude from the sun or stars
2. Astrolabe	_____	B. A territory settled and controlled by a distant country
3. Compass	_____	C. The movement of crops, animals and disease between continents after 1492
4. Circumnavigate	_____	D. To sail all the way around the world
5. Colony	_____	E. A magnetic needle that shows direction at sea
6. Columbian Exchange	_____	F. The making of maps
7. Monopoly	_____	G. A small fast ship able to sail against the wind
8. Cartography	_____	H. Exclusive control of a trade, with no competition

Part B — Fill in the blanks (8 marks)

1. The small, fast ship that could sail against the wind was the _____.

2. A magnetic _____ let sailors find direction out of sight of land.

3. An _____ measured the angle of the sun or a star to find latitude.

4. European traders wanted a sea route to Asia mainly to buy _____.

5. To sail all the way around the world is to _____ it.

6. A territory settled and controlled by a distant country is a _____.

7. The exchange of crops, animals and disease after 1492 is called the _____ Exchange.

8. By far the deadliest thing carried to the Americas was _____.

Part C — Which way did it travel? write Americas to Europe, or Europe to Americas (6 marks)

Crop, animal or disease	Direction
Potatoes	
Horses	
Maize	
Wheat	
Tomatoes	
Smallpox	

Part D — Read the source (4 marks)

FROM THE JOURNAL OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, OCTOBER 1492

They traded with us and gave us everything they had, with good will. They do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword and they took it by the edge and cut themselves. With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.

— Christopher Columbus, writing for his patrons

1. What does Columbus notice first about the people he meets, and what does he conclude from it?

2. This was written for the rulers who paid for the voyage. How might that have shaped what he wrote?

Age of Exploration Worksheet — Answer Key

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Part A — Vocabulary

1. **Caravel** → G
2. **Astrolabe** → A
3. **Compass** → E
4. **Circumnavigate** → D
5. **Colony** → B
6. **Columbian Exchange** → C
7. **Monopoly** → H
8. **Cartography** → F

Part B — Fill in the blanks

1. **caravel**
2. **compass**
3. **astrolabe**
4. **spices**
5. **circumnavigate**
6. **colony**
7. **Columbian**
8. **disease**

Part C — Direction of travel

1. Potatoes → **Americas to Europe**
2. Horses → **Europe to Americas**
3. Maize → **Americas to Europe**
4. Wheat → **Europe to Americas**
5. Tomatoes → **Americas to Europe**
6. Smallpox → **Europe to Americas**

Worth saying aloud: the exchange was not even. Crops moved both ways, but the diseases travelled almost entirely in one direction, and they killed a large share of the population of the Americas within a century.

Part D — The source

1. **He notices they are generous and unarmed, and concludes they could easily be conquered.**
   The two sentences sit side by side in the original. Students should see that the observation and the conclusion are connected.
2. **He needed continued funding, so he had reason to describe the voyage as promising and the people as easily controlled.**
   Accept any answer noting he was writing to persuade, not to record neutrally. This is the core skill: asking who wrote a source, for whom, and why.